**Figure 2: Assemblage**

*Occupy Hope* was created by Shepard Fairey during the height of the Occupy movement in late 2011. This is an example of an “assemblage” remix in that it utilizes a widely circulated symbols of resistance and revolution, such as the Guy Fawkes mask and the “We are the 99%” slogan, to assemble a new, more radical message of political unification. Notice how the minimal textual modifications above and below the word “HOPE” leverage the progressive rhetoric of Fairey’s original poster while simultaneously deploying the word for alternate political ends.

**Figure 3: Reappropriation**

Effective reappropriative remixes pursue “tactical changes” to a source text, creating minimal visual modifications to maximize rhetorical effect. The most powerful modification in this image is the placement of the large wiretapping headphones on Obama. This simple visual modifier reappropriate’s Obama’s hopeful, confident gaze into a look that seems much more cold and calculated.

**Figure 4: Redistribution**

Redistributive remixes require keen rhetorical attention to how digital texts circulate in different online spaces and signal affiliation with particular social, cultural, and political ideologies. The image in figure four emerged in response to Mitt Romney’s comments during the 2012 presidential debate, where he said that although he “loves Big Bird” he does not believe that PBS should receive federal subsidies.

Aligning with the progressive political ideals embodied by Fairey’s original, this remix works to redistribute the message of support for federally subsidized television programming to audience’s sympathetic to Obama’s campaign rhetoric. Moreover, by replacing Obama with Big Bird, the remix further enshrines the beloved children’s character as the de facto mascot for government supported programming.

**Figure 5: Genre play**

Genre play remixes disrupt normalized patterns of public discourse. In fact, theremixes discussed so far are all instances of “genre play” in that they participate within a particular type of “social action” that emerged through the rhetorical circulation of Obama Hope. This remix is no different. It too uses the existing rhetoric of Obama Hope to make its point. However, it is more explicitly engaged in a critique of the “Obama Hope” genre by claiming that Obama’s success is merely “Hype” based on clever campaign marketing strategies.

**Figure 10**

On the night of July 16th, 2009, Harvard Professor Henry Louis Gates Jr. was arrested on charges of disorderly conduct for attempting to break into his own home. Although the charges against Gates were later dropped, the incident gained steam in the mainstream media in the wake of President Obama’s comment that the white Boston Police officer who arrested Gates had “acted stupidly.”

However, amid public outcry over his offhand remarks, Obama began to backpedal on his comments and even invited Gates and the officer who arrested him for a drink at the White House. This event, which was informally known as the “Beer Summit,” set off a stream of criticism from many black communities who saw Obama’s gesture as a timid response to what was clearly a case of racial profiling on the part of the Boston Police Department. For instance, Van Jones, a former environmental advisor to the Obama administration, stated that “sometimes it felt like [Obama] was the president of everyone *except* black people.”

Obama faced criticism throughout his presidency from various community leaders that he has not done enough to address issues of racial inequality in the United States. Prominent voices such as Tavis Smiley, Cornel West, and Ta-Nehisi Coates have levelled pointed critiques at not only Obama’s policy initiatives but also the conciliatory rhetoric through which he discusses racial issues.

After the 2012 election, criticism of the Obama administration began to escalate as people grew increasingly disappointed that the president’s re-election did not translate to more explicit policy initiatives aimed at alleviating racial inequality. One of the most damning critiques came from pastor Kevin Johnson.

In an article for The Philadelphia Tribune Johnson stated that “Obama is more of a historical leader than he is a transformational leader,” indicating that Obama’s advocacy on behalf of the black community has been mostly symbolic.

Obama’s response to his critics can be summed up in a 2012 interview that he gave with Black Enterprise magazine, where he stated “I'm not the president of black America. I'm the president of the United States of America.” Community leaders and politicians who have defended Obama sound a similar refrain in pointing out that many of the president’s core policy initiatives, such as the Affordable Care Act, vastly improved the lives of African Americans.

Many criticisms of Obama’s policies and statements about race persist strongly to this day within the Black Lives Matter movement. Kwame Rose, one of the founders of Black Lives Matter, stated in a recent interview with NPR that he doesn’t believe that Obama has “done enough for black people.”

Although Obama’s election certainly galvanized a black electorate that has been historically marginalized from the American political process, it would be a mistake to assume that black Americans unilaterally supported all of Obama’s actions as president.

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As Jennifer Senior pointed out in 2015, many active leader of the Black Lives Matter Movement see the resurgence of racial tensions as stemming from Obama’s “inability...to satisfactorily address racial inequality in this country.”

Prominent Black Lives Matter activists such as Kwame Rose criticize the Obama administration for continually making comments that seem more designed to appease white supporters than that respond to the actual concerns of black citizens.

As racial inequality persisted throughout Obama’s presidency, prominent black leaders such as Tavis Smiley, Cornel West, and Ta-Nehisi Coates continued to level pointed critiques at not only Obama’s policy initiatives about race but also the conciliatory rhetoric through which he discusses racial issues.

During the lead up to the 2012 election, many defenders of Obama, such as Al Sharpton, construed any kind of criticism from within the black community as a kind of racial heresy.

The most paradigmatic example of this came from influential black radio host Tom Joyner and his admonition to “stick together, black people.”