

Breaking the cycle of Restorative (in)Justice
Final Aesthetic Project Commentary
C&I 6973 #*BlackLivesMatter*: Critical Perspectives
May 10, 2016

The inspiration for my final aesthetic project resulted from the combined effort of the #*BlackLivesMatter* research project for our class and a narrative inquiry qualitative pilot study required for my Qualitative Methods course. I selected the theme of *Restorative Justice* from the #*BlackLivesMatter* website (www.blacklivesmatter.com, n.d.) to tie everything together under the historical battles for civil rights that began with the first slaves entering Colonial America in 1619 through the present.

Through the course, I discovered that the attempts by the White majority to grant civil rights to the Black community under the guise of “Restorative Justice” actually turned out to be Restorative (in)Justices due to the many loopholes left open in the interpretation of court rulings and laws that purportedly outlawed continuing discrimination. Additionally, I coupled the historical timeline with the concepts of *Afro-Pessimism, Afro-Futurism, or both* based on the events that occurred and what the impact of these actions meant for members of the Black community at that period of time concerning the future of their freedom and the rights granted with recognized citizenship.

Each clock pictured in the center of the slides is a 24-hour clock, not to represent the time of day, but the years chronicled on the historical civil rights timeline. The timeline is not 100% inclusive of all activities that occurred but highlights major events. Each tick mark represents 20 years of time. To develop these projects, I created a nine-question interview and selected three participants from the #*BlackLivesMatter* class, one undergraduate, one graduate at the masters level, and one graduate at the doctoral level, from which to gather my data. After transcribing the interviews and coding the data, I discovered a pattern involving the concept of time from the following interview question:

How would you compare that historical movement with your perception of the current #*BlackLivesMatter* movement?

The participants, in the prior question, each identified an historical civil rights movement that resonates with them the most to compare to the current #*BlackLivesMatter* movement. Responses included the following:

“For Black people time is cyclical, and not linear...we’re basically going through the same things...just a different time period...not really fighting different movements, they’ve evolved...It’s just a repeated cycle.”

“I hope #*BlackLivesMatter* in the future when folks are talking about it; it’s not old news... I want it to be fresh in acknowledging it being inclusive of everybody and really challenging some of the ways in which dominant narratives have skewed folk’s ways of thinking.”

“I think we’re working in the right direction...but, we have to carry on the legacy...#BlackLivesMatter is setting up their legacy and they are training our younger generation to be ready to take the torch and to continue to fight and demand respect...”

“I would say it’s more than a movement...it’s a revolution. I think from here it can only progress...I don’t see it dissolving any time soon...It will only be getting stronger and stronger would say as years go by...Since it has already, I guess as a micro-movement, enlightened so many people...There is no going back!”

The first response falls under the category of *Afro-Pessimism* noting the continuing struggle for true civil rights without hesitation or reservation whereas the other three are examples of *Afro-Futurism* from the standpoint that the #BlackLivesMatter movement has become a perpetual cog in the timepiece of civil rights activism.

Finally, the working clock in the center represents real-time and serves as a reminder that the fight is not yet over for the granting of full civil rights without caveats or other exceptions to the Black community. It also serves to remind us that even when the time comes where equitable treatment for all truly happens, the work needs to continue to avoid slipping back in time to previous conditions. As we watch the hour hand tick by the four critical perspectives twice daily, and the minute hand pass each of them hourly, it reminds us that the fight for true freedom is not yet over.