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# Documenting Ferguson: Capturing History as It Happens

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# Documenting Ferguson: Capturing History as it Happens



Sonya Rooney, University Archivist, and Jennifer Kirmer, Digital Archivist

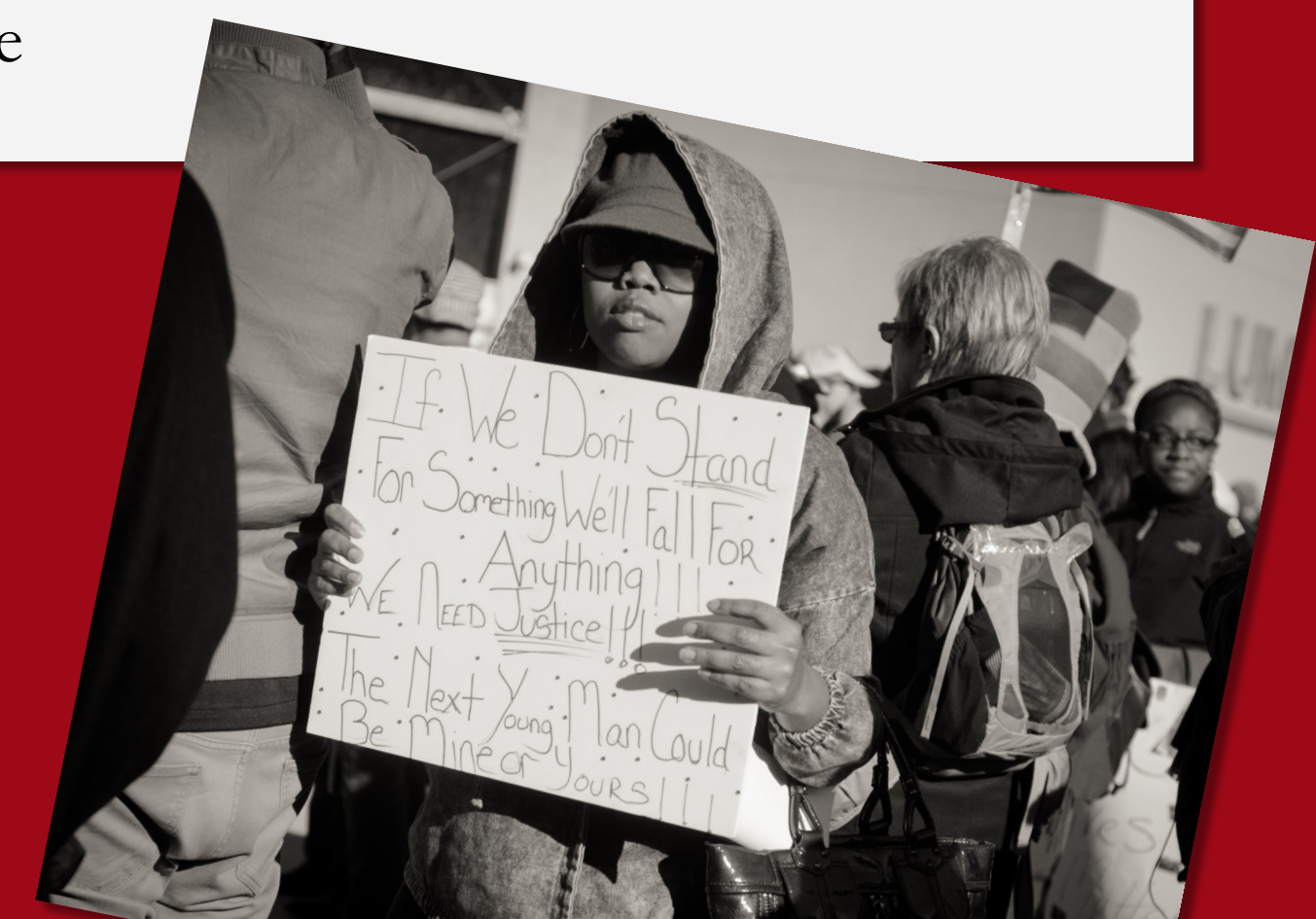
## Formation and Beginnings

- On August 9, 2014, eighteen-year-old Michael Brown was killed by then police officer Darren Wilson in the St. Louis suburb of Ferguson, Missouri, which sparked a variety of responses including memorials, community meetings, protests, and rallies which dominated the local and national media.
- Later in August, with the direction from Washington University Librarian, Jeffrey Trzeciak, the Documenting Ferguson Team was formed to capture history as it happened.
- Participants were using social media and mobile devices to organize events as well as document them. The team needed to find a way to collect and preserve born digital files captured on these types of temporal media.



## Getting the Word Out

- Variety of venues were used to publicize about and solicit content for Documenting Ferguson
  - Washington University news story
  - St. Louis NPR Interview
  - Missouri History Museum program “Documenting History: Artists Respond to Ferguson”
  - “Documenting Ferguson: Capturing History as it Happens” *Archival Outlook* November/December 2015 issue



## Research and Class Use

- In-person research use of physical posters, fliers, and newspapers
- Spring 2015 Sophomore Seminar group project — students interviewed university staff who live in Ferguson or surrounding communities
  - Interviews contributed to the Community Portal
  - Interviews added to the Washington University Archives Oral History Collection which includes interviews with alums, current/past faculty and staff regarding their experiences at WU

## Community Portal

- Omeka-powered website with Contribution plugin
- Allows anyone to contribute content
- Terms and conditions to contribute:
  - Contributor must be creator of content
  - Contributor gives university permission to preserve, use, distribute, and reproduce content
  - Content approved by site administrators
- Content includes:
  - Stories; Images; Videos; Audio; Oral Histories

## Archive-It

- Collaboration with Archive-It to solicit web content, news stories, blog posts, and social media that documented events in Ferguson
  - Over 100 links contributed directly from the Documenting Ferguson team
- Web content directly related to Washington University community captured on our own installation
- Archive-It expanded their collecting to include documentation of events across the country, not only in response to Ferguson, but also other “police-involved” shootings and related protests and events
- Links to contribute web content are included on the Omeka community portal

## Physical Collection Material

- Collect, preserve, and make accessible physical material documenting the university community’s responses
- Examples of material:
  - Student group fliers and posters
  - Student newspaper articles covering Ferguson
  - Event fliers from university-hosted discussions

## Moving Forward

- Continue to:
  - Capture websites through Archive-It
  - Seek contributions to the Community Portal
  - Collect physical material
- Work with variety of faculty and students to use the collection for teaching and research

## Committee Members

- La'Tanya Buck (consultant), Director of Center for Diversity & Inclusion
- Rudolph Clay, Head of Library Diversity Initiatives and Outreach Services and African & African American Studies Librarian
- Shannon Davis, Digital Projects Librarian
- Makiba J. Foster, Subject Librarian for American History, American Culture Studies, and Women, Gender, & Sexuality Studies
- Meredith Evans, Associate University Librarian
- Chris Freeland, Associate University Librarian
- Nadia Ghasedi, Head of the Visual Media Research Lab
- Jennifer Kirmer, Digital Archivist
- Sonya Rooney, University Archivist
- Andrew Rouser, Director of Scholarly Publishing
- Rebecca Wanzo (faculty advisor), Associate Director for The Center of the Humanities
- Micah Zeller, Copyright Librarian

Photos courtesy of the Documenting Ferguson Project, [digital.wustl.edu/ferguson](http://digital.wustl.edu/ferguson)

