

## Educate, Empower, Advocate: Amplifying Marginalized Voices in a Digital Society

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The Internet and other communication technologies can provide a powerful tool for social justice and civic action. These digital devices and social media have shown enormous potential by activists to mobilize the public, document their activities and the injustices they witness, and spread information to a wider audience. Individuals are often inspired to identify ways they can leverage digital technologies to work toward positive social change. The challenge is that youth are watching and learning from these events and texts as well. As youth utilize these digital, connected texts, educators need to know what makes their voices uniquely powerful. Perhaps more importantly, English language arts (ELA) educators need to consider ways in which they can bring these skills, practices, and texts into the classroom. This study examined how activists used digital, social technologies for the purposes of amplifying marginalized voices and enacting social change. Furthermore, the study explored how acts of digital activism can be leveraged to inform ELA teachers as they support inquiry, empathy, and connection in their classrooms. The findings identify opportunities for teachers to educate, empower, and advocate for youth as digitally literate citizens.

The first one I think is most helpful is don't prescribe unless you can describe. It's really learning about how to describe the impact of a policy decision or the impact of a situation from a first-person perspective. If you can't do it from a first-person perspective then don't prescribe a solution because you could be actually exacerbating the problem and that might have unintended consequences in the future. (Muhiyidin d'Baha, as quoted in Waters, 2017)

The Internet and other communication technologies (ICTs) can provide powerful spaces for social justice education and civic action. Digital devices and social media have shown significant potential by activists to mobilize the public, document their activities and the injustices they witness, and spread information to a wider audience (Bennett, 2008).

Within these contexts, some individuals are inspired to identify ways they can leverage digital technologies to work toward positive social change (Ellison, Steinfield, & Lampe, 2007). This article begins with a quotation from Muhiyidin d'Baha, an activist from the Charleston, South Carolina, area to call attention to the need to focus on work at the grassroots level and to describe these events and inequalities at the local level before moving to prescribe, or consider the implications, for teacher education.

Across society, youth are increasingly speaking up to address societal problems (Humphrey, 2013; Stornaiuolo & Thomas, 2017). From Show Up for Racial Justice to United We Dream to the Movement for Black Lives to The Sunrise Movement, youth are increasingly engaged in activism. As youth utilize these digital, connected texts, educators need to understand what makes their voices uniquely powerful.

As educators learn and adapt to these new practices, youth are watching and learning from these events and texts as well. Youth are engaging in their own community engaged activist work at the local and global level, many times independent of adult modeling and input. Perhaps more importantly, English language arts (ELA) educators need to consider ways in which they can bring these skills, practices, and texts into the classroom. What can educators learn about these practices as they bring activism and texts or narratives shared by activists into the ELA classroom?

Bringing activist practices and texts into the classroom can take multiple forms. One form could be a classroom teacher who wants to teach a controversial text like *The Hate U Give* (Thomas, 2017) and it is met with protest and controversy from the local police departments. For example, in the summer of 2018 Charleston, South Carolina, area police protested the inclusion of this novel as a school assignment, citing complaints about the book's "anti-police message" (Bowers, 2018).

Another form could be a classroom teacher recognizing that students are speaking out against gun violence online and in the local area and choosing to support and amplify their voices. Examples of this appear in stories of teachers from Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School choosing to support and amplify the voices of their students as they speak out against gun violence in and out of our schools (Kissel, Whittingham, Laman, & Miller, 2019).

A classroom teacher could decide to speak out or strike in support of better teacher pay, support of schools, and investment in the community. Examples include recent educator protests from 55 Strong in West Virginia (Slocum, Hathaway, & Bernstein, 2018) to the Red 4 Ed and SC for Ed protests in recent years (Hale, 2019).

In each of these instances, the educator and students accept a certain amount of risk (Ryan, 2016). Mistakes will be made as each of these individuals (i.e., students and educators) engage in these literacy practices. Many in the audience will not receive or contextualize this communication simply at face value. That is to say that individuals cannot expect "best faith efforts" as an audience consumes and responds to shared content. An audience may seek to take statements and action out of context, harass, and troll (Van der Nagel & Frith, 2015).

The research described in this article sought to identify existing challenges and opportunities and provide guidance for educators as they consider engaging with digital activism practices and texts in the classroom. I reviewed contexts as society moves from activism to digital activism as a lens to examine how adults and youth use these digital, social technologies to advance social change. The “real world” reactions and implications of connecting using digital texts/tools to enact change pedagogically were examined. This study responded directly to these pressing needs by asking the following questions.

- How do activists use digital, social technologies for the purposes of amplifying marginalized voices and enacting social change?
- How can these acts of digital activism be leveraged to inform ELA teachers as they support inquiry, empathy, and connection in their classrooms?

This qualitative case study integrated ethnographic and discourse analytic methods to examine the use of digital tools for activist purposes by Shakem Amen Akhet, a self-described leader of the Black Nationalist Movement in the Charleston, South Carolina, area. Shakem is also the executive director of the Muhiyidin d’Baha Leadership Academy, an academy for African American youth named after a slain Charleston Black Lives Matter activist.

Muhiyidin d’Baha, was a leading Black Lives Matter activist known nationally for crossing a yellow police tape line to snatch a Confederate battle flag from a demonstrator on live television in Charleston, South Carolina, in February 2017 (Cobb, 2018). A year later, in February 2018, d’Baha was shot while riding a bicycle through the streets of New Orleans a little after midnight. He died soon after due to the massive loss of blood.

Tensions have been at a boiling point in the Charleston area after the Walter Scott shooting and the massacre at the Charleston AME Church. This study examined how activists like Shakem utilized digital, social tools to work toward social justice education and addressing local problems. The study focused on the personal and professional contexts of Shakem’s life as an activist and as an educator.

Because Shakem is actively utilizing digital tools as part of this work, it is important to study and learn from him as he uses digital tools, especially in this grim climate. In interviews with Shakem, he shared insight about the challenges in pushing back against harmful discourses with grace, determination, and a commitment to justice. Shakem utilizes digital, social tools to document and share his narrative and the narratives of others.

Artifacts collected in the case study include multimodal content (i.e., images, video, web links, etc.) showing examples of this work and participant interviews to support the findings and implications presented. Shakem gave me permission to use his real name in addition to his Facebook identities, as well as screenshots of his social media posts in this publication. The findings identify opportunities for educators to educate, empower, and advocate for youth as digitally literate citizens.

## **Review of the Relevant Literature**

### **Activism**

Activism is generally defined as intentional actions conducted by organized individuals or groups in an effort to bring about social change (Parsons, 1937; Shaw, 2013). Defining

activism involves an examination of the social movements and contexts within which it exists. Cammaerts (2015) defined social movements as a “social process through which collective actors articulate their interests, voice grievances and critiques, and proposed solutions to identified problems by engaging in a variety of collective actions” (p. 1027).

Activism as viewed as a social movement has three features (Della Porta & Diani, 2009): (a) They are characterized by disagreement or conflict and have clearly identified ideological opponents; (b) they are structured through dense informal networks; and (c) they are geared toward developing, sustaining and sharing collective identities.

Activism usually begins at the local or grassroots level as people come together to “convince, pressure, or coerce external decision makers to meet collective goals either to act in a specified manner or to modify or stop certain activities” (Staples, 2016, p. 11). As such, the perspective of “contestation” is a core component of activism, as well as the tenets of advocacy, conflict, and transgression (Ganesh & Zoller, 2012).

As the world adapts to a digital revolution, newfound tools of social media have reinvented activism and moved many elements from print to pixel (Sivitanides & Shah, 2011). The research described here sought to describe these tools and practices utilized in digital activism and identify opportunities for teacher educators.

## **Digital Activism**

The label of digital activism is an increasingly popular term that is both broad and ambiguous (Yang, 2016). It loosely refers to the use of digital media and ICTs for political purposes (Gerbaudo, 2017). To a larger extent, it can be referred to as the use of technology to promote a political agenda or a social change, ranging from hacktivism (Denning, 2001), denial of service attacks (Bessant, 2016), to hashtag activism (Jackson, 2016).

In this paper digital activism is defined as the use of ICTs such as social media, e-mail, podcasts, and other forms of digital media. A bricolage of digital texts, tools, and spaces are leveraged to enable faster, more effective communication by citizen movements to large or specific audiences for the purposes of fundraising, community building, lobbying, and organizing.

Digital activism is studied across a multiplicity of fields (e.g., anthropology, sociology, media and communication studies, and political science) that examine the practices and affordances of the social, political, and civic contexts in which these actions occur (Loader & Mercea, 2012; Robertson, 2018). Each of these adds different disciplinary insights and diverse perspectives or approaches into understanding of this growing field. Each field is impacted by the different localities and global contexts in which digital activism occurs (Routledge, 2003), as well as the purposes and practices of activist groups and advances in new technologies (McCaughey & Ayers, 2013).

Digital activism is often determined by the affordances of a specific digital text, tool, or space (Dahlberg, 2011). Networked technologies used by activists are often seen as the “intersection between social context, political purpose, and technological possibility” (Gillan, Pickerill, & Webster, 2008, p. 151).

Digital, social platforms and tools offer differing types of communicative practices (Fenton & Barassi, 2011). Some platforms are more conducive to one-to-one, one-to-many and many-to-many communication. Digital activists need to negotiate these competencies and affordances as they leverage these tools to inform their tactics (Van Laer & Van Aelst,

2010). As a result, activists need to negotiate the affordances of different tools, platforms, and spaces as they engage with others. They need to consider real-time communication, as opposed to asynchronous communicative practices. They also need to understand that some platforms offer anonymity to users and privacy in communication, whereas others do not.

### **Activist Literacies and Youth**

As digital texts and tools become more ubiquitous in society and schools, the barriers to youth exposure and engagement with digital texts are minimized (Alvermann, 2011; Turner, Abrams, Katic, & Donovan, 2014). More to the point, adolescents have been shown to spend most of their time in and out of school engaging with digital media (Livingstone, 2008; Salmela-Aro, Upadyaya, Hakkarainen, Lonka, & Alho, 2017). This social connectedness and accessibility to content is identified as participatory culture (Jenkins, 2009) and begs questions about possible democratizing effects of allowing all users to participate, communicate, freely exchange information, and create content they believe is meaningful (Couldry, 2015; Garcia, Mirra, Morrell, Martinez, & Scorza, 2015; Muhammad & Womack, 2016). The challenge comes when the desires of individuals comes into conflict with the membership structures and hierarchies and move from offline to online contexts.

Networked publics enable and enrich specific community discourses that signify participation and engagement amongst a collective in digital spaces (Ito et al., 2009). The term *public* can hold different meanings for different purposes and practices (Wenger, 1999). As digital technologies become even more ubiquitous around the globe, multiple versions of public, or publics, exist as individuals identify, connect, communicate, and engage with others (Deuze, 2006; Rheingold, 2008). In these spaces, networked publics are not just individuals grouped together, but “transformed by networked media, its properties, and its potential.” (boyd, 2010, p. 4)

The interactions, needs, and concerns of these collectives are shaped and modified by the spaces and tools they use to congregate (Lai & Turban, 2008). Participating with networked publics in open, digital spaces requires an extra appreciation for the risks, roles, and responsibilities that come with experimenting in current and future contexts (Picazo-Vela, Gutiérrez-Martínez, & Luna-Reyes, 2012; Simon & Campano, 2013).

Pedagogies that embed activist practices and texts require elements of social justice education (Dover, 2013) as educators build the dispositions necessary to contextualize and work to enact social change (Alsup & Miller, 2014). Teaching for social justice is influenced by a diverse constellation of approaches from the educational, political, and philosophical (Dover, 2013).

Social justice education (Ayers, Quinn, & Stovall, 2009; Grant, 2012) integrates elements of critical pedagogy (Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008; Freire 1970), multicultural education (Banks, 1995), and culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1995). The focus is on creating opportunities and building individual dispositions so that youth can engage in participatory spaces to promote societal change (Picower, 2011; Westheimer & Kahne, 2004).

Foregrounding social justice thinking in educational practice can sometimes be challenging, as educators need to weave together a tapestry of “discursive and pedagogical practices” (Bialystok, 2014, p. 148). Hytten and Bettez (2011) provided a framework to identify five, interconnected strands that help knit together social justice education in

learning environments: (a) philosophical/conceptual, (b) practical, (c) ethnographic/narrative, (d) theoretically specific, and (e) democratically grounded.

Social justice education is defined in this research as a process and a goal, where educators focus on the development of a democratic environment in which learners are empowered to engage actively in their education, understand the roles that power and privilege play in systems, and reflect on opportunities to challenge or disrupt these systems (Bell, 1997; Hackman, 2005).

Experimentation by youth in digital spaces provides opportunities to reshape narratives to better reflect perspectives that are routinely marginalized or silenced (Price-Dennis, 2016; Stornaiuolo & Thomas 2017, 2018). Through the process of *restorying*, young adults are able to use digital texts, tools, and spaces to write themselves into being (Muhammad, 2012; Thomas & Stornaiuolo, 2016).

This process of restorying paves a path for individuals to narrate their story, while also synthesizing, or recontextualizing, dominant narratives to serve as counternarration, or disruption of inequalities in society (Haddix, Everson, & Hodge, 2015; Olan & Richmond, 2017; Stornaiuolo & Thomas 2017).

This research identified opportunities to leverage these counterspaces and counternarratives to allow individuals to come together and have tough discussions about tough topics (as in Johnson, Bass, & Hicks, 2014). Through this experimentation with digital activist practices in the classroom, educators and students can identify moments to heal (Baker-Bell, Stanbrough, & Everett, 2017).

## **The Study**

This case study emerged from a larger ethnographic research project that explored the use of technology and networked social networks by individuals in local groups for the purposes of enacting societal change (O'Byrne & Hale, 2018). The project sought to describe the role technology has in reinforcing, or perhaps resisting, hurtful discourses. It also studied the offline reactions and implications of connecting using digital texts and tools to enact change.

Society is witnessing digital activists and average citizens taking advantage of new technologies to provide an alternative way of organizing society and push back against troubled, hostile societal narratives (Brown & Duguid, 2017). Participants for the larger project were selected from online advocacy and activist groups in the local Charleston area. Shakem, the focal individual of this case study, quickly stood out as not only a highly engaged and productive member of this group, but also because he utilized different tools and techniques in his work. In addition, he was open and accessible in his interviews as he helped to explain the rationale behind his actions.

Although this single case study is not meant to be representative of all activists, it does provide opportunities for new ways of understanding these literacy practices and invites further research into the practices of activists as they push for change. This research also provides an opportunity to consider the challenges and opportunities that exist as educators bring these literacies, practices, and dispositions into ELA classrooms.

In this research, Shakem urged educators and researchers to closely study and learn from his practices in digital contexts. These digital social spaces have also been used to

promulgate initiatives and their discourses to vast audiences, including those that are pervasive in the lives of adolescents.

Broader civic, educative, and social-emotional concerns are also arising in national and international contexts, while events percolate at the local level. These forces impact learning contexts as educators are asked to help students respond, contextualize, and perhaps counteract these narratives. Educators must explore how information and technology shape the contours of the spaces in which learning takes place, while providing guidance for educators as they struggle with how to discuss these trends affect youth learning and engagement in global and local contexts.

The purpose of this study was to focus on how activists in Charleston formed groups, and utilized technology and media in order to respond and react to an increase in instances of hostility towards individuals and groups. These trends are evidenced by the regular battles over the taking down of the Confederate flag around the state of South Carolina. They extend to the local context, as Charleston witnessed the shootings of Walter Scott as well as the murders at the Charleston AME Church.

Young adults (and ELA teacher educators) are watching these events and interactions and learning. This fact is relevant to the study of how young adults and youth interact with each other in school, at home, and in society. Media and technology are used to create social bonds for community dialogue and the promotion of social justice education. Adults and youth utilize digital texts and tools to promote the values necessary as participants in civic and democratic societies. Within these contexts, a local group of individuals has been actively using technology and social networks as a tool for responding and resisting hostile discourses and actions.

## **My Positionality**

I conducted this research to present the challenges and opportunities that are present as individuals and groups utilize digital tools and spaces for the purposes of activism and advocacy.

This research and my findings are ultimately shaped by my positionality, which includes my cultural background and value systems and must be made known to the reader (Bourke, 2014; Chiseri-Strater, 1996). I entered into this research to better understand the impact of these literacy practices on the pedagogical activities and practices of students and educators in learning environments from pre-K through higher education. During this research, my positionality as a White man remained as the focus of my attention.

I do not share the same background or identity at the focal individual of this research, and I am not a member of the local black grassroots community. I am a White, heterosexual, cisgender male, and I lived in the Charleston area for the 5 years before this article was published.

To acknowledge the bias and privilege I bring to the research process, I engaged in a process of *reflexivity* (Bourke, 2014) to understand how my positionality affects research practice and the production of knowledge from this work. This reflexivity includes transparency in self-disclosure, as well as critical examination of one's motivations, interests, roles, and assumptions in this work (Chiseri-Strater, 1996; Finlay, 2002).

Reflexivity also includes an explication of the power structures involved in social situations involved in this examination (England, 1994; Steier, 1991). Reflexivity is a process of self-

scrutiny in which the researcher is continually in a “mode of self-analysis” (Callaway, 1992, p. 33).

This process, as I sought to be a reflective researcher, included several in order to build trust, collaboration, corroboration, and ultimately trustworthiness with research participants (Attia & Edge, 2017). The process included regular participant checks with the focal individual of this study, as well as other participants who serve as activists in the local area. In these events, I shared drafts of this research, as well as findings from my data collection and analysis. They indicated holes in my thinking and perspective and suggested reading materials and research I might use to address these areas.

In addition, Show Up for Racial Justice, one of the groups that Shakem was active in, shared a comprehensive list of resources that were used to inform my research. All of these efforts were made to acknowledge and critique my privilege and identity outside of the group.

### **The Focal Individual**

This case study focuses on the work of Shakem Amen Akhet. Shakem, who is identified as a leader of the local chapter of the Black Nationalist Movement, is a community organizer in the Charleston, South Carolina, area. Shakem is also an educator, and executive director of the Muhiyidin d’Baha Leadership Academy, an academy for African American youth named after a slain Charleston Black Lives Matter activist.

On Facebook, Shakem goes by many versions of his name on the social network (i.e., Shakem Akhet, Shakem Amen Akhet, and Shakem Amen Akhet II). These duplicates of his Facebook profile serve as a necessary tool, as he frequently needs to deal with bans from the network as other users give feedback or report his profile for content shared.

Shakem was selected as the focal individual for this research as a result of topics he raised during interviews held as part of the larger data collection focused on activist groups and their use of digital tools and spaces. Shakem offered two points that served as the impetus for this data collection, analysis, and subsequent paper. First, he indicated that it is the responsibility of educators to contextualize current events, and the activities of activists for students in their classrooms. In interviews he indicated the following:

I think the children are depending on us to tell the narrative. They’re just observing an event. So they’re observing an event and they’re understanding what is going on, but I think it’s up to people like us to put a context, a historical context on what’s happening. Because they’re looking and they’re just kind of like, you know, like wow, you know, they know what’s going on. They see it, they hear it, but they need some sort of context to it. (October 28, 2017)

Second, Shakem suggested that current activists were not using technology to its full potential. In interviews (Akhet, S. A., personal communication, November 5, 2017) he suggested that technology offered opportunities for “guerilla warfare” and that they could “fight stronger, more advanced opponents with these resources.” For the most part, activists were “twos and threes” out of a scale of 1 to 10 in terms of their ability to effectively use digital tools to enact change. This research highlights the digital practices of Shakem and obtain some clarity about the points he made.

### **Data Collection**



Over a yearlong period, from August 2017 to August 2018, I conducted a discourse-centered online ethnography (DCOE; Androutsopoulos, 2008), which included a collection of social media and online posts, semistructured interviews, and participant observation, to gather data on Shakem. With his permission, I collected 334 Facebook posts, links, and Facebook Live videos shared during this time period.

I conducted three video-recorded interviews using Google Hangouts on Air, each lasting approximately an hour in length. As part of this research, I “friended” the participant and joined all Facebook Groups in which he served as an administrator. I conducted many brief exchanges with Shakem either through email, chat, SMS, Facebook Messenger, or comments on Facebook.

Field notes and collected information were also gathered during my exploration of the Internet to links shared by Shakem or through the use of Internet searches to learn more about a topic. These may include mentions or involvement in other materials shared online (e.g., blogtalkradio and interviews in local newspapers) to provide background for the analysis.

Across this dataset, I was able to observe Shakem’s use of digital texts, tools, and spaces for the purposes of engaging in digital activism. I took field notes from this examination of his practices and reflected on many of these in blog posts on my website to replicate lessons learned (as also in Heap & Minocha, 2012; Scanlon, 2013).

All Facebook materials in this paper came from public posts on one of Shakem’s profile pages. In data collection and analysis, I did not include photos, videos, or content shared by, or about his family or personal connections. In this I was intentional on showing respect for Shakem, as he sought to use these digital social spaces for a variety of purposes, not just activist practices. I focused only on content related to the research questions and areas of focus in this paper.

## **Data Analysis**

Computer-mediated discourse includes a myriad of disparate and interconnected communication threads shared on the Internet. Computer mediated discourse analysis (CMDA) is one approach to analyzing this content that is language focused and supplemented by a constellation of different approaches (Alvesson & Kärreman, 2011) derived from critical discourse analysis (Fairclough, 2013; Rahimi & Riasati, 2011). DCOE served as a bridge between methods of data collection to analysis to help illuminate relations between texts, and their production and reception practices in digital, social spaces.

This case study (as recommended by Yin, 2006) employed a qualitative CMDA approach to conduct a content analysis as guided by the research questions to make clear the opaque connections between language and society as tools in securing power. Herring (2004) recommended a focus on research that is “empirically answerable from the available data” (p. 346) as well as being time-based, event-based, or participant-based. This research is participant-based as it focuses on the practices, texts, and habits of one individual and themes that emerge from the data.

CMDA was applied to the dataset in the analysis of Facebook Posts, Facebook Live Videos, and other links and digital communication shared by Shakem. All social media content was collected in a Google spreadsheet to allow for data collection and analysis. These forms of discourse and intertextuality help inform how an activist uses digital tools, spaces, and

texts to understand hypertextuality, or content that refers to other content in other texts (Mitra, 1999). This series of interconnected texts was supplemented by interviews with Shakem, as well as Google searches on topics and areas of interest identified by themes and patterns identified in the analysis.

Data analysis was inductive and ongoing, involving a recursive process of reviewing data, writing notes, and creating analytical memos to identify structural patterns and themes. I regularly and publicly shared some of these analytical memos as blog posts and distributed through my social media feeds in an attempt to obtain feedback and examine patterns and themes at a deeper level (as recommended in Heap & Minocha, 2012; Scanlon, 2014).

Through several cycles of content analysis (Krippendorff, 2018) and these feedback loops of shared analytical memos, I reviewed my observations to develop an in-depth understanding of the data. This review included social media and online posts, semistructured interviews, participant observation in online spaces, and researcher notes.

The process of analysis consisted of seven steps. First, I read the data set (interview data and Facebook Posts) twice to establish familiarity with the data. Data were read and reread, and initial codes were developed based on what was going on in the data (e.g., expressing narrative and pushing back against mainstream narratives).

Second, I examined and identified emergent trends in the data that were related to the research questions using a repeated and iterative analysis technique (Belkin, Brooks, & Daniels, 1987). I then compared and revised my individual analysis to identify categories and develop operational definitions of these codes. Codes were grouped together to identify overarching themes (Rivas, 2012).

I coded the data based on these operational definitions. The emerging themes were compared to a review of the literature to ensure they were relevant to the research questions while also relevant to the field. I then compared these analyses to other forms of data collected in this study and the larger research project (i.e., interviews with participants and researcher notes). Finally, I returned to the data to confirm findings. Throughout this iterative process, three themes were identified as central to understanding the practices and texts used by activists in digital spaces.

## **Findings**

Through this study I sought to understand the practices of an activist as he utilized digital texts and tools for purposes of activism. The analysis was conducted to help inform and contextualize his work and the possible import for ELA teachers. As was suggested by Shakem in an interview, the main purpose of educators in relation to works of activists is to help their students contextualize the information, sources, and people in these incidents. In one of the interviews with Shakem, he said the following:

I think right now we are at a time in history that is going to bring about a change in society—a revolutionary change. And I think those of us who are like you know—doing this right here. I think the children are depending on us to tell the narrative. They're just observing an event. So they're observing an event and they're understanding what is going on, but I think it's up to people like us to but a context, a historical context on what's happening. Because they're looking and they're just kind of like, you know, like wow, you know, they know what's going on. They see it, they hear it, but they need some sort of context to it. So I believe what we can do

now is to help form the narrative to put some sort of understanding behind what they're seeing. (October 28, 2017)

The results suggest through the interconnection of digital texts, tools, and spaces, activists can use digital, social technologies for three purposes: (a) to educate, (b) to empower, and (c) to advocate. *Educate* is defined as giving intellectual, moral, and social instruction to the self, another person, or group (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 2016). *Empower* is defined as giving authority or power to the self, another individual, or a group to take action, become stronger, or more confident (Collins, 2000). *Advocate* is defined in this study as publicly supporting or recommending a particular cause or policy (Ginwright, 2010; Sefton-Green, 2012).

These three elements are socially situated, cultural acts that work iteratively and are intertwined with one another. That is to say that individuals and groups may move quickly from one element to another, as the elements do not exist solely by themselves. Additionally, these habits and practices change, develop, and are modified as digital activists continue to develop and utilize new tools and practices. These elements also are modified as new, more progressive, and more digitally agile activists expand and push the horizons of the use of these digital, social technologies for activist purposes.

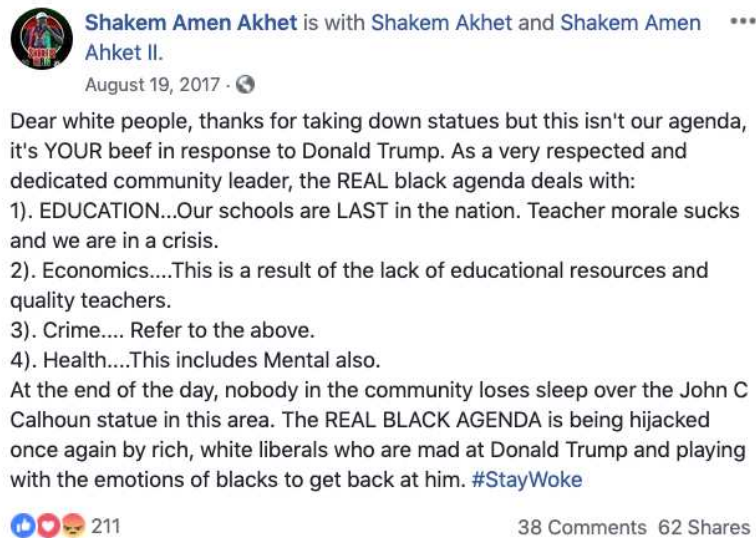
The remainder of this findings section describes study examples culled from the social network posts and interviews with Shakem. They are organized around the three goals in communication of the digital activist (educate, empower, and advocate) and modified by the movement from a focus on the self, publics, or networked publics.

## Educate

*Educate* is defined as giving intellectual, moral, or social instruction to the self, another person, or group. Educate also means to develop mentally, morally, or aesthetically by instruction. Educate can be viewed as persuading, arguing, or conditioning someone to feel, believe, or act in a desired capacity or manner. An example of Shakem using digital, social technologies for the purposes of educating as a part of digital activism is shown in his repeated attempts to describe his role as an activist and push back against false narratives.

Tensions have been simmering in the Charleston area after the murder of Walter Scott and the Mother Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal (AME) church shooting in 2015. During summer 2017, violent and racist acts like the events in Charlottesville, Virginia (Harold & Nelson, 2018; Spencer, 2018), ratcheted up concerns that violence might also strike in the Charleston area. Cities across the South began debating the display of Confederate statues and flags across the region.

Activists like Shakem spoke up during these times to organize public debate in an attempt to build dialogue and prevent racially motivated violence. Some of this work also involved educating others on the reasons why he, and other activists, were marching. An example of this is shared in Figure 1 (see [Appendix](#) for transcript of posts and social media entries).



**Figure 1.** Facebook status post by Shakem Amen Akhet on August 19, 2017.

Some of the responses from Shakem pointed at the challenges and concern about the role of Confederate symbols in public spaces and contextualizing these elements by contrasting it with symbols as related to other groups (see [Appendix](#), Akhet, 2017e). Of course these tactics to persuade, argue, or condition others many times is not easily accepted by all. Shakem noted in his interviews, and as noted by his multiple Facebook accounts that he is regularly “banned” on Facebook for a period of time (i.e., 30 days) after being reported by others on the social network. Shakem also indicated that he often needs to be careful of what he says, protect himself, but also staying mindful of surveillance as complaints are made to law enforcement (e.g., the FBI), as opposed to filing a report on a social network (see [Appendix](#), Akhet, 2017i).

In these activities, and as part of the research project, I have been interested in whether or not online discourse practices and activities lead to offline, physical danger or harm for individuals. As noted in earlier research in this project (O’Byrne & Hale, 2017), Shakem was questioned by the FBI for complaints made about him, and some of his rhetoric shared online (see [Appendix](#), Akhet, 2017c), and on a Facebook Live video stream (see [Appendix](#), Akhet, 2017b). This information raises questions about the risk and reward of including these activist literacies in the classroom.

As part of this process, Shakem educated himself and used digital social tools to educate and inform others as to his plight. Other members of his social circles shared information about the recent identification and focus on “Black Identity Extremists” by the FBI (see [Appendix](#), Akhet, 2017d). As a response, Shakem broadcasted a flurry of Facebook Live videos (see [Appendix](#), Akhet, 2017f, 2017g) about the “false narrative” that was being portrayed, and the intelligence assessment document from the FBI. At this time, Shakem also started using other digital tools (e.g., BlogTalkRadio) to host, share, and archive a talk show of sorts to encourage public participation, educate, and spread his narrative.

Ultimately, Shakem sees the value in his work educating the public, while at the same time also remaining surprisingly serene as he considers how his work helps impact his community as well as inner publics and those in networked spaces (see [Appendix](#), Akhet,

2017a, 2017e). One may see this as pushing back on social institutions, while at the same time perpetuating the harm narrative of young people of color in this country. This example, however, shows a member of the community speaking as an insider and sharing their narrative. Although some of his views may be seen as controversial, it is important to include them because narratives of individuals and communities that are often marginalized and whose histories have been neglected in most schools (as previously advocated by Haddix, 2016).

## **Empower**

Empower is defined as giving authority or power to the self, another individual, or a group to take action, become stronger, or more confident. This power may be to enable the self or others to control their own lives, claim rights, or promote self-actualization or influence. An example of Shakem using digital, social technologies for the purposes of empowering as a part of digital activism is shown in his work fighting for the rights of youth as they are incarcerated for selling palmetto roses in the Charleston.

A palmetto rose is made by folding the fronds of a palmetto tree to resemble a flower. Youth are often seen selling these handmade crafts in the streets of the Charleston area. Selling palmetto roses without a permit is a violation of City Code 17-109. The ordinance was passed by City Council in 2007, according to a city press release.

To receive a permit, a child must have the signature of a parent or guardian and attend a weeklong business course. Under this ordinance, palmetto rose sellers must complete the training program to get a permit. People who receive the license must wear a city-issued shirt during business hours and display their certification badges while selling roses. The ordinance restricts sellers from peddling their products in popular, tourist friendly, downtown areas. For the most part, the certified sellers are expected to do business from designated kiosks throughout downtown.

The city had been trying to identify a strategy to handle unlicensed peddlers when a 16-year-old was arrested and charged with illegally selling palmetto roses and resisting arrest near the City Market in Charleston. After the teen's arrest, activists in the Charleston area called on the City to end the ordinance requiring youth to obtain permits to sell palmetto roses in the downtown area. Protests were organized online and local activist groups, including ones organized by Shakem, planned local rallies to speak out against the ordinance. As shown in Figure 2, a Facebook post and video (see [Appendix](#), Akhet, 2018h) shows Shakem and other activists bringing online discussion and protest to the streets and the offline spaces.

These protests and rallies in the streets were accompanied by a flurry of calculated messages spread across digital and traditional print sources by Shakem and associates. These sources included press conferences held in front of City Hall that were covered by the local papers (Majchrowicz, 2018), as well as a series of Facebook Live Video streams held by Shakem (see [Appendix](#), Akhet, 2018e, 2018f, 2018k). These sources were in addition to a series of posts in which he shared links from the news, text posts, and commentary on other social media feeds (see [Appendix](#), Akhet, 2018d). These social media posts and use of Live video help digital activists like Shakem share their narrative and push back against dominant narratives shared by the mainstream media, national groups, and current powerholders in the area.



**Figure 2.** Facebook status post by Shakem Amen Akhet on July 14, 2018. Some faces in photos have been obfuscated.

Shakem is not afraid to call out the hypocrisy of the situation or the racism embedded in the discussion and the things individuals “like” in social groups. He shared a social media post in which someone shared and supported the selling of lemonade by a young white child, whereas the same act resulted in a young black teen being arrested in the same area (see [Appendix](#), Akhet 2018i).

Shakem also shared a recent collection of images and news stories about the local skatepark that was built in an attempt to provide a space for youth to hang out (see [Appendix](#), Akhet, 2018j). In this post, he indicated the potential dangers that might exist if local leaders did not take the time and expense to provide for all youth in the area (see [Appendix](#), Akhet, 2018j; 2018l).

This work was shared in digital spaces and when individuals showed up for offline protests were captured and edited into a video by Black Collective, a Charleston-based digital media company focused on creating content that shares African-American news, stories, and perspectives. The digital media group edited this video that was shared via social networks to document the voices and narratives involved in this debate (see [Appendix](#), Akhet, 2018m). These networked texts and practices identified opportunities for educators and



youth to freely exchange information and create and share content they believed is meaningful (as also in Muhammad & Womack, 2016)

Shakem closed this chapter of the debate about the palmetto rose controversy by indicating that he needed to straddle this area between developing lesson plans or teaching class, and “pissing off business owners and tourists” to stand up for the rights of youth (see [Appendix](#), Akhet, 2018n, 2018o). (See Figure 3.) He indicated that, if youth cannot make money on the market, “then we will crash the local economy and REALLY give them something to complain about” (see [Appendix](#), Akhet, 2018o).

In this example, Shakem used digital spaces to reshape narratives to reflect the perspectives of youth who are routinely marginalized or silenced (as defined by Price-Dennis, 2016). In this process, he narrated their story, while also recontextualizing dominant narratives to serve as disruption of inequalities in society (see also Haddix et al., 2015; Stornaiuolo & Thomas 2017).



**Figure 3.** Facebook status post by Shakem Amen Akhet on July 20, 2018. Some faces in photos have been obfuscated.

## Advocate

*Advocate* is defined as publicly supporting or recommending a particular cause or policy, which includes pleading the cause or interests of the self, another individual, or a group. An example of the use of digital tools and spaces to engage in acts of advocacy is shown in Shakem's work in the classroom and the development of the Muhiyyidin d'Baha Leadership Academy.

This article began with a quotation from Muhiyyidin d'Baha in an interview (Waters, 2017) as he shared guidance on activism and effectively organizing in order to address local problems. d'Baha went on to describe an infrastructure in which individuals build on needs, organize, raise awareness, focus on local area folks, center voices of women, and build from the community-level up. The interview also shared some insightful guidance on connecting the online, digital conversations to real-world action in the streets:

**Online vs. Reality:** What we're doing is we're exploring a new way of communicating and a new way of organizing in which we organize virtually. We want to express in physical reality then we want to bring that expression back into virtual reality to reflect on and to have that generate some more energy so we can express it in physical reality. There is a dance there that we're learning how to do so we don't get caught up in the social media world because in the social media world we can have 3,500 people that are coming to an event and we can have 100,000 people that have watched a video. But when it comes to a city council meeting to actually push the work forward, it's hard getting people to come out.

This philosophy of organizing from “the block up” is detailed fully in a Blockbuilder website (<http://blockbuilder.yolasite.com>) that describes a curriculum focused on “strengthening cooperative youth enterprises with a vision of nurturing their ideals and awakening their dreams into reality.”

Muhiyyidin d'Baha, also known as Muhiyyidin Moye, was a leading Black Lives Matter activist in the local Charleston area and across the southeastern United States. d'Baha has been described as having an “activist’s virtues” (Cobb, 2018). d'Baha “possessed a restless intelligence and an impatience with a corrupted racial status quo and something bordering on contempt for those who had brokered or tolerated such a bad deal in the first place” (Cobb, 2018, para. 4). d'Baha’s plan to build from the block up can be seen in the development of the Muhiyyidin d'Baha Leadership Academy, an afternoon learning program centered in nearby Summerville, South Carolina.

As one of the leaders of the development of the d'Baha Leadership Academy, Shakem indicated that he had frequent talks with d'Baha about the need to provide a space where “black kids can learn about themselves and other black kids” (Manno, 2017, para. 13). The curriculum at the d'Baha Leadership Academy would build on the curriculum developed and disseminated by d'Baha on his website, but was also guided by work Shakem conducted in schools around the Charleston region. This “blueprint for liberation” is detailed in a post from Shakem shown in Figure 4 (see [Appendix](#), Akhet, 2018a).





**Figure 4.** Facebook status post by Shakem Amen Akhet on June 22, 2018. Some faces in photos have been obfuscated.

As detailed on his network of Facebook posts, Live Videos, and content regularly shared online, Shakem is a frequent visitor and volunteer at schools in the Charleston area (see [Appendix](#), Akhet, 2018n; 2017h). In one post (see [Appendix](#), Akhet, 2018c), he said,

I started out a mere protester screaming, “No Justice, No Peace!” on the frontlines of civil unrest. Bullhorns blazing through angry crowds of people with signs, we envisioned change in a system that threatened our mere existence as inhabitants in this nation. Even though I was energized and had fun being the “bad guy,” I realized I couldn't live my whole life that way. Now I embark on the greatest path of revolution and change, in the classroom. I love teaching children and giving them the tools they need to be successful in life!! It's easier to raise powerful children than to repair broken men.

In interviews with Shakem, he said that he valued this time in the schools so he could talk with youth and guide them to not make the mistakes he made. He has the gravitas and experience to present these messages. He leverages his role and these perspectives to inspire youth to actively engage in their education, understand societal power structures, and identify opportunities to challenge or disrupt these systems (as described in Johnson et al., 2014).

Shakem said that he learns from his work as an activist and brings this into his work as an educator as he creates spaces and opportunities to advocate for youth. In a Facebook post, he said that he learns from his supporters and critics and ultimately uses what he learns to inform his work in and out of the classroom, online, and in the streets (see [Appendix](#), Akhet, 2018b). Shakem spoke these same sentiments in interviews, as was documented in earlier research in this project (O’Byrne & Hale, 2018).

Finally, Shakem said that the other lenses of work as an activist using digital tools (i.e., educate and empower) connect to this work as an advocate. In a post he said that they will go “FULL FORCE,” and “ZERO TOLERANCE” will be shown as they advocate for and seek to empower their children (see [Appendix](#), Akhet, 2018g). In these activities, Shakem

identified opportunities for youth and educators to engage in participatory spaces to promote societal change and reshape narratives to reflect perspectives that are routinely marginalized or silenced (as described in Picower, 2011; Price-Dennis, 2016).

### Implications for ELA Teachers

Digital tools and networked social spaces have shown opportunities for individuals to provide counternarration to mainstream contexts. Activists have skillfully utilized these spaces, texts, and tools to push for change, social justice education, and civic action. This research suggests an opportunity to educate, empower, and advocate as educators bring these practices and texts into ELA classrooms (Haddix et al., 2015; McArthur, 2016). This opportunity can provide contexts for these texts, support and amplify the voices of students, or speak out and advocate for teachers and their classrooms.

As activists work to mobilize the public, document activities and injustices, and spread information to a wider audience, youth are watching and learning from these events. Educators also must question what impact these practices and texts have in their classroom. This study focused on the work of one activist in order to provide insight for pedagogy in the ELA classroom. Several lessons can be learned from this study that have specific import to the ELA classroom and teacher development for these spaces.

First, identity and privilege need to be discussed and problematized in the ELA classroom (Blackburn, 2003). As the racial composition of teachers in the United States is predominantly white (US Department of Education, 2016), the first step for white teachers is to unpack and continuously learn to uncover the privilege which is so often taken for granted (Picower, 2009). Teachers must simultaneously educate themselves on the histories of numerous communities of color and indigenous or immigrant communities whose histories have been neglected in most schools (Haddix, 2016; Ladson-Billings, 2006). Teachers can draw from critical pedagogy (Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008; Freire 1970), multicultural education (Banks, 1995), and culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1995).

Social justice education (Au, 2009; Cammarota, 2011) helps cultivate understanding for diverse individuals and perspectives as educators may bring narratives from marginalized communities or identities into the classroom. As an example, the text *White Fragility: Why It's So Hard for White People to Talk About Racism* (DiAngelo, 2018), was frequently referenced in interviews with many of the digital activists and shared as a resource within their Facebook group. As educators build the dispositions necessary to contextualize and work to enact social change (Alsup & Miller, 2014), honest discussions around implicit bias and deep histories of harm that marginalized youth and entire communities is needed before examining these texts and practices.

Second, educators can begin to network with other socially conscious teachers who can support furthered awareness and community members who are connected and activated in the communities in which teachers serve. Acts of digital activism move along a continuum that moves from *self* to *publics* to *networked publics*.

*Self* is defined as the individual or originator of the communication or practices. Focus on educating, empowering, and advocating for self before worrying about others. *Publics* identify a community of individuals who share “a common understanding of the world, a shared identity, a claim to inclusiveness, a consensus regarding the collective interest” (Livingstone, 2005, p. 9). *Publics* may include localized connections in a community, including friends known locally, or issue publics (Tremayne, Zheng, Lee, & Jeong, 2006).

*Networked publics* extend this continuum from the self beyond local connections and affinity spaces (Kim, 2016) as found in publics but are reshaped and restructured by the space, tools, and people (boyd, 2010). Networked publics include an interconnected set of practices that include sociocultural as well as technological elements that are modified as advances come in digital, social technologies (Bonk & King, 2012). As teachers educate, empower, and advocate, they can start with the individual and then move to the local level.

Third, as indicated by the opening quotation to this publication from Muhiyidin D'baha, start with understanding and connecting the local before moving to the global. As the focus on audience extends out from the self to publics to networked publics, the opportunity to enact change and have one's narrative heard is lessened over time. The Internet and other communication technologies provide opportunities to broadcast a narrative for a variety of purposes (educate, empower, and advocate). It does not guarantee a receptive audience, however (Papacharissi, 2008). Ability to reach an audience may not scale up as teachers speak to networked publics. Furthermore, the ultimate message received may not be what was intended.

Fourth, a risk assessment should be conducted before bringing these activist practices and texts into the ELA classroom. Educators must ask how they will be supported by colleagues, administrators, parents, and students if they engage in these activities. Significant attention may be attracted from others as the ELA educator agrees to engage with this content.

Even as educators and their students are thoughtful, vigilant, and circumspect about getting involved in these spaces, there is the chance that mistakes will be made. Due to the nature of digital information, these missteps will be documented and digitally archived for all to review. Critics may also take intentions, content, and narrative out of context in an attempt to smear or harass the author. Risk and reward is involved when engaging in these practices and with these texts. These situations may also be an important teaching moment.

Finally, understand and use digital tools and online spaces wisely. Teachers should protect themselves and be thoughtful as they build a digital identity for themselves and their students. They must be conscious and savvy about their use of privacy and security in the use of these digital texts and tools. They must focus on mental health and offline connections to remain balanced as they work to enact change and push for social justice.

The continual highs and lows of emotions were present in the social media posts shared by Shakem. Shakem indicated in interviews and social media posts that family and friends were the most important, and at times he needed to unplug and spend time with loved ones to recharge emotional reservoirs.

## **Conclusion**

In this study, I examined the ways in which an activist leveraged digital technologies to work toward positive social change (as defined by Ellison et al., 2007; Haddix & Sealey-Ruiz, 2012). I opened this article with a quotation from Muhiyidin d'Baha, an activist from the Charleston area, to call attention to the need to focus on work at the grassroots level and to be descriptive before moving to the prescriptive and opportunities to use digital spaces, to document and address inequalities. This mindset is echoed in interviews with Shakem, as he frequently referenced the need to talk and continue the dialogue with others, even when it is hard to do so.

This point was hammered home in an interview in which he indicated that debate, protest, and perhaps even violence were ultimately a positive, as they have spurred much-needed dialogue. Perhaps these counterspaces and counternarratives allow individuals to come together and have tough discussions about tough topics. Perhaps these moments also provide opportunities to heal locally and globally.

Even though difficult at times, perhaps these discussions have the potential to prepare youth to engage and *restory* societal power structures for the purpose of personal and social transformation – opportunities to have tough discussions that society usually never has around issues of racism, religious intolerance, sexual assault, misogyny, and xenophobia, as well as a disregard for science and the environment – opportunities for educators to educate, empower, and advocate for youth as digitally literate, critically conscious citizens.

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## **Appendix Transcripts of Shakem's Posts**

Akhet, S. A. (2017a, August 19). Dear white people, thanks for taking down statues but this isn't our agenda, it's YOUR beef in response to Donald Trump. As a very respected and dedicated community leader, the REAL black agenda deals with:1). EDUCATION...Our schools are [Facebook status update]. Retrieved from <https://www.facebook.com/shakem.akhet/posts/1649230018455105>

Akhet, S. A. (2017b, September 26). The FBI Joint Terrorism Task Force in Mt. Pleasant, SC came looking for me today. The targeting of political activists. [Video file]. Retrieved from <https://www.facebook.com/shakem.akhet/videos/1684510121593761/>

Akhet, S. A. (2017c, October 2). .....And the FBI had the nerve to question me last Tuesday about domestic terrorism. Smdh. [Facebook status update]. Retrieved from <https://www.facebook.com/shakem.akhet/posts/1689354721109301>

Akhet, S. A. (2017d, October 6). FBI releases report on BIE (Black Identity Extremist) likely to target Law enforcement officers. <https://www.documentcloud.org/.../4067711...> [Video file]. Retrieved from <https://www.facebook.com/shakem.akhet/videos/1693728454005261/>

Akhet, S. A. (2017e, October 16). Question for White America...How would you feel if your child's High School in a white neighborhood was named after Elijah Muhammad who referred to the whiteman as the devil? How would you like it if we erected a statue [Facebook status update]. Retrieved from <https://www.facebook.com/shakem.akhet/posts/1702851496426290>

Akhet, S. A. (2017f, October 17). Call in NOW 657-383-1653 press 1 to speak. The FBI Exposed. The false narrative of the Black Identity Extremist. [Video file]. Retrieved from <https://www.facebook.com/shakem.akhet/videos/1704237089621064/>

Akhet, S. A. (2017g, October 20). FBI Black Identity Extremists Intelligence Document. [Video file]. Retrieved from <https://www.facebook.com/shakem.akhet/videos/1707220902656016/>

Akhet, S. A. (2017h, October 24). Leadership is about empowering others to be leaders. Give them an opportunity and let them spread their wings and fly. I love being in the classroom!! [Facebook status update]. Retrieved from <https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=1710732622304844>

Akhet, S. A. (2017i, December 23). I BLOCK ANYONE who comes on my page with the kill whitey/pigs rhetoric flashing profile pictures of Khalid Muhammad with an AR-15 talking about they are preparing for the revolution. We have to be wise family. The FBI probably [Facebook status update]. Retrieved from <https://www.facebook.com/shakem.akhet/posts/1772070816171024>

Akhet, S. A. (2018a, June 22). I still question God as to why. He was too young to die. Too kind and caring to be taken carelessly. Too focused and driven to be murdered so wrecklesly. An intelligent mind and a gift of speech that was [Facebook status update]. Retrieved from <https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=2056391121352214>

Akhet, S. A. (2018b, June 29). Everyday I strive to make myself a better educator. It's EXTREMELY difficult and new to me. I thank all my supporters and critics. I really appreciate those who volunteer their FREE time to help do reading assignments and donate resources. [Facebook status update]. Retrieved from <https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=2063386933985966>

Akhet, S. A. (2018c, July 1, 2018). I started out a mere protester screaming, "No Justice, No Peace!" on the frontlines of civil unrest. Bullhorns blazing through angry crowds of people with signs, we envisioned change in a system that threatened our mere existence as inhabitants in [Facebook status update]. Retrieved from <https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=2065199500471376>

Akhet, S. A. (2018d, July 5). The world is watching again Charleston! You apologized for slavery then lock up young boys for selling \$2 Roses to tourists while whites make BILLIONS off the horrible history of slavery through tourism. [Facebook status update]. Retrieved from <https://www.facebook.com/ShakemAmenhotep/posts/2069387263385933>

Akhet, S. A. (2018e, July 8). MESSAGE TO MAYOR TECKLENBURG AND CITY COUNCIL. We will shutdown the 9 billion dollar tourist industry in defense of young, black children who are harassed by CPD for selling Roses. Charleston is rich due to the exploitation of the legacy of slavery. [Video file]. Retrieved from <https://www.facebook.com/shakem.akhet/videos/1999583703419733/>

Akhet, S. A. (2018f, July 9). Saturday, July 14th, 4pm We will set off a series of demonstrations at the "Slave Market" and then Charleston City Hall. We will stand up for our future generation and NOT let them fall in the hands of the enemy. [Video file]. Retrieved from <https://www.facebook.com/shakem.akhet/videos/2001132223264881/>

Akhet, S. A. (2018g, July 10). I'm letting it be known to ALL parents, future parents. Students

and future students at the Muhiyidin D'baha Leadership Academy. If ANY student is done wrong or faces any injustice in society in any way, we will go FULL FORCE [Facebook status update]. Retrieved from <https://www.facebook.com/shakem.akhet/posts/2002228306488606>

Akhet, S. A. (2018h, July 14). Not only did we get the message out to a lot of people in the area, we helped the young boys down there sell out of their Palmetto Roses they sold. People were supporting them like crazy. We rallied for [Facebook status update]. Retrieved from [https://www.facebook.com/shakem.akhet/posts/2008668709177899?\\_tn=-R](https://www.facebook.com/shakem.akhet/posts/2008668709177899?_tn=-R)

Akhet, S. A. (2018i, July 15). This was posted today in a group. When two white little girls sell lemonade in Downtown Charleston it's sooo cute and they are warmly referred to as "local businesses". Black kids sell Roses downtown Charleston they are referred to as [Facebook status update]. Retrieved from <https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=2009997842378319&set=a.142045565840232&type=3&theater>

Akhet, S. A. (2018j, July 17). I will be down at Charleston City Council meeting this evening to confront Mayor Tecklenburg and Council members about their discriminatory policies against black youth who are making money trying to be entrepreneurs selling

Palmetto Roses. We CANNOT allow our [Facebook status update]. Retrieved from <https://www.facebook.com/shakem.akheta/posts/2012823432095760>

Akheta, S. A. (2018k, July 18). Time to clear the air!!! [Video file]. Retrieved from <https://www.facebook.com/shakem.akheta/videos/2014734171904686/>

Akheta, S. A. (2018l, July 18). Luckily those kids are down there selling Palmetto Roses to tourists. They could be down there pulling the Glock .45 out on the tourists. City of Charleston needs to count there blessings. [Facebook status update]. Retrieved from <https://www.facebook.com/shakem.akheta/posts/2014170141961089>

Akheta, S. A. (2018m, July 20). \*\*\*\*PLEASE DO ME A FAVOR\*\*\*\* Watch this clip!!! [Facebook status update]. Retrieved from <https://www.facebook.com/shakem.akheta/posts/2018088708235899>

Akheta, S. A. (2018n, July 20). When I'm not in the classroom teaching the youth, I'm out here in the streets advocating on their behalf to make money without being harassed by law enforcement. We will be on the Market again tomorrow at 4pm. BULLHORNS BLAZING [Facebook status update]. Retrieved from <https://www.facebook.com/shakem.akheta/posts/2017708951607208>

Akheta, S. A. (2018o, July 21). Man, I pissed off so many business owners and tourists last week. They were calling the police department left and right. Unfortunately, they couldn't do anything about it because it was legal. I informed the carriage riders that they were [Facebook status update]. Retrieved from <https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=2019335331444570>