ANONYMITY, TECHNOLOGY, AND CONFLICT IN THE 2020-21 PORTLAND PROTESTS

by

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THESIS ABSTRACT

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The murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis ignited protests around the world. Portland, OR quickly emerged as a vanguard for leftist organizing, leading to nightly demonstrations against law enforcement. The incentives to remain anonymous to thwart identification by police and right-wing opponents play out in-person and in online spaces, prompting new modes of organizing. Monitoring group boundaries, calling out wrongdoings, and limiting information to trusted comrades may estrange others who seek involvement in the rejuvenated Black Lives Matter movement. Social technologies create new dynamics in how activist networks can organize effectively, resolve conflicts, and endure hardship. This thesis proposes that mutual aid offers an inclusive and coalitional approach to addressing inequalities in the Portland community. It does so by leveraging the affordances of digital technologies to benefit the collective without requiring as robust a security culture as protests do and without foreclosing confrontational dissent against institutions of the state.

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This thesis is dedicated to George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, and all those we have lost to police brutality.

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1. Introduction

On May 25, 2020 in Powderhorn Park, Minneapolis, MN, an employee at Cup Foods convenience store called the police due to a conflict over an allegedly counterfeit twenty-dollar bill. Three officers, including Derek Chauvin, attempted to detain the suspect, George Floyd, on suspicion of forgery, ultimately placing him in handcuffs and lying him face-first on the ground. Chauvin proceeded to kneel on Floyd's neck for nine minutes and forty-nine seconds. George Floyd was unarmed, unresisting, and pleading repeatedly for air, for water, for his mother, and for release. Around five minutes in, Floyd was unconscious, with Chauvin unrelenting until Floyd was taken to the hospital where he was pronounced dead.

Outraged at the brazen and cruel nature of George Floyd's murder, which was comprehensively witnessed and documented by powerless bystanders, Minneapolis erupted into impassioned protest at the continued extinguishment of Black life at the hands of law enforcement. Protests similarly materialized in communities around the country and the globe under the Black Lives Matter banner. The year-to-date found George Floyd's murder amplified by two other central conflicts refracted through American communities: the deadly COVID-19 pandemic and Joe Biden's presidential bid to unseat Donald Trump.

In 2020, the US saw 22,000 demonstrations, breaking the record for the most in the world in a single year (Bartusevičius et al, 2021, p. 1391). In the late spring and early summer of 2020, it felt as though everyone in the Portland, OR city core emerged from isolation to demonstrate their support for the Black Lives Matter movement and their disgust with the continual cycle of Black death and lack of accountability for the police responsible. They did so by marching in the street by thousands, cheering at the marchers from windows and porches, and/or displaying supportive signs prominently in yards, homes, and businesses. Daytime protests began to fracture at dusk where the more risk-averse would depart. Others congregated outside the Multnomah County Justice Center and faced off with police late into the night, regularly dispersed with flash-bang grenades, tear gas, less-lethal munitions, bull rushes, and the threat of detainment.

Regardless of police tactics, meaningful direct actions continued for months on end, even in light of a gradual dwindling of attendees. As Portlanders negotiated their roles (or lack thereof) in the reinvigorated protest movement, conflicts among and between community members eroded whatever coherence might have been perceived in the earliest days. These internal conflicts in a large left-leaning community were then superimposed onto the broader, more acrimonious conflict with the institutions of law enforcement and anti-Black racism.

On January 6, 2021, supporters of Donald Trump gathered in Washington, D.C. to protest the results of the presidential election and, with immediate infamy, laid siege to the Capitol building. The images and footage from that day are stunning, not least because of the insurrectionists' audacity. Most did little to shield their faces, either from COVID-19 or from being identified as a party to a crime. To the contrary, many participants advertised their roles in invading the Capitol building on their social media feeds through images and videos, some of which have been used in the months following to criminally charge individuals for their actions (Gross, 2021). There is much to be said about the implications of the Capitol insurrection, but the adamancy of many of those right-wing protesters to be present there as their identifiable selves contrasts sharply with the measures taken by left-wing protesters in municipalities across the globe.

In contrast, especially as hostilities against both police and right-wing adversaries were activated, protesters in Portland adopted, practiced, and enforced an overarching system of self-protection, central to which is shielding their identities on the ground. This system is frequently referred to as *security culture*. This is defined by CrimethInc as "a set of customs shared by a community whose members may be targeted by the government, designed to minimize risk" and, most crucially, as an understanding that "people should never be privy to any sensitive information they do not need to know" (2004, para 1). In general, it requires some form of consensus among trusted friends and organizers, and it can manifest at different levels of secrecy depending on the actions planned. Illegal or high-risk behavior warrants a higher degree of security, which also implies fewer individuals are apprised of important information about events, often including the basics, like when and where they will take place.

While enacting security culture is "not paranoia institutionalized" by intent, it is still a domain rife with potential conflicts (Ibid., para 18). For many of the most dedicated activists, withholding trust is a key piece of self-preservation, and perceived transgressions of the culture can be the site of serious conflict among friends and comrades, which may in fact begin to resemble policing or the doling out of punishment. These difficulties are enduring, but the ubiquity of digital media has only served to exacerbate them in the information age.

Significant efforts to address the fast-moving and dynamic role of technology and new media in social movements have rippled through twenty-first century media commentaries and academic writings. Still, innovations and adaptations far outpace post-hoc analysis and evaluation. Preference for offline communication or communication restricted to specific, encrypted apps entails a smaller cohort of activists engaged in a direct action, and direct actions are usually deemed successful based on popular support, putatively measured by the quantity

of attendees. Social networking sites' "architectures of visibility" encourage and facilitate "lateral/mutual surveillance practices" (Marichal, 2012, cited in Owen, 2017, p. 690). This is all to say that barriers to entry (e.g., obtaining a burner phone), perceived risks (e.g., arrest), or disagreement about strategies developed in the privacy of the security culture (e.g., vandalizing homes, businesses, or government buildings) may dissuade most people from participating in further actions. The assumption is that most people are inclined to obey the law and only participate in protest that is developed and accomplished above ground.

At the same time, protesters and dissenters are correct to be reasonably suspicious of infiltration or sabotage either by the state (see Baker et al, 2021) or by right-wing partisans (see Smith, 2020). In the information age, digital media and technology are both assets and liabilities for a social movement. Overall, the initial solidarity that stretched across diverse swaths of the Portland community eventually gave way to internal fragmentation, which frequently and publicly played out in activist social media circles. To the uninitiated (even if enthusiastic) observer, this fragmentation might be noticed, though its origins, contours, and outcomes may be entirely or partially obscured. In short, internal conflict sowed confusion in Portland's 2020 protest scene.

The object of solidarity became less clear to the average march participant or Black Lives Matter supporter. While the killings of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor (among others) brought many thousands of people into solidarity with Black lives, *local* solidarities splintered. Speaking as a hypothetical protester, the person next to me may espouse beliefs, engage in tactics, or elicit risks I oppose despite the emotional compulsion to arrive to the same protest event. In addition, resolving this hypothetical conflict exists only in a spontaneous, on-the-ground forum, distorted by the emotional intensity of the demonstration itself. Activists utilize social media, too, as a mode of conflict resolution prior to and following direct actions, though its efficacy as such is severely understudied.

These inchoate conflicts are in the nature of social movements as they manifest in street demonstrations. The energy and urgency of the early days inevitably become blunted for a variety of reasons, including the fear of detention or injury, the distrust of fellow protesters, the lack of resources (e.g., time, money, supplies, and/or trusted comrades), or disagreement with the protests' goals (or lack thereof). That is, burnout has always been endemic to social justice groups and activists, and ingroup conflicts are unavoidable. These reasons heavily inform the research question at hand: What implications for conflict resolution are presented by the arc of the 2020 Portland protests following the murder of George Floyd, and are these unique to the local context? Further, what lessons about social media, technology, anonymity,

and dissent can be translated to left-wing communities interested in social justice? To be clear, there are three intertwined conflicts at hand, all of which are modulated by technology: (i) protester conflict with the apparatus of the state, (ii) protester conflict with the broader local community, and (iii) internal protester conflict.

The wax and wane in popularity of Portland's racial justice protests provides a rare natural case study in praxis. By this I mean the protests offered an enactment of beliefs and principles not frequently seen in everyday life. In this localized context, the boundaries of normalcy are being expressly transgressed. These transgressions constitute part of a moral churn in which those normative things often tacitly agreed to by the majority become unsettled. These normative things are, for instance, ideas about how to be a good community member (e.g., deference to law enforcement), behave in protest (e.g., refrain from tagging walls or breaking windows), or be an effective political force (e.g., call local politicians, vote, or volunteer). Further, the prevalence and general banality of communication technologies add new dimensions to how philosophies might be interpreted and performed in real communities.

My focus is the inflections of the digital space on the protesters. In protest security culture, anonymity is paramount. While outward concealment of my identity might be relatively easy in the digital space, in the form of adopting a pseudonym and a non-representative profile image or avatar, backchannel identifiers may still pose significant risks. In addition to the way these insidious yet normalized technologies can influence the scope and scale of localized conflicts, it is often also opaque. The multifarious uses of otherwise inanimate machinery are not made clear to the average person.

In this way, science fiction can be as useful a source as history and philosophy when it comes to creative conflict resolution. The interplay of technology and democracy is for many at least partially informed by celebrated artifacts of culture like Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* (1932), George Orwell's *1984* (1949), the *Matrix* movies (1999, 2003, 2021), or the *Black Mirror* television show (2011-19). These creative imaginings respond to a discomfiting reality. The infiltration of technology into our lives, according to Donna Haraway, opens up new questions about the role of the "cyborg" in the construction of identity, envisioning it as a "kind of disassembled and reassembled, postmodern collective and personal self" (1991 [1985], p. 162). Her essay blends together the two poles of the discursive spectrum on technology: the utopian and the dystopian. She augurs what is to come: "Our machines are disturbingly lively, and we ourselves are frighteningly inert" (Ibid., p. 151). I see it as my responsibility in this thesis to describe, at least in part, the scope of technological risks assumed by the average person and the technological capabilities of the state.

Beyond the conflicts enumerated above, there is also, I argue, a way out. Through the anarchist practice of mutual aid, which aims to fill gaps left by the state to fulfill the needs of community members, existing activist networks can build relationships with those on protest peripheries, diversify the social justice movements at hand, and build a solid foundation for future crises and mobilizations. For activists, "mutual aid is the idea that we all have a stake in one another's liberation, and that when we act from that interdependence, we can share with one another as equals" (M., p. 3). In Portland, mutual aid projects include assisting the burgeoning unhoused population, distributing public health supplies (e.g., masks to protect against COVID-19 or respirators to protect against wildfire smoke and tear gas), offering free or affordable food, providing legal support for those being incarcerated or facing eviction, arranging car or bicycle repair workshops, organizing mental health services, and so on. Mutual aid has the capacity to build trust across difference, create tangible outcomes for people in need, execute and practice social justice philosophies, and open up spaces that are non-confrontational and less emotional than on-the-ground protests.

Figure 1: The People's Store, run by volunteers, offers free food, first aid kits, personal hygiene goods, safety supplies, and other necessities to unhoused communities in Portland. Photo from Laurelhurst Park by B Okabe for Street Roots on October 21, 2020.

2. Thesis

The murder of George Floyd was a powder keg which, in Portland, ignited latent and knotted conflicts that reflect the city's history and have significant implications for its future. In *longue durée*, a historiological perspective, "each 'current reality' is the conjoining of movements with different origins and rhythms" where the present "is comprised of the time of yesterday, of the day before yesterday, and of bygone days" (Braudel and Wallerstein, 2009 [1958], p. 182). The goal is for this thesis to contribute specificity to a broad discourse on twenty-first century practices of dissent and movement mobilization, especially as they pertain to interpersonal, local, and online conflicts. Wallerstein (2004) asserts the task of the *longue durée* scholar is to "universalize the universals by particularizing the particulars" (p. 2). The protests are not over, and they did not even really begin with George Floyd's murder. Portland's political conflicts have played out on the streets for decades, and the introduction of digital technologies only make these more visible and protean. I see it as incumbent upon me to take heed of José Medina (2011) via Michel Foucault (2003 [1975-76]) that for both scholars and activists, "the critical task [...] is to resurrect subjugated knowledges—that is, to revive hidden or forgotten bodies of experiences and memories—and to help produce [their] insurrections" (p. 11). This means that the present offers an opportunity to dig through silences, omissions, falsities, and contradictions littered through history in order to build a more truthful and equitable future.

Extrapolating from the diminishing numbers in attendance at protest events, I assert that serious fragmentation occurred among people in Portland due to the systematized designs of taken-for-granted channels of discourse. Digital media and the incentives driving people toward anonymized dissent and civic engagement reveal rifts that can ultimately subvert the cooperative wherewithal of social justice movements. In addition, taking on such a powerful and fortified institution as the Portland Police Bureau (PPB)—and the police writ large—is an uphill battle for grassroots organizers. The normal shortcomings of human psychology paired with the normal challenges of interpersonal and organizational conflict resolution combine in the highly volatile and emotional dynamics of social movements. Without proper tools, these regular psychological and relational processes—what we might consider facts of life—are warped *by* technology and adapted to *through* technology, altogether elaborating new modes of resistance to power.

Security culture serves a strategic purpose, part of which entails the agitation of conflict. Portland's protest movement, amorphous as it is, was compelled to oscillate between

reifying the boundaries of the ingroup out of self-preservation and making them more porous and welcoming to outsiders. Undoubtedly, this is a difficult line to walk, and missteps are inevitable, especially in a leaderless group operating in a hybrid[1] organizing environment. Therefore, mutual aid practices proffer services that in turn build relationships, all without compromising security as it pertains to direct actions. Theoretically, protest-related security culture and community mutual aid can sustain a dialectic capable of managing conflicts as they arise because community members themselves have ownership over such processes.

[1] Herein, "hybrid" refers to both online and offline, usually pertaining to communication and organizing.

3. Methods

Longue durée helps to locate the maelstrom of the Portland protests in a more placid chronology of history, where upheavals and furors of the present can be burnished by the past, and the two "can be better seen in their reciprocal lights" (Braudel and Wallerstein, 2009 [1958], p. 185). An event, on this reading, "is an explosion" that "fills the conscious domain of today's people" only to dissolve quickly under the pressure of new ones; however, under *longue durée*, "the event becomes linked, by design or by chance, to a whole chain of events, of underlying realities that then become impossible to disentangle" (Ibid., p. 174). In episodic history, the kind to which we have grown accustomed, events are linked together, creating isomorphic sequences and constructing perimeters around intellectual disciplines.

With the alternative vantage point of *longue durée*, "one can rethink the totality of history, as though it were located atop an infrastructure," where all the "explosions of historical time can be understood from […] this semi-immobility" (Ibid., p. 181). The melodrama of small-scale conflicts, like the protests at the center of this thesis, situated in a protracted and precipitous anti-systemic moment instantiates the assertion that "we are living in a world-system that is a capitalist world-economy" that has endured for centuries, continues to reiterate itself, and "may well be in its terminal crisis now" (Wallerstein, 2004, p. 1). *Longue durée* offers a permanent renascence to the scholastic and activist projects of liberation.

Social networking sites produce digital ephemera. Accounts and posts are sometimes deleted, usernames are sometimes changed, and people might switch their accounts from public to private or vice versa. One user can be blocked by another, other accounts are at times suspended, and posts can sometimes be edited or comments disabled, depending on the site. This is in keeping with Adam Nash's observation of the "profoundly indeterminate and interactive nature of digital networks, where no individual entity can really be said to exist except in the most transitory and procedural fashion" (2016, p. 7). I aim to answer some of the questions posed by Caren et al (2020), including

> how and to what extent activists employ some technologies and not others; how the specific affordances of each technology might provide constraints or opportunities for the mobilization and effects of social movements; and how differential, unequal access to some platforms over others might affect the trajectory of social movement mobilization among some collective groups and not others (p. 457).

This thesis also aims to contribute to understudied places and phenomena. Following Timothy Recuber (2017, cited in Sclafani, 2019), I undertake a digital discourse analysis without "the collection and analysis of big data," focusing instead on "small spaces on the Internet" the

content and dynamics of which algorithms and aggregations may not be able to comprehend (p. 21). For personal reasons, I choose not to maintain Instagram, Facebook, or Twitter profiles. For this thesis, I did create accounts with Telegram and Nextdoor. Twitter allows non-members to view and search tweets, and all of Reddit is accessible to anyone without an account. Facebook and Instagram make outside observation more challenging, but it is not impossible unless users turn on stricter privacy settings.

In the course of writing this thesis, relevant fragments and figures of online discourse appeared and disappeared. In keeping with the nature of the Internet, I let them come and go, choosing to experience the movement in motion rather than bounded and fossilized. By employing the method of a colloquial online discourse analysis, I am adapting to the difficulty of capturing the complexity and effervescence of these events in a formal academic study. I conducted no formal interviews and employed no data-crunching software. Instead, I am trying to take the city's temperature in the ways available to the average community members, that is, through social and news media. I am diving headfirst into the speculation and scuttlebutt of the collective commentary.

In this thesis, I alternately use the terms protesters and activists, and I do not use the term rioter. These choices are meant to be descriptive, yet they carry connotative consequences. I make this semantic decision with the intent of keeping the ideas of protest and activism as broad as possible. I also use they/them pronouns to describe individual anonymous Internet users. I do this to avoid passing descriptive judgments based on names or appearances, if such clues are available. This choice is also in keeping with shifting dynamics around language choices around gender fluidity.

Frequently, I hear *they are behaving in this way*, or *they are saying that about us*, with the "they" in question remaining imprecise. For example, an activist named Tristan is interviewed in the *Uprising: A Guide From Portland* podcast regarding tactics. He says,

> They say it's all white anarchists but there's no way to prove this because they're all bloc'ed up,[2] and there's this subtext that what they really want is to know who these people are, to gratify themselves about being right and also so the cops can get them. There's this kind of undercurrent that if they really cared, they'd show their faces or something (cited in Evans, 2021c).

Conversely, a Nextdoor user states, "The people protesting in Portland are focusing the attention on themselves, they're not contributing to efforts to reform the police in any way," (Smith, 2021) while another user responds in kind, "If we successfully reformed policing and

[2] "Bloc'ed up" refers to the act of dressing in black bloc during direct actions, a tactic for shielding protesters' identities and is discussed in greater detail in subsequent sections.

had a top-notch police department, these people would lose their raison d'etre, and some may lose the only 'career' they've ever known. We must all stop listening to professional activists" (Authougies, 2021).

As Haraway asserts, "Monsters have always defined the limits of community in Western imaginations" (p. 174). So, while the most dehumanizing commentary regularly falls to people thought of outside the community—for example, "pigs," referring to the police or "fash" and "chuds"[3] referring to fascist or right-wing individuals—the construal of fellow community members can begin to reflect an inexact and detached reasoning that indicates some truths and effaces others. Involved parties emplot their firsthand experiences, secondhand anecdotes, and collective media consumption/production into a conflict narrative that makes sense, all while—sometimes—shielding their real identity from most onlookers.

I borrow some of the philosophical underpinnings of Grégoire Chamayou's *A Theory of the Drone* (2015), which offers a searing critique of drone warfare by the US military. Haraway considers cyborgs "the illegitimate offspring of militarism and patriarchal capitalism," (1991 [1985], p. 151), and Chamayou finds drones to be a cognate. By studying an instrument—i.e. the *means*—we should ask "what the choice of those means, in itself, tends to impose," and by extension, begging the question, "To what do they lead, not only in terms of their relation to the enemy but also in terms of the state's relation to its own subjects?" (Chamayou, 2015, p. 38). Myth and tool—as they wend through information systems, communication networks, and biotechnologies—are thereby mutually constitutive (Haraway, 1991 [1985], p. 161).

While social networking sites "are global, stateless platforms" (Owen, 2017, p. 690), they also have to craft agreements with the countries in which they operate, often granting the state access to "user data, location and network information" (Papic and Noonan, 2011, cited in Owen, 2017, p. 693). Websites and platforms can also change terms of service "at any time, without specific user knowledge or consent," usually expanding the web of companies granted access to user data (Zuboff, 2019, p. 49). Globally, the situation is complex, where governments have taken different approaches in creating their own set of regulations and social media companies usually yielding to them (Ahlam, 2021, p. 838). That is to say, the situation moves swiftly, and the present restrictions, regulations, or licenses should not be taken for granted. It is not hyperbolic to take as instructive the methods and justifications of American

[3] This is an epithet given to supposed fascists like Proud Boys members, most likely stemming from the eponymous 1984 science fiction film about Cannibalistic Humanoid Underground Dwellers (CHUDs).

militarism as it might relate to domestic social movements and their interaction with social media. Studying technology as an instrument can shed light on an emerging set of ethics which may govern activism in the twenty-first century.

In this thesis, I first elaborate on three intersecting foundations (4): philosophical (4a), historico-political (4b), and social psychological (4c), the latter of which relates most closely to the fledgling field of conflict resolution. Next, I expand on three relevant left-wing movements (5): antifascism (5a), anarchism (5b), and Black Lives Matter (5c), followed by a brief explanation of the particularities of 2020 and 2021 during the COVID-19 pandemic (5d). The subsequent section offers a comparison between Portland and the recent protests in Hong Kong (6), setting up the next section, which details the events of Portland's protests through 2020-21 (7). Following this, I offer a synthesis (8), articulating the relationship of all prior sections to, specifically, local privacy considerations (8a), white attitudes to protest (8b), media democratization efforts (8c), and the perils of infighting (8d). In my conclusion (9), I aim to demonstrate how the topics elaborated in this thesis have appreciable impact on twenty-first century conflict resolution prospects.

4. Foundations

4a. Philosophy

One of the most central issues of the Portland protests, and their internal conflicts, is the distribution and shuffling of power. By this I mean power can be simultaneously repressive and revolutionary. According to Melgaço and Monaghan, "in the case of protests, visibility is a synonym of power" (2018, p. 9). The way the Portland protests unfolded at times supports this claim and, at other times, challenges it. The introduction of technology to the protest space, both in organizing and in action, gives credence to the idea that "our cognitive, affective, and political lives are caught up in various tensions among multidirectional relations of power/resistance" (Medina, 2011, p. 10). Utilizing the Foucauldian method of "genealogy," the unearthing and recentering of "counter-histories" can "energize a vibrant and feisty epistemic pluralism so that insurrectionary struggles among competing power/knowledge frameworks are always underway and contestation always alive" (Ibid., p. 12). This particular kind of epistemic pluralism is what he terms "guerrilla pluralism" (Ibid.). Silences are "constitutive" where mainstream discourse "acquires its distinctive normative structure by virtue of the exclusions that it produces" (Ibid., p. 16).

Excavating subjugated knowledges involves the uprooting of others. If the present is rich and exciting, then "what point is there in turning to historical time—impoverished, simplified, devastated by its silences, reconstructed?" (Braudel and Wallerstein, 2009, p. 184). Through critique and multivocality, new visibilities dug up from the past "benefit not only those whose experiences and lives have been kept in the dark, but the entire social body" (Medina, 2011, p. 20). Proceeding one step further, those knowledges which are made newly visible must also be interrogated, questioned and brought to bear against contradicting knowledges, or else we "run the risk of building, with our own hands, a unitary discourse" (Foucault, 2003 [1975-76], cited in ibid.). The past is thus "incessantly novel" and in being so, "make[s] our own lives strangely unfamiliar" (Ibid., pp. 27-28). Cognitive or moral complacency is never an option.

As people come into assembly, argues the feminist philosopher Judith Butler, "even when they are not speaking or do not present a set of negotiable demands, the call for justice is being enacted" (2018, p. 25). That is, "bodies are maps of power and identity" (Haraway, 1991 [1985], p. 174). Bodies in assembly simultaneously pose risks and are at risk. Violence is a stark reality for many, and much of its normalcy extends from its use by the state. It creates a world in which "war has become both remedy and poison—our pharmakon" (Mbembe, 2019,

p. 3). The interpretation of violence—"*and violence is always interpreted* (Butler, 2020, p. 14, emphasis original)—is central to the conflicts within the Portland protests. What the protesters and the police do to each other, and whose actions are considered warranted or legitimate, circulates in conversation across the community. It is important to remember that the state's use of force is almost always determined to be legitimate, as it proves itself anew every time Black people are killed by law enforcement with minimal, if any, sanction. Some protesters have set fires, broken windows, sprayed messages in graffiti, and thrown projectiles of various potential to injure at police. Whether these behaviors fall under the umbrella of "peaceful" protest is regularly debated within the movement and beyond it. Take, for example, the thread below on the *PDX Uprising* Telegram channel.

Figure 2: A tweet from Harvard Law professor Laurence Tribe posted to the PDX Uprising Telegram channel from a now-deleted account on August 24, 2020.

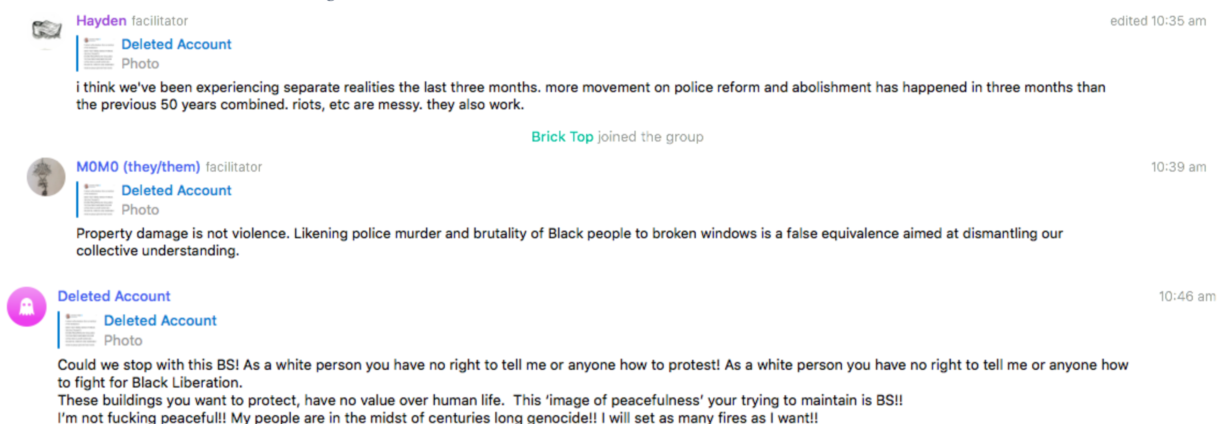

Figure 3: Three distinct responses to the Laurence Tribe tweet by PDX Uprising Telegram channel members on August 24, 2020.

Especially when it comes to political speech, assembly, and dissent, there is an established norm of nonviolence that has become widely accepted as the only legitimate form of protest. In fact, Simpson et al (2018) found that observers evaluated anti-racist activist

violence more negatively than they evaluated white supremacist violence, including placing equal responsibility for the country's political problems on both types of partisans (p. 9), implying that expectations of left-wing protesters are inordinately higher. For example, the *New York Times* revealed that in 2020, the FBI had plainclothes agents in black bloc crowds, which watchdog groups found appalling for its potential to chill First Amendment activity (Baker et al, 2021). Many of the "most recommended" comments on the article evidence Simpson et al's claims:

> *Cynical* (2021, Dec. 23): "These mobsters have been giving progressives a bad name. They need to be thwarted along with the trumpsters."
> *Steve* (2021, Dec. 23): "I'm an old-school liberal, but good for the FBI. […] These antifa gangs are violent criminals who repeatedly attack people and property, using fascist tactics of violence and fear to attempt to achieve their objective of intimidation."
> *S Baldwin* (2021, Dec. 23): "Wearing a mask or carrying a weapon is not part of protesting to my mind. The point of protesting is to show your face and use your presence as a show of support for an idea or an organization."
> *Evangelos* (2021, Dec. 23): "Peaceful protest is a Constitutional right. Non-violent civil disobedience is a great American civil rights movement tradition. But looting, burning and violence? No, thugs and terrorists should go to prison, whether they're leftists, anarchists or Trump's January 6th fascists."

However, with the 2017 Unite the Right rally in Charlottesville, VA and the 2021 insurrection at the Capitol—as well as a long, underreported history of racist and right-wing violence, like the Greensboro Massacre of 1979 and contemporary murmurs of an impending civil war–this norm of nonviolence stands on shaky ground.

Still, for Judith Butler, "there is a sense in which violence done to another is at once a violence done to the self," when, rather, "an ethics and politics of nonviolence would have to account for this way that selves are implicated in each other's lives, bound by a set of relations that can be as destructive as they can be sustaining" (2018, p. 9). That is to say, the principle of nonviolence carries with it a certain moral, solemn energy to redefine social relationships, and as a principle, it is a valid choice for many who take up the banner of Black Lives Matter.

Haraway foreshadows the insufficiency of identity politics, especially in the information age. For her, "gender, race, and class cannot provide the basis for belief in 'essential' unity," and the response to the problem of finding a collective voice among the Left has been an "endless splitting" in the pursuit of coherence and unanimity (Haraway, 1991 [1985], pp. 153-54). Ushering in the information age, she warns that "we risk lapsing into boundless difference and giving up on the confusing task of making partial, real connection" (Ibid., p. 158). Similarly, Butler finds that "identity politics fails to furnish a broader conception

of what it means, politically, to live together, across differences, in modes of unchosen proximity," and that even when coexistence is fraught and difficult, it "remains an ethical and political imperative" (2018, p. 27). For her, freedom is relational and conflictual (Ibid.).

Capitalist democracies like the US are, in principle, distinct for their differentiation of the public sphere from both the "machinery of the state and capital" and "from the private realm of everyday life" (Carroll and Hackett, 2006, p. 98). Digital and social media, however, are contributing to the blurring of these distinctions and fracturing the spheres of public engagement. Shoshana Zuboff details the contours of what she terms "surveillance capitalism," which in becoming embedded in our lives, "unilaterally claims human experience as free raw material for translation into behavioral data" (2019, p. 8). This idea is echoed by some Portland activists in the public Telegram chat: "Algorithmic mass media encourages competition and infighting as well, which is antithetical to solidarity which is what people need, imo [in my opinion]" (Lavenza, 2020). Zuboff continues, noting that surveillance capitalism "is parasitic and self-referential" and "strips away the illusion that the networked form has some kind of indigenous moral content, that being 'connected' is somehow intrinsically pro-social, innately inclusive, or naturally tending toward the democratization of knowledge" (2019, p. 9). Butler reiterates the same sentiment: "Relationality is not by itself a good thing, a sign of connectedness," rather, it is "a vexed and ambivalent field in which the question of ethical obligation has to be worked out in a light of persistent and constitutive destructive potential" (2020, p. 10).

Surveillance capitalism is "the puppet master that imposes its will through the medium of the ubiquitous digital apparatus" (Zuboff, 2019, p. 376). Unlike an Orwellian vision of an ideological and totalitarian power, it is instead a blunt instrument wielding an impersonal power that "reduces human experience to measurable observable human behavior while remaining steadfastly indifferent to the meaning of that experience" (Ibid., pp. 376-77). From this perspective, we might feel aboard a runaway train made up of the rapid adoption of digital technologies that were quickly ensnared in the hegemonic forces of capitalism, racism, and militarism. In this way, discord is deliberate, though the mechanisms that sow it remain opaque. The "digitization of everyday practices" thereby produces an environment characterized by "surveillance creep" (Marx, 1988, cited in Melgaço and Monaghan, 2018, p. 10). This was made alarmingly clear, for instance, in the Cambridge Analytica scandal, which saw a private firm use more or less inconsequential data from millions of Facebook profiles to ultimately have a highly consequential impact on political outcomes.

Social media has therefore strayed from some of the earliest homespun prototypes, like Indymedia founded in 1999, run by anarchists and pioneering "things people now take for granted, like blogging, photo sharing, and audio and video streaming" through the Independent Media Centers decentralized network (Franklin Lopez, cited in Fassler, 2020, para 12). Furthermore, it is almost no longer a choice to participate in digital or social media, especially when it comes to engagement in social movements. Today, over 298 million Americans are active Internet users, and 240 million Americans are active on social media (Johnson, 2021). Such high Internet use in the country helps explain why social movements take on distinctive characteristics in the twenty-first century. The twenty-first century reality "produces a psychic numbing that inures us to the realities of being tracked, parsed, mined, and modified" (Zuboff, 2019, p. 11). Foreshadowing Zuboff, Haraway notes how the human body, through the introduction of new technologies, becomes "probabilistic, statistical" where nothing is innately sacred (1991 [1985], p. 160). The way forward is, consequently, unclear.

For newer social movements and younger participants, "widespread social fragmentation has produced individuation as the model social condition in postindustrial societies" (Bennett, 2012, p. 22). Coinciding with Zuboff, Nash asserts that the digital capitalists who control online networks ultimately "exploit predigital beliefs of individuality and agency among their users" (2016, p. 6). In surveillance capitalism, Internet users are both products and consumers; this dynamic provokes anxiety, which itself becomes a primary product of Internet consumption, and the Faustian cycle repeats indefinitely (Nash, 2016, p. 9). These age-old values of agency and individuality are "thwarted" by surveillance capitalism's grasp of our lives, namely, "our sense of self-worth and needs for self-determination" (Zuboff, 2019, p. 18). Wells (2014), citing Bennett (2008), concurs, detailing evidence that young people's "civic orientation" can be described as "self-actualizing" in contrast to the "dutiful" orientation of generations past, that is, younger people engage only in ways that are individually networked and "personally resonant" (p. 617). This understanding helps set up the possibility for mutual aid networks as a way out of the digital snares that divide, stymie, or commodify civic activity and social movement organizing.

Portlanders have engaged online in a good deal of elegiac discourse over the beggared condition of the city and the unfavorable optics of the protests once initial enthusiasms to take to the streets began to taper off. A feature of leftist social media is a tendency toward harsh criticism, especially on Twitter. Some of this can be characterized as snark, though it is mixed in with commentary that occasionally crosses the line into bullying and harassment. People who decry snark are essentially pleading for a change to "the pessimistic 'tone' of the news or

censur[ing] activism that defines itself around a common enemy rather than a common cause" (Tsiveriotis, 2017, p. 18). To paint the picture, in an analysis of 20,000 tweets, half from political extremists and half from non-extremist partisans, extremists demonstrated lower "indicators of positive emotion and higher text-based indicators of negative emotion" (Alizadeh et al, 2019, p. 24). In other words, activists may come across to most users as being too morose and cynical. Yet, being polite is not the same as being civil, which merely "ensures that the conversation is guided by proper principles," and being polite does not necessitate "any larger commitment to honesty, morality, and justice" (Tsiveriotis, 2017, pp. 59-60). Feeling jarred by online acerbity, especially if the reader might feel like they are actually more or less on the same side, is in fact a matter of socialization and a result of being maladjusted to the dynamics of social media discourse.

Eve Sedgewick expounds on the domain of criticism among the left, distinguishing between "paranoid practices" which "seek to expose lies, dangers, and societal ills" and "reparative practices" which "attempt to assemble the incomplete, imperfect pieces of the world into a new whole," together performing essential functions of negation and generation (Tsiveriotis, 2017, p. 69). In its own way, snark can be seen as insurrectionary, a clear response "to the smug wonkery and self-satisfied smarm that dominates political discourse on mainstream publications and cable news" (Ibid., p. 84). The consolidation and corruption of power plaguing democracies is a process the "statist left" has "failed intellectually and practically" to address, leaving only a vast terrain of discontentment, voiced loudest by a disempowered anarchist left (Prichard and Worth, 2016, p. 6). Those considered part of the mainstream—in the Portland context, these people are usually referred to generally as liberals—become fair targets of snark where their supposedly progressive values "function as a merit badge of cultural capital rather than an active commitment to social solidarity" (Tsiveriotis, 2017, p. 85). For example, a *PDX Uprising* Telegram channel member laments low numbers at protests at the local Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) building: "[I]'m just skeptical of what can possibly be done to appeal to liberals if forced, mass hysterectomies on immigrants won't do it. [L]ike what happened to the pussy hat people? [W]here is everyone who went to the women's march?" (Deleted Account, 23 Sept 2020f).[4] At the same time, reparative practices may simply be less visible in online spaces, where their

[4] A number of messages from now-deleted accounts appear in this thesis, which may make reading archived text conversations confusing. Messages appear as posted by deleted accounts because Telegram has a setting that allows users to choose a time frame in which their account will be deleted if they are inactive for one, three, six, or twelve months. There is no feature for opting out of account deletion due to inactivity.

productive nature is better suited to offline environments, like mutual aid events. Either way, both the liberal handwringing and the radical indignation endure.

Other researchers have noted how "liberal racism" manifests in online forums. Sclafani's dissertation on Reddit's r/Brooklyn finds that this kind of racism "rewards racially coded speech, or speech that carries racial undertones as a form of good participation, while punishing those users who post explicitly racist content" (2019, p. 45). Furthermore, he finds that "Redditors practice a color-blindness in their discussions with one another under the assumption that claims posited as 'rational' cannot be racist" (Ibid., pp. 45-46). Though outrage and drama might ultimately help social media sites profit, embracing snark as one discursive tool of many may well help assimilate direct, textual conflict into the fold of acceptable communication among community members.

In the social science world, solidarity is a Durkheimian concept. To oversimplify, mechanical solidarity refers to the beliefs and practices generating social cohesion in pre-industrial societies whereas organic solidarity emerged out of the needs for interdependence in postindustrial societies as a tightly-knit shared consciousness fell away. Of course, the implications of Durkheim's work are far more complex. In moments of severe moral jolts—like the murder of George Floyd—a "renewed mechanical solidarity was carried out very much in a religious framework" where "beliefs and rituals reaffirming the sacredness of the collectivity" are expressed (Durkheim, 2008 [1912], p. 316). Recall Harway's assertion that, in this new world order, nothing is sacred in itself (1991 [1985], p. 161), which gives the pronouncement that "Black lives matter" the potential to bend the trajectory of our reality in a new direction. People who consider themselves activists and organizers are thus well-suited to synthesize the jolt of a new mechanical solidarity among the aggrieved with the organic solidarity of existing and incipient activist networks. This means that modern organic solidarity entails a "rich network of social ties, beyond the kinship network, that are freely entered into and developed by social actors" (Ibid., p. 307).

Solidarity was foundational in Durkheim's idea that "the pre-eminent character or 'nature' of (human) life was *association* (between individuals and groups)," especially as it relates to the individual and the state (Fournier, 2005, p. 52, emphasis original). Durkheim also focused explicitly on ritual with later scholars expanding on dramaturgical and aesthetic elements of collective practices. Further, "[s]ociety can make its influence felt only if it is in action. [...] It is through common action that it becomes conscious of itself and affirms itself" (Durkheim, 2008 [1912], p. 313). In times of turmoil, that is, communities may find themselves

at odds with hegemonic forces or larger cultural pressures as they try to fashion new localized meanings out of the old ones.

In Durkheimian axiological thought, the commingling of religious, human, and moral forces affix themselves to social institutions and relationships, even though, in our society, "evil jostles good, injustice often prevails, truth is constantly obscured by falsehood," and the ideal society we conceive of and strive toward is "a dream men have used to soothe their miseries but which they have never lived in reality" (Ibid., pp. 314-15). He continues, "No society can exist that does not feel the need at regular intervals to sustain and reaffirm the collective feelings and ideas that constitute its unity and its personality," which he suggests should happen through meetings and assemblies (Ibid., p. 322). In other words, only through collective deliberation and conflict can consensus emerge that will stir the spirits of the community.

Durkheim acknowledges how traditions can grow dull: "The great things of the past, those that inspired our fathers, no longer excite the same ardour in us, either because they have entered the common usage to the point where we take them for granted, or because they no longer answer to our current aspirations; and yet nothing has come along to replace them" (Ibid., p. 322). Referring to leftists, Prichard and Worth (2016) note how an enduring appraisal is that "the left offers empty critiques" rather than substantive alternatives to the state of things (p. 7). In Durkheim's view,

> this state of uncertainty and confused agitation cannot go on for ever. A day will come when our societies will once again experience times of creative effervescence and new ideas will surge up, new formulas will arise that will serve to guide humanity for a time (2008 [1912], p. 323).

In Portland, and in other cities, it can be argued that this stimulus to innovate and inspire is driving the continuation of racial justice protests in addition to a hope that new systems may materialize when sufficient critical attention is trained on the old ones.

That is to say, truth is a creation, not a given (Medina, 2011, p. 24). In Durkheimian terms, truth is merely a "social fact" (1982 [1895], p. 21). Like Durkheim's thoughts on the reenergizing of collective feelings, truths also "have to be created or recreated to be alive;" otherwise they "lose their action-guiding value and productivity when they are detached from concrete life-experiences, becoming ossified by habitual use" (Medina, 2011, p. 25). Durkheim also "identified the perennial human quest to live effectively in our 'conditions of existence' as an invisible causal power that summons" the ways we structure our lives, including (but not limited to) our digital entanglements (Durkheim, 1964 [1893], p. 275, cited in Zuboff, 2019, p.

32). This all lends credence to Medina's call for guerrilla pluralism in which the collectivity negotiates for new meanings, systems, and motivations.

4b. History and Politics

In general, the broad category of the "left wing" is disputed, though the equally broad category of the "right wing" rarely makes distinctions beyond condemnations of the "monolithic 'radical left' filled with 'radical liberals'" (Davis, 2017, para 2). This porous, ambiguous designation of the "left" encompasses centrifugal and centripetal forces convening and displacing people in an ever-evolving dynamic. According to the theory of *The Big Sort* (Bishop, 2008), "Americans are moving into neighborhoods and cities where everyone else thinks like them" (cited in Redden 2014, para 18). In Bishop's understanding, "we have found ways to recreate Durkheim's 'mechanical solidarity' in increasingly like-minded neighborhoods, churches, social clubs, and voluntary organizations" (2008, p. 335). Even as organizational memberships decrease, lifestyle choices "increasingly code" individuals' personal politics (Bennett, 2012, p. 22). In short, localities begin to develop a collective consciousness. As a case in point, Portland's liberal reputation has only shifted leftward, especially on social issues (Redden, 2014). In a 2013 poll, "43 percent of city residents consider themselves to be 'very liberal' on social issues, compared to just 11 percent of the rest of the region and 13 percent of the rest of the state" (Redden, 2014, para 8). In Multnomah County, home to Portland, the 2020 election swung almost 80 percent in favor of Joe Biden. Yet, a 2021 poll of Oregonians found that only 53 percent of Portland metro area residents view the city positively (Monahan, 2021). While the left might unite against the right in the case of the presidential election, it appears that intra-group conflict dogs those who broadly identify as "liberal," perhaps contradicting some of Bishop's claims.

Among the left, "even calls for 'resolution' can be interpreted as ideological statements" (Davis, 2017, para 4). Some classic theories of pluralism aim for convergence or for melioration, but the goal of Medina's version of resistance through guerrilla pluralism is not conflict resolution, but rather the pursuit of friction for its own sake (2011, pp. 22-24). In the Portland protest scene, the desire for solidarity across political, racial, and strategic differences became a central conflict in and of itself, eventually splintering direct participation. For example, the left has of late been characterized by "government instability and public anger rather than an embrace of clear competing ideologies or party identifications" (Bennett, 2012, p. 26). Its history has been constituted by emphasizing incommensurability and the development of "moral and political rankings of left-wing groups," which can be a difficult

tradition to renounce when dominant systems obstruct progressive coalition-building, like Occupy intended to do (Prichard and Worth, 2016, p. 5). Simultaneously, significant efforts to build and strengthen solidarities have the potential to counteract defection and dissatisfaction. This might be characterized as a "subpolitics" (Beck, 2006, cited in Bennett, 2012, p. 26), where political expression is enacted in ways other than formal politics. Mutual aid therefore is a political act even when divested of explicitly political content.

To complicate matters, two separate polls in 2021 found that a large majority of Portlanders find maintaining or increasing police numbers favorable, even if they may criticize law enforcement's tactics against Black people and/or protesters (Kavanaugh, 2021a). One of the polls also demonstrated a reformist streak in its respondents, who overwhelmingly supported "the use of body cameras by officers (96%), doubling the size of the Portland Street Response program (89%) and a more community-focused approach to policing that would include hiring more officers of color and requiring the city's cops to live in Portland (87%)" (Kavanaugh, 2021b, para 16).

Even though the world has gained electoral democracies over recent years, "rights and liberties have suffered" (Bonner et al, 2018, p. 10). Mbembe argues, in defining "necropolitics," that the "more or less hidden violence of democracies" is making itself visible, fearing a systemic political shift toward "a form of organization for death" (2019, pp. 6-7). Policing is an institution, and as such, it can produce less democratic experiences for citizens (Squillacote and Feldman, 2018, p. 136). It is in fact well-studied that people miscalculate the possibility that democracies will one day behave in undemocratic ways (Passini, 2017, p. 536). Important metrics of law enforcement are regularly kept out of public view, and only in recent years have federal oversight agencies attempted to maintain a national repository of use-of-force data, to which most agencies do not contribute (Jackman, 2021). Quantitative information about local law enforcement activity has otherwise been left to grassroots organizations (e.g. The Police Data Initiative), investigative journalists (e.g. *In the Dark* podcast series), and vigilant citizens (e.g. local Cop Watch groups).

If Portland's protest mobilization closely follows Durkheim, the history of policing might be more Weberian. The German sociologist Max Weber theorized that the rationalization of life could, on one hand, generate predictable rhythms and systems thereby nourishing human freedom, and can, on the other hand, turn people into stultified and dispassionate agents at the behest of the authorities we created (Kim, 2007). In this context, "the police are a bureaucratic organization," which has been designed in such a way that oversight and accountability become near-impossible to achieve with our democratic tools (Squillacote and Feldman, 2018, p. 138).

Smith and Alexander (2005) similarly argue that modern societies have created categorical divisions between those who decide punishment, those who inflict it, those who receive it, and those who observe it (p. 25). The centuries-old theater of punishment no longer guarantees that it "will produce on the audience and the victim anything like a ritual effect" even as "penal agents" attempt to "powerfully evoke the moral background structures of society" (Ibid.). It is, however, the aloof, prejudiced, and alienating design of punishment that feeds a stubborn miasma of illegitimacy over the projects of law enforcement and criminal justice (Ibid.). Durkheim, for his part, insists that "administrative complexity" does not replace the emotional and cultural premises but is just another layer atop them (Ibid., p. 24). Weber similarly presaged that the rationalizing forces of modernity would prompt "a chaotic, even atrophic, inundation of subjective values," meaning enchantment and disenchantment would constitute an ongoing existential dialectic (Kim, 2007, para 29). The persistence of oppression combined with the novelties of technology produces an explosive situation, like the one we witnessed in 2020.

From this emerges "the unintelligibility of police reform" and may even give credence to an oft-heard protest refrain that police "can't be reformed" (Squillacote and Feldman, 2018, p. 137). Squillacote and Feldman note the insufficiency of "reasoned argument" and democratic deliberation over policing's brokenness, insisting instead that Cop Watch programs are a necessarily grassroots "agonistic" practice circumventing engagement with the custodial and carceral state (Ibid., pp. 144-54). Of course, citizens using their own resources, creating their own oversight programs, and remaining subject to the affordances of technology also can serve to reinforce existing power imbalances. Nonetheless, citizen oversight is in keeping with Medina's epistemic friction. Along these lines, Portland residents in 2020 voted overwhelmingly for an overhaul of the police oversight board, opting for a large, diverse committee made up of community members, the establishment of which has successfully hurdled bureaucratic and ideological obstacles placed in its way and aims to reinvigorate tired and ineffective accountability mechanisms (Levinson, 2021a).

Since the 1990s, police antagonism against social movements has accelerated, using tactics which include the "heightened use of no-go zones and barriers," a growing array of less-lethal instruments, mass arrests, and "a proliferation of surveillance, presumptive techniques, and security intelligence practices" (Melgaço and Monahan, 2018, p. 11). According to Butler, "the bureaucratic and disciplinary diffusion of sovereign power produces a terrain of discursive power that operates without a subject, but that constitutes the subject in the course of its operation" (1997, p. 34). In this case, designations of rioter or peaceful protester exceed a nominal function and confer validity onto (or withhold it from) real people taking to the streets.

In Portland, law enforcement regularly appears cozy with right wing militants, like members of Patriot Prayer and Proud Boys, using riot control tactics against them less frequently than they do with those on the left, even when members of the right are carrying weapons (Fortin, 2019; Al Jazeera, 2018). These suspicions are not unfounded. In 2019, a public records request revealed that a PPB lieutenant in charge of the riot control team (Rapid Response) was exchanging text messages with Joey Gibson, Patriot Prayer's leader, offering him support, information about left-wing counterdemonstrators' movements, and assurances that a Patriot Prayer member with an active warrant, Tusitala "Tiny" Toese, would not be apprehended at their rally (Shepherd, 2019). A recent data leak also revealed that since 2009, "more than two dozen current and former police officers, sheriff's deputies, corrections officers, and members of the military in Oregon" have joined the Oath Keepers militia (Levinson, 2021b, para 6).

In general, law enforcement engages in its own security culture, partly rooted in institutional protections and partly through ground-level actions like covering up officer names and numbers while on the front lines. Across the country, right-wing groups can take up arms against the state (e.g. the Capitol insurrection, the conspiracy to kidnap the Michigan governor, the Cliven Bundy standoff) or purportedly in service of the country (e.g. Kyle Rittenhouse in Kenosha, WI or the unofficial border patrol group, United Constitutional Patriots). The disparity in treatment between left and right-wing groups is exasperating for left-wing activists. Still, on occasion, institutional means can bring some relief, like a county judge who ruled in a lawsuit that PPB was required to release the names and personnel numbers of Rapid Response officers who had attempted to cover them up (Forrest, 2021). Information revealed by law enforcement through public records and Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests is referred to by Grinberg (2019) as "transparency optics," where the state—whether compelled or not to disclose unsavory information—leverages in various ways liberal democratic assumptions that disclosure leads to accountability (p. 299).

The history of policing shows an eventual shift to the "classic liberal 'night watchman' state," one intended to protect "the honest, industrious citizens" and which has been preoccupied with "the underclass" (Bonner et al, 2018, p. 8). Prior to the late nineteenth century, "American law narrowly defined the crimes of riot, rout, and unlawful assembly by requiring an immediate and serious risk of violence," meaning there was a clear acceptance of illegality as distinct from violence, which has dissipated over the years (El-Haj, 2015, p. 971). Left-wing organizers in particular have experienced an encroaching "securitization of dissent," which by its very nature is a difficult force to resist and does begin to reflect an Orwellian reality (Owen, 2017, p. 692). Studies have demonstrated how "the goal of protecting the status

quo is instilled within each class of police recruits through training and socialization" and becomes further "reinforced through policies and practices of the police structure" (Davenport et al, 2011, p. 155). That is, the same shared and reciprocal feelings that motivate protesters can also pull police bureaus into greater conformity or, inversely, lead to internal division. In regard to the former, a public records release showed that the final slide in a training presentation for PPB protest and crowd control policing encourages and celebrates violence against left-wing protesters. Policing institutionally embodies the drive toward conformity through the constant surveillance of public spaces, which extends into communities through cameras, private security patrols, neighborhood watches, and the like.

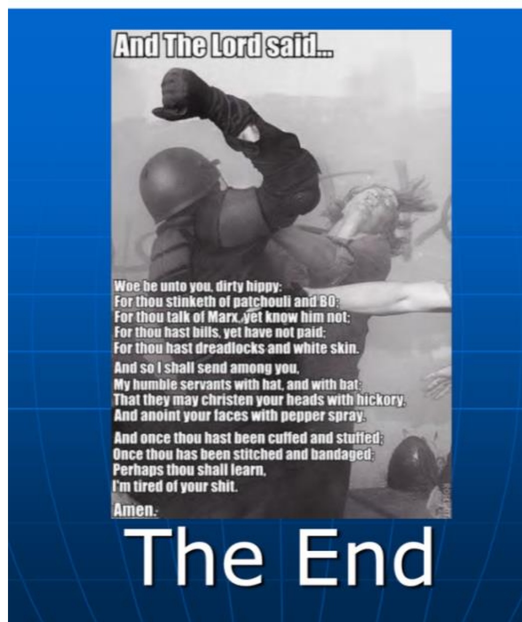

Figure 4: A slide from a law enforcement training presentation created in 2018.

Beyond the left, policing carries on a legacy of racial animus, the extent of which cannot be detailed by this thesis. However, nationally and "across a range of measures, white police officers are more racially conservative than white citizens" (LeCount, 2017, p. 1061). Additionally, "white police officers are more likely to endorse stereotypes of African Americans as violent, more likely to express racial resentment, deny anti-black discrimination, oppose policies aimed at reducing racial inequality, and even more likely to see themselves as victims of racial discrimination" (Ibid., p. 1066). For these reasons, appearing as an identifiably Black person on the streets in protest is demonstrably dangerous in a way disproportionate to other participants.

In the United States, the right to privacy is a highly contentious political and legal concept. The most basic balance to strike is the prevention of government overreach against the citizenry and the prevention of nefarious criminal activity planned and perpetrated through digital media. In general, the Constitution's Fourth Amendment provides the basis for a vague right to privacy. The ACLU contends that anonymity is a constitutional right in the context of political speech, which was affirmed by the Supreme Court in *McIntyre v. Ohio Elections Commission* (1995) (Akdeniz, 2002, p. 229). As it stands, American citizens and activists swim in murky waters when it comes to the covert accumulation of digital data by agents of surveillance. Akdeniz frames the information age not as manifesting new privacy issues but as

making "existing ones—such as confidentiality, authentication, and integrity of the personal information and correspondence circulated—difficult to control and secure" (Ibid., p. 223).

The US already has a long history of domestic surveillance, beginning in the 1920s with the Black Chamber program, which "involved collecting and monitoring telegraphs, with the compliance of companies like Western Union" (Issitt, 2015b, para 4). During World War II, Operation SHAMROCK "monitor[ed] communications with the compliance of Western Union, ITT, and RCA Global," eventually leading to the establishment of the National Security Agency (NSA) (Ibid., para 5). In the 1960s and 1970s, the FBI carried out the now-infamous Counter Intelligence Program (COINTELPRO), entailing "massive surveillance, infiltration, and disruption of domestic political groups" like the Black Panther Party (Hersh, 2015, para 7). Programs like Operation SHAMROCK, COINTELPRO, and MKULTRA (the program infamous for LSD experiments on US citizens) were revealed to the public through efforts of the Senate's 1975 Church Committee. Still, domestic surveillance programs make headway, often with legislative and public approval.

In 1993, the Clipper Chip, formally known as MYK-78, was introduced by the US government. It was, in essence, an "encryption technology certified as unbreakable by the NSA" and voluntarily available to private citizens though the government would retain a copy of the chip's escrow key thus enabling it "to intercept messages sent by the chip's user" (Froomkin, 1995, p. 716). Perhaps unsurprisingly, the project fizzled before the turn of the century while the government's intent to grasp control over private Internet telecommunication has not faded. In 1994, the Communications Assistance for Law Enforcement Act (CALEA) was passed by Congress, allowing and simplifying back-door access to digital phone calls, which was eventually expanded to include internet service provider (ISP) and Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) services (Electronic Frontier Foundation, n.d.). In 1997, a bipartisan effort in the House of Representatives fundamentally altered the landscape of the Internet in the US. In amending the Communications Act of 1934, Section 230 freed platforms from legal liability over what their users publish on their sites. This legislation responded to some of the earliest legal controversies over Internet content, and it continues to have meaningful impacts on the relationship between democracy and online speech.

The month after 9/11, the USA PATRIOT Act enabled new surveillance methods and circumvented red tape for existing ones (Hersh, 2015). Law enforcement can also plant malware on suspects' computers to access their files, browsing histories, and communications in a practice called network investigative techniques (NITs) (Issitt, 2015a). The early 2010s were highly consequential for surveillance of social movements. FOIA requests have revealed

how law enforcement agencies collaborated to keep tabs on Occupy Wall Street demonstrations in cities across the US, infiltrating Facebook networks, using facial recognition technology, deploying on-the-ground informants, and logging the information of activists and associates (Rothschild, 2013). In 2012, drones were legalized for commercial and law enforcement use, altering the landscape of aerial monitoring capabilities (Issitt, 2015a). That same year, the FBI adopted "'Operation Torpedo,' a system designed specifically to infiltrate networks using Tor routing" (Ibid., para 7). In fact, *ProPublica* journalists revealed that the NSA had a "targeting list" that corresponds with "the list of directory servers used by Tor between December 2010 and February 2012," which all users are routed through when they first launch Tor (Angwin and Tigas, 2014, para 2). While the NSA maintains they minimize data collected from citizens, users were nevertheless potentially flagged for further monitoring, and later revelations would continue to cast doubt over the ambit of the NSA's domestic surveillance programs (Ibid.).

In 2013, Edward Snowden, an NSA contractor, rose to prominence for leaking the extent of federal surveillance, both domestically and abroad (Hersh, 2015). For example, his whistleblowing revealed the PRISM program, which grants law enforcement back-end access to user information, and the XKeyscore program, which allows law enforcement to see a user's real-time online activity (Owen, 2017, p. 693). XKeyscore files showed that the NSA could "obtain a person's phone number or email address, view the content of email, and observe full Internet activity including browsing history without a warrant" and that those targeted were people who had simply either used or visited the Tor network and the Linux-based Tails system (Rosenblatt, 2014, para 2). Details remain murky, but the NSA may also have been able to remotely and clandestinely activate iPhone cameras and microphones through DROPOUTJEEP software (Owen, 2017, p. 693). Snowden's revelations did not necessarily generate social unrest, but they have made Internet users more aware of government surveillance capacities (Madden, 2014, cited in ibid.), which the Pew Research Center ties to a "spiral of silence" and political self-censorship on social media sites (Hampton et al, 2014, cited in ibid., p. 697).

Around the same time, law enforcement agencies nationwide began using the International Mobile Subscriber Identity (IMSI) catcher, or "Stingray" tool, which "obtains cell phone data by mimicking a signal coming from a cell phone tower" and is controversial for the indiscriminate dragnet of personal communications it produces (Issitt, 2015a, para 8). In addition, the Next Generation Identification (NGI) system was implemented, creating "profiles for individuals that record the individual's fingerprints, voice prints, scans of the individual's iris, and facial recognition photos," even potentially without being implicated in any illegal

activity (Ibid., para 9). The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) owns an automated biometric identification (IDENT) database that captures the fingerprints and faces of non-citizens who enter the US (Grinberg, 2019, p. 307). A CIA-funded intelligence platform called Geofeedia was utilized by private companies in addition to public entities like the Baltimore Police Department and the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department to aggregate content across social media platforms and were granted special access to data by these social media companies (Ibid.). Geofeedia also generated "individualized 'threat scores' using social media data, often against targets like Greenpeace or labor unions (Zuboff, 2019, p. 388). It was not until the ACLU filed FOIA requests that the public became aware and the companies cut off access to Geofeedia in 2016.

DHS was founded in the aftermath of the 9/11 terrorist attacks, and the agency is responsible for the establishment and proliferation of "fusion centers" whose aim is to provide loci "for the receipt, analysis, gathering and sharing of threat-related information between State, Local, Tribal and Territorial (SLTT), federal and private sector partners" (DHS, 2019, para 3). Fusion centers are now known to have been utilized for monitoring Occupy Wall Street protests across the country (Moynihan, 2014, cited in Owen, 2017, p. 692). In 2020, conservative senators introduced federal legislation which propose making social media platforms liable for users' content (Eliminating Abusive and Rampant Neglect of Interactive Technologies Act of 2020 "EARN IT") and the proposed regulation of companies providing encryption services or products (Lawful Access to Encrypted Data Act, "LAED") (Ahlam, 2021, pp. 836-37). These brief historical vignettes serve to elucidate how being a citizen and an Internet user places individuals in what is essentially a Wild West of privacy, surveillance, and market forces. The Internet's dynamics resemble a horseless carriage in which the cumulative effects of individual users' digital choices reverberate in our quickly-evolving relationships with our communities and our government agencies.

All of this points to evidence of the assertion that a gradual offensive state terror that purports to be defensive "is seeking legitimation by blurring the relations between violence, murder, and the law, faith, commandment, and obedience, the norm and the exception, and even freedom, tracking, and security" (Mbembe, 2019, p. 7). There is a reason, argues El-Haj (2015), that "Black Lives Matter protests often bear little resemblance to our idealized conceptions of public discourse as reasoned disquisitions on difficult choices of public policy" (p. 963). He traces how contemporary judicial decisions compress "the right of assembly into the freedom of speech," which ends up "leaving protesters feeling that First Amendment protections are weak and lower courts confused about to decide what level of public disruption

the Constitution requires official to tolerate" (Ibid., p. 963). The hyper-regulation of public space "render[s] protesters supplicant to the authorities they are challenging" (Ibid., p. 964). Municipalities have been granted permission by the court system to "circumscribe, control, and disperse crowds in the name of public order" (Ibid., p. 966).

The scope of surveillance within (and outside of, in Snowden's case) the legal remit of the state demonstrates the entanglement of digital technologies and law enforcement and how this puts dissidents and grassroots political groups at a significant organizational disadvantage. The extent of legislative jockeying over the boundaries of surveillance implies that "a law requiring a backdoor into an encrypted device is not outside the realm of possibility" (Ahlam, 2021, p. 836). Zuboff warns of surveillance capitalism's "*coup from above*" since it plays a part in the "overthrow of the people's sovereignty" and in the "drift toward democratic deconsolidation" (2019, p. 21, emphasis original). The situation is thus a dire one for both the average citizen and the conscientious objector. Without detailing the extent of domestic surveillance, the gravity of this reality may not otherwise be immediately clear.

The question of privacy has engaged scholars of political philosophy and law. With the rapid proliferation and near-infinite gray areas of the internet and its attendant technologies, this question has become even more urgent. Trillions of images are uploaded to the Internet, billions of phones have picture-taking capabilities, and millions of new surveillance cameras are sold every year (Draper, 2018). A lesson for contemporary protest movements is that in addition to navigating all the many contingencies that arise from mass mobilization, demonstrators must make digital literacy a priority. At its best, technology use in protest movements can have the broader effect of embodying many platforms' original democratic values in the face of the growth of surveillance incentives and loopholes vis-à-vis the free market and the state. Core to this thesis is the claim that "publics today are increasingly constructed around and shaped through the affordances provided by globally operating digital platform that connect us across physical distances" (Helm and Seubert, 2020, p. 187). The COVID-19 pandemic offered a real-time experiment of organizing and discussing a social movement almost entirely online. Becoming privacy literate is no doubt important, but users can only control certain elements in a platform's front-end (Hagendorff, 2018, p. 129). A catchword like "end-to-end encryption," which WhatsApp uses, may appeal to an average user, but it is probably unclear that the app is in fact collecting significant amounts of metadata and information from the smartphone on which it is installed (Helm and Seubert, 2020, p. 191). Almost all user data is far out of reach of the individual from whom it is being collected without

any assurance that platforms are even obeying data protection laws and face little if any accountability for user information that "goes amiss" (Hagendorff, 2018, pp. 129, 131).

It is also well-researched that algorithms and digital surveillance affect users disproportionately along the familiar lines of class, race, and education, making privacy "some form of capital" (Hagendorff, 2018, pp. 132-33; Helm and Seubert, 2020, p. 191). Even when users are well-educated on privacy risks online, studies show that awareness and concern do "not necessarily affect online behavior" (Hagendorff, 2018, p. 128). Studies have revealed how "the more media users think they have control over the disclosure of private information, the less they show privacy concerns even when there is a high probability that they will encounter" their data being misused (Ibid., p. 137).

Both Hagendorff and the Helm & Seubert team criticize the "responsibilization" of online privacy. This is the process in which the responsibility for online protection is shifted onto the user rather than the state (O'Malley, 2009, cited in Hagendorff, 2018, p. 139). Our reality does not have to be that social media platforms and technologies have as much control over us as they currently exert. As Haraway puts it, "We can be responsible for machines [...] we are responsible for boundaries" (1991 [1985], p. 174). As it stands, though, the longstanding value of "privacy" is, according to Helm and Seubert, being "hollowed out" while still being "performatively actualized" as a concept (2020, p. 193). Implicit in efforts to empower Internet users to be more privacy literate is a shunning of the collective and democratic duty to protect the original value so that the entire collective is protected (Hagendorff, 2018, pp. 138-139; Helm and Seubert, 2020, p. 194).

4c. Social Psychology and Conflict Resolution

Some of the most well-known theories in social psychology emerged from Philip Zimbardo's Stanford Prison Experiment in the 1970s, though his research is notoriously controversial. Nonetheless, one of the most enduring concepts is that of deindividuation (Crossey et al, 2021, p. 1). Zimbardo defines it as "a complex, hypothesized process in which a series of antecedent social conditions lead to changes in perception of self and others, and thereby to a lowered threshold of normally restrained behavior" (1969, p. 251). Culturally, Zimbardo points to habits of mask-wearing in rituals and festivals, referring to an experiment conducted with children that found wearing costumes increased aggressive behavior (Fraser, 1974, cited in Zimbardo, 2004, p. 30). He goes on to ruminate on the effects of changing warriors' appearance, wearing uniforms, participating in college rivalries, and acts of vandalism and graffiti (Ibid., pp. 29-34). Feelings of deindividuated affinity can clearly also

give rise to a shadow side, producing effects generally considered undesirable, like the bystander effect (Latané and Darley, 1969, cited in Crossey et al, 2021, p. 3), "destructive obedience" (Wiltermuth, 2012, cited in Crossey et al, 2021, p. 6), and feeling permission to engage in violent or anti-social behavior (e.g. the Vancouver riots of 2011) (Crossey et al, 2021, p. 7). While Zimbardo is concerned with the dark side of deindividuation, it does have prosocial effects and can be a particularly useful tool for social justice causes. It is an important concept to probe in the Portland protest context because of how it manifests in crowds under considerable stress, how it manifests in online spaces, and how it operates with the widespread adoption of black bloc.

Online, "pure anonymity" is difficult to come by, but its approximation helps people feel comfortable engaging in various forums (Graham, 2019, p. 4). Several factors are unique to the online environment and contribute to feelings of deindividuation: *dissociative anonymity*, the compartmentalization of online behavior; physical *invisibility* to others; the normalization of *asynchronous* communication; *solipsistic introjection*, that is, projection onto those one is interacting with; *dissociative imagination*, that the online self can be governed by different rules; and the *minimization of status and authority* relative to the so-called real world (Suler, 2004, cited in Graham, 2019, p. 6). Researchers have found evidence to support the Social Identification and Deindividuation Effects (SIDE) theory, which postulates that online anonymity decreases a user's sense of individuality and increases the perception of shared thoughts and feelings, giving way to a state of deindividuation, and, sometimes, a conformist urge (Ibid., p. 5). Zuboff worries about some of the ways in which social media platforms encourage such conformity, particularly criticizing advocates of platforms' algorithmic influence over users' individuality, even if the social pressures are ostensibly for good things, like voting (2019, p. 436). Perfumi et al (2019) found that the strongest effects on conformity come from "task ambiguity" in which an individual is searching for reliable information about a given task (p. 235). This is why, for example, we often trust reviews of restaurants, hotels, and repair shops, even though they are written by strangers.

In the case of the Portland protests, community members observing or participating in discourse might find themselves in a position of such task ambiguity and unconsciously fall in line with the dominant opinion of whichever platform they happen to be browsing. In particular, the digital space is one ripe for disinhibition, especially because physical identity markers are superseded (though sometimes reinforced) by "one's skill in communicating (including writing skills), persistence, the quality of one's ideas, and technical know-how"

(Suler, 2004, p. 324). The question of trust, in short, becomes all the more confusing for Internet users as they navigate the many platforms available to them.

Being part of a crowd is such a powerful feeling that even just *imagining* walking in synchrony can produce effects of affiliation and deindividuation (Crossey et al, 2021, p. 6). All of this research hearkens back to Gustave Le Bon's seminal work *The Crowd* (1895), which popularized theories of submergence (into the crowd's norms and feelings) and contagion (of a specific idea or action) (cited in Graham, 2019, p. 5). While persuasive, the ideas espoused by Le Bon and Zimbardo tend to obscure occurrences of agency, autonomy, and reason within, in our case, a social movement. Emotional intensity is to be expected, but the aim of this thesis is to shed light on the careful consideration that protesters undertake as they engage in large group dynamics. That is to say, emotion and reason are not mutually exclusive.

Emotional motivations are not necessarily understudied, but they are difficult to gauge, especially as a movement unfolds. Jasper argues that "we can usually categorize protestors' actions, usually post hoc, as strategically effective or mistaken, but rarely as irrational or rational" (1998, p. 398). The emotions that impel protests derive from the perceived breakdown of a moral code (Ibid., p. 401). In this sense, antifascists and anarchists were well-poised to take up and sustain the mantle of Black Lives Matter whereas it might be estimated that many of the marchers of the early days had activist identities tied solely to the visceral reaction to the murders of Black people in 2020. Politically, people may feel paralyzed by the all-or-nothing choice offered by "participation in public life," (Hirschman, 1992, p. 210, cited in ibid., p. 419). That is, "voting offers too little involvement; social movements demand too much" (Ibid.). Those who *do* meet the demands of social movements then become exasperated by inaction on the part of so many of their neighbors.

Randall Collins' seminal work on conflict dynamics provide a useful framework for the challenges protesters confront. His work is particularly focused on how conflict can escalate in real world settings, not necessarily online. For him, echoing Zimbardo, the face of another person creates strong disinhibitions for violence (Collins, 2008, cited in Nassauer, 2016, p. 522). However, I would like to propose that the seepage between on and offline interactions only supplements the feedback loops of conflict he asserts. Focusing on conflict escalation, he claims that "internal solidarity fuels external conflict," and further, that "anger and fear toward the enemy is one of the strongest and most contagious emotions" (Collins, 2012, pp. 1-2). Following Durkheim, Boyns and Leury (2015) note solidarity is "valanced," involving both prescriptions and prohibitions (p. 155). They emphasize therefore that emotional energy can have negative values that may justify antisocial or destructive behavior.

Also in line with Durkheim, Collins argues that emotional energy "has a natural half-life" that needs constant revitalization through continued interaction ritual chains (Ibid., p. 150). As it relates to religious experience, Durkheim asserts that "we must act and repeat the necessary acts every time it is useful to renew their effects," thus bestowing upon the "cult [...] impressions of joy, of inner peace, of serenity, of enthusiasm, which the faithful hold as the experimental proof of their beliefs" (2008 [1912], p. 312). Continuity is therefore important to the survival of a movement. Repertoires and cultural information are passed down and disseminated. These are aided by "schemas" which can be thought of as "'cognitive shortcuts' providing efficient but sometimes inaccurate information" (DiMaggio, 1997, cited in Ratliff and Hall, 2014, p. 272). For Boyns and Leury, conceptualizing emotional energy in terms of positive and negative qualities helps to explain the degree to which conflict can escalate on the basis of intergroup biases (2015, p. 161). This can also manifest *within* a group, the effects of which might be captured in the research on activist burnout.

A related theory demonstrates how ingroup "attachment" can be a productively conflictual feeling as opposed to ingroup "glorification," which embraces conformity and uncritical evaluation (McLamore et al, 2019, p. 1702). Glorification builds a blockade for conflict resolution because it feeds "psychological defensiveness," including the justification of and lack of guilt for "ingroup-inflicted harm," resistance to "pursuing justice against ingroup perpetrators and dehumanizing outgroup victims," and more inclination to support "violent approaches to conflict" (Ibid.). Put simply, the "sacralization" of a moral foundation has been found to be a cause of extremism (Alizadeh et al, 2019, p. 6), so while the lack of clear leaders avoids lionizing *people*, the *principles* of a belief system can assume a similar role.

The categories of attachment and glorification are fluid and are not mutually exclusive, and members may find themselves floating between the two at various stages of conflict. Because attachment is productive, it should be cultivated, McLamore et al argue, noting that doing so "appears to mitigate the effects of glorification" (2019, p. 1713). While it is still currently debated whether leftist actions can be truly categorized as "violent" in the grand scheme of things, these theories lend empiricism to Butler's observation that violence as a tool "presupposes that the tool is guided by a clear intention and remains so guided throughout the course of the action" (2020, p. 13). Highly democratized movement organizing also attenuates the impact of disreputable leaders and comrades, though the pursuit of movement purity may have adverse effects on engagement. All of this means that the vicissitudes of human beings can be modulated with the introduction and widespread adoption of resources that maintain the spirit of a movement's guiding principles.

The killing of George Floyd led to a monumental “moral shock” that rippled through the country and around the world; people will not respond to the shock in the same way, with most choosing to “resign themselves to unpleasant changes, certain that governments and corporations do not bend to citizen protest” while a substantially smaller group will, “through complex emotional processes,” be motivated to join political activist activity (Jasper, 1998, pp. 409-10). In this regard, it is relatively well-studied that “the victim role can be experienced as psychologically rewarding […] as it can entail moral high ground” (Noor et al, 2012, cited in McLamore et al, 2019, p. 1703). One important dimension is directing blame effectively. In this case, “causing a threat differs from the responsibility for fixing it” (Jasper, 1998, p. 410), and in Portland, therefore, blame can be multivalent, with the police as the direct threat and neighbors and community members as responsible for remedying it.

Emotions also engage with material elements, like bodies on the ground, money, supplies, and other resources. One protest phenomenon is the “repression paradox” (Brockett, 1995, 2005, cited in Suh et al, 2017, p. 282), which describes how state repression can actually serve to promote and sustain the movement it aims to subdue by mobilizing popular and material support. Creating an atmosphere of legitimacy and righteousness in the face of unjust state practices holds tremendous symbolic power, as, for example, the longevity of 1960s civil rights movement imagery attests. In particular, “groups seek allies by activating prior network ties and making exchange partners feel it is not only in their interest to join but that it is morally imperative to do so” (Collins, 2012, p. 6). In Portland, nearly everyone—civic leaders, business owners, and non- or borderline-activists—was implored to support the movement. This persuasion is done by “appealing to ideals” and “circulating atrocity stories, showing how evil the other side is” (Ibid.). As time wears on, it is by pushing people with a “positive network connection” into higher degrees of commitment that those people, rather than the core members, become linchpins for a movement’s success (Ibid., p. 8). Mutual aid networks are an effective way to accomplish precisely this. Nonetheless, social justice activism is foreign and uncomfortable, especially in the form of being a body in the street, head-to-head with the police. For that reason, research with people who *do* become highly involved through some kind of existential conversion experience remains somewhat lacking.

Some of the many hypotheses that have emerged from research on politically extremist ideology include: ambiguity intolerance, uncertainty avoidance, fear and aggression, negative affect, need for cognitive closure, need for order and structure, integrative complexity, anxiety, group-based dominance, system identification tendencies, self-esteem, and moral foundations (Alizadeh et al, 2019, p. 3). The diversity of ideas presented here is to illustrate the difficulty

of capturing something so enigmatic as a person's relationship to political beliefs, practices, and groups. These theories can at times contradict one another. For example, the need to avoid uncertainty (Greenberg and Jonas, 2003, cited in ibid., p. 4) conflicts directly with the finding that "extreme attitudes [require] some degree of sophistication and complexity" (Sidanius, 1988, cited in ibid.). In leftist circles, a good deal of intellectualism, rooted in philosophy, history, and lived experience, undergirds activists' behavior. At the same time, highly intellectual activists are nevertheless human and, especially if they are active online, are subject to the same cognitive lacunae—like confirmation, availability, or selection biases (see Spohr, 2017)—that affect everyone regardless of political persuasion.

Beyond the conflict dynamics of one conflict party and their allies, doing battle with such an institutionalized force as the police is especially onerous on a movement's resources. Members of Portland's protest scene have explicitly sought to simply drain law enforcement's emotional (e.g. hoping they will quit their jobs), temporal, and monetary resources. Research demonstrates that "protester use of violence and property damage" draw police to an event as well as when protesters target the government (e.g. the Justice Center or the local ICE facility) regardless of protest size (Davenport et al, 2011, p. 163). This helps explain why law enforcement was largely absent from the daytime marches and from many mutual aid events, and it explains why a core group of protesters continued taking to the streets hundreds of days after the initial mobilizations. The goal is to divert law enforcement from over-policing and "terrorizing our neighbors" (Deleted Account, 2020a). In that sense, they have been somewhat successful with 115 local police officers either retiring or resigning from the bureau between July 2020 and April 2021, with most in their exit interviews citing low morale, lack of support, and general burnout as reasons for leaving (Bernstein, 2021). Now, the bureau has over one hundred vacancies for officer and civilian positions (Ibid.).

One exchange in the *PDX Uprising* Telegram channel is illuminating. A user called kn0me, in replying to another user, says, "If we show up in force, but don't give a reason for arrests, we'd still be draining their budget from overtime. If they shoot gas and munitions it's good for us because it costs money for materials and time to write out reports; […] I don't think people need to be arrested to have an impact." Another user responds, noting that it is "[d]ifficult to drain OSP [Oregon State Police] resources when backed by Feds," (Deleted Account, 2020c) referring to the prolonged federal deputization of local law enforcement. A third user chimes in, aligned with the repression paradox, expressing how police brutality may appeal to a broader audience: "I suppose the idea is that their escalatory presence combined with the image that it is ineffectual at preventing nightly DA [direct actions] could be

advantageous to the movement" (BeastfulProtester, 2020). *Winning* may not really mean anything on a night-by-night basis. In the context of war, if social cohesion leads to innovative tactical maneuvers, catching the enemy off guard, this "can lead to rapid turning points, in which one organization deteriorates rapidly" (Collins, 2010, pp. 9-10). In the war between police and protesters, the outcome seems to be a much slower burn, even if law enforcement has a much greater capacity for squashing grassroots organizers through threats of force and detention.

One of the most debilitating processes that occurs in most social justice circles is burnout. As Collins argues, "because solidarity is the source of idealism, individuals become less willing to sacrifice themselves for the group," and eventually the "high emotional energy" of being part of the group dissipates, either through diminished confidence, interpersonal disputes, or the pull of other responsibilities (Collins, 2012, pp. 15-16). The economic stasis in the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic propelled mobilization when many people had the time to devote to being in the street. In addition, the warming weather meant that it was safer, from a public health perspective, to gather in groups outdoors. Face masks also provide a degree of anonymity in public spaces thereby effecting deindividuation. In normal circumstances, "rioters have to go home, eat, and eventually get back to their economic routines" (Ibid., p. 14). To maintain the early waves of galvanization, a hybrid network emerged called Comrade Collective who maintained an online presence in addition to being stationed at direct actions with signage, helping people find "protest buddies" and affinity groups. In its infancy, the organizer asked the Telegram channel for input, with a variety of responses mostly urging strong security practices both online (e.g., using Signal and Telegram for communication) and offline (e.g., not giving out real names) to minimize the risk of right-wing or police infiltration.

In many racial justice circles, activists frequently "put unreasonable pressure on themselves, not just to respond to individual suffering, but to create massive structural change" (Gorski, 2019, p. 669). Activist culture inadvertently breeds a "ubiquitous discourse of selflessness" (Rodgers, 2010, cited in ibid., p. 672). Racial justice activists of color experience something akin to "battle fatigue" from the accumulative trauma of racial oppression and racist violence (Ibid., p. 670). White racial justice activists may get burned out when they "become mired in guilt and shame involving their whiteness, constantly re-centering their needs for validation from activists of color, draining organizational energy, and disrupting movement progress" (Mallett et al, 2008 and Warren, 2010, cited in ibid., p. 672). Racial justice activists have linked their burnout to the emotional fluctuations of white fellow activists and to "white

liberals," who claim to celebrate diversity but ultimately act to protect their privileged status in society (Ibid., p. 679). Burnout has also been shown to cause "movements to lose institutional expertise, leading to a constant process of wheel-reinventing" (Plyler, 2006, cited in Gorski et al, 2019, p. 366). Beyond activist networks and nonprofits, members of extremist organizations may experience diminished trust in the group if it does not effectively respond to members' individual needs" and may choose to abscond (Windisch et al, 2019, p. 11). Activists may be invigorated or disillusioned "based on the comparison of their schematic memory," meaning the package of passed-down ideology and culture, "and the emotional sense attained through that experience" (Ratliff and Hall, 2014, p. 272). For example, if activists feel their peers are acting hypocritically, their worldview may become dissonant, or if peers are acting nobly, then the activists' worldview remains consonant.

Trust is therefore paramount in affecting decision-making (Tan and Tan, 2000, cited in Windisch et al, 2019, p. 2). Zuboff reports that in the US, high levels of interpersonal trust fell from about fifty percent in the 1970s and 1980s to thirty percent by 2014 (Our World in Data, 2017**,** cited in 2019, p. 384). In the late 1950s, three quarters of Americans registered high trust of the government, which has fallen to eighteen percent by 2017 (Pew Research Center, 2017, cited in ibid.). This is worrisome because "social trust is highly correlated with peaceful collective decision making and civic engagement" and that without it, "the authority of shared values and mutual obligation falls away" (Ibid.). In organizations, trust is directly related to their ability "to form new relationships necessary to accomplish goals and, therefore, is predictive of whether an organization will remain sustainable in the future" (Windisch et al, 2019, p. 2). In interviews with both left- and right-wing former extremists, Windisch et al found "distrust with leadership and organizational abilities, dissatisfaction in group personnel[,] and victimization" as contributing to defection (Ibid., pp. 7-8). In particular, suspicion can cause severe disruptions and undermine collaborative potential of a group (Balch, 2006, cited in ibid., p. 8). This is why security culture runs serious interpersonal risks and requires mechanisms to repair relationships when they are harmed.

What may be poorly understood in many of the localized discourses about the protests is that optics and outcomes do not necessarily take into account the emotional swell of those on the frontlines. Research on violence suggests "that actors' motivations and strategies in fact form weak predictors of whether and when violence will occur" (Nassauer, 2016, p. 516). Simultaneously, an overemphasis on emotionality renders agency and rationality inapposite. Protest "can be pleasurable in itself, independently of the ultimate goal and outcomes," that it in fact "becomes a way of saying something about oneself and one's moral, of finding joy and

pride in them," or, alternatively, in battling the shame or stigma of one's marginalized identity (Jasper, 1998, p. 415). Local Portland activist Crème Brulee described most Justice Center events as being "like a music festival where you've also got cops" (cited in Evans, 2021a). Black Lives Matter attempts to find that equilibrium in Black uplift in the face of Black death. Liberation is thus deeply emotional and moral. Protesters experience intense emotions, which Jasper distinguishes between reciprocal—those circulating *between* protesters, like friendship and solidarity—and shared—those directed by the group *toward* another, like anger (Jasper, 1998, p. 417). I wager, in line with Collins, that if those reciprocal emotions break down into more negative ones like frustration, resentment, or distrust, and shared anger toward outgroup members becomes more blunted and diffuse, then the movement suffers and may wither away.

Street protests are inherently theatrical. Nonviolent direct action, like 1960s sit-ins and marches, "dramatiz[ed] social injustice" for onlookers (Ratliff and Hall, 2014, p. 269). For this reason, protest optics frequently become an object of conflict. The concept of WUNC—worthiness, unity, numbers, and commitment—summarizes performative elements of protest actions, meaning these four things must be demonstrated for and effectively translated to an audience (Tilly, 2004, cited in Caren et al, 2020, p. 446). Some social movement researchers contend that oppositional or radical tactics "may generate activist lifestyles that are consonant with their social justice goals (Crossley, 2003), but they may errantly assume the qualities of their practices, language, tropes, and rituals are optimal vessels to garner broad support in the public at large" (Ratliff and Hall, 2014, p. 270).

Conceptualizing social movements as performative helps frame how symbols operate on participants' and onlookers' emotions, how protagonists and antagonists are constituted, reveal the gravitas of a chosen protest site, and underscore kinetic modes of demonstration, like marching, shouting, lining up against riot police, smashing windows, or setting fires (Ibid.). Occupy Wall Street demonstrations, despite internal conflict, worked to maintain a peaceful and law-abiding protest space, leveraged the repression paradox and helped to construe police behavior as illegitimate and unjust, thus activating the sympathies of the public (Suh et al, 2017, p. 283). The alt-right demonstrators in Charlottesville, VA attempted a similar display of legality to garner legitimacy, but the killing of a counterdemonstrator coupled with the display of views widely considered repugnant made their performance markedly less sympathetic to onlookers.

Anonymity in the form of black bloc is thus a highly dramatic tactic, though its effect on the broader public may provoke negative reactions, in part due to the dehumanizing tendencies toward deindividuated people. For example, fence sitters may want to join a

winning coalition, but they also want to join one that will have them as a member," and in many cases, the quick cue for this determination is race (Davenport et al, 2018, p. 174). In the Portland protest scene, these identity cues are sometimes manipulated for legitimacy-seeking ends or otherwise become a liability, especially online. For example, Telegram user Graham, in a discussion about a protest location choice, states: "1. I don't wholly believe everything anonymous users on the internet tell me 2. Just because it's black led doesn't mean it isn't strategically sound 3. I've been attending for a long time now and just because something is black led isn't a guarantee of substantive DA [direct action]" (Graham, 2020). A now-deleted account responds, "Are you black?" (Deleted Account, 2020d), adding shortly after "Nothing hurts more than people who aren't black critiquing everything you say. It makes you feel unsupported and looked over, and honestly it's very discouraging" (Deleted Account, 2020e).

It is through the "defection of allies [that] opens the way for third-party settlement" (Collins, 2012, p. 1). With nightly protests, the "temporal distance from interpersonal transgressions" necessary for conflict resolution is difficult to attain, and defection or resentment may become more likely (Boyns and Leury, 2015, p. 160). To be clear, Collins' propositions are descriptive, not normative. Third-party settlement, in the case of social justice issues, may not be a desirable outcome. In keeping with Collins' proposition, research by Hasan-Aslih et al (2020) in Israel-Palestine demonstrated that ingroup collective action and joint collective action between conflict groups was only viable "during periods of relative calm" (p. 1341). As conflict intensity subsides, the possibility for bridge building increases even if a resolution does not necessarily come to fruition. Within the group, being a hard-liner or compromiser is an identity that "come[s] into being because of the time-dynamics of conflict itself" (Collins, 2012, p. 17), that is, these ingroup identities are not a given though there may well be attempts to regulate how they come to manifest. Jasper adds that an individual's activist identity may be issue-based, organizational, or tactical (1998, p. 415), which allows for internal diversity to flourish in broad-based coalitions. All told, research has shown that "disorganized violence" usually legitimates state repression, prompts fear and desertion in demonstrators, raises the threshold of participation and inhibits growth, and will have "generally negative effects on nonviolent activism" (Abbs and Gleditsch, 2021, pp. 26-27, 34). All of this means that protest movements are subject to change, and this change is not random, but governed by processes of human social psychology and to the affordances of technological infrastructure. The next section details three intersecting left-wing movements and contextualizes them for the circumstances wrought by 2020.

5. Left-Wing Movements

5a. Antifascism

American iterations of antifascism are rooted in the European tradition, developing in response to the fascist regime of Italy's Benito Mussolini in 1919. Unlike continental Europe, the US did not have an officially fascist government in its history, but it does have resemblances in its violently racist antipathies. To this day, the figure of John Brown—an abolitionist who believed violence against members of the slave trade was a necessary and justified means to the end goal of abolition—resonates among antifascists (Vysotsky, 2020, p. 4). The call and response between white supremacists and their enemies over the centuries takes on a contextual guise. From the Ku Klux Klan, to the German American Bund, to the segregationists and racists of the civil rights movements, all were met with swift and forceful opposition by antifascists.

Modern characteristics of antifascist collectives include decentralization, horizontal leadership, direct action, subcultural behavior, the use of "affinity groups," and consensus-based decision-making models (Ibid., pp. 10-15). While opposition to fascism on its face should be uncontroversial to most people, it is likely the subcultural behavior that dissuades most people from identifying as antifascist and joining in collective action. In addition to perceived deviance and legal risk, I argue that barriers to entry—security culture, in-depth use of social and other digital media, and opacity of existing networks—make antifascism a contentious position in Portland. Online, there are several reasons onlookers might disapprove of antifascists, including the belief that they "violate norms of free speech" (e.g. in no-platforming or disrupting speaker events), that their targets are in fact not viewed "as being worthy of racial condemnation" or doxing (e.g. Jordan Peterson), and that some antifascist groups and events have been violent (Graham, 2019, pp. 17-18).

In the 1960s and 70s, Vysotsky argues that "fascism became diluted in the American popular conception to refer to any form of illiberalism or authoritarianism" (2020, p. 6). This is evidenced in Portland by a sweeping array of causes that result in antifascist demonstrators, from Black Lives Matter, to counterprotests at far-right rallies, demonstrations at the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) building, the Indigenous Day of Rage, and protecting unhoused communities from camp sweeps. By February of 2021, Rose City Antifa released a statement about the ongoing demonstrations, especially in light of right-wing media clinging to the specter of "antifa":

> While many of the people involved may consider themselves antifascists in ideology, we narrowly define antifascism as actions taken to oppose the insurgent right-wing. Under this definition, protests that are not involved in direct opposition to far-right violence and instead combat the state, capitalism, etc. would not be described as antifascist protests. Instead, these would be more accurately descripted as anarchist, anti-capitalist, anti-authoritarian, or another term reflecting the specific ideology of the participants (RCA, cited in Riski, 2021, para 13).

This statement demonstrates the apparent splintering of local left-wing dissidents, further prompting questions among interested observers wondering who is out there protesting night after night, if not the city's official Antifa organization.

When a conglomerate of far-right protesters gathered in Charlottesville, Virginia in August 2017, many left-wing onlookers felt a call to action following the audacious display of white supremacy and the horrific murder of counter-protester Heather Heyer. Grassroots groups across the country, and particularly in Portland, mobilized to foil similar rallies by right-wing organizers. To boot, according to the Southern Poverty Law Center, hate groups have risen in recent years (in 2018, they numbered over a thousand), the country has seen a thirty percent increase in hate crimes from 2015 to 2017, and in 2018, fifty people were killed in hate crimes (Stack, 2019, cited in Graham, 2019, p. 11). In other words, the threat and the urgency to respond are real.

Rose City Antifa was founded in 2007, the first organization in the country to explicitly don the moniker "Antifa." Its members came together in direct opposition to an event called Hammerfest, in which a racist skinhead group called Hammerskin Nation and its local allies, the neo-Nazi group Volksfront, tried to attend their anniversary concert in Portland (Intelligence Report, 2007). Because of Rose City Antifa's coordinated opposition, the event was canceled. Another local antifascist group called Popular Mobilization (PopMob), who rose to prominence in the direct and often absurdist confrontations with right-wing agitators following Trump's election, have also not been in an organizational leadership role throughout the 2020-21 Portland Black Lives Matter protests. Founded in 2018, PopMob emerged "to fill the gap by creating a broad-based community swell" in a "return to the large participatory model that emerged in response to the far-right 'free speech' rallies that occurred in 2017 across the country" (Burley, 2018, para 9). That is to say, its founding aims were narrowly defined. The antifascist practice of horizontalism meant that a new dynamic of direct confrontations with the police, rather than with right-wing protesters, led to somewhat of a vacuum filled by nascent local groups with the goal of meeting the moment just as Rose City Antifa and PopMob had done previously.

Antifascism is unique in its clear purpose as a counterforce to a different social movement; it is, in simple terms, an enacted negation of a substantive political movement (Vysotsky, 2020, p. 2). Antifascists therefore borrow from other social movements and political ideologies to build affirmative visions of community. Simultaneously, there exists an organic "form of (sub)cultural work and the active policing of cultural boundaries" (Ibid., p. 3). For instance, this resistance to fascism, at least in Portland, played out violently in the punk and skinhead subcultures, which were infiltrated by neo-Nazis and white supremacists in the 1980s and 1990s. Eventually, these mobilizations would become semi-institutionalized, particularly in Skinheads Against Racial Prejudice (SHARP) groups and the Anti-Racist Action (ARA) network, the latter of which grew into the Torch Antifa Network in 2013. Codified in formal principles, antifascists make clear that they take an intersectional approach to opposing oppression, disavow the presumed efficacy of the legal system, hold each other accountable, and "also support people outside the network who we believe have similar aims or principles" (Ibid., pp. 9-10).

An oft-heard refrain, especially in mutual aid circles, is "We take care of us" (Evans, 2021a). As detailed by Vysotsky, "antifascists engage in many of the activities of a formal police force—investigation, surveillance, assertion of force to contain violence or potential violence—without the monopoly of power or authority rendered to police in contemporary society" (2020, p. 19). Regarding investigation and surveillance, Portland activist Mac Smiff asserted that antifascist involvement in 2020 Portland protests involved mostly doing research that would aid the movement (Evans, 2021b). Engaging in such tactics, over time, might eventually alienate those who *do* give at least *some* credibility to established institutions, like the criminal justice system or city government, even if those people are nevertheless critical of them. Antifascists' tactics may also alienate people whose definitions or legitimations of violence are at odds. Throwing punches at members of the alt-right, throwing rocks or water bottles at police lines, breaking windows, or tearing down statues—any or all of these may estrange onlookers or less hands-on participants. This internal, informal policing practice is also especially difficult to pull off when the protests are in direct opposition to the police themselves.

5b. Anarchism

In the same way that "antifa" has been deployed as a catch-all term, often pejoratively, anarchism is equally as broad and spectral. Then-US Attorney General William Barr officially designated Portland, Seattle, and New York as "anarchist jurisdictions" in September 2020. Just as antifascism *does* play a crucial role in the web of local left-wing organizing, anarchist philosophy does as well, especially because the two share many of the same principles. Some anarchist beliefs "include participatory democracy, delegation instead of representation, consensual decision-making, and refusal to participate in electoral politics and other institutionalized mechanisms" (Chase-Dunn et al, 2019, p. 374). Anarchists, as a point of principle, resist the institutionalization of social movements, preferring "spontaneity and small scale organization" (Ibid., p. 376).

Anarchism is relegated to the margins both politically and organizationally, colloquially considered misanthropic and destructive, though it is precisely for its nonconformism that it should be studied. Core to anarchism is the idea that "no-one may represent the interests of another" (Goodwin, 1986, cited in Reedy, 2014, p. 644). Discord is therefore not a bad thing; a central practice is exercising "free speech without a goal" and engaging in deliberation before reaching consensus (Ibid., p. 648). As they tend to naturally take shape in groups, disagreement also keeps emergent leaders and leadership structures in check, "enabl[ing] challenges to the various forms of domination and authority that tend to re-emerge without constant vigilance" (Ibid., p. 649). The networked nature of anarchists means that personal trust among comrades is unifying. In doing so, anarchist circles can simultaneously be highly effective bridge-builders (as in the case of Portland's mutual aid networks) and can quickly fragment along murky relational, philosophical or tactical fault lines (Ibid., p. 650). Taking the individual—and that person's beliefs, life experiences, and goals—as the basic unit of measurement inevitably presents difficulties in the formulation of collective action.

For both anarchists and antifascists, violence against persons has become far less common as an explicit tactic since the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, opting instead for property targets (Chase-Dunn et al, 2019, p. 377). Still, anarchy does not separate ends and means, and living out one's principles is expected (Reedy, 2014, p. 646). Praxis is therefore a prerequisite as "solidarity is built through participation in assembly and decision-

making" (Ibid., p. 651). Grounding this solidarity is "subjectivity as a core political issue" which will bring about more livable and just conditions for the collective (Ibid., p. 651).

Anti-capitalist movements of the 21st century have, according to some scholars, sloped toward "a greater emphasis on the primacy of individual autonomy and personal development and away from more collectivist thinking," especially as it relates to anarchism (Curran, 2006, in Reedy, 2014, pp. 645-46). Zuboff notes that a disconnect can emerge. In Occupy Wall Street, for example, the heightened and sacrosanct value of individualism ultimately may have limited the movement's outcomes, making radical subjectivity difficult to sever from its capitalist origins (2019, p. 45).

Anarchists may tend to be even more radically anti-capitalist than others in left-wing activist circles (Chase-Dunn et al, 2019, p. 382), which may indicate some of the shifts in messaging as the protests wore on in Portland toward broader left-wing issues. In many ways, anarchist and antifascist collectives typify the trajectory of Portland's protests. The litany of social issues addressed on the streets illustrates how "such groups tend to be both intensely local (because they rely on various forms of conviviality to maintain affinity bonds) and engaged in global issues, using information and communication technologies to extend networks" beyond local borders (Reedy, 2014, p. 650).

Previous studies of and interviews with anarchists have found that they tend to be younger, much less religious, more self-professedly radical, and more often male, white, and part of the working or lower class than other left-wing activists (Chase-Dunn et al, 2019, pp. 380-82). Vysotsky's book paints antifascists as largely gender equal, queer, white, in their 20s and 30s, and working-class (2020, pp. 51-55). In a recorded confrontation in a restaurant's outdoor dining tent, Mayor Wheeler repeatedly asks the person recording him, "How old are you?" following it up with "You need to grow up" (Bonnano, 2021). This implies that identity markers of the person behind the camera, who the audience cannot see, are noticed by the mayor and thus used to derogate that person's claims and implicitly invalidate their anger. In this way, anonymity may actually grant some power and legitimacy by erasing many such identity markers as they make claims in protest. At the same time, local activists take issue with the painting of protesters as white men, noting that many anarchists are Black, Indigenous, queer, women, and other diverse identities (Evans, 2021c). In fact, some of the most prominent organizers, many of whom are people of color, choose *not* to shield their names, faces, or identities from public view, which can lend credibility and familiarity to the movement.

5c. Black Lives Matter

While this thesis is not an analysis of the Black Lives Matter social justice movement more broadly, what is relevant here is how it embodies twenty-first century considerations. By this I mean that it is largely leaderless, amorphous, transportable, networked, and observable not only in the streets, but across various forms of media. As noted by the scholar Andrea S. Boyles, who was on the ground in Ferguson, Missouri in the immediate aftermath of the shooting of Michael Brown by a police officer, Brown's body in the street marked a shift toward 'a multi-layered cultural departure that transcended previous periodic protests against the police to provide a broad, solid template for mass mobilizing and social change" (2019, p. 15). While Black Lives Matter is similar in many respects to organizing like the Battle of Seattle and Occupy, it is a movement informed by historical anti-Black racism and rich lineage of Black grievance and action centered on Black liberation, Black solidarity and Black-led organizing, though people of all races may take up its banner. It is intuitively and empirically true that those who most strongly identify as Black "report stronger emotions in response to Black victims of police violence" (Reinka and Leach, 2017, p. 773). Furthermore, Black people "have viewed protests against racial bias more favorably than do White Americans" since at least the 1960s (Ibid., p. 774).

The names of previous civil rights leaders were widely known in their lifetimes and their legacies were immortalized upon their murders or deaths. Today, Black Lives Matter shuns civil rights-style leadership opting instead for prominence as a collective, and the names that are memorialized are not leaders, but those killed by law enforcement in American communities. The list is thus long, malleable, contextual, and personal. It also aims to challenge "the reduction of a long history of black activism [...] to a specific, sanitized version of the civil rights movement" which tends to favor "white moral psychology that overstates the efficacy of peaceful acquiescence to loss on the part of the subordinated groups" in achieving justice (Hooker, 2016, p. 450). Black Lives Matter shares an important lineage with earlier civil rights movements for what Bell (1992, p. xvi) observed in protesters who "participated to gain dignity in their lives through struggle and moral expression, not necessarily because they expected equal rights from that struggle" (cited in Jasper, 1998, p. 417). This is an example of how rationality and emotionality coalesce in ways that are not mutually exclusive.

While the movement for racial justice in the US is as old as the country itself, Black Lives Matter is understood to be a distinct and contemporary type of civil rights movement inaugurated by Black activists Alicia Garza, Patrisse Cullors, and Opal Tometi in 2013 after a

slate of killings of Black men and boys at the hands of law enforcement. These include Michael Brown, Eric Garner, Tamir Rice, as well as the acquittal of George Zimmerman in the extrajudicial slaying of Trayvon Martin. These killings were so egregious and the lack of justice so apparent that they ignited nationwide indignation at the continued belittlement of Black life in the US. These national stories added context and power to the lesser-known stories of Black people killed by law enforcement in local communities.

On March 13, 2020, more than two months before George Floyd's murder and hundreds of miles away in Louisville, KY, Breonna Taylor was shot and killed by police officers in a no-knock raid in which her apartment was erroneously identified as a place of interest in connection to her ex-boyfriend's criminal activity. She was asleep and unarmed in bed with her partner. The raid prompted her partner to shoot his personal firearm toward the disruption, and law enforcement responded with more than thirty rounds into the apartment. National uproar over her death and police negligence only began with the launch of the George Floyd protests. Soon, Floyd and Taylor became the recognizable embodiments of the 2020 Black Lives Matter movement, their deaths borne on a wave of preventable and grievous deaths of Black people at the hands of law enforcement.

Figure 5: A mural of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor in Louisville, KY. Photo by Erik Branch for the New York Times.

Less than a month before Breonna Taylor's killing, white men in a pick-up truck in a rural Georgia community shot and killed Ahmaud Arbery, a Black man jogging in the road. The men, who referred to Arbery with a racist slur, were acting on the suspicion that Arbery was responsible for entering a house under construction in the minutes before their confrontation as well for previous break-ins in the community. It later came to light that one of the men who shot Arbery was a former law enforcement officer and that the local prosecutor's office was sympathetic to the shooters, evidenced by neglecting to arrest the shooters for more than two

Figure 6: A demonstrator in Brunswick, GA. Photo by Sean Rayford for Getty Images.

months—not until the video graphically depicting the shooting was uploaded to YouTube—and by allowing a trial with an almost all white jury chosen with “intentional discrimination” (Sayers et al, 2021). To many who watched the video, it depicted a contemporary lynching (Taylor and Vinson, 2020).

Portland, in addition, has its own slate of recognizable names that appear in Black Lives Matter demonstrations. These include Black people killed by law enforcement—Lloyd Stevenson in 1985 (Perry, 2020), Kendra James in 2003 (Bernstein, 2013), and Patrick Kimmons in 2018 (Bernstein, 2018)—and by avowed racists—Mulugeta Seraw in 1988 (AP, 1988) or the two white men who died protecting teenage Black girls on public transportation in 2017 (Campuzano and Ryan, 2017). In 2020, the shock at the cruelty of George Floyd’s killing, gruesomely captured on video in broad daylight, turned attention rapidly and forcefully (and still, repetitively) to the brokenness of the US policing system, specifically the lack of accountability for officers in cases of misconduct. Directly confronting the police takes on different risks and strategic considerations than confronting right-wing attendees at a rally. The parties in conflict do not engage on equal footing, in part because of the technological and surveillant advantages endowed to law enforcement agencies.

Figure 7: Patrick Kimmons' mother, Letha Winston, holds a rally once a week for her son. Photo tweeted by @ThornCoyle on August 10, 2020.

Black activism has always been under threat in the US, but COINTELPRO is a particularly ignoble example of the federal government’s attempts to fleece Black Power and civil rights organizations. In Chamayou’s drone theory, he focuses on the implications of pattern-of-life analysis, which, instead of identifying the personal characteristics of a target, is a “mixed mapping” of “social, spatial, and temporal particulars” wherein “activity becomes an alternative to identity” (2015, p. 83). Black citizens have been disproportionately subjected to predictive policing, or “Total Information Awareness,” a method aided by advanced technologies to accumulate and wield “trends, patterns, sequences, and affinities found in data to make determinations about when and where crimes will occur” (Cyril, 2015, para 10). For instance, in New Orleans, the private data company Palantir collaborated with NOPD to use data accumulation to aid predictive policing practices by identifying gang members as well as their inner and outer social networks (Zuboff, 2019, p. 388). In 2015, protests erupted in Baltimore when Freddie Gray died in the back of a police van due to injuries he sustained from

law enforcement officers. Baltimore, in the years preceding Gray's homicide, was outfitted with more than seven hundred CCTV cameras through the CitiWatch program with the city also requesting access to private cameras' footage (Grinberg, 2019, p. 304).

As people took to the streets in 2015, the FBI flew Cessna planes with "forward-looking infrared (FLIR) Talon multi-sensor camera system[s] with features like a thermal imager, laser illuminator, optical camera, electron magnification, and multi-agent autotracking" over the city (Ibid., p. 297). The FBI has conducted similar surveillance in Ferguson after Michael Brown was killed, while, after Eric Garner was killed, the NYPD used helicopters to survey protests (Ibid., p. 302). In 2016, a company called Persistent Surveillance Systems (PSS) began flying Cessnas over Baltimore, at the behest of a conservative donor, with wide-angle cameras that can capture images of 30 square miles at once and upload them in real-time to hard drives for later analysis (Ibid., p. 305). The Los Angeles Police Department has employed PSS to conduct similar surveillance over the Black neighborhood of Compton (Ibid.). In addition, the FBI has created a "Black Identity Extremist" designation, predicting that "perceptions of unjust treatment of African-Americans and the perceived unchallenged illegitimate actions of law enforcement will inspire premeditated attacks against law enforcement" (FBI, cited in Beydoun and Hansford, 2017, para 2). Such practices highlight the urgency of Chamayou's *A Theory of the Drone* as it relates to domestic programs.

It is worthy of further study to find out whether black bloc Black Lives Matter protests—that is, anonymous bodies mobilizing on behalf of an identity group—create different or more favorable outcomes for Black protest movements. Studies have shown that "when compared with other groups, African American protesters are more likely to draw police presence and that once police are present, they are more likely to make arrests [and] use force and violence" (Davenport et al, 2011, p. 153). When the race of protesters and police are visible, one study has found that "each race [Black and white] places less blame on their own group, tends to hold the 'other' responsible for the greater violation of norms" (Ibid., p. 168). In other words, in different racial configurations of police, protesters, and research participants, racial differences have a significant effect on how blame is perceived, regardless of the protest's content (Ibid.). Grinberg, in analyzing the advanced surveillance practices of Baltimore's Black Lives Matter protests, notes how aerial night-vision surveillance of bodies on the street serves to prevent individuals' capacity "to inhabit public space under the cover of darkness without being made exceedingly visible," fortifying the criminalization of Black communities across the country (2019, p. 304).

In Portland, perhaps protesters' shielding of their identities on the ground even if their body heat could be sensed by cameras in the sky, is a way to counteract from the bottom-up methods of surveillance that disproportionately target members of specific communities. Identity usually "can provide a readily accessible heuristic basis upon which to decide whether a person is 'with you or against you'" (Davenport et al, 2018, p. 173). Black bloc protests are important to understand because they avert these cues while presenting different cognitive/emotional problem in going to great lengths to be anonymous. On one hand, the lack of identity markers might theoretically prompt onlookers "to render independent and costly judgments about what happened, who is right, and what should be done" (Ibid., p. 174) rather than relying on identity markers. On the other hand, in shielding their identities, black bloc protesters may in fact provoke alternative shortcuts that dismiss protesters as criminals, white anarchists, or deviant young people.

5d. 2020-21 Contextualized

Anarchism is frequently conflated with chaos and lawlessness, producing an effective bogeyman for outsiders. While this is somewhat of a misconception, scholars have spent time in recent years reflecting on "the need for chaos," which they characterize as the ambition to tear down current structures, systems, and institutions (Bartusevičius et al, 2021, p. 1392). The pandemic and its longevity, political ruptures, and induced bouts of isolation have exacerbated "feelings of social exclusion and a lack of control over life" (Ibid.). These feelings are then directed "upward," toward elites, power-holders and decision-makers (Ibid.). In the context of protesting, "the tremendous capabilities of new media technologies that empower activist movements are asymmetrically enabling governments to intensify targeting campaigns and calcify their power" (Grinberg, 2019, p. 297). The circumstances of 2020 revealed further negative consequences for individuals' wellbeing, which can have serious knock-on effects when it comes to working cooperatively in a group and against the powers that be. These include social exclusion, social isolation, diminished physical and mental health, having "disease-related fears," economic instability, and increased risk-taking behaviors, with the latter two helping to predict aggression (Bartusevičius et al, 2021, p. 1393).

The motivation to participate in collective action has been explored extensively in social movement research. The pandemic engendered entirely new contingencies when it comes to protest organizing. COVID-19 and its surrounding crises can "undermine people's sense of political efficacy," where low political efficacy has been demonstrated "to predict engagement in nonnormative (violent), rather than normative (peaceful), collective action"

(Ibid., p. 1393). In some cases, the “radical flank effect” can work to sustain a larger movement by directing support to moderate and mainstream arms of the movement, though the evidence for this phenomenon remains inconsistent as its dynamics are highly subjective and volatile (Haines 1984, 2013, cited in Simpson et al, 2018, p. 12). Radical elements in Portland’s case may or may not feed into a readily available apathy or antisociality fed by the stresses of the ongoing pandemic.

Bartusevičius et al’s research shows that “the psychological burden of COVID-19” is overall associated with antisystemic attitudes (2021, p. 1396). Research participants who reported perceived COVID-19 burdens also self-reported participation in political violence, but less so with participation in protests more generally (Ibid., p. 1398). This research is supported anecdotally by Portland community organizer Gregory McKelvey, who notes that the “goal” of the ongoing protests “has explicitly been revenge (Evans, 2021c). He continues,

> We must put ourselves in the mind of someone who probably rightfully believes the world is ending, or at a minimum is at the brink of being unrecognizable. Some people are going to act like it. It’s amazing to me that liberal Democrats really do believe we’re on the brink of something like Armageddon and then are shocked when some people behave like it (Ibid.).

Even if the pandemic fades away and national politics regain a sense of normalcy, if law enforcement continues to kill unarmed Black people—and these killings continue to be caught on video—then how, a Portland activist wonders, could the ebb and flow of the protest cycle ever stop? (Evans, 2021d). For Black Americans, no one tactic provides the necessary respite for their disproportionate killings at the hands of law enforcement. The Black community is also not a homogenous one, and there is a rich spectrum of belief and opinion about law enforcement, Black Lives Matter, and protest tactics. At the same time, mutual aid practices offer a hopeful vision for unification of a community out of endless difference, the reified value of individualism, and a creeping ennui.

6. Hong Kong in Comparison

While American antifascism might find its historical roots in early twentieth-century authoritarian resistance in Europe and anti-racist organizing in the US, its contemporary strategic roots are most directly drawn from the protests in Hong Kong, especially due to the severity of the power imbalance between the state and the citizenry. The complexities of the Chinese mainland's relationship with Hong Kong are too sweeping to recount in full here. To summarize, Hong Kong, with a population of more than seven million, is a special administrative region (SAR) on China's southern coast. Originally a British colony, its administration was transferred to the Chinese government in 1997, but it would maintain a special sovereignty over its political and economic processes. Its constitution is referred to as the Basic Law of Hong Kong and is legally enshrined for a period of fifty years, until 2047, with nothing yet in place for the years to follow.

In recent years, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), the mainland's government, has taken steps toward intervening in the democratic character of Hong Kong. One of the tenets of the Basic Law is that universal suffrage is honored in the election of representatives to Hong Kong's election committee, who then choose the Chief Executive, the SAR's principal governor. In a 2014 decision that would affect the 2016 and 2017 Hong Kong elections, universal suffrage was to be narrowed to include only eligible candidates who profess a degree of deference to China, thus bypassing the possibility of a democratic dissenter's election. In response to this proposal, primarily young people organized enormous protests in opposition. They staged sit-in occupations in major intersections, landmarks, bridges, and thoroughfares by the tens of thousands. These occupations, in part, became known as the Umbrella Movement for the protesters' use of umbrellas to shield themselves from police tear gas and projectiles.

In 2019, in response to the murder of a Hong Kong citizen by another Hong Kong citizen in Taiwan, the Hong Kong legislature proposed a bill that would create an extradition agreement between not only Hong Kong and Taiwan but would also include mainland China (and another SAR, Macau). The encroachment of the Chinese government on the Hong Kong legal system generated alarm among pro-democracy advocates. Serving as a rough analogue to the effect of the US Occupy movement in the early 2010s, activists in Hong Kong had grown disillusioned with the Umbrella Movement's protest tactics and were even more galvanized by the surge of Chinese authoritarianism since the end of that movement. This is especially so because of the violence, suppression, imprisonment, and intimidation of Umbrella Movement activists in the protests' aftermath, even while these crackdowns fueled global support for the

cause. What emerged in 2019 has been referred to as an "adhocracy" in the spirit of participants' autonomy and in celebration of the diversity of skills and supplies they offer (Wong, 2020, p. 5). Hong Kongers, at times by the millions and often by the hundreds of thousands, clashed with police in the streets with the aim of the legislature's withdrawal of the extradition bill from consideration, but law enforcement tactics were brutal, serving to escalate the confrontations.

As protests continued, with intense violence and chaotic scenes, pro-democracy organizations and activists were achieving electoral and popular success. In spring of 2020, a national security law was crafted through means designed to circumvent democratic legislative processes, effectively criminalizing dissent against China. Under the new law, democracy activists were jailed, organizations disbanded, and politicians disqualified from holding office among other anti-democratic measures, all of which drew international rebuke yet also successfully subdued mass protests in addition to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Hong Kongers have embodied contemporary mass mobilization, aided in part by its status as one of the most digitally connected places on earth (Ibid., p. 1). Following the lineage of twenty-first century protest movements, like the Arab Spring, the Gezi Park occupation, and Occupy, technology and social media played pivotal roles in protest outcomes. Its juxtaposition with what has been dubbed the "Great Firewall of China," that is, the CCP's practices of Internet censorship across the border (Griffiths, 2019), makes for a highly combustible online ecosystem. In Hong Kong, certain charges carry a much heftier criminal weight that they might in the US. For example, the vaguely defined crimes of "subversion" and "rioting" in Hong Kong can result in a life sentence or ten years imprisonment, respectively. Where the Chinese government could not censor Internet disseminations, it could effectively stifle activists and dissidents through the political and legal systems. Despite these grave threats, "protesters have taken to technology to publicize, lead the conversation, and legitimize the movement domestically and internationally" (Wong, 2020, p. 4). Especially considering the interplay (and fear of) technology and state suppression, the experiences emerging from Hong Kong and the capture of global support are highly instructive for Portland activists.

Hong Kong's surveillance machinery may foreshadow the ways in which technologies designed as everyday conveniences can play a dual role as instruments of the state. There, citizens must use radio-frequency identification (RFID) cards with high-resolution photographs, the city is saturated with both public and private closed-circuit television (CCTV) cameras, and citizens are subject to extensive data acquisition through cell phone, Internet, and transit providers (Ibid., p. 3). Protesters have toppled "smart" lampposts installed by the

government because their uses have not been publicly disclosed (Ibid., p. 6). To combat the weaponization of these purportedly innocuous or instrumental technologies, protesters themselves transform into a "smart mob" engaged in "networked protests," by which citizens need not join any specific organization but can contribute their knowledge, supplies, skills, and/or bodies to the shared cause (Ting, 2020, p. 362). This is how more than a quarter of the population could engage in a single protest (BBC, 2019).

The original demand was that the government withdraw the extradition bill, which it did in September 2019. Well before then, however, the widespread police brutality experienced by demonstrators led to the addition of further demands that would more comprehensively protect democratic processes for the populace, like "an independent inquiry into police actions, exoneration of arrested participants, […] a rekindled call for free elections" proceeding from the Umbrella Movement's goals, in addition to the call for the resignation of Chief Executive Carrie Law and the dismissal of the legislature (Kow et al, 2020, p. 3). Framing the protests as either successful or failed is an overall fallacious dichotomy due to the severity of the power imbalance between the citizens and the colossus of the CCP, the Hong Kong protests resulted in important achievements.

While making ambitious demands, the limitations of the Umbrella Movement's strategies were largely removed. That is, in pro-democracy protests of 2014, there were prominent leaders of organizations, public infighting, and occupations hosted at physical locations. Taken together, leaders became targets for law enforcement, organizations dissolved, and bodies at occupation sites eventually dwindled, and they were cleared by the police. Thus, the movement appeared to unambiguously fail. In 2019 and 2020, protesters instead rallied behind the entreaty to "be water" and to "blossom everywhere" (Ting, 2020, p. 363). Access to online organizing platforms and the popularity of the movement creates a game of whack-a-mole for law enforcement, giving citizens an advantage vis-à-vis adaptability less available to institutional forces. It also uses ambiguity to its advantage by generating an image of popularity independent of the volume of bodies occupying a public place.

The Hong Kong protests and American anti-fascist, anarchist, or otherwise radical leftist movements share some significant similarities. For one, the widespread adoption of the Telegram app signals an emerging consciousness and reflexivity around the real possibility of law enforcement's interception of dissidents' communications. The app is a useful democratic product of the digital free market. While the Hong Kong government's broad definition of rioting and subversion is severe, protesters in the US also face vague, subjective premises for crimes like "disorderly conduct" (El-Haj, 2015, p. 976) or the Black Identity Extremist

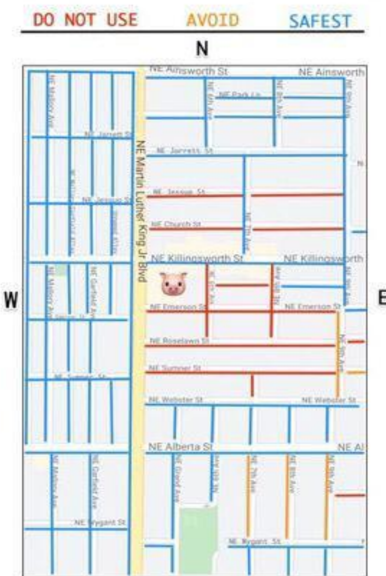

Figure 8: A map disseminated to protesters showing safe streets to avoid police kettling at a direct action. Posted by Deleted Account in the PDX Uprising Telegram channel on October 19, 2020.

designation. Both movements adapted based on lessons learned from prior protests, like the Umbrella Movement and Occupy, respectively. Extending from Collins' analysis, protesters in Hong Kong and Portland attempted to circumvent the slipping of solidarity as it stems from protest attendance (2012, pp. 11-12). The commitment to horizontalism and leaderless organizing, despite the challenges they pose, is worthy of more sustained study. Additionally, a do-it-yourself (DIY) ethic permeates both movements, enabled by the rapid sharing of information, like detailed maps of specific neighborhoods showing safe and unsafe exit routes after demonstrations as shown in the adjoining figure.

Building upon settled practices of autonomously organized direct actions, protesters are extending these into grassroots group norms about data safety. This ethic is also visible in mutual aid organizing, crowdfunding, and the dissemination of alternative resources to law enforcement in crisis situations. Above all, the call to "be water" and "blossom everywhere" took root among Portland protesters for what they perceived to be a successful tactic as numbers dwindled on the streets and legal stakes were raised.

Figure 9: A digital flyer telling protesters to "be water." Posted in the PDX Uprising Telegram channel by SikhFarmer on November 14, 2020.

At the same time, there are a number of marked divergences from the Hong Kong protests. Broadly, "Hong Kong lacks a strong tradition of radical protests" (Ting, 2020, p. 363) where Portland has a much longer history of going head-to-head with the right-wing and neo-Nazis. Regardless, Hong Kong met the moment quickly, innovating with available technologies under a decreasingly democratic regime. For one, Hong Kong protesters shifted from one demand to five, adapting to governmental actions. In Portland, no clear, consensus-based, or concrete demands have been made at a group level, other than the early call to defund the PPB, attempts to recall Mayor Ted Wheeler, and the more general calls for police abolition. Arguably one of the most consequential differences

with regard to conflict resolution is the Portland protest scene's lack of a clear or public decision-making process. While Hong Kong protesters engaged in autonomously organized direct actions, an online forum called LIHKG harnessed some of the chaos of collective action by using upvoting and downvoting, like Reddit. This "open-ended, consensus-based operating system facilitated the crowd-sourcing of leadership, linked to robust feedback loops" (Ting, 2020, p. 364). Certainly, this method compromises privacy for transparency, but it also confers an important sense of ownership to participants and provides a space for bounded discussions and internal dissent.

Furthermore, Portland protesters eventually shifted away from the encouragement or tacit toleration of streamers' presence at direct actions, eventually growing suspicious of either commodification of protest drama for streamers' own financial gain or the unintentional capture of illegal behaviors or individuals' faces. In Hong Kong, streamers were a valuable asset, and protesters even held counter-press conferences in an effort to push back against media coverage sympathetic to the Chinese state. In general, the stakes grew continuously higher in Hong Kong because of the increasingly severe crackdown on protesters, with thousands of arrests, de facto curfews imposed by the transit authority, an anti-mask law, and a proposed "fake news" bill (Ting, 2020, p. 366; Wong, 2020, p. 6). Portland's protest movement experienced some similar setbacks—especially the introduction of federal officers, the federal deputization of local law enforcement, and the continual use of tear gas—but in general, the world was not as horrified by the antidemocratic nature of crowd control of American protests as they were in Hong Kong.

In Hong Kong, there are two distinct protest philosophies: "the escalation philosophy, known as yung mou (勇武), and the peaceful protest philosophy, known as wo lei fei (和理非)" (Kow et al, 2020, p. 3). Leveraging this diversity of tactics emerging from "experiential learning and practical adaptation from the Umbrella Movement," new solidarities were forged and enabled by the autonomous dynamics of the protests (Ting, 2020, p. 364). Protesters self-selected into useful roles, with some opting to be on the frontlines, throwing "bricks and Molotov cocktails at riot police and vandal[izing] government property" and transit stations and even exacting vigilante justice on civilians who oppose the cause, while the peaceful protesters aided their efforts with "barricades, mov[ing] bricks, and extinguish[ing] tear gas" (Ibid., p. 366). Still others gave out apartment complex passcodes freely so that protesters could escape into relative safety from the police (Kow et al, 2020, p. 7).

The repression paradox and the radical flank effects in Hong Kong appear, at least on the surface, to be supported by many onlookers in democratic locales around the world. However, even so, an example from an apolitical and broad subreddit called r/coolguides, a space for sharing interesting image-based reference guides with over two million members, shows the precarity of protesters' tactics when they enter the global stage. Titled "Protest Roles," (u/[deleted], 2020) it depicts peaceful protesters, frontliners, medics, and copwatchers in addition to light mages, fire mages, and range soldiers who act antagonistically against police (or defensively, depending on one's perspective). The top-rated comment (u/WACS_On) states, "Fire bombs are not an element of protest. They are an element of riot." Another commenter ([deleted]) asks, "But aren't they rioting?" A heavily downvoted responder (u/14Turds) asserts, "They are uprising against their oppressors," while an upvoted response (u/Euphoric_Kangaroo) argues that "marching to protest the guy [presumably George Floyd] getting killed is one thing. [R]ioting/pillaging/burning/looting is just as bad." In this case, up- and down-voting comments serves as a gauge for public opinion, even if more diversity of opinion is shielded from the forum, especially when people choose not to engage by commenting or voting on posts on the platform.

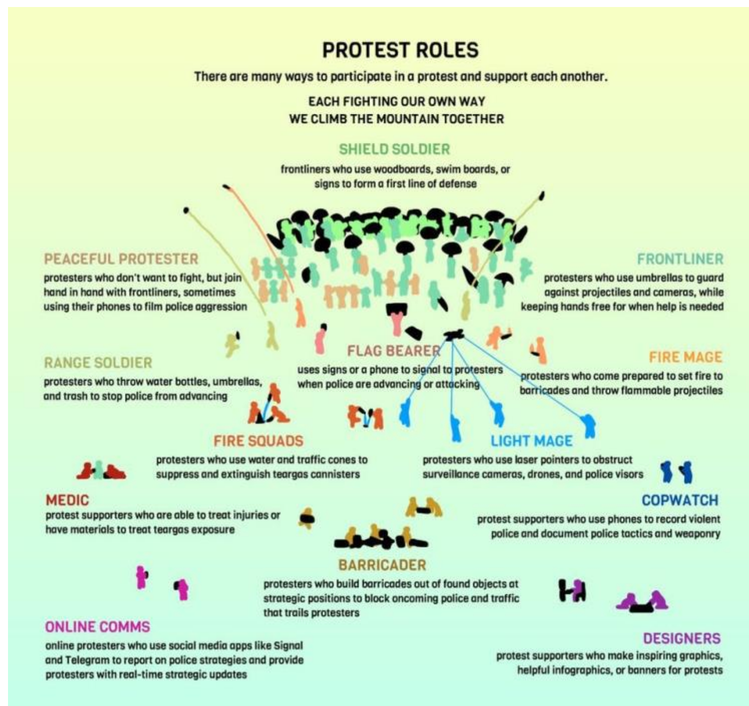

Figure 10: Reddit post in r/coolguides depicting protest roles by u/deleted on May 30, 2020, only a few days after the murder of George Floyd.

In Hong Kong, people could participate fully online by joining Telegram channels, including localized groups to report up-to-date neighborhood information, profession-based groups to organize events, publicity groups, scouting groups to track police, fact-checking groups, mapping groups, and civil rights/legal aid groups (Kow et al, 2020, p. 6). These groups also were governed by an online ethic prioritizing efficiency and clarity. For example, the "Dog Scout" channel for tracking police asks the following of its members: "Submit only FIRST-HAND FIRST-HAND information! Information must be accompanied by a photo, and one sentence to describe the incident. Do not say 'hi.' Report to one and only one admin. Camera

must activate time stamp; blur faces. Use Secret Chat as far as possible" (Ibid., p. 8). In Portland, the *PDX Uprising* Telegram channel had a number of "norms" periodically posted and "pinned" to the top of the chat, ranging from protocol in choosing a username; a prohibition on doxing, inciting illegal actions, advertisements, and alt-right content; requests for posting entire URLs with descriptions, posting only OTG [on the ground] information during active protests, responding to disagreement in a "restorative" way, and asking for consent in the main chat before sending private messages to other members (Aye Aye, 2021).

The similarities between Hong Kong and Portland are remarkable, though the relative scale of the movements differ significantly. Protesters drew explicitly from Hong Kongers' protest tactics, as shown in the adjacent Tweet, with the entire thread including tips for barricade deployment, the use of coordinated hand signals to communicate supply needs, de-arrest techniques, eye flushing, dressing in black bloc, and creating non-violent projectiles like water balloons and glitter-filled super-soakers.

Figure 11: Twitter thread from Chad Loder detailing Hong Kong protest techniques.

In the podcast *Uprising: A Guide From Portland*, people involved in the protests through 2020 note how certain techniques borrowed from Hong Kong were effective when widely adopted, used in coordination, and used consistently, though carrying equipment like heavy shields could actually thwart protesters from escaping quickly from the police (Evans, 2021c). The efficacy of any of these actions is part of the ongoing debate. My argument is not that unconditional acceptance of opposing viewpoints and opposing tactics and philosophies is a prerequisite for a successful protest movement. However, in Portland, there appeared to be a gradual narrowing of accepted activist strategies in a political and legal ecosystem that in fact allows for a wide variety of dissident action.

Finally, the situation in Hong Kong presented grave challenges to major transnational technology corporations. Twitter had to rustle thousands of CCP-backed accounts, Facebook removed several pages and profiles, and YouTube disabled hundreds of channels all attempting to delegitimize protesters on each platform (Wong, 2020, p. 5). Telegram adapted to quickly adopted anti-democratic policies by changing its policies in kind (Ibid.). The Apple app store removed, reinstated, and removed again the HKmap.live mapping app created to convey information to protesters (Ibid., p. 6). Social and digital media platforms are increasingly

politicized and decisive spaces in meting out appreciable ramifications to movements through their respective affordances.

7. Events in Portland

Worldwide, demonstrations increased by seven percent in 2020 from the year prior (Kishi et al, 2021, cited in Bartusevičius et al, 2021, p. 1391). Still, it was perplexing to some why Portland would emerge as a vanguard for this iteration of the Black Lives Matter movement. It is not a city with a large Black population nor did it have police killings of Black people that garnered equivalent national attention (e.g., Eric Garner in New York, Freddie Gray in Baltimore, or Ezell Ford in Los Angeles), yet it carried on protests for more than one hundred consecutive days.

In Portland, marches in solidarity with other cities first numbered in the thousands, exceeding ten thousand demonstrators in early June and eventually tapering off to include hundreds or dozens. Marches and rallies drew a diverse array of supporters, from families with small children, senior citizens, local politicians, former Black Panthers and civil rights activists, Portland Trail Blazers basketball star Damian Lillard, and avowed antifascists. The organizer of many of the most widely attended marches was local non-profit Rose City Justice (RCJ), which was founded in the immediate aftermath of George Floyd's murder. Nightly through most of June, the group led marches thousands-strong from Revolution Hall in inner southeast Portland to various destinations. The marches would block traffic, but they were peaceful, drew little to no law enforcement response, garnered the support of bystanders, and would disband not long after nightfall. The leaders of RCJ were young Black community members, whose identities were known to march attendees. Their organizing was disseminated publicly across social media platforms, and the marches were popular, in part, because they were accessible and palatable to many in the Portland community.

Figure 12: Damian Lillard at the eighth consecutive day of protest in Portland on June 4, 2020. Photo by Brooke Herbert for the Oregonian/OregonLive.

RCJ's marches were frequently compared to the nightly demonstrations outside of the Multnomah County Justice Center in downtown Portland, just two or three blocks west of the Willamette River. These downtown protests were more decentralized in leadership and more confrontational with police, partly because they were stand-offs rather

than marches. Therefore, the risk of arrest or injury was appreciably higher at these demonstrations. In addition, the incentive to dress in black bloc or to otherwise achieve anonymity was greater in order to avoid being implicated in criminal activity or identified as an anti-police activist either by the police or by opponents on the Internet. Whether or not RCJ explicitly supported or rejected the events at the Justice Center was an ongoing dispute in the Portland protest scene with criticism emerging of RCJ from local activists about the lack of support for a diversity of tactics.

In the early summer, the superseding message of the gatherings was to affirm that Black lives matter, and their goals were relatively narrow and urgent. Most prominently was the call to defund the Portland Police Bureau, with many calling for reform and others calling for abolition. The target was to defund the bureau by $50 million, and on June 17, the city council cut $15 million from the Portland police budget, which included the dismantling of the Gun Violence Reduction Team, which had disproportionately targeted Black Portlanders (Mimica, 2020). Following this, no clear demands or goals were made other than to vote for progressive candidates in the November elections.

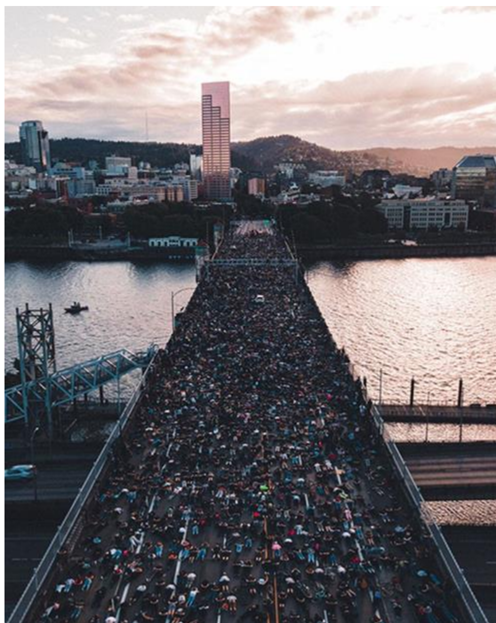

Figure 13: A nine-minute die-in on the Burnside Bridge on June 2, 2020. Photo by Andrew Wallner.

Eventually, RCJ's finances and leadership were increasingly challenged in online spaces. It was not necessarily transparent how donations were being used, the group was questioned for its ambivalent relationship with the Justice Center demonstrations, and they were sharply criticized for their willingness to sit down with Portland Police Bureau (PPB) representatives. Much of the criticism centered on one of the organization's leaders, Darren Golden, who had years-old tweets unearthed that expressed "misogynistic and anti-immigrant sentiments" and whose past work as a military police officer disqualified him from BLM leadership in the eyes of some activists (Ramakrishnan, 2020a).

In late June, a group of young Black activists—two of which were wearing camouflage balaclavas—held an Instagram Live session (@jujulikethecandy, 2020) with Darren Golden and Chrissy Wood from RCJ to ask difficult and crowd-sourced questions about Golden's past and about the organization's willingness to gather outside the Justice Center. They push for RCJ to adopt a more robust security culture, including asking questions about the plans to make

RCJ marches a guaranteed safe space for vulnerable people, about the use of protesters' faces in and the scrubbing of metadata from images and videos, the use of donations, about their website's requests for personal information from potential supporters, about their affiliation with a protest attendee who is accused of rape, and about their knowledge of the history of policing. The video is a confrontational and improvised mode of conflict resolution, and in some moments it is uncomfortable, unclear, and blunt, but it is an innovative way of creating an expectation of transparency and grassroots mechanisms of accountability.

As criticism mounted in early July, the group first posted to Instagram that they would take a healing retreat to address activists' concerns, later announcing the end to their nightly demonstrations with some organizers leaving the group and current leaders sending cease and desist letters to former members. On July 14, 2020, the group led a march from Revolution Hall after a weeks-long organizing hiatus. The crowd was noticeably smaller, drawing 200 to 250 participants as well as attracting left-wing counter-protesters who made signs calling on RCJ to face the criticism leveled against them (Ramakrishnan, 2020b).

The vacuum left by RCJ's disassembly was felt widely among Portland community members, many of whom presumably wanted to demonstrate under the Black Lives Matter banner but were unwilling or unable to participate in Justice Center demonstrations. A simplified dichotomy might have emerged that the Justice Center crowd were primarily anti-police and anarchic, while RCJ rallies were more focused on Black Lives Matter. Though RCJ's dissolution meant that antifascist and anarchist organizing principles of autonomous direct action could become the principal method for ongoing protest and resistance to the Portland police, it also meant that Justice Center demonstrators could be primarily cast as troubled young white men, especially if participants went to great lengths to shield their identities.

Shortly after the RCJ controversy, President Trump deployed federal law enforcement to defend the courthouse and quell the protests. What many felt was grave federal overreach and a threat to the democratic right to assemble, thousands once again took to the streets, this time stationed in direct opposition to the federal and local law enforcement agents at the Justice Center. Alarmingly, videos surfaced of unmarked vehicles and anonymized agents in fatigues detaining protest participants off the street (Yang and Wellford, 2020). These nights, which were tense and violent with law enforcement's ready use of tear gas (which had been banned by a federal judge in previous weeks) and less-lethal munitions, also saw the emergence of the Wall of Moms and the Wall of Veterans, who offered a new optic to the mainstream image of "antifa." One video in particular, depicting a Navy veteran unflinchingly beaten and tear gassed

by law enforcement (KGW News, 2020), drew widespread condemnation, including from members of Congress, state officials, and local leaders.

Along with all other protest participants, the Wall of Moms, distinguished by wearing yellow, were severely tear gassed, drawing national attention. The image of mothers on the frontline is emotively potent because it toys with the dominant image of "moms as gentle, caring, and domestic" (Kurtzleben, 2020, para 11), and at times, the evaluation that mothers' lives are more valuable than other women's lives was criticized. The Portland Wall of Moms group ultimately imploded after significant leadership disputes and allegations of anti-Black racism. The founder identifies as Mexican American and quickly started receiving criticism that, under her guidance, Black lives were de-centered, Black leaders ignored, Black bodies made vulnerable due to tactical errors, and shady financial dealings that would have ostensibly helped her profit from the group (Blaec, 2020). In its place sprung Mxm Bloc—"a Black womxn led group with a mission to mobilize all mxms, caregivers, and nurturers" (Mxm Bloc PDX, 2020) in support of the local Black community—which supplements the work already being done by mutual aid groups.

Figure 14: Wall of Moms. Photo by Noah Berger for AP.

Figure 15: Wall of Vets. Photo/video by Octavio Jones for the New York Times.

After more than a week of confrontation, the federal government signed an agreement with Oregon's governor to hand over law enforcement duties to the Oregon State Police. Through all of this, and despite positive national publicity during the deployment of federal troops in July, many in Portland were and remain critical of Mayor Ted Wheeler. At the beginning of the national unrest, Wheeler imposed a curfew, which he lifted after a few days, and he requested help from the National Guard, which was refused by the governor. The curfew, many felt, gave police license to use harmful methods of crowd control against demonstrators. The only time he attended the protests was during the deployment of federal

law enforcement, and he was booed by activists and eventually tear gassed in police attempts to disperse the crowd. In multiple statements, he explicitly threw his support behind nonviolent demonstrators while condemning property destruction and anti-police violence. He did so on the basis of demonstrations' optics fueling conservative backlash against progressivism and that they were harming local business owners.

For many, he was lampooned as one of the biggest obstacles to the movement, becoming an object of derisive chants, graffiti, comedy roasts, and social media posts. Regardless of his unpopularity, he defeated his challenger in the November mayoral race, Sarah Iannarone, who describes herself as an "everyday antifascist" and forcefully opposes many of his policies. After his reelection, he took an even more explicit stance against continued demonstrations, adopting a zero-tolerance policy, promising harsher penalties for vandalism, and supporting controversial police kettling tactics. His condominium lobby has been occupied by activists, angry citizens have confronted him on film when they have spotted him out to eat in town, and he has fielded angry comments during town halls, to say nothing of the flood of social media posts expressing disdain at his actions (or lack thereof). Among moderates and conservatives, too, Wheeler receives relentless criticism for not acting forcefully enough against continued antifascist direct actions in the city (Beyer, 2020). In this way, he is "politically squeezed,"—partly due to his leadership style and partly due to the city's unique commissioner system of city government—and somewhat of a power vacuum has emerged municipally, leaving protesters and police locked into their regular confrontations with very few public leaders considered trustworthy or effective (Mapes, 2020).

The most supportive city commissioner is Jo Ann Hardesty, a Black woman, a longtime civil rights activist, and Navy veteran. While she is on occasion criticized for her policy positions, she is overall popular among leftists. She is and has been the target of overtly racist harassment. Most egregiously, a white woman accused Hardesty of committing a hit-and-run despite Hardesty not having a working vehicle at the time. Shortly after, the newly instated Portland Police Association (PPA) president, Brian Hunzeker, resigned for "a serious, isolated mistake" related to the allegation, and the results of the investigation revealed that Hunzeker did in fact leak the allegation explicitly out of revenge for Hardesty's policy proposals (Bernstein, 2021). This is all to illustrate the extreme, absolute distrust in the Portland police as an institution among leftist activists. Fear of illegal and unethical reprisal at the hands of law enforcement is a real fear rooted in real experiences of their comrades and allies.

As noted, Portland has a robust history as a juncture between anti-racists and white supremacists. Since Donald Trump's first presidential campaign and election, downtown

Portland has been the site of skirmishes between right-wing groups, like the Proud Boys and Patriot Prayer, and anti-fascists. At the end of August 2020, a Facebook event dubbed "Trump 2020 Cruise Rally" drew more than a thousand right-wing protesters into the city from the suburb of Clackamas in a caravan of flag-clad vehicles. In a tense and acrimonious atmosphere, counter-protesters with weapons and mace showed up en masse and were met with paintball gun-toting Three Percenters, people wielding bear spray and mace, and encouragement by event organizers that right-wing participants conceal their firearms (Swindler and Campuzano, 2020). This was in fact the third straight day in which left- and right-wing demonstrators clashed in downtown Portland, and the usual criticism of law enforcement's lack of intervention with the caravan or street brawling was levied in real time over social media channels.

As the evening wore on, a white left-wing demonstrator shot and killed a member of Patriot Prayer, Aaron "Jay" Danielson, who sprayed a cloud of mace before the suspect pulled the trigger (Vice News, 2020). While the thousands of Black Lives Matter demonstrations were overwhelmingly peaceful, "at least twenty-five Americans died during the unrest" (Beckett, 2020, cited in Bartusevičius et al, 2021, p. 1391). As the suspect, Michael Reinoehl, was named and a warrant put out for his arrest, left-wing activists quickly distanced themselves from him, even though he called himself "100% ANTIFA all the way" (Hill et al, 2020), with the majority eschewing endorsements of this kind of martyrdom (Sense Nom, 2020) and identifying him as already a problematic presence at previous demonstrations (Brownie, 2020).

On September 3, 2020, five days after Danielson's death, federally deputized law enforcement found Reinoehl in Lacey, Washington, two hours north of Portland. At the time, details of their confrontation were murky. All that was clear was Reinoehl was shot and killed by the fugitive task force agents, who fired more than forty rounds toward his vehicle. Despite many still unsupportive of Reinoehl's actions against Danielson, his own death at the hands of law enforcement was considered extrajudicial and unjustified, further renewing distrust and condemnation of law enforcement's behavior. Despite criticism of Reinoehl's previous actions, law enforcement's overreach in denying him due process allowed for the focus to again shift to criticism of the state.

Certainly, the feeling that Reinoehl's death was questionable and without due process was supported by President Trump's statements immediately following the news: "There has to be retribution when you have a crime like this" (cited in Wade, 2020, para 3). Over the next several months, the Thurston County Sheriff's Office, which has jurisdiction over Lacey, conducted an investigation into the actions of the task force, concluding that it was likely

Reinoehl who initiated gunfire (Wilson, 2021). The *New York Times*, upon reviewing the Sheriff's Office's findings, expressed skepticism at its conclusions. Contradictory evidence does not support the likelihood that Reinoehl shot first (Baker and Hill, 2021). Additionally, no body cameras, vehicle cameras, or bystander cameras were used to record the incident.

Shortly after Reinoehl's and Danielson's deaths, wildfires spread across the American West, including up and down Oregon's Willamette Valley. The choking wildfire smoke in the Portland area, a severe health hazard, halted protests for several days. At the same time, people associated with the protest scene were also participants in a sprawling mutual aid network, who sprang into action to assist those impacted by the wildfires. Explicitly depoliticizing their mutual aid space, the Portland EWOKS—Equitable Workers Offering Kommunity Support—organized an aid station in Milwaukie, Oregon, just south of Portland, to assist those affected by fires in the southern parts of the valley (Swindler, 2020). Another group, the Witches, brought N95 masks to unhoused communities to offer protection against the smoke as well as supplies to neighboring counties, while other fanned out across the state to provide direct support to rural communities (Burley, 2020).

Simultaneously, false rumors about the wildfires' origins spread through social media, namely that they were intentionally set in conservative communities by members of Antifa. Even one of the most popular media figures in the country, Joe Rogan, promulgated this claim after it was rejected by federal law enforcement agencies (Elfrink, 2020). Some people considered forming patrols to deter looters, arsonists, and antifascists, while others did not heed evacuation orders and instead opted to stay to protect their homes (Healy and Baker, 2020). In Corbett, only a few miles beyond the Portland metro area, armed residents in fatigues set up illegal checkpoints in order to question people coming and going from the town, fueled in part by social media posts reporting on Antifa's plans to burn the Columbia River Gorge, where Corbett is located (Wilson, 2020). While these actions were swiftly condemned by the Multnomah County Sheriff's Office leadership, one of its sergeants commended the community's wariness and initiative, suggesting instead that they be more tactful with their firearms, take pictures of cars and license plates, stand alongside the road as observers, and to otherwise trust their guts (Ibid.).

Through the efforts of firefighters and with the aid of a much-needed rainstorm, the smoke eventually cleared in the Portland area, and protests resumed. In leftist circles, conflict was fomenting. On September 15, a flyer advertising a direct action included the words "Be Water. Spread Fire," which spread widely on right-wing Twitter. The *PDX Uprising* Telegram chat discussed the fallout.

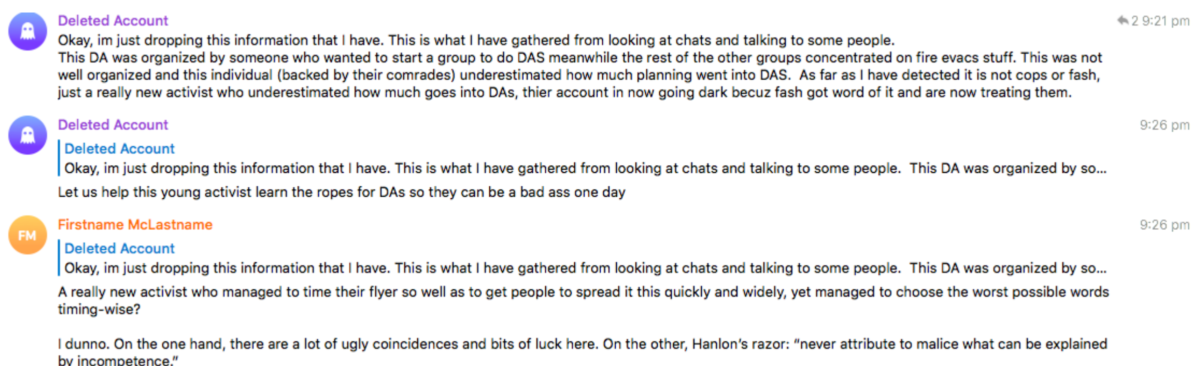

Figure 16: Discussion in the PDX Uprising Telegram chat about the "Be Fire" flyer disseminated in activist networks on September 15, 2020.

A user later adds, “I long for the day restorative justice is the norm. We do great harm when we kick someone out without restorative communication, etc.” (Deleted Account, 2020b). It may never be fully clear whether online actions are simply missteps or are more sinister acts of subterfuge, and the Internet as a forum for the dissemination of information raises the stakes. Users cannot easily, if at all, retroactively withdraw content once it is spread, and mistakes or revealed identities can extend to audiences far beyond the localized community.

On the same day, a well-established mutual aid group called Snack Bloc released a statement related to a brewing conflict over their founder, which reads in part:

> To our Black community: We want to say that we are sorry for the harm that our silence has caused. There are 20 core members that make up the group. We want to make clear that we chose to take this time to engage in an internal accountability process to address the concerns of the community. Our want was to fully comprehend the concerns raised, and address them as a collective of people who deeply love and care for one another and the community at large. As such, led by the Black femmes in our group, and based on consensus, we decided to ask our founding member to step down. This decision impacted many personal relationships and was one that we take very seriously. We will continue to communicate with them in the hopes of working thru personal accountability and restorative justice processes. We understand that this restoration of credibility does not come merely because we ask for it, but as the result of sustained work over time. (@snackblocpdx, 2020).

In keeping with leftist principles, internal conflict resolution processes based on ideas of restorative justice are frequently utilized in the absence of formal structures with the capacity to address intra-activist conflicts, especially as they pertain to identity markers or organizational finances, as they do in the cases of Snack Bloc, Rose City Justice, and the Wall of Moms. At the same time, public statements may sow confusion for those who are not in-the-know about the leaders or organizers at the center of the conflict. Context clues enable

observers to piece together the story, though the complete truth of it can never be uncovered through social media.

Some comments left on the above statement illustrate the diversity of opinion about how conflict and missteps should be handled in Portland's protest scene:

> @*mixedneeds*: @snackblocpdx continues to do the good work and has put in so many hours, days, nights supporting our community. I am forever grateful to the work everyone is doing and has done, thank you. Standing with you [emoji].
> @*ibrake4butterflies_*: re: this specific post— if you're not Black and you are criticizing this decision. that's not a good look. re: the org. as a whole, there are a lot of mutual aid orgs. in town who have done as much labor if not more, who do not have the same following because of aesthetics. i.e. don't shoot, riot ribs, pdx mutual aid (not to be confused with portland mutual aid which is run by white liberals and exceptionally poorly i might add). period. […] i would def. recognize this org. has liberal and peace police members. period. they also just had a huge fundraiser venture that 4,000 people liked, yet are still asking for physical donations. one would ask what the money is for?? […] i, of course, very much hope snack bloc continues as an entity and i have personally been fed and sanitized by this group, which i am thankful. but there are no heros in this, ok! just people doing their best to be decent. think critically.
> @*basic.blaec.girl*: Not to mention who is leading this restorative justice process? I understand potentially wanting anonymity bc of the sensitive nature of the work but there was a very direct and concerning call out from individuals and this is a vague and lackluster apology. How is faith supposed to be restored amongst Black community or is this all we get?
> @*portlandresistance*: You want to know what I want to know? Is why can't y'all run a fucking organization without having to put these statements out? Do good the first time. Fuck. Sick of people making money off BLACK LIVES DYING. Period. Thank you for the work that you do... but no THANK YOU at the expense of BLACK people being silenced. This is pathetic. You need to dissolve and we need to make sure the these organizations are by BLACK PEOPLE FOR BLACK PEOPLE. Period. Who has time to read your bullshit. Stop fucking up!

Instagram, like Twitter, is an interesting forum for handling community conflict because front-end privacy controls delimit how much of a user's identity and posted content is viewable by the wider public. Some use real pictures of their faces as profile images, while others use non-representative images; some choose usernames that identify their real name, while others do not; some maintain public profiles while others' are private; and the individuals in control of group accounts, like Snack Bloc, may remain unknown to their audiences. Users' follower counts and the number of likes their comments on others' posts receive are public. These choices are then reflected in, for example, comment sections like the one above, which give minor cues and context clues to onlookers how to feel about a post and to whose voices they

should give credibility. On the other hand, Telegram participants in PDX Uprising are urged to only refer to themselves in non-representative ways, though sometimes real identities and relationships bleed through in minor acts of self-disclosure, like revealing they are on the ground or witnessing something significant at a direct action. This contrast demonstrates how the affordances of different platforms are then adapted through user choices and group norms.

While conflict among progressives and people aligned with Black Lives Matter circulated, a common enemy can help to keep an otherwise disparate group focused and united. Word began to spread of a rally organized by the Proud Boys, one of the country's most infamous alt-right groups, who promote "western chauvinist" beliefs in their all-male organization. The organizers estimated there would be twenty thousand attendees. The US Marshals Service federally deputized members of the PPB's riot response team and Sheriff's Office deputies as a precaution. Portland activists and concerned community members discussed online how to best address the presence of tens of thousands "chuds" in their city especially considering the tensions of Reinoehl's and Danielson's killings. Activists digitally sparred over the best and safest approaches to counter-demonstrations, but, in the end, only two hundred or so Proud Boys attended the rally, and no clashes occurred between the groups.

However, local law enforcement's federal deputization did not end after the rally and instead was intended to endure through the end of 2020. This cohort of officers numbered seventy-eight in total in addition to the year-long deputization of about fifty Oregon State Police troopers during July's unrest. This way, local law enforcement can circumvent the prerogative of the newly elected Multnomah County District Attorney, Mike Schmidt, to decline prosecution of many left-wing protesters, especially when arrested for "interference with a peace officer." Arrested protesters could now be charged with federal crimes, like civil disorder or assault on a federally deputized officer, which were in fact the first charges brought against a left-wing demonstrator at the ICE building on October 7, 2020. For protesters, then, the risks continued to increase.

The news and its audiences would increasingly divide their time between local protest developments and the unfolding of the hotly contested 2020 election cycle. In Portland, local races drew immense turnouts and sparked rousing debates among liberal Portlanders. Ted Wheeler was deeply unpopular, but the candidates to his left (Sarah Iannarone and Black activist Teressa Raiford who was subject of a write-in campaign without explicitly running of her own accord) would split the vote and give him the slimmest of majorities, allowing for the first re-election of a Portland mayor in twenty years. A Black man, Mingus Mapps, endorsed by the police union and who voiced a moderate liberal platform, unseated an incumbent white

councilwoman seen by many as an important ally to leftist causes. Over the summer, a newcomer, Dan Ryan, filled the city council position left by a commissioner who had passed away the previous winter. After a week of uncertainty, Joe Biden's presidential victory was announced by pundits nationwide. While some celebrated in the streets, some leftists continued to march on behalf of Black lives, pleading with bystanders to do more while other antifascists spray-painted antifascist, anarchic, and otherwise critical messages across the Democratic Party of Oregon's county headquarters.

Figure 17: The antifascist symbol and the word "Shame" spray-painted on the Democratic Party of Oregon's headquarters. Photo by Melissa "Claudio" Lewis.

Only days after the city council election, Jo Ann Hardesty proposed a further eight percent cut to the PPB budget, and Ryan was considered the swing vote, which he rejected decisively. Before and after the vote, protesters mostly in black bloc arrived at Ryan's home in North Portland, first urging him to defund the PPB and later led chants, shattered his windows and planters, lit flares, and threw eggs and paint-filled balloons, actions which were quickly condemned by city council and community members (Ellis, 2020). Additionally, Teressa Raiford, the write-in candidate and an executive of Don't Shoot PDX, accidentally revealed her ballot choices in an Instagram post, showing that she voted for Mingus Mapps, the moderate new councilor and endorsee of the police union (Wrecker, 2020). The then-leader of Portland's NAACP chapter, E.D. Mondainé, wrote an op-ed for *The Washington Post* in late July 2020, decrying the protests' shift away from Black Lives Matter and toward "white spectacle," taking issue with, for instance, viral images of a naked white woman known as Naked Athena at the Justice Center demonstrations and urging activists to "take the cause of Black Lives Matter into those places where tear gas and rubber bullets and federal agents cannot find us, and where there is less risk of spectacle distracting from our true aims," like offices, schools, city government, the courts, and so on (paras 1, 10). Mondainé, in the fall, was accused by multiple members of his church over many years of incidents of psychological and sexual abuse, prompting him to withdraw his re-election bid for NAACP presidency (Zielinski, 2020; Jaquiss, 2020). When protesters were criticized by local Indigenous organizations for events on the Indigenous Day of Rage, Telegram users were suspicious and critical: "Who even is the Portland Indian Leaders Roundtable? I'm not seeing anything online except vague descriptions

of a 'partnership among organizations, tribes, etc' but no details," linking to a Native American Youth and Family Center (NAYA) blog post (Deleted Account, 2020g) and, another responded, "I'm not sure but NAYA is very much an in-bed with local government organization. They have huge grant contracts with [M]ultnomah county and the city" (Heyyou she/her, 2020). These incidents are intended to illustrate how left-wing infighting and distrust in civic leaders and nonprofit organizations played out in person and in the digital sphere through the months of protests.

In my estimation as a Portland resident, the overall tenor of local conversation grew increasingly disapproving from autumn onward, specifically in response to the targeting of city council members, the Indigenous Day of Rage event in which Abraham Lincoln's statue was toppled and the Oregon Historical Society's windows were smashed, and the defense of unhoused communities in the face of camp sweeps. The zenith, however, occurred in the fall and winter of 2020 in Portland's Mississippi neighborhood, one of the most clearly gentrified areas in the city. The Mississippi and Albina neighborhoods are historically Black residential areas located in inner-north Portland, now home to many new, expensive apartment complexes, bars, restaurants, coffee shops, and music venues. On a corner on the northern edge of the popular Mississippi Avenue sits a grassy lot and a red house. In September 2020, the owners of the properties—a Black and Indigenous family—were served an eviction notice by the city. In what evolved into a legally complex and socially divisive narrative, the thrust was that the Kinney family leaned into progressive sympathies for displaced Black residents. The family espoused the principles of the sovereign citizen movement, declaring, in essence, that they had no obligation to the law or government. It emerged that the family had not paid their mortgage since early 2017, accruing almost $100,000 in unpaid bills. In 2018, the house was foreclosed, and the family rejected participation in a foreclosure avoidance program.

Figure 18: The Red House and its adjoining property in January 2021. Photo by Henry Brannan for Street Roots.

It was not until 2020 that an eviction was attempted, and murmurs of its imminence prompted activists to arrive in the family's defense, especially motivated by the cruel prospect of their displacement in both the onset of winter and during a deadly pandemic. At the same time, other residents noted that the family in fact owned other properties, that one of the family

members had killed someone in a hit-and-run as a teenager (after which the resulting legal fees prompted the family to take out subprime loans on the home), that they were mistreating dogs and had been cited by the county's animal services, and that they were proponents of conspiracy theories like QAnon. For many, this saga was an incredibly confusing one. In December, protesters drove back law enforcement with rocks, paint balloons, and slashed cruiser tires. Though activists did not claim to be constructing one, the area surrounding the Red House started to take on the characteristics of an "autonomous zone" similar to the one achieved briefly in Seattle's Capitol Hill neighborhood in June 2020. Activists in Portland blocked off the road, dispelled local mainstream journalists, argued with neighbors, devised spike strips, and carried AR-15s in a form of grassroots security.

The eviction defense is ongoing, though its intensity dissipated significantly in mid-December 2020 when the family struck a deal with the city, agreeing that they would not be evicted if the activists' barricades were dismantled. The deal was hard-won, and it drove a substantial wedge in public opinion between those with more radical inclinations and those with less. For months, the property next to the Red House served as a community of unhoused people, but in October 2021, a deal was finalized, turning it over to the nonprofit Self Enhancement, Inc., which "serves the city's Black youth and families" though the Kinneys allege a property line dispute, and it is still unclear what will become of their house (Crombie, 2021).

On and off in the months following, protests, encouraged to be autonomously organized, occurred throughout the city, sometimes targeting ICE, the Justice Center, the Sheriff's Office, the police union building, and so on. Corporations (e.g., Starbucks or US Bank) were sometimes vandalized in these demonstrations as were, on occasion, local independent businesses, sometimes owned by people of color, as well as churches serving unhoused folks, and the Boys & Girls Club of America, which serves many of the city's Black youth. At this point, many community members were exasperated and incensed by the perceived indiscriminate nature of the protest actions. At the same time, Asian American businesses were subjected to increasing rates of vandalism in the wake of racist beliefs about the COVID-19 pandemic, and swastikas and other far-right graffiti cropped up around the city. Unhoused communities grew, sparking hundreds of conflicts and complaints from city residents about drug use, trash, theft, and mental health crises.

Further, gun violence has seen a staggering increase in the city with homicides in 2021 breaking the previous 1987 record by October. While some endeavor to reduce this rise to the result of the disbandment of the PPB's Gun Violence Reduction Team, contributing factors

add far more complexity: “As with other U.S. cities experiencing escalating gun violence, Portland faces fallout from easy access to guns, coronavirus-shuttered safety nets like after-school programs, and an enhanced distrust of police following last year’s killing of George Floyd by a Minneapolis police officer” (Bernstein, 2021, para 12). Most violent and property crimes rose in in the first half of the year, pointing perhaps to a kind of desperation or anomie among the populace. Anomie is another Durkheimian concept, which theorizes the breakdown of organic solidarity and individual disjunctures in a shared morality. However, the “violence has disproportionately affected people of color — more than half of those who have been killed are Black, Latino or Asian. […] The homicide rate for Black people [in 2021] is nearly eight times higher than for white people, based on their population in Portland” (Ibid., para 11). Portland police are reportedly attempting to mobilize resources and partnering with federal agencies while the city disburses monies for related community partners. Black community organizers are also using their energies to prevent further violence (Ibid.). Recently, Wheeler proposed an infusion of $5.2 million back into the police bureau, hoping to attract retired officers and offering signing bonuses, in addition to the hiring of safety specialists, an independent crowd control consultant, an expedited basic training academy for new officers, and the introduction of body-worn cameras (Ellis, 2021). These developments and concurrent activist fatigue spell uncertainty. All told, the city witnessed a great deal of chaos in 2020, sagging all the while under the emotional weight of the COVID-19 pandemic.

8. Synthesis

8a. Portland and its privacy considerations

While it was only in recent years that local consciousness around the city and state's racist history was raised (thanks in large part to Alana Semuel's widely shared 2016 piece for *The Atlantic* on the subject), Portland's radical and racist streaks are in fact well-established. Oregon was founded as the only state in the country with Black exclusion explicitly enshrined in its constitution, and it has remained extraordinarily white ever since. For decades, it was a stronghold of the KKK. In the state, just over two percent of the population identifies as Black or African American, and in Portland that share hovers around six percent. That is to say, Portland's progressive reputation is a relatively recent development. Prior to the 1990s, Black residents were subjected overtly to violence, discrimination, and displacement both within and outside the law. While circumstances have ostensibly improved, as longtime Black resident Paul Knauls told Semuels, "Everything is kind of under the carpet. […] The racism is still very, very subtle" (2016, para 4).

A recent podcast called *It Did Happen Here* recounts in eleven parts the Portland of the late twentieth century where anti-racist skinheads openly clashed with their racist counterparts in the 1980s punk scene (Flores et al, 2020-21). This kind of media production is a fruitful example of the Foucauldian genealogy of omitted and subjugated knowledges; the podcast producers are invigorating an alternative history that is particularly local and historically divergent (Medina, 2011, p. 18). Only in the early and mid-2000s did Portland take on a sheen of a more palatable liberalism, attracting newcomers, forcing up housing prices, and driving radical elements further underground.

In the formal political sphere, many Portlanders have long lamented the city's commission system of government. Between the mayor and four elected commissioners, city bureaus are divvied up among them: "The quintet has legislative, executive, administrative and quasi-judicial powers all at once, a remarkable melding of say-so that exists in no other major American city" (Friedman, 2019, para 3). A 2019 Portland City Club report remarked further that elected commissioners are given oversight of bureaus "with little, if any, regard to their managerial or subject-matter expertise," which "appears to result in poor bureaucratic performance" (cited in, ibid., para 6). The report also suggests that the city revise its city-wide election system and add councillors to the city government (Ibid.). As it stands, Ted Wheeler is both mayor and commissioner of the police department, impeding his ability to build relationships with left-wing activists who call for police reform or abolition.

In general, young people are less involved in formal civic groups than generations past, and many extant civic organizations maintain a "narrow, broadcast" relationship with its online audiences, generating mostly "self-referential content" (Wells, 2014, pp. 629-30). Additionally, research shows that "incumbent political forces often make less use of online democratic opportunities" (Bright, 2018, p. 20). Others have noted how "the relationships between individuals and civic organizations are becoming more entrepreneurial and less centrally manageable," which fundamentally changes the methods and efficacies of communication (Bimber et al, 2012, cited in Bennett, 2012, p. 27). In a Durkheimian fashion, Portlanders may feel restless about the deficiencies of the status quo and the groups that purport to represent their interests and aim to devise a new shared consciousness and attendant structures to support it.

By April 2021, Wheeler made statements urging residents to "unmask" protesters—noticeably employing a vague use of *they*—saying that "they want to burn, they want to bash, they want to intimidate, they want to assault" (Villegas, 2021). Even with the unpopularity of the ongoing direct actions, Don't Shoot PDX, a Black-led social justice organization, summarizes the urgent social justice concerns following his remarks: "Portland, Oregon has its own share of Kyle Rittenhouses and Dylann Roofs who are waiting for this call from a higher authority. In a city that already harasses and racially profiles its minority communities, Ted Wheeler has exacerbated this with the explicit statements made at his recent press conference" (2021, para 1).

Portland is one of the only major metropolitan areas where police officers do not wear body-worn cameras. It has only been about a decade since their widespread implementation in law enforcement departments across the country, but a great deal of research has been conducted into their effectiveness in transforming police encounters with community members. While the PPB supports the adoption of body-worn cameras, budget restraints have often stymied the process. Now, the federal government is looking to step in "because, nearly a decade ago, the DOJ found a 'pattern and practice' of the Portland Police Bureau using excessive force against people with mental illness," and, after a settlement, "the city was found to be out of compliance" in 2021 (Riski, 2021, para 11). Like other cities, the bargaining over exactly how body-worn cameras might be used in Portland is fraught with legal considerations, especially whether officers can review the footage before writing their reports, how they will be used as a surveillance tool, how data will be stored, and how and when the public might gain access to relevant recordings (Ibid.).

Portland's reluctance to adopt body-worn cameras makes some sense in the context of its policies around residents' right to privacy. In the fall of 2020, Wheeler and the rest of city council unanimously voted to prohibit facial recognition technologies by both public and private entities. As Jo Ann Hardesty noted, this has positive implications for racial equity in protecting "those most vulnerable and overpoliced" (City of Portland, 2020). As noted in a *Wired* article, the city government's modest Smart City office shifted its mission from "hunting for 'smart' new tech" toward the mediation of "tech's impact on citizens" (Simonite, 2020, para 3). Where Hong Kongers toppled smart streetlamps and other cities have removed them after police impropriety, Portland disabled their version pre-emptively (Ibid.). At the same time, Baltimore was described by *Wired* in 2016 as "America's Laboratory for Spy Tech" due to its adoption of panoptic policing methods (Newman, 2016). So, while Portland's privacy ethic seems to support, in general, the right to assemble and remain anonymous, let alone to move about in the city as a private person, it does not affect the disparate municipal choices made in largely Black communities elsewhere. Still, even in Portland police do watch livestreams, use social media, employ informants, and fly Cessnas for surveillance during protest events.

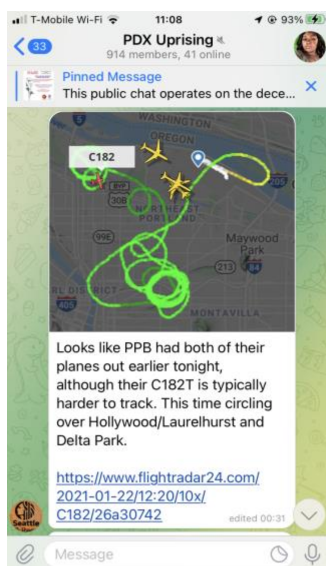

Figure 19: Telegram updates from user @Seattle [emoji] (he/him)... on January 23, 2021.

Even without facial recognition technologies or smart streetlamps, the sheer volume of cameras in the world upend older notions of "public privacy." Take, for instance, the proliferation of dashboard cameras and smart doorbells. Across the pond, London has a prodigious saturation of CCTV cameras, and according to politician Nick Clegg, "it's happened without any meaningful public or political debate whatsoever," which he attributes to the UK's lack of "history of fascism and nondemocratic regimes" coupled with a recent history of terrorist attacks, which led to the largely uncontroversial adoption of the Investigatory Powers Act, allowing British intelligence agencies to collect "bulk data from [its] own citizens" (Draper, 2018). The legal and ethical implications of constantly watching public space are grave: "Research suggests that […] the impact of surveillance tends to be the straightforward exclusion of disfavored groups rather than the apprehension or deterrence of criminals" (Slobogin, 2002, p. 249). Surveillance changes the character of public space, and it impedes on individuals' freedom—to not conform, to stand still, to move freely—whereas the embrace of privacy rights bolsters it.

Protesters therefore are caught in a morass of security considerations, even if they are behaving within legal bounds. Many may maintain a presence on popular social media platforms, like Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, Reddit, and Nextdoor, but they will also utilize communications apps with privacy enhancements when it comes to event planning, strategizing, and, likely, conflict resolution. In many ways, a digital presence is necessary. Without one, events (and sudden changes to events, including cancelations, location or time changes, and event endorsements, endorsement withdrawals, or outright rejections) are difficult to transmit effectively. At the same time, a digital presence brings significant risk. Activists distribute grassroots resources on obtaining burner phones specifically for protests, annotated street maps showing how to successfully retreat from a demonstration and avoid kettling, and how-to guides for dressing in black bloc. Activists interviewed in *Uprising: A Guide From Portland* make clear that black bloc is not an organization, a uniform, or an identity. Rather, it is a tactic. As one Indigenous protester, who originally was in the Wall of Moms, says, “One wrong move or getting doxed can really affect everyone around me,” (cited in Evans, 2021c).

Figure 20: Infographic posted by Aye Aye in the PDX Uprising Telegram channel on April 26, 2021.

In addition, it falls on disparate activists to develop an effective conflict resolution process as disruptions and disputes emerge. In the Telegram chat, a grassroots effort has been made to disseminate de-escalation tactics for protesters on the ground. One document compiles practical tips from a “Week of Action” workshop in September 2020 at length for any protester to put into practice. These include knowing one’s own threshold and boundaries for their safety, growth, and danger zones, becoming aware of one’s own personal and reactionary spaces, communicating effectively with body language and with masks on, becoming aware of

one's own triggers and patterns governing our neural pathways, practicing conversations in advance, and crafting action agreements if needed (CryptPad, 2020).

Mayor Wheeler's appeal to "unmask" neighbors, coworkers, and friends involved in property damage is a direct response to the fear emanating from many Portland residents about their city and what they feel it has become, typified by downtown's stark desolation. For example, an 85-year-old Black former state legislator, Margaret Carter, who frequently drives around downtown in the mornings to survey the damage was interviewed by the *New York Times*: "Portland was a beautiful city […] Now you walk around and see all the graffiti, buildings being boarded up. I get sick to my stomach. And I get angry" (cited in Baker, 2021, para 3). On the Nextdoor app, this is a sentiment often echoed: "[W]hat these vandals are doing is just so evil" and "Thugs & hooligans are the bad guys and they have nothing whatsoever to do with politics" (Jacobsen, 2021). In general, though violent crime has seen steady nationwide decline for years, most Americans think it is actually getting worse, and community members use visible signals like graffiti as a gauge of their safety (Cho & Ho, 2018, p. 13). Still, in 2021, Portland saw its highest homicide and traffic fatality rates ever, constituting an alarmingly real crisis.

8b. Making sense of white attitudes

Unlike in some communities, support in Portland for "Black Lives Matter" would appear entirely uncontroversial, as signs are displayed in front lawns and windows all across the city. Nevertheless, in a majority white city, prior research on white attitudes toward Black activism may prove illuminating. One 2020 study divided whiteness into three categories: no recognition of whiteness (I); recognition of whiteness seen as a liability (II); and recognition of whiteness and white privilege (III) (Cole, 2020, p. 1630). Interestingly, it was type I and type III identifiers who "were often critical of the methods used by the movement," including property destruction, belief in police abolition, and inconveniences like blocked roads created by protests, even though type III identifiers professed unconditional support for Black Lives Matter (Ibid., p. 1631). This study helps illuminate some of the contradictions and assumptions in white attitudes toward the movement.

Fundamentally, "the fact that whites (as a racial group) have historically been the winners in US democracy has shaped their political imagination," thus infusing a priori legitimacy into traditional democratic institutions (Hooker, 2016, p. 455). The social imaginary, in which "subjective violence by the victors of historical struggles pervades and eventually becomes the objective, structural violence of institutions," is a system "into which

people are born and which they therefore tend to embody and naturalize exactly like they do their first language" (Widick, 2014, pp. 66, 69). When different people in a community have different social imaginaries yet a shared social space, conflict is inevitable.

The social imaginary of a place like Portland makes "subjugated knowledges remain invisible to mainstream perspectives" (Medina, 2011, p. 11). For Durkheim, "a society is the most powerful bundle of physical and moral forces observable in nature. Nowhere else do we find such a wealth of diverse raw material brought to such a degree of concentration," creating fertile ground for some kind of higher, transcendent power to emerge (2008 [1912], p. 342). I argue that, while Durkheim is referring to religion, those ideas extend into the moral sphere, and the higher, transcendent power galvanizing people could be something like "justice" rather than "God."

Disdain for rioting can be interpreted as a failure of Black "protesters to make visible to a white audience the reality of an unjust criminal system via the willing sacrifice of their innocent, non-resisting bodies to racial violence" (Hooker, 2016, p. 456). This might best be exemplified by the reaction to the video of George Floyd's murder, as an undeniably quiescent Black body slain in broad daylight. His stark vulnerability therefore displayed, for white audiences, something plainly broken in twenty-first century race relations. It has been perhaps more difficult, argues Hooker, to shame white people into solidarity because of "a belief that the United States is now a post-racial society" and making good progress on issues of equity (Ibid., p. 460). White Americans, compared to other races, have been shown to find protesting in general less "positive or helpful" and consider protesters to be "'thugs' or 'criminals'" (Reinka and Leach, 2017, p. 782).

The act of naming, according to Judith Butler, carries great power. A name "constitutes one socially, but one's social constitution may take place without one's knowing," and further, "one may well imagine oneself in ways that are quite to the contrary of how one is socially constituted" (Butler, 1997, p. 31). Deemed a criminal, looter, or rioter, Black people are deprived of the opportunity to name themselves and their own actions amid the ongoing trauma shaped by the killing of Black people by law enforcement. In addition, white people in Reinka and Leach's study feel less of an emotional reaction to images of police violence and tend to view them in a colorblind way (2017, p. 773). Images of black passivity to the violence of law enforcement is actually reinforcing the activation of white liberal sympathies as the ultimate litmus test for social movements.

Even when images of police violence and protest are disseminated and begin to affect public opinion and effect policy change, research shows that "many white participants

disengaged from the images in later stages of processing when more motivated attention and appraisal result in emotion and action" (Reinka and Leach, 2017, pp. 784-85). Collins theorizes that mobilizations will be affected by the degree to which the state has saturated a society, "breaking down local enclaves, fostering communications and transportation, and providing a central arena for political activity and a unifying focus of public attention" (2012, p. 14). In other words, to the extent that citizens see existing institutions as enduringly legitimate, the less likely they will be activated to join a protest, even if they are jarred by the images of police brutality they see.

Charles Mills, the late philosopher, argued that "privileged white subjects have become unable to understand the world that they themselves have created" (Medina, 2011, p. 31). This generates "white ignorance," which is directed by white people both inward and outward, and enforces "silence or oblivion" (Ibid.). A study on racial justice protest bystanders found that those with weak perceptions of racism felt more negative about the protest, supplementing studies that have found people react negatively to "interpersonal confrontations of injustice" and "toward those who challenge the status quo" (Selvanathan and Lickel, 2019, pp. 602, 610). One study demonstrated how only white people who score "high in racially egalitarian attitudes reported emotional reactions to police violence similar to those of Blacks" (Leach et al, 2017, cited in Reinka and Leach, 2017, p. 785). This helps to explain the multiracial coalition of people who continue to engage in the Portland protest scene. This is also perhaps why the "Fed War" motivated people to join or return to nightly confrontations outside the Justice Center; that is, Trump's overreach may have been viewed as a graver threat to democracy than the normalized behaviors of local police. For those already deeply embedded in a conflict group, any normalization of power disparities disincentivizes marginalized groups from engaging in bridge-building efforts with the opposition (Hasan-Aslih et al, 2020, p. 1342). For example, Joe Biden's presidential victory was hardly cause for celebration in activist circles even as many Portlanders celebrated.

Audre Lorde described anger as "loaded with information and energy," able to be "expressed and translated into action in the service of our vision and our future," distinguishing it from both hatred and guilt (1981, pp. 8-9). She continues: "Black women are expected to use our anger only in the service of other people's salvation, other people's learning. […] My anger has meant pain to me but it has also meant survival" (Ibid., p. 9). Echoing this, Tsiveriotis (2017) argues that tone policing diminishes a sustained focus on seeking truth (p. 53). Similarly, Hooker postulates that violence in the era of Black Lives Matter, which is "often viewed as self-destructive, might be productive for black citizens because they allow for the

expression of black anger and pain, which is otherwise precluded by expectations of black sacrifice and forgiveness" (2016, p. 464). At the same time, nonviolence does not necessarily emerge from a pacific or calm part of the soul," rather it is often "an expression of rage, indignation, and aggression" (Butler, 2020, p. 21).

8c. Social media, surveillance, and media democratization

News interviews, Nextdoor posts, and tweets by no means constitute a representative sample of the Portland population. In fact, the public discourse might appear exceptionally messy *because* of the particular tilts of each platform. As of the mid-2010s, sixty-five percent of American adults and two billion people globally using social media every day (Perrin, 2015 and Statista, 2016, cited in Cox, 2017, p. 1847). A Pew Research Center study of social media use among adults shows that only twenty-three percent of adults report ever using Twitter and only thirteen percent use Nextdoor (Auxier and Anderson, 2021). In addition, Twitter users tend to be "young, affluent, and well-educated" (Caren et al, 2020, p. 458). Nextdoor, as an anomaly among social media platforms, requires a verified address and urges use of real names since its purpose is to be a virtual, continual neighborhood forum thus negating potential for either anonymous or external input. The largest regional newspaper, *The Oregonian*, disabled its comment section for its online news stories in December of 2019, closing off one of several avenues eliciting public engagement (The Oregonian, 2019). This is all to highlight that opportunities were narrowed, especially during the isolating context of the COVID-19 pandemic, for members of the Portland community to engage in dialogue over highly complex, structural problems like anti-Black racism, policing, gentrification, antifascism, city governance, houselessness, social movement efficacy, and so on.

YouTube and Facebook rank highest in the Pew study at eighty-one and sixty-nine percent, respectively (Auxier and Anderson, 2021). Neither of these platforms are loci for activist organizing in the Portland context. YouTube is useful as a repository of police brutality or protest video footage taken by participants or witnesses, as in the case of Ahmaud Arbery's killing, but it does not lend itself to collaborative communication or as a tool for organizing. Distrust of Facebook and its accompanying platforms of Instagram and WhatsApp, in particular, has been an explicit deterrent among activists: "[W]ell it seems like the problem is that many people don't follow [F]acebook related apps and as a result the events aren't as visible as they should be," followed by another message, saying, "Instagram REQUIRES you to have an account to view and browse content on it properly, and it requires you to be using the mobile app for any kind of 'fluid' user experience" (Soup Fam, 2020). WhatsApp includes

end-to-end encryption whereas in Facebook messenger, it is an opt-in feature linked to individuals' Facebook profiles.

Even though Telegram also requires users to opt-in to end-to-end encryption along with the manual activation of other privacy settings, it has become a widely used organizing platform in Portland. Similarly, downloads of the Signal app, an encrypted messaging competition, grew by the tens of thousands in the weeks following the first George Floyd protests (Nierenberg, 2020). Signal is in fact an objectively more secure platform, but Telegram's facilitation of social media-style networking through "broadcast channels and almost unlimited group sizes" in addition to its explicit founding principle as a gathering space for dissidents make it attractive and useful to autonomously organized protesters (Doffman, 2021, para 2). Nevertheless, two billion people use WhatsApp globally compared to 550 million Telegram users (Statista, 2020). In addition, ProtonMail is an encrypted alternative to platforms like Gmail or Yahoo!, facilitating private communications between ProtonMail users (Lucchesi, 2018). By basing its headquarters in Switzerland and abiding by Swiss law, a country with robust privacy protections, ProtonMail limits potential law enforcement access to or the repression of dissidents in other countries (Ibid.). Portland's protesters also utilized CryptPad, an open-source and encrypted collaborative site akin to Google Drive, Docs, and Sheets. These shifts demonstrate how Internet users are utilizing alternative platforms to traditional non-encrypted SMS communications, even if they are fighting an uphill battle that is always partially obscured by the hegemonic forces that guide them.

Malcolm Gladwell (2010) wrote a popular piece of commentary for *The New Yorker* lamenting "Facebook activism," which he claims "succeeds not by motivating people to make a real sacrifice but by motivating them to do the things that people do when they are not motivated enough to make a real sacrifice," like sharing, liking, or maybe giving some money to a cause (para 19). He argues that successful social movements of the past were successful because of the group's strong social ties, high-risk activities (like lunch counter sit-ins), and clear hierarchies, noting that the diffusely networked nature of social media sites facilitates precisely the opposite (Ibid.). While he certainly has a point, purpose-built social media sites like Hong Kong's LIHKG or Telegram channels can begin to manifest more structured online decision-making and information-sharing processes while staying true to the ethic of horizontalist organizing. McCaughey bridges how Gladwell's perspective informs present study of social movements, noting that it has become clear "that movements are hybrids of online and offline activity, and one does not cause, or prevent, the other" (2014, p. 2). Social media is a particularly useful tool for conveying the gravity of any given injustice around the

world through images: "Not everyone can put their bodies on the street […] but they can log on and channel some portion of their attention into the digital semiotic groundswell" (Widick, 2014, p. 64). Social media also provides a free and accessible place to accumulate and frame protest repression to justify and spur further action (Suh et al, 2017, p. 290).

All told, the overriding feeling expressed publicly is that Portland is a deeply divided city with endemic conflicts between residents and the powers-that-be. From a conflict resolution perspective, digital civil discourse remains piecemeal and disparate. While many platforms prove useful for community-building among kindred spirits, it is less clear whether these platforms are helpful or detrimental (or a mix of both) to the act of bridge-building across ideological divides. It also remains controversial whether this should be a goal in the first place. While social media platforms wax and wane, the overarching structure of online connectedness has quickly cemented itself as a given of contemporary sociality.

Surveillance is a French word, translating roughly to *oversight* in English, and scholars have also identified the inverse phenomenon: "sousveillance" or *undersight* (Mann and Ferenbok, 2013, p. 18). In 2020, as Derek Chauvin acted to detain George Floyd in Minneapolis, a seventeen-year-old named Darnella Frazier pulled out her phone to record a video that would inflame this iteration of Black Lives Matter. While some forms of recording that are ostensibly to ensure accountability—like CCTV and body-worn cameras—their ownership and distribution are not determined by the public. Without citizen sousveillance, most interested observers remain enmeshed in the power dynamics of "oversight." In this regard, video—despite its assumed perspicuity—takes on new kinds of ambiguity, where questions such as *whose footage this is* and *how we came to see it* help establish its trustworthiness.

Surveillance evokes the philosopher Jeremy Bentham's concept of the panopticon, an artificial omniscience derived from prison architecture and social psychology. The idea is that those imprisoned know they *could* be observed at any moment, due to the layout of the cells and the watchtowers, and thus will discipline themselves accordingly. At the same time, police officers report a similar effect when bystander video of their actions wrest away control of the officer's subjective understanding and subsequent narrative account (Newell, 2019, p. 72). Bentham would likely be surprised by the technological manifestations of such a design.

Today, Mann and Ferenbok argue, the citizenry's technological capabilities shatter some of the dystopian trappings of a contemporary surveillance society. Mann and Ferenbok's approach takes on somewhat of an optimistic resonance with their inclusion of the potentiality of "equiveillance," wherein sousveillance combined with political action can act as a

counterforce against state surveillance (2013, p. 26). The asymmetry between the two, however, has never come close to being upended or reorganized. However, the acceptance and impact of sousveillance is still subject to contestation, with events in Portland creating a key battleground. Much has been written about police resistance to both body-worn cameras and to being filmed by members of the public. A different development over the role of livestreamers emerged in Portland after several weeks of protests where individuals on the ground record continuously from cameras that are handheld or strapped to a helmet, chest rig, or tripod and uploaded to streaming platforms like Woke.net, Periscope, or Twitch.

In the summer of 2020, activists engaged in discussions over the potential uses and abuses of livestream footage. The spiral of surveillance and countersurveillance generates a kind of "synopticon," which might be best understood in this context as when "the few watch the few" (Mathieson, 1997, cited in Wilson and Serisier, 2010, p. 178). This dialectic generates a kind of "'lateral surveillance' and cultures of suspicion" (Andrejevic, 2005; Chan, 2008, cited in ibid., p. 178). Hardt and Negri (2004) note how tools of resistance, like filming protests, prompts law enforcement to innovate in kind, using more advanced versions to quash grassroots uprisings (cited in ibid., p. 169). On July 6, 2020, a prominent organizing group, Pacific Northwest Youth Liberation Front (PNWYLF), retweeted another user's observation that the US federal law enforcement deployed to Portland were watching protesters' own livestreams as part of their command center surveillance, as photographed by *The Oregonian/OregonLive* (@PNWYLF, 2020).

Maxine Bernstein | The Oregonian/OregonLive 18 / 24

Federal Courthouse Transformed

A U.S. Marshals Service incident management team sat around a conference room table two flights up from the lobby at the Mark O. Hatfield United States Courthouse in downtown Portland, each officer focused on a small black laptop, handheld radios and large screens at either end. July 26, 2020. Maxine Bernstein | The Oregonian/OregonLive

Figure 21: A screenshot from The Oregonian/OregonLive revealing law enforcement's use of protest livestreams.

PNWYLF stated, "Any with a conscience will shut down their streams, and if they don't, they should be forced out," which sparked a flurry of responses engaged in a debate over the virtue and efficacy of livestreamers' presence at protests (Ibid.). Most in the replies forcefully disagreed with the wholesale ejection of the grassroots accountability mechanism provided by livestreams: "I don't livestream on main platforms for

livestreams[.] [S]o far the views are limited but it helps me take clips for later, like the triple phaser [police CS gas canister] that struck me also setting a car on fire last night" (@udaniyadv, 2020). Many also expressed a desire for more mindful or restricted streaming practices: "The only place a livestreamer's presence is warranted is behind the police line. See one mingling with the protesters? Isolate and confiscate with no hesitation or remorse" (@sevapetrov, 2020). Still others felt that the benefits of livestreamers far outweighed their potential risks, shifting the onus back to the protesters on the ground: "The cops are recording way more than the live streamers ever could. Protesters need to take it on themselves to remain anonymous and cops need to be recorded" (@psychonot23, 2020). Finally, others expressed disapproval at the perceived racism or movement co-optation expressed by PNWYLF: "'Force out' a POC streamer at a black lives matter protest. Makes sense. I'm not sure many people will support that" (@Sol_Luna_Xi) and "We've had this @ indigenous protests too. White anarchists pulling knives, telling us to leave. Grow up. Cover your faces" (@n8vdailynetwork). This online discourse illustrates many of the tensions that play out on the ground by people who are, in essence, on the same side. Still, over time, the presence of livestreamers and many journalists became unwelcome in protest spaces, especially as it became difficult to ascertain who among them was an ally, a grifter, a law enforcement informant, or a right-wing infiltrator, if the streamer were to fall in any of these categories at all.

It is true that law enforcement agencies use social media, including what is publicly available and backend data or private communications made available through warrants. For example, an eighteen-year-old Portland protester was tracked down and charged with arson after throwing a firework at a protest. He was identified through livestream and social media footage, with police eventually finding a relative's Amazon product review of his protective vest and later his personal Facebook profile (Brannan and Opaleski, 2020). Right-wing and neo-fascist groups also orchestrate disruptions to left-wing organizing online. For instance, the white nationalist group Identity Evropa created a fake Twitter account called @ANTIFA_US, pushing for potentially violent mobilization on the part of antifascist "comrades" (Collins et al, 2020).

At the Red House protests of December 2020, *The Oregonian/OregonLive* published a story with the headline, "Activists work to block journalists from full, accurate coverage of occupation outside 'red house' in N. Portland" (Kavanaugh, 2020). Many on Twitter were quick to point out there were in fact journalists on the ground and behind the barricades: "This Oregonian article is nonsense. I've been at Red House nearly everyday since Tuesday. I've taken pictures & interviewed people without issue. You don't need to film 24/7 to 'accurately'

report" (@hungrybowtie, 2020b). Further, others on the ground pointed out that mainstream media has not earned the trust of activists and are therefore unwanted at protest events: "Step your game up if you want people's trust that you aren't just going to report what the state wants you to" (@homolingual, 2020). Cable news stations KATU, KGW, and KOIN are sometimes referred to as "KKKATU" or "KKKOIN" or "KKKGW" (@hungrybowtie, 2020a). Part of the reason is because of their ties to corporate, partisan media conglomerates: "Sinclair Broadcasting Group is state-sanctioned propaganda through quid pro quos from the Trump campaign and has their journalists read scripted 'local' news reports. KATU will never be capable of telling the entire story" (@teamraccoonpdx, 2020). In 2021, freelance photojournalist Justin Yau was assaulted while reporting at a demonstration, who, in the week following, implored: "Journalists are humans, we are not perfect, but we are not the enemy. Use words, not violence" (@PDocumentarians, 2021).

Figure 22: A tweet from reporter Zane Sparling showing Justin Yau's injuries.

Democratized publishing platforms like Twitter do indeed diminish the public's reliance on established journalists affiliated with specific outlets. During Occupy, "technology developers sought to build idea generators, take-action platforms, and a 'global square' virtual commons" (Bennett, 2012, p. 30). Research about Twitter, for instance, suggests that well-networked activists on the platform effectively activate "a low-interest, high number of peripheral Twitter users" and, at the same time, "can also have a discursive impact on broader political and civil society actors," including its adoption as evidence in news stories (Caren et al, 2020, pp. 450, 453). Previous research has shown that "online activity on Twitter is highly associated with the spread of offline protests in a wide variety of movements" (Ibid., p. 453). In a similar but more dire vein, Klein (2019) argues that "Twitter, as a space for political debate, becomes an arena for activating violence, where rival communities may indulge fantasies of civil war before acting on them," (p. 315), due in part to the ways in which conflict parties can engage in discursive, virtual stand-offs for weeks, months, or years.

What has emerged as a mode of information-sharing is frequently referred to as "citizen journalism" via the "hyper-democratization of video activism" (Wilson and Serisier, 2010, p. 175). Social movements, in addition, have traditionally been subject to "asymmetrical

dependency," where they rely on media exposure, but media outlets do not rely on them for viewership or readership (Carroll and Hackett, 2006, p. 86). Media activism can therefore be conceived as an entirely novel genre of social movement, one in which media democratization is both the means and the end (Ibid., p. 96). I argue, following this, that Twitter is a particularly suitable tool for citizen journalists for its easily dispersible hybrid text-image/video format. Through social media platforms, individuals are influenced by the person in their network who shared a news source thereby evaluating its trustworthiness vis-á-vis people in their network (Turcotte et al, 2015, p. 524). For mainstream media sources, citizen journalism poses somewhat of a problem for its circumvention of traditional journalistic norms and the traditional accrual of professional credibility. The problem for journalism is that just because a source is authoritative does not necessarily make it reliable (Wells, 2014, p 619). Among citizen journalists, credibility can be conferred through, for instance, follower counts or the willingness to enter the fracas of dangerous, exclusive, or otherwise extraordinary events. Research has also shown that "information feeds that are updated more quickly tend to be seen as more credible" (Westerman et al, 2014, cited in Cox, 2017, p. 1849). For Black Lives Matter, prior to the events of 2020, Cox reported that most research participants explicitly stated they used an amalgamation of social media platforms to obtain information about the movement (Ibid., p. 1850).

Elsewhere on the Internet, people are turning to alternative news sources. Take, for example, popular YouTuber Andrew Callaghan's citizen journalism projects *All Gas No Brakes* and *Channel 5 News*. His videos are relevant here because YouTube remains understudied for its relationship to social movements (Caren et al, 2020, p. 454). Frequently, Callaghan's interviews are humorous, offbeat pieces at fringe cultural events, but in the case of the Minneapolis protests in the immediate aftermath of George Floyd's murder, the footage and discussions are eminently serious, and the comment section is filled with refrains that echo user @AlterBot's sentiments: "This is the best news I've seen to date. It's unbiased, unsensationalized, and clean. No flashy nonsense or voice-overs or meticulously crafted

narrative; you see the situation for yourself and hear the opinions of those that are there. God this is great reporting. Nothing can beat this" (2020).

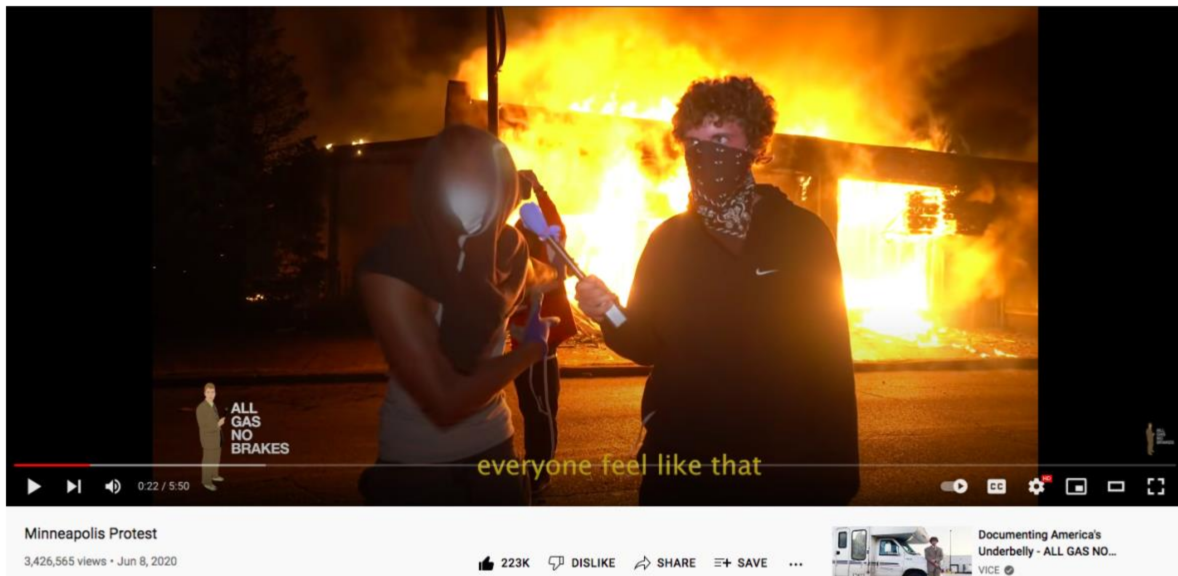

Figure 23: Screengrab depicting an anonymous, Black-presenting protester in Minneapolis gesturing toward a burning building, expressing that the destruction accurately reflects the emotions of the community.

The entirety of the "Minneapolis Protest" video shows the diversity of opinions among people on the streets. Many point to the inadequacy of peaceful protests in the past to effect change, some show concern for the optics of the protest events in the media, and others express their visions of justice for George Floyd and their sincere hope that they will be heard. As Wilson and Serisier ask, "if the documenting of police misconduct and brutality is intended to foster accountability, the question then becomes is this possible via an uncoordinated avalanche of dispersed and decontextualized visual fragments?" (2010, p. 177). Above all, Callaghan compiles what is otherwise voluminous raw footage and information into a format that is concentrated, visceral, and often full of ideological dissonance.

Callaghan also came to Portland during Trump's federal deployment. The protest footage has a markedly different feel and look compared to the Minneapolis video because of the hundreds or thousands of people dressed in black bloc in a direct confrontation with law enforcement. For the most part in his interviews, anger toward law enforcement is fierce, somatic, and replete with expletives and insults. As one person in black bloc tells the camera, "If your dad's a cop, punch him in the face at least fifty times." The people he interviews reflect on their roles and the broader ramifications of taking to the street. For example, one protester says, "Being out here, I would say it's patriotism at its finest," adding sarcastically, "Yeah, I got my antifa terrorist card in my back pocket, you know how it is." The video shows how collective effervescence manifests in a conflict situation as grave as this. It is clear that the

positive and negative emotional energy as proposed by Boyns and Leury contribute to the environment on the ground.

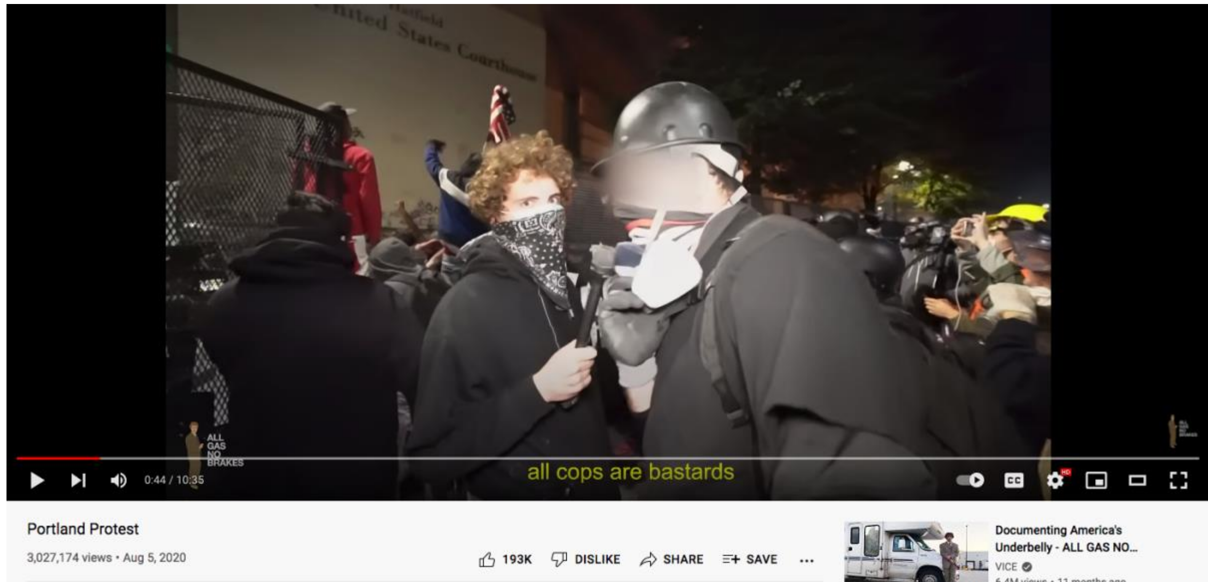

Figure 24 Screengrab depicting a white-presenting protester outside the Justice Center expressing disdain for the mayor and for police.

In the middle of the video, Callaghan juxtaposes commentary from *Fox News*' Tucker Carlson with *Democracy Now*'s Amy Goodman, who frame the Fed War in exact opposite ideological terms. To say the least, the accumulated footage is chaotic, and his editing choices demonstrate the contradictions that inhere to a large social movement. Many protesters choose to have their faces blurred for the interviews, but those who do not are almost entirely Black activists. Young women organizers from PDX Black Youth Movement state, "If you're white, you don't get to decide when you wanna break shit, you don't get to decide when it's time to protest, march, whatever," telling white anarchists explicitly to "shut the fuck up." The video immediately cuts to some of the fringe protesters, like people who say they attended to run around naked and get tear gassed or the person who is wearing blue body paint as an homage to his Viking ancestors' anarcho-primitive heritage.

The video cuts again to the young women's perspective on the protests, criticizing the de-centering of Black lives and imploring people to not act like the events are a party. The video cuts to a person criticizing Jewish infiltration of the federal government and another highly inebriated and confrontational person, both of whom present as white. The PDX Black Youth Movement members lament how people love to repost about white fragility on their social media accounts without acknowledging it within themselves (in the vein it seems of Gladwell's thoughts on clicktivism) and the hypocrisy of North and Northeast Portland's gentrified neighborhoods plastered with Black Lives Matter signs. Earlier in the video, a black

bloc-clad activist said their vote was for “anarchy” in the upcoming election. The video closes with the PDX Black Youth Movement activists and another Black activist highlighting the importance of civic engagement and voting. As commenter @Torrential states, “The parallels between the two types of protesters was truly shocking. It seems like the media on each side is focusing on one or the other instead of the whole, and what you did in this video was exactly what we needed” (2020).

This extended description of *All Gas No Brakes* is to demonstrate the manifold, paradoxical, and deeply emotional series of conflicts that are difficult to grasp across such a sprawling and diversified movement. Viewers might be left with conflicting emotions or reactions to what they have seen and attempt to integrate the information into their future decision-making about joining, continuing in, or leaving the movement. It also shows that a large swath of the population distrusts traditional media coverage (Ladd, 2011, cited in Turcotte et al, 2015, p. 521). Even with widespread distrust, traditional media coverage of protest movements proves highly consequential in directing public opinion and policymaking. Past research has shown that these two audiences—the broader public and policymakers—are protesters’ primary concern when it comes to changing hearts and minds, though it remains unclear which group’s sympathies prove more meaningful (de Moor, 2013, pp. 11-12).

News media may ignore movements altogether, focus mostly on the spectacle rather than the content of protesters’ grievances, or frame protests using “radical tactics” as mostly an issue of “law-and-order,” or report in a way that “attacks movement claims or legitimates repression” (Caren et al, 2020, pp. 446-47). Activists therefore do spend a good deal of time focusing on protest optics, using the affordances of social media platforms and broad community networks—what Caren et al (2020) refer to as “stitching” (p. 447)—to attempt to control onlookers’ focus of the movement**.** So, while protest tactics are driven by significant emotional intensity, there is sustained conversation among activists about the logic and trajectory of ongoing direct actions.

In keeping with Zuboff, Dahlberg identifies two forces of “extreme fragmentation and homogenization” driven by market forces treating social media users as “individualized consumers” (2007, p. 840). Individualist, consumer societies therefore begin to fashion our civic life as a pursuit of self-fulfillment rather than the collective good (Rose, 1999, cited in Passini, 2017, p. 540). The forces of the Internet leave us in a bind where we “live in the knowledge that our lives have unique value, but we are treated as invisible” (Zuboff, 2019, p. 45). The consequence for social movements is that consumerism works to “make protests

against curbs on freedom something very expensive and undesirable" and work to obscure the narrowing of freedoms altogether (Bauman, 2007, cited in Passini, 2017, p. 541).

The problem of "filter bubbles" and "echo chambers" emerged concurrently with nascent social media, but there is no real consensus about what actually occurs in online networks. Regardless, prior to the information age, humans are prone to "form social ties with others who are similar to oneself in some way" and to "select information or sources they already agree with whilst filtering out the others" (Bright, 2018, p. 19). Bright also points to studies that demonstrate how people "moderate their opinions into line with what they perceive the group norm to be" or to otherwise stay silent, transmitting the impression of a univocal collective (Ibid.). Further study has also shown that it is those who reside in the extremes of the political spectrum who are most likely to engage in "selective exposure," whereas those who are more central are more likely to talk across the left-right divide (Ibid., pp. 20, 29). In addition, "system-driven customizability," meaning the platforms' algorithms, has also been found to have a strong effect on selective exposure (Dylko et al, 2017, cited in Spohr, 2017, p. 153). Multipurpose social media sites like Facebook and Twitter generate a "news-finds-me perception" in which users feel informed about the news without actively seeking it out and likely not questioning their own or the platform's exposure biases, thus creating an environment of "ambient news" (Gil de Zúñiga et al, 2017, cited in ibid., p. 155). Overall, the Internet produces a new conundrum for the age-old problems of how people reason their beliefs, find their information, and process disagreement.

Bright's evidence points to the idea that it is actually "the certainty with which people hold beliefs, rather than ideological differences" which determines online fragmentation (2018, p. 29). This research generally implies that "deliberation within groups of similar identity […] is ultimately a serious danger to democracy and society at-large" (Dahlberg, 2007, p. 832). Especially as it pertains to anarchist circles, the assumption of "a liberal-rationalist, consensus-oriented model of deliberative democracy and the public sphere, where difference is ultimately a problem to be dealt with" is inherently problematic (Ibid.). Another perspective is that when "counter-discourse largely circulates within closed spaces [it] provides an important step in building alternative visions of life before contributing to opening the boundary of dominant discourse through more explicit forms of contestation" (Ibid., p. 837). The Gramscian concept of the "subaltern" can be applied to the creation of "counter-publics" on the Internet; however, Carroll and Hackett argue that subaltern communities stay within the bounds of talking to one another without necessarily addressing "wider publics," both of which they see as crucial to achieving media democratization (2006, p. 98). In a not-so-extreme example, what has come

to be referred to as Black Twitter acts as an informal deliberative enclave that has been shown to have little content overlap with other spaces, especially in times of police violence (Graham, 2019, p. 15).

High-profile account suspensions have occurred on mainstream social media platforms. In August of 2020, Facebook banned several pages from distinct social corners of its platform, including far-right, QAnon, anarchist, and leftist pages. In October 2020, Instagram disabled the PNWYLF account. After the first wave of bans, leftists created a DIY social media platform called Kolektiva Social on Mastodon, "a decentralized, non-corporate social media alternative," crowdfunded through Patreon and centered on open-source software (Fassler, 2020, para 1). Mastodon is part of a wider network of decentralized social media sites called the Fediverse, where users can interact across sites with only one profile (Ibid.). This arrangement, according to one user, "is a very anarchist vision of what the world should look like," namely, "small self-governing communities or affinity groups, united but decentralized" (Franklin Lopez, cited in ibid., para 5).

A great deal of study has been done on Twitter and hashtags. Speaking generally, the use of hashtags for indexing purposes is conspicuously absent from left-wing Twitter during the Portland protests. Hashtags are one method among many that helps to "develop an understanding of problems and solutions that do not exclusively rely on leaders within the movement," oftentimes discussing protest tactics openly (Ince et al, 2017, pp. 1818, 1825). They are "entry points into larger and more complex worlds" and can allow people with marginalized identities to author their own interpretations of the world and visions for the future (Bonilla and Rosa, 2015, pp. 7, 9). In 2020, activists strayed from the use of hashtags and undertook innovative ways of spreading information that could stay out of the view of the wider public. One way of doing so, as shown in the adjoining tweet, was typing information in code to bypass Twitter's search function.

Figure 25: A Twitter user typing in code to communicate online security technique for their audience.

In addition, there is a cottage industry of partisan, right-wing journalism with perhaps no one more emblematic of this adversarial phenomenon in the Portland context than Andy Ngô. Broad worries over filter bubbles distort the fact that right-wing media networks, like Alex Jones' *InfoWars* or the now-defunct Parler social networking site, "are distinct in being highly networked and insular, facilitating the circulation of propaganda" (Benkler et al, 2018,

cited in Caren et al, 2020, p. 445). Ngô has an explicit and vested interest in exposing and opposing "antifa," and his work has arguably played an outsize role in the creation of the "antifa" specter in right-wing circles. He repeatedly publishes the criminal charges, mugshots, and prosecutorial outcomes of those arrested in relation to demonstrations. Publicly available arrest information coupled with his wide audience provide activists with high stakes and a clear incentive to shield their identities from enemies. In contrast to what might be called "left-wing" Twitter, Ngô's feed is steeped in the publication of illegal and unethical actions undertaken by protesters, often involving video footage of assaults, confiscated weapons, previous deviant criminality, or otherwise hypocritical behavior.

As individuals assess the trustworthiness of an organization, they "tend to overgeneralize from vivid, highly salient events" and "use the behaviors of institutional leaders as reference points" (Windisch et al, 2019, p. 3). In 2020, memorable police behavior acts as a schema to evaluate police as a whole, and likewise, dramatic protester behavior helps to represent all or most activists. The reality is that individuals are primed through their networks to see confirmatory images from the onset that are entirely divergent from the images seen by people in other networks. Ngô himself is a gay Asian American man who grew up in Portland, and the strategic wielding of his own identity—especially when Asian Americans are assaulted at protests on the suspicion that *they* are Ngô (@MrAndyNgo, 2020b)—and identities of other people of color (@MrAndyNgo, 2020a) complicates straightforward narratives about opponents of Portland's particular manifestation of racial justice protests. His feed constitutes a variety of raw documentation like photos and videos of protests but portray an entirely different atmosphere than that of many protest participants, who produce similar raw data which instead depicts "fash" or police.

8d. Doxing, infighting, and security practices

Andy Ngô has almost a million followers on Twitter. When he posts the names and photos of people allegedly involved in Portland's protest movement, they are rightfully concerned about their lives being affected negatively by those comprising the alt-right. Known left-wing protesters report receiving regular death threats via social media platforms. When shaming is removed from the purview of the ingroup (that is, those *within* the protest movement), it becomes especially dangerous. Even a brief peek into the Proud Boys (and Proud Boys-adjacent) Telegram channels reveals vitriol directed against antifa, Black Lives Matter, and leftists: "I'm so sick to my stomach. We are at the precipice of great and violent change boys. The night is always darkest before the dawn. […] @ProudBoysusa are the only ones

standing f2f [face-to-face] with the enemy to stop them" (Official New Hampshire Proud Boy, 2020a).[5] In a similar forwarded post, the New Hampshire Proud Boys state, "antifa, blm and the whole of the left […] have committed treason against America and for that they have become the enemy. The punishment for treason? Death. Death to their ideals, death to their beliefs and a reset of an ideology that is diametrically opposed to America's values" (2020b).[6] This is clearly signaling the adoption of a wartime narrative, one in which both parties see the other as the enemy, focusing much of their energies on defeating the other. Where this is antifascists' explicit purpose, it constitutes an organically developed, distinct priority for a group like the Proud Boys.

In all cases, "even relatively minor forms of ridicule and shaming can culminate in insurmountable harm, especially for those who may be marginalized or otherwise vulnerable" (Trottier et al, 2020, p. 2). Digital vigilantism, which includes doxing, "seek[s] job losses and embodied interventions against their targets" (Ibid., p. 3). It is mainly for this reason that black bloc is considered necessary. In 2017 Charlottesville, alt-right protesters were confident in their racism, marching together in plainclothes and with their faces uncovered, shocking many observers. In Durkheimian language, as Milbrandt observes, it could "be considered an inter-tribal assembly of the far-right in America" (2020, p. 222). Protest organizers made sure to let the public know that this was in fact a legal and legitimate assembly (Ibid., p. 226). In a sense, "visible political violence allows power to 'deploy its pomp in public,'" which can arguably be most potent when small collectives gain legitimacy through the state (Foucault, 1977, pp. 48-49, cited in Ward, 2020, p. 3). Almost immediately, far-flung spectators "disrupted any expectation of anonymity or temporal boundedness that may have been presumed by rally goers" in crowdsourcing personal information based on pictures and videos of attendees, successfully costing people their jobs and reputations (Milbrandt, 2020, p. 230). In the Durkheimian view, the Charlottesville rally "violated strongly held sentiments 'deeply written' into the collective consciousness," thereby granting normative permission to name and shame the violators (Ibid., p. 251). Thus, public shaming is waged as a political and cultural war, exceeding the drama of a social movement's own infighting and elevating the social risks of those involved in political expression.

[5] This message has since been deleted by Telegram, and the cited link now states, "This channel can't be displayed because it violated Telegram's Terms of Service."
[6] This message has since been deleted by Telegram, and the cited link now states, "This channel can't be displayed because it violated Telegram's Terms of Service."

When Ted Wheeler asked for the public's help in unmasking protesters, the case of the Vancouver riots in 2011 should have given him pause. The Vancouver Police Department explicitly made the request of citizens to help identify rioters through photos and videos, ultimately fueling and legitimating an indiscriminate public shaming (and even vigilante justice) campaign of suspected rioters and people mistakenly identified as suspected rioters (Schneider and Trottier, 2012, pp. 68-69). People from across the political spectrum seem to relish the opportunity to reveal the identities of people involved in protests, and others—like the Capitol insurrectionists—seemed unbothered by the possibility, or at least found confidence in their self-righteousness or fortitude in the supposed protection of Trump and his allies. While doxing Charlottesville rally goers seemed to get a "shame pass" (Teitel, 2017, para 4, cited in Milbrandt, 2020, p. 216), some scholars are perturbed by the practice in which "many citizens bec[o]me 'deputized as motivated agents' to assist state surveillance practices" (Ward, 2021, p. 346, cited in Tynes, 2021, p. 352).

As was detailed in the prior section, initial demonstrations in the city reached into the thousands and began to dissolve following rifts between activists made public. Infighting in social movements is almost elemental, and it can have adverse consequences. A contributing factor to burnout is "competition related to who had 'street cred,' who adopted the most radical language, and who withstood the most oppression" (Gorski, 2019, p. 679). Even beyond the public disavowal of Rose City Justice and Wall of Moms, other activist groups and individuals as well as news outlets and individual journalists over the months have been singled out for criticism on social media. This phenomenon is frequently referred to as "call out culture" or "cancel culture." For those not intently tuned into the protest community and its communication methods, these dynamics might be almost indiscernible.

On the ground at demonstrations, confusion and disagreement can emerge out of *who* is speaking or leading and whether they are trusted or respected in the protest community. For example, one group first known as Portland Protest Bureau and later renamed Black Unity PDX, has drawn the ire of other activists for what is called "swooping" (@dontatmefascist, 2020), being "grifters" (@shadoweater44, 2020), or otherwise acting out of alignment with other protesters. Swooping generally refers to the co-optation of an event by speakers or people that purport to be leaders, often shifting the message away from what the event's intentions, and grifting refers to shady commodification or clout-chasing due to a person or group's proximity to protest events. Black Unity PDX has been called out for being overly aggressive (@SoundsnColors, 2020), making critical strategic errors and acting unilaterally (@PNWResistance, 2020), being misogynistic and homophobic (@speetsy, 2020),

cooperating with the police (@BreadBook, 2020), and weaponizing their Blackness (@PDXcomms, 2020).

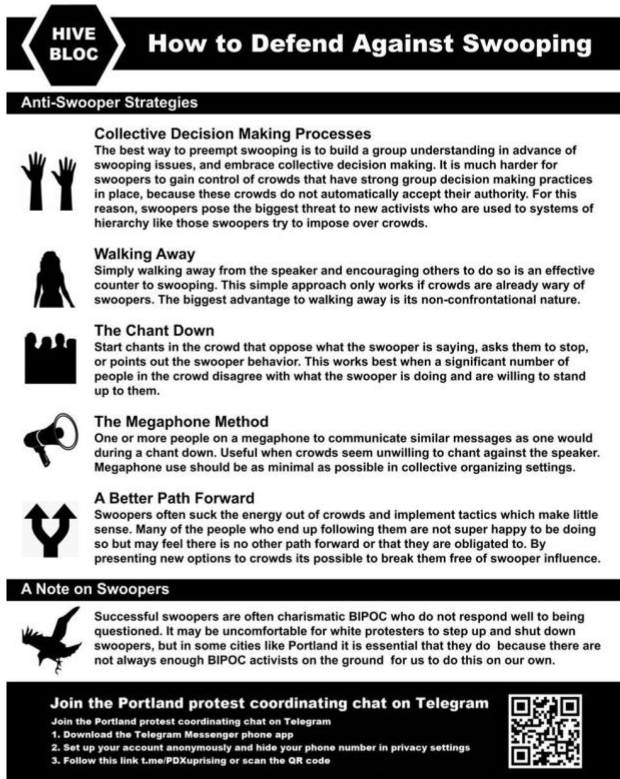

Figure 26: An infographic regarding "swooping" regularly posted in the PDX Uprising Telegram channel. Posted by Deleted Account (2021, March 14).

Ad hoc protest security forces have regularly been called out for replicating police behavior, with Michael Reinoehl exemplifying how this can go awry. For example, activists interviewed in *Uprising: A Guide From Portland* reflect on how a 7/11 convenience store, which came to be referred to as “Comrade 7/11,” slowly shifted toward becoming a gathering place for unscrupulous people on the fringes of the protest (Evans, 2021b). In one incident captured on film, self-appointed and armed protest security forces attacked a bystander who questioned their aggression and proceeded to attack a couple in a truck who tried to intervene, leaving the man unconscious and with serious injuries requiring hospitalization (The Oregonian, 2021). The podcast reports that the man’s girlfriend was clear in distinguishing the people that attacked her boyfriend from “real protesters” (Evans, 2021b). This distinction attempts to diffract negative evaluations by drawing boundaries between authentic and inauthentic participants, though it is likely these distinctions do not carry far beyond individuals already paying close attention to on-the-ground nuances. Similarly, at the Red House eviction defense, Black activist Ragina Rage criticized the security forces, who they described as “white cisgender people, running around acting crazily, like cops” (cited in Evans, 2021d). American society has long been saturated by models of punishment, suspicion, and exclusion, which makes imagining (let alone executing) alternative models exceedingly difficult, hence a leftist protest mantra to “kill the cop in your head” (Ibid.). With the installation of a pervasive security culture, maintaining a clear line between strategic wariness and misguided distrust borne out of conjecture is a demanding responsibility.

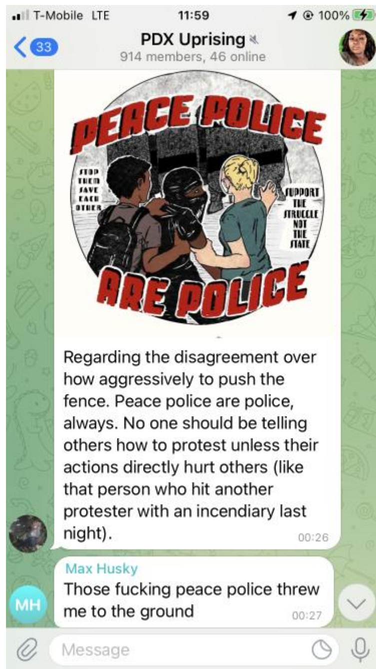

Figure 27: Image posted by user Hyrid Rainbow 精神保健信息on July 23, 2020 regarding "peace policing."

Simultaneously, "peace policing" is not tolerated at protest events. Peace policing refers to attempts made by people at a demonstration to soften or sanitize other protesters' actions thereby serving to reinforce dominant norms of "peaceful" or nonviolent protests that do not include any kind of aggression, vandalism, or offensive/defensive techniques against the police. De-escalation groups like the Portland Peace Team, may be tolerated, ignored, or criticized, but are overall considered outsiders and out of touch with the movement's radical contingents (@everyotherjdw, 2021; Antifasta, 2021). Interacting cooperatively with the police in any way is heavily proscribed and ultimately precludes people and organizations from retaining a presence in the radical protest scene (Shepherd, 2017; Deleted Account, 2020h). People who "peace police" in Portland also tend to be identified as people who are armed, overly aggressive, ultimately coming full circle with the problematic policing behavior identified in the latter paragraph.

Below follows a somewhat convoluted, but effective, online conflict resolution attempt in the *PDX Uprising* Telegram chat based on an offline conflict that occurred during a direct action. The discussion begins with a protest update: "Well otg [on the ground] it's been said finally. They don't want our 'anarchy bullshit'" (Brownie, 2020). Others in the chat ask for more information from John Brownie, who observes that some protesters were called out for "swooping" and responded with the above statement. The discussion continues in Figure 28.

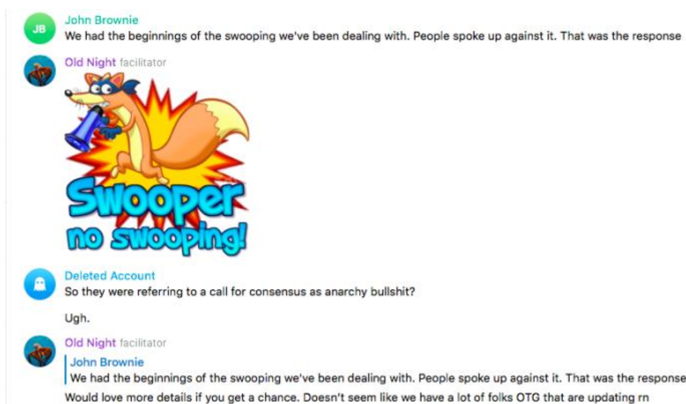

Figure 28: Excerpt of "swooping" discussion, part I.

Another user, in a carefully worded message, shown in Figure 29, recounts the details of the conflict from their experience on the ground to abate the confusion in the chat about what happened. In providing

details, they couch their observations as a product of subjective experience, attempting to not speak for others. In doing so, this message effectively defuses some of the mounting conflict.

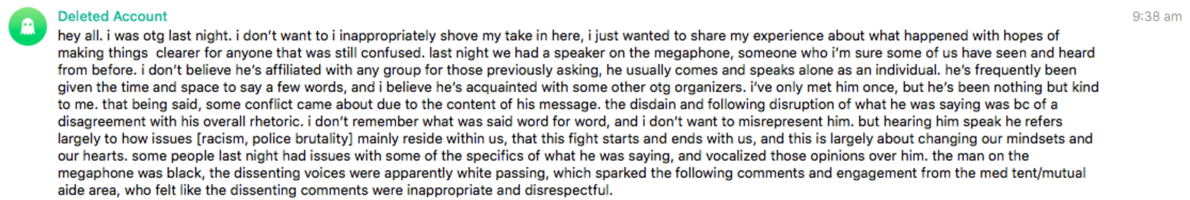

Figure 29: Excerpt of "swooping" discussion, part II.

In Figure 30, user "Have At It" takes issue with how they and their "teammates" have been characterized in the Telegram messages and on Twitter. In their message, Have At It demonstrates how black bloc shields key identity markers, making it difficult to know whose voice in a Black Lives Matter direct action should be legitimized or given priority. They therefore apologize for assuming a white-passing person of color was white. They then explicitly refer to some of the chatter shown in Figure 28 as problematic.

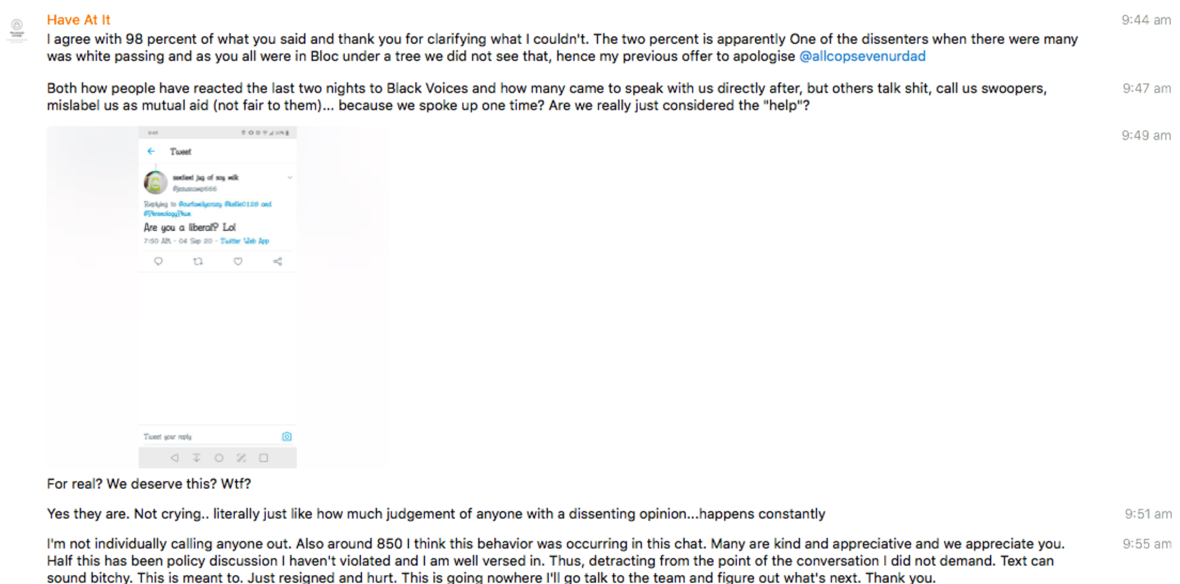

Figure 30: Excerpt of "swooping" discussion, part III.

Below, kn0me invites a hybrid mode of conflict resolution, implying that the online forum is insufficient to assuage all concerns of those directly involved in the conflict. Have At It shows hesitation and, in Figures 31 and 32, criticizes how they have noticed a recent shift in which some Black voices are quickly shut down and excluded from direct actions. They seem to be addressing unhealthy conformism or ineffective methods of approaching disagreement and internal dissent. The nature of this online forum is that the result of such discussions may never be clear except to those directly involved, who presumably have continued to address such conflicts in their inner circles, in private chats, and in person. The

forum nevertheless offers a glimpse into how conflicts at times emerge, simmer, escalate, defuse, and/or resolve.

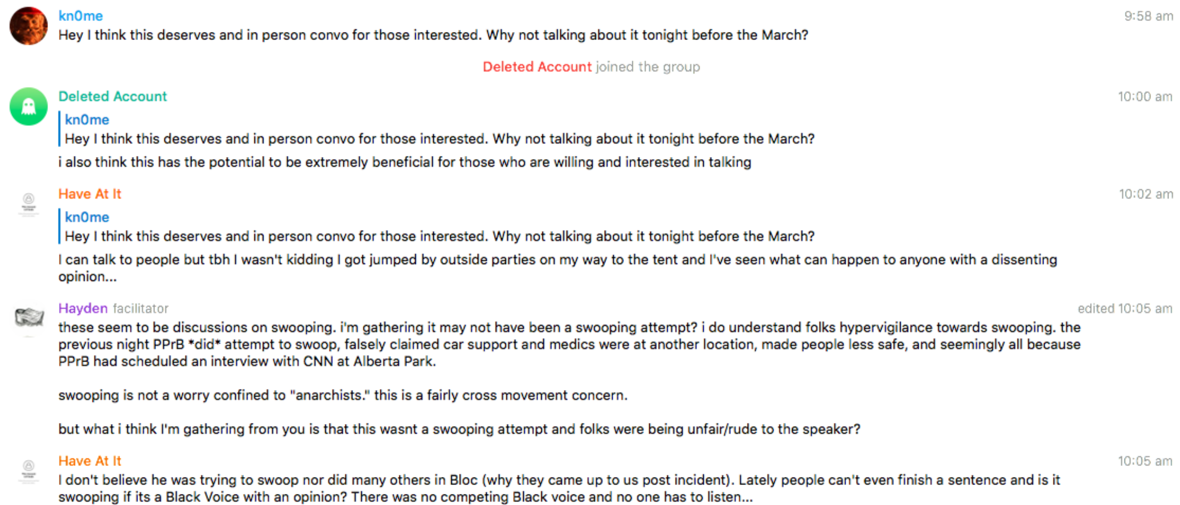

Figure 31: Excerpt of "swooping" discussion, part IV.

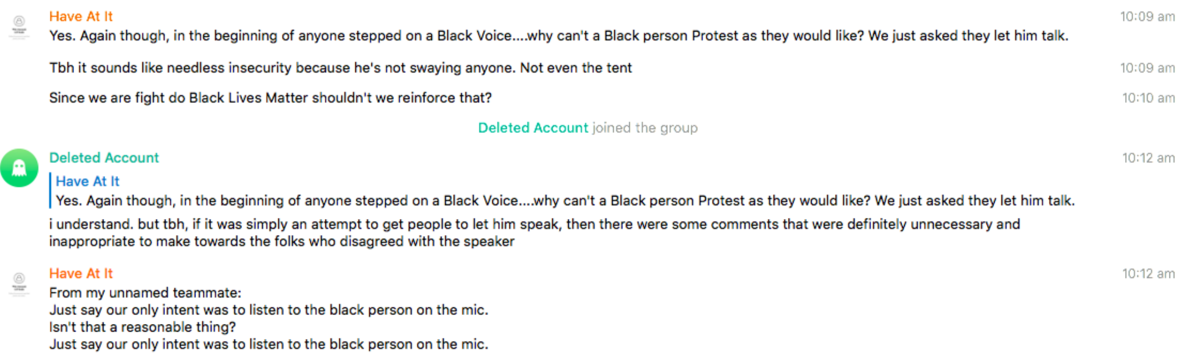

Figure 32: Excerpt of "swooping" discussion, part V.

One way to conceptualize antifascists, according to Vysotsky, is as a subculture (2020, pp. 14-16). In subcultural spaces, "authenticity [is] a consistently shifting set of standards that vary from scene to scene and era to era" (Ibid., p. 16). Understanding how a social movement's subculture engenders and resolves conflict has significance beyond the walls of academia. Especially among young people, subcultural recruitment frequently happens through "a process of stigmatization," that is, being or feeling excluded from the dominant or mainstream culture (Williams and Copes, 2005, p. 68). Still, most people who are in a subculture maintain larger networks, even if they are mainly made up of "weak social ties" (Ibid., p. 70). Traditionally, subcultural leaders transmit important information about subcultural membership, and more general information is transmitted through mass media (Ibid., pp. 70-71). In the digital age, anonymity on the internet makes subcultural boundaries more porous, and it allows people to experiment with self-expression mediated through a screen. The digital space means that "processes of differentiation must occur through communicative practices

including the publication of text and visual media, even when community boundaries seem well defined, in order to separate authentic members from inauthentic members" (Sclafani, 2019, p. 15). The question of authenticity, especially in a horizontalist grouping like the Portland protest scene, then becomes far more difficult to monitor in online spaces. Black bloc, in a way, acts as a similar shield of an individual's identity while on the ground, facilitating the hybrid nature of boundary enforcement.

"Cancel culture" as it manifests among the left-wing might, at first glance, seem a product of younger generations or leftist political persuasions being far too sensitive. Looking more closely, platforms themselves "can foster ideological rigidity and lack of nuance due to the typical textual brevity of any individual post, the speed with which posts are disseminated, and the rapidity of online exchanges, which militate against considered responses" (Ng, 2020, p. 623). Tsiveriotis echoes author Joshua Rothman (2014) in the description of "online communication as 'Kafkaesque'—not only because of the mental acrobatics necessary to make sense of context-less chunks of content, but also because […] 'punishment is pervasive'" (2017, p. 46). Following the concerns about filter bubbles, gatekeeping practices do appear on platforms across the Internet, both spilling in from and out into the so-called real world. Still, it is actually the platforms themselves who benefit from our commodified attention and engagement, even and especially if it is in outrage.

Nevertheless, public callouts may be deemed necessary at times. In the lineage of #MeToo, activists have used the platform to divulge who among them needs to be ejected from the movement. Others have been outed as collaborators with the police and for being a snitch. This ostensibly serves to protect the community at large from further interpersonal harms or from undermining the movement from within. Further research could be done on protesters' anxieties about being called out online for missteps they make or harms they cause. Campbell and Manning assert that "insofar as people come to depend on law alone, their willingness or ability to use other forms of conflict management may atrophy" (2014, p. 697). It makes sense then that those *most* critical of the legal system would turn to novel forms of dealing with disputes. Where authority is absent or no authoritative action can be taken, "gossip and public shaming can be powerful sanctions" (Ibid., p. 698). In cases that are small but cumulative (like microaggressions) or that fall outside the bounds of traditional authorities, those in conflict "seek to attract the attention, sympathy and intervention of third parties" (Ibid., p. 696). Their idea is that "a morality that privileges equality and condemns oppression is most likely to arise precisely in settings that already have relatively high degrees of equality" (Ibid., p. 706). They also assert that enough of this "may even lead to the emergence of a new moral culture" (Ibid.,

p. 711). Their writing gives a negative value judgment to such a possibility, but I believe that this kind of moral culture is more in keeping with anarchist praxis and the general embrace of conflict. Still, social media does not incentivize or provide tools for conflict resolution when it is desired.

9. Conclusions

The murder of George Floyd brought into harsh relief the inertia of American iniquities and inequities that breed frustration, resentment, and ideological intransigence. For communities like Portland, it triggered a collective reckoning over the ability to co-exist in times of stark cruelties, let alone to compel material change in the local context.

While many Portlanders feel invested in the sentiment of Black Lives Matter, the call to “abolish the police” or the belief that “all cops are bastards” have a more alienating effect. In addition, even sharing a philosophical belief in the abolition of systems of policing and incarceration does not necessarily entail participation in a direct action calling for such a philosophy. Other responsibilities and rationalizations beckon, and people stop showing up. Somewhere, among those with liberal inclinations, a rhetorical line is drawn, slowly hewing an otherwise inclusive left-wing movement and creating fissures of a deeply personal nature. The subtleties of left-wing positions play out in social media spaces and in the quantities of bodies on the ground during protest events. One of the most acute difficulties for leftist organizers is the effort required to muster a utopic social imaginary out of a deeply flawed world, especially in an emotionally charged space like an ongoing protest movement. With the COVID-19 pandemic necessitating digital and social media as the fulcrum for a 2020 Black Lives Matter movement, activists were the ones saddled with their deficiencies for organizing.

The extent to which individuals have ceded information to corporations and other Internet users and the extent to which the state has granted itself and corporations the right to monitor, identify, and wield digital information *about* and *against* individuals presents an ever-more urgent problem as it pertains to dissent, protest, and to pre-digital democratic norms. If the Internet has eluded the protections and limitations provided by the law, from a mass mobilization standpoint, the implications of this are profound.

Activist use of the Internet constructs a digital canopy rife with both risk and opportunity. This canopy is constructed by two forces, state agencies and private companies, the boundaries of which are not clearly demarcated. Especially within Portland’s activist core, the risks posed by both forces directly threaten its ability to organize and demonstrate as a collective. For this reason, a strong security ethic in one’s digital presence is a requirement for participation. The age-old threat of state tyranny is simultaneously obfuscated and amplified by the polysemy of the digital space. The events of 2020 stirred a deep, pronounced dread over the flagrant abuse of state power, and individual law enforcement members’ behaviors on the

ground, witnessed by fewer people or undertaken with more subtlety, substantiate the magnitude of such powers and further radicalize their opponents.

It is for this reason the most hardened activists are leery of accepted networking platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter, established watchdogs, like mainstream news outlets, and even allied advocates like civil society organizations and non-profits. Caution comes from a self-protective impulse, and it can in turn extend so far as the wholesale rejection of individuals who might otherwise appear remarkably like-minded. In other words, moving through activist space and treating outsiders or opposition as circumspect can also have corrosive effects on a movement.

In general, we conceptualize "conflicts in terms of cohesive actors bound by the shared identities and interests of the groups they claim to represent" (Bakke et al, 2012, p. 265). Zooming out from the orbits of Portland activist social media, I think it is fair to assume that most interested observers regionally, nationally, and globally would think of the conflict at hand in terms of Black Lives Matter versus the police or perhaps left versus right. However, inherent to a social movement—especially one as complex as the one sparked by George Floyd's murder—is the tension between "a contest in the pursuit of the common good for the group as a whole *and* a contest over private advantages with other factions in the movement" (Ibid., p. 266, emphasis original). Zooming in to Portland in 2020 and 2021, conflicts and their actors become far more inscrutable.

Haraway cites Chela Sandoval's (1984) "oppositional consciousness," a proposed framework for political identification, which aims to do away with traditional categories and classifications, opting instead for "a kind of postmodernist identity out of otherness, difference, and specificity" (1991 [1985], p. 154). Bennett (2012) adds that the identity politics of previous social movements that centered on classes of people (e.g. women, Black people, etc.) or specific causes (e.g. anti-nuclear activism, conservation, etc.) and notes the contemporary wave of "more heterogeneous mobilizations" blending many identities and causes under a broader umbrella (e.g. equality, economic justice, climate change) that are "directed at moving targets from local to national and transnational and from government to business," (p. 21). This movement diversity fosters personalized political expression among participants, aided by communications technology developments. Likewise, Prichard and Worth (2016) claim that rallying behind "non-domination […] permits both an anarchist politics and a pragmatist left to mutually sustain a concerted critique" against the forces of oppression (p. 8). Non-domination is sufficiently inclusive to avoid the disaffection of leftists, liberals, and the like through the onslaught of political struggle. History is steeped in domination, and in the *longue*

durée, it has become so hackneyed as to become quite possibly *the* defining feature of human relations. Amid the bellicosity of modern crises, the localized manifestations of domination, in its systemic and interpersonal forms, can animate communities and prompt them toward action.

Developments during the Portland protests lend evidence to an argument for a DIY ethic "as a more or less permanent adaptive response to complexities of late-modern politics" (Bennett, 2012, p. 30). Especially for young people who have grown up in this political milieu, activists or otherwise politically involved people "have few clear guidelines to follow in fashioning a public life" (Ibid.). For Butler, "whatever 'doing the right thing' turns out to be, it depends on passing through the division or struggle that conditions the ethical decision to begin with" (2020, p. 10). Ethics are therefore alive, portable, and tailor-made, suited to the specific conditions in which communities live.

Protest movements are caught in a lurch between seeking legitimacy and maintaining a "coherent collective identity," with the pursuit of one sometimes foreclosing the possibility of the other (Chowdhury et al, 2021, p. 427). For this reason, I do not categorize the Portland protests in terms of productiveness because social movements of the past, even if they refuse to compromise and lose public support, provide opportunities and lessons for future groups to take up the same issues. As nightly demonstrations slowed and attentions turned elsewhere, mutual aid practices helped create environments borne out of positive emotional energy and a desire to support the most marginalized people in the community. Mutual aid is individualized, collaborative, and organic. It aims to patch holes in the fraying social safety net. As a commentator in *Uprising: A Guide From Portland* assures, mutual aid "can be as small as it needs to be and as quiet as it needs to be" (Evans, 2021a). Mistakes, interpersonal slights, and burnout can be more readily managed through mutual aid networks that can take these atavistic features of human relationships and shape them into something collectively beneficial. It is imperfect, and it is a practice, and it works to elide punitive and carceral logics.

Research supports that protests can in fact "create and strengthen exactly the sort of social ties that encourage additional civic and political engagement" (El-Haj, 2015, p. 981). At the same time, with the right infrastructure, coalitions can be fostered through diversity and inequality, especially if they aim to produce trust and commitment through shared neutral spaces, invest in ongoing interaction, create strong social ties and recruit skilled bridge-builders, develop restorative processes that build solidarity and are equipped to acknowledge inequalities and manage conflicts, and, finally, celebrate the coalitional identity and affirm shared commitments (Gawerc, 2021). Communicating during protests or through digital media poses challenges to the stability of a coalition, but these proposed foundations can help it to

weather the storm and alleviate some of the uncertainties and irritations present in the movement.

Technology is ineluctable in our lives, and it simultaneously uplifts and threatens our ability to connect with one another. Furtive, anonymous interaction, in order to escape the machinations of surveillance, may necessarily have to cement itself into social justice causes, especially in the face of right-wing populism and antidemocratic permutation. For Haraway, "there is a myth system waiting to become a political language to ground one way of looking at science and technology and challenging the informatics of domination" (1991 [1985], p. 175). In her view, cyborgs shatter the dualisms that beleaguer us, and, in a Durkheimian fashion, new myths can be elicited. Social technologies have abounded in the last twenty-five years, and they have done so far more rapidly than most of us can apprehend, let alone thoughtfully assess whether they do us any good. These growing pains, in episodic history, may signal a crisis, but in the *longue durée*, they may better evince the remarkable adaptability of human collectives and the resilience to stand up in the face of oppression. In fact, both can be true. Tactics and optics aside, the irenic conclusion is that a clear aspiration for a better world, even if the possibilities seem bleak, remains alive and well.

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