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# The Intersectionality Between BLM and Muslim Communities: An Analysis of the Black Lives Matter Movement in relation to Sapelo Square and MuslimARC

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The Intersectionality Between BLM and Muslim Communities: An Analysis of the Black  
Lives Matter Movement in relation to Sapelo Square and MuslimARC

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Honors Senior Thesis

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## Introduction

One of today's toughest challenges is fighting through the daily hardship of reading news, watching television and scrolling through social media without utterly breaking down. Each day, devastating events destruct any perception of hope or positivity for the future. Each race, ethnicity, age group, sex, nationality and religious background is subject to distress while reading or hearing new information. Examples such as, a mass destruction within a city that kills innocent lives, a natural disaster that tears through the long-lived homes of families, or the implementation of new policies that engender individuals to rethink the role of their government, are just a few demonstrations of events affecting particular regions and particular communities. Regardless of which piece of news reaches the world, it is bound to touch the lives of a group of individuals in some specific way. After acts of devastation and distress come movements and organizations working to change the status quo, addressing needs that fit their interests, goals and values.

When Trayvon Martin, an unarmed 17-year-old African American teenager, was shot in 2012 in Sanford, Florida, the news didn't just touch the lives of his family. The news touched the lives of the more than 37 million African Americans in the United States who expressed immense rage and grief at the act of injustice. Outrage mounted in more than 100 cities nationwide, with protests calling attention to the need to reevaluate U.S. racial tensions. Once his murderer, George Zimmerman, was acquitted for his crime, the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement emerged and the movement continues to act as a voice for all minorities facing racism and intolerance today.

On the BLM official website, they state that "All Black Lives Matter," and include a list of their founding principles. The values and groups they support are: "diversity," "restorative justice," "being unapologetically black," "globalism," "collective value," being "transgender affirming," "black women," "black villages," "empathy," "black families,"

“loving engagement,” being “queer affirming,” and being “intergenerational.” While this demonstrates a significant list, and a wide sense of inclusivity, the movement does not mention any support for religious groups or faith-based organizations. Under the umbrella of all black lives matter, it is difficult to discern whether BLM supports Muslim Associations or Black Muslims.

Black Muslim associations and Muslim associations arose because of the need to provide a voice to the racism and intolerance for their specific communities. These associations strive to tackle the nationwide sense of Islamophobia, with events such as anti-Muslim stereotyping post 9/11 and the travel ban under a new administration, that continue to perpetuate notions of Muslim exclusivity. Acts of anti-Muslim violence and legal policies that target Muslim communities indicate a similarity to the BLM movement, in that they represent the continued intolerance and injustice both groups encounter.

Although not on the same national scale as BLM, Muslim Associations nationwide are attempting to take similar strides to combat intolerance and injustices. Organizations such as Sapelo Square, an organization aimed to centralize Black Muslims in a country that tends to place their marginalization in the background, and MuslimARC, a racial justice education organization by and for Muslims, are two examples of associations that desire to educate and redirect Islamophobic mindsets in the nation.

The BLM movement started the conversation of injustice where Muslim Associations such as Sapelo Square and MuslimARC joined in with the BLM movement. Both organizations being launched after BLM, represents the exigency to face a nation where minorities continue to battle against exclusivity and injustice. With my paper, I hope to provide a deeper understanding of the exigency for both movements, citing examples that illustrate the necessity for both BLM and Muslim Associations to speak for their individual needs, as well as analyze the intersectionality between values and goals of both organizations.

Although the movement may differ in that it is race-based and the Muslim associations are faith-based, there is an inherent need to understand and acknowledge how the two converge and diverge, and how the line of intersectionality bridges these two cultures facing similar oppression in the United States. Understanding the intersectionality will come from research on how BLM movement and these Muslim Associations explicitly direct attention to one another and how they implicitly overlap through shared values and goals.

### **Exigency**

The idea to uncover the intersectionality between BLM movement and Muslim association stemmed from the travel ban that President Trump administered this year. The ban faced opposition from its immediate presence in the media with protests and recent rulings continuing to set back the implementation of the ban. In the January 27<sup>th</sup> executive order, Trump banned foreign nationals from seven countries, Iraq, Syria, Iran, Libya, Somalia, Sudan and Yemen, all Muslim-majority nations, from entry to the United States for at least the next 90 days, refugees for 120 days, and indefinitely halted refugees from Syria. Several district court judges from around the nation, including initially with New York and Massachusetts, and recently with Hawaii, blocked parts of the order. Former President Barack Obama expressed strong criticism of the ban stating that he “fundamentally disagrees with the notion of discriminating against individuals because of their faith or religion.” Former attorney general Sally Yates also refused to defend the travel ban. The ban continues to be shut down despite numerous attempts by Trump to argue that the ban is in the best interest of national security by protecting from terrorism. The “new” travel ban is said to only ban six countries as of March, removing Iraq from the list of targeted countries. As of March 30, 2017, Hawaii’s federal judge extended blocking the travel ban, as Hawaii’s U.S. District Judge Derrick Watson ruled against the ban, resulting in a temporary restraining order just before the ban was set to go into effect. Federal Judge Theodore Chuang of Maryland also

blocked the revised travel ban, and as he shared a similar view to Watson that the ban was “intended to discriminate against Muslims.”

During the time of the initial executive order, Muslims both nationally and internationally faced fear for the safety of their friends, families and fellow Muslim brothers and sisters. Protests erupted across airports the day after the executive order was signed, destroying the perception of acceptance for Muslims in the United States. During these protests, I was curious as to the involvement of BLM movement and whether their support extended to Muslims nationwide. Although not comparable in any way to the shooting of Martin or the numerous incident of police brutality and racism that the African American community faces, the ban is similar in that it is an act that targets a specific group, as BLM movement finds acts of injustice to target African American communities. Not directly called a “Muslim ban” under the administration, the specificity of the countries selected and desire to exclude countries who seemingly do not “support our country” or “love deeply our people” as stated by Trump with the first executive order, targets a specific group of people without labeling exactly who this ban is aiming to target. I was inspired to explore whether BLM movement played a role in the protests that served to express outrage over an injustice targeting a specific group of people nationally and whether their support correlated with their statement that “all black lives matter” and their values of diversity and globalism.

I feel this topic is extremely important to call attention to because of the lack of research that exists explaining the intersectionality between BLM movements and Muslim associations. In discerning whether this topic would be feasible, I struggled to decide on how to elaborate on a topic that is limited in resources. However, I think the injustice that both African American and Muslim Americans continue to face is important to understand and discuss. BLM and Muslim Associations are continuously directing attention to the need to rethink race relations in America.

## **Methodology**

This paper aims to explain the backgrounds of the BLM movement and Muslim Associations and to expand upon the values of both groups, the challenges each faces and to illustrate the intersectionality between the two organizations. Intersectionality, as defined by a guide by Olena Hankivsky titled, “Intersectionality 101,” is “an understanding of human beings as shaped by the interaction of different social locations” and these interactions are “occur within a context of connected systems and structures of power.” Hanvinsky describes social locations in aspects such as race/ethnicity, gender, class, and religion, and structures of power such as, laws, polices, state governments, religious institutions, political unions and media. She goes on to indicate that “inequities are never the result of single, distinct factors. Rather, they are the outcome of intersections of different social locations, power relations and experiences.” The impacts of race tensions in the United States, unequal treatment and injustices are issues that both those representing the BLM movement and Muslim associations aim to ameliorate. Thus, this paper will focus on explaining what intersectionality exists between the goals of both groups and how each group illustrates or does not illustrate a sense of intersectionality between one another.

The first section of the paper will discuss the history of the BLM movement, the exigency of its formation, and the rhetorical strategies the movement implements to aid in promoting in their efforts towards equality and justice. The second section of the paper will explain the background behind the two Muslim Associations, Sapelo Square and MuslimARC, and the values and goals of each group. The third section will focus examples of intersectionality between BLM, Sapelo Square and MuslimARC. The fourth section will explain challenges and successes in intersectionality. The final section, the conclusion, will explain interviews with three local Knoxville residents involved in activism for Muslim and



black associations. In this conclusion section will also be closing remarks, with an analysis of the interviews and a personal reflection based on research shown in this paper.

This paper will use rhetorical tools to analyze the goals of both groups individually as well as how they persuade in terms of exemplifying their intersectionality in shared values and motivations. By using the pathos-driven rhetorical techniques of fear and guilt appeals, the BLM movement and Muslim associations establish intersectionality through shared values and goals, expressing a need for advocacy for social and political change.

## **Chapter 1**

### **The Formation of the Black Lives Matter Movement**

BLM Network is a decentralized national social justice organization, with about 37 chapters nationally and one international chapter in Toronto, Canada. After news of the acquittal of George Zimmerman, a Florida neighborhood watchman who shot the unarmed 17-year-old African American, Trayvon Martin, on July 13, 2013, the phrase Black Lives Matter was coined. Alicia Garza, co-founder of the movement, posted to Facebook and started the phrase “Black Lives Matter” when in her post she said: “Black people. I love you. I love us. Our lives matter.” Garza, alongside two other founding members, Patrisse Cullors and Opal Tometti, were inspired to seek justice and make the movement more than just a social media hashtag. The hashtag grew from Cullor’s re-post of the acquittal of Zimmerman using “#blacklivesmatter.”

The movement continued to gain recognition as acts of violence towards African Americans persisted. Following Martin, Eric Garner, an unarmed, 43-year-old African American male from Long Island, New York died by the chokehold of police. On July 17, 2014, police officers confronted Garner to arrest him for his sale of illegal cigarettes. Garner’s final breaths included his utterance of a phrase that surmounted in increased protests, “I can’t breathe.” The cellphone video documenting the incident, providing

considerable evidence, demonstrated that the chokehold, along with the compression of his chest by officers who handcuffed him, to be the cause of the death. The New York grand jury cleared white police officer, Daniel Pantaleo, responsible for the chokehold that killed Garner; Pantaleo was not indicted for Garner's death, and Garner's death was ruled a homicide-as the city medical examiner cited the chokehold and force applied to Garner's chest as the cause of his death. However, just because the death by Pantaleo was ruled a homicide does not necessarily mean it can be called a crime-calling into question why the grand jury decided not to indict the officer.

Another major act of injustice towards the African American community occurred on August 9, 2014 with the shooting of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri. Brown, an unarmed 18-year-old was shot and killed by officer Darren Wilson after being suspected of stealing cigarettes from Ferguson Market and Liquors. Brown and his friend, Dorian Johnson, were walking in the middle of Canfield Drive with cigarillos, which police said in the videotape that he stole. Police also claimed there was an altercation between Brown and Wilson which led to the shooting by Wilson as an act of self-defense. In the *NY Times* article, "Autopsy Shows Michael Brown Was Struck at Least 6 Times," it states that Johnson said the shooting of Brown was instead "a case of racial profiling and police aggression from a white officer towards a black man." Discrepancies as to the validity of the police report continue, as unlike the video accompanying Garner's death, there exists only the testimony of the officer and witnesses to determine whether the violence preceded the murder of Brown, or whether Brown faced Wilson with his hands raised and was shot in the front. Documents showed that Wilson fired his gun 12 times at Brown. Officer Wilson resigned from the Ferguson Police Department and the shooting prompted investigation that revealed the large number racial profiling incidents preceding Brown's murder. In the *CNN* article, "Ferguson police report: Most shocking parts" said that attorney general Eric Holder named the tension

between African Americans and police officers in Ferguson as a “highly toxic environment.” The article’s author, Jeremy Diamond, said Holder explained that the Ferguson police department demonstrates “excessive force overwhelmingly against African Americans,” and Diamond says Holder noted this had “no alternative explanation” other than racial bias. The same article mentions the Justice Department’s civil rights investigation which points to “unlawful bias against and stereotypes about African-Americans.” Needless to say, the BLM movement had strong basis for their outrage with the injustice imparted on Brown, and used the tragic event to reinforce their goals.

Further acts of police violence towards African Americans continued after Brown with the death of another other unarmed African American, 12-year-old, Tamir Rice. Cleveland police officer, then an officer-in-training, Timothy Loehmann shot him at a gazebo outside a recreation center on November 22, 2014. Rice had been carrying a pellet gun outside the recreational center and a citizen called 911 to report that Rice was “probably a juvenile” and that his gun was “probably fake.” The 911 operator who took the call, Constance Hollinger, failed to relay this information to the responding officers, Timothy Loehmann and Frank Garmback. Video footage shows that Loehmann shot Rice moments after arriving at the park. As of March 2017, Hollinger received an 8-day suspension as discipline, which Samira Rice, mother of Tamir, called the decision “unacceptable.” In the same article, the family’s attorney, Subodh Chandra exclaimed, “Eight days for gross negligence resulting in the death of a 12-year-old boy,” and “How pathetic is that?” Again, the fate of both officers was a decision by an Ohio grand jury not to indict either Officers Loehmann or Garmback, as the prosecutor, Tim McGinty described the incident as a, “perfect storm of human error, mistakes, and communications by all involved that day, the evidence did not indicate criminal conduct by police.”

As these few examples indicate, the movement grew out of injustice towards Martin, and followed the continued acts of police brutality. After Rice, a few more prominent examples of African Americans subject to death by police are Walter Scott, the 50-year-old African American in North Charleston, South Carolina who died on April 4, 2015, and Freddie Gray, the 25-year-old African American who died in Baltimore on April 19, 2015. Scott was pulled over for a broken tail light and ran away from Officer Michael Slager; however, Slager shot Scott several times in the back as he ran. Slager was fired and a grand jury indicted him on a state murder charge, for misleading investigations and for violating Scott's civil rights. As a result of this incident, the South Carolina Legislature passed a bill mandating the use of police body cameras and the North Charleston City Council agreed to a settlement of \$6.5 million with Scott's family. Gray died seven days after he was injured by officers who found a knife in his pocket and arrested him on a weapons charge. Gray died from a spinal cord injury while in police custody, and six officers, three black and three white, were charged in connection with his death. However, three officers were initially acquitted followed by prosecution dropping charges against the remaining three officers on July 27, 2016. Baltimore mayor, Mayor Stephanie Rawlings-Blake said in a *CNN* article, 'Black Lives Matter' cases: What happened after the protests?," represents "an opportunity to bring closure to the Gray family, the community and the city."

### **Rhetorical Devices of BLM Movement**

What did all these incidents mean for BLM movement? How did the movement react? With several of the incidents discussed above, the BLM movement's written response came in the form of statements posted on their official website in response. In the case of Ferguson and the shooting of Brown, BLM wrote a statement titled, "Ferguson, 1 Year Later: Why Protesters Were Right to Fight for Mike Brown Jr." from October 1, 2015. Analyzing the

statements issued on Ferguson by the BLM movement will help to exemplify the use of fear and guilt appeals by the BLM movement to persuade the need for social and political change.

In deciding what rhetorical techniques would best serve in analysis, I find fear and guilt appeals to aid in understanding how the BLM movement conveys the exigency of their voice on political and social reform. These appeals are associated with pathos, or appeals to emotion, and thus I find them powerful in emoting the urgency for change, as both are negative emotional responses that engenders individual to desire to turn the negativity to positivity.

The target audience for these appeals are African Americans and the public through the fear appeal, and those with power to enact public policy for the guilt appeal, using both appeals to direct changes in attitude towards the existing state that needs modification based injustices. The fear appeals to African Americans to desire to realize the racism that exists and to extend this fear to all marginalized groups. The guilt appeals then work to target authorities such as governmental figures and police authority to desire to enact political and social change.

As stated in the book, *The Dynamics of Persuasion: Communication and Attitudes in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* by Richard M. Perloff, he defines fear by saying, “fear is a powerful emotion,” and the fear appeal as a “persuasive communication that tries to scare people into changing their attitudes by conjuring up negative consequences that will occur if they do not comply with the message recommendations” (385, 389). Perloff defines the guilt appeal as a negative emotional response that Perloff states involves “ought” and “should” components, as in when an individual is aware that s/he failed to do what s/he “ought” to or “should do.” This could be the violation of a social custom, ethical or moral principle or legal regulation. Guilt arouses empathy to engender individuals to act in a way that helps reduce the unpleasant feeling that arises with this emotional appeal (Perloff 405).

In analyzing statements by the BLM movement on Michael Brown and Tamir Rice, I will examine the language used in both posts as a basis to examine how the movement uses fear to evoke an emotional response from the African American community and guilt to engender a response from the larger public and those with power to acknowledge that enough has not been done and that more needs to be done to eliminate anti-African American sentiments in the nation. With the statement on Brown and the statements on Rice there is an immediate appeal to fear and guilt, as the statements include arguments that appeal the emotions they aim to convey.

The BLM movement's Ferguson post begins with a recap of the events of Brown's killing, and then explains the contradiction between the information the Department of Justice found versus the testimony of Brown's friend, Dorian Johnson. The statement says, "an 18-year-old black male has been shot at least six times, twice in the head, by a white police officer," and that his "dead body was then left uncovered on Canfield Drive-in public view of family and neighbors." There is an immediate appeal to fear, as the message is direct, uses intense language that is gruesome, and targets an audience of African Americans who after reading this opening in the post, set themselves up for the feeling of fear that this could happen to them as well. The threats are salient as they directly appeal to the target audience, using Ferguson as an example of a real-life situation that has and continues to occur with the existing, unjust police enforcement. Reinforcing the idea of fear aroused from Ferguson is the indication that "Hands up, don't shoot" would eventually become a protest cry," and that the Ferguson protestors "saw themselves in Brown," as "potential victims or shooting targets of officers like Wilson, who served in a police department where anti-black animus was the standard."

The guilt appeal is more indirect, yet comes from the statement, "Ferguson protestors knew Brown should not have been killed." This ties in into the value of restorative justice, as

the official BLM website defines as, “We are committed to collectively, lovingly and courageously working vigorously for freedom and justice for Black people and, by extension all people. As we forge our path, we intentionally build and nurture a beloved community that is bonded together through a beautiful struggle that is restorative, not depleting.” The fact that protestors, who include a wide variety of walks of life, know the injustice of racism within policing and profiling exists and can still happen, demonstrates the “collective breaking point” that the protestors reached knowing the need to continue fighting for Ferguson and other cities nationwide for dignity, justice and respect. The guilt that the protestors are to feel for not doing enough perhaps to prevent a devastation such as this from occurring extends to the larger public, especially those in Ferguson who have the power to monitor the police department, including police officers, and those in governmental positions to prevent race-based crimes. Within the statement is listed those that came before Brown, including other unarmed African Americans like “Amadou Diallo, Oscar Grant, Shantel Davis, Eric Garner and Rekia Boyd,” who experienced the fate that is “any unarmed black person’s engagement with white police officers could be imagined as ending in death.” The use of these past examples serves to remind the target audiences that what ought to have been done, perhaps prior reform to the end racial profiling of African Americans in police-related crime, has not been done, but should be done to prevent the list from expanding.

Further demonstrations of the fear and guilt appeal in the Ferguson statement are examples that both evoke these emotions but also serve to illustrate the movement’s values. After describing the factual details of the incident, the response says, “The scene was nightmarish. This critical moment in contemporary United States history was not a beautiful beginning.” The statement then goes on to say that Brown was only one of the numerous unjust killings of African Americans, and demonstrates that Brown is just another victim of “...years of racial bias by the town’s police against black residents,” and that this “blue-on-

black violence” is one of the movement’s main reasons for motivation as a social justice organization. Citing these real-life examples works in effect to emphasize the fear the African American community is subject to, as racial profiling leads to consequence through the abuse of police power. As indicated by Perloff, a fear-arousing message contains both threat and efficacy information. As the Ferguson response continues, it states, “Whether our hands are up or our fists clinched, when in the presence of police, officers are still likely to respond to black people differently than white people, too often with deadly force,” and demonstrates their target audience as African Americans who could also face injustice like Brown and the many others before him. This exemplifies the effort of the movement to continue to seek restore justice for the African American community, which has recently been evident in police brutality.

In providing a response efficacy, or “information about the effectiveness of the recommended action,” the same Ferguson statement indicates that this “spark of injustice” promoted protestors to have their voice heard. Listed are the changes made during the past year of Ferguson’s death, including the Department of Justice’s investigation revealing a history of racial bias and discrimination by the Ferguson Police Department against African American residents, personnel changes in Ferguson’s municipal leadership, former President Barack Obama convening with protestors to discuss the tensions in Ferguson, and that Ferguson activists are leading the dialogue on “policing, anti-black racism, and state violence across the country.” The statement goes on to say that “None of the above would have happened had the tenacious Ferguson protestors remained quiet or unconvinced of their unrest on Brown’s behalf,” and that the public owes gratitude to Ferguson and Mike Brown for igniting the movement towards a passion for justice. Using the fear appeal as a means of persuasion, “The protesters in Ferguson saw themselves in Brown: potential victims or shooting targets of officers like Wilson,” and demonstrating that protesting is effective as a



means of voicing concerns and achieving justice, the Ferguson statement also serves to illustrate the value of seeking justice for the African Americans. These values align with the movement's desire to provide a voice for African Americans wrongfully incarcerated and in doing so, as they indicate on their national website, "are intentionally left powerless at the hands of the state." To seek justice for all and reclaim "basic human rights and dignity" are demonstrated in the posts that express concern, outrage, sadness, and fear for Black Lives that then turns into activism to alter the existing state.

Another example that serves to exemplify the rhetorical tools used by the BLM movement to persuade the need for change is through analysis of three posts on Tamir Rice from the official website, dating from the period December 2015 to June 2016. In a series of three posts, the BLM movement website expresses concerns for the death of Tamar Rice and uses tactics that serve to exemplify this situation as another injustice that claimed the life of another African American. The first post, dating December 29, 2015 is a release of the statement by the Rice family after the grand jury reached the decision to not indict either officers. The post, "For Immediate Release: Tamir Rice's Family Mourns For Tamir After Non-Indictment Of Officers," includes the press release contacts and the statement by Rice's mother, describing her concerns such as her belief that prosecutor McGinty "deliberately sabotaged the case never advocating for my son, and acting instead like the police officers' defense attorney," and ending the statement with "I pray and hope that the federal government will investigate this case." The next post on Rice was on December 30, 2015, introducing the statement by indicating that the day prior to the post, the Ohio grand jury decided to not bring criminal charges against both officers.

The post, "Black Lives Matter Network Statement on #JusticeforTamirRice," included the statement by Samira Rice, Tamir's mother, and follows with sections divided by titles each indicating the demands of the BLM movement after this decision. The three

sections are titled, “We demand the immediate firing for both officers,” “We demand Department of Justice conduct an immediate federal investigation into Loehmann’s killing of Tamir and the events leading up to his death,” and “We demand the immediate resignation of Cuyahoga County prosecutor, Timothy McGinty,” respectively. The most recent post on Rice, and the last post about Rice on the website, “Statement From Rice Family in Honor of Tamir’s 14th Birthday,” is from June 24, 2016. It begins by saying that it’s been 19 months since the Rice was killed by the officers and that this Saturday, he would have been 14 years old. The post includes two statements, one by Samira Rice and one by LaTonya Goldsby, though it is not mentioned if she is related to Rice. Both describe their continued desire to seek due justice, and within Goldsby’s statement is a link to the petition she created on change.org, “#Justice4Tamir, The fight for Justice continues,” to advise the incoming Cuyahoga County Prosecutor, Michael O’Malley, to continue fighting for Rice’s justice by releasing the transcripts during McGinty’s proceedings and indicting the officers involved in Rice’s murder.

In the Rice statements, the appeal to fear is evident in the threat of his death as a representation of what could occur to African American youth. Taking, for example, the statement from December 30, 2015, “Black Lives Matter Network Statement on #JusticeforTamirRice,” the statement reads, “across the country, 12-year-olds are playing with newly gifted holiday toys, grateful for a break from early morning alarms and schoolbooks, but not Tamir,” eliciting both a response to fear, for other African American youth and their families, as well as an emotional response to guilt from the public who has not done enough to prevent incidents such as this from occurring to other African Americans and their families. This statement specifically employs the guilt appeal in that it “induces empathy,” that “instills a sense of social, normative, responsibility to help,” and that “convinces individuals that the recommended behavior will reduce guilt or repair the

problem” (Perloff 407). The target audience this guilt is directed towards is exemplified through the direct demands by the movement that are as follows: “We demand the immediate firing of both officers,” “We demand Department of Justice conduct an immediate federal investigation into Loehmann’s killing of Tamir and the events leading up to his death,” and “We demand the immediate resignation of Cuyahoga County prosecutor, Timothy McGinty.” These statements are used to direct attention to the actions that ought to be done in order to attain justice from such an incident. Targeting those with power, in this case, people in law enforcement and the justice system, to ensure such actions are enacted from this situation, the BLM movement makes an appeal to fear from the negative consequence that this incident prompted from the devastation of the family to the devastation of the community through protests, and the guilt that prompts authoritative figures, such as involved in public affairs, to use these actions to resolve the problem of police brutality and provide justice to the Rice family.

Additionally, in the three statements BLM issued on Rice are messages from those close to Rice, from the Cleveland BLM chapter, and from the original founders of the BLM movement. Rice’s mother says, “this has been an emotional for my family and me,” that “It’s a shame we can’t show unity for racial problems in the City of Cleveland and in America.” A statement from LaTonya Goldsby, whose relationship to Tamir is not explicitly mentioned, is also included in the post. She says, “It’s important for people to remember Tamir, not just because it’s his 14th birthday, but because the criminal aspect of this case is not over,” calling for action with the petition she created to request the incoming prosecutor to pursue due justice Tamir deserves. Both statements from Rice’s mother and Goldsby appeal to guilt as they appeal to empathy and work to elicit an emotional response. The compilation of both statements by his mother and Goldsby serve to work in the statement to draw fear to the African American community, in that the devastation this family feels for the loss of their

child could also occur if proper measures are not taken, and to guilt towards public officials to act to attain the justice that has not been provided to Rice or his family. Public officials are noted that LaTonya has started a petition, but that this is not the only course of action that needs to occur, as the petition on change.org is a small step towards a larger call to action to instill the sense of social responsibility aid Tamir and future cases such as this to be prevented and avoided.

Furthermore, in the BLM Network Statement for Rice are statements from the local chapter and one of the organization's founding members that evoke negative emotions of both anger and sadness. The inclusion of these statements in the post are used to "motivate more serious attention to a message," in this case the demands that BLM movement feels are necessary to attain justice after Brown's killing and to prevent further injustice in the future. Local spokesman for the Cleveland chapter of BLM says, "We will not desist in our call for the firing and prosecution of the officers involved in the murder of Tamir Rice nor will we desist in our efforts to have the Department of Justice investigate the mishandling of the Tamir Rice case," using the personal pronoun "we" to include all those involved in the movement as well as those who support justice to be sought. Patrisse Cullors, co-founder of Black Lives Matter, says, "In the absence of justice and advocacy on behalf of Department of Justice...Black people must continue to defend ourselves against this kind of violence that is sanctioned by the state — if not us, who?" Emotions evoke a response that represents the anger felt by the BLM movement driving their need to "formulate strategies to redress the ethical inequity," and to use emotions as a powerful technique for persuasion (409). Cullors use of "Black people" demonstrates that her target audience is both African Americans who have not yet participated in action for change, and after these incidents, are in dire need to, as well as the Department of Justice, who has failed to provide the equality they feel Rice

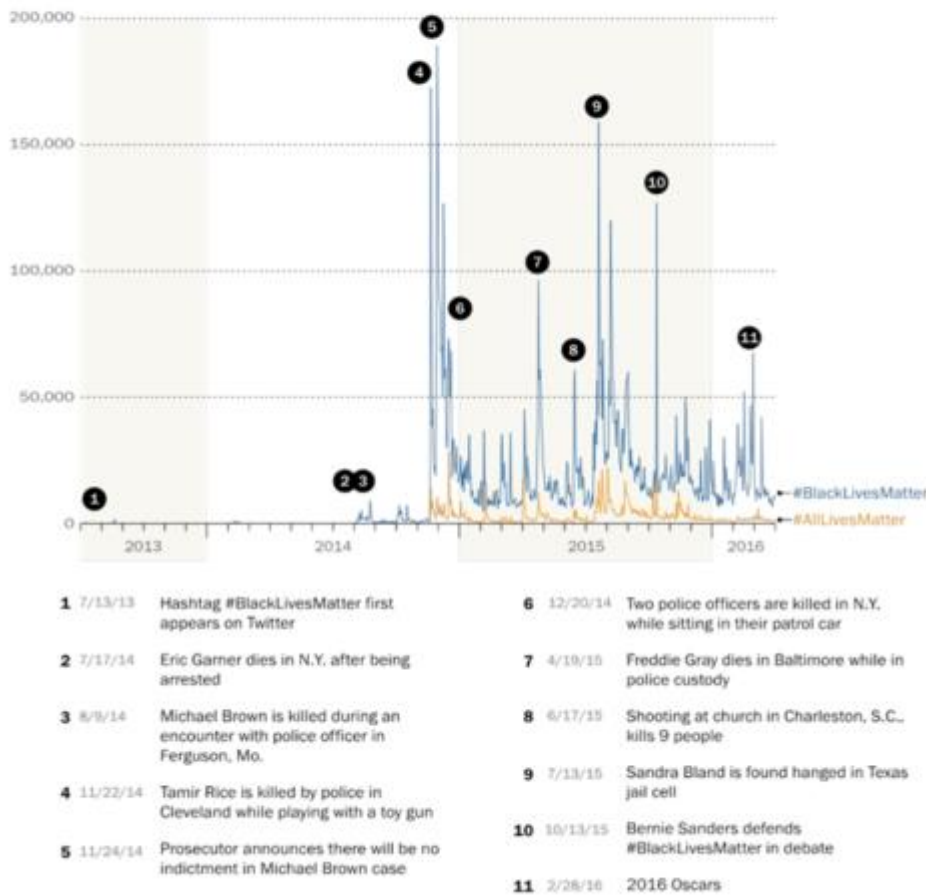
deserved as well as those before him where police officers were not indicted for their murders.

Of course, the BLM movement does not solely use their official website as the means of communication. Social media plays an important role persuasion, as short statements of 140 characters or less can have a large impact in reaching a wider audience in a shorter amount of time. The hashtag on Twitter strategically brings to light the movement's concerns in the media and is used also to report news, opinions and advocate for a community in support of the organization. The hashtag, #BlackLivesMatter, is a strategy employed by the BLM movement from its founding and throughout their promotion for social justice. Twitter provides the platform and the hashtag provides the efficacy for visibility of the conversation of BLM extending within the movement and beyond. Twitter users are able to join and contribute to the conversations associated with the movement and create a network of people supporting the goals of BLM.

In a study published by the PEW Research Center on August 15, 2016, researchers examined the number of tweets including both hashtags, #BlackLivesMatter and #AllLivesMatter, from the timeframe of July 12, 2013 to March 31, 2016.

**From July 12, 2013, to March 31, 2016, #BlackLivesMatter was used eight times as often as #AllLivesMatter**

Number of Twitter posts mentioning each hashtag: July 12, 2013, to March 31, 2016



*Figure 1.1: In the 10-year period of Twitter, #Ferguson was the most-used social issue hashtag and #BlackLivesMatter ranked third. This graph shows the changes in use of the #BlackLivesMatter from the period of 2013 to 2016, as marked by the blue lines.*

As demonstrated from this data, it was not until the incident at Ferguson in 2014 that the hashtag picked up usage, as PEW indicates the hashtag “appeared an average of 58,747 times per day in the roughly three weeks following Brown’s death,” and even more so when the jury decided not to indict Wilson three months later when the hashtag appeared on the following day, November 25, 172,777 times and 1.7 million times in the subsequent three weeks. The data shows spikes in the use of the hashtag from deaths that made headlines in the media, such as Tamir Rice, number four on the chart, the death of Freddie Gray, number

seven on the chart, and Sandra Bland, number nine on the chart. There are also peaks in usage during injustices such as the decision not to indict in Brown's case, number five on the chart, and during times where social media tends to be used frequently such as at the Oscars, number eleven, and at political events, specifically where BLM is discussed, number 10.

In analyzing the persuasiveness of the hashtag, it's important to understand how the message works in reiterating the goals and values of the BLM movement. Do the posts successfully reflect the values of the BLM movement as a whole and work towards their goals of enacting social and political change? Revisiting the use of fear and guilt appeals will aid in analysis of when the hashtag peaked and when it declined in usage, and how this cycle worked to represent the priorities of the movement. The first major peak is seen with number four, the murder of Tamir Rice. As noted in the post and with the explanation of number four on the chart, "Tamir Rice is killed by police in Cleveland while playing with a toy gun," the implication is clear that the focus is on the child aspect of this devastating incident. The fact that the hashtag sparked from an estimated 10,000 uses in Brown's murder to in August 2014 to an approximate 175,000 uses in Rice's murder in November 2014 indicates that the increased use of the hashtag is not solely because he is African American but more importantly because he was a 12-year-old. This highlights the way in which appealing to fear is useful in inciting awareness towards combatting goals the movement is aiming to achieve, such as highlighting incidents that show devastation that can be brought upon any African American, regardless of age.

The next large peak after Rice is number five, the announcement that there will be no indictment in Brown's case. The graph shows an approximate 190,000 tweets using the hashtag, as outrage ensued over the injustice with this decision. This is the largest peak on the graph and demonstrates one of the most evident values and goals of the BLM movement- restorative justice and being unapologetically black. The restorative justice principal stated

on the BLM official website states, “We are committed to collectively, lovingly, and courageously working vigorously for freedom and justice for Black people and, by extension all people. As we forge our path, we intentionally build and nurture a beloved community that is bonded together through a beautiful struggle that is restorative, not depleting.” This guiding principle is apparent through the use of the hashtag, as the increased use of the hashtag demonstrates how it works to build communities globally who support efforts of the movement. This increase use of the hashtag shows the power of social media in creating networks of people advocating, in this case, justice for Brown, and in turn demonstrate that the inequality of this decision is seen not only through the eyes of African Americans but also through the eyes of all who find injustice in racial divides. The guiding principal being unapologetically black is defined by BLM as, “We are unapologetically Black in our positioning. In affirming that Black Lives Matter, we need not qualify our position. To love and desire freedom and justice for ourselves is a necessary prerequisite for wanting the same for others.” The increased use of the hashtag with the decision to not indict Brown’s killer is also a demonstration of how the BLM movement is focused on seeking justice for African American lives and by doing so, seeking justice for all others.

That this peak is also the largest also demonstrates that the appeal to guilt, targeted at the public and those in power is creating communities who see that anti-African American racism still exists and needs to be combatted. Joining on the hashtag demonstrates a sense by this target audience in aid the movement’s efforts through showing support by using the hashtag, and thus increasing visibility of this act of injustice and creating a network of those in favor of ending a society where, as the official BLM movement states, “Black lives are systematically and intentionally targeted for demise.”

Two other points on the graph that demonstrate how the use of the fear appeal works to support the BLM movement’s goals are with number seven and number 9 on the graph.



Point seven is the death of Freddie Gray in Baltimore while in police custody, and point nine is Sandra Bland, found hanged in a Texas jail cell. These points also indicate increased use of the hashtag, with number seven amounting to approximately 100,000 uses of the hashtag, #BlackLivesMatter, and number nine at about 160,000 uses. Using the hashtag to call attention to both of these deaths works in using fear to appeal to the public, and more specifically, African Americans. That they both died after incidents with police officers further highlights one issue the BLM movement aims to call attention to which the excessive force used by police authorities towards African Americans based on racial bias. That, with both the case of Gray and Bland, there is unclear and unjust basis for why the officers arrested the two African Americans, Gray for being falsely accused of carrying an illegal switchblade, and Bland for failing to use a turn signal, only further emphasizes how the hashtag serves to create visibility towards “broadening the conversation around state violence to include all of the ways in which Black people are intentionally left powerless at the hands of the state” and creating a network of people in support of raising awareness in demonstrating how “Black lives are deprived of our basic human rights and dignity.”

The last large peak in the graph, number 10, is seen with the approximate 140,000 tweets using the hashtag when Bernie Sanders defends #BlackLivesMatter in a debate on October 12, 2015. As Sanders was running for the 2016 presidential election, his status as a white, male political figure defending a Black movement only reiterated notions of how the guilt appeal works in reiterating the idea towards the public that the surplus amount of racially motivated crimes could have been prevented, and should be prevented in the future and supporting BLM movement is one way to raise awareness and contribute towards social and political change. In his speech during the CNN Democratic Debate, Sanders says, “Black lives matter, and the reasons those words matter is because the African American community knows that some innocent person like Sandra Bland...or that kids or going to get shot,” and

that “We need to combat institutional racism from top to bottom and we need major, major reforms in a broken criminal justice system.” From there the spark of the hashtag demonstrates how the conversation took to Twitter, using the support from Sanders as a reminder that those in power can advocate and reinforce support for the BLM movement and its efforts to stop systematic racism towards the Black community.

Additionally, more research by PEW indicates that 38% of the tweets from this time are supportive or positive references to the BLM movement.

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### **Tweets using the hashtag #BlackLivesMatter supported the movement by more than three-to-one margin**

*% of Twitter posts: July 12, 2013, to March 31, 2016*

<b>Supportive or positive reference to #BlackLivesMatter movement</b>	<b>38%</b>
General support	21
Specific incidents of alleged police misconduct	18
<b>Neutral references to #BlackLivesMatter</b>	<b>12%</b>
<b>Criticism of #BlackLivesMatter movement</b>	<b>11%</b>
<b>Other</b>	<b>39%</b>
General race issues, not about #BlackLivesMatter movement	15
2016 campaign	14
Miscellaneous	10

Note: Data were collected using Crimson Hexagon’s machine learning algorithm and include all tweets that included either “#BlackLivesMatter” or “BlackLivesMatter” between July 12, 2013, and March 31, 2016. Numbers may not add up due to rounding. N=11,781,721 relevant Twitter posts.

Source: Pew Research Center analysis using Crimson Hexagon. “Social Media Conversations About Race”

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*Figure 1.2: Data shows 38% of the tweets using #BlackLivesMatter are positive or supportive references to the movement. Also shown is 39% of uses of the hashtag extend beyond the movement towards others issues such as general race issues, the 2016 campaign and miscellaneous.*

This data represents how the visibility and collective network created by the hashtag extend beyond creating conversations solely related to the Black Lives Matter movement. That there is almost an equal percentage of positive uses of the hashtag and other uses that relate to general race issues not about the #BlackLivesMatter movement represents how the movement's voice for race-related issues reaches beyond the issues the movement chooses to focus on. That the hashtag started the conversation, and continues to play a role within the movement as well as outside of it only reiterates the goal of the movement to "spark dialogue" and to "facilitate the types of connections necessary to encourage social action and engagement." The hashtag's positive and supportive use shows support for the movement and its efforts and that the hashtag is used to apply to other race-related issues beyond those voiced by BLM demonstrates an intersectionality that reaches diverse and global communities.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Introduction to Sapelo Square**

In order to demonstrate the intersectionality between Muslim associations and the BLM movement, I chose two organizations to use as a means of comparison and analysis of rhetorical techniques. Unlike the national-scale of the BLM movement, both of these organizations are not as widely known, but do count as national organizations working on a national level to combat injustice.

Sapelo Square is an online resource for Black Muslims in the United States that launched on May 19, 2015, intentionally as this is the birthday of Malcolm X. The resource's name stems from being one of the first African Muslim communities in the United States in the 1800s, and "square" is a reference to the communal aspect, a "cultural hub for African-descended people." The main goal of the resource's founding is to put Black Muslims at the center of the conversation, explaining who they are, what they have done, and why it matters to the nation. As they say on their website, "African-descended Muslims are situated at the intersection of three major geographies: the African diaspora, the United States, and the Transnational Muslim community." The resource speaks as though Black Muslims have been excluded from the conversation on U.S. society, politics, culture and Islam in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and it aims to enter the mainstream discourse. As this is an online site, it has been accessed globally and uses Facebook and Twitter to advertise new posts and promote attention to larger audiences. The resource is essentially an online publication, comprised of a founding member and senior editor, Su'ad Abdul Khabeer, and about nine other members that have different specialties from politics editor, religion editor, history editor, arts and culture editor, web developer and special projects.

The values of the movement center on serving as an educational resource, as they indicate on their website, to understand the "history of Islam in Black America" and to "reflect the vitality of Black Muslim Life." The resource uses a nonsectarian, or secular approach to understanding Islam and what it means to be Black in America, by providing, "informed and thought provoking content that leads to innovative and transformative action." The resource does this through a variety of posts on a series of topics, such as Arts and Culture, History, Religion and Politics and allowing for contributions of those who want to share their experiences of what it means to be a Black Muslim in the U.S. and to ultimately achieve the main goal, which is "to celebrate and analyze the experiences of Black Muslims

in the United States to create new understandings of who they are, what they have done, and why that matters.” In addition, Sapelo Square provides resources such links to the #IslamophobiaIsRacism Syllabus, the #BlackIslam Syllabus and livestreams with special guests speaking on topics such as the presidential election results, calling their most recent stream “Where Do We Go From Here?” Sapelo Square aims to ensure Black Muslims do not remain invisible in mainstream discourse and that those seeking to better understand what it means to be a Black Muslim the U.S., have an online resource that can provide a sense of unity and reassurance that Black Muslim issues are just as important as others.

In a blog post on Sapelo Square’s website under the politics category is an article titled, “Muslim Ban, Anti-Blackness and African American Muslims,” from January 20, 2017. The post is written by Layla Abdullah-Poulos, an adjunct at SUNY Empire State College, and she includes the comments from Muslim academics, writers, thinkers, and activists from diverse Muslim associations, including that of Margari Aziza, programming director and one of the co-founders of MuslimARC. Abdulla-Poulos’s post is about the then recent issuing of President Trump’s first order on immigration and calls into question why some African American Muslims were apprehensive about protesting alongside their Muslim brothers and sisters. Abdullah-Poulos uses factual arguments, the fact that 1/3 of the Muslim demographic is made up of Black Muslims and that there is a “heritage of African American Muslims in fighting against oppression and systemic racism from the time of enslavement, Reconstruction, Jim Crow, the Civil Rights Movement to today.” She goes on to say that African American Muslims have devoted their “time, energy, resources and bodies in social justice movements outside their culture,” and the fact that some are ambivalent towards showing full support towards Muslims is “disturbing.” A large portion of the rest of the comments chosen in this post are direct appeals to pathos. For example, Asha Mohamood Noor, advocacy and engagement specialist for “The Campaign to Take on Hate” says “many

Black Muslims fall in a dangerous intersection, facing anti-Black racism and Islamophobia,” and she goes on to use “I” in saying “I stand with Black Lives Matter, as so many Somalis and Sudanese Americans who will be impacted,” and “we would hope that our black brothers and sisters fight against anti-black racism when it affects us too.” The motivational element in her commentary to “bridge the divide and stand together,” reemphasizes the appeal to emotions, as she uses language that heightens the idea of the necessity of unity in a time of despair. Other comments emphasize the sadness knowing that there is an internal battle between Muslims and African American Muslims unwilling to show support, and as another commentator, Hind Makki, says, the “#MuslimBan is anti-Black racism intersecting with Islamophobia.” In this way, Abdullah-Poulos is advocating that there is a clear intersection between the African American community, the Muslim community, and the African American Muslim community and that there should be support among all three to work together to resist and fight against acts of injustice.

### **Introduction to MuslimARC**

If Sapelo Square is the online resource for explaining the problem of the oppression of Black Muslims that is often overlooked, MuslimARC could be identified as the solution to this problem. MuslimARC stands for Muslim Anti-Racism Collaborative, and is a faith-based human rights education organization focused on racial justice. The organization says it has three main goals: to educate by providing resources and training for racial justice, to provide outreach by building multi-ethnic and intra-interfaith coalitions for racial equity, and to advocate for increased awareness and racial justice. The organization launched on February 9, 2014 and does not identify a specific leader as the founder but instead says in 2013, the idea began with a group of Muslim activists, students, community leaders and scholars to challenge racism and inter-ethnic tensions. The values explicitly indicated on the organization’s website are: “a deep appreciation for diversity,” the “exchange of meaningful

dialogue,” “self-reflection in the fight against arrogance,” “promotion of righteousness and unity,” and “belief in the applicability of theory to action.” As the organization is faith-based, each of these values is tied to a specific verse from the Quran, Islam’s holy book, and the last value is tied to Malcolm X’s “Letter from Mecca.” Something different from Sapelo Square and the BLM movement is the fact that this organization is membership-based, requiring a fee to access online trainings and monthly member meetings.

The organization’s blog, reMARC, allows for voices of marginalized members of the community to contribute to the larger discussion on Muslim anti-racism efforts. One of the posts, “A Muslim for Ferguson Letter,” was published on November 20, 2014. This article is by Margari Hill, one of the organization’s co-founder and director, and she specifically addresses the letter to Muslim organizations and Civil Liberties Organizations, beginning with the greeting, “Salam alaikum.” The letter begins, “We await the grand jury decision on whether Darren Wilson, the police officer who fired on and killed unarmed Michael Brown, will be indicted on criminal charges,” and goes on to cite saying of Prophet Muhammad and saying of Allah from the Quran. The verse used from the Prophet reads, “By Allah, if you have killed one man, it is as if you have killed all the people” (Sunan Sa’id ibn Mansur 2776), and the article goes on to say that as Muslims, we should stand with the most marginalized members of society, “to stand with the victims of oppression for justice.” The article goes on to say that the decision impacts Muslims just as much as the African American community, as “the realities of structural racism affects the lives of Muslims and people of color nationwide.” In this way, the article is also using an appeal to fear to indicate to the Muslim community that the issue of racism is the African American community’s problem just as much as it is theirs.

Another blog post, “I Caution All to Abstain From Using #MuslimLivesMatter,” was written by Namira Islam, Co-Founder/Executive Director of MuslimARC, on February 17,

2015 and originally posted to Facebook. The post is a response to the shooting of three UNC Chapel Hill Muslim students on February 11, 2015. According to a CNN article, “Chapel Hill 'rocked' by killings of 3 Muslim students,” the three Muslim victims, Deah Shaddy Barakat, 23, and his wife, Yusor Mohammad, 21, of Chapel Hill, and her sister, Razan Mohammad Abu-Salha, 19, of Raleigh, were shot based on an ongoing neighbor dispute over parking. In the same article, the killing sparked an uproar on social media overnight with the hashtag, #MuslimLivesMatter, for those who felt the “hate crime” was largely motivated by the victims’ religion. In the post by Islam, she advises the Muslim community to refrain from using a hashtag that is a “response to systematic police brutality, the senselessness of extrajudicial killings by law enforcement, and the following lack of justice in US courts for what amounts to execution by officers and vigilantes.” While recognizing that the injustice is evident towards the Muslim community, “Muslim lives are considered less than,” and “Muslim deaths do not matter in the eyes of our foreign policy and most of our media,” there is a recognition that justice, in this case has been served. Islam says the shooter is already in custody for first degree murder and that “is far more a step towards some kind of justice than the loved ones of many Black victims will ever see.” Islam arouses guilt by saying that despite the fact that U.S. non-Muslims and non-Black Muslims have been behind the work involved in the promotion of #BlackLivesMatter, “it is especially egregious and disrespectful for us to then co-opt the HT for any reason, including the pain of this event,” by derailing the conversation. The negative emotion of guilt thus brought out, Islam then provides solutions to get rid of this guilt by offering solutions. Some solutions include: check your privilege, mourn and act for justice for all by grieving without adding to another’s pain, and to instead use other hashtags, like #WithMuslims, #Justice4Muslims, #IGotYourBack, or the hashtag that arose after the Chapel Hill death, #OurThreeWinners.



The guilt appeals to Muslims who have adopted the hashtag #BlackLivesMatter into #MuslimLivesMatter and as Islam mentions, there is a need to recognize and support BLM but to not overstep their movement by applying it to any and all other communities. The fact that Islam appeals to a target Muslim audience by fear, accounting for the tragedy, mentioning the names and recounting the event serves to engage Muslims in an awareness of the present state of their status in the community. That three innocent Muslim lives can be taken due to inherent racism, Islamophobia and lack of acceptance for the Muslim community is a strong indicator that this could happen to other Muslims as well. By similarly using the event to spark awareness and concern, as the BLM movement does with their posts, Islam and the MuslimARC organization represent a case of adopting techniques of prior movements, yet in addressing the need to maintain the integrity of the BLM movement by not manipulating their hashtag, there is also a sense of respect for the goals and values of another movement that is also combatting racism of a minority in the United States. This highlights the value of the MuslimARC organization to demonstrate their deep appreciation for diversity and use of advocacy for increased awareness and efforts to advance racial justice.

### **Chapter 3**

#### **Intersectionality between BLM movement and Muslim Associations**

To begin, although not explicitly stated by either Sapelo Square or MuslimARC, there seems to be an inherent exigency in the launching of both organizations. In looking at the date Sapelo Square launched, May 19, 2015 and MuslimARC launched, February 9, 2014, there is an exigency that points towards the reason both Muslim Associations began. The BLM movement can be thought of as a catalyst for other movements to spark up and rise against racial tensions that physically and emotionally engender loss for suppressed communities. In recognizing that these organizations began in the midst of African American

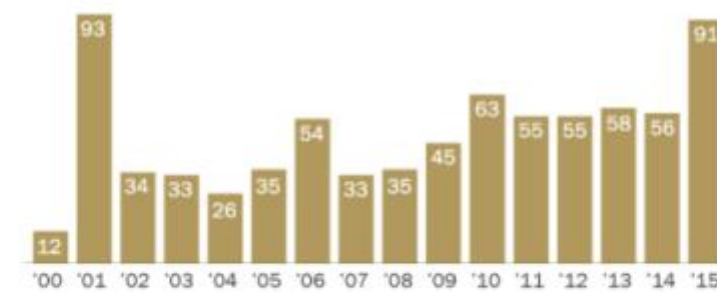
oppression, it can be shown that Muslim Americans had their own battles to overcome. According to 2016 PEW Research Center report, “Anti-Muslim assaults reach 9/11-era levels, FBI data show,” data shows that there were 91 reports of aggravated or simple assaults motivated by anti-Muslim bias in 2015, which is just two less than the number reported after 2001.

ANTI-MUSLIM ASSAULTS REACH 9/11-ERA LEVELS, FBI DATA SHOW

## Anti-Muslim assaults at highest level since 2001

### Anti-Muslim assaults at highest level since 2001

Anti-Muslim assaults reported to the FBI



Note: Includes simple and aggravated assaults.

Source: Federal Bureau of Investigation

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*Figure 1.3: Data shows a significant resurgence of anti-Muslim assaults, including both aggravated or simple Muslim assaults motivated by bias in 2015, with 91 reported incidents. This number is only two less than the number of assaults in 2001, post 9/11.*

Moreover, the research found that in 2015 there were 120 anti-Muslim intimidation crimes—those threatening bodily harm—the largest number since 2001’s total of 296. Also, the FBI reported that in 2015 a total of 257 incidents of anti-Muslim hate crimes, which was a 67 percent increase from 2014. The incidents included a total of 301 individual crimes, 71 percent of which were targeted at individuals and not property. More data from another study by PEW titled “Republicans Prefer Blunt Talk About Islamic Extremism, Democrats Favor

Caution” reveals that most Americans feel there is a lot of discrimination against Muslims.

The survey was conducted from January 4 through the 7 in 2016 on landlines and cellphones among a national sample of 2,009 adults.

## Many say U.S. Muslims face ‘a lot’ of discrimination



*Figure 1.4: Based on PEW study conducted from January 7-14, 2016, the data shows most those surveyed found there is “a lot” of discrimination against Muslims in the U.S.*

Here, more than half of Americans surveyed, 59 percent, find that Muslims face a lot of discrimination. What all this data illustrates is that the basis for the rise of both Sapelo Square and MuslimARC is drawn both out of fear and guilt. With increased racism through physical assaults and discrimination in other forms, there is an ever-present need to address issues against those living in fear in their own home country. For these two Muslim organizations, it was a sense of guilt drawn by the knowledge that there are efforts being made by other movements such as the BLM movement to alter the course of race relations in the U.S. and that Muslim organizations such as these need to step up, speak out and act against unnecessary and unjustified oppression.

In analyzing the intersectionality between a race-based movement and faith-based movements, I want to begin by examining a few posts by the BLM movement that call attention to their support for Muslims, as well as those from both Sapelo Square and MuslimARC that show a similar sense of support for the BLM movement’s goals and values. There are two posts that explicitly mention that the movement extends itself to support diverse groups. In the BLM post, “In Honor of Our Dead: Latinx, Queer, Trans, Muslim,

Black — We Will Be Free,” published on June 14, 2016, there is mention of Muslims and religious extremism. The post comes after the devastation that the Orlando gay nightclub shooting on June 12, 2016, where Omar Mateen was responsible for killing 49 people and wounding 53 others. The post states, “Black people are a diverse community and though the hate-filled rhetoric of the conservative right is currently trying to pit us against our kin — we will always stand with all the parts of ourselves. Today, Queer, Latinx, and Muslim family, we lift you up.” This embodies the values of respecting differences and commonalities and practicing empathy. As they go on, they address the media representation as a terrorist attack and say, “Religious extremism is not new to America and is not unique to Islam,” and that “We need a world that realizes that the word “terrorist” is not synonymous with Muslim, any more than “criminal” is synonymous with Black.” The empathy of understanding the similarity between the disillusion created by media’s framing of Muslim with terrorist and Black with criminal allows a sense of intersectional to be established, in that the BLM community recognizes that other groups face race issues and injustice. The post goes on to say, “until anti-Blackness no longer fuels anti-Muslim...we can never be truly free.” The value of globalism is also present in recognizing that the movement is part of a global Black family, in the fight to attain the social and political justice needed to end racial tensions and unfair treatment in the country both African Americans and Muslims call home.

The other post, “Exclusive: Black Lives Matter releases statement on Trump’s Muslim ban,” is from *Mic*. The BLM statement was published January 31, 2017 and begins by saying, “The Black Lives Matter Global Network and movement could not exist without our Black Muslim, immigrant and refugee family.” The statement goes on to explain the executive order issued by Trump and says, “We cannot allow this injustice to continue” and that the “war against Muslims, and refugees, the separation of families, immigrants deported and detained, the turning away of those seeking asylum and the denial of basic human dignity

must stop.” The statement goes on to cite that this is an example of Islamophobia and Xenophobia and ends with three lines that are as follows: “We will fight for the safety of all people. We will protect people everywhere that we can. This is going to be a long fight; Black Lives Matter will be there every step of the way.” With this post, there is clear evidence of the desire to empathize with and work towards promoting diverse efforts to combat issues that directly target a specific group of individuals.

Sapelo Square and MuslimARC have both posted support for the BLM movement. Sapelo Square’s post, “Mapping the Intersections of Islamophobia & #BlackLivesMatter: Unearthing Black Muslim Life & Activism in the Policing Crisis,” from August 30, 2016, focuses on the difficulty of Black Muslims facing oppression from both sides of their identities. Author Donna Auston, explains that Black Muslim face both anti-Muslim and anti-Black discrimination that leads them to “exist right at the intersection of these two forms of racism.” In connecting the shared sense of oppression felt by both groups, Auston is mapping intersection through the exigency of both the BLM movement and Sapelo Square to realize the discrimination that African Americans, Muslims and African-American Muslims must combat and to use their organizations as platforms for social and political change. The article ends by saying, “We fight because we are profiled both on the street and at the airport” and “We are unapologetically black. We are indisputably Muslim. For better and worse, we are fully and ambivalently American. And we are enough.” Directly using one of the values of the BLM movement, as they state on their official website that one of their guiding principles is being unapologetically black, Auston is reinforcing a primary goal of Sapelo to bring to light the injustices and discriminated faced by Black Muslims that is often pushed to the background.

An example of intersecting the goals of Muslim communities and the BLM movement is found in MuslimARC’s “#BlackLivesMatter Toolkit for Muslims” published on

March 6, 2014. The toolkit serves to educate the Muslim community to understand the context of Black Lives Matter specifically in the realm of police brutality. This is in fact one of the most explicit examples of intersectionality, as the toolkit is specifically created for Muslim communities to aid in understanding the BLM movement, the issue of structural racism and police brutality, and to raise consciousness and affect change through this awareness. The toolkit provides suggestions for action, facts, a list of deaths protested by the BLM movement-in chronological order, visual aids, including graphs and photographs of the BLM movement protests and MuslimARC members and Muslims involved as activists with the protests, BLM chants, protestor demands, as well as several other resources for education on the BLM movement and its demands, goals and actions for justice. The toolkit is available to anyone for download, making it easy to access and available to all regardless of association with the organization. The toolkit is also relevant, with the last update on August 21, 2016. MuslimARC explains that the goal of the toolkit is to “draw upon our Islamic traditions and historical legacy of Black upliftment and empowerment,” and to address the clear racial disparities and devastating effects of the prison-industrial complex on Black/African American Muslim communities” as well as the systemic racism that “not only deprives individuals of opportunities, but undermines our dignity as a people.”

This statement uses guilt to address both the Muslim community at large but more specifically the Muslim community leaders who have the power to enact efficacy, or effectively engaging in the advocated action. Here the BLM toolkit works to educate about the BLM movement and account for as many elements of the movement as possible, and then suggests courses for action by leaders in Muslim communities. Some of these suggestions include a section on individual courses of action, including advice such as, educating the uninformed and not making the issue about your personal cause or attempt false comparison between groups. The advice extends on to what organizations can do as well as tips for

organizing a dialogue on BLM in the Muslim community, stating, “We urge all Muslims to engage in today’s civil rights movements and be on the right side of history” and that “As part of our commitment to fighting racism within the Muslim community and standing for justice, we must take action.” Ultimately the toolkit serves to provoke a larger conversation, understanding the oppression that exists then understanding how the BLM movement inspires Muslim movements like MuslimARC to then promote their own social and political change for the Muslim community. Here there is no divide apparent between the two movements, and instead an effort by MuslimARC to acknowledge the efforts of BLM movement and emphasize the need to understand this movement, maintain its dignity and reputation, and to learn from the movement to inspire Muslim communities to understand oppression, as this oppression inherently extends to Muslim, African American and African American Muslims nationwide.

In addition to using the posts as examples of intersectionality, I would like to compare some topics within the Black Lives Matter syllabus by Frank Leon Roberts at New York University to the #IslamophobiaIsRacism syllabus posted on the Sapelo Square blog in their resources section. These syllabi, though not directly from either of the movements, are representations of applying the values, goals and intent of the BLM movement and Muslim associations mentioned in this paper. As noted in figure 1.2, the percent of Twitter posts from July 12, 2013 to March 31, 2016 shows that 39 percent of posts fall into an “other” category. The largest portion of this other category, 15 percent, include topics that are not related to the BLM movement but are instead race issues in general. The Black Lives Matter syllabus demonstrate how the conversation from the hashtag works in effort to promote the efforts of both the BLM movement and the Muslim Associations mentioned here. For the BLM movement, as stated on their official website, it is a desire to “engage in critical dialogue with us about this unfortunate and problematic dynamic” of investigating anti-Black racism; on

Sapelo Square's website, a goal mentioned is to "provide informed and thought provoking content that leads to innovative and transformative action,"; and on MuslimARC's webpage, the organization mentions "developing and delivering education on internalized, interpersonal, and institutional racism." Thus, the hashtag is shown to extend to the syllabi in the sense that it serves as a catalyst for these syllabi to be taught and used by educators and the public to voice the messages of BLM movement, anti-Black and anti-Muslim issues, and racism at large.

The Black Lives Matter syllabus was created by Frank Leon Roberts and taught for a semester at New York University's Gallatin School of Individualized Study in Fall 2015. Roberts is an educator and political organizer that founded the Black Lives Matter Syllabus to provide a public educational curriculum to provide resources needed to teach BLM both in the classroom and in community settings. Furthermore, Roberts said in an interview with *FADER* magazine that there is certain exigency to the course, as we "are in a national crisis and that with the end of Obama's administration, "our timelines are inundated daily with conversations about racial strife and racial injustice in America, and people are looking for resources." Roberts decided to extend the conversation beyond online forums and social media, and using the hashtag to spark dialogues and engage in ideas which, as he says in the same interview, "is not something that, in mainstream media, people are really willing to do in a thoughtful way."

The most recent syllabus version is from the 2016 fall course taught by Roberts, in which he aims to focus on how the #blacklivesmatter movement extends to larger phenomenon including: "1) the rise of the U.S. prison industrial complex and its relationship to the increasing militarization of inner city communities," "2) the role of the media industry in influencing national conversations about race and racism," "3) the state of racial justice activism in the context of a neoliberal Obama Presidency," and "4) the increasingly populist



nature of decentralized protest movements in the contemporary United States.” The course also focuses on how the present Black Lives Matter movement is influenced by the larger movement for black lives that has been an integral part of the United States for centuries. Some other focuses of the course then follow that comparison between time gaps such as the dynamics of political protest among the millennial and post-millennial generations, #blacklivesmatter movement and the U.S. civil rights movement. Other issues discussed in the course pertain to the current issues Black Lives Matter movement are currently tackling, such as LGBTQ underpinnings of the #blacklivesmatter movement and the hyperbolic media myth of “black on black” crime. The course is taught through reading material, in-person dialogues with activists currently involved in the Black Lives Matter movement, required films and videos used for analysis, from TED Talks to a #BlackLivesMatter iSLAY remix of Beyoncé’s song “Lemonade.”

The exigency of the syllabus created by Roberts is a response to the recent violence committed against African Americans as a catalyst to examine the history of injustice the race has faced. The #blacklivesmatter heightened the need to add a voice to this injustice and the movement is an example of working towards what Leon explains is “resisting, unveiling, and undoing histories of state sanctioned violence against black and brown bodies.”

Similarly, the #IslamophobiaIsRacism syllabus was recently posted on Sapelo Square’s resources page; however, the post did not mention who started the syllabus. An interview with a faculty member at the University of Michigan, one of the founders of the syllabus, reveals more information about those involved in creating the syllabus, and their motivation for doing so. The interview is posted to the news organization for the university, Michigan News, and the interview was conducted by Mandira Banerjee, the International Communications Specialist at the University of Michigan. In the article, from April 11, 2017, Banerjee says the syllabus was developed by a group of interdisciplinary scholars from

around the country as a response to anti-Muslim racism. The interviewee, Evelyn Alsultany, is an associate professor and the director of the Arab and Muslim American Studies Program at the university, said the online syllabus was a collaboration between 10 scholars nationwide who began working on the syllabus in November 2016. “Our main intervention to the conversation about Islamophobia is that it needs to be understood as a form of racism,” Alsultany says, explaining the ‘phobia’ as “an irrational fear of Muslims.” Alsultany continues describing the exigency for this syllabus as the need to challenge a national and global problem and examine anti-Muslim racism in diverse mediums, such as governmental policies, media representations, surveillance, and more specifically to shift away from “the individual and see how it is connected to a longer history of exclusion of marginalized groups.”

Drawing information from the syllabus’s official website, the WordPress site says the syllabus was inspired by others such as the #FergusonSyllabus, #StandingRockSyllabus, #BlackIslamSyllabus, and others. On the site is listed the full names of creators and contributors to the syllabus, goals of the syllabus, the themes and topics, and key terms important to the discourse, as well a reminder to: “PLEASE SHARE WIDELY.” The questions this syllabus aims to focus on are: “1) Define anti-Muslim racism as an alternative to the concept of Islamophobia,” “2) Understand the relationship of race and religion to white supremacy through the racialized figure of the Muslim,” “3) Provide an intersectional and comparative analysis to anti-Muslim racism,” “4) Strategize ways to challenge anti-Muslim racism and resist white supremacy.” Themes and topics range from policing, security and anti-Muslim racism, race, empire, and Islam and the impact of and the resistance towards anti-Muslim racism. Like the Black Lives Matter, the syllabus links each topic with readings, documentaries and films to aid supplement the themes as well as a short description of what the topic explores. For example, the topic, Race, Empire, Islam, focuses on the difference

between Islamophobia and anti-Muslim racism, as well as understanding anti-Muslim racism and anti-Black racism in the U.S. The topic, Policing, Security, Surveillance, and Anti-Muslim Racism, works to explain the intersectionality between policing and anti-Muslim racism, defining policing as the tactics and policies used to administer security logics, like surveillance, entrapment, and specific targeting of individuals and communities.

In analyzing the rhetorical appeal of both syllabi, there is not so much the use of fear and guilt but rather the effects of the fear and guilt that have produced responses to those appeals in promoting change. With the Black Lives Matter syllabus, there is a level of community building that serves as a means of persuasion in promoting intersectionality, learning about the values and goals of the BLM movement through an educational course. Promoting discourse on the BLM movement is one of the main goals of Robert's syllabus and this represents a means of action that in education comes the understanding for the need for social and political change to combat the issues the BLM movement highlights. With the #IslamophobiaIsRacism syllabus, the topics are arranged in relation to the BLM movement and thus a clear level of intersectionality between the values. Again, this syllabus serves as a response to the fear and guilt by pushing the target audience of those in power as well as Muslim communities to seek action for justice and the mitigation of anti-Muslim sentiments. The action through education and building communities works to alleviate that fear by promoting positive change through education and solutions in engaging in advocated action.

## **Chapter 4**

### **Rhetorical Challenges of the BLM Movement**

Despite the social movement's continued efforts to demonstrate the commitment to spreading their values onto change within the societal and political realms, the BLM movement has and continues to face opposition and criticism. Some of this confusion stems from a misunderstanding what the movement is and how the movement functions

decentralized. However, in acknowledging this confusion and attempting to reduce it, the movement posted a statement to address and justify the effectiveness of the movement and its main goals.

In a post by the BLM movement's official website on October 1, 2015, the movement answers "11 Major Misconceptions About the Black Lives Matter Movement." A few of the most common misconceptions are that the movement does not care about queer or trans lives, it's a leaderless movement and that it's a one-issue movement. The target audience could be those that are unsure about elements of the movement, or those that are opposed to the movement and are looking for perhaps an argument they could counter their perception of the BLM movement.

In addressing the topic of queer or trans lives, the movement refers to facts to target the misconception and addresses their queer affirming value. The BLM movement claims there has been about twenty murders of trans women of color and that it has been "at the forefront of efforts to highlight our national epidemic of murders" of these women. The post also states that both founders of the network, Patrisse Cullors and Alicia Garza, are queer black women and goes on to end this section by saying, "But there is a fundamental belief that when we say Black Lives Matter, we mean all black lives matter." This reiterates the value from their national site that says they are committed to fostering a queer-affirming network, in that "when we gather, we do so with the intention of freeing ourselves from the tight grip of heteronormative thinking," or that all are heterosexual.

With the misconception of being a leaderless movement, the section responds by saying it is instead a "leaderful movement," and using Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. as an example of the consequences of placing a movement on the shoulders of one leader. The vulnerability of having one leader can result in the identification, harassment, killing of that individual as they compare this to the example of Dr. King's subsequent death. Instead they

say they are composed of several leaders and several organizations, including Black Youth Project 100, the Dream Defenders, the Organization for Black Struggle, Hands Up United, Millennial Activists United, and the Black Lives Matter national network.

The misconception that this is a one-issue movement is met by the argument that other issues beside police brutality the movement hopes to tackle are the “failing system of public education, which is a virtual school-to-prison pipeline for many black youth” amongst others like the “complete dismantling of the prison complex...safe and affordable housing, issues with food security, and reproductive justice.” This language makes it clear that the movement is aware of other issues and wants to engage in problems beyond the police injustice. The last two misconceptions mentioned here tie into the value of restorative justice, in that they present the “desire for freedom and justice for Black people, and by extension all people.” Building a community through a leaderful movement and establishing that their desire for justice branches beyond a single problem aids to demonstrate the application of the movement’s values.

Yet there is still media that perpetuates the idea that the BLM movement is ineffective and divisive. Articles such as *CNN*’s “Is Black Lives Matter blowing it?” and the *Harvard Political Review*’s “A Broken Frame: Black Lives Matter” both point out the flaws that continue to prevent the movement from truly establishing themselves. In the *CNN* article, author John Blake says, “Four years after its founding, BLM is still a movement without a clear meaning for many Americans. Some see it has a hate group; others as cutting-edge activism and yet others as just a step above a mob.” Blake goes on to cite some concerns from activists and historians who target similar misconceptions the BLM post aimed to alleviate such as being a leaderful rather than a leaderless movement, as well as others such as not being able to communicate in a way that reaches and persuades a white audience. The article ends by referring to the possible future question of, “Hey, whatever happened to

Black Lives Matter?,” highlighting the opposition towards the movement in believing its tactics in produce memorable and effective change. The *Harvard Political Review* article describes the BLM movement’s weapons as “words, protests, and the transcendent force of social media,” followed by saying, “Their goals? That’s a bit trickier.” Some problems this article focuses on are the fact that the movement has created a racial line, intentionally or unintentionally, between black and white lives in America, and that it lacks political capital. The article states that the movement claims to be inclusive yet white Americans feel as though they are being singled out.” Here is an example of a potential backlash against the guilt appeal, as the BLM movement perhaps does not provoke the need for those in power, particularly white policy makers and police authorities, to change, but instead calls them out as the problem to blame. That the issue of police brutality is one that African Americans are facing on a larger scale than whites is mentioned, yet the article says that white people feel like their being “lumped in” to the entirety of the issue. With the political capital criticism, author Brandon Dixon says “force-the-issue demonstrations” are mainly symbolic and stresses the idea that BLM needs to amass local political capital rather than national support, leaving the streets to lobby boardrooms instead.

Therefore, there are several challenges to the rhetorical appeals of the movement that culminate in the fact that it is not as representative as it claims and the issues addressed are perhaps not as varied as the movement aims. Sometimes the fear and guilt appeals fail to target the audiences intended and instead are counterproductive. I will discuss a few ways in which the BLM movement faces rhetorical challenges in lacking inclusivity and prioritizing certain issues, that end up representing the movement in public media.

One of the most prominent ways the movement demonstrates a lack of inclusivity is the prioritization of focusing on African American males. Looking back at the statements Returning to the graph in figure 1.1, it’s evident that the majority of peaks when the Twitter

hashtag, #BlackLivesMatter, peaked are for incidents of African American male murders and failure to indict the officers involved in killing these men. The case of Sandra Bland's hanging is the only peak shown on the graph that includes the unjust death of a women with an incident of police brutality. Moreover, the Twitter head, the background image at the top of the page, on the Black Lives Matter page, is an illustration of two black males with the text in the center, "Remember Trayvon." Thus, there is a misunderstanding by those who use the hashtag and inadvertently associating the movement's focus to be on police brutality and injustice for African American males. This is perhaps unintentional, as on the BLM official website, they do include guiding principles of support for "Black Women," stating that they are committed to a building a community where these women are "free from sexism, misogyny, and male-centeredness" as well as two other principles affirming to dismantle gender privilege and be both "Transgender Affirming" and "Queer Affirming." From the public viewpoint, these values are not as evidently pointed out, and perhaps the BLM movement needs to highlight their commitment to "Restorative Justice," in supporting all other genders and communities to align with the values they demonstrate on their website. It is also perhaps an rhetorical consequence highlighting the police brutality that specifically targets black men, as in the public view, the movement becomes associated with men such as, Freddie Gray, Eric Garner, Michael Brown, and the women and queer black women get pushed to the background because their issues are not reinforced in public eye.

Another rhetorical challenge of the BLM movement is the focus on acts of injustice and racial oppression to culminate with police brutality. As noted with the posts discussed earlier on Michael Brown and Tamir Rice as well as the graph in Figure 1.1, most all of the outbreak with protests, demands for reform and uproar on social media follows the acts of police brutality, and again, police brutality among African American males as it is the movement's most visible issue in public discourse. In the same "11 Major Misconceptions

about the Black Lives Matter Movement” statement, the movement addresses the common perception of it being a “one-issue” movement. In this post, it says, “Although it is true that much of the protesting to date has been centered on the issue of police brutality,” there are a range of other issues the movement is focused on. These include things such as public education reform, dismantling the prison-industrial complex to reduce the “mass incarceration of black and Latino people,” reproductive justice for women of color.” However, none of these other issues have made it to the forefront of public media, as protests focus mostly on voicing concern after incidents of police brutality and the other issues they claim are not yet in the forefront because the movement is relatively new and needs “time to find its footing and its take on all the aforementioned issues.” When the fear and guilt appeals are mainly seen in issues such as Brown and Rice, it’s difficult to understand how this selective visibility extends to other issues and how these other issues fit within the priorities of the movement. This is perhaps a consequence of a rhetorical intention in using the fear and guilt appeals with statements on killings of African Americans to enact change through protests that serve to voice the movement and the rhetorical effect that is difficult to control, as the movement then begins to be associated with a specific cause and it’s difficult to steer the public eye to understand that it has more than just a one-issue focus.

### **Rhetorical Challenges of Sapelo Square and MuslimARC**

One of the key differences between the BLM movement and both Sapelo Square and MuslimARC is that these Muslim associations lack the national profile of the movement. The Pew Research Center indicates that as of 2015, there are 3.3 million Muslims in the U.S., making up about one percent of the population, and the 2015 U.S. Census Bureau indicates that African Americans make up 13.3 percent of the total population, counting African American as those who identified as “Black or African American alone.” This large difference in population size could represent the heightened need for the BLM movement to



prioritize their issues and goals. The smaller population of Muslims as compared to African Americans makes it difficult to discern the rhetorical challenges of both these Muslim associations, with limited representation in public media. That, in itself, is a challenge for both Sapelo Square and MuslimARC in that with less visibility comes less power in public discourse. The fear and guilt appeals that both these groups use perhaps have not yet produced the action of recognition and reduced anti-Black Muslim racism that Sapelo Square advocates for and the overall anti-Muslim sentiments and desire to integrate into the conversation of the BLM movement that both organizations desire.

It can also be said that the limited visibility stems from the fact that the BLM movement does not outwardly link itself to supporting Muslim communities or its fellow African American Muslims. In this way, the BLM movement prioritizes its own goals and values over those of other marginalized groups like Muslim communities, and does not represent a sense of integrating the Muslim communities into the conversation of race relations in the U.S. Therefore, there is a certain inequality in lack of visibility, due to the fact that the goals of the Muslim communities have not been pushed to the forefront of public discourse and this is in part perhaps due to the fact that a movement such as the BLM movement, with such national prominence, has not rendered enough visibility for other communities facing racial tensions like those faced by the Muslim American population.

In this way, it becomes the responsibility Muslim organizations such as MuslimARC and Sapelo Square to use their voice to educate, inspire and enact change the African American community, Muslim community and the Black Muslim community. One such portrayal of the way the resource MuslimARC has inspired this voice on intersectionality is represented through an artist's recent portrait series, inspired by the MuslimARC hashtag, #BeingBlackAndMuslim. Visual artist, Bobby Rogers, published a portrait series of an image of a Black Muslim alongside text of tweets using #BeingBlackAndMuslim, direct quotes

from the people featured, and his own original writing. Rogers shared the portrait series on his website and social media platforms, describing the exigency for the series since “There is, and always has been, an erasure of Black Muslims from our historical teachings in America, just as there is an erasure of Black and Muslim cultures worldwide,” and saying that “With my series I want to show society that Black Muslims have always been an integral part of American history, as well as, Islamic history.” His series not only represents his effort to as he says, “challenge the mainstream meaning of what it means to be Muslim” but also demonstrates how the values of this correlate with the goal of Sapelo Square to be an online presence “that reflects the vitality of African American Muslim Life” and the values of MuslimARC to “build interfaith and multiracial coalitions to advance racial justice.” Specifically here is also Sapelo Square’s “spirit of ‘do for self’” that they indicate is a means of centralizing the issue and seeking justice through prioritizing the issues of a marginalized community, which for Sapelo is seeking racial justice for Black Muslims. In this way, the portraits extend the conversation of these two Muslim associations as here MuslimARC has inspired Roger’s art to visually represent the values of the association in the need acknowledgement of broader Muslim communities to enact social and political change.

## **Chapter 5**

### **Challenges and Successes in Intersectionality**

One of the reasons there has been challenges with clearly identifying points in intersectionality between the BLM movement and Muslim associations is often because of the uncertainty of how BLM prioritizes communities other than Black Lives. These criticisms demonstrate the need for BLM movement to be more clear in expressing their goals and strengthen arguments against the validity of their movement. In assessing the challenges and successes of intersectionality, it’s important to think about some questions. How do the values on the BLM national site, such as diversity, globalism and empathy translate to

Muslim associations? Has there been an equal representation of intersectionality from both the BLM movement towards Muslim associations and vice versa?

Starting on a positive note, I will begin with some of the success of demonstrating intersectionality. Here, I am defining “successes” as the way in which both movements give a voice to the individual concerns of their groups as well as promote conversation and understanding towards the shared sense of racial oppression felt by BLM towards Muslim communities and Muslim communities towards BLM.

If we return to the posts mentioned in “Intersectionality” section of this paper, there is an attempt to recognize the Muslim communities by the BLM movement and the Muslim associations to recognize the need to bring anti-Muslim sentiments into the conversation of the oppression of African Americans. The posts by the BLM movement demonstrate the continued use of the fear and guilt used by the movement to provoke a response towards an incident and a policy against Muslims and to provide a response that promotes a solution towards political and social change. Examples of this intersectionality are evident in both posts BLM issued in support of Muslim communities, where the movement targets white supremacy as a national issue targeting both marginalized groups. In the post addressing the Chapel Hill killing of three Muslims, BLM said, “The enemy is now and has always been the four threats of white supremacy, patriarchy, capitalism, and militarism.” This directly targets white supremacy as one of the factors that contributes to racism for African Americans and Muslims. The movement then states, “These forces and not Islam create terrorism.” In this post where BLM addresses Trump’s travel ban, the BLM movement says another misconception the movement addressed in the post, “11 Major Misconceptions...” is that the “movement hates white people.” However, the post says that in naming the movement “Black Lives Matter” it is not to say that “white lives do not matter” but instead that “black lives matter also.” The post says that the “white people who mischaracterize the affirmation of the

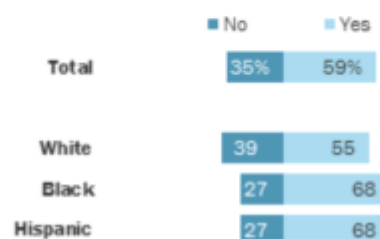
value of black life as being anti-white” is antithetical to what the movement stands for. In addressing the white supremacy as a force against Muslims as well, the BLM is linking a national issue targeting both African American and Muslim communities. Using fear by addressing specific attacks and terrorism work to demonstrate that their rhetorical techniques extend to the addressing issues regarding Muslim communities as well. Within the post on the travel ban, BLM says, “We know that an attack on any of us is an attack on all of us,” illustrating an example of how the movement bridges a shared sense of community between those impacted by all acts of injustice, regardless of race or beliefs.

Additionally, returning to figure 1.4, there is additional data from the same study that blacks and Hispanics are more likely than whites to say Muslims face “a lot” of discrimination in the U.S. This furthers the notion that the black community recognizes racism exists against Muslims in the U.S. The shared goals of the need to restore justice, as well as the need to express their efforts towards diversity are evident.

## Many say U.S. Muslims face ‘a lot’ of discrimination

### Many say U.S. Muslims face ‘a lot’ of discrimination

*In U.S. today, is there a lot of discrimination against Muslims, or not?*



*Figure 1.5: This data shows that 68 percent of both Blacks and Hispanics reported that U.S. Muslims face “a lot” of discrimination in the U.S. The data is from the same survey conducted from January 7-14, 2016. Noted in the study is that Whites and Blacks include only those that are not Hispanic and that Hispanics are of any race.*

For the Muslim associations, an example of a success in intersectionality can be seen with the hashtag, #BeingBlackAndMuslim, launched in 2014 by MuslimARC. The hashtag demonstrates an intersectionality between the two Muslim organizations, voicing the oppression for Black Muslims that Sapelo Square centralizes as its primary mission. MuslimARC hosted its 4<sup>th</sup> annual #BeingBlackAndMuslim conversation on February 14, 2017 at 2 p.m., stating that, “We ask that allies signal boost and RT responses by Black Muslims and avoid derailing the conversation by centering the plurality of Black Muslim identities.” To start the conversation, MuslimARC posted six questions and requested responses from those wanting to participate in the hashtag conversation. The six questions are for this year’s conversation were as follows: “What are the effects of the 45’s Executive Order on #BeingBlackAndMuslim?,” “How can we counter the erasure of #BeingBlackAndMuslim?,” “What are #BeingBlackAndMuslim led initiatives we should support?,” “Who are #BeingBlackAndMuslim scholars, activists, leaders, artists, and writers we should follow?,” “How can allies support #BeingBlackAndMuslim?,” and “Share your images of #BlackJoy about #BeingBlackAndMuslim.” Here are some examples from tweets shown on MuslimARC’s post, “MuslimARC’s 4th Annual #BeingBlackAndMuslim Amplifies Black Muslim Voices.”



*Figure 1.6: Shown are a few examples of some of the top tweets during the 4<sup>th</sup> annual #BeingBlackAndMuslim hashtag conversation on Twitter, held on February 14, 2017. MuslimARC said the hashtag was trending in the U.S. and Canada within a few hours after the conversation began.*

The use of twitter also shows an intersectionality with the BLM movement's use of #BlackLivesMatter in that it also. Although there is not data showing the usage of the hashtag like there is with the BLM hashtag, there is demonstration from such examples in Figure 1.6 that point to how #BeingBlackAndMuslim creates visibility and build shared sense of community. The hashtag conversation is an effort by MuslimARC to provide visible voices all working to represent their concern for the way in which the issues of largest group of Muslims, Black Muslims, are overshadowed and overlooked as being solely issues for Muslims or African Americans but not those that identify as both. Thus, using social media as a means of communicating the goals of MuslimARC works to show how their efforts extend beyond advocating for anti-Muslim and anti-Black racism and additionally highlight anti-Black Muslim racism.

Some challenges for the BLM movement in terms of not advocating this intersectionality as effectively as possible, is the fact that the fear and guilt appeals serve to heighten the goals of the BLM movement, most of which do not illustrate an attempt to aid in reducing anti-Muslim racism nationally. As seen from the posts and the syllabi, though similar in the sense to combat racism, both movements have their own agenda and own goals. This is to say that the ranges of issues facing African American communities and Muslim communities may overlap, but those the issues that are pushed to the forefront of the BLM movement and these Muslim associations focus on the issues that founded the movements. The majority of posts discussed from the BLM movement show that although their movement may also work to combat injustices in the public education to discrimination towards Black women and Black LGBT populations, the primary issue presented in mainstream media is that of police brutality. The national website and the Twitter hashtag show a particular inclination to use national incidents of police brutality to spark the conversation of racism for African Americans. This focus on police brutality in the public eye, perhaps hinders the efforts, if existent, of the BLM movement towards Muslim associations.

### **Conclusion**

#### **Part 1: Interviews from Local Members of BLM Knoxville and MSA at UTK**

Based on the research, I feel as though there is still much to do on the part of the BLM movement to demonstrate enough of an intersectionality towards Muslim organizations and communities overall. It has been a challenge through the research to find enough data on the part of the BLM community that shows explicit support for any Muslim communities, much less for the specific Muslim organization and online resource mentioned here. It's also important to remember that the national BLM movement does lay the foundation for the movement, but it is in fact the role of the individual 37 national chapters to relay these goals

and values to their respective communities. Each chapter of course is different, in that there are certain issues that may relate to one community, city or state that vary across the nation. In attempting to take a closer look at the local efforts of the BLM movement and the goals and values Muslim communities in Knoxville and in Cincinnati, Ohio, I have interviewed four persons involved in both efforts to promote awareness for the BLM movement, the Black Muslim community, and the Muslim community. I would like to include information on these interviewees and their opinions on the topic of intersectionality.

Andre Canty is on the Development and Communications Team at the Highlander Research and Education Center. The Highlander Center is located in New Market, Tennessee and one of their motives is to work for social justice and equality, building bridges between African Americans, youth, immigrants, poor and working class, different races, genders, ethnicity, and geographies. Canty is also involved in the BLM Knoxville Chapter as well as the Muslim Student Association at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. In my interview, Canty explains the importance of fighting for an understanding of being black and Muslim and where divides exist. Canty identifies as a Black Muslim, but says he does not fit the stereotypical persona of a Muslim illustrated in the mainstream public in America. “When people think of Muslims, they don’t think of me,” Canty said. He goes on to explain the importance of how the perception of Muslims and blacks in the U.S. plays a role in the larger misunderstanding between how the two are intersectional. He explains that the BLM movement nationally and locally is effective in the fact that it is leaderless, in that anyone can take the role of a leader, even himself, and educate others about the goals and values. “I’m part of the ongoing conversation here in Knoxville to demonstrate the need to voice the concerns of Black Muslims, in that there is not enough representation of the Black Muslim oppression,” he said. “Our voices deserve to be heard as well, as we go through struggles of two different types of marginalization.” Canty says he has been involved in a variety of



workshops and events with MSA that address intersectionality between the Black community and the Muslim community. For example, events such as the Muslim Student Association's discussion titled, "We Gon' Be Alright: Surviving 2016 and Entering the Third Reconstruction" in 2016 "Droppin' Knowledge: Islam's Influence on Hip Hop and Black Youth," in 2017 both featured Canty as a speaker. These events highlighted the evident influence of African Americans and Muslim communities, as attendees included a mix of African Americans, Muslims and other minorities, coming together and addressing concerns of fear for with Trump's presidency with the former and the influence of a religion on a cultural movement with the latter. Canty adds, "Workshops and programs like these represent the need to address privilege for both Muslim and African Americans. Where one community may not have the same fears as another, where the struggle to combat issues of Muslim oppression don't merge with black struggles and the other way around." Canty said we are all in this together, and it's important to aid one another in the fight for social and political justice, whether that be police brutality or an immigration ban.

Faatin Salekin is a senior in neuroscience at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville (UTK) and is the secretary of the Muslim Student Association at UTK. For Salekin, the Muslim Student Association was a space for him to connect with others sharing similar faith and values as he did, and he decided to become more active with the organization to represent Muslims of the future. "In this day in time with Trump being our president, it's a wakeup call for Muslims across the nation to step up and do something, Salekin expressed. Salekin said MSA is an opportunity to come together to a common understanding between all faiths and races, as it is an association open to all and reinforces Islam's values of peace, kindness and understanding. He shares that although he is not as active in BLM Knoxville, with only a few tweets here and there using the hashtag, he recognizes commonalities and differences between Muslim communities and the movement. "From my perspective, one common things

between BLM, Muslims and Islam is the strive to fight for justice and fairness of every race and every color.” He added that BLM is a movement that contains the fundamental principles of Islam, in that the fight for justice and understanding that the desire to better people are inherent principles both share. The openness and willingness to include all and listen to the concerns of all marginalized groups is something both organizations share as well. However, Salekin finds the key differences stem from the fact the BLM has an agenda that focuses on goals perhaps not specific to Muslim communities. “Even though the BLM movement does fight for justice, it could be said that they fight for their own justices, and seek to focus on achieving privileges that align with their agenda.” In terms of the issue of being black and Muslim, he said that he struggles to speak for this issue, being Muslim but not black. “I’m sure microaggressions exist but in the long run, we are all brothers and sisters, and when thinking about Black Muslims we need to dig deep to our roots and keep in mind the connection between one another.” Salekin said the BLM movement is perceived negatively in mainstream media, especially when it comes to violence in protests that gets perceived visually, despite the positive intentions. “If the BLM wants their ideas to be exposed, an effective way to do this might be to get a white speaker to speak on behalf of black oppression, and have the white speaker acknowledge his or her own privilege.” As a final piece of advice, Salekin said, “It’s not about how many hands you raise, it’s about how many hands you shake. Let people understand your faith, beliefs and values and listen to the opposition.”

Drost Kokoye is a Kurdish Muslim American, who is involved in a variety of social activism efforts and organizations in Tennessee, including the Muslim Student Association. Kokoye said her involvement in social activism began with a bill in Tennessee that directly targeted the Muslim community. She learned that there is an apparent struggle for the Muslim community locally and has been involved ever since, following new legislation, policies and

Tennessee government practices overall. Kokoye added that in assessing the intersectionality between BLM Knoxville and Muslim organizations, like MSA, it's important to recognize the differences in the purpose of each group. "MSA is a religious social group, a space for Muslim students to find community, while BLM is a political movement, and there's a connotation of combative nature in the fight for justice that is association with BLM." However, she recognized that anything the Knoxville BLM chapter does, there are Muslim communities locally who show physical support through attending and hosting workshops within mosques and other community gatherings. Kokoye said that BLM Knoxville does focus on similar issues to the national movement, such as police brutality and a larger ignorance of the black community, yet is more focused on issues within the public-school system. "Black students are four times more likely to be put in out-of-school and in-school suspension for the same wrongdoings as their white counterparts." In terms of the challenges with the Black Muslim community, Kokoye said it lies in the fact that black "doesn't translate into a faith," and that there is an internalized anti-blackness within non-black Muslim communities that needs addressing. "The Black Muslim community has been a growing part of the Muslim community as a whole, and although the purpose of BLM and Muslim communities are different, they still find ways to come together. That in itself is a beautiful thing." Some solutions Kokoye offered for local initiatives to combat racism include efforts to promote Tennessee as a sanctuary state and include this within cities and campuses. Kokoye said these are spaces where injustices will not be tolerated and in these spaces, all identities are welcome. "Whether it be police enforcement at the direct end of violence, ICE (U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement) agents out for undocumented immigrants, TSA not letting Muslim communities come across borders, within sanctuary spaces, everyone is there to aid and fight for justice. We need to realize the importance of sanctuary spaces in unifying and building us together." Other propositions Kokoye offered

for combatting issues of racism is to become informed on executive orders and to get involved in local government. In terms of challenges with intersectionality, she says, “Organizations like MuslimARC teach us how to address anti-blackness within Muslim communities. As BLM formed in response to Ferguson and national police brutality cases, this organizations formed to teach us the importance of standing with our black Muslim community and reaching out to aid in the BLM movement efforts.” She said that BLM faces the challenge of automatically translating as a movement that means only applies to black men. “Black means anything, any other identity a black person holds is within the BLM organization, despite class, group, religious background or social status.”

### **Part Two: Final Remarks**

What do these responses mean in terms of this paper’s exploration of intersectionality? Although I reached out to BLM Knoxville and Muslim associations locally, I did not receive a response to my requests for an interview. That the subject of African American and Muslim oppression is timely and that this is a topic that is perhaps difficult to address by both communities could explain the lack of response. Nonetheless, much can be said from the responses of the three interviewees in terms of intersectionality. Though these are just a few samples, and cannot represent the spectrum of local perspectives on intersectionality within the Knoxville community, these responses serve to identify how BLM is perceived locally from a sample of members of black and Muslim associations. For one thing, they represent the inherent desire for members of African American and Muslim communities to fight for the same goals. Here we have two Muslims and one Black Muslim who are intersected by an involvement in a shared organization, the Muslim Student Association at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. The fact that MSA is a common factor between all three interviewees represents intersectionality in that the faith-based group brings them together, as the association is inclusive to all. MSA Knoxville defines their goals as

“promoting personal, spiritual, and social growth among members serving the Knoxville community, and establishing a bridge of understanding between Muslims and non-Muslims.” BLM Knoxville’s official website posted the same guidelines as the national BLM website under the “Who We Are” and “What We Believe” sections. In the FAQ section of the BLM Knoxville website, they posted the “11 Major Misconceptions about the Black Lives Matter Movement,” that is posted on the national website. That the three interviewees referenced the marginalization of their individual groups and that of the non-black Muslims towards other the African American community reinforces the increased need for organizations such as MuslimARC and Sapelo Square to educate the Muslim community about the oppression of Black Muslims. That there was mention of the BLM Knoxville movement supporting Muslim community efforts but little mention of specific instances shows the need for local and national efforts to show a wider sense of diversity and inclusion in terms of fighting for justice beyond the priorities of justice for Black Lives.

Moving forward, I think both the BLM movement and Muslim associations mentioned here need to do more in terms of expanding on efforts to show intersectionality in a shared fight for social and political justice. As noted in the introduction, I had difficulty finding efforts by both groups to support one another in the public, mainstream eye. Discourse through use of fear and guilt as rhetorical appeals by both movements may serve to enact a certain amount of change, but it may also be counterproductive, in in turning target audiences away from the movement’s goals, feeling overburdened with assuming themselves to be the root of the problem. Building a shared community and using community building as a rhetorical technique to illustrate intersectionality may work better in that working together for a shared sense of justice would work in favor of supporting justice for both black, Muslim and Black Muslim communities. Working through the problem of issues in race relations in the U.S., it’s evident that there is much to do in the upcoming years. The current state of anti-

Muslim and anti-African American sentiments is only producing heightened division in the nation in a world that is already divided. If the BLM movement uses their national power to reinforce their shared goals and values with Muslim communities, the two groups can use their outrage with the current state to work towards larger solutions. The steps being taken by the BLM movement in addressing injustices for Muslims as well as the resources Sapelo Square and MuslimARC is educating on BLM and Black Muslim oppression are all forward-thinking, pushing towards intersectionality between these marginalized groups that are the most need of social and political change to support anti-racism efforts nationally.

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