

## Visual Culture in Black Protest

*with Prakash Krishnan and Kristen Young*

**Keywords:** Anti-black racism, Visual culture, Individual change, Motivational imagery/Solidarity, Protest aesthetic, Media circulation, Historical imaginary virality

**Related Course Subjects:** Diversity and the Contemporary World, Political Science, History, Communication studies, Liberal arts, Journalism, Film Studies, Art, Photography

Prakash Krishnan and Kristen Young present three protest cases in summary and through a visual medium. The protests were held in Montreal (Tiohtià:ke) at various times in history. The demonstrations are now part of our historical imagery as different instances were “documented.” Our hosts accentuate the importance of organizing ourselves to create a more substantial visual impact through performative actions, image capturing and media sharing during protests and emphasizing the significance of the protest practice.

### Video URL

<https://youtu.be/X-UutI2906c>

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### Goals/Objectives

After watching the video, students will be able to:

- Describe briefly the three case studies presented within the video
  - Identify the critical influences of visual media within the creation of our narratives
  - Describe the importance of visual culture within protest settings
  - Describe the importance of individual acts that serve as solid catalysts for more significant change
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#### About The Decolonial Perspectives & Practices Hub

The Decolonial Perspectives & Practices Hub is a student-led initiative to provide a platform for the community to collaborate and develop meaningful solutions to the systemic issues faced by underserved groups in academia. Our mission is to advance knowledge and understanding of these issues and provide a space to engage in research and learning that is open to all experiences each individual brings.

#### About the Anti-Racist Pedagogy Project

The Anti-Racist Pedagogy Project is a video library that showcases pre-recorded talks by local community activists, students and educators in Montreal and Canada and transforms them into anti-racist educational resources for the classroom. Undergraduate and graduate students from Concordia and McGill University created the content for these course packages. These resources exemplify the power of student leadership and their contribution to advancing antiracist education.

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### Pre-Class Self-Reflection Exercise (Educators)

Fully engaging with antiracist pedagogy starts with self-reflection and accountability. **If you are familiar with antiracist education, you know that the best way to teach antiracist pedagogy is to model antiracist praxis and thought.** As such, we have developed a series of self-reflection questions for you to consider before integrating anti-racist educational materials into your classroom. The night before class or at least a few hours before class, give yourself time, without distractions, to reflect on the questions below - you can write them down or reflect on them with yourself paper free!

#### Be reflexive

- What does antiracist pedagogy or education mean to you?
- What is the relationship between your identity and antiracist work? How would you describe your role in antiracist work?
- How do you view the mutualistic exchange between yourself and your students? Do you adjust your teaching style accordingly?
- What is the difference between engaging with our repository as a knowledge exchange versus a knowledge extraction?

#### Be accountable

- To what extent have you engaged with antiracist or anti-oppressive education or philosophies within your life/work? Why or why not?
- What has the silencing or exclusion of another person or group looked like in the environments that you frequent? What have you done, or what could you have done to remedy it?
- Reflect on how you have engaged with literature, presentations and other forms of knowledge led by Queer, Trans, Indigenous, Black, Asian, and other POC in your academic, personal, or professional lives.
- What has been your role in disrupting and mobilizing against racism and oppression interpersonally or in the environments you frequent?

### Guiding Questions

#### Before watching the video

##### Pre-Video Questions -Students

- Think about how many viral images/videos have you seen in recent years that reflect a moment of resistance or civil unrest? Where did you see it? Why do you think it went viral? (e.g., Tommie Smith/John Carlos)
- Have you ever attended a protest/demonstration? Did you feel like it made a change?



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- Do you know any examples of anti-black racism protests specifically?
- What elements stand out at a protest? (Signs, people, places, interactions, etc.)
- Do you think a petition and a protest have the same capacity to stimulate change?
- What is visual culture? Is visual culture part of history? Is it relevant? In which ways do you envision social media content being part of mainstream history one day?

### While watching the video

As you watch the video, take note of the following:

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- How are the images in the three cases similar? How are they different? (Are they depicting one or several people? Overall ambiance? The post-math? The culminating points?)
- Do different mediums hold the same impact? (e.g., Painting, Photo, Video)? Why or why not?
- What are the emotions or ideas you associate with the images?

### After watching the video

#### Post-video Questions

- Understanding the impact visual protests can have and with the new Covid reality, can you think of different ways to strategize and create a more significant impact through visual culture?
- How is protest culture exclusive to specific communities? Who is underrepresented or invisible?
- Why is it important to share such striking images of protests? What are the potential benefits/disadvantages?
- Why do people protest? What makes people want to stand up and resist policy, government, etc.?

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### Assignments / Writing topics

- Research one protest of your choice. Pick a visual documentation of the protest (at any moment, in any form). Present the visual content to the class first and get them to try and speculate about the meaning or impact of the content. Present the actual protest.
- Watch “ninth floor” and create an essay or presentation by comparing it to a similar instance (in history or your immediate environment). Compare the outcomes/impacts and reflect on ways to combat them.
- Create a comparative Pecha Kucha (*PechaKucha* is a storytelling format where a presenter shows 20 slides for 20 seconds of commentary each) presentation about how anti-black racism protests are depicted vs other types of protests. How does the mass media present them? Let students point out the discrepancies in groups.
- Film a motivational video or create a brochure (advertisement style) discussing ways to use visual culture to strategize and organize protests. Consider how social media has been used to promote awareness or increase the visibility of protests.



### Taking Action

- Attend an upcoming demonstration, try documenting it via visual media, and present your observations to your class. Alternatively, organize your own protest/resistance movement (start a petition, a club, or a discussion) and submit it to your class.
- Choose a striking image of a protest, print it out and place it somewhere in your neighbourhood with a short description (like an item from an art exhibition, this could be on a tree in a park, a bare wall, etc.). Sit nearby and conduct a field study by observing how and if people engage with it in any way. Report back to class.
- Create an informative post about visual culture within protests on any of your social media platforms, asking people whether they ever participated in a rally. Report the comments back to colleagues.
- Share the “visual culture in black protests” video with a colleague that you believe might benefit from watching it. Have a discussion. Report back to class.
- Create a timeline of social movements/protests that started online and their subsequent impact. Present to class.

### Student Group Reflection

1. What is something new that your group learned or began to consider from watching the video?
2. What type of educational videos on systemic racism would you like to see more of?
3. How can you combat systems of oppression and exclusion in your individual lives?
4. Why is having an anti-racist approach to your work/studies important?
5. After today’s exercise, write down two suggestions for your professor on making your class more inclusive.

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Thank you for implementing our resources and supporting anti-racism efforts in education. If you have any questions or feedback, please email us!

