
Writer's Statement for "Social Media's Rhetorical Prowess, the Black Lives Matter Movement, and How Millennials Experience It"

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Upon enrolling in Professor Wright's ENC 1102 course, I wasn't met with dread, but rather childlike excitement. I had my first experience with college-level writing one year prior in ENC 1101 with Professor Taylor, and while both are required classes, writing has always been a strength of mine as well as something I genuinely enjoy. In short, I knew I would look forward to the challenge.

The course was broken down into three major assignments, each one a step towards one final term paper. We had about sixteen weeks to contemplate, plan, and execute a research paper. The topic of the research paper was entirely open-ended, save for one stipulation: whatever we chose to research had to relate to writing, rhetoric, or literacy. Granted, the weight of the assignment was initially intimidating. I had never written a research paper in my life, much less attempted a research proposal. Was I even qualified to conduct research?

Despite my reservations, I didn't consider the assignment to be an impossible task. Instead, I saw it as an opportunity. The fall of 2016 was a hotbed of sociopolitical turbulence, and I feel that the timing of it all was absolutely essential to my research. With the impending presidential election and a rash of police brutality spanning news headlines, I felt the need to connect the paper to current events. I had originally been inspired by Beyonce's visual album, *Lemonade*. At first, I wrote it off as inherently nonacademic—a pop culture music video devoid of richer value. After watching the cinematographic content in full, I later recognized it as a painstakingly personal dialogue on her experience as a Black Woman.

My focus then shifted towards the idea of oppression and the broader Black Lives Matter movement. I noted how just as brands use social media to make themselves known, so do grassroots movements. However, I had to ask: how much of this actually leads to social or political change? At the time of the assignment, I was only seventeen. Not only was I a full-time college student, but I also worked part-time. With that said, I questioned my viability as a millennial in such a situation to actually facilitate change. If the only thing I can do is retweet a post generated by Black Lives Matter, will that have an effect? Overall, it was fascinating to delve deeper into the international phenomenon of using social media to bring attention to a particular issue, as well as how societal issues are perceived in light of such attention.

Throughout the writing process, I was highly conscious of how my writing might sound to an audience. I wanted to reflect the voice of the general public and make sure that the seriousness of the project didn't eclipse its ability to be understood. While such stylistic writing may not be acceptable for students in other fields, I learned that it can still produce a work that is both professional and approachable. Additionally, Professor Wright worked with me one-on-one to sharpen my direction, and it made a significant difference knowing I could comfortably send him drafts and ideas for review.

At the end of the semester, after more than one bout of writer's block, it was incredibly gratifying to have proven myself capable of authoring a research paper. I learned that the best way to deal with writer's block was to simply close my laptop and leave the document alone for a while. The project also taught me that where there is oppression, there is resistance. And now, in this era, such resistance takes hold on a new platform, irrespective of whether or not tangible change has been achieved.