

HTMLles 13, Beyond the # — Failures and Becomings
November 2018

The Feminist Media Studio is excited to participate in HTMLles 13 as a participating member. In participating in HTMLles, we would like to acknowledge our institutional debt to the Kanien'kehá:ka Nation, on whose unceded Indigenous lands the Studio is located, and who we fully recognize as the custodians of the lands and waters of this territory. This debt is particularly important to us because it not only recognizes the continued struggles for restitution to (and resurgence of) Indigenous peoples, but also specifically because feminism itself owes a debt to the decolonial and anti-patriarchal force of Indigenous knowledge forms and social justice movements. We learn from and acknowledge the #IdleNoMore movement, the #waterprotectors, #NotInvisible, and #mmiw as vital to imaging new, intersectional, emancipatory perspectives within and outside of various feminisms.

Similarly, the theme of this year's HTMLles, the #metoo movement, owes a debt to the histories of women of colour, and BIPOC trans and queer organizing, and to the continued and ongoing social justice present in #BlackLivesMatter, #wontbeerased, #allthemonumentsmustfall, the #slav resistance movement, and others. The failure to properly acknowledge these histories and the work of BIPOC in events such as these implicates partner institutions—the Feminist Media Studio included—in the ongoing erasure of the work of BIPOC in feminist organizing against gender-based violence and for transformative justice. We maintain that the fruitful questions the festival raises about failures and becomings are unanswerable without a proper account of the hashtags that intersect, tag, retweet or challenge #metoo, hashtags that point to intersecting and sometimes disparate sites of activism that need to be part of HTMLles also, and of the Feminist Media Studio's collaboration with and participation in this important festival.

We emphasize that Tarana Burke launched the #metoo movement in 2006 to try to bring healing into the lives of black women and girls. She created this hashtag in the context of building a nonprofit organization, Just Be Inc., to help victims of sexual harassment and assault. As #metoo was electrified and amplified in 2017, it both exposed the deep and widespread structures of sexual violence and abuse, and rendered invisible people of colour, queer and disabled people. We recognize that #metoo is a movement to highlight how, in Burke's words, "unchecked privilege and power accumulate and are wielded against the most vulnerable,"¹ and that the #metoo movement was built on the labour of people who survive sexual, racial, transphobic and economic violence in a number of forms.

As an institution, the Feminist Media Studio takes seriously Burke's concern that many black women now feel that the current iteration of #metoo isn't for them. Feminist institutions must take seriously critiques of them for excluding and—worse—exploiting the labour and voices of people of colour, queer and trans, and disabled communities. Burke argues that we need to shift how we talk about #metoo, how we demand accountability beyond the focus on crime and punishment and toward harm reduction, and how we seek justice. She notes that survivors must be central to accountability, to leading and dictating what that accountability looks like.

The Feminist Media Studio, operating within the financial and institutional structures of the university, is not exempt from these dynamics and critiques. We acknowledge there is work to be done to examine how feminist institutions work to implicitly privilege the presence and employment of white cis-women, and that undoing this institutional privileging requires uncomfortable conversations, making space, stepping down from positions of power, and openness to criticism.

Our support of the AASK Longtable at HTMLIles is part of an effort to address feminist social justice in this context, and we are grateful for the opportunity to bring these issues into the conversation on hashtag activism and beyond. We are committed to extending these conversations to the Studio's broader mandate, and to the classroom and the university to deal with questions of 'free speech', 'safety', 'fragility' and 'conflict' in those spaces, to critique and alter engrained hierarchies and power dynamics more broadly.

¹ https://variety.com/2018/biz/features/tarana-burke-metoo-one-year-later-1202954797/amp/?fbclid=IwAR3xS25flsls6roFOfi_kISsNOKqgyhkpUR59UjVco_yWVbOr3CbthOxaU.