Beyond #MeToo: Alternative Justice, Hashtag Movements, and Survivor-Centered Approaches to Sexual Violence

by

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B.A., MacEwan University, 2016

Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Arts

in the
Department of Gender, Sexuality, and Women's Studies
Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences

Approval

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Abstract

This thesis conducts case study research on three contemporary hashtag movements: #MeToo, #MuteRKelly, and #AmINext, and situates them within a network of online consciousness-raising feminist activism. Firstly, by constructing genealogies of each movement, this research examines the nuance, complexities, and contradictions present within online movements addressing sexual violence. Secondly, this project utilizes an intersectional and decolonial framework to explore the extra-judicial and alternative justice responses being enacted by each movement, including job loss, public atonement, policy change, and national inquiries. By looking beyond the above-mentioned hashtags, I illustrate how spectrums of justice for survivors of sexual violence take on broader meanings, outside of the current narrow understanding that present the legal system as the only viable option. This thesis adds to a body of knowledge that critically analyzes the possibilities of extra-judicial justice for survivors and promotes intersectional understandings of sexual violence.

Keywords: sexual violence; #MeToo; alternative justice; social movements; online activism

Dedication

I would like to dedicate this thesis to all survivors of sexual violence.

This research is an act of solidarity with you.

Acknowledgements

This has been an incredible and challenging journey, and I would not have been able to complete it without the amazing support system I have.

I would like to thank my supervisor Dr. Coleman Nye for her constant reassurances, kindness, and brilliant insights. I cannot imagine a more motivating and empathetic mentor, especially through times of uncertainty. I would also like the thank Dr. Lisa Monchalin for her invaluable feedback and enthusiasm for this project.

To my amazing family: Mom, Dad, and Alyssa – not living near you was the hardest part about this experience, but your constant support never wavered.

To my academic and life soul mates: Reith, Sarah, Matt, Claire, Sam, and Mel – thank you for the writing dates, venting sessions over drinks, and steadfast encouragement.

Thank you.

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Chapter 1.

Introduction

> *Women have been speaking up for years about harassment and abuse. #metoo has just created cover for those who didn't feel safe enough to speak up. The movement didn't *create* the concept of speaking out. It just allowed people to hear us better as a chorus and not a solo. And be clear there are still MILLIONS of people around the world who are still silent. Who STILL don't feel safe enough to share their experiences and the mischaracterization in the media is a DISSERVICE to them.*
>
> *-Tarana Burke, founder of the #MeToo movement (Tweet, @TaranaBurke, July 13, 2018)*

1.1. Constructing a Narrative of Sexual Violence

In the past thirty years, numerous law reforms and bills have passed in Canada to address the widespread issue of sexual violence. Yet, in this same time period, sexual violence is the *only* violent crime that has not statistically decreased. Sexual violence also has the lowest conviction rates of any violent crime, prompting the question: if many prejudicial sexual assault laws have been reformed, why is this not being translated into the reduction of acts of sexual violence or higher rates of conviction (Johnson, 2012)? Sexual violence is a serious social, political, and public health issue, yet many cases go unreported, and of the cases that do make it to court, the outcomes are rarely favorable to survivors[1].

Within the legal institution, numerous biases about sexual assault continue to shape court proceedings and restrict the administration of justice for survivors (Schuller, McKimmie, Masser, & Klippenstine, 2010; Smith & Skinner, 2012; Taslitz, 1999).

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[1] Within this thesis, I use the term survivor to discuss those who have experienced sexual violence in a variety of ways. That being said, not all people who have experienced sexual violence self-identify with this language, nor is this choice of language intended to create a monolithic characterization of survivor. I also use survivor as a gender-neutral term, not in an attempt to erase the reality that sexual violence is a gendered issue, but to be cognizant of any marginalized group outside of the heteronormative binary. All survivors deserve recognition, belief, support, and personally defined justice.

Researchers have found that "negative attitudes and beliefs about sexual assault complainants often overshadow the facts of the case in police charging, prosecutorial decision making, and jurors' deliberations" (Johnson, 2012, p. 623), and wide adherence to rape myths, including who constitutes an 'ideal victim', is rampant within the Criminal Justice System (CJS) (Comack & Peter, 2005; Johnston, 2012; Wong, 2014). These patterns contribute to underreporting of assaults, a culture of victim blaming, and more broadly perpetuate and normalize sexual violence.

To comprehend the severity of the problem, I turned to the available statistics on the sexual violence reporting and conviction[2]. Only 20% of sexual assaults are reported to police, and of those, only 5% of perpetrators are actually convicted. More distressing still, less than 0.5% of those convicted will spend even a single day behind bars (Johnson, 2012; Statistics Canada, 2014). These numbers represent averages, so it is important to note that these statistics change considerably when taking into account dynamics of gender, race, sexuality, ability, socio-economic status, and many more. For example, Indigenous women in Canada are among the groups most affected by sexual violence, while also being the least likely to receive favorable court outcomes, indexing the critical intersection of sexual violence with ongoing formations of colonial violence (Bubar, 2013; Koss, 2000; Nightingale, 1991). These statistics serve to highlight the failures of the current justice system, and partially illuminate why survivors might resist reporting and distrust the legal process. Taken together, they speak to the urgency of seeking out alternative frameworks to address sexual violence.

Much of the current research has focused on the failings of the CJS as an institution to effectively prosecute cases of sexual violence, examining how biases and deficiencies shape legal outcomes in ways that are detrimental to survivors and that re-entrench social inequalities. Yet, little academic literature or social policy has looked to models that can advance survivor-centric forms of justice as an alternative to the dominant pathway of the CJS, which routinely means reporting, following the legal process, then obtaining satisfaction through the court's outcome. Centering survivors'

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[2] While statistics can be an effective tool in communicating the scope of certain issues, it is important to note that quantitative data can be misleading, or fail to capture nuanced aspects of the issue. Many people who have experienced sexual violence never report their experiences to data collection agencies, the police, or their social circles, which could potentially skew statistics. These discrepancies in reporting have been tied to various intersections of social inequality including race, class, gender, ethnicity, ability, and sexuality.

perspectives, experiences, and language has proven to be an effective way to address bias in policy and action in areas such as cancer treatment, child sexual abuse, and intimate partner violence (Countryman-Roswurm & DiLollo, 2017; Koelsch, 2014; Naples, 2003; Silva-Martinez, 2017). However, there is a gap in the research when it comes to analyzing how alternative measures can be legitimized and recognized as a valuable response to our current societal and judicial failings.

1.2. Social Movements and Survivor-Led Alternative Justice

One way that alternative justice has been present in the current narrative around sexual violence is through the lens of social media, and more specifically through the viral adoption of hashtag movements. In the past fifteen years, the movements #MeToo, #MuteRKelly, and #AmINext have emerged to enact or advocate for extra-judicial justice for survivors. These movements mark a notable shift in the dominant cultures of sexual violence, as it turns away from current legal channels, instead seeking out alternative avenues for survivors to publicly describe their lived experiences and hold perpetrators responsible. Through my research, I explore how these hashtag movements are a part of a wider constellation of survivor-led responses to the institutional failures of the judicial system and the pervasiveness of sexual assault and rape culture, and attend to the ways in which they offer alternate paths toward justice and social change. This project has two main objectives: (1) To create case studies of these three hashtag movements, developing genealogies and providing context, while highlighting major paradoxes, controversies, and potentials; and (2) to explore the extra-judicial and alterative justice responses enacted by those hashtag movements, including an intersectional analysis of who is able to access that justice, and through what methods.

1.2.1. Timelines, Contexts, and Controversies

The hashtag movements #MeToo, #MuteRKelly, and #AmINext have separate, yet interconnected histories of resistance and activism, and capture different feminist responses to sexual violence. #MeToo, as the most widely known hashtag, is considered alongside the initiative Time's Up, and analyzed on its' retributive and reform-based justice response, considering both the potentials and problematic aspects of the movement. #MuteRKelly is analyzed alongside the aims of Black Feminist anti-

violence activism, including a rebuttal against Carceral Feminism and the rejection of the Criminal Justice System (CJS). And finally, #AmINext, and parallel hashtag #ImNotNext is contextualized within #MMIW/G/2S (Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, and Two-Spirit People), and the broader constellation of Indigenous-led movements addressing sexual violence. Each case study contains a timeline of events, analysis of major cases, reflection on the controversial aspects and critiques, and how each hashtag can be understood as contributing towards the final goal of ending sexual violence. I take a two-pronged approach to the study of the justice potentials of the movements by exploring (1) how collective justice was sought through a shift in consciousness at a social and political level to center survivors of sexual violence, and (2) how personal justice was enacted through creating individual ramifications for perpetrators of sexual violence.

It is critical to explore how understandings of justice for survivors of sexual violence can be reimagined in the age of hashtag movements. This includes not only investigating the radical possibilities that inhere in the movement; it also requires interrogating how hegemonic assumptions of justice can be detrimental to survivors of sexual violence, as well as how popular movements such as #MeToo can risk reinscribing social inequalities in access to justice, visibility, and support. My second objective is to explore the alternative justice that is taking place outside the current legal institution in relation to each hashtag movement. By analyzing the spectrums of justice that are taking place either during these movements, or because of them, it becomes possible to visualize what alternative justice methods can offer survivors. This includes intersectional analysis to better understand *who* is able to access various justice structures through these movements, and to *what extent* they provide opportunities for both individual and collective justice.

1.2.2. Online Activism: Social Justice through Social Media

Online movements have become increasingly visible as digital platforms become sites for dialogue, political debate, and social justice (Eagle, 2015; Keller, Mendes, & Ringrose, 2018). Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, and various blogs have become publishing sites for personal narratives, opinion pieces, and public engagement. It is often in this informal sphere that social justice movements gain traction, connecting individuals with common stories and collective concerns (Lokot, 2018; Manikonda, Beigi,

Liu, & Kambhampati, 2018; Turner, 2013). Popular media has facilitated the rapid dissemination of popular North American culture and is uniquely linked to online feminist movements in their mutual ability to enact change and shift collective consciousness. That being said, the complexities of online social movements must be considered, especially in regard to accessibility, cycles of trauma, alternative forms of justice outside the legal system, and conceptualizing collective voices as agents of change.

Research has shown that online interactions have an important impact on shaping individual perspectives and informing collective opinions (Al'Uqdah, Jenkins, & Ajaa, 2017; Fotopoulou, 2016; Turner, 2013). With almost every aspect of our lives being shaped by access to technology, including the Internet and social media, it comes as no surprise that many aspects of social justice and activism have moved online, as well. Changes in organizing public demonstrations can be seen within the example of #IdleNoMore, where Facebook groups and chat rooms were used to organize rallies and spread information. The dissemination of knowledge when it comes to campaigns for social issues has rapidly changed, with hashtags, retweets, and reach/views being gauges for public involvement and empathic response. Although studies exist that link societal perceptions with meaningful governmental and judicial changes (Fletcher & Star, 2018; Fine, 1989), it can be difficult to quantify the impact of digital social activism. It is often accepted that the more education and information the public has on a certain issue, the more likely it is for societal shifts and collective consciousness-raising to occur. While the history of online activism is only as old as the Internet itself, it has taken several forms and used for many issues or means, nationally and internationally. Often political in nature, online activism has been used to organize demonstrations, marches, and riots, rally public rage, petition for policy and governmental change, or act as communicative webs of support and community (Keller, Mendes, & Ringrose, 2018; Rapp, Button, Fleury-Steiner, & Fleury-Steiner, 2010; Saramo, 2016). While I have no interest in categorizing or creating hard definitions of what is or is not digital activism, it is important to note that digital activism may be conceptualized differently for different groups or individuals. For the sake of this thesis, I draw from my understanding of digital activism as any online action (often collective) that seeks to dismantle oppressive hierarchies, empower marginalized voices, and enact change from a grassroots perspective, keeping in mind that considerations of social justice have often been dependent on the intersecting identities within those power dynamics.

With the creation of social media platforms such as Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook, digital activism has shifted from early conceptions of underground chat room organizing to mainstream, visible campaigns. Accessibility, in conjunction with transnational applications and the ensuing ethical debates, make for a complex discussion of social media, and its effects, problems, and possibilities. Current research highlights the "unprecedented speed and immediacy" (Fotopoulou, 2016, p. 17) of digital media in its potential for the dissemination of knowledge and experiences. Instead of gathering and organizing in person, which can be restrictive in reach and/or scope, digital activism moves the conversation online, unbound by the majority of geographic constraints. With so much of our everyday lives taking place online, it comes as no surprise that issues relating to sexual violence, rape culture, and other intersecting oppressions have manifested in online platforms. In response to this, or perhaps in spite of it, online activism has recently flourished, igniting mobilization of resources, grassroots responses, and widespread consciousness of social issues. Online feminist action takes many forms, and goes by several different names, including "hashtag feminism", "cyberfeminism", and "networked feminism" (Fotopoulou, 2016; Keller et al., 2018). This conversation demands the nuanced and complex consideration of several factors, including intersectional approaches to understanding oppressions, social movements, and the capacity for meaningful responses to sexual violence. As Keller et al. (2018) emphasize in their study of social media usage by teenage girls to combat sexism, "girls and women have been increasingly engaged with feminist critique and activism, often using digital media technologies to speak out against misogyny, rape culture and everyday sexism" (p. 22). Grassroots initiatives such as #IdleNoMore, twitter trends like #BeenRapedNeverReported, and many others internationally have used these methods of public sharing to encourage dialogue and create meaningful changes within communities and cultures where these issues have reached critical mass. It is the vast scope and visibility of the movements selected that compels me to include them within this thesis, since they embody a form of justice many survivors have chosen, or been forced to chose, as a response to institutional injustice. As Jeff Hearn (2018) states, "virtual politics can be a means to rapid, transnational spreading of ideas, information and interventions", and these case studies are an illustration of that (p. 229).

Social justice movements, online or otherwise, have historically originated from grassroots organizations and marginalized groups. While #MeToo, alongside

#MuteRKelly and #MMIW/#AmINext, has gained massive public currency, rad/radical people have been doing this kind of work for generations, and any research on alternatives to the CJS must turn to these community-based alternatives as important forms of collective justice. Online activism is often utilized in conjunction with in-person organizing, such as Black Lives Matter (BLM) and Idle No More (INM). A movement that started as a response to police brutality against people of color (specifically the hyper-surveillance of black men and boys), BLM not only organizes marches across Canada and the United States, but is also a viral hashtag that promotes dialogue and calls attention to various abuses of power and injustice. The movement has been connected to specific court cases, increases in activism and advocacy, and policy changes in legislative and judicial branches, while also being heralded for increasing awareness of police brutality and racism more widely. In Canada, the INM movement began in the fall of 2014 as a woman-led, Indigenous response to changes made to the Indian Act (Bill C-45 and C-31) and associated patriarchal, colonial policies of the Canadian government (John, 2015; Wood, 2015). INM became widely understood as a modern construction of Indigenous resistance, combining anti-colonial frameworks with online campaigns, eventually culminating in offline protests that flooded the streets of several major cities in the form of flashmobs and blockades. While these examples are only two of many recognizable movements in North America in recent years, they highlight the range of issues behind mass movements that are utilizing social media and digital activism to create change. It is also essential to note that movements like BLM and INM lay the groundwork for future movements, such as the ones explored in this thesis.

1.3. Theoretical Framework

This thesis is informed by intersectional feminist thought that focuses on interlocking systems of oppression, such as Kimberle Crenshaw's writings on the "multiply-burdened" subject (Crenshaw, 1989, p. 140). Crenshaw's work on layered oppressions offers a theoretical framework for "mediating the tension between assertions of multiple identity and the ongoing necessity of group politics" (p. 1296). It is this juncture between individual identity, group social movements, and the multiplicity of justice that I explore in depth through my thesis. For example, a Black trans woman would likely experience sexual violence in a vastly different way than a white cisgender woman, especially in regard to the response from hashtag movements and the

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subsequent justice response. I also supplement Crenshaw's work with Catherine Mackinnon's (2013) nuanced discussion of intersectionality, since she elaborates on the connection of intersectionality to justice and law, articulating, "Law is replete with missed intersectional opportunities" (p. 1022). An Indigenous feminist perspective is also utilized throughout this thesis to attend to the ways racism and colonialism shape sexual violence. By drawing on the works of Sarah Deer (2015), Joyce Green (2007), and other Indigenous scholars/activists, I explore the applications of Indigenous feminism to sexual violence research; as well as interrogate notions of solidarity, collective justice, and agency.

Sandra Harding's (2004) feminist standpoint theory presents "a way of empowering oppressed groups, valuing their experiences, and of pointing toward a way to develop an oppositional consciousness" (Harding, 2004, p. 2), and emphasizes, "the commonality of experiences and perspectives that emerge for groups differentially arrayed within hierarchical power relations" (Hill Collins, 2004, p. 377). Standpoint theory begins from the premise that all knowledge is situated and that we should approach research from the perspective of those marginalized. It is important to reiterate the connection between feminist standpoint theory, as outlined by Harding (2004), and the conscious decision to believe all survivors. This declaration is simultaneously personal and political; it stems from a personal belief that survivors of sexual violence are to be trusted with their accounts of their lived experiences above all else. Helen Longino's (2010) description of feminist epistemology also informs my approach to centering multiplicity, interrogating notions of ultimate 'truths', and accounting for the positionality of researchers. The hashtags #IBelieveYou and #BelieveSurvivors recognize the narratives of survivors to be all the 'evidence' needed to believe those who have experienced sexual violence. This is in direct contrast to the legal system, in both the United States and Canada, where the burden of proof remains on the individual, instead of a deeper understanding of sexual violence as a collective and societal problem. This foundational belief is more than a methodology; it is a thread that flows throughout my research to create an organizing framework of understanding sexual violence, and it reinforces this research as an act of solidarity with survivors.

Alternative justice scholarship is also a critical theoretical dimension of this project. Works such as Lawrence W. Sherman and Heather Strang's 2007 report for the Smith Institute titled *Restorative Justice: The Evidence* provide contexts and evidence

for how alternative justice practices can be utilized in the area of sexual violence (Armatta, 2018; Backhouse, 2012; Clairmont, 1996; Koss & Achilles, 2008). Finally, in connection to my investigation of the #MeToo movement as a possible form of justice, my framework and methodology is influenced by digital social movement studies, and aided by Eric Turner's (2013) social movement theory. Digital feminism is closely linked to online social movements and encapsulates how some justice practices are moving away from the legal system and into other spaces.

1.3.1. Methodology, Data Sources, and Analysis

Throughout the thesis, I focus on a digital analysis of online sources, due to the rapid growth of online movements and the potentials associated with them. Mapping the hashtag movements creates an opportunity to explore the existing network of online feminist initiatives involving sexual violence, while navigating the limitations, complexities, and possibilities of future movements. In order to create the genealogies, I draw from media platforms that focus on self-published narratives, namely tweets, opinion pieces, open letters, and blogs, with a focus on material published online between October 2017 and September 2018. I pay special attention to the Twitter feeds of the founders and the official pages of the movements, so that the information is direct and cited from the original sources. First person, unedited data gives the clearest indications of the main critiques of the movement, which are often from survivors of sexual violence themselves. Digital platforms that allow for self-publishing are ideal sites to seek out these voices and critiques for several reasons, including the immediacy of publication, democracy of the platforms, potential for unfiltered honesty, and vast amount of posts. Academic sources are used to flesh out the rich history of activism and scholarship on sexual violence and the movements to eradicate it. This genealogy will not just be a timeline of important events, but a multi-faceted tracking of a movement throughout shifts in social context, public support, and international adoption. By creating a comprehensive genealogy within each case study, I am able to analyze and discuss the contexts and possibilities for justice at both an individual and societal level.

Although the main sources of data I investigate are public and accessible, I am still considering how to navigate my research with the conscious intention of managing and mitigating harm to those most marginalized by sexual violence, and from whose voices I have learned so much. This research is a reflection of not only the current

sociopolitical climate, and the heightened collective consciousness of issues surrounding sexual violence, but my own experiences and understandings of sexual violence, justice, and healing. As a survivor researching the experiences of other survivors, this project has taken on intense meaning for me, and has been a lesson in the emotionality of academic research and self-care. Research is political, and this thesis upholds that tradition. I also believe that research can function as activism, and I hope that this thesis contributes to the growing work of scholar-activists that are creating empathetic and informed research on the experiences of survivors of sexual violence.

1.4. Chapter Summaries

1.4.1. Chapter 2: #MeToo and Time's Up: Retweets, Repercussions, and Resistance

The first case study considers how the hashtag #MeToo, subsequent movement, and concurrent initiative Time's Up have come to inform our understandings of sexual violence, support survivors, and enact justice within and outside of the legal institution. The chapter creates a genealogy of the movement, interspersed with research on several high profile perpetrators, key proponents within the movement, and the creation of organizations, such as Times Up. By creating a dynamic and holistic genealogy, I situate the movement within a larger socio-political climate. I argue that the #MeToo movement is multi-faceted, with both collective consciousness-raising to address the culture of sexual violence and individual call-outs of perpetrators as a mode of enacting justice for survivors.

The second section of the chapter focuses on the extra-judicial measures enacted by the #MeToo movement, including job loss, public call outs, and some judicial measures such as incarceration. Throughout the chapter, I consider how some of the main critiques of the movement can be understood through the lens of intersectionality, as well as several nuances that the movement brings into public dialogue: same-sex violence, spectrums of accountability, comebacks and public apologies, among others. By positioning #MeToo within an existing framework of anti-sexual violence activism, this case study chapter uncovers how alternative justice is being practiced via online hashtag movements and contributes to an overall shift in cultural norms surrounding sexual violence.

1.4.2. Chapter 3: #MuteRKelly: Black Feminism, Boycotting, and Beyond

In the second case study chapter, I create a timeline of the hashtag #MuteRKelly, and the accompanying extra-judicial measures it seeks to employ. The movement, created by two Black women to stop the violence of the singer Robert "R" Kelly has broader links to Black and anti-carceral feminisms. The first section, replicating the format of the previous case study on #MeToo, creates a complex genealogy of the movement, while connecting it to #MeToo and #TimesUp. Woven throughout is an analysis of how #MuteRKelly relates to current understandings of social justice that often replicates inequalities and oppressions, especially against Black femmes. A discussion of Black feminist literature on sexual violence follows to provide context, history, and an intersectional understanding of how #MuteRKelly is one example of movements advocating for the bypassing of judicial channels in favor of survivor-centered alterative justice. Specifically, #MuteRKelly advocates for the boycott of R. Kelly's music as a means to restrict his financial capabilities and stop cycles of harm. I argue that this tactic is a form of alternative justice, and has wide applications within anti-sexual violence activism.

The final section of the case study traces histories of Black feminist activism, from slavery to the current era of incarceration, and the impact those histories have on the current manifestation of activism: hashtag movements. The emphasis on survivors to accessing the legal system is problematized within a Black feminist framework and considers how complicated the relationship between Black survivors and the legal system is. By considering justice as a spectrum, this case study looks beyond the hashtag and beyond the legal system to alternative justice that is being utilized by the #MuteRKelly movement. It also introduces an intersectional consideration of sexual violence activism that the third case study builds upon.

1.4.3. Chapter 4: #MMIW/G/2S, #AmINext, and #ImNotNext: Indigenous Feminism, Intersectionality, and Imagining Decolonial Futures

The third chapter examines hashtags emerging from Indigenous-led online movements addressing sexual violence that pre-date #MeToo and #MuteRKelly and, in many ways, created the foundation that those movements have built on: #MMIW/G/2S,

#AmINext, and #ImNotNext. The first section explores how the hashtags emerged and are explicitly situating sexual violence within colonial histories of violence and resistance. I also highlight how these movements differ from the previous two case studies in several critical ways, and analyze the tensions that exist between the movements themselves. By centering the work of Indigenous activists and scholars, the timelines illuminate a history of hashtag movements. The next section critically considers the role of colonialism within sexual violence responses, diving into criticisms of past measures that attempt to erase the voices of Indigenous peoples.

The final section of the chapter looks at future trajectories of anti-sexual violence work, decolonization as a methodology and practice, and the ongoing survivance of Indigenous peoples. Within the realm of sexual violence work, decolonization takes on renewed meaning in its application to justice strategies for survivors. In an effort to situate #MMIW/G/2S, #AmINext, and #ImNotNext within the web of interlocking online movements, this chapter works to highlight how decolonized justice can be applied to future movements combatting sexual violence in more robust and inclusive ways.

1.5. Moving Forward: Self-Defined, Survivor-Led Justice

Hashtag movements offer opportunities to witness survivors defining what justice means to them personally, creating their own realities of healing and transformation. Some survivors are utilizing the hashtags to call for incarceration; some for job loss; some are finding justice by stopping cycles of harm; some are advocating for increased support services; some are looking to policy change or alternative systems like sentencing circles. Although Restorative Justice or Transformative Justice (RJ/TJ) models are utilized at a much lesser rate than the CJS, hashtag movements have expanded worked to reimagine justice through the application of alternative methods to combat sexual violence. Moving forward, my research suggests that opening up the amount of legitimized, accessible, and equally viable choices that survivors have in the aftermath of sexual violence serves to mitigate the trauma associated with seeking justice.

Collective justice movements offer methods of retribution, healing, and punishment outside of the current CJS, and my research adds to a body of knowledge that critically explores the possibilities of justice for survivors of sexual violence. This

research contends that sexual violence against marginalized populations highlights broader issues within the North American context, and encourages larger conversations about equality, oppression, and violence within our society today by illuminating the intersectional possibilities for justice beyond #MeToo. As Gilbert-Hickey (2019) states, "#MeToo is a movement that asks questions about the structures within society at large, and yet we must ask important questions of and about the movement itself if we hope to move toward less violent, more equitable futures" (p. 4). The opportunity remains for hashtag movements to be approached, in all their complexity, as an alternative method that shifts the reliance for justice from the judicial system, which continues to fail survivors, to a survivor-centric model. In this regard, #MeToo, #MuteRKelly, and #AmINext are not isolated events, and must be situated within a network of already-existing grassroots justice responses to sexual violence, often led by survivors themselves. Ultimately, research on how to create better pathways to justice for survivors needs to become a priority for anti-violence work, and society at large, and this thesis contributes to this ongoing dialogue.

Chapter 2.

#MeToo and Time's Up: Retweets, Repercussions, and Resistance

2.1. Mapping the #MeToo Movement

The news coverage of the #MeToo movement has been integral to influencing public perceptions of sexual violence and harassment, and continues to be widely instrumental in disseminating outrage, support, empathy, or indifference to the movement. One Australian site even wrote that the Weinstein exposé "was the news story that triggered a revolution" (Idato & Prytz, 2018). But what revolution is that? What shifts are we seeing? And can these shifts be solely contributed to #MeToo, or do they work in conjunction with current political and social climates? This genealogy contextualizes a timeline of events, troubles monolithic considerations of the movement, and reimagines the societal implications of #MeToo.

Mapping the landscape of online feminist activism is integral to understanding how these movements came to be, what their potentials are, and where conversations about rape culture and sexual violence fit within our society. This chapter critically examines the applications and ramifications of the #MeToo movement for those who have experienced sexual violence, while challenging binary, polarizing perceptions of the movement by social commenters or the general public alike that deem it *either* beneficial *or* destructive. Within the context of our current online (and offline) culture, narratives of sexual violence should be regarded with extreme empathy and awareness, and viewed as complex, dynamic, and intersectional.

While select, informal genealogies of the #MeToo movement exist in news articles and on blogs, my research contextualizes the ongoing events and experiences within the movement to facilitate a better understanding of both the public narratives of those who have experienced sexual violence, and the culture in which they occur. The immediacy of social media can be argued as a beneficial aspect of knowledge dissemination and mobilization, with the potential for global communities, far-reaching connections, and fast-paced responses (Al'Uqdah, Jenkins, & Ajaa, 2017; Jaffe, 2018;

Mendes, Ringrose, & Keller, 2018; Wood, 2015). At the same time, social media movements also have the potential to create monolithic constructions of complicated topics (Eagle, 2015; Fotopoulou, 2016; Manikonda, Beigi, Liu, & Kambhampati, 2018;Turner, 2013). For example, the instantaneous aspect of social media could lend itself to the creation of a singular voice or idealized version of sexual violence survivor, erasing the multitude of realities of those publishing their experiences and skewing identities present within the #MeToo movement. Online activism can be regarded as a tool to forge communities of shared experiences, but the connective potentials can have detrimental effects on survivors themselves. While the widespread recognition of #MeToo is a key component in creating societal shifts in the disruption of rape culture, many survivors have taken to social media to discuss the experience of being retraumatized by the extensive news coverage. One paradoxical dilemma is this: the #MeToo movement's power to enact individual justice for survivors and facilitate societal shifts in relation to sexual violence stems from its sheer volume, but it is this same hyper-visibility that is potentially triggering for those same survivors when their entire feed is just an endless scroll of stories of violence. The over-consumption of these traumatic stories has been shown to have a variety of positive effects for survivors, including feelings of solidarity (Keller, Mendes, & Ringrose, 2018), but also have the potential to also promote negative outcomes of apathy and ambivalence of the general public towards survivors and their stories (Whittier, 2018).

While this chapter constructs a holistic timeline of the #MeToo movement, it must be emphasized that for every news headline, every celebrity accusation, there are thousands of untold stories that do not make the papers or receive national attention or support. It is also integral to note that for every sexual assault we hear about from within the #MeToo movement, there are a million micro-aggressions that are shrugged off: a million normalized covert harassments, a million uncomfortable situations that survivors navigate every day. And those do not get tweeted about. As I progress through my research, I become increasingly aware of the stories that are not being shared, or the stories that are being shared, and then being ignored. So, while this genealogy highlights the major cases and loud public events within the movement, it should also increase awareness and understanding of the silences that also abound.

Creating a timeline of the #MeToo movement as a complicated, multifaceted, and nuanced period also means mapping the social landscape in which it occurred.

Movements like #MeToo would not exist in a society without rape culture, sexual violence, or white supremacy, and are greatly affected by current political, judicial, and social climates. Many people have described the #MeToo movement as a "tipping point", which reflects the mounting public discourse on sexual violence, ongoing inequalities, and power hierarchies.

On January 21st, 2017, the Women's March took place in Washington, DC, in direct response to the presidential election of Donald Trump. It was reported that this was the "largest single-day demonstration in American history" (Harris & Weiss, 2017). Movements to empower and support women were gaining international recognition, shifting sexual assault and harassment to the forefront of North American consciousness. Over the summer, there were several high profile sexual violence or assault cases reported upon, including open letters from employees at Uber (Fowler, 2017), and Fox News (Stelter & Byers, 2016) outlining ongoing harassment, assault, and misogyny. Perhaps the most public and well-known case within the #MeToo movement began on October 5th, 2017, when actress Ashley Judd, along with several other Weinstein Company former and current employees, published an exposé in the New York Times detailing years of sexual assault, harassment, and cover-ups at the hands of Harvey Weinstein (Kantor & Twohey, 2017). Three days later, he was fired as the CEO of his production company. To date, over 100 women have come forward with allegations against Weinstein. A few days later, on October 16th, actress Alyssa Milano issued a call to survivors of sexual violence: "if you've been sexually assaulted write 'me too' as a reply to this tweet" (Milano, 2017). Millions used the hashtag internationally in the first 24 hours, and the conversation was just beginning.

Before the hashtag started trending, before the phrase 'me too' became synonymous with sexual violence, and before the Harvey Weinstein case made international headlines, the words that now define a movement were being used by Tarana Burke in 2006. In a recent interview, Burke spoke about the beginnings of #MeToo as a tool for girls and women of color who had experienced sexual assault to speak out about their stories, and find support from each other. Most people are not aware of the history of the hashtag, or its creation by a woman of color. As Burke outlines, she originally started the hashtag in conjunction with a MySpace page and website to facilitate connections for survivors of sexual violence, focusing on women and girls in the Bronx, New York (Ohleiser, 2017).

After the 2017 call to action, the spark that Burke had lit and tended for ten years was suddenly headline news: the #MeToo hashtag went viral and spread across the globe; some countries translated it, others created similar or parallel hashtags to speak about their experiences (such as the hashtags #BalanceTonPorc in French [Donadio, 2017] and #AnaKaman in Arabic [Alfatlawi, 2017]). While Burke has spoken several times about her mixed feelings in relation the adoption of the hashtag, she ultimately asserts that the #MeToo movement (@MeTooMVMT on Twitter) expansion is a necessary step in eradicating sexual violence. "It made my heart swell to see women using this idea - one that we call 'empowerment through empathy'," she tweeted, "to not only show the world how widespread and pervasive sexual violence is, but also to let other survivors know they are not alone. #metoo." (Burke, 2017).

A few days after Milano's post, another major news story broke: Olympic gymnast McKayla Maroney tweets about the abuse she experienced from doctor Larry Nassar, prompting over 150 women and girls to come forward against him, and leading to his arrest and shining an international spotlight on the professional sports industry (Nashrulla, 2017). In late October, Anthony Rapp came forward to disclose an assault by Kevin Spacey as one of the first highly publicized non-heterosexual allegations. Fifteen other men then echoed similar experiences with Spacey (Puente, 2017). The accusations prompted an onslaught of discussion related to same-sex assault, and the use of sex addiction treatment as atonement. While the individual case is unique, it lends itself to a wider dialogue, especially the reality that sexual violence *does* happen outside of the confines of heterosexuality. According to Chaffin, Chenoweth, and Letourneau (2016), "Same-sex statutory rape incidents reported to law enforcement were rare, accounting for only 1% of all statutory rape incidents. But these cases were considerably more likely to result in an arrest" (p. 41). Their research goes on to contend that while reporting rates were low, the likelihood of arrest was high due to several factors, but most notably homophobic assumptions, lack of resources and education, and sensationalist responses. While same-sex assault has not received a large amount of media coverage within #MeToo, a study by Messinger (2011) found that same-sex sexual violence within relationships (also known as Intimate-Partner Violence or IPV) was twice as likely than in opposite-sex partnerships (p. 2239). Girshick (2002), although specifically looking at women-to-women sexual violence, suggests that a major challenge facing the anti-sexual violence movement is the need to approach queer

violence as more than an "add-on." She argues that we must understand same-sex assault "as fully as we understand [heterosexual] violence. In order to achieve this, we must immediately confront the issues of homophobia, biphobia, and heterosexism" (p. 1517). #MeToo, in all its complexity and contradiction, has served to ignite conversations that are often on the fringes of sexual violence activism, such as same-sex assault. When the media begins reporting on aspects of sexual violence that are often pushed to the fringes of public consciousness, including queer sexual violence, it becomes harder to ignore or silence.

The Asia Argento case stands out within the timeline, as it heightened dialogue relating to not only male survivorship, but also to the complication of linear depictions of violence and power. Argento was one of the first survivors to speak out against Weinstein, and was very active within the #MeToo Movement and Time's Up. When reports surfaced of an allegation and eventual settlement from 2013 between Argento and Jimmy Bennett, who was 17 at the time, there was a wide range of reactions both online and offline. Questions arose about the universality of power dynamics, the potential for anyone to cause harm, and even the credibility of her experiences with Weinstein. Burke commented on Twitter about the situation, reiterating a rejection of an idealized understanding of survivor identity, and pushing for a more nuanced discussion:

> It will continue to be jarring when we hear the names of some of our faves connected to sexual violence unless we shift from talking about individuals … and begin to talk about power. Sexual violence is about power and privilege. That doesn't change if the perpetrator is your favourite actress, activist or professor of any gender. And we won't shift the culture unless we get serious about shifting these false narratives. (@TaranaBurke, 2018)

Scholarship on female perpetrators and male survivors has looked at several different aspects, including strongly held myths and stereotypes that signal an increase in stigmatization. As Chaffin, Chenoweth, and Letourneau's (2016) research outlines, "Subverting the normalized assumption of male perpetrator and female survivor, the female-on-male statutory rape pairings were the least likely to have an arrest regardless of relationship context, perhaps suggesting that these incidents tend to be viewed as less victimizing or exploitative" (p. 41). It is imperative to keep understandings, and subsequent research, focused on the reality that any gender is capable of violence, and any gender can be a survivor. Within the #MeToo movement, there is still a severe lack

of public recognition of this reality, with more education, empathy, and awareness needed to expand our current society's model of survivorship. In relation to the other piece in the Argento case, there is no hard and fast rule that states that being a survivor of sexual violence precludes or excludes you from also being a perpetrator of violence. Often, according to two studies by Ayala, Kotary, and Hetz (2018), and Choudhary, Coben, and Bossarte (2010), perpetrators of violence have often experienced abuse or violence themselves, complicating the binary construction of perpetrator/survivor, and pushing for more nuanced considerations.

Two of the next major cases to receive public attention were the comedians Louis CK and Aziz Ansari. Accused of non-consensually masturbating in front of several women, CK issued a statement admitting to his actions, but neglected to actually apologize (CK, 2017). Ansari was accused of sexual assault by a woman he went on a date with, later denying the allegation, stating that he was unaware his date was uncomfortable and was not consenting (Way, 2018). While both of these cases are individual examples of sexual violence, they speak to larger normative behaviors and societal responses, including obliviousness as a legal defense, and the eagerness of our society for a "redemption arc" (Gayla, 2019). A predictable side effect of the #MeToo movement, much of the public narrative has been centered on this idea of a 'comeback'. In the eyes of the public, when can those accused and/or convicted of sexual violence return to the literal and figurative stage, if ever? Referring to Ansari's recent Netflix stand-up special, Gayla (2019) touches on important points: "These works ask how we handle our sympathy for men who have done wrong. They linger in the surprising, conflicting feelings that trail after headline-worthy outrage. They make the argument for ambivalence as a fundamental part of the broader #MeToo story". While a select few academic or popular media articles have considered job loss, or in this case, loss of celebrity status, as a form of extra-judicial measures or harm reduction, I argue that it deserves more recognition as an important impact of the movement. Often, in the absence of effective judicial interventions, the removal of access, power, or privilege, can be a form of alternative justice, predicated on hindering the perpetrator from committing further harm. CK has been met with a decidedly mixed reaction when returning to the stage, and had a movie release postponed and several shows cancelled. Less than a year after he confirmed the harassment had taken place and said he would "take a step back and a long time to listen" (CK, 2017), CK was back on the comedy

circuit, quoted in a comedy club lamenting about the ramifications of his actions: "Fuck it, what are you going to take away, my birthday? My life is over, I don't give a shit" (North, 2019). His reaction brings up important questions: how do we hold perpetrators accountable when the public continues to consume their work, and by extension, support them? While the details of these individual cases varied, they both instigated public conversations about consent within power dynamics, what "public apologies" actually entail, and accountability.

In early November, several women accused Roy Moore, the Republican Senate candidate for Alabama, of sexual misconduct while they were underage in the 1970's and 80's (McCrummen, Reinhard, & Crites, 2017). During Moore's campaign, Trump endorsed him several times, despite the mounting allegations. While politicians being accused of or committing sexual violence is not a new phenomenon, this was the first major case since the #MeToo movement had entered US society's consciousness that a major politician had been involved, one whom President Trump openly supported even after the allegation. One key aspect of the media attention surrounding the Moore accusations would be repeated later in the Kavanaugh hearings: why the survivors waited to come forward. While this sentiment has been echoed in almost every case of sexual violence when the survivor/s do not immediately seek formal legal avenues of "justice", it took on a new importance when combined with political motivations and public scrutiny. As Grover (2019) articulates, "In order to fully realize the purposes of the #MeToo Movement, society must recognize and respect that each survivor processes their assault differently" (p. 305), and oftentimes that can include not "coming forward" at politically convenient times, if at all. Trump, who had been accused of sexual assault or misconduct by 16 women during his presidential campaign, sets a dangerous precedent. If the highest office in the United States can be occupied by someone accused of multiple counts of sexual violence, how could any survivor receive meaningful justice or healing? Mid-December, Moore was beaten by the Democrat nominee, with the #MeToo Movement being cited as a fundamental component of his electoral defeat. Since #MeToo gained international attention, dozens of North American politicians have been accused of sexual harassment and/or assault, with varying degrees of accountability and recognition (Godfrey, Felton, & Hosking, 2018).

One of the most public cases of sexual violence during the #MeToo era was the Brett Kavanaugh Supreme Court nominee hearings, where Dr. Christine Blasey Ford

came forward to testify about an experience she had with Kavanaugh during high school (CBC News, 2018). According to Nielsen, a television data analytics company, over 20 million Americans viewed Senate Judiciary Committee hearing, which does not include Canadian or other international viewers (Fitzgerald, 2018). Detailing how Kavanaugh held her down and groped her, Ford spent hours answering the questions of both Democrat and Republican Senators. Fervently denying the allegations, Kavanaugh's nomination was put on hold while a weeklong, limited-scope FBI investigation took place. Ultimately, his nomination passed, and he currently sits on the Supreme Court of the United States. While many people, survivors included, rallied against Kavanaugh, larger questions began to arise pertaining to toxic masculinity, survivor support, and the lack of mainstream justice. Grover (2019) sees the hearings, the behavior of certain politicians, and ultimate success of Kavanaugh's nomination, as a foreboding lesson: "The reality of Justice Kavanaugh's confirmation hearing has raised the question as to how much society has actually learned from the #MeToo Movement" (p. 305). During this '#MeToo era', there have been numerous discussions about it's efficacy and impact; different people have different definitions of what qualifies as meaningful change, justice, or accountability.

While #MeToo has become synonymous with sexual violence, and been cited as the cause for some changes and individual enactments of institutional/retributive justice, if the Kavanaugh hearings were any indication, there is a long way to go before #MeToo has ramifications within the upper caste of political institutions. According to data collected from RAINN, America's largest anti-sexual violence organization, incoming calls to their hotline increased by 500% in the days following the nomination hearings (RAINN.org, n.d.), which speaks to the high potential for retraumatization and the need for increased social supports when sexual violence is front page news. This hyper-visibility, while important for prompting international dialogue, can have detrimental affects on survivors. Given the contemporary nature of the research, this genealogical timeline of the #MeToo movement concludes with the September Kavanaugh hearings, but that does not mean the movement is over by any means. Cases continue to make headlines; perpetrators continue to be outed; spectrums of justice continue to be enacted. The reality that the majority of women, trans folks, and non-binary people will experience some form of sexual violence in their lifetime remains. Ideally, social justice movements such as #MeToo will cease to be a passing hashtag, and become

embedded within the societal psyche, contributing to a future free from sexual violence. Until then, feminist activism, and more specifically digital feminist movements, persists.

2.1.1. Time's Up: Legal Defense Fund

In December 2017 TIME Magazine named their Person of the Year as "The Silence Breakers", naming and interviewing not just celebrities within the #MeToo movement, but also farm workers, hotel staff, engineers, teachers, and many more from a multitude of industries (Zacharek, Dockterman, & Edwards, 2017). This marked a major shift in the movement, since it was one of the first instances of a mainstream publication compiling several stories of sexual violence together in a publicly legitimized way. By departing from the rhetoric that only rich, white, celebrities could access justice, the Person of the Year article sought to illuminate the reality that sexual violence is experienced across many factors, such as across industries, class, ethnicity, and age. The article itself stressed the revolutionary potential of the #MeToo Movement, highlighting the sentiment that people were "fed up":

> Women have had it with bosses and co-workers who not only cross boundaries but don't even seem to know that boundaries exist. They've had it with the fear of retaliation, of being blackballed, of being fired from a job they can't afford to lose. They've had it with the code of going along to get along. They've had it with men who use their power to take what they want from women. (2017)

Although the TIME article marked a milestone of public awareness of the movement, it also needs to be critically considered in relation to intersections of identity. Heavily centering women as survivors creates limitations of inclusion, especially for trans folks and non-binary people, who often experience violence at statistically much higher rates. The name given to the participants also bring up an important point on the problematic aspects of the movement: the Silence Breakers. What about those who cannot afford to break their silence; those who could potentially experience more violence by speaking out, or lose jobs, housing, family and friends by voicing their experiences? Where do they fit within a movement that predicates the vocalization of traumas?

In a letter published in *Time* magazine a month after the "Silence Breakers" issue, over 300 women within the entertainment industry announced the creation of Time's Up, a social welfare organization with a Legal Defense Fund and charity. Initially

created as a response to the rampant inequalities and violence within Hollywood, it expanded into countless other industries and demographics. Time's Up mandate is to 1) "address the systemic inequality and injustice in the workplace that have kept underrepresented groups from reaching their full potential", 2) "partner with leading advocates for equality and safety to improve laws and corporate policies, 3) "help change the face of corporate boardrooms and the C-suite", and 4) "enable more women and men to access our legal system to hold wrongdoers accountable" (TimesUpNow.org, n.d.). While their focus is on workplace harassment, the organization's approach is multi-pronged: providing grants with the intention of outreach and education to shift societal understandings of sexual harassment, inequality, and oppression, lobbying for policy and legal changes, and administering resources to individual survivors who choose legal avenues of justice. As Wexler, Robbennolt, and Murphy (2019) summarize, Time's Up seeks to "amplify and credit survivors' voices, seek accountability, change workplace practices, and encourage access to the legal system" (p. 48). Through narratives of solidarity and revolution, the Time's Up organization is a facet of the #MeToo movement that is enacting both individual and collective change, albeit within certain parameters.

Widely considered as an action-orientated extension of the #MeToo movement, Time's Up has a scope centered on the workplace, and more specifically the workplace within the Western capitalist economy. Given the complexities of this reality, certain limitations of Time's Up should be considered simultaneously, while acknowledging the impactful nature of the organization. Providing legal assistance to individual or class action lawsuits is only one potential pathway, and Time's Up does acknowledge the need for comprehensive and holistic understandings of sexual violence. By emphasizing that societal values must be renegotiated in a way that recognizes the autonomy and power of women, Time's Up seeks to alter structural barriers for those survivors accessing the legal system. As one facet of the #MeToo movement, Time's Up represents the urge of *some* anti-sexual violence activists to *reform* the current legal system. To that end, much of the impact of #MeToo and Time's up has been firmly located within the sphere of criminalization and incarceration. Scholars, such as Musto (2019), illustrate this point, stating that, "The movement, however, has played a role in raising public awareness about the criminalization of survivors of violence and brings to the surface feminist concerns about aligning anti-violence efforts too closely with

carceral agendas" (p. 46). For example, Bill Cosby's and Harvey Weinstein's arrests being heralded as "big win[s]" and "pivotal moment[s]" reflect the reality that incarceration is still the preferred or "real" form of consequence (Hsu, 2019, p. 274). This emphasis may be antithetical to some anti-sexual violence work that is seeking to decenter legal reformation in lieu of alternative practices.

2.2. Extra-Judicial Measures Enacted by #MeToo

Bound up in conversations about #MeToo and Time's Up are notions of justice, and the tensions surrounding accountability, incarceration, and healing. As founder Burke has stated in numerous tweets and interviews, the #MeToo movement was conceived, in part, to navigate and potentially bypass the current judicial system, which routinely and systematically fails Black women and girls. But has #MeToo actually succeeded in fulfilling this mandate? The movement, which has been characterized by its divisiveness in many ways, also contains multitudes of responses when posed the question- what does justice look like in the #MeToo era? Various stakeholders, including academic scholars, have taken up these questions. Some, like Afzal and Wallace (2019) and Wexler et al. (2019), predominantly herald #MeToo as an apparatus of alternative or retributive justice, while Gilbert-Hickey (2019) and Hsu (2019) bring a decidedly more critical lens to the methods of the movement. Bava and McNamee (2019) investigate the factors that contributed to #MeToo's creation, stating that, "As institutionalized systems of justice in the form of laws, policies, and practices fail to create a sense of fairness and equal rights, we find the emergence of self organizing communities focused on creating a more just society" (p. 290). They go on to categorize public condemnation of perpetrators and other methods of retribution as a "collective response of justice", arguing that "these movements are not simply a call for justice; they are becoming a form of justice. What counts as justice is continuing to emerge" (Bava & McNamee, 2019, p. 290-291). As such, dissatisfaction with current institutionalized models of justice remains a central tenant to the organizing powers of #MeToo.

2.2.1. Methods of Alternative Justice

While incarceration as a method of justice is considered throughout this research, the extra-judicial alternative methods that #MeToo has spotlighted must be

critically considered as one of the important impacts of the movement. Burke, speaking to the significance of nuanced reactions to sexual violence, urged for an understanding that reflects that since sexual violence occurs on a spectrum, the responses and accountability should also occur on a spectrum (Brockes, 2018). We have seen several methods of alternative forms of justice stem from the #MeToo movement, including but not limited to: job loss, public atonement, reparations, truth commissions, and boycotting (Bava & McNamee, 2019; Hsu, 2019; Musto, 2019; Wexler et al., 2019). In their witty blog-post-turned-research-article titled *Give a Woman an Inch, She'll Take a Penis* (2018), Gentile looks at the "transformative functions of shame" (p. 717) as it relates to ramifications for perpetrators of sexual violence, calling out the few powerful men that have been fired. While momentarily gleeful at the accountability associated with shaming individual perpetrators, Gentile (2018) considers the "knowing but blind institutions" (p. 712) as fully culpable in the crimes of sexual violence. Wexler et al. (2019) illuminate the complexity intrinsic to the issue of accountability and repercussions in the current socio-political climate:

> Serious disagreement exists over what the appropriate consequences should be for many of the acts identified as part of #MeToo. One might think of it like a Goldilocks problem: some bemoan the "professional death penalty," while others argue, that in many instances, the loss of a job falls far short of a needed criminal or civil remedy for the victims. (p. 67)

How we take up these disagreements will dictate how we respond to disclosures of sexual violence moving forward, and how we attempt to eliminate violence more generally. As illustrated within the timeline of the movement, there have been a huge continuum of responses, which speak to the offline applications of #MeToo and Time's Up. Harvey Weinstein has been convicted of committing a criminal sex act in the first degree and rape in the third degree, while being acquitted of many other, more serious charges; Larry Nassar has been sentenced to life in prison; Louis CK has experienced a degree of professional setbacks; Brett Kavanaugh is sitting on the highest court in the United States. Some perpetrators have been fired, stepped down from positions of power, or participated in alternative justice programs. Some perpetrators have been promoted, falsely justified hiring fewer women, or continue unexamined and unaccountable lives. As Musto (2019) reiterate, "Individual disclosures have led to worker strikes and public firings of powerful men. For many, #MeToo offers a glimmer of hope that sweeping social change and justice for survivors of violence may yet be

possible" (p. 45). Their cautiously optimistic tone is echoed by scholars Afzal and Wallace (2019), who assert that #MeToo and #TimesUp do not only enact ramifications for individual perpetrators, but also "can be vehicles for dismantling systems of power" (p. 149). While the individual ramifications are possible to be charted and tracked, the effects of structural shifts are harder to quantify, and may not be immediately apparent. Further attention and research must be paid to the repercussions of these hashtag movements, and how our society will react to the extra-judicial methods of accountability being enacted.

2.3. Post-#MeToo Justice

Both #MeToo and Time's Up take up the issue of sexual violence in ways that concurrently circumvent *and* reinforce the legal institution. By creating a complex genealogy of the #MeToo movement, it becomes possible to consider the various responses and reactions of online movements that address sexual violence. That being said, troubling the monolithic notions that still cling to narratives of sexual violence is paramount, and intersectionality cannot be fully considered without also discussing options outside of the legal system for survivors. Tracing a timeline of #MeToo also illuminates the gaps and silences within the movement, and while no social movement is free from the inequalities of the society it exists in, connections must be made to other movements that are taking up similar issues in dissimilar ways. Wexler et al. (2019) urge us to practice patience, asserting that "cultural shifts and individual adjustments do not happen overnight, and the changes already wrought by the #MeToo conversation may not yet be deeply embedded" (p. 110). That being said, it is possible to remain critical of the movement itself, and be conscientious about asking: for whom is it facilitating justice, and what kind of justice is it? As Gilbert-Hickey (2019) astutely observe, "#MeToo is flawed. It is broad and it is incomplete. It is imperfect. It all too often replicates the very systems of oppression it seeks to undermine. It is messy and it is sanitized. It is effective only insofar as it begins to recognize and critique itself" (p. 12). With international attention on sexual violence, it is imperative to begin and continue dialogue about alternative and extra-judicial justice. By broadening access to multiple forms of justice for survivors, #MeToo and Time's Up have the potential to legitimize options outside of the judicial system, but should remain critical and conscientious of reiterating existing oppressive systems.

Enmeshed in our reckoning with sexual violence, the #MeToo movement illustrates examples of nuance, accountability, and justice. That being said, "#MeToo and #TimesUp movements must not be treated as isolated social media campaigns against sexual violence, but as a part of a larger feminist network" (Afzal & Wallace, 2019, p. 130). The following two case study chapters contextualize #MeToo within Black feminist and Indigenous anti-oppression movements to emphasize the potentials of intersectional movements, highlight the rich foundation of activism preceding #MeToo, and point to future trajectories of research and organizing.

Chapter 3.

#MuteRKelly: Black Feminism, Boycotting, and Beyond

3.1. #MuteRKelly

Because violence flows from social injustices of race, class, gender, sexuality, and age, for African American women and men, eradicating violence requires a new Black sexual politics dedicated to a more expansive notion of social justice.

-Black Feminist scholar Patricia Hill Collins (2004, p. 245)

Running parallel to #MeToo is #MuteRKelly, a movement created by Kenyette Barnes and Oronike Odeleye, which calls out the musician Robert "R" Kelly for decades of abuse, assault, and harassment against Black girls, with the aim of removing the current girls and women under his influence, and preventing him the opportunity to reoffend. The hashtag #MuteRKelly was created in 2017 by Barnes and Odeleye as a grassroots movement with goals to remove his songs from the radio in Atlanta and cancel his impending concerts to bring raise awareness and address his continued pattern of violence. The momentum spread to other cities where he was set to perform, with individuals and organizations calling for a boycott and igniting several protests. In September, when the Weinstein accusations surfaced, the creators were hopeful that R. Kelly would be included in the mass media attention. However, concerns about R. Kelly were largely sidelined. This dismissal prompted an onslaught of questions, but most pointedly, people asked: why are black women and girls often either blamed for sexual assault/abuse or ignored completely? These tensions became very apparent to the founders of #MuteRKelly and prompted discussions on the mainstreaming of rape culture and the idealized identities of survivors.

In January of 2019, the six-part docuseries *Surviving R. Kelly* aired, quickly becoming the most-watched documentary on the Lifetime channel (Fortin, 2019). It focused on R. Kelly's accusers, their families, and interviews with activists and celebrities, tracing twenty plus years of R. Kelly's behavior. Highlighting the most recent

few years since #MuteRKelly began, the docuseries harnessed the momentum gained by #MeToo to amplify awareness of R. Kelly's actions and situate Black survivors within mainstream consciousness. A central aspect of the #MuteRKelly movement is the recognition that his victims were, and are, Black underage girls, who are part of a demographic of sexual violence survivors that are statistically underrepresented and socially neglected (Donovan, 2007; Hill Collins, 2004; Tambe, 2018). The movement is about holding R. Kelly accountable, but is also about investigating the people, companies, industry, and general societal apathy that allowed it to occur and continue.

Beyond holding R. Kelly accountable as an individual perpetrator, the #MuteRKelly movement has amplified a collective conversation about the intersectional oppressions faced by women of color in ways that the #MeToo movement has been criticized for neglecting. The #MuteRKelly movement also embodies an alternative pathway to justice, outside of the legal system that the Time's Up Movement attempts to work within: Barnes and Odeleye pointedly and clearly state that the legal system has failed women and girls of color, especially African American femmes. No longer looking to judicial institutions for justice, their mission statement critically interrogates the notions of guilt/innocence, justice, and truth.

According to the Mute R. Kelly website, Barnes and Odeleye argue for a more nuanced approach to the legal system when it comes to "justice" for Black people, women and girls especially. They urge supporters of R. Kelly to reflect on hypocritical views of the judicial institution and its failures, including the fact that R. Kelly had previously been tried and acquitted of child pornography charges when the underage victim refused to testify (St. Clair & Ataiyero, 2008). This acquittal served to bolster some supporters' beliefs that R. Kelly was 'innocent', adding to the complex history of R. Kelly's public support and the circumstances in which he was able to continue offending. On their homepage, in a section titled '*Why Mute R. Kelly?*', Barnes and Odeleye address these hypocrisies (2017):

> And since when has the Black community looked to the justice system to be the decider of innocence or guilt? All day long we scream the justice system is broken but *NOW* we act as though what it decides is the gospel truth? We all know that there are Black men and women sitting in jail *right now* that are innocent and tons more on the streets that are guilty. We should not need any outside forces to rid our communities of the ills that plague it.

This clear and concise denunciation of mainstream legal channels is one of the main ways #MuteRKelly diverges from #TimesUp. Where #TimesUp often, though not always, seeks to enact justice for survivors through the judicial system, #MuteRKelly firmly rejects the notion that an institution that has contributed to and maintained white supremacy, sexism, and anti-black racism can be utilized to solve the problem of sexual violence against black women and girls.

While the immediate goal of the Mute R. Kelly movement is to prevent the ongoing violence of one man, it expands beyond that to tackle issues of racialized justice, institutional failures, and the erasure of Black women from current conversations surrounding sexual violence. As Ashwini Tambe (2018) points out, it is imperative to keep in mind the historic dynamics that have existed around sexual violence and Black bodies. For some, the heavier reliance on survivors' experiences is a welcome and refreshing change, but for others, it can reflect a long-standing pattern of Black people being falsely accused and judged (Tambe, 2018, p. 200). Scholars Leung and Williams (2019) and Neville and Hamer (2001) highlight the history of Black women's activism against sexual violence and illustrate how Crenshaw's concept of intersectionality applies to the experiences of Black victims and perpetrators. Historically, patterns of white women falsely accusing Black men of sexual violence and hyper-sexualized constructions of Black women have served as tactics of white supremacy that enable ongoing material, legal, and symbolic violence against black men and women. In this context, the question of whose testimony counts and what justice looks like is complicated by anti-blackness such that Black men and women are more likely to be targets of violence and less likely to be believed. (Leung & Williams, 2019; Neville & Hamer, 2001). Black anti-sexual violence activists and scholars have analyzed how justice can be achieved for a group that traces their oppression to the onset of slavery and the maintenance of white supremacy (Donovan, 2007; Leung & Williams, 2019; Neville & Hamer, 2001; Wexler, Robbennolt, & Murphy, 2018). #MuteRKelly speaks to the normalization of sexual violence against racialized survivors, creates connections to Black Feminist Theory, and critiques responses that emphasize the judicial system, including Carceral Feminism. If the ultimate goal of online movements addressing sexual violence is to increase awareness of rape culture and sexual violence across society, and thereby diminish the occurrence of violence, then bringing these movements into dialogue with each other can serve to illuminate shared experiences and truths.

Interwoven into these conversations is the understanding that not all experiences of sexual violence are considered equally, nor are they represented equally in the existing movements.

3.1.1. Timeline of Events and Goals of the Movement

According to news articles, the docuseries, op-eds, and, most importantly, the lived experiences and testimonies from survivors, R. Kelly had been exhibiting violent behaviors and perpetuating abuse against racialized women and girls ever since his rise to fame. Accusations have ranged from child pornography to sexual assault and abuse. Most existing timelines of R. Kelly's history of abuse begin in 1991, when the singer, age 24, began to mentor another singer, Aaliyah, who was 12 at the time (CNN, 2019; Time Magazine, 2019; MuteRKelly.org, 2019). Three years later, they married illegally when Aaliyah was 15, although the marriage certificate stated that she was 18. The marriage was annulled a year later when her family became aware of the union and intervened.

From 1996 to 2001, R. Kelly was accused by several women of sexual assault, sexual misconduct, and coercion. All of the accusers settled out of court and with Kelly admitting to no wrongdoing. In 2000, Jim DeRogatis, a journalist for the Chicago *Sun-Times*, was sent a video of Kelly engaging in sexual acts and urinating on (what appeared to be) an underage girl, prompting him to hand over the evidence to the police and begin an investigation into R. Kelly that would span almost two decades. That tape, along with a raid of Kelly's Atlanta home, would lead to Kelly's arrest on child pornography charges, although several items confiscated from his home were inadmissible in court due to a technicality in the search warrant. The case continued to trial, with 14 charges remaining, although it was postponed for years until 2008, which experts call "victory by delay" (MuteRKelly.org, 2019). Ultimately, R. Kelly was found not guilty, with the jury citing the lack of testimony by the person in the video, and therefore lack of confirmation that they were underage. In the past ten years, several other women and their families have come forward alleging abuse, misconduct, coerced abortions, and STD transmissions. Others, including former girlfriend Jerrhonda Johnson Pace, have broken their non-disclosure agreements in the hopes of speaking out about Kelly and his actions.

By examining the trajectory of Kelly's behaviors, accusations, arrests, and acquittals, it becomes possible to make connections to the notions of truth, "innocence", and justice that Barnes and Odeleye interrogate in their mission statement of #MuteRKelly. Contemporary mainstream North American society places an inordinate amount of authority on the judicial system to define and uphold our understandings of what guilt or innocence is, while neglecting the realities of systemic oppression, including racism and sexism, that often permeate those institutions. The false narrative that all innocent people will be found 'not guilty' and all guilty people will be convicted is wildly inaccurate and arguably unattainable within the current judicial system, especially in cases of sexual violence. Leung and Williams (2019) summarized several studies on the efficacy of the judicial system for Black survivors of sexual violence, with each study coming to the same conclusion: their perpetrators are less likely to be convicted, they are more likely to categorize their experience with the police and courts as traumatizing, and they are less likely to be considered a "credible victim" by the jury. There has also been an increase in scholarship that dissects the origins of the prison industrial complex and the racist legacy of the current judicial systems in both Canada and the United States, including the book *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness* by Michelle Alexander (2010). As Jackie Wang (2018) argues, "the legal system is diagnosed as being *infected* with racism, masking the fact that the legal system is the constituent mechanism through which racial violence is carried out" (p. 265). All these pieces – the lack of justice within the court system, the racist histories of the CJS, and the increase in disclosures of sexual violence – intersect with the case of R. Kelly. It is within this contemporary cultural climate that #MuteRKelly takes place; one where guilt/innocence is dependent on a system that is interwoven with sexism, racism, xenophobia, and numerous other oppressions. In their explicit rejection of the court system's ability to enact change or justice, the founders of #MuteRKelly reiterate this sentiment, and vocalize the reality that even though R. Kelly has been acting without major criminal consequences up until recently, that does not mean he is innocent by any means.

During a podcast titled "Why 'Surviving R. Kelly' has some black women feeling more included in #MeToo" on WHYY, Jenice Armstrong discusses how the hashtag #MuteRKelly and subsequent docuseries "ignited local activism" and created a forum for local women and others to "gather together and heal" through survivor-to-survivor peer

support (John-Hall & Ben-Yaacov, 2019). But the boycott of R. Kelly and his music was not accepted by everyone. Odeleye emphasizes that the movement was extremely "polarizing" with the public. While some called for boycotts, criminal charges, and justice, others subscribed to the age-old narrative of 'separating the man and the music.' The rhetoric of separating individuals from their actions and behaviors echoes sentiments strongly supported by rape culture. This stance is often applied to cases where celebrities have committed a violent, taboo, or unacceptable behavior, but are "forgiven" to the extent that their music is still played or their movies are still shown. In R. Kelly's case, the refusal to separate his actions from his music directly impacts his ability to continue violence since, as the Mute R. Kelly website (n.d.) states, "Radio spins = Club spins = Concert bookings = Cash to pay for his crimes." Stopping the cycle of abuse, apathy, and inaction is paramount to the #MuteRKelly movement, and relates to the pervasiveness of our society's inclination to tolerate rape culture and its affects. Leung and Williams (2019) speak to the compromise that the women and girls coming forward against R. Kelly make:

> They have to decide how their claims will affect the African American community as a whole or hinder the social progress of their racial community. And it is a double-edged sword if their grievances are made against a prominent African American man since they will be attacked by both African American women and the larger community for trying to tarnish the reputation of a symbolically uplifting role model. (p. 363)

#MuteRKelly, as founder Odeleye laments, has faced harsh backlash from within the Black community for calling out R. Kelly, which Leung and Williams (2019) call "the victim's dilemma: self justice versus social justice" (p. 362), with self justice meaning coming forward about R. Kelly's behaviors, and social justice meaning maintaining solidarity with Black men against white supremacy.

3.1.2. Connecting #MuteRKelly to #MeToo and #TimesUp

Originally, #MuteRKelly was seen as a fringe movement on the peripheries of broader conversations about sexual violence, justice, and rape culture. Where #MeToo and #TimesUp sought to shed light on multiple perpetrators of sexual violence and change collective consciousness in a broad sense, #MuteRKelly emphasized the (repeated) actions of one man against Black women and girls, and society's (repeated) inaction in support of Black women and girls. When Hollywood celebrities began

tweeting #MeToo, the constructed image of 'survivor' became white, rich, and influential. While the sentiment #BelieveSurvivors or #BelieveWomen is important, it has been argued that the movement neglects to critically consider race (Tambe, 2018). In contrast, #MuteRKelly and its explicit urging to #BelieveBlackWomen pulls at these deeply rooted racial capitalist conceptions of the survivorship to shine a light on the lived realities of sexual violence at the intersection of race, class, and gender. But, after the *Surviving R. Kelly* documentary, has "#MeToo finally returned to black girls" (Tillet & Tillet, 2019)? When critically considering online movements addressing sexual violence, it is paramount to consider what identities and voices are being exalted, and which are being excluded. The stories we hear being told about sexual assault inform our understandings of everything from gender roles to the normalization of power structures. Bringing #MuteRKelly into conversation with similar movements could serve to highlight the existing inequalities and gaps, while refocusing the movements on the groups most likely to be impacted by sexual violence.

Considering both #MuteRKelly and #MeToo as simultaneously intersecting and parallel movements can also serve to strengthen online movements to make them more inclusive, equitable, and sustainable. On May 1st, 2018, a group within Time's Up known as WOC (Women of Color) published an open letter in support of the Mute R. Kelly movement, and emphasized several overlaps between the two initiatives. They called on the renewed boycott of R. Kelly, and for several companies to take action and cut ties with the musician (2018):

> For too long, our community has ignored our pain. The pain we bear is a burden that too many women of color have had to bear for centuries. The wounds run deep. As women of color within Time's Up, we recognize that we have a responsibility to help right this wrong. We intend to shine a bright light on our WOC sisters in need. It is our hope that we will never feel ignored or silenced ever again.

By unequivocally offering support to a movement that had minimal visibility within mainstream media up until that point, the open letter from Time's Up created a large response online. An article in *Variety* by Richardo Lopez cited the letter as "a notable first for minority women in the #MeToo era" (2018), an obviously positive response to the show of solidarity. While #MuteRKelly is widely considered a facet of the larger #MeToo movement, it provides an intersectional understanding of sexual violence that was largely lacking previously. To critically consider #MuteRKelly as a movement existing

both alongside and within Me Too also presents its own obstacles, including the clashing of central goals. #MuteRKelly indisputably rejects the judicial system as fundamentally flawed and racist towards black people, survivors and perpetrators alike. Time's Up, and more broadly Me Too, majoritively seeks to administer "justice" through legal and existing channels. Approaching sexual violence through a racially gendered lens deserves increased research and attention as these movements continue to grow and sculpt contemporary society.

3.2. Black Feminism and Sexual Violence

To better contextualize the #MuteRKelly movement within current constructions of Black Feminism and theory, I drew from narratives written by Black femmes themselves, including podcasts, tweets, academic articles, and opinion pieces. Given the accessibility and community-building potentials of the internet and social media, Rapp et al (2010) state that, "Internet protests may be a useful tool for Black women to augment traditional approaches to advocacy and activism, allowing them to have an explicit public presence with the opportunity to influence local law enforcement practices, while also raising awareness at the local and national level" (p. 256). Tweets using the same engaging hashtag, combined with effective organizing and activism, has made all the difference to the #MuteRKelly movement, with an increase in visibility corresponding to raised awareness and the possibility for self-determined justice. Scholars Mack and McCann (2018) emphasize the connections to other online movements centering people of color, while motioning to areas of tension or contradiction:

> [We] are deeply salient in a cultural moment that simultaneously claims that #BlackLivesMatter and breaks silence regarding sexual violence with #MeToo. At a time when many U.S. citizens are coming to terms in new and consequential ways with the fact that our criminal justice system is a disastrous machine of white supremacist violence, we are also confronting the horrifying prevalence of sexual violence and being told to #BelieveWomen. (p. 330)

Drawing from questions posed by Mack and McCann (2018) on the barriers to reconciling the violence of the incarceration of racialized individuals with the reality of sexual violence, this section situates these tensions within the framework of hashtag movements.

3.2.1. Understanding the Frameworks

By emphasizing the missing dialogue within other sexual violence movements, #MuteRKelly highlights the unique impacts processes of racialization have on victimization, societal acceptance, and potentials for justice. The main critique that #MuteRKelly identifies, namely the erasure of black femmes from public attention surrounding sexual violence, is part of a larger set of ideologies in intersectional feminism and alternative justice. As Mack and McCann (2018) state, "Universalizing and normative narratives of victims and perpetrators often ignore the complexity of racialization" (p. 334). This central critique shapes mainstream reactions to disclosures of sexual violence, as well as who is believed and who is further marginalized. #MuteRKelly directly and explicitly grounds the movement within Black Feminist theories and anti-violence ideologies that seek actionable change.

Instead of asking for greater representation within current structures such as the legal institution, the #MuteRKelly movement draws from Crenshaw's (1989) ideologies, which argue that "these problems of exclusion cannot be solved simply by including Black women within an already established analytical structure" (p. 140). Crenshaw's sentiment that "the entire framework […] must be rethought and recast" (p. 140) is echoed in the statements made by the #MuteRKelly founders that fervently demand justice outside of mainstream channels. Crenshaw's claim that marginalization can be caused by a "single-issue framework for discrimination" (p. 152) relates to the case of sexual assault in a MeToo era: only certain identities are valued as survivors, and those are the people most likely to receive conventional "justice". This leads to the erasure of multiples of experiences and communities, especially as it applies to Black women who reside at the intersection of race and gender. Sexual violence cannot be described or cured through a universalizing narrative. As Mack and McCann assert, "the complex ways in which sexual violence is symbolized […] does render the logics and commitments of white-heteropatriarchy visible: our cultural responses to sexual violence serve to protect white male supremacy, and in so doing reassert racial, gender, and sexual hierarchies at all intersections" (p. 331).

Donovan (2007) illuminates how depictions of Black women as either "jezebels" or "matriarchs" began during slavery, where dehumanizing Black women and their bodies allowed for atrocities of violence, specifically sexual violence, to occur without

repercussions (p. 723). More broadly, Giraldi and Monk-Turner (2017) define rape culture as a system that "makes this dehumanization normal and allows sexual violence to become mundane, seen almost as inevitable" (p. 123), a dehumanization that takes on new depths when considering the race, age, and socio-economic status of R. Kelly's victims. It is this inevitability that Odeleye and Barnes say contributed to the decades-long normalization and dismissal of Black femme stories and experiences with R. Kelly. These cycles of victimization, trauma, erasure, and dismissal are characteristic of mainstream movements that predicate a single (read: cisgender, heterosexual, White, middle to upper class) narrative over the lived realities of marginalized people, including Black femme survivors of sexual violence. The value placed on the varying experiences of survivors directly impacts not only the level of "justice" they receive, but also the amount of belief and accreditation they obtain. As musician Chance the Rapper lamented during an interview with Jamilah Lamieux, which would air during the *Surviving R. Kelly* docuseries (2019):

> We're programmed to really be hypersensitive to Black male oppression, but Black women are exponentially [a] higher oppressed and violated group of people just in comparison to the whole world. Maybe I didn't care because I didn't value the accusers' stories because they were Black women.

Or, as stated by Wriggins (1983) in their article *Rape, Racism, and the Law*, "The selective acknowledgement of the existence and seriousness of the rape of white women by Black men has been accompanied by a denial of the rape of Black women that began in slavery and continues today" (p. 117). By discounting the stories of marginalized groups and their experiences with sexual violence, the political and social climate ultimately creates pathways for both explicit and implicit reactions to sexual violence: subtle, underlying assumptions that affect our beliefs, and overt, systemic and policy-based inequalities that can manifest as violence, or the acceptance of violence. Violence becomes embedded into the justice system, replicating structures that continue to harm those it is lauded to "help" by disproportionately incarcerating marginalized and racialized individuals, re-traumatizing survivors, and creating complex barriers to healing.

3.3. Spectrums of Justice

One defining difference between the #MeToo or #TimesUp movements and #MuteRKelly is the emphasis and de-emphasis, respectively, on the judicial system and prison-based punishments for perpetrators of violence. While both seek to dismantle overarching systems and recognize oppressive hierarchies of power as fundamental causes of sexual violence, #MuteRKelly's founders are hypercritical of the CJS. They approach the CJS as a foundationally racist institution. Their argument that justice is unlikely to be distributed evenly in cases where either the survivor or perpetrator is Black or racialized is supported by decades of research (ASA, 2007; Hetey & Eberhardt, 2018; Wriggins, 1983).

Providing survivors with alternative means of receiving and understanding justice has to be coupled with collective efforts to raise societal consciousness when it comes to sexual violence, according to Wexler et al. (2009). As Odeleye and Barnes state on the MuteRKelly website, "If the court system is unable to protect our young Black women and girls, we must step forward to do so ourselves" (n. d.). The erasure and silencing of Black survivors represents one major motivation to operate outside of mainstream legal channels, as does the reality that there are complexities and paradoxes within #MeToo that can potentially act as barriers. Tambe (2018) explores these probable obstacles, highlighting that it is "worth keeping in mind that the primary instrument of redress in #MeToo is public shaming and criminalization of the perpetrator. This is already too familiar a problem for black men" (p. 200). These insights play the crucial role of layering complexities onto movements such as #MeToo or #MuteRKelly, with tensions and contradictions arising in the exploration of justice and retribution. #MuteRKelly offers an extra-judicial means of preventing further harm: removing R. Kelly's financial and social capital, thus diminishing his power and ability to reoffend.

3.3.1. Carceral Feminism and Mute R. Kelly's Critique

Carceral feminism, also referred to as pro-criminalization feminism, as Kim (2018) defines it, is "a term signaling feminist reliance upon law enforcement as a dominant intervention strategy" into sexual and domestic violence (p. 219). Relating Crenshaw's "conceptualization of intersectionality" to anti-carceral feminism, Kim (2018) comments that:

> Crenshaw's analysis articulated concerns raised by many women of color who identified with feminist anti-violence struggles, but for whom the mainstream feminist movement's domestic violence and sexual assault programs and policies were often irrelevant or antithetical to the interests of their communities. (p. 224)

These concerns are reiterated by many scholars, both past and present, that urge stakeholders to consider how "the impacts of sexual and carceral violence fall unevenly upon differently positioned bodies and intersect in ways that warrant that kind of intersectional analysis that carceral feminism simply does not offer" (Mack & McCann, 2018, p. 331). Historically, carceral feminists in the anti-violence sector have pushed, alongside the state, for harsher penalties of incarceration. Now, many scholars and activists are critically examining that position, which seems to neglect a thorough understanding of the history of institutions such as prisons to function in ways that continue to oppress and violate racialized people, especially Black men, while simultaneously erasing the reality of sexual violence *within* those institutions. This oppression, Mack and McCann (2018) assert, is less related to the simplification of 'bad policy' and more to the conscious and intrinsic structures of neoliberal politics themselves.

Within the #MuteRKelly movement, the failures of the CJS are pronounced. Central to their method is the rejection of the state-driven justice for survivors of R. Kelly. And while criminal charges *are* currently laid against R. Kelly, the main tenants of the movement refuse the notion that incarceration is the final goal. For instance, given that the abuse continued for over two decades with little effective prevention from law enforcement, the #MuteRKelly movement called for a different approach. Musto (2019) elaborates on the idea that individualized forms of carcerally-motivated justice eschew or erase the foundational injustices:

> Carcerally orchestrated anti-violence strategies contribute to "a false dichotomy," where the harms an individual endures as a result of a particular situation—whether assault, human trafficking, intimate partner violence, rape, etc.—are seen apart from harms that are the direct result of state activities, including states' inaction in addressing discrimination and structural inequalities that contribute to people's experiences of exploitation, harm and interpersonal violence. (p. 47-48)

By demanding the boycott of his music and effectively cutting off his financial means, the #MuteRKelly movement initially circumvented the CJS in the hopes that without

economic stability, R. Kelly would be forced to release the women still under his control and would be less likely or unable to reoffend. *Surviving R. Kelly* (2019) documents the tactics used by parents of survivors, which very much echo the sentiment 'if the cops won't do anything about it, we will'.

If there is little to no potential to reconcile feminist anti-violence responses to sexual assault and abuse with the current CJS, then alternative pathways must be explored. Or, as Mack and McCann (2018) reason:

> Any critical inquiry that problematizes the role of the neoliberal state in justifying its own violence through responses to sexual violence should proceed in a spirit of radical imagination. Lamenting the self-rationalizing brutality of the state is not enough. Rather, our critiques must also illuminate the alternative modes of justice that neoliberalism obscures (p. 336).

Within the context of #MuteRKelly, and the patterned ineffectiveness of the CJS, many turn to Restorative Justice frameworks to enact justice. Currently, alternative methods of justice often fall into one of two categories: Restorative justice or Transformative justice. Restorative justice tactics are sometimes considered within and alongside the CJS, but with altered goals of rehabilitation, healing, and reintegration, such as utilizing a court judge, or using state facilities. Although the term Restorative Justice is situational, and by definition is changing and fluid, I work with an understanding of Restorative Justice articulated by Umbreit, Vos, Coates, and Lightfoot (2006), namely that Restorative Justice consists of "programs that view crime as a violation of people *and* relationships, causing harm for which offenders *and* communities are accountable and have an obligation to repair" (emphasis mine, as quoted in Koss & Achilles, 2008, p. 1). This definition allows for movement and dialogue surrounding spectrums of justice and places less emphasis on formal sentencing processes and reporting of sexual violence. When applied to #MeToo and #MuteRKelly, Wexler et al. (2019) argue that:

> It is critical not to lose sight of the particularity of victims and the need to respond to what happened to them for its own sake. Justice is not only forward-looking but backward-looking as well. Victims deserve a response to the wrongdoing the experienced intrinsically and not just because or only if a response will facilitate broader societal change. (p. 104)

Transformative justice, in slight contrast, often works independently or wholly outside of the judicial system, although both have important roots in Indigenous cultures globally

(Kim, 2018; Whalley & Hackett, 2017). As Whalley and Hackett (2017) argue, "These liberatory and interlocking forms of feminism and abolitionism adopt the firm stance that the state – particularly the carceral state – has its roots in domination and control and therefore cannot provide liberation and self-determination that oppressed communities seek" (p. 467). Ultimately, they are reasoning that a violent system cannot effectively eliminate violence.

3.4. Looking Beyond the Criminal Justice System: #MuteRKelly and Alternative Justice

Black women have long been at the forefront of social justice movements, including #MeToo and #MuteRKelly, and build on generations of Black feminist activism, scholarship, and organizing. Narrowing the focus to online movements, Black women have been instrumental at enacting community-level justice and harm reduction. For example, Rapp et al. (2010) outline an online Black feminist resistance initiative called *HollaBackNYC* (now called *hollaback!* and available in 21 cities) in which predominantly racialized women can post pictures and details about sexualized street harassment to both shame offenders and warn other women. The *hollaback!* initiative presents one of many programs that Black women have conceptualized to circumvent the CJS, while still promoting ground-level interventions to violence.

Manifesting and visualizing alternative forms of justice that do not replicate structures of racism and oppression can seem to be an insurmountable task. Within the context of #MuteRKelly, I contend that progress is being made to shift popular understandings of carceral feminism in favor of community-based activism and support. By critically engaging with the contradictions and complexities of "justice", there may be possibilities for our society to examine and reimagine our responses to sexual violence, while looking to the invaluable and impactful work Black activists have already been doing. #MuteRKelly provides a case study in which to interrogate how we conceptualize justice for both survivors and perpetrators of sexual violence during the era of #MeToo. While criminal charges have been laid against R. Kelly in several states, the movement is far from over, especially considering that finding "justice" through the judicial system is not one of the main goals of #MuteRKelly. Women are still involved in relationships with R. Kelly that the docuseries stressed are against their will and a general apathy remains towards Black survivors of sexual violence. However, with the increased visibility of

#MuteRKelly and *Surviving R. Kelly*, the founders are hopeful that both individual justice for R. Kelly and generalized justice for all survivors is the next step. As the Mute R. Kelly twitter account (@OffMuteRKelly) states, the movement is fundamentally "activism that prompted a reckoning" and that reckoning is just beginning. The movement to bring R. Kelly to justice (alternative or otherwise) was one of the first cases during the #MeToo era to critically consider the intersection of race and gender as it relates to sexual violence. If online movements addressing sexual violence are being considered as part of the future of anti-violence work, we must critically consider the intersectional applications of alternative justice within them. For marginalized populations, including Black femmes, legitimizing the use of extra-judicial measures in cases of sexual violence has the potential to alter the current realities of harm and healing.

Chapter 4.

#MMIW/G/2S, #AmINext, and #ImNotNext: Indigenous Feminism, Intersectionality, and Imagining Decolonial Futures

> *Just as the #MeToo movement is demanding we hold those in positions of power accountable, the #MMIW/G movement demands accountability from the authorities tasked with keeping Native communities safe. Combining these issues - in public discussions, mass protests, or deeper reform efforts - won't dilute any message that demands more respect and acknowledgment of our nation's least visible and most vulnerable.*
>
> *-Graham Lee Brewer, journalist and member of the Cherokee Nation*

4.1. Tracing Indigenous Movements Through Social Media Campaigns

In 2012, Grand Chief Shelia North Wilson coined the hashtag #MMIW/G, prompting an onslaught of tweets and posts about missing, murdered, or abused women, girls, and Two-Spirit Indigenous people in Canada (Baum, 2016). Depending on the context, the movement utilizes several variations on the hashtag: #MMIW for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, #MMIWG for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, and #MMIWG2S for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, and Two-Spirit People[3]. Wilson, in an effort to focus national attention on what Amnesty International called a "national human rights crisis" (Watson, 2018), created the hashtag to further dialogue around the issue post-Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada[4] (TRC). #MMIW/G/2S has served a magnitude of purposes, and interacts with users in similar ways to #MeToo: it is referenced by survivors, loved ones of those

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[3] The hashtag #MMIW/G/2S will be used throughout this chapter to signify all variations in an attempt to be as inclusive as possible to multiple identities, while acknowledging that some groups may experience violence at higher rates than others.

[4] The TRC began in 1998 as a response to the last Indian Residential schools shutting down in an attempt to support survivors of the schools, report on intergenerational impacts and trauma, and distribute reparations. The efficacy of the TRC has been controversial, and not without interrogation by Indigenous activists.

missing or murdered, media, government, researchers, and many more, while also establishing online sites for dialogue and engagement. Conversations range in scope from individual retweets from personal accounts, to the federal government responding to activists in front of a national audience. Considered by many activists and scholars as one of the most recognizable hashtags within a Canadian Indigenous context, #MMIW/G/2S represents one dimension of anti-sexual violence work currently taking place.

This chapter provides a brief overview of colonial sexual violence in Canada, the creation of two hashtag movements, namely #MMIW/MMIWG2S and #AmINext/ImNotNext, and future directions for online responses to sexual violence. By drawing from narratives written, tweeted, and spoken by Indigenous women and Two-Spirit people, I explore the online movement as it relates to Indigenous feminism, restorative justice, and decolonial practices. These hashtags present an opportunity to examine how online movements around sexual violence are connected to (and in many ways indebted to) Indigenous activism, as well as to explore the linkages between the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women movement and attempts to address sexual violence.

When I began researching this chapter, I was struck by the lack of survivor-centered narratives within the hashtag #MMIW/G/2S. I searched for clarification, poring over forums and pages for stories that echoed the trajectory of #MeToo: survivors speaking up, sharing their experiences, and promoting dialogue. Indigenous perspectives were markedly few within the #MeToo movement, although studies show that Indigenous women are some of the most likely to experience sexual violence (CEDAW, 2016; Deer, 2015; Mack & Na'puti, 2019). I had, presumptuously, assumed that this gap in representation within the mainstream #MeToo movement was because Indigenous survivors had their own, similar movement to address sexual violence that could be studied in a similar methodological manner. This presumption speaks to my own limitations as a white settler, as well as the general apathetic understandings of Indigenous experiences of sexual violence within our society. Why weren't Indigenous survivors being emphasized within mainstream movements? Was the active violence of colonialization eschewing or erasing the realities of Indigenous women, girls, and Two-Spirit people?

My confusion lends itself to a discussion of the differences in methodologies between the previous two chapters and this one. If my research is drawing from narratives written *by* survivors, how does a hashtag that refers to missing and murdered Indigenous people diverge from that? The hashtag #MeToo, and subsequent movement, is predicated both on survivors of sexual violence speaking out, but also on there *being* survivors. The double meaning of 'survivor' also impacts the research: the term is used to both describe those who have been victims of violence, and as those who are still alive, while not being mutually exclusive. It comes as no surprise, then, that the methodological understandings would have to shift to account for the discrepancies between the hashtags given that #MMIW/G/2S emerged in response to the overwhelming number of indigenous women, girls, and Two-Spirit people in Canada who had not survived sexual violence.

Another realization that I came across in relation to the methodological perspective of this chapter was the rejection of the singularity of certain hashtags. Both #MeToo and #MuteRKelly are singular in the sense that they predominantly address sexual violence as the foremost issue, while #MMIW/G/2S does not address sexual violence specifically; sexual violence is bound up in conversations with other physical violence, as well as colonial and structural violence. Initially, I was paralyzed by this realization and searched for days to try and find a hashtag movement that was Indigenous-led, survivor-centered, and directly related to sexual violence, but came up with very little. I knew that this was not because of a lack of sexual violence directed towards Indigenous femmes (which is actually occurs at astronomical rates of close to 80% [Statistics Canada, 2016]). Yet I could not fully comprehend why a comparable hashtag did not exist. It was not until a meeting with a committee member that I was able to succinctly vocalize what I had been dancing around during my fruitless search: a singular hashtag that addresses sexual violence towards Indigenous women, girls, and Two-Spirit people does not exist because sexual violence cannot be separated from the other pervasive forms of violence experienced by this community. In self-reflection, my insistence that there be complete continuity between my chapters was limiting my understandings of the movements, their goals, and the experiences of violence.

I recognize that this chapter in no way covers the depth and breadth of colonial sexual violence; it only serves to highlight some of the historical manifestations of violence, while bringing those concepts into conversation with contemporary online

movements addressing the topic. Just as the previous chapters gave overviews of #MeToo and #MuteRKelly, this chapter sets up the conditions necessary to begin an ongoing dialogue relating to sexual violence against Indigenous peoples, but realistically cannot adequately speak to the massive scope of injustice or trauma experienced. As a white settler living on the unceded and traditional territories of the səl̓ilw̓ətaʔɬ (Musqueam), Sḵwx̱wú7mesh Úxwumixw (Squamish), xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Tsleil-Waututh) and kʷikʷəƛ̓əm (Kwikwetlem) Nations, and actively benefitting from these systems, I reassert this research as an act of solidarity with Indigenous survivors and strive to utilize a critical, intersectional feminist epistemology.

4.1.1. #MMIW/G/2S

Within a Canadian context, the national issue of missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls, and Two-Spirit people has been intrinsically tied to the issue of sexual violence. Under colonialism, attempting to disentangle sexual violence from the genocide of MMIW/G/2S is counter-productive due to, among other things, the interconnectedness of contributing factors, including the positionality of the perpetrators, overwhelming lack of resources, general apathy of governments, and overall erasure of Indigenous experience (Dylan, Regehr, & Alaggia, 2008; Deer, 2015; Saramo, 2016). Long before hashtag movements were a possibility, Indigenous organizers and activists have been doing work to confront violence of epidemic proportions, often unrecognized and invisible. Colonialism has been functioning, alongside patriarchy, since European contact with Canada, disrupting Indigenous systems of gender, sexuality, governance, and autonomy, all which relate to the extraordinary rates of violence Indigenous women, girls, and Two-Spirit people have faced, and continue to face within Canadian society (Cannon, Cannon, & Sunseri, 2011; McCaslin & Boyer, 2013; Monchalin, 2016). Specifically, MMIW/G/2S is a part of organized resistance starting in the early 1980's, when calls for a national database to track and maintain disappearances, murders, and assaults on Indigenous women began (Moeke-Pickering, Cote-Meek, & Pegoraro, 2018; Saramo, 2016; Watson, 2018). Calls for action escalated due to the persistence of Indigenous activism, as well as heightened attention to the 'Highway of Tears' – a secluded stretch of highway in British Columbia that was infamous for the number of Indigenous women, girls, and Two-Spirit people abducted, assaulted, and/or murdered along its route. Not only were Indigenous activists and communities calling on judicial,

policy, and governmental change, and speaking truth to power; they were also condemning institutions like the RCMP for their inaction, ineptitude, dismissal, and even for being perpetrators themselves. While the hashtags are contemporary, the movement itself has been intensely maintaining accountability and advocating for change since the 1980's. It is within this tumultuous context that the hashtags #MMIW/G/2S, #AmINext, and #ImNotNext were created.

These Indigenous-led hashtags were conceptualized pre-#MeToo, in 2012 and 2014, respectively. Before #MeToo became a colloquial phrase embedded with meaning, #MMIW and #AmINext/ImNotNext were attempting to break into public consciousness without the aid of celebrity endorsements or widespread media attention. While smaller in scope, these movements served as the critical foundation upon which future movements were built. And although these hashtag campaigns could be considered niche in the sense that they called upon a certain population of people to tweet their experiences (not just those who had experienced sexual violence, but *Indigenous* people who had experienced sexual violence), the impact they had, and continue to have, is significant. Not only does this speak to the longevity of these movements and the possibilities of viral hashtags to promote meaningful and actionable change; it also showcases the groundbreaking work that Indigenous activists have been and are currently doing. Connections between historical and contemporary governmental policies such as the Indian Act and Bill C-31 echo through lived experiences of sexual violence towards Indigenous women. When Indigenous survivors of sexual violence have accessed the Criminal Justice System, or "retributive justice" as Dylan, Regehr, and Alaggia (2008) describe it, the research "overwhelmingly pointed to the negative impact of the system" (p. 681). The study also states that the CJS has even "been accused of escalating violence against Aboriginal women because the inherent racism enrages offenders and fails to protect victims" (Dylan et al, 2008, p. 608). It is within this reality of violence, institutional mistrust and abuse, and cycles of trauma that the hashtag movements were created.

To be clear, while the use of hashtags as an agent for communication and community-building may be new, the sharing of stories within Indigenous culture pre-dates any European colonization or involvement; it is integral to Indigenous knowledge transfer. Collective action through solidarity has been, and is currently, a common method of Indigenous activism, translating onto digital platforms in an interesting and

contemporary way. Hargreaves (2017) addresses how Indigenous storytelling functions as resistance to the "systemic silence and indifference" of colonialism, "to both evoke public empathy and promote social change" (p. 103). Storytelling as an Indigenous methodology translates online by connecting storytellers in their resistance to colonialism and violence (Cunsolo Willox, Harper, & Edge, 2013; Hargreaves, 2017; Hendry, 2007). As Hendry describes, storytelling is an act of "meaning making" and a "sacred act" (p. 495). Extrapolating from the understanding that storytelling can take numerous forms, the sharing of experiences of sexual violence through Indigenous hashtag movements can be considered as a decolonial practice. By utilizing the viral potential of Twitter hashtags, the scope of impact that Indigenous activists can have offers a new entry point into combating the apathy within Canadian governments and non-Indigenous Canadian populations. By flooding our Facebook timelines, Twitter feeds, and news cycles with stories of Indigenous activism, heartbreak, and triumph, online digital responses to sexual violence take on new meaning and efficacy. If impact can partially be measured by the amount of participation online, then hashtags like #MMIW/G/2S could be seen as contributing to changing attitudes toward sexual violence against Indigenous peoples, or at the very least raising awareness.

Another important aspect of #MMIW/G/2S is the connection to other hashtags, including #AmINext and #ImNotNext. Rarely are the hashtags used singularly or independently; tweets referencing the hashtags often contain several related hashtags, creating a web of interconnected tweets and communications online. This reinforces the understanding that these movements are not stand-alone, isolated events, but multi-faceted movements that compound and build on each other. For example, Twitter user Savvy Simon tweeted "Over 1200 missing & murdered native women in Canada since 1980. Immediate action required. #AmINext #ImNotNext #MMIW" (@savvyunltd, 2014), along with several images of Indigenous people holding signs with their personal declarations of #ImNotNext or #AmINext. Not only does the inclusion of several hashtags within tweets provide literal connections when searching for certain hashtags, it reiterates the interconnectedness and interdependency of these movements.

4.1.2. #AmINext and #ImNotNext

The hashtag #AmINext was started in September of 2014 by Holly Jarrett as a response to her cousin Loretta Saunders' murder earlier that year and in an effort to

prompt a national inquiry by the government into MMIW/G/2S (Janus, 2014). Saunders had been a university student in Halifax before she was killed, and was writing her thesis proposal on the murders of three Indigenous women who went missing from Nova Scotia: Nora Bernard, Anna Mae Pitou Aquash, and Tanya Brooks. In many cases, the question "Am I Next?" was directly asked of the Prime Minister at the time, Stephen Harper, by either addressing him within the tweet, or by tagging him. By addressing Harper explicitly, the #AmINext campaign presents an interesting divergence from other campaigns that predominantly seek to address the general public and take a more individualized approach. Interestingly, while spreading awareness about violence against Indigenous women, girls, and Two-Spirit people is a facet of the movement, by specifically focusing on extra-judicial measures, such as a national inquiry or policy changes, these campaigns and movements speak to more explicitly systemic dimensions of sexual violence. While individual instances of personally defined justice are still an option, the conversation turns towards collective systemic changes to institutions that both inflict violence and allow violence to continue.

#AmINext also includes a visual component within most tweets in a way that #MeToo, #MuteRKelly, and #MMIW/G/2S do not. The majority of tweets that utilize the #AmINext hashtag do so alongside a photograph, which often depicts the user holding a sheet of paper with the hashtag written on it. This difference, while seemingly unintentional and inconsequential, provides an important perspective of analysis into the intent and impact #AmINext has in relation to sexual violence awareness and Indigenous survivors. In directly confronting the apathy that is rife across Canada towards Indigenous violence, the inclusion of the photo provides another layer of protest; it is forcefully humanizing the issue – literally putting a face to an often-faceless genocide. When Indigenous women, girls, and Two-Spirit people are often referred to as no more than statistics, the power of this visual component cannot be understated. The query of #AmINext also insists that this violence is ongoing – this did not simply happen; it will continue to happen until the underlying causes are addressed. #AmINext also departs from #MMIW/G/2S in another critical way: while #MMIW/G/2S is majoritively family and friends tweeting *about* those who have experienced violence, #AmINext shifts the focus to those in the present who are emphasizing *preventative* measures. This departure in tactic has been critiqued by some, including scholar Samira Saramo, who asserts that by focusing on those who have yet to experience violence (#AmINext), there is a continued

erasure of those already missing or murdered (#MMIW/G/2S) (Samaro, 2016, p. 211). While I agree with Saramo's perspective, I also acknowledge that providing a diverse amount of approaches into a dialogue pertaining to sexual violence could aid in providing the most coverage, empathy, and action. #MMIW/G/2S has been instrumental in calling for the national inquiry, circulating the names of those missing or murdered, and providing support for loved ones, but neglects to emphasize the voices of those still at risk of violence. By 'putting a face' to those most at risk of sexual violence, #AmINext offers a refreshing and jarring perspective into anti-violence online campaigns. All too often, we only acknowledge the faces of those missing or murdered when they are plastered on posters or part of a huge mosaic of in memoriam photographs on the news. The visual component of #AmINext introduces the general public to empowered Indigenous activists who are actively rejecting colonial manifestations of violence.

Trending a few weeks after #AmINext, the hashtag campaign #ImNotNext takes a "tougher approach", according to creator Sarah Rainville. In an interview with *CTV News* (2014), Rainville articulates that #ImNotNext is about reframing and refocusing the narrative of how we discuss missing and murdered Indigenous women. In a series of tweets, Rainville expresses her perspective on agency and passivity, stating, "Asking "am I next?" creates an expectation; saying we're Inherently rapeable/killable. Say no to victimhood. #ImNotNext #StrongIndigenous" (@Sar_Rain, 2014). Rainville's assertion brings up an important aspect of Indigenous anti-violence work: that historically and contemporarily, Indigenous peoples have been infantilized and portrayed as passive victims in need of paternal, colonial assistance (Lavell-Harvard & Brant, 2016; Mack & Na'puti, 2019; Monchalin, 2016). This has translated into acts of genocide, sweeping policies like the Indian Act, and active violence such as Residential Schools. By emphasizing agency and autonomy, #ImNotNext offers an alternative perspective on how hashtag movements can engage with the anti-violence narrative in refreshing ways. Sarah Hunt (2016), in an opinion piece written for *Rabble.ca*, highlights the connections between #AmINext, #ImNotNext, and the general attitude of the federal government to make Indigenous women their "rescue project". Hunt argues that, by reinforcing narratives of victimhood, Canadian governments and the general public continue to silence the voices that are most affected by both interpersonal and structural violence. While both #AmINext and #ImNotNext were created and maintained by Indigenous women, they utilize different perspectives and methods to convey their messages. That

being said, I contend that this divergence does not make either hashtag less impactful or important; sexual violence is so pervasive within our culture that multiple tactics into dismantling these systems are necessary and valid.

4.2. Gender-Based Colonial Violence in Canada: An Overview

Although #MeToo, #TimesUp, and #MuteRKelly are expanding the national and international dialogue surrounding sexual violence, the topic of violence against Indigenous women, girls, and Two-Spirit people has largely been ignored within North American society. Despite numerous commissions, speeches from political leaders, and preliminary policy changes, Indigenous women are still facing astronomical rates of sexual violence, and are eight times more likely to die from violence than non-Indigenous Canadian women (Amnesty International, 2004, Stolen Sisters: A Human Rights Response to the Discrimination and Violence against Indigenous Women in Canada). According to the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), some strides have been made since their recommendations in 2014, but there remain huge gaps in public and governmental support. To date, the estimated number of those missing or murdered ranges from 500 to 5,000. Saramo (2016) emphasizes that "we do not yet know the full extent to which Two-Spirit people are among Canada's missing and murdered 'women and girls,' but we must acknowledge their presence and encourage their stories be told" (p. 205). This huge fluctuation in numbers varies greatly depending upon whether you are accessing governmental sources or sources from within Indigenous communities. However, statistics do little to convey the deep and lasting trauma, not only of the individual acts committed, but also of the structural oppressions of racism, sexism, and colonialism that permeate Canadian society. Linked to the high prevalence of sexual violence against Indigenous women are realities of erasure, poverty, cultural and literal genocide, and legacies of Residential Schools. As Sarah Deer (2015) writes, "the impact of rape on an individual can be compounded by the influence of this historical trauma, and the survivor may experience a rape as part of a larger policy to silence, disempower, and ultimately destroy her nation" (p. 112-113). There is also the problematic assumption that the majority of those missing or murdered are women involved in sex work, and that this somehow eliminates them from respect, decency, or empathy. Such an assumption is

both false and damaging. As Saramo (2016) asserts, "All too often, the disappearances of Indigenous women are dismissed as the result of involvement in the sex trade. Both the denial of sex workers' worth and human dignity and the assumption of Indigenous women's sexual availability and engagement in sex work are highly problematic" (p. 213-214). Some sexual violence campaigns have been critiqued for painting a picture of the 'ideal victim' at the risk of whitewashing and sanitizing the truth: that anyone can experience sexual violence, but those most at risk are often members of historically and contemporarily oppressed groups, This includes Indigenous sex workers, people who use drugs, and people experiencing homelessness; essentially those who are most often blamed for the violence that befalls them individually and structurally. By undertaking research and having conversations that exclude these groups, we are doing a disservice to survivors and perpetuating whorephobia, classism, stigma, and further marginalization. As Armstrong, Gleckman-Krut, and Johnson (2018) state, "Scholarship on sexual violence reveals it to be both a cause and a consequence of inequality, not only on the basis of gender, but also along lines of race/ethnicity, class, sexuality, age, ability status, citizenship status, and nationality" (p. 100). I would also expand this list to include sexual history. These layered oppressions should not be neglected when discussing sexual violence within policy, research, support services, or institutional justice strategies. As seen throughout the media coverage of #MeToo and #MuteRKelly, there are many factors that affect if a survivor will be believed, receive support, or have access to the legal system. If these hashtag movements are partially about addressing the issue of violence against marginalized groups, it is imperative to keep the focus on those who are most consistently and systemically erased.

4.3. Future Trajectories of Anti-Sexual Violence Work and Survivance

If you're going to tell stories of survivors, make sure you're telling stories of survival.

-Tarana Burke, November 25th, 2019

One of the main critiques of the #MeToo movement was that it was argued to follow the trajectory of White Feminism: concentrating on certain stories at the expense of others, adhering to oppressive patriarchal understandings that stem from

cisheteronormativity and white supremacy, and concentrating on "solutions" within already-corrupt and functionally-bankrupt systems (Hearn, 2018; Zarchov & Davis, 2018). #MMIW/G/2S and #AmINext parallel #MeToo in certain aspects, but also diverge in several important ways. The movements all emphasize speaking out, spreading awareness about individual and collective forms of violence, and connecting survivors with resources. However, Indigenous-led movements tend to underscore the importance of intersectional, collective, and decolonial approaches to justice, as well as information-sharing and healing. As Mack and Na'puti (2019) summarize, "A decolonial feminist orientation understands gendered violence, such as sexual assault, as part of colonial violence and attends to the combined processes of racialization, gender dichotomization, and heterosexualism in modernity" (p. 2). The intersections of these oppressions cannot be disconnected from one another, much in a similar way that sexual violence cannot be disconnected from other forms of violence Indigenous people experience.

As an ideological practice, political and personal perspective, and methodological approach, decolonization has the capacity to be applied within multiple contexts, including sexual violence. Colonialism is an ongoing micro and macro process that fundamentally works to strip Indigenous peoples not only of their general cultural practices, compromise their bodily autonomy, and dehumanize them (Deer, 2015). Those processes are directly linked to experiences of sexual violence, where dehumanization and lack of control reinforce cycles of trauma and recidivism. The connections between colonization and sexual violence become critical when considering approaches related to online social movements addressing sexual violence, especially a movement like #MMIW/G/2S that highlights violence towards Indigenous people. A nuanced understanding of sexual violence must take into account the complexities of systems that uphold violence, including colonialism. To decolonize movements like #MeToo, steps must be taken to comprehend how colonialism manifests in sexual violence against Indigenous people, and how current systems perpetuate violence, while simultaneously erasing the voices of those who experience it. Deer (2015) emphasizes an important argument regarding narratives of survivors and "speaking out":

> A point of caution: women should not feel pressured or obligated to share their story in a public forum unless and until they are ready. At times, the American anti-rape movement has suggested that survivors must "break the silence" or that they otherwise have political obligations to pursue justice for all rape victims. Given that many Native women have chosen

silence as a true means to survival, the choice not to speak out must be honored as much as the choice to speak out. Rape is the manifestation of removing choice and should not be perpetuated in the quest for justice. Stories are the intellectual property of the survivors (p. 114-115)

By utilizing Indigenous methodologies, the #MMIW/G/2S and #AmINext/#ImNotNext movements lean toward collective action, as opposed to a social movement that rotates around a singular leader, or focuses on individual perpetrators. Wilson, who conceptualized the hashtag, remains less of a central figure within the movement, decentering and rejecting the notion that social justice movements must have a unifying "leader" to be effective or gain in notoriety (Mack & Na'puti, 2019; Watson, 2018). In their article outlining grassroot Indigenous responses during the Harper government years, Saramo (2016) explores how these hashtag campaigns can be seen as forms of "individualized collective action that allow large numbers of people to join in loosely coordinated activities centered on more personal emotional identifications and rationales" (p. 210). I argue that this emphasis on decentralizing movements allows for greater involvement by those utilizing the hashtags; the news coverage is less about the founder or leader of the movement, and more about stories of survivors and their collective goals. As hashtags, retweets, likes, and other forms of online social media engagement become common sites for activism, decolonizing practices must be utilized to avoid reiterating power inequalities in our quest for a violence-free future. Hashtag movements play a key part in spreading awareness, disseminating support, and calling attention to underrepresented voices impacted by sexual violence. But as #MeToo founder Tarana Burke asserted during a speech for Vancouver's Battered Women's Support Services in 2019, these hashtag movements are meant to be one of many interventions into sexual violence, *not* the only intervention.

Indigenous hashtag movements also call for varying types of extra-judicial action: while some survivors and loved ones may advocate for legal recourse within a juridical frame, others focus on calling for the National Inquiry to attempt to change policy, shift societal understandings, and create federal watchdog systems (Clairmont, 1996; Dylan et al, 2008; Saramo, 2016). Until a Liberal government finally launched a national inquiry in 2015, the government had maintained that the fact that thousands of Indigenous women, girls, and Two-Spirit people were missing or murdered was a "a criminal matter that ought to be dealt with through legal channels, rather than a sociological phenomenon, which would require national engagement in an exceedingly

uncomfortable, heuristic exercise" (Carter, 2015, p. 422). By altering the narrative surrounding sexual violence and reclassifying it as a complex social issue with complex solutions outside of the singular trajectory of the judicial system, grassroot activists and scholars are broadening what 'justice' can mean. Alternative justice can mean many things to many people, but often focuses on justice possible outside of legal channels, including restorative and transformative justice practices that have been utilized by Indigenous communities for generations. As Lisa Monchalin (2016) outlines, "All peoples and nations have their own cultures and thus their own healing practices; there is not one "fixed" traditional Indigenous mode of healing" (p. 304). Even within decolonizing practices, there must be a deep understanding that pluralities and multitudes exist. Hashtag movements addressing sexual violence are one part of this shift, and have the potential to not only widen understandings of sexual violence, but also normalize alternative justice practices.

4.3.1. Survivance as Activism

Anishinaabe scholar and writer Gerald Vizenor's defines survivance as "an active sense of presence, the continuance of native stories, not a mere reaction, or a survivable name. Native survivance stories are renunciations of dominance, tragedy, and victimry. Survivance is more than mere survival—it is a way of life that nourishes Indigenous ways of knowing" (as quoted by Surviance.org). Survivance, as a state of being and as an action, must be at the forefront of any scholarship or activism in relation to sexual violence. By learning from and standing in solidarity with Indigenous activists doing this work, it becomes possible to imagine a world after sexual violence, based on shared understandings of justice, healing, and empowerment. Emphasizing pathways forward, Mack and Na'puti (2019) outline how non-Indigenous people can engage in decolonial practices, including how to "*resist with* Indigenous populations, in part by listening and learning how to recognize practices of survivance, and by deepening a commitment to decolonization" (p. 20). By adhering to the central concepts of survivance, decolonization becomes the main tenant to decreasing individual acts of sexual violence, while contextualizing those acts in relation to larger, societal inequalities and practices. Jill Carter (2015), an Anishinaabe/Ashkenazi professor, theater practitioner, and activist, also aligns with this perspective, and states that:

> The opportunity to articulate such acts of resistance and to remember and articulate these moments of meaning in the midst of colonization's disordered assault is a vital, life-affirming act that connects the fallen ancestor, the current survivor, and the future descendant in a ceremony of mourning and a celebration of Indigenous endurance (p. 419).

Survivance not only outlines how pathways to justice can be decolonial in nature; it also accentuates the importance of pluralities of justice. As Mack and Na'puti (2019) articulate, "The very existence of these stories is what makes them so important, as they are written responses to colonization that enact survivance by reimagining and reinforcing a presence of their loved ones instead of an absence" (p. 18). The hashtags #MMIW/G/2S, #AmINext, and #ImNotNext function as interconnected webs of communication, archiving the memories of lost loved ones, questioning state 'authority', demanding progressive action, fostering empowerment, and regaining autonomy. The stories of loss, anger, and resilience that accompany the hashtags move beyond a singular voice; they remind us of the shared experiences of violence that Indigenous people face, and the collective power of storytelling. By focusing on how survivors of sexual violence are choosing to access alternative ways of connection and support, hashtag movements offer an interesting point of entry into conversations about what is next for decolonial, intersectional anti-violence activism, and the translation of online activism into material realities.

4.3.2. Decolonizing Hashtag Movements

In regard to accessing alternative justice practices within sexual violence responses, Sarah Deer (2015) states that our current colonial legal systems offer little flexibility when it comes to justice outcomes and support; they operate in a one-size-fits-all model, which assumes that all survivors have similar needs, healing pathways, and justice goals. Against this model, Deer contends, "having different options and the agency to choose one of the options is a valuable remedy for the harm that rape does" (p. 161). Monchalin (2016), echoes Deer's dissatisfaction with the colonial system: "The harmony, balance, and circular thinking integral to Indigenous teachings and knowledge is not internalized, grasped, or reflected within Canadian Westernized institutions, governance structures, or discourses" (p. 259). Focusing on restoring access to choice and agency after experiencing sexual violence has been shown to aid in healing practices, and reaffirms bodily and personal autonomy within a process that research

shows often re-traumatizes and marginalizes (Clairmont, 1996; Deer, 2009). Studies have also shown that colonial justice channels can serve to reinforce negative and false stereotypes about sexual violence and rape culture, which is in opposition to what decolonial practices strive for (Nightingale, 1991; Schuller, McKimmie, Masser, & Klippenstine, 2010). Intergenerational legacies of trauma and distrust related to government agencies, which include the legal system, have been challenged within activist circles that urge policy makers and enforcers to consider alternative methods of justice, including Indigenous methods, such as transformative or restorative justice. Bubar (2013) outlines that by, "bringing colonialism to the forefront of our discussions of sexual violence, we engage a decolonization process that creates space for empowerment where Native women can speak out against sexual violence" (p. 540), with participating in hashtag movements as one way to speak out. By creating space for decolonial practices within anti-sexual violence work, stakeholders may be able to shift perspectives and stop cycles of trauma that have been active for generations and that contribute to the continued sexual violence faced by Indigenous peoples.

To consider how anti-sexual violence work can utilize decolonial practices, it is imperative to look both at extra-judicial measures such as the national inquiry and increased access to Indigenous justice systems, *and* to foundational concepts of decolonization, which includes dismantling the settler state. While there is a rich cache of research on decolonization as *theory* (Bubar, 2013; Deer, 2009; Hargreaves, 2017), given the issue of combatting sexual violence, I am more interested in decolonization as *practice* (John, 2015; Mack & Na'puti, 2019; Tuck & Yang, 2012). As Tuck and Yang (2012) insist, "Decolonization is not a metaphor" (p. 1). Decolonial discourse is not about relieving settler guilt or offering thin attempts at reconciliation, but about making meaningful shifts in dominant colonial systems. In relation to sexual violence, decolonization can manifest as a breakdown of the colonial gender binary that exists within heteropatriarchal models (John, 2015, p. 46), as well as a renewed emphasis on the legal authority of sovereign nations to "reclaim safety and empowerment for all women", which includes bypassing colonial legal systems in favor of tribal law in cases of sexual assault or harassment (Deer, 2015, p. 122). Indigenous feminist scholarship takes on the issue of sexual violence in ways that critique current institutional reactions, reinforce Indigenous sovereignty, and underscore land reclamation (Armstrong et al., 2018; Bava & McNamee, 2019; Carter, 2015; Deer, 2009; Deer, 2015; Dylan et al.,

2008; Green, 2007; Hargreaves, 2017; John, 2015; Mack & Na'puti, 2019; Tuck & Yang, 2012). I argue that this important work, while seemingly tangential to hashtag movements addressing sexual violence like #AmINext and #ImNotNext, are actually intertwined. Just as the hashtags themselves are often used simultaneously to create webs of intersectional analysis, sexual violence against Indigenous women, girls, and Two-Spirit people cannot be combatted without concurrently addressing systemic colonial violence.

Chapter 5.

Conclusion

> *If we limit ourselves and this movement to what can be fought and won in the criminal justice system, women[5] will never see that kind of equality.*
>
> *-Feminist author Jessica Valenti (2020)*

5.1. "Found Guilty": Expanding Collective Goals Post-Weinstein

Recently, Harvey Weinstein was convicted in New York of two out of five charges, and sentenced to twenty-three years in prison, shockingly near to the maximum sentence for the convicted crimes. Many survivors and stakeholders in the #MeToo movement have celebrated this watershed moment. And yet, there is room to complicate and analyze this complex and layered piece within the larger movement. I argue that it is possible to simultaneously celebrate the Weinstein verdict, while also considering it as an invitation to look beyond carceral solutions to sexual violence. By surveying the initial media response to the Weinstein verdict, there is an apparent dichotomy of reactions as it relates to #MeToo, constructing the sentencing as either the beginning of #MeToo's ramifications, or as signifying the satisfactory end of #MeToo's impact. To illustrate, Mia Kirshner (2020), in an opinion piece for the Globe and Mail, heralded the Weinstein conviction as a catalyst for the "real work" of #MeToo to begin, although with a cautious warning: "We need more than a criminal conviction; we need a systemic overhaul of these structures that allowed him and others to thrive for so long". Others are suggesting that the case marks the summation of #MeToo, such as comedian Cameron Esposito, who clearly states her belief that "It couldn't be clearer to me that the #MeToo movement is over" (2020). I argue that reinforcing binary representations of the Weinstein case as either the beginning or end of the #MeToo movement eschews the larger reality; #MeToo, and the Weinstein verdict and sentencing, represent only a small facet of the

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[5] As well as trans and non-binary people, men, and anyone else who has experienced sexual violence.

anti-sexual violence movement and its interventions. Activists have been doing survivor-centered work long before the current hashtags started circulating, and will continue long after Weinstein's sentence elapses. An important reminder to keep at the forefront of the ongoing dialogue surrounding Weinstein is that an individual case cannot signify the end of a movement that has never just been about incarcerating one man. That sentiment is a reflection of the limited frameworks available to currently understand and address sexual violence. These movements, in all their complexities and intersections, are also about seeking structural shifts in how we respond to sexual violence as a society.

A tweet from journalist and lawyer Hassan A. Niazi stood out to me among the onslaught of social media coverage after the verdict:

> Harvey Weinstein has been found guilty. It took 90 women to accuse him of harassment and rape, the entire #MeToo movement, 5 years of court proceedings, and intervention from the New York State governor to finally achieve this. That is how hard the fight for justice is for women. (@HNiaziii, February 25th, 2020)

There are many caveats I would add to this tweet, but too many to fit into the limited character allotment of Twitter. Incarceration is *one* form of justice response to sexual violence, and that deserves recognition, but there are real and significant barriers to this method for millions of survivors that also deserve celebration and justice. Through this research, I argue for online movements addressing sexual violence to expand the current definitions of justice to contend with decolonial and intersectional paradigms. The Weinstein case does set a precedent for judicial ramifications, which is accessible to a select few, but I see this outcome as only one facet of possibility. Given the structural and individual histories of trauma associated with formally accessing the legal system in cases of sexual assault, my research points to the importance of legitimizing alternative options for survivors.

As this project demonstrates, online activism and hashtag movements have become critical sites of intervention into narratives of sexual violence, and the kinds of justice accessible to survivors. While a key facet of these hashtag movements is their initial online transmission and connection, it remains imperative to consider the muddy and often-indistinguishable online/offline divide, and the material impacts of translating these movements from social media into tangible shifts in sexual violence responses. Hashtags are only one piece of the puzzle. It is the connection between these viral

online movements to concrete, substantial revolutionary applications to lived realities of survivors that holds transformative powers. By making these connections, it becomes possible to conceptualize hashtag movements addressing sexual violence as catalysts of palpable change.

5.2. Lessons from the Movements

There are many lessons to learn from hashtag movements addressing sexual violence. If we look to #MuteRKelly for examples of anti-carceral imaginings and intersectionality, and #AmINext for decolonizing possibilities, global and recognizable hashtags-turned-movements like #MeToo could act as a vehicle of justice for those not currently being served by legal institutions. #MeToo, as the most recognizable of the hashtags, presents an opportunity to harness the current momentum of notoriety to critique and expand online movements and their inclusivity. As a central tenant of feminist epistemologies, being internally critical of "inclusive and feminist" movements is vital to constructing and reconstructing socially thoughtful movements. To succeed in this within the context of hashtag movements addressing sexual violence, we must listen to the survivors themselves. More specifically, #MuteRKelly offers a vision of justice that extends to and uplifts Black girls and women, and considers the detrimental aspects of the judicial system on both Black women and Black men. The hashtag movement also provides insight into how grassroots accountability tactics, like boycotts, can be effective instruments for reformation and revolution. #MuteRKelly serves as a cautionary tale for those of us navigating and benefitting from a white supremacist-patriarchal society: *intersectional movements or bust*. If social justice movements do not seek to alleviate realities of violence for those most at risk, then what is the point?

#AmINext parallels the insistence on intersectional considerations of identity and experiences within the colonial state. The hashtag and subsequent tweets remind those engaging with them that Indigenous women are not faceless statistics; they are resilient and powerful. The #AmINext hashtag, along with #MMIW/G/2S and #ImNotNext, call attention to the dangerous discrepancies in how the Canadian government addresses sexual violence against Indigenous peoples and the call for reconciliation. Future movements must adhere to meaningful decolonizing practices if they are going to be heralded as impactful to anti-violence activism. Another important takeaway from the #AmINext/#ImNotNext and #MMIW/G/2S movements is the interconnectedness, both in

terms of connections between hashtags, and connections between oppressions. To clarify, the connections between hashtags refer to the overlapping use of several hashtags at a time – oftentimes survivors participating in these movements will use several complimentary hashtags within the same post, binding movements together and weaving a web of outreach and activism. The connections between oppressions follow a similar pattern in the sense that you cannot detangle one from the others; Indigenous women, girls, and two-spirit people do not experience a singular violence in isolation, they simultaneously experience the violence of colonialism, personal violence, ecological violence, and many more. Movements that only seek to address a singular manifestation of violence are working within too limited a frame of reference, and need to move towards an intersectional perspective that consider the layering and intersecting realities of sexual violence.

The failings of the current legal system outlined throughout this thesis point to the repercussions of neglecting to prioritize survivor agency within healing and justice responses. Survivor-led initiatives embody the possibilities and effects that many survivors have called for, namely personalized alternative justice methods that occur within a spectrum, and that build upon generations of work being done by marginalized groups, especially BIPOC[6]. These complicated and complex movements are interrogating notions of what it means to be a survivor seeking justice, how justice is constructed and construed, and what this means for a society grappling with the fall-out of these movements. By taking up the tensions and contradictions that these hashtag movements embody, I argue that it is possible to normalize and recognize alternative pathways to justice. Hashtag movements offer opportunities to witness survivors defining what justice means to them personally, creating their own realities of healing and transformation. If anti-violence organizations, activists, and movements are urging for us to listen to and believe survivors, we, as society, must consider how to legitimize and support their justice choices, which often includes reinscribing agency and autonomy. Moving forward, my research advocates that opening up the amount of legitimized, accessible, and equally viable choices that survivors have in the aftermath of sexual violence serves to mitigate the trauma associated with seeking justice. The examples of alternative justice enacted by these movements also allow for more emphasis on justice as a spectrum, with an infinite amount of accountability methods available. A spectrum

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[6] BIPOC stands for Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (according to thebipocproject.org).

accommodates more methods of healing, justice, and accountability for an understanding that sexual violence occurs on a continuum that is currently not accommodated by the legal system.

5.2.1. Future Directions of Research and Activism

I have learned several lessons throughout this thesis. I have learned that there is still rampant sexism, racism, colonialism, and many other 'isms' working at both the individual and institutional levels that serve as barriers to survivors seeking justice. I have learned that single voices can start movements, and that collective voices can continue them. I have been reminded (countless times) that survivors are some of the most resilient, vibrant, and powerful people. And I have also learned how expansive and transformative these movements can be, even in the face of such adversity. When considering future directions of hashtags movements, I see the vast potential of society to utilize social media as a tool to simultaneously connect survivors with support, uplift the voices least heard, and enact spectrums of justice for everyone. But for hashtag movements to move beyond single stories and the white-cisgender-heterosexual-carceral-patriarchy reiterations, I believe that work needs to be done to dissolve larger, structural oppressions. If we are truly considering an intersectional framework from which to approach anti-violence activism, then large shifts are necessary in relation to decolonization and deinstitutionalization. The case studies conducted in this thesis point to the future of decolonial, intersectional, and equitable social movements addressing sexual violence. By advocating for pluralities of justice, these movements open up dialogue on the potentials of anti-violence movements to sustain meaningful and actionable shifts in the lives of survivors.

None of the three case studies created within this thesis offer the perfect template for future hashtag movements to replicate, majoritively due to the sobering fact that these movements are reflections of an imperfect society embedded with rape culture. That being said, each case study offers insight into the pitfalls and victories associated with #MeToo, #MuteRKelly, and #AmINext that can inform how anti-sexual violence work moves forward. There is space, I argue, to concurrently critique these movements *and* herald their potentials. To be both cognizant of the oppressions they risk reinscribing, such as the creation of an idealized survivor, or an insistence on legal ramifications, *and* of community-building, awareness-raising, and accountability

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possibilities. This could manifest as a wide array of initiatives: normalizing alternative justice measures in cases of sexual violence, decolonializing literally every institutional body in Canada (#landback), teaching anti-violence and anti-oppression continuously and from a young age, and/or obliterating the gender binary, patriarchy, and white supremacy. And while these 'recommendations' may seem extreme and unrealistic, I have to believe that they are not. If there is one thing that the millions of #MeToo tweets and posts have shown us, it is that sexual violence is extremely pervasive. It is especially pervasive if you live within a web of intersecting marginalized identities that our society systematically and routinely neglects, silences, and perpetuates. Restoring agency to survivors is paramount when considering justice strategies, and advocating for choice is central to shifting that reality. Sexual violence against marginalized populations highlights broader issues within the North American context, and encourages larger conversations about equity and oppression within our society today by illuminating the intersectional possibilities for justice beyond #MeToo.

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