

FAM1001F

Essay Two: Culture Jamming

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Olivia Nolan

NLNOLI001

Part One: Essay

Tokolos Stencils Collective are known to employ culture jamming methods in order to challenge hegemonic ideologies. The incident of Tokolos' signature stencil of Mgcineni Noki and the phrase "Remember Marikana" appearing on the Rhodes Statue on UCT Upper Campus as a form of activism will be discussed in this essay. Firstly the concept of culture jamming will be defined as well as the concept of hegemony. How the group practiced culture jamming in order to challenge the heavily protested hegemonic ideals of white supremacy through the presence of the statue and the Marikana Massacre will be analysed. Also, points which the activists are emphasising such as that people must not forget the horrors of the Marikana Massacre while debating the issues of patriarchal white superiority through the statue as well as the link between the two topics will be proven through their graffiti. The potential benefits and limitations of such a practice of activism will be proven such as students being able to see the artwork, how not everyone that needs to see the graffiti can, vandalism charges, however, individuals in Tokolos being difficult to target, and the lack of brand or corporation Tokolos could have been drawing attention to, however, through their signature stencils they draw attention to themselves in the same manner. Lastly, other graffiti works by Tokolos Stencil Collective will be analysed and proven to challenge hegemonic ideals in the same manner as the graffiti in the image which is the central analysis of this essay.

In order to analyse the manners in which Tokolos uses culture jamming, a definition of the concept is required. Culture jamming may also be referred to as "counter-hegemonic discourse" (O'Shaughnessy & Stadler, 2012:213). It is the utilization of "a variety of ways in which alternative media allows for juxtapositioning, reconstructing [or] fragmentation of mainstream media to create radically different messages that expose inequalities, inconsistencies and abuse of power". (Bengtsson, 2015). Entities which are seen as having authority generally enforce hegemonic views about which activists protest (Scheidel, 2006:4). These are the views or ideologies which are most prominent and hold the most power (Carroll, n.d.:11). The context surrounding why Tokolos chose to stencil the statue is vital to the argument. The "Rhodes Must Fall" movement led predominantly

by students was in action months before the removal of the statue (Pather, n.d.). Protests against “systematic oppression born from colonialism”, “patriarchy” and “white supremacy” were held by UCT, as well as other South African universities', students and staff (Pather, n.d.). The removal of the statue became focal in order to drive home the movement's prerogatives (in addition to land being returned to rightful black owners) (Quintal, 2015). This was because Cecil John Rhodes was a British colonialist who enforced white supremacy through his imperialist views, his exploitation of the Kimberley diamond mines and “privatis[ing]” the “natural resources” of black “ancestors[']s” land (Tokolos Stencils, 2014). A statue commemorating such a man bares connotations of such reminders and was thus insulting to many, predominantly black, students (Chigumadzi, 2016). Tokolos “desecrated” the statue commemorating Rhodes “on the eve of a debate” concerning the statue's removal (Knoetze, 2014). By stenciling the statement “Remember Marikana” as well as the recognizable image of Mgcineni Noki, one of the leaders during the strikes of the platinum miners, Tokolos made two political statements (Davies, 2015). The first being that they drew comparisons between the obscenity of Rhodes' imperialist and capitalist ideals to the “massacre at Marikana” (Tokolos Stencils, 2014). It was written concerning Rhodes that he was “the man who, like Cholera, brings with him everywhere misery and grief” and that he was the “epitome of capitalist immorality” (Tamarkin, 1996). People suffered under his “personal imperial imperative” with the land being exploited for its resources and the land's people being exploited for their labour (Tamarkin, 1996). This is similar to the Marikana strikes in which miners protested against a “British mining company, Lonmin”, for being exploited and working for “meagre pay in potentially dangerous... conditions” (Tiwana, 2015). The strikers, however, suffered in possibly “the worst violence in the country since the advent of democracy in 1994” when the police “gunned [them] down” killing thirty-three people (AFP, 2015). Lonmin as well as Cyril Ramaphosa were accused and blamed “for failing to engage with the workers' wage demands” (AFP, 2015). The “inequalities” and “abuse of power” imposed by the hegemonic ideals of both Rhodes and Lonmin are thus exposed and challenged through Tokolos' stencil and statement and employment of culture jamming (Bengsston, 2015).

There is a second way in which one could interpret the superimposing of Tokolos' stencil and “Remember Marikana” statement on the Rhodes statue's inscription. This is that Tokolos was commenting on how the public had become so focused on the issue of the statue and what it stood for that the Marikana Massacre which occurred three years before should not fall into the background to be forgotten. The very words “Remember Marikana” are “blood-red” in representing the blood spilt the day of the massacre and bare a sense of urgency in enforcing people that they do not forget about the sufferings and horrors of that day in focusing on the statue (Davis, 2014). The

stencil of “the man in the green blanket” also brings connotations of desperation with his fist held in the air triumphantly as if crying to students who pass the statue not to forget (Knoetze, 2015). This form of “guerilla semiotics”, a synonym for culture jamming, is thus effective as Tokolos employed it to challenge, not exactly a hegemonic ideology, but a hegemonic stance and focus with which the students and public were preoccupied (Bengsston, 2015). The potential of placing such a stencil on the UCT statue was great but bared some limitation as well.

There are many positive aspects to culture jamming as well as negative. In this particular case of the Rhodes Memorial, it is easy to analyse how graffiti-ing the statue has potential. Firstly, countless students of UCT are forced to walk past the statue to get to Upper Campus, like the individual on the right-hand side of the image, everyday and would thus become aware of the stencil. This would hopefully cause students, who were generally up to date with the issue and protests, to consider the matters which Tokolos was highlighting. In addition to this, for the students and general public who had access to social media, they would be able to view the culture jam as it was posted online. However, the culture jamming practice is limited here due to the fact that not every energetic, socially-committed person has access to internet in South Africa. In fact, less than half of the country's population does (Duff, 2014). This limitation is commonly known as the Digital Divide (Wild, 2013). The families of those killed in the Marikana Massacre would thus probably not be able to witness such activism because the majority of families live in “shacks [most of which] have no [electricity]” (Davies, 2015). This is a significant limitation to Tokolos Stencil's culture jamming in a South African context. Another realistic limitation for this specific situation is that the culture jam practice which Tokolos employed could've been viewed and dealt with as vandalism (Hearn, Mahncke & Williams, 2009). This is because the statue is classified as a heritage object and on UCT property (Sosibo, 2015). It was stated that “UCT was outraged by the graffiti” and could have taken procedures against the artists (Knoetze, 2015). However, Tokolos Stencils Collective is a largely anonymous group therefore it is harder to accuse individuals of vandalism (Botha, 2014). This is a positive characteristic with regards to their culture jamming practices. Another potential point with Tokolos' practices is that the group does not comment on any big brand advertisement which by doing so would cause a type of negative publicity, drawing focus to the brand or advertising practice of a company which the culture jam would be trying to expose (Bengsston, 2015). However, one could argue that because the stencils are recognised as the signature of Tokolos Stencil Collective, in using them to challenge hegemonic ideals, Tokolos is not drawing attention to a brand but rather to itself though it is not a company or corporation (Botha, 2014). Through the group's repetitive methods of activism, they make themselves known and hence advertise themselves which is traditionally classified as a limitation for culture jamming

(O'Shaughnessy & Stadler, 2012:224). Therefore Tokolos Stencil Collective's culture jamming practices do have several points of potential as well as limitations in a South African context.

To extend the analysis, it is interesting to note the other works of Tokolos Stencil Collective graffiti that were found on UCT property. While they cannot specifically be classified as culture jams as they do not parody or use another example of media of sorts to challenge an ideology, they were prominent examples of graffiti art aimed at inspiring thought and challenging students walking by (Tokolos Stencils, 2015). The first example is the statement "UCT has Lonmin Shares!" which, though it is not a culture jam, reflects the same message as mentioned before in drawing the similarities between the messages which UCT perpetuates by displaying the Rhodes statue and the massacre at Marikana (Figure 1) (Tokolos Stencils, 2015). Secondly, the "non-poor only" stencil which was displayed in the tunnel one walks through when walking to Upper Campus, while this may be classified more readily as a culture jam than the previous example, is effective artwork in that it challenges the easily ignored socio-economic problems which are present in South Africa with only the financially well-off benefitting from education offered at university level (Figure 2) (Tokolos Stencils, 2015). The majority of young people without the benefit of a middle to upper-class lifestyle in fact do not even qualify with a matric certificate thus leaving them no opportunity to qualify for university (Vorster, 2016). Therefore, in addition to the stencils on Rhodes Memorial statue, Tokolos Stencil Collective's graffiti artwork and other forms of culture jamming appear to be rather effective in their employment in challenging hegemonic ideologies and realities.

In conclusion, it is proven that Tokolos Stencil Collective employs culture jamming to challenge hegemonic ideologies by stenciling the Rhodes Memorial Statue in two main manners. With the definition of culture jamming and hegemony in mind, the first manner is, by placing the "Remember Marikana" and Mgcineni Noki stencil over the statue's inscription, Tokolos draws similarities between the corrupt hegemonic ideals of Cecil John Rhodes, white supremacy and capitalist mining obsession with the massacre of Marikana miners striking against British mining company Lonmin's working conditions and wages. This was proven by analysing the views and actions of both Rhodes and Lonmin and the police. The second manner in which ideals are challenged is, through the placement of the stencils, Tokolos could be commenting on the people's focus on the statue and urging them not to forget about the horrors of the Marikana Massacre. The limitations and potential of activist practices such as culture jamming which Tokolos employs have been analysed with it being proven that there lies potential in countless students having to walk past the statue daily, Tokolos individuals being difficult to accuse of vandalism of the statue as they are anonymous and that Tokolos does not comment on any big brand therefore drawing unwanted

attention to capitalist practices. Limitations of the practice have been proven such that not everyone who needs to see the culture jam will be able to, the Digital Divide plays a significant role in this, Tokolos' employment of culture jamming may be viewed as heavy vandalism and, lastly, that through its signature stencils, Tokolos may be drawing a negative publicity onto itself rather than enforcing the challenge the stencils pose to ideologies. Lastly, other graffiti works by Tokolos were analysed to show that they challenge hegemonic ideologies in the same manners as mentioned.

Word Count: 1978

Appendix:

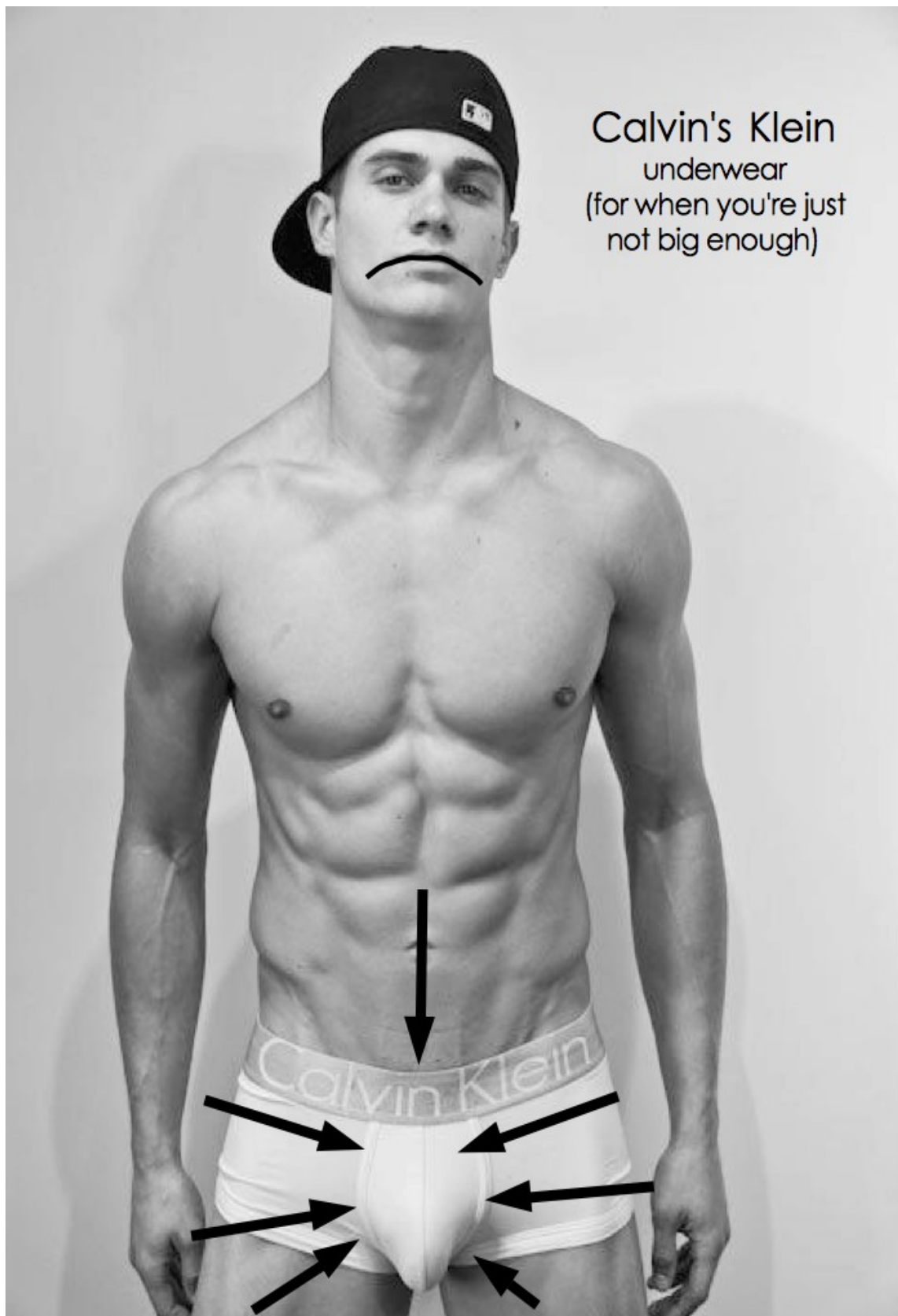
Figure 1



Figure 2



Part two
Option 1: Design your own culture jam



Analysis

I have chosen to create a culture jam around a *Calvin Klein* advertisement for men's underwear because I find that the advertisement is predominantly promoting sex and not the actual product. The advertisement's target market is young men, and intends to create a longing in the consumer to look as sexually appealing as the model in the advertisement. This particular advertisement was found online and creates this longing by using a model with defined muscles and an obvious bulge in his underwear. This perpetuates the ideology that a man's prowess is in the size of his penis and his sexual authority. I have challenged this convention of sexual appeal in advertising and particularly in *Calvin Klein* campaigns by creating a pun on the word "Klein". In a South African context, "klein" means "small" or "little" in Afrikaans. By adding "s" after "Calvin", the advertisement is saying that Calvin (the model or any ordinary young male) is actually small with regards to his penis. Therefore, buying the underwear "when you're just not big enough" will give the man the sensation that he has got a large and acceptable penis in a society which perpetuates this patriarchal idea that a man is only as big as his penis. In this culture jam I am thus challenging the hyper-sexuality and importance placed on sex in advertisements of and similar to those of *Calvin Klein*. I would publicise this culture jam in magazines and on social media (the latter being the easier method) in order to reach as many people as possible with the message that the media displays unattainable goals and twisted morals not to be taken seriously in one's own life.