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# Introduction:Sexual Violence, Social Movements, and Social Media

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By 2019, have Hollaback and Slutwalk become familiar names within feminist communities? Hollaback is a digital activism movement and non-profit organization aimed at putting an end to street harassment by encouraging the use of digital tools, such as mapping and social networking sites, to report incidents of street harassment around the world. Slutwalk began as a street-based festival in 2011 to protest the victim-blaming of rape survivors. These are both transnational feminist digital movements, built across boundaries with the help of the digital platforms in the second decade of the 21st century.

Social media platforms have grown by leaps and bounds over the past eight years, as has social media activism against sexual violence. The intensification of the #MeToo Movement in 2017 has spurred the emergence of many additional transnational movements against sexual violence including the #MeToo Movement. Indeed, 2017 is now considered a watershed year, when millions of women across the world said #TimesUp to sexual violence of all kinds and when the violence was not only steeped in patriarchal power, but also protected by it.

As 2019 begins, we see even more women continuing the struggle against sexual violence, using social media platforms for support, amplification, and strength. From South Korea to Sudan, Germany to Mexico, the U.S. to India, Bangladesh to Kenya, women have risen against sexual violence, assault, and harassment and shared their stories both online and offline, making #MeToo an ever more global movement (Mahdavi 2018).

Conversations about sexual violence were not just limited to the U.S., but had a global reach. There were lists of perpetrators, editorials and reporting on sexual violence, and hashtags that include but are not limited to #Metoo, #TimesUp, #Losha, #WhyIDidn'tReport, #NiUnaMenos.

Throughout the world, social media platforms and internet technology have been providing space for those who have suffered sexual violence to share their painful experiences. Social media has been one of the platforms women have used to share their experiences, bringing them to the public, and resulting in some cases with judicial proceedings, albeit with mixed results. On one hand Harvey Weinstein and Bill Cosby have been indicted, while on another, Brett Kavanaugh's nomination to the U.S. Supreme Court was approved, despite credible sexual assault allegations against him.

Transnational feminist activists have long used online platforms to mobilize feminist campaigns (Scharff et al 2016, Losh 2014) like the #MeToo campaign. As transnational feminist media scholars, we are cognizant of the existing gaps on social media—which have also been identified and critiqued by feminist activists from marginalized communities—that most online sexual violence activism ends up having a Western focus and moves away from marginalized classes. Cyberfeminism has facilitated collaboration on activism between women from diverse spaces, but a constant criticism has been that feminist digital activism has usually been assumed to be a radical political movement of Western women (Khamis 2010, Yu 2009).

There has also been discontent in the form of open letters when champions of women's rights have been accused of sexual harassment and assault, like the #Losha in India: the list of sexual harassers in academia. There has repeated online trolling of anti-rape feminist activists, making the social media platforms contested terrain of both autonomous space and misogynistic harassment. Addressing the successes and limitations of online social movements against sexual violence, through this issue, *Ada* wanted to represent the global perspectives of feminist scholars and activists through the lens of religion, class, power, culture, race, and other social identities. Feminists are working to make sexual violence prevention efforts more inclusive, along with discussions on social media platforms, but there are still far too many whose experiences have been overlooked, their stories buried under the identities of race, class, gender, location, caste, and other intersectional identities (Brown et al 2017).

In this issue, you will read about the #MosqueMeToo movement on Twitter, in which Muslim women share their lived experiences of sexual violence. As author Camille Point observes, this activism puts Muslim women in a double bind, as they fight both the discrimination of Muslim xenophobia and exclusivity of western feminist activists.

Wunpini Fatimata Mohammed offers a holistic overview of online feminist activism of Northern Ghana, shedding light on the role of existing power dynamics in a religious

and conservative society, going beyond the effective use of social media activism against the sexist harassment and slut-shaming of Sadia, the survivor-activist who decided to protest against her sexist harassment.

Using video to unpack the sexual harassment accusations against self-identified feminist Aziz Ansari, Rena Bivens and Ummni Khan write about their video production on sexual harassment accusations against Aziz Ansari, American Tamil comedian. The authors explore the multilayered issues of identity, racism, and political affiliation that complicated this case.

Who engages, creates, and disseminates hashtag activism against sexual violence? Sarah J. Jackson, Moya Bailey, and Brooke Foucault Welles ask this important question in their article on digital labor. According to them, women of color disproportionately conduct the labor behind hashtags like #YesAllWomen and #MeToo, thereby making complex issues of gendered violence more accessible for public discussion.

Finally, Sarah Ciston, in her article discussing her chatbot creation Ladymouth, focuses on the combination of intersectional research and creative coding to prevent online misogyny and promote activism aimed at ending sexual violence.

We hope these articles provide timely insight into online social movements against sexual violence.

This issue would not have been possible without the tireless involvement of our reviewers (listed below and who will be part of the editorial board for Ada Journal for 2019) and the digital publishing team (or who Radhika refers to as her “dream team” including Bailey Poland, Brandie Bohney, Lena Mary Ziegler, and Renee Ann Drouin) from the Rhetoric and Writing program at Bowling Green State University. We thank them for their work in providing feedback to the authors and thus for their support in producing collaborative and innovative scholarly work. We also thank Eva Peskin, Sherham Mokhtar, Sarah Hamid, Riddhima Sharma, Dave McCallum, Bryce Peake, Karen Estlund, Lee Nickoson, Andrew Schocket, Susana Pena, and University of Oregon Libraries for various levels of support over the last few months during the Fembot collective management transitions at this issue was moving forward towards publication.

Ada Issue 15 reviewers:

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**Pallavi Guha** (<https://adanewmedia.org/author/pallaviguha>)

Pallavi Guha is an Assistant Professor of journalism and new media at Towson University. Dr. Guha researches on anti-rape and sexual harassment activism on mass media and social media platforms; the role of gender in electoral campaign and media; and politics and social media. Dr. Guha is a former journalist, researcher, and media educator with over fifteen years of professional experience. She has a Ph.D. in journalism from the University of Maryland, and her academic background lies in the intersection of political science, international relations, communication, journalism, and Women's Studies. She has the experience of teaching media and communication courses at universities since 2012. An alumna of University of Maryland, Rutgers University, Presidency College, and Jadavpur University, Dr. Guha has worked internationally for leading media organizations including BBC News and television, London and The Times of India in UK, India, and the U.S. Dr. Guha has won many awards and honors for her research and teaching.

**Carol Stabile** (<https://adanewmedia.org/author/cstabile>)

Carol Stabile is professor of Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies and associate dean for strategic initiatives in the College of Arts and Sciences at the University of Oregon. She researches the history of gender, race, and class in media institutions. She received her PhD from Brown University. She is the award-winning author of three books: *Feminism and the Technological Fix*, *White Victims, Black Villains: Gender, Race, and Crime News in US Culture*, and *The Broadcast 41: Women and the Anti-Communist Blacklist*. Her articles have appeared in *Camera Obscura*, *Cultural Studies*, and *South Atlantic Quarterly*. She co-founded the Fembot Collective and co-edits the *Feminist Media Studies* book series for University of Illinois Press. Her book, *The Broadcast 41: Women and the Broadcast Blacklist* (Goldsmiths University Press, 2018) tells the story of a group of women who were driven from US media industries during the Cold War. Stabile received an American Council of Learned Scholars (ACLS) Fellowship to complete the book and is working on a digital companion to it. She is currently collaborating with digital humanities scholar Roopika Risam on a new digital publishing project, *Reanimate*, aimed at restoring the contributions of women and people of color to media history and documenting lost innovations, creativity, and resistance within media industries.

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Radhika Gajjala is Professor of Media and Communication and of American Culture Studies at Bowling Green State University, USA. She was Fulbright Professor in Digital Culture at

University of Bergen, Norway for the year 2015–2016 and has continued collaborations through affiliation with the Western Norway Research Institute in Sogndal, Norway. In 2012, she was Senior Fulbright scholar at Soegijapranata Catholic University and has continued collaborating with faculty their in the examination of Indonesian craft communities/entrepreneurship. She has researched online activism, DIY crafers and women-centered communities online, non-profit organizations and also engaged in community partnerships with biracial communities in the U.S. Her work that engages themes related to globalization, digital labor, feminism and social justice. Her experience in critical feminist (digital and ethnographic) research methods, in building digitally mediated networks (since 1995) and also research in craft communities internationally has led to her being invited to participate in various projects internationally as advisor, mentor and collaborator. Published books include "Digital diasporas: labor, affect in gendered Indian digital publics" - co-authored with several online activists and co-researchers - (Rowman and Littlefield International, Forthcoming in Fall 2019). "Online Philanthropy: Connecting, microfinancing, and gaming for change"(Lexington Press, 2017).Lexington "Cyberculture and the Subaltern" (Lexington Press, 2012) and "Cyberselves: Feminist Ethnographies of South Asian Women" (Altamira, 2004). Co-edited collections include "Cyberfeminism 2.0" (2012), "Global Media Culture and Identity" (2011), "South Asian Technospaces"(2008) and "Webbing Cyberfeminist Practice" (2008).



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