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### Protest Art: The #BlackLivesMatter Movement

Early in the semester our class discussed the topic of visual rhetoric, and how to analyze a piece of visual rhetoric. I have always been passionate about art and believe it's a powerful medium of communication. This led to my decision to look into the subject of protest art for this digital media project. While researching various social movements that are active today, I found that protest art has a strong presence within Black Lives Matter, whether it be signs made for a protest, murals painted in memory of a victim, or work by professional artists.

The application I selected for my project was Tiki-Toki, a web-based software for creating interactive timelines you can share on the internet. I had never heard of it before, or used any type of timeline creator, so I figured I would challenge myself and experiment with something new. While the timeline took a good deal of time and effort to put together, overall the process of using Tiki-Toki was a relatively smooth one, especially as it offered instructional information as I continued to edit and add stories to my timeline. I had found a couple articles written in a timeline-like format, discussing incidents of police brutality occurring in the past several years since the shooting of Trayvon Martin in 2012. An editorial by the Washington Post gathered artwork inspired by #BlackLivesMatter and asked the artists about their creative process; many of them cite specific incidents in the news that motivated them to create their art. By finding sources like this, I decided that a timeline pairing visuals with text would work best for my project. I could also cite my sources within the timeline through captioning photos

as well as including a "find out more" option at the end of each story that sends the user to the site where I found the information.

As I evaluate my finished timeline, I believe it reflects my purpose to highlight the presence of protest art within the Black Lives Matter movement. Using a timeline to present the information demonstrates that police brutality is a current and widespread issue in our country; it is not restricted geographically and it is not something of the past. The last incident recorded on my timeline is the fatal shooting of Stephon Clark in Sacramento just last month on March 18th. While I could not incorporate every single incident that is worthy of attention, while revising I tried to select incidents that would give the viewer a broad picture of the scope of this issue while emphasizing the artwork responding to them.

As a piece of rhetoric, the context of my project is clear. While revising, I added to the "About This Timeline" tab explaining, "This project exemplifies visual rhetoric through highlighting protest art within the Black Lives Matter movement. Works of art are paired with headlines signifying an incident of police brutality. Images are powerful. Images can convey grief when words fail us. They can spark conversation and action. The arts can play a role in ending established systems of oppression." Each story on my timeline features headline alongside an image of a relating piece of artwork, and the visuals are what draw attention from the viewer. While Tiki-Toki was limited in its options for customization, I was able to make a few design choices to fit the look of my timeline to the subject matter. For example, I chose black and yellow as the overall color theme, as they are the primary colors of Black Lives Matter. I kept the story color as a neutral grey so that the images of the artwork would stand out and not be competing with anything else visually. While all the works of art displayed in the timeline are

concerned with abuses of power and racial discrimination, they reflect many different attitudes. Some serve to document a protest, some make a statement to provoke thought, and others simply evoke a sense of mourning and remembrance. But they are all united in their call for real change, now.

Below are two additional sources I used to construct the timeline that I could not cite within the timeline itself.

## Works Cited

Benzaquen, Mercy, et al. "The Raw Videos That Have Sparked Outrage Over Police Treatment of

Blacks." *The New York Times*, The New York Times, 28 Mar. 2018,

[www.nytimes.com/interactive/2017/08/19/us/police-videos-race.html](http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2017/08/19/us/police-videos-race.html).

"Timeline: The Black Lives Matter Movement." *ABC News*, ABC News, 22 Feb. 2018,

[www.abc.net.au/news/2016-07-14/black-lives-matter-timeline/7585856](http://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-07-14/black-lives-matter-timeline/7585856).