**#BlackLivesMatter Arts: Exploring Deep Community Engagement**

Initially a hashtag, but now a global movement, #BlackLivesMatter emerged as a response to the 2013 acquittal of Trayvon Martin's murderer. With the mission to eradicate White supremacy and build local power to intervene in violence inflicted on Black communities by the state and vigilantes, the global network is expansive, affirms the lives of Black queer and trans folx, as well as Black peoples' humanity throughout the world. But what is the role of arts and culture in advancing the #BlackLivesMatter movement?

In 1970, Bayard Rustin argued that “the Black artist, whether or not he considers himself as such, is an essential member and a most important member of the freedom struggle.” He further contended that, “one of the fundamental reasons that the artist is always a forerunner in the movement for freedom among oppressed people is that all men, including Black men, judge a society or an ethnic group or a nation on the basis of their artistic creativity.” Furthermore, Nina Simone has been quoted as saying, “You can’t help it. An artist’s duty, as far as I’m concerned, is to reflect the times.”

Therefore, this presentation will explore the research question, in what ways might Black artists and arts leaders collaborate to foster deeply impactful community engagement initiatives in support of #BlackLivesMatters? Co-moderated by an arts leader and a dance artist, the discussion will focus on using culture as a meaning-making system to advance racial justice in communities by using the arts to ask provocative questions in service to envisioning and actualizing an antiracist world. Furthermore, this panel will explore the importance of creating, encouraging, and expecting collaboration in support of culture that engages communities in addressing the historic and continuous discrimination, marginalization, oppression, and subjugation experienced by Black people, specifically, throughout the world.

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