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WRIT 2500

Project B Part 2

An integral part of being a college student is being an informed citizen, a civil
participant, and expressing personal opinions and concerns. It is a time of discovery and figuring
out how individuals relate to each other. For our social media campaign, we plan to use the
social media platform Twitter to encourage discussion and exploration of current events topics
that spark controversy on DU's campus. Using Twitter, we aim to facilitate a conversation while
providing multiple viewpoints and perspectives to allow students to come to their own
conclusions. Everybody's unique opinion will be welcomed as an opportunity to discuss and
dissect current issues that impact us, our loved ones, and people within our community. We aim
to offer a digital community to explore, learn, and discuss current events topics that gain
attention on the DU campus.

Following McCluhan's logic that the medium is the message, we selected Twitter for our
campaign platform. The affordances of Twitter make it a hotspot for discussion, deliberation, and
opinion-sharing. Twitter is an inclusive medium because anyone can draft a tweet and anyone
can respond. Through this social media platform, we envision creating a community that
encourages thoughtful discussion. Our campaign is not aimed to specifically denounce or
promote the opinions of one specific viewpoint. We hope to encourage members of the DU
community to explore multiple perspectives and come to their own conclusions surrounding
current events. As Coates reinforces, "a constant questioning, questioning as ritual, questioning
as exploration rather than the search for certainty" (34). Many of the issues on DU's campus,

including the travel ban, climate justice, Black Lives Matter, and countless other concerns, do not have a simple solution and are often wrapped up in emotion.

We plan on using the hashtag "#DUHaveAnOpinion" to encourage viewpoints from people with a Twitter account who wish to join the discussion. The Twitter platform allows the use of "retweeting," or sharing other people's tweets on our page, so we can recirculate opinions from DU students or members of the community who use the hashtag. As mentioned in the article "#BlackLivesMatter: Epistemic Positioning, Challenges, and Possibilities," our hashtag could too present an ideology counter to the historical and contemporary framing of groups that strip them of their social value (1). As in the Black Lives Matter movement, social media platforms, like Twitter, can offer powerful responses and support to movements that might not otherwise gain traction.

Social media platforms create an "online community" that unifies people through discussion and collaboration. In Anderson's "The Origin of National Consciousness," he claims that capitalism, print, and the fatality of human linguistic diversity allowed new communities to become imaginable (42-43). For Twitter, imagined communities are formed through the brevity of information in each tweet, the ability to respond to and "retweet" other people's messages, and the accessibility of the medium for every person with internet connection or a smart phone. As Anderson mentions, print media laid the basis for national consciousness by creating "unified fields of exchange and communication" (8). Like print media, Twitter offers a streamlined platform for communication. However, it allows discussions and opinions to be more easily and widely circulated than print media. No community would exist without interaction. Twitter makes engaging with current issues uncomplicated and accessible to a limitless audience.

In contrast to forums, discussions, and debates held on DU's campus, Twitter provides a disconnect between in-person interaction. This is a beneficial affordance when discussing controversial topics that often evoke strong emotions and viewpoints. As Anderson compares to the uniformity of vernacular, Twitter provides a unified language, platform, and cause for people "who might find it difficult or even impossible to understand one another in conversation" (44). In this same way, Twitter "levels the playing field," or gives everyone the opportunity to contribute in a way that they might not otherwise be able to engage with in face-to-face discourse. The affordance of a digital platform as an "imagined community" separates people physically and allows them to share opinions, questions, and comments in a safe and respected community. Furthermore, digital mediums, and specifically Twitter, provide a briefness (140-character limit) and digestibility of information. This affordance allows Twitter to be instinctively conversational and casual, while still dealing with complex and complicated issues.

Trump's executive order (banning travel to Iraq, Syria, Iran, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, and Yemen) has sparked controversy throughout the DU community, in the United States, and across the world. We hope to provide personal insight from DU students affected by travel ban, perspectives from professors and department heads, news articles (media perspective), along with contemporary art, poetry, and videos, along with general opinions from the DU community. This will be accomplished both with interviews from students and professors as well as student interaction with our Twitter page and hashtag. Rather than push a political agenda or reinforce our own opinions, we hope to gain a more comprehensive understanding through the exploration of new ideas and the engagement of media extensions (pictures, videos, links to articles, quotes from students and professors) as well as personal input through our Twitter page.

We envision that this campaign, although targeted toward discussion about the travel ban, could be retargeted to other "hot topic" events in the DU community. Like in Ta-Nehisi Coates's book, *Between the World and Me*, we do not wish to propose definitive solutions, but rather, provide a medium to grapple with relevant issues that impact each person individually (directly or indirectly) on DU's campus and beyond. As Coates advises his son, "I would not have you descend into your own dream. I would have you be a conscious citizen of this terrible and beautiful world" (108). It is our duty, both as American citizens and as college students, to be politically engaged, opinionated, and passionate. Being conscious means being alert and aware of your surroundings, being engaged, and contributing to a larger conversation.

The goal of this online community is not to create change so much as it is supposed to invoke discussion. Change does not happen overnight. Change does not happen as a result of one person. And change does not occur as a result of one person's or one group's opinions alone. The goal of our Twitter account is to provide a community for DU students, faculty, and staff to engage with, grapple with, and learn about how current issues impact and inform the lives of others. Coates says that writing a series of questions were "the earliest acts of interrogations, of drawing myself into consciousness" (29). As a result of creating and facilitating our Twitter platform, we hope to heighten the consciousness and engagement of the DU community by encouraging exploration, questioning, and participating.

Quotes

"An unceasing interrogation of the stories told to us by the schools now felt essential" (Coates 34).

"The Dream thrives on generalization, on limiting the possible questions, on privileging immediate answers. The Dream is the enemy of all art, courageous thinking, and honest writing" (Coates50).

"You must struggle to truly remember this past in all its nuance, error, and humanity" (Coates 70).