

3 The Limits of the Internet

What are the limits of digital activism?

1 Culture jamming

- A. Read the text. Find general information about it (author, source, date, topic).
 B. What was the initial goal of #MyNYPD? What happened?
 C. Who are Jackson and Welles? What did they show?
 D. How would you define "culture jamming"?

HELP!

Verbs & expressions

- backfire
- boycott
- disparage / speak badly of
- distort the truth / deceive
- harass
- influence
- oppress
- undermine

/ˈʌndəˈmaɪn/

Nouns

- clicktivism /ˈklɪktɪvɪzəm/
- grassroots movement: mouvement citoyen
- smear campaign: campagne de diffamation

2 Everybody can have their say

- A. Look at the cartoon below and read the *Cultural fact*. Describe the cartoon and explain what it is about.
 B. What does the cartoonist want to show?

Cultural fact

On April 14, 2014, 276 schoolgirls were kidnapped from Government Secondary School Chibok by Boko Haram terrorists in Nigeria.

YOUR PROJECT

You are the community manager for a non-profit organisation in the US. Start a digital campaign to defend your cause.

In April 2014, the New York Police Department started a social media campaign, asking its Twitter followers to use the hashtag #MyNYPD and tweet photos of themselves with police officers. A few folks participated, snapping and sharing pictures with officers at a Yankees game or Central Park.

5 But in a New York minute¹, the hashtag was hijacked². Twitter users suddenly started sharing their stories of brutality, misconduct, and shootings by police officers, tweeting them in images and words accompanied by the hashtag #MyNYPD.

Two Northeastern professors, Brooke Foucault Welles, a computational social
 10 scientist, and Sarah Jackson, a scholar of social movements, were watching this play out on Twitter in real time. [...] Together, they decided to investigate how the hashtag was spreading.

Jackson and Welles created a network from a sample of 13,631 tweets that included #MyNYPD. They assumed the network would show that popular
 15 accounts with large followings – such as mainstream media outlets and celebrities – were responsible for making the hashtag go viral. But instead, they found something unexpected.

"We saw a bunch of people we'd never heard of before – local community organizers, online activism accounts with few followers," Welles said. In other
 20 words, not established social influencers with clout³, but regular people with a story they wanted to share. And these people were largely women and people of color.

In total, more than 100,000 messages with the hashtag #MyNYPD were posted to Twitter. The vast majority of these tweets were critical of the police – a complete reversal of the original intent of the campaign.

This is a type of media activism called "culture jamming," [...]. And Twitter was providing the perfect platform for people to engage in this tactic.

1 very quickly • 2 détourné • 3 influence

Allie Nicodemo, _____, 9 May 2018



Matt Bors, American cartoonist, 2014