

Black Lives Matter, Bernie Sanders, and Resistive Rhetoric on the Electoral Stage

by

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This is to certify that the accompanying thesis by Jessica Kostelnik has been accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for graduation with Honors in Rhetoric Studies.

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Abstract

Interruption, as a rhetorical tactic, has long been understood as a resistive act to silencing. Silencing those who wish to speak is a method of policing behavior. Interruption allows a rhetor to confront silencing tactics designed to disenfranchise them from their political and social systems. In this paper, I analyze the Black Lives Matter interruption of Democratic presidential candidate Bernie Sanders' rally in 2016 to understand how the Black Lives Matter protesters used interruption to reject silencing tactics employed by the Sanders team. Turning to the work of Jacques Rancière, I additionally demonstrate how silencing tactics are a rhetoric of control. To reject this control, marginalized groups can practice incivility—negating a policing logic that determines who is permitted to speak and when. In the case of the Sanders rally, protesters Marissa Johnson and Mara Willaford demonstrate the ways that uncivil interruption facilitates a space for struggle and social change.

KEYWORDS: Policing, Black Lives Matter, Bernie Sanders, resistive rhetoric

Introduction

Black bodies have always been policed in America: from their initial capture and commodification by the state under slavery, to their oppression and segregation under Jim Crow, to their incarceration and brutalization by the judicial system and its enforcement. Black speech and black behavior are also policed. The glaring racial inequality in America serves as a reminder that black citizens cannot speak out of turn to police officers, cannot occupy a position of equality in the workplace, cannot receive equal or equitable health care, and cannot live in certain spaces. The policing of Black Americans is exercised through control and distribution of public goods, services, and rights. While white supremacy ensures that Latinx, Native Americans, and other non-white groups are also policed through control and the distribution of resources, blackness is a prominent example of the material consequences of racial hierarchy. It is in this context that Black Lives Matter articulates itself.

The repeated stories of violence at the hands of police toward black bodies may be the most glaring example of racial inequality in America; however, they are not the only examples. Racial inequalities persist in the disproportionate incarceration rates of black citizens;¹ the disproportionate rates of unemployment and poverty for black citizens, wherein black households on average earn just over half the income of white households;² the disproportionately low number of black citizens graduating from college (23%) compared to their white counterparts (36%);³ housing segregation and gentrification;⁴ infant mortality rates for black families regardless of socioeconomic status and education level that double the mortality rate of white families of lower

education and socioeconomic status;⁵ and the disproportionately lower rate of preventative care and quality of medical professionals for black citizens.⁶

The policing of black bodies in various capacities maps into the structural relationship of Rancière's policing. Blackness today still operates within a system of control; Black Lives Matter exists to resist such control. Johnson and Willaford's interruption of Bernie Sanders in his 2016 Seattle rally works against a police logic in practice at the event. I use this example to argue that incivility is a useful tactic to disrupt policing, and to identify structural conditions around rhetoric's existing discussion of incivility. By putting incivility and interruption in conversation with Rancière's systems of policing, I argue that incivility and interruption are tactical ways of rejecting manifestations of police control. Rhetoric studies provides an explanation for the policing tactics that played against Johnson and Willaford, and provides an avenue for resistance.

¹ Michelle Alexander, *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness* (New York: New Press, 2011).

² "Social & Demographic Trends: On Views of Race and Inequality, Blacks and Whites are Worlds Apart," *Pew Research Center*, 27 June 2016, accessed 1 November 2017, <http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2016/06/27/1-demographic-trends-and-economic-well-being/>.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Dayna Bowen Matthew, Edward Rodrique, and Richard V. Reeves, "Time for Justice: Tackling Race Inequalities in Health and Housing," *Brookings*, 19 October 2016, accessed 1 November 2017.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

Why Black Lives Matter?

Black Lives Matter is an ideological and political intervention in a world where Black lives are systematically and intentionally targeted for demise. It is an affirmation of Black folks' contributions to this society, our humanity, and our resilience in the face of deadly oppression.

—Black Lives Matter⁷

George Zimmerman's fatal shooting of Trayvon Martin in 2012 sparked a nationwide outcry. In response to this shooting and the eventual acquittal of Zimmerman, activists took to Twitter with a simple idea, #BlackLivesMatter.⁸ The subsequent deaths of Michael Brown in 2014, Samuel DuBose in 2015, Freddie Gray in 2016, Philando Castile in 2016, Sylvie Smith in 2017, and Terence Crutcher in 2017 at the hands of police have sparked an ongoing debate about the use of excessive force by law enforcement, violence against black bodies by the state, and manifestations of racism in America. It was in this racial turbulence that #BlackLivesMatter moved between the realm of social media and the world of grassroots activism.

Alicia Garza, Opal Tometi, and Patrisse Cullors have created a vast network of 38 regional chapters. These chapters have positioned the powerful articulation “black lives matter” as “a call to action and a response to the virulent anti-Black racism that permeates our society. Black Lives Matter is a unique contribution that goes beyond extrajudicial killings of Black people by police and vigilantes.”⁹ Today, their platform calls attention to incarceration reform, police brutality, gender/sex/race/ability intersectionality, black community, and the need to affirm blackness.¹⁰ Black Lives Matter has used a single phrase to call attention to the fact that black lives are not given the same value as their white counterparts.

While grassroots organizing through social media, Black Lives Matter (BLM) has mobilized protests, marches, city hall disruptions, fund raising efforts, and engagement in local electoral politics.¹¹ BLM has also interacted with prominent political figures about the black experience of today. During the presidential election of 2016, BLM found numerous opportunities to engage political figures. BLM engaged with Donald Trump, Hillary Clinton, and Bernie Sanders. These three prominent candidates each responded to the BLM protesters in different ways. BLM activists attempted to engage with Trump at rally in North Carolina on December 4, 2015.¹² At this event, BLM engaged through protest. Black Lives Matter activists attended the rally and interrupted Trump's speech a reported 10 times. Upon yelling "black lives matter," activists were heckled by the audience and by Trump. The voices of the activists were immediately dismissed, and they were physically escorted out of the event. Black Lives Matter activists interrupted Clinton on October 30, 2015 at an event hosted at Clark Atlanta University, a historically black college.¹³ As Clinton began speaking, activists entered near the stage and began chanting "black lives matter." Clinton responded by saying, "yes they do and I'm gonna talk a lot about that in a minute." BLM activists were escorted out. On February 24, 2016, BLM activist Ashley Williams attempted to interrupt Clinton again— this time at a private fundraising event in South Carolina.¹⁴ Clinton responded to this interruption by stating, "well, can I talk? And then maybe you can listen to what I say."¹⁵ Not long after, Secret Service escorted Williams out of the event.

Black Lives Matter activists engaged with Bernie Sanders as well. On August 8, 2016 in Seattle, Black Lives Matter activists took the stage from Sanders at a rally

about Social Service, Medicare, and Medicaid.¹⁶ Marissa Johnson was the primary speaker. She was accompanied on stage by a second activist, Mara Willaford. At the beginning of the interruption, Sanders' team attempted to regain control of the podium. They quickly abandoned these attempts and gave the stage to Johnson and her companion. Once the protesters had the stage, they proceeded to address social issues in Seattle. For the majority of the interruption, Sanders sat quietly in the background. After a moment of silence for Michael Brown, and a few additional tense interactions between the Sanders team and the protesters, Sanders exited the stage. Unlike any other interruption staged by Black Lives Matter to viable 2016 presidential nominees, Johnson spoke about the black experience.

Donald Trump responded to BLM with total negation. Hillary Clinton attempted to co-opt BLM into her vision for blackness in America. Bernie Sanders, however, lost his speaking position to Black Lives Matter. BLM's interruption of Sanders is unique of the three primary candidates because activists had the space to articulate policy concerns and claim political agency. Black Lives Matter, like other social media and grassroots movements, occupies an interesting position in contemporary political discourse. They intervene in politics outside of formal voting systems, party platforms, and electoral races. The method of engagement for Black Lives Matter has been disruption and protest. In *The New Jim Crow*, Michelle Alexander envisioned what a modern civil rights group might look like:

When those who have been locked up and locked out finally have the chance to speak and truly be heard, what we hear is rage. The rage may frighten us; it may remind us of riots, uprisings, and buildings aflame. We may be tempted to control it, or douse it with buckets of doubt, dismay, and disbelief. But we should do no such thing.¹⁷

With every disruption that “black lives matter” we have heard rage at an inequitable system. When confronted with this rage, political figures have attempted to dismiss, control, harness, placate, or redirect activists. Though Bernie Sanders eventually relinquished the political space, his team tried to negotiate submission from the activists. The failure to control Johnson and Willaford sheds light on the power of disruptive politics. Moreover, the subsequent media focus on Black Lives Matter gestures to the potential of interruptive politics.

⁷ “Guiding Principles,” *Black Lives Matter*, accessed 10 September 2017, <http://blacklivesmatter.com/guiding-principles/>.

⁸ About the Black Lives Matter Network,” *Black Lives Matter*, accessed 25 October 2016, <http://blacklivesmatter.com/about/>.

⁹ “About the Black Lives Matter Network,” *Black Lives Matter*, accessed 25 October 2016, <http://blacklivesmatter.com/about/>.

¹⁰ “Guiding Principles,” *Black Lives Matter*, accessed 10 September 2017, <http://blacklivesmatter.com/guiding-principles/>.

¹¹ Barbara Ransby, “Black Lives Matter is Democracy in Action,” *The New York Times*, 21 October 2017, accessed 1 November 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/10/21/opinion/sunday/black-lives-matter-leadership.html>.

¹² Tal Kopan, “Donald Trump rally interrupted repeatedly by protestors,” *CNN Politics*, 5 December 2015, accessed 6 September 2017, <http://www.cnn.com/2015/12/04/politics/donald-trump-raleigh-protesters-black-lives-matter/index.html>,

¹³ Dan Merica, “Hillary Clinton protested by Black Lives Matter,” *CNN Politics*, 31 October 2015, accessed 6 September 2017, <http://www.cnn.com/2015/10/30/politics/hillary-clinton-black-lives-matter/index.html>.

¹⁴ Eugene Scott, “Black Lives Matter protesters confront Clinton at a fundraiser,” *CNN Politics*, 25 February 2016, accessed 6 September 2017, <http://www.cnn.com/2016/02/25/politics/hillary-clinton-black-lives-matter-whichhillary/index.html>.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ “Raw: Protesters disrupt Bernie Sanders Seattle rally,” *King 5: Western Washington’s Home Team* video, 6:12, n.d., accessed 7 March 2015, <http://www.king5.com/videos/news/2015/08/08/sanders-rally-2/31359953/>.

¹⁷ Michelle Alexander, *The New Jim Crow*, 260-261.

Rhetoric of Control. Rhetoric of Resistance.

A new civil rights movement cannot be organized around the relics of the earlier system of control if it is to address meaningfully the racial realities of our time. Any racial justice movement, to be successful, must vigorously challenge the public consensus that underlies the prevailing system of control.

—Michelle Alexander, *The New Jim Crow*¹⁸

Rancièrian Policing

Any effective conversation about racism in the U.S. should acknowledge that systems of control extend beyond the badges of law enforcement. Jacques Rancière's concept of police logic provides a compelling description of how these systems function. Extending beyond the direct actions of law enforcement, Rancière envisions policing as a logic that orders socialized bodies and “defines the allocation of ways of doing, ways of being and ways of saying.”¹⁹ Rancière's structural definition has direct implications for rhetoric insofar as policing creates a hierarchy of what can and cannot be visible and sayable. In distinguishing what speech is understood as discursive and what speech is not understood at all, policing privileges the voices of some over others. Ways of doing, being, and saying that defy the police ordering become noise, stripped of meaning and illegible as political discourse. Bodies and their concerns become visible to political representation based on their compliance to ordered ways of doing/being/saying. In addition to its direct control over bodies, Rancière's concept of policing also describes how bodies are counted in order to be represented and how political activity always exists in excess of this count:

Two ways of counting the parts of the community exist. The first counts real parts only- actual groups defined by differences in birth, and by the different functions, places and interests that make up the social body to the exclusion of every supplement. The second, in addition to this, counts a part of those

without a part. I call the first the *police* and the second *politics*.²⁰

Police logic's counting of communal parts serves to distribute rights and access to political resources. Contemporary liberal democracies, including the United States, base their functioning on practices of counting bodies via demographic differences, and distribute rights according to factors like legal adulthood, status as a felon, local and regional political districting, and financial ability to influence politics, all of which have implications for groups marginalized on the basis of race, class, or gender.

Rancière argues that the prevailing definition of politics frequently collapses the disruptive potential of social movements into the establishment of order and consensus:

Politics is generally seen as the set of procedures whereby the aggregation and consent of collectivities is achieved, the organization of powers, the distribution of places and roles, and the systems for legitimizing this distribution. I propose to give this system of distribution and legitimization another name. I propose to call it *the police*.²¹

For Rancière, modern “political” institutions can be read as institutions that serve to categorize bodies and communities, and through that categorization the populace is split. Politics for Rancière is unrulier in that it disrupts police logics and exists outside of the counted parameters. The census, taxation, drivers' licenses, birth certificates, marriage licenses, the draft, zoning laws, Gerrymandering, and even voter registration can be read as state practices of counting people as parts of a community, not as the act of politicking. Furthermore, statist practices of voting serve to reinforce and legitimate this system of ordering. The division of communities, and how those divisions impact the distribution of state resources, is police control for Rancière. The enforcement of this control varies, from physical control by institutions like law enforcement, to subtler behavioral control functions like marching permits and sin taxes. The police-

principle is “at the core of statist practices.”²² Rancière’s relationship of control to disruption reframes the state as a non-democratic institution.

Police practices of division and distribution are further enforced through ways of seeing and being in the world. Rancière calls the sensory ordering of the world and its communal parts the *partage du sensible*. This *partage* functions as “on the one hand, that which separates and exclude; on the other, as that which allows participation.”²³ In other words, the *partage* is what conditions how we interact with the world and how we come to understand it. The hierarchical ordering that seems almost assumed of who is in charge in a situation, who should participate and when it is appropriate, and how participation should look are all aspects of the *partage*. Thus, the *partage* becomes a logic for how communities should organize and participate in the world. *Partage* suggests that police-logic also influences sensory experience. While the state may police participation and exclusion, the sensory ordering of their logic (the *partage*) also seeks to control bodies.

For my purposes, I will be using Rancière’s framework of policing to reframe the discourse happening between Sanders and Black Lives Matter. Rancière’s terminology suggests a structured, hierarchical relationship between subjects and the police-state. The relationship between the Black Lives Matter activists and the Sanders team is an example of how groups with a hierarchically privileged position (a white, male Senator running for president and the campaign team at his own rally) assumed control and expected silence. Rancière’s definition of state policing is a fruitful lens for understanding *what* is occurring in that space— the disruption of a police ordering.

While the policing state controls bodies physically, it also practices controlling voices. The state and its apparatuses engage in rhetorical strategies of power maintenance to control voices of dissent. Andrew King argues that rhetorical strategies of power maintenance are largely unchanged from power group to power group.²⁴ King's rhetorical strategies of power maintenance are tactical ways a police order can distribute political legibility, and take it away. These tactics control discourse in a way that minimizes dissent and maintains the privileged position of the group in power, enforcing Rancièrian police-logic of who is in control and who is not. King states that when a group is in power, and is attempting to maintain that power, they approach dissent or challenge by: ridiculing through humor, crying anarchy, setting impossible standards, and co-optation. Each of these strategies is employed throughout the electoral process in response to Black Lives Matter. Trump ridicules BLM through humor by heckling activists, ultimately dismissing their platform. Clinton appeals to co-optation when stating, "yes they do and I'm going to talk a lot about that in a minute."²⁵ For King, co-optation is "the notion of separation is temporary and an illusion."²⁶ Clinton suggests to protesters that their issues will be resolved because they are a common concern.

Sanders employs co-optation and sets impossible standards. When the Sanders team allowed BLM to speak only if they speak in an order, "after Senator Sanders,"²⁷ they utilize King's cooptation tactic. King's definition of impossible standards means controlling participation and exclusion: "It is an old truism that whoever is able to define the terms of a conflict situation wins. A common application of this is controlling the rules of the game in a way that shuts out or intimidates interlopers..."

Boundaries must keep people in as well as block people out.”²⁸ King’s “rules of the game” hails back to the role of *partage du sensible*. If Rancière’s *partage* “presupposes a distribution of what is visible and what is not, what can be heard and what not,”²⁹ King’s impossible standards are how such distinctions between visible and invisible, audible and inaudible can be made. The presupposed, *partage* of rules of a candidate rally are discrete and unspoken (you come to support the candidate, you listen to their speech, and you cheer when appropriate); these rules guide the behavior of the general audience and the candidates’ responses to disruption. When Sanders’ team requested that BLM “be reasonable,”³⁰ the Sanders’ team sets a standard for any additional participation.

Rules of the game and standards for participation exist in electoral politics more generally. Sanders, Clinton, and Trump did not make the rule that candidate rallies are distinct from more participatory styles of candidate engagement. To directly engage in electoral politics additionally has rules to participate, whether that is money, or status, or power. The structure of electoral politics is inaccessible outside of a voting booth³¹ or a bumper sticker to the average citizen; sizable engagement is restricted through an ordered distribution of those on the in and those on the out. The *partage* of electoral politics separates citizens from participation beyond controlled and prescriptive means. Though BLM protesters responded to various forms of control on the electoral stage, their method of resisting the normative rules of a rally was tactically similar in each instance. The rules of the game have ordered the bodies in any electoral space, breaking those rules is the challenge.

The *partage du sensible* is one point of intervention for Black Lives Matter. Glenn Mackin argues that Black Lives Matter is “at least partly a clash over the sense.”³² Black Lives Matter exists to contest the dominant sense that we live in a post-racial society where institutionalized racism is a relic of the past. The assertion is that “black lives matter” calls the dominant sense into question; the claim forces an auditor to ask why the assertion has to be made if we live in a racially equal society. Mackin is interested in the sensual reconfiguration that happens in response to “black lives matter.” He argues that Black Lives Matter places their competing aesthetic experience, or counterworld, within the hegemonic world order through their activism. Through their competing counterworld narrative, their actions of disruption are logical responses to systemic racism. Each action they take is justifiable by this metric. By disrupting the assumption of equality among constituents in electoral spaces, BLM demonstrates how existing structures mask social hierarchies and silence the differences these hierarchies produce. Mackin puts BLM in direct conversation with the sensible. BLM’s assault of the dominant sense interrupts the existing *partage*.

Holloway Sparks problematizes Rancière for his “valorization of a much too narrow slice of political action.”³³ Rancière speaks of disruption without mentioning the struggle to become a speaking subject when entrenched in “histories of racism, sexism, heteronormativity, and colonialism.”³⁴ Sparks directly takes on Rancière by claiming that dissent is not always a “surprising rupture.”³⁵ She argues that dissent can exist beyond a finite moment. The success of a rapturous moment is Rancière’s only metric for success. However, Sparks claims that “failure simply indicates that action

did not disrupt the existing police order... we need to pay more attention to those moments of failure because, pace Rancière, they also change and shape the *partage*.”³⁶

Sparks takes this notion of disrupting the *partage* and applies it directly to the activist work of Black Lives Matter: “compare the knowledge of African American communities about the steady drumbeat of police violence and brutality toward blacks prior to the contemporary Black Lives Matter movement... These are not new ‘wrongs’ to the communities of color experiencing them; it’s just that they could never be seen before by whites.”³⁷ This claim affirms Mackin’s belief that Black Lives Matter reconfigures the existing *partage*. Black Lives Matter can be viewed through Rancière as a disruption to the *partage du sensible* by asserting a non-white lived experience. If police-logic is invested in the American political system appearing to maintain a democratic and equal process, the claim that black lives are not valued disrupts that appearance. When BLM points to institutional racism as a piece of the black lived experience, it challenges privilege-blind whiteness. The sensory ordering of our state is a *partage* that does not see the “steady drumbeat of police violence” in the same way because it is situated in a position of whiteness—wherein there is no police crisis and the systems are fair (to white people).

Sparks engages and expands Rancière on two major fronts. First, she argues that becoming a political subject occurs not just in a moment, but rather throughout a period of time. This subjectivization is informed by years of systemic oppression (policing.) A moment of dissent exists because of its historical implications. Second, to limit democratic disruption to its efficacy at changing the police order disavows most attempts at political disruption. For Sparks, disruption can be successful simply by

changing the way reality is conceptualized, even if it fails to change reality. Disruption of the *partage* undermines the police order, and that in itself affirms disruptive tactics. I utilize both of these contributions to address disruption and the subjectivization of Black Lives Matter protesters in a racialized space.

While Sparks importantly notes that Rancière does not make enough space for the marginalization that informs dissent, I would like to further push Rancière's thought on how dissent is created. Rancière provides a relational system of control—*policing*; but he fails to provide us with a mechanism to resist that control. Furthermore, he favors the rejection of policing as necessary for democracy,³⁸ but this resistance needs a mechanism. In this way, I argue that rhetorical tactics are *how* policing can silence discourse, and *how* dissent and resistance are illuminated. The marginalization of communities through their ordering in the *partage* by the police-state effects how dissent and resistance manifest in discourse. In order to understand Black Lives Matter, I explore how silencing tactics are employed and how they condition the possibilities of resistance. Rhetoricians have long been theorizing how voices of dissent make themselves known and how they articulate and push their claims.³⁹ To put this in conversation with what Black Lives Matter is attempting, I turn to theories of incivility.

Civility & Respectability

Cloud and Lozano-Reich suggest that invitational rhetoric presupposes equality among speakers.⁴⁰ In reality, this equality does not exist. Appeals to civility attempt to constrain unequal speakers from speaking out of turn. They claim that, “historically, dominant groups have repeatedly enacted civilizing strategies to effectively silence and

punish marginalized groups... extending this history, women of color have been silenced through civilizing strategies that deem legitimately angry speech to be ‘uppity’ or ‘illiterate.’”⁴¹ Cloud and Lozano-Reich identify that calls for civility invalidate the fundamental claims of the speaker. For Cloud and Lozano-Reich, social change is predicated upon incivility. They claim that democratic grassroots tactics, “inherently do not operate within the realm of decorum,” because in the pursuit of justice, “the civility standard is detrimental to this project.”⁴² When conceptualizing how a social movement will create, or perhaps illuminate, dissent—the uncivil tongue is a key rhetorical strategy. The uncivil tongue is the tool that defies Rancièrian policing. It is literally the voice of the “part without a part”⁴³ refusing to be silenced and controlled. Civility, in opposition, is the police order’s attempt to enforce the existing *partage*; civility conditions how bodies should order themselves and operate in the world. Those who do not meet the civility standard are illegible and are labeled ‘uppity’ or ‘illiterate.’ Their speech is invalidated because of discursive *partage* of what counts as political speech and what does not. The uncivil tongue rejects the policing tactic of civility. It negates discursive standards of power maintenance by participating even when such standards are not met.

This construction of civility functions in the same space as respectability politics. Both are a method of organizing and policing behaviors, ultimately to privilege some voices over others. We can see this connection in the enforcement of respectability politics. Blackness has long been shadowed by respectability politics. From W.E.B. Du Bois citing the need for the meritorious one-tenth of black-elite Americans to shepherd the remaining nine-tenths⁴⁴ to Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham’s

study of black Baptist communities and their appeals to a “politics of respectability” in order to be palatable by white America, respectability politics has a long history in the United States.⁴⁵ What Higginbotham identifies and labels is a political move that appeals to whiteness. It attempts to placate white America by changing the “behavior and habits of the black masses so that blacks as a group could be accepted by white America.”⁴⁶ Higginbotham studies black Baptist activism from 1880s to the 1920s, a time wherein United States popular culture, media, and politics were white-dominated. Civility and respectability were the standards of participation in public discourse. The example Higginbotham cites reveals that in order for black speech to be recognized in predominantly white spaces, it had to be moderated to white sensibilities. Civility and respectability are tactics that restrict black speech should it attempt to participate in the public; they are silencing tactics that keep public discourse white—and if not white, whitewashed. Historian Kevin Gaines notes that the appeals to whiteness for a place in America ultimately is a “misplaced equation of race progress [which] blamed black men and women for ‘failing’ to measure up to the dominant society’s bourgeois gender morality, and seemed to forget that it was the state and the constant threat of violence, not some innate racial trait, that prevented the realization of black homes and families.”⁴⁷ Respectability politics places the responsibility of inequality on those oppressed without recognizing the systems that have placed them at a disadvantage. This system is enforced through constant state-sponsored violence. Gaines’ summary of the consequences of respectability politics reflects a Rancièrian police-state order. Police logic demands that inclusion fit within certain parameters. If respectability politics is one of the parameters for inclusion in the police-state, those who fail to meet

such standards are subject to disproportionate representation in state affairs— the consequences of which can vary in scope but ultimately mean that rights and interests are not equally pursued. Illegible respectability means concerns with police violence, violence against protesters, or structural violence go unheard by the police-state. Clouds and Lozano-Reich’s uncivil tongue can be thought of as the rejection of the civility inherent in respectability politics. The uncivil tongue refuses to be waylaid as illegible even when respectability is not performed.

Jacques Rancière claims, “if there is someone you do not wish to recognize as a political being, you begin by not seeing him as the bearer of signs of politicity, by not understanding what he says, by not hearing what issues from his mouth as discourse.”⁴⁸ This is precisely what calls to civility and respectability aim to do. Civility and respectability marginalize other forms of speech by viewing them as non-discursive. Civility and respectability are silencing tactics that falsely reduce speaking subjects as incomprehensible. Cloud and Lozano-Reich note that standards of civility frame protesters as, “wild and riotous by dominant media, rendering their struggles illegitimate.”⁴⁹ The civility/respectability standard is a strategy of power maintenance, King’s version of setting impossible standards. Civility as a condition for participation is a method of exclusion; it sets a standard that bars disruption and confrontation. Cloud and Lozano-Reich argue, “protestors inherently do not operate within the realm of decorum... the civility standard is detrimental to this [radical social change] project.”⁵⁰

The work of Black Lives Matter has refused respectability or civility as a qualifier for justice. Julius Bailey and David J. Leonard⁵¹ propose that Black Lives

Matter is “a challenge to the politics of respectability, which has historically demanded that movements for justice only be granted legitimacy when they develop around those who can be said to have lived a blameless life.”⁵² This ties into the definitions of civility that Cloud and Lozano-Reich propose; respectability politics is similarly a silencing tool that conditions who may speak, when, and how. The loosely connected network of activists points to criminalizing narratives that excuse injustices and as such, the group often negates performance of respectability as a pre-condition to citizenship. They further illuminate how inflexible respectability and civility are for black bodies—making the margin for excusable injustice all the wider. The uncivil tongue is the tool through which Black Lives Matter can illuminate hegemonic expectations of respectability in order to shatter those expectations.

Returning to Spark’s note that political subjectivization does not just occur in a moment of rupture, but rather is cultivated over a period of time, Eric King Watts affirms both rupture and cultivation in the case of blackness. He argues that black political subjectivization balances history and moment.⁵³ Watts demonstrates how blackness, when the speaking subject, must negotiate an insecure space in the American public sphere and simultaneously challenge and affirm ‘America.’ For a black subject, history and moment create political capacity. The black politicking agent can mediate the realities of oppression in American with its possibilities for equality. Watts’ reading of black political speech finds a space wherein years of oppression by a Rancièrian police-state can inform a moment of rapturous dissent against police logic.

Julius Bailey and David J. Leonard⁵⁴ further frame Black Lives Matter within the history of blackness in America. They provide that, “the mantra [Black Lives

Matter] is... a challenge to the affront of racial violence and prejudiced policing; it is a challenge to white privilege and supremacy, and it seeks to disrupt the status quo by forcing America to unflinchingly examine the ways in which state-sponsored agents treat black Americans as, at best, second-class citizens.”⁵⁵ Language like “status quo” gestures to the inequality of the existing *partage*. Moreover, “state-sponsored” connects the policing of black bodies explicitly to statist practices. While law enforcement is explicitly mentioned by Bailey and Leonard’s interpretation of Black Lives Matter, larger structural positions are referenced to with “state-sponsored agents” who “treat black Americans as... second-class citizens.” Black citizens in America are ordered lower in a hierarchical structure that is practiced and enforced by the state. Bailey and Leonard demonstrate how “black” as a community has been counted by the state as separate from the privileges of whiteness. Privileges are distributed based off of that community order, and such privileges can be seen in the different relationship between the state and whiteness. Rancière’s police-state orders communities, and the ordering of black citizens within social structures of the United States are emblematic of police-state practices.

Blackness has been ordered for years as lower on the social hierarchy by a police-state that seeks to control, categorize, and distribute bodies. This ordering conditions civil and respectable speech as appropriate for black bodies. While Black Lives Matter has challenged the sensory ordering of blackness in various ways, they further challenge the control of the police-state through tactics of incivility. Their uncivil interruption of Bernie Sanders is one example of a rejection to the existing order of black bodies and black political subjectivization.

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- ¹⁸ Michelle Alexander, *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness* (New York: New Press, 2011), 223.
- ¹⁹ Jacques Rancière, *Disagreement: Politics and Philosophy* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), 29.
- ²⁰ Jacques Rancière, *Dissensus* (New York: Continuum, 2010), 36.
- ²¹ Jacques Rancière, *Disagreement: Politics and Philosophy* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), 28.
- ²² Ibid.
- ²³ Jacques Rancière, *Dissensus* (New York: Continuum, 2010), 36.
- ²⁴ Andrew A. King, "The Rhetoric of Power Maintenance: Elites at the Precipice," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 62, no 2. (1976): 127-134.
- ²⁵ Ibid.
- ²⁶ King, "The Rhetoric of Power Maintenance," 131.
- ²⁷ King, "The Rhetoric of Power Maintenance," 131.
- ²⁸ Ibid.
- ²⁹ Jacques Rancière, *Dissensus* (New York: Continuum, 2010), 36.
- ³⁰ King, "The Rhetoric of Power Maintenance," 131.
- ³¹ Which still is problematic in regard to equal accessibility.
- ³² Glenn Mackin, "Black Lives Matter and the Concept of the Counter World," *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 49, no 4 (2016): 459-481.
- ³³ Holloway Sparks, "Quarreling with Rancière: Race, Gender, and the Politics of Democratic Disruption," *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 49, no. 4 (2016): 420-437.
- ³⁴ Sparks, "Quarreling with Rancière," 428.
- ³⁵ Sparks, "Quarreling with Rancière," 430.
- ³⁶ Sparks, "Quarreling with Rancière," 432.
- ³⁷ Ibid.
- ³⁸ Jacques Rancière, *Dissensus* (New York: Continuum, 2010), 40-44.
- ³⁹ On resistance, intelligibility, and performance, see Fenske (2007) and Zivi (2016). On interruptive voice and race, see Brooks (2016). On oppositional ethos and strategies of advocacy, see Brooks (2011). On dissent as necessary for democracy, see Thimsen (2015) and Farred (2008).
- ⁴⁰ Nina M. Lozano-Reich and Dana L. Cloud, "The Uncivil Tongue: Rhetoric and the Problem of Inequality," *Western Journal of Communication* 73, no. 2 (2009): 220-226.
- ⁴¹ Lozano-Reich and Cloud, "The Uncivil Tongue," 223.
- ⁴² Lozano-Reich and Cloud, "The Uncivil Tongue," 224.
- ⁴³ Jacques Rancière, *Dissensus* (New York: Continuum, 2010), 36.
- ⁴⁴ W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk: Authoritative Text, Contexts, Criticism* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1999).
- ⁴⁵ Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, *Righteous Discontent: The Women's Movement in the Black Baptist Church, 1880-1920* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1993).
- ⁴⁶ Fredrick Harris, *The Price of the Ticket: Barack Obama and the Rise and Decline of Black Politics*, (Oxford University Press: 2014), 102.
- ⁴⁷ Kevin K. Gaines, *Uplifting the Race: Black Leadership, Politics, and Culture in the Twentieth Century* (The University of North Carolina Press: 1997,) 6.
- ⁴⁸ Jacques Rancière, *Dissensus* (New York: Continuum, 2010), 38.
- ⁴⁹ Nina M. Lozano-Reich and Dana L. Cloud, "The Uncivil Tongue: Rhetoric and the Problem of Inequality," *Western Journal of Communication* 73, no. 2 (2009): 224.
- ⁵⁰ Lozano-Reich and Cloud, "The Uncivil Tongue," 224.
- ⁵¹ Julius Bailey and David J. Leonard, "Black Lives Matter: Post-Nihilistic Freedom Dreams," *Journal of Contemporary Rhetoric* 5, no. ¾ (2015): 67-77.
- ⁵² Bailey and Leonard, "Black Lives Matter," 74.
- ⁵³ Eric King Watts, "'Voice' and 'Voicelessness' in Rhetorical Studies," *The Routledge Reader in Rhetorical Criticism*, edited by Brian L. Ott and Greg Dickinson (New York: Routledge, 2013), 158-174.

⁵⁴ Julius Bailey and David J. Leonard, "Black Lives Matter: Post-Nihilistic Freedom Dreams," *Journal of Contemporary Rhetoric* 5, no. 3/4 (2015): 67-77.

⁵⁵ Bailey and Leonard, "Black Lives Matter," 68.

Bernie Sanders, Black Lives Matter, & Policing

Sanders & the Seattle Rally

The Sanders rally in Seattle, WA on August 8 of 2016 was specifically set for Sanders to talk about social safety net programs like Medicare, Medicaid, and Social Security. Sanders' campaign up to the rally was framed by his supporters as a "political revolution," and Sanders as a figurehead was noted for his "enthusiastic idealism."⁵⁶ When Sanders failed to capture the Democratic primary, his campaign concluded and he endorsed Clinton. Retrospectively, Sanders is viewed as one of the most progressive, viable candidates in the 2016 election. *FiveThirtyEight* said the Sanders campaign "marks a turning point for the American left... Sanders took advantage of a Democratic primary electorate that has become more liberal."⁵⁷ Though he lost, Sanders pushed the Democratic Party to adopt a more progressive platform and he pushed Clinton on several social and economic issues. While Sanders is lauded by many progressives, his Seattle rally is marked by racial contestation.

A video posted to YouTube from lovelyti2002 shows Sanders on stage as he introduced the event: "thank you Seattle for being one of the most progressive cities in the United States," (0:50-0:57).⁵⁸ At this time, Mara Willaford walked directly in front of the stage with her fist in the air. Marissa Johnson walked on stage with both of her fists in the air while Sanders was in the middle of his introduction. Johnson yelled, "black lives matter," (0:59) before turning to confront Sanders at the podium. A Sanders representative stepped forward at 1:00, putting his hand around Johnson to usher her away. Willaford joined Johnson on the podium at 1:00 to speak with Sanders. They circled the podium until 1:14, at which point Willaford said, "if you do not listen

to her your event will be shut down.” Johnson and Willaford continued to argue for the podium until Willaford got in front of the microphone and Sanders stepped away from the podium at 1:21. The Sanders representative regained the microphone at 1:24. The Sanders team began playing *Glory* by John Legend⁵⁹ over the loud speakers at 1:27, the lyrics ringing “one day, it will be ours, it will be ours...” (1:27-1:30).⁶⁰ The microphones were off since Sanders stopped speaking. Instead, all that can be heard in the video is the music and yelling between Black Lives Matter and the Sanders representative. The microphone cut back in at 1:41 with the Sanders representative still firmly behind the podium and Johnson and Willaford both on his right-hand side making pointing gestures, shaking their heads and fingers, and yelling. At 1:42 the Sanders representative audibly said, “we’re going to let you on the mic.”

Footage from of *King 5*, a local news broadcast, begins with Johnson and Willaford already on stage.⁶¹ As the *YouTube* video reflects, the initial interruption of Sanders by the BLM activists was contentious—the activists yelled both at the representative and into the microphone as the music played. The volume of the music and the inability to hear the discussion happening on stage suggests the music was an attempt to drown out the activists and distract the audience. This is the first silencing maneuver made by the Sanders team to quiet the voices of Johnson and Willaford. At 0:36 “Bernie” calls and booing began from the audience. Next the primary Sanders representative says, “we are going to let you on the mic,” (0:34-0:36). In what appears to be a move to control and placate, the Sanders representative attempted to negotiate, saying, “after Senator Sanders,” (1:00). Several minutes of muffled negotiating continued as the crowd began to boo. Calls for “Bernie” intensified from the crowd.

Eventually the Sanders representative ceded the stage as the camera panned across a booing audience (3:30).

Johnson commented, “this is the most liberal that we have. You guys are full of bullshit with your black lives matter” (3:44). The audience came alight with competing boos and chants of “black lives matter.” In footage from *The Seattle Times*, an audience member is heard yelling back “you’re full of bullshit,” (0:04) in response to Johnson.⁶² In the *King 5* footage, Johnson responds: “I was going to tell Bernie how racist this city is, filled with its progressives, but you already did that for me... now that you’ve covered yourself in your white supremacist liberalism, I will formally welcome Bernie Sanders to Seattle,” (5:59-6:08). Johnson addresses three distinct audiences: Bernie Sanders and his team, Johnson and Black Lives Matter supporters in the space, and the remaining hostile Seattle crowd. Johnson uses “Bernie,” “you,” and “we” to make these distinctions and shape separate audiences, each as mutually exclusive with oppositional experiences and groupings.

Around seven minutes into the disruption, Johnson began to address policy concerns about Seattle. She articulated concerns over indigenous rights, police brutality, incarceration inequality, education inequality, and gentrification. Finally, Johnson asks the audience for four and a half minutes of silence, to represent the four and a half hours that Michael Brown’s body laid in the street:

We’re going to honor this space, and honor Michael Brown; and we’re going to honor all of the black lives lost this year; and we’re going to honor the fact that I have to fight through all these people to say that my life matters. That I have to get up here in front of a bunch of screaming white racists to say that my life fucking matters. (8:45)

At this moment in the footage Johnson's voice cracked. After a silence, audience members began restless chants. "Let Bernie speak" and "Bernie matters" chants grew. In another camera pan, we see mixed audience reactions to the imposed moment of silence. Some members stood with their fists held high. Other audience members shook their heads and had their mouths open. The next three minutes are footage of audience reactions and muffled argumentation on stage. Thirteen minutes into the *King 5* footage, Sanders began to exit the stage. He eventually left the rally without making any public comments.

Long after the event had ended, Sanders, the audience, and the protesters offered varied interpretations of the interruption on social media. Sanders was reported saying he was, "disappointed that two people disrupted a rally attended by thousands ... I was especially disappointed because on criminal-justice reform and the need to fight racism there is no other candidate for president who will fight harder than me."⁶³ Those in the crowd who had spent anywhere from \$200-\$1000 to be in attendance responded: "Why would they pick Bernie Sanders to do this to? He has stuck up for civil rights."⁶⁴ Yet, in the heat of the moment, Sanders had remained silent while his representatives tried to control the protesters—and the audience members booed and even called for police intervention, as reported by *The Seattle Times*.⁶⁵ Protesters later responded on social media saying, "we honor black lives by doing the unthinkable, the unapologetic, and the unrespectable."⁶⁶ I interpret this event through the lens of Rancièrian policing explore tactic of silence and control, and to explore interruption and incivility as tactics of resistance.

Policing Black Lives Matter

The silencing tactics of power maintenance and respectability politics are used in attempts to control marginalized groups. If policing acts as “that which separates and excludes” and “that which allows participation,”⁶⁷ tactics of rhetorical power maintenance and respectability politics make the same such in and out groups. Policing practices control the distribution of what can be heard. The Sanders representative employs a police-logic by practicing the silencing tactics of rule-setting through respectability standards and cooptation.

The first moments of Johnson and Willaford’s interruption begin with intense negotiation for space. They initially assert themselves on stage without an invitation. The Sanders team moved quickly to regain control of the podium. *King 5* showed the primary Sanders representative make the first concession to maintain the structure of the event: “we’re going to let you on the mic” (0:34-0:36). As Andrew King notes, the rhetorical strategies of power maintenance include cooptation, which attempts to reframe dissent as temporary and difference as an illusion.⁶⁸ By willfully abdicating the stage to the protesters “after Senator Sanders” (1:00), the team coopts the voices and concerns of the protesters conditionally. The protesters are offered the space to speak, on the condition they forfeit agency to the Sanders campaign and consent to being secondarily important—a rhetorical carrot and stick. To minimize the protesters, Sanders’s team attempted to control the rules of participation and exclusion, making use of police logic. By organizing speakers into entities of those who should be speaking and those who should not, Sanders and BLM respectively, the Sanders team partitioned the two discursive entities and distributed the right to speak accordingly.

The separation of speakers into groups and of haves and have-nots, discursive and non-discursive, allowed and disallowed is police logic in practice. Furthermore, in qualifying participation with “after Senator Sanders” (1:00), the Sanders team controls “the rules of the game in a way that shuts out or intimidates interlopers...”⁶⁹ For King, controlling the rules and the players is how dominant rhetors set standards for discourse. First, Sanders’ team attempted to coopt the Black Lives Matter protesters as incorporated into their own social justice discourse. When that failed to silence the protesters, the Sanders team dictated the rules of engagement to deescalate and order the discourse of the protesters.

The BLM protesters are further marginalized when the Sanders team states, “we are trying to be reasonable” (0:49). This claim to “reasonability” situates the Sanders team as on the side of civility and by extension, situates their cooptation and silencing tactics as preferable for a “civilized” event. Furthermore, this appeal invites the protesters to participate in the more “reasonable” and preferred methods of discourse—all methods that the Sanders team can control. These logics, and the tactics that enforce them, exclude the protesters from participation. Initially, The Sanders team disallows the protesters from being heard by using a discourse that frames the protesters as unreasonable. By contrast, this powerful discourse frames the Sanders team as reasonable by comparison. When this silencing tactic failed and the protesters refused to cede the stage, the Sanders team could not control the distribution of the protest voice. Instead, Sanders’ team attempted to mitigate the disruptive voice by de-radicalizing the interruptive nature of the speech through cooptation. By offering the protesters a place to speak, on the condition that they speak within controllable

parameters “after Senator Sanders,” the Sanders team reduces the radical nature of interruption. The police practices Rancière describes are at work in the tactics of the Sanders team.

Resisting Police Logic

By stepping onto the stage without invitation or authority, Johnson and Willaford employed resistive tactics, specifically the tactic of interruption. They resisted the silencing tactics of power maintenance that would have silenced them. Johnson and Willaford’s interruption demonstrates a rejection of the rules of the game, that a rally is candidate driven. Their additional incivility rejects cooptation into respectability discourse and the social justice framework the Sanders representative attempts to establish with “after Senator Sanders.” The protesters refused cooptation by speaking, not after but in place of Senator Sanders. With each attempt to silence and control their voices, Johnson and Willaford employ an uncivil tongue and interruption tactics to reject the rhetoric of power maintenance. As Cloud and Lozano-Reich note, they operate outside the “realm of decorum.”⁷⁰

Johnson and Willaford refuse the appeals to order and policing by resisting the subjugation invited by the “reasonable.” Willaford senses the discipline of the rhetoric of reasonability. She yells, “we are reasonable. We are respectable” (0:43-0:53). Willaford equates reasonability here to respectability. She recognizes that functionally, reasonability is employed to silence in the same way respectability is used. Reasonability discourse is symptomatic of, and always coupled with, calls for participation in respectability politics. Willaford subverts respectability politics by shouting the affirmation, “we are respectable,” generating a resistive frame to the

policing logics of the Sanders team. Willaford redefines the very notion of respectability in her discourse. She rejects the limitations of the Sanders team's definition of reasonability, and by consequence, respectability. Willaford, in her tactic of interruption, resists having her behaviors policed. Through refusing cooptation and the discourse of reasonability, Johnson and Willaford reject appeals to participate in white standards of respectability.

Johnson and Willaford work to uncivilly fracture the decorum of the event through their use of invective. By addressing Sanders and the audience as Other, with assumed distinct interests and experiences, Johnson creates a tension between herself and her auditors. She alienates them from her interests when addressing the audience response as "white supremacist liberalism" (5:59-6:08). Her assertion is met with hostility from some of the audience, revealing that such an invective makes a significant part of the audience uncomfortable. In bringing racial invective into the space, Johnson articulates whiteness as distinct in its structural positioning from blackness. Johnson removes a veil of colorblindness that would otherwise treat all audience members as same. She racializes the space to reveal the social positioning of the bodies at the event. While the reaction to sharp invective indicates part of the audience's discomfort with a racialized space, it also demonstrates that racialized invective is placed, via logics of policing, outside the realm of decorum within the space of a candidate rally on social services. By repeatedly breaking the boundaries of decorum, Johnson and Willaford continue to evade policing of their behavior. They interrupt and their tongue is uncivil, refusing to cede to the sensitivities that would otherwise restrain their speech.

⁵⁶ Clare Foran, “The End of a Political Revolution,” *The Atlantic*, 12 July 2016, accessed 3 November 2017, <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2016/07/sanders-endorses-clinton/486122/>.

⁵⁷ Harry Enten, “What Bernie Sanders Meant,” *FiveThirtyEight*, 12 June 2016 accessed 3 November 2017, <http://fivethirtyeight.com/features/what-bernie-sanders-meant/>.

⁵⁸ “Activists Disrupt Bernie Sanders Speech plus new interview w/one of the ladies,” *YouTube* video, 17:02, posted by “lovelyti2002,” 10 August 2015, accessed 8 November 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7VbHUI1R3IA>.

⁵⁹ John Legend, *Selma*, ARTium, Def Jam, Columbia, 2014.

⁶⁰ Ironically, Glory is the theme song for the film *Selma*, which follows Martin Luther King Jr as he attempts to march peacefully for black voting rights in Alabama and is met with brutalization, violence, and resistance by local police enforcement and white supremacy groups—but I digress.

⁶¹ “Raw: Protesters disrupt Bernie Sanders Seattle rally,” *King 5: Western Washington’s Home Team* video, 6:12, n.d., accessed 7 March 2015, <http://www.king5.com/videos/news/2015/08/08/sanders-rally-2/31359953/>.

⁶² “Black Lives Matter protesters shut down Bernie Sanders; later rally draws 15,000,” *The Seattle Times*, 8 August 2015, accessed 8 November 2017, <https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/politics/black-lives-matter-protesters-shut-down-bernie-sanders-rally/>.

⁶³ Jim Brunner, “Black Lives Matter protesters shut down Bernie Sanders; later rally draws 15,000,” *The Seattle Times*, 11 August 2015, accessed 21 October 2017, <https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/politics/black-lives-matter-protesters-shut-down-bernie-sanders-rally/>.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ “Black Lives Matter protesters shut down Bernie Sanders; later rally draws 15,000,” *The Seattle Times*, 8 August 2015, accessed 8 November 2017, <https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/politics/black-lives-matter-protesters-shut-down-bernie-sanders-rally/>.

⁶⁶ Jim Brunner, “Black Lives Matter protesters shut down Bernie Sanders; later rally draws 15,000,” *The Seattle Times*, 11 August 2015, accessed 21 October 2017, <https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/politics/black-lives-matter-protesters-shut-down-bernie-sanders-rally/>.

⁶⁷ Rancière, *Dissensus*, 36.

⁶⁸ King, “The Rhetoric of Power Maintenance,” 131.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰ Lozano-Reich and Cloud, “The Uncivil Tongue,” 224.

Conclusion

Rather than challenging the basic structure of society and doing the hard work of movement building... we have been tempted too often by the opportunity for people of color to be included within the political and economic structure as-is...

— Michelle Alexander, *The New Jim Crow*⁷¹

Politics, before all else, is an intervention in the visible and the sayable.

—Jacques Rancière, *Dissensus*⁷²

My reading of the Black Lives Matter interruption suggests that Sanders' team and the audience were hostile and controlling entities. Johnson and Willaford resisted silencing tactics that would otherwise police their behavior through employing the uncivil tongue and using the tactic of interruption. In taking the stage, in criticizing the audience, in critically examining racial oppression in Seattle, Johnson and Willaford disrupted the institutional logic that confined the rally's participation to respectability politics and rhetorics of reasonability. They practiced incivility to make inequality visible and legible as political discourse, in Rancière's sense.

This Black Lives Matter interruption demonstrates that interruption is a productive mode of incivility for those who have been silenced by power. Interruption disrupts policing tactics that seek to dismiss voices speaking out of turn. Every time Sanders' team employed cooptation and civility/respectability standards, they were met with more interruption from Johnson and Willaford: "why are you still talking?" (2:48)⁷³ The police logic of control, and the Sanders team's attempt to partition speech with cooptation and civility standards, is discursively disrupted. Additionally, interruption and incivility make the silencing tactics deployed at the rally visible. The audience's hostile reaction to the interruption and dissent of Black Lives Matter and the Sanders team subsequent response to silent dissent revealed first BLM should not be speaking

and then revealed that dissent was not welcome within the police logic of the rally. Interruption & incivility made visible the controlling logic of civility standards, respectability politics, and strategies of power maintenance. With these tactics of control visible, protesters were able to resist policing tactics through persistent acts of interruption—interrupting the rally, interrupting idyllic narratives of Seattle, interrupting respectability, interrupting the strategies of power maintenance.

Interruption is only one way of practicing incivility in the face of police logic. Social movements have long practiced incivility as a resistive tactic in various capacities. In the struggle for black lives, incivility has taken on the form of bus boycotts beginning in 1955; sit ins by black students in 1960; freedom rides in 1961; and marching without permits. The practices of the 1960s-civil rights movement were deliberately disobedient and resistive to the status quo and conditioned modes of civility. Martin Luther King Jr's "civil disobedience" was civil in that it precluded violence, but the FBI's attentive wiretapping of Kings activities⁷⁴ and J. Edgar Hoover's claim that King was "the most notorious liar in the country"⁷⁵ suggests that any act of resistance is coded as an uncivil threat to existing hierarchical orders.

Incivility has also been used as a tactic in the environmental justice movement in Warren County in 1982, when black citizens laid in the street to prevent environmental racism;⁷⁶ it has been used in die ins from ACT UP to prompt legislators to recognize and act around the AIDS crisis in 1987;⁷⁷ it was used at Standing Rock in 2016, when protesters camped for months to stop the Dakota Access Pipe Line;⁷⁸ and it has been used during prison strikes across the nation in 2016 to resist prison conditions and unpaid labor practices.⁷⁹ While the Sanders rally in Seattle is centered around Black

Lives Matter and Johnson and Willaford's practice of interruption, my research indicates that practices of incivility would be relevant to any struggle outside of electoral politics. Furthermore, Rancière's theory provides rhetorical scholars with a structure of thinking about systemic inequalities that police bodies and have tactical implications to rhetoric. Artifacts around disenfranchised groups can read incivility into the defiance of tactics of control and policing structures.

With this paper, I have demonstrated how Rancière's theories of policing are employed through rhetorical tactics and how Rancièrian policing adds a structural framework for incivility's effects. Civility standards, respectability politics, and tactics of power maintenance all serve to control and silence voices of dissent. To defy policing similarly requires rhetorical tactics: interruption and the uncivil tongue. While Rancière provides a relational system between positions of control and subjugation, rhetorical tactics are *how* these systems and relationships are maintained discursively. Whereas respectability politics is a tactic used to police the speech and behavior of black bodies, Rancière provides a systemic model for how race strategically oppresses bodies through mechanisms of police-logic. Moreover, rhetorical tactics are how strategies of policing and controlling can be resisted. Lozano-Reich and Cloud focus on incivility as a local discursive antidote to practices of civility, specifically invitational rhetoric, within a structured society. Rancière provides a name for the structure wherein Lozano-Reich and Cloud make argumentative interventions (incivility.) Furthermore, the police-state system can employ civility standards even without specific calls to civility. Incivility, and by extension interruption, is a tactic of argumentation; however, it can be made more dynamic by reading incivility in the

context of, and as a response to, policing strategies and logics. I put Rancière in conversation with Cloud and Lozano-Reich to identify incivility as a tactical response to a Rancièrian police order. Rancière's police order utilizes rhetorical tactics to silence and control, and thus it is important to rhetorical studies.

Future research can map Rancière's relational framework of policing and politics into social movements. While this project focuses on Rancièrian policing, his definition of politics suggests that dissent itself is inherently political. In social protest, disenfranchised groups resist policing forces that would limit their engagement with the state to state sanctioned apparatuses such as electoral politics—areas where the state may control how discourse is permeated and how problems are addressed. For Rancière however, “politics exists because those who have no right to be counted as speaking beings make themselves of some account, setting up a community by the fact of placing in common a wrong that is nothing more than this very confrontation.”⁸⁰

Additionally, politics exists in part in a discursive space:

Political argumentation is at one and the same time the demonstration of a possible world in which the argument could count as an argument, one that is addressed by a subject qualified to argue, over an identified object, to an addressee who is required to see the object and to hear the argument that he ‘normally’ has no reason either to see or here.⁸¹

If social movements are read as demonstrations that make an argument, and demand accountability and visibility of social problems, the work of social movements fits Rancièrian politicking. Social movements make precisely the interventions in the “visible and sayable” that are integral in Rancière's definition of politics. Rancière expands briefly on political demonstration as a practice of making visible “that which had no reason to be seen.”⁸² Social movements are doing Rancièrian political work.

Reading social movements into the structural relationship between politics and policing—wherein policing is the system of control at present and politics is the resistance of that control— suggests that our state-processes are inherently constraining to marginalized groups if the state is the primary site of political action. Social movements can both illuminate the control tactics and constraints of state-processes and resist such tactics. The statist definition of what politics is and where it happens is detrimental to the democracy project. Exclusionary practices, unequal distribution of rights, and tactics of control and silencing are not democratic politics, but instead are policing. The resistive nature of interruption and incivility *are* democracy in action because they place politics outside of controlling and exclusionary state apparatuses. Rancière’s version of politics affirms the need for grassroots organizing and resistive discourse even where state politics might appear to be doing progressive social work. Rancière’s structural definitions accounts for the varied social (via the *partage du sensible* and internalized police-logic) and institutional (police-state) constraints on disenfranchised groups. He reveals agentive strategies for those groups to resist such constraints through his definition of politics. Rethinking social movements as not the margins of politics, but the center of politics is why Rancière’s framework is so useful.

A year after the Black Lives Matter interruption of the Bernie Sanders rally, Marissa Johnson wrote a response to her interruption, its critical reception, and the outcome of the 2016 election:

Though our brave and highly unrespectable critique of Sanders helped shift the narrative around Sanders and the Democratic Party, resulting in the release of criminal-justice-reform platforms and continued conversation around Black Lives Matter... I think our greatest impact had nothing to do with the realities of the presidential election at all and everything to do with the powerful black resistance that is making itself known more and more in America... The issue that united

white people in their fear and anger around our action wasn't their love for Bernie Sanders or their dedication to civility; instead it was the visual image of two people, young black women, jumping up out of the caste system American society has placed them in and running up to challenge a powerful white man.⁸³

Disruption as a rhetorical tactic provides a way of interacting with and rejecting the normative control of electoral "politics." The failure of both Sanders and Clinton in the 2016 presidential race demonstrates that electoral politics is not a reliable method for progressive social change. Women's right to vote, emancipation, and LGBTQ rights were first pursued outside of electoral politics. Social progress takes years of struggle. Black Lives Matter protesters did not interrupt Sanders to win his support, they were following a long tradition of interrupting the social order. While electoral victories can certainly legitimate social movements, interruption and the uncivil tongue critically engage electoral "politics" in a way that includes more marginalized voices that are silenced in the two-party system. Rancière's *politics* describes a space that resists policing. As social movements resist the cooptation and silencing of police-logic and "progressive electoral politics" they continue to push social issues. Johnson recalls her interruption as an attempt to resist "the seemingly progressive forces that oppress us, we called the entire system into question. By going after the left, we moved the needle on what was considered racist, helped raise the stakes around what it means to believe in justice."⁸⁴ Social progress is marked by contestation and dissent. If we recognize that progress cannot be limited to state apparatuses we make space for more radical social change.

⁷¹ Michelle Alexander, *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness* (New York: New Press, 2011), 259.

⁷² Jacques Rancière, *Dissensus* (New York: Continuum, 2010), 36.

⁷³ “Raw: Protesters disrupt Bernie Sanders Seattle rally,” *King 5: Western Washington’s Home Team* video, 6:12, n.d., accessed 7 March 2015, <http://www.king5.com/videos/news/2015/08/08/sanders-rally-2/31359953/>.

⁷⁴ “Martin Luther King, Jr. Part 1 of 2,” FBI Records: The Vault, accessed 8 November 2017, <https://vault.fbi.gov/Martin%20Luther%20King%2C%20Jr./Martin%20Luther%20King%2C%20Jr.%20Part%201%20of%202/view>.

⁷⁵ “The FBI vs. Martin Luther King: Inside J. Edgar Hoover’s ‘Suicide Letter’ to Civil Rights Leader,” *Democracy Now!*, 18 November 2014, accessed 8 November 2017, https://www.democracynow.org/2014/11/18/the_fbi_vs_martin_luther_king.

⁷⁶ Phaedra C. Pezzullo, “Performing Critical Interruptions: Stories, Rhetorical Invention, and the Environmental Justice Movement,” *The Routledge Reader in Rhetorical Criticism*. Edited by Brian L. Ott and Greg Dickinson (New York: Routledge, 2013), 175-192.

⁷⁷ Kevin Michael, DeLuca, “Unruly Arguments: The Body Rhetoric of Earth First!, ACT UP, and Queer Nation,” *Argumentation and Advocacy*, 36, no. 1 (199): 9-21.

⁷⁸ Catherine Thorbecke, “Timeline of the Dakota Access Pipeline Protests,” *ABC News*, 28 October 2016, accessed 3 November 2017, <http://abcnews.go.com/US/timeline-dakota-access-pipeline-protests/story?id=43131355>.

⁷⁹ Alice Speri, “The Largest Prison Strike in U.S. History Enters its Second Week,” *The Intercept*, 16 September 2016, accessed 3 November 2016, <https://theintercept.com/2016/09/16/the-largest-prison-strike-in-u-s-history-enters-its-second-week/>.

⁸⁰ Jacques Rancière, *Disagreement: Politics and Philosophy* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), 27.

⁸¹ Jacques Rancière, *Dissensus* (New York: Continuum, 2010), 39.

⁸² Jacques Rancière, *Dissensus* (New York: Continuum, 2010), 38.

⁸³ Marissa Jenae Johnson, “1 Year Later: BLM Protester Who Interrupted Bernie Sanders’ Rally Discusses the Moment and the Movement,” *The Root*, 9 August 2016, accessed 3 November 2017, <http://www.theroot.com/1-year-later-blm-protester-who-interrupted-bernie-sand-1790856353>.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

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