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“I address race because race addresses me”: women of color show receipts through digital storytelling

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ABSTRACT

In Black colloquial culture, the practice of documenting and calling out injustices is known as “showing receipts.” The ongoing labor of collecting, communicating, and showing receipts is one way to highlight the hypocrisies embedded in racist structures and hold those in power accountable. As the receipts pile up in the form of viral videos of sexism, racism, and violence against Black bodies, accountability cannot be easily ignored. Showing receipts as a form of resistance, however, is both exhausting and never-ending. Thus, women of color need spaces of respite and community care where we can speak our stories and be heard. In this essay, we demonstrate one such space: digital storytelling shared between women of color. While reciprocal sharing provides women of color storytellers a respite from the labor of proving our worth and producing receipts, in recording our truths and sharing them online, we also create digital receipts as testimony to our experiences. Although there is no guarantee that those in power will listen, by producing, archiving, and disseminating these receipts, storytellers maintain hope that our words will make an impact.

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Like many women of color (WOC) who testified in the University of Washington Center for Communication, Difference, and Equity (CCDE) digital storytelling project,¹ Gloria, a Black woman poet in her 70s, described how her very truth is constantly questioned when she moves through white-dominant spaces. Once, a white reader complained to Gloria that she “was always writing about race.”² Gloria went through her poetry collections and found that only 14% of her 250 poems centered on race. Gloria explained:

I address race because race addresses me. Not because I wake up saying, I am going to address race today. I’m just minding my own business and then [*snaps her fingers*] out of the blue, something happens or doesn’t happen, and then I find myself there again.³

Gloria’s work is not always about race; race was all the reader could hear.

In Black colloquial culture, the practice of counting and justifying our work is known as “showing receipts,” something André Brock documents on Black Twitter as providing Black truth, Black labor, and Black resistance that “situat[es] historical[ly] transgressive

behavior.”⁴ The phrase “show me the receipts” is derived from Whitney Houston, who—in an interview with Diane Sawyer, after being confronted about the amount of money she allegedly spent on drugs—said, “I want to see the receipts.”⁵ Houston’s words were grounded in her refusal to be shamed by unconfirmed information, and this phrase has since taken on a wider meaning for holding the powerful accountable. This accountability takes various forms, such as Black internet users demanding companies go beyond popular slogans to take substantial action to dismantle racism. Jumi Akinfenwa argues that Black Twitter has “turned accountability into an artform” by showing receipts by diligently documenting racism at work.⁶

Gloria shows her receipts offline through the painstaking documentation of her poetry. Such justification is, of course, well known among underrepresented people whose truth is often invalidated, and whose stories go unheard. This is particularly the case for WOC whose intersectional identities contain multiple truths. These identities, Tressie McMillian Cottom asserts, name our “lived experiences” and our positioning in relation to power.⁷ When we decide to speak in white-dominant spaces, we must constantly brace ourselves for being misheard, misunderstood, or outright ignored, and thus having to return with receipts. In the case of our CCDE digital storytelling project, the storytellers created podcasts, their own “receipts,” documenting personal experiences of racism and resistance.⁸

The ongoing labor of collecting, communicating, and showing receipts is one way to highlight the injustices and hypocrisies embedded in racist structures and hold those in power accountable. As Katy Waldman argues, the surge in references to “show me the receipts” marks a societal shift: “Where the powerful once exercised their power with relative impunity, now we might be seeing glimmers of accountability.”⁹ Digital technologies offer WOC new pathways to collect and brandish our receipts, exposing experiences of racism and sexism and allowing us to reaffirm our truths. As the receipts pile up in the form of viral videos of violence against Black bodies, accountability cannot be easily ignored.¹⁰ And yet, showing receipts as a form of resistance is exhausting and never-ending. As Gloria puts it, having to constantly “re-act” to racism leaves her feeling unable to simply *be*.¹¹

Thus, we need spaces of respite and community care where we can speak our stories and be heard. We demonstrate one such space: digital storytelling shared between WOC. While describing the experience of creating—with Veralyn Williams and Rachel Raimist—a digital storytelling workshop for Black women, Robin M. Boylorn stresses:

When black women are allowed to tell their truth without shame, embarrassment or judgment ... when they are supported and affirmed in the process and encouraged to bring their whole selves in the room, *in the story*, black women “get free.”¹²

Such digital storytelling spaces are sites of community care and a means of resistance through the collecting of receipts.

Ourselves WOC, we run a digital storytelling project through a community-engaged center that records and archives stories of underrepresented people through a project entitled “Interrupting Privilege.” Gloria, and the other WOC whose voices are featured in this essay, participated in our first digital storytelling project in 2017. This initiative focused on podcasting, a medium that enabled the storytellers to harness the affective

potential of sound to center the power and complexity of their narratives.¹³ Three results struck us from this first set of stories: (1) most of the people who responded to our call to share their stories were WOC; (2) many of the WOC respondents, like Gloria, asked to be paired with someone they didn't know; (3) circulation of their stories on mainstream media outlets versus community outlets altered the reception experience for the WOC storytellers.

Undergirding all three points is a paradox of WOCs sharing of our stories through digital media projects: While reciprocal sharing provides WOC participants a respite from the labor of proving our worth and producing receipts, in recording our truths and sharing them online, we also create digital receipts as testimony to our experiences. Although there is no guarantee that those in power will listen, by producing, archiving, and disseminating these receipts, storytellers maintain hope that our words will make an impact.

Project description

In 2017, we recorded 16 intimate conversations about experiences of racism in a digital storytelling project run by the Center for Communication, Difference, and Equity at the University of Washington.¹⁴ In addition to a publicly accessible archive of edited clips from these stories,¹⁵ we circulated the clips through a mainstream radio station and a community radio station. One of the pairs we focus on in this essay, Gloria and Sophia, shared their story via the community outlet while another pair, Tammy and Jinho,¹⁶ shared their story on the mainstream outlet. The stories shared in this project are not reducible to a singular experience of racism, or racialized sexism, nor are they evidence of a generalizable racialized/gendered injustice.¹⁷ Rather, such narratives are part of a web of subjectivities, complicated by privilege and oppression.

In this essay, we use conversations with the project's participants as primary texts of analysis, discursively mapping sites of power in relation to storytelling, dissemination, and listening. These texts include participant recordings from the digital storytelling project, follow-up interviews with participants, and public discussions during a panel organized with participants at the 2018 Critical Ethnic Studies Association conference. Like Aisha S. Durham, we aim to produce "relevant cultural criticism about, by, and for women of color."¹⁸ Our theories and methods follow those of Durham, who writes, "what is said about black women's lived experience is just as important as how researchers choose to represent it. Theory, method, and writing are inextricably embodied processes of knowledge production."¹⁹ Inspired by Durham's method of "interpretive interactionism," which she describes as "a narrative approach to understand lived experience as it is enacted and performed," our project, in Durham's words, "explores lived experience and assumes that epiphanic moments—those moments of heightened awareness of the situated self—emerge from interactions that render crises of identity and/or representation."²⁰ Through analyzing participants' narrations of racialized sexism in front of the mic, we illuminate the power of these "epiphanic moments." These recorded acts of reciprocal sharing function as showing receipts, weaving together in an accumulating digital archive of voices collectively resisting structures of racialized violence. Our analysis centers on participants' narratives of their experiences, their

embodied hopes and frustrations, as they worked to produce and share their receipts, their stories, with wider audiences.

WOC storytelling: making public private moments

Sharing stories with other WOC allows us to be seen, heard, and fortified. Nadine Changfoot writes that by participating in a digital storytelling workshop with other WOC, she gained “an acknowledgement that what [she] had experienced was very real ... which would not occur in another world where anti-racism would be valued and practiced.”²¹ We take up, in the realm of digital storytelling, what Manoucheka Celeste describes as the project of Black feminist media studies: “mak[ing] visible Black women’s stories and intellectual contributions in a mediascape where we are either hypervisible or invisible.”²² In our amplification of WOC voices we resist what Myra Washington describes as the typically “reactionary” position of communication scholarship on race, wherein “whiteness... sets the rules of our engagement with rac(e)ism.”²³ In this essay, we center the voices of four intergenerational participants: two Black women and two Asian American women whose stories speak particular truths that resonate with other stories we have recorded between WOC over the past three years.²⁴ Gloria’s interview partner was Sophia, a Black woman in her 20s. Despite being strangers prior to their first meeting for the project, Gloria expressed that she felt more heard in her conversation with Sophia than in her decades teaching primarily white college students. While emphasizing pride in her work as an educator, Gloria framed these intimate moments between WOC, moments that enable vulnerability, as crucial in sustaining activist work. Tammy, an Asian American woman in her 40s, recorded with Jinho, an Asian American woman in her 30s. They further emphasized the necessity of fostering WOC dialogue spaces. As much as possible, we link to their audio stories to let their experiences of racism and resistance be told in their own voices.

Centering WOC listening dyads creates moments of reciprocal communication by allowing us to talk through the trauma of racism. Stories of racialized/gendered pain often go unheard by white/male others for whom we are often forced to “prove” our experiences with receipts. As bell hooks writes, WOC have voice, but our voice exists as “the soliloquy, the talking into thin air, the talking to ears that do not hear you.”²⁵ While we acknowledge that the experiences of WOC cannot be folded into a singular collective experience, in the tradition of Patricia Hill Collins, we use the first-person plural “we” to signal our shared exclusion within the dominant culture and to point to the continued need for collective politics to resist racialized/gendered violence.²⁶ For many WOC, speaking out is an act of resistance; it is work that needs to be done despite the risks to body and mind, despite often falling on ears unwilling to hear.

We need to return to spaces of affirmation, and to people with whom our voices may resonate and build. Shardé M. Davis and Tamara D. Afifi describe such spaces for Black women as part of a “Strong Black Woman Collective,” which does the vital work of “resist[ing] oppression and promot[ing] solidarity at the group level.”²⁷ Such spaces enable us to be empowered in our vulnerability and to work through ambivalence

around sharing our narratives. In her study of Black female graduate students' experiences in higher education, Subrina J. Robinson found that students seek refuge with each other to engage in "candid, straightforward talk" to resist the white academy.²⁸ When we open spaces where WOC can speak our pain, we create the conditions for future collaboration for political action. As listeners and storytellers of intersectional racism/sexism, we tell our stories even if we have no guarantees of social change. Robinson stresses the importance of "making historically private talk-public," in order to impact systems of power.²⁹ The participant storytellers in our project similarly stressed the importance of recording their conversations to counter hegemonic postracial discourses.

Digital storytelling as a means of producing receipts

With the advent of emerging digital media technologies in the 1990s, a number of organizations and educational institutions created "digital storytelling" campaigns focused on small-scale, low-budget projects with the goal of empowering "everyday" people to share personal stories.³⁰ Several prominent new media scholars have argued that the participatory culture of the digital age offers hope for marginalized groups to resist dominant ideologies and push for social change.³¹ As Kishonna L. Gray's work on Black cyberfeminism argues, internet technologies offer a space for "the marginalized to regain control of hegemonic imagery to be able to define themselves."³² The networked nature of online spaces destabilizes traditional notions of authorship as a wide array of contributors coconstruct an affective landscape, affording new forms of resistance. Brock argues that on platforms such as Black Twitter, users build off each other's contributions, requiring "a deep awareness of what has been to invent a future in the now."³³ Similarly, the multiple stories of sexism/racism and resistance recorded and shared through our digital storytelling project create a polyvocal archive of receipts that draw from past experiences to imagine a better present.

Critical media scholars such as Herman Gray have questioned the ability of changes in technology to transform long entrenched corporate structures and hegemonic ideologies.³⁴ Although the fluidity of online spaces provides potential for the formation of polyvocal counterpublics that are "wary of holism, but needy for connection," this potential is fleeting and fragile.³⁵ The power of digital spaces to subvert oppressive systems of power can be suppressed (but not snuffed out completely) by numerous forces enmeshed within the online ecosystem. Rather than consider virtual engagement to be separate from lived realities of oppression, the materiality of bodies is interwoven with virtual spaces, both of which are subject to systems of oppression. As Herman Gray notes in his discussion of the viral video of Antoine Dodson, when media rip voices and bodies out of their situated contexts, the results can be affective alienation rather than connection between dispersed individuals and communities.³⁶ Additionally, the online space is not a democratized free-for-all, but is shaped by corporate structures and mediating organizations. The need and desire to tell our stories persist, despite the risks. The storytellers who participated in our project were aware of the fraught politics of representation, the power of editing, and the way their words might be twisted as they traveled online. Still, they voluntarily sought to participate in the project as a means of showing the receipts of sexism/racism's impacts on WOC.

“Show me the receipts”: holding power accountable through digital documentation of injustice

Receipts are used in two ways: firstly, to demand receipts for claims made by those in power; and secondly, to systematically produce content documenting injustices. Black journalist Dee Lockett points out how hollow public statements against racism by corporate players no longer fly in this radical Black moment. With the recent uprisings spurred by the murder of George Floyd, Black Americans are demanding action over words. “[S]how me the receipts’ culture” Lockett proclaims, has become “crucial to the revolution.”³⁷

The recording process presents the possibility to reclaim a moment of racialized violence and use it in the service of antiracist activism, a public reworking of a past personal moment of suffering to chart a new pathway for the future. In follow-up interviews with participants, many expressed that they participated in our digital storytelling project because they wanted to preserve their stories and have them documented as an archive of receipts refuting discourses asserting the arrival of a postracial era. Such an era, Catherine R. Squires writes, provides alternate ways to hide “regressive, oppressive tactics.”³⁸

This was especially important for Gloria, the Black woman educator, poet, and writer whose story opens this essay. The primary reason Gloria felt compelled to participate in the digital storytelling project was to preserve stories of injustice and Black resistance. She wanted these memories of segregation and subsequent struggle for equality to be recorded and ingrained within wider public memory.³⁹ These storytellers hoped their narratives would have an impact on how present and future generations would understand the impacts of sexism/racism.

While Gloria is willing to take on the burden of educating others, she is aware of the toll it takes. Although she feels the repeated pain of telling her stories into the void of indifference, she maintains hope that people will change, albeit slowly:

That’s why I keep saying, “We have to keep telling the stories. We never know who’s going to get it right. Keep telling it.” Eventually we’ll get to the tipping point. I hope it’s soon. But we cannot just be silent. Not all of the time. We do have to take a break We need to take a break or we will die early, but admit that everybody’s not going to get it at the same time You never know who gets it when.⁴⁰

Although we cannot guarantee our words will receive a just hearing, through the process of producing receipts, of reworking moments of racialized trauma into stories of resistance, we invite listeners to hear differently, and to act differently, even if they don’t “get it” in that moment.

Finally feeling heard: Gloria and Sophia

Many of the storytellers felt safer sharing their stories with an unknown community member who shared their race/gender identity than with someone they knew personally. This resonates with what a participant in another digital storytelling workshop described as “de-whitening,” signaling that spaces intentionally reserved for WOC can produce their own form of “excitement” and collaboration.⁴¹ When we speak to people we do not know, and with whom we have not yet formed bonds of trust, the imperative

builds to listen for difference and resonance that might be missed with family or close friends.

In the weeks following the original recordings, Anjuli met with several of the participants to discuss why they had chosen to take part in the project, the impact of telling their stories, and who they imagined listening to their recordings. When addressing racism in the Pacific Northwest, Gloria has grown accustomed to a defensive resistance. Gloria told Anjuli that opening up to Sophia was different. She listened. Both Gloria and Sophia expressed their pain and anger in the face of racism in a way that is often not available to them within predominantly white spaces in “liberal” Seattle.

Gloria and Sophia first met for coffee an hour before their scheduled recording. Sophia recalled feeling a bit awkward because she was about to dive into a discussion about racism with a woman she had just met. As they started chatting, however, they quickly fell into a groove. “Oh, this is gonna be really great,” Sophia thought, as her anxiety transformed into anticipation.⁴² The interview took place in a recording studio at the University where Sophia worked, and where Gloria had earned her Ph.D. in English (the first Black woman to do so at the University). Although their experiences at the University were separated by several decades, the ivory tower had largely retained its whiteness and racism.

In their recorded interview, their digital receipt, Gloria’s voice is clear, confident, and textured with age. She declares, “I don’t mind saying I’m ignorant about certain things, but there are just so many people that are ignorant about race and race relations.” She gives an exasperated laugh as she continues, “And I think they don’t want to know about race, they don’t want to talk about race.” She takes a deep breath before saying in words tinged with sorrow from a lifetime of experience: “It’s too bad because all of us lose, it’s just that some of us lose more than others.”⁴³

Sophia chimes in, decrying the “dismissive” and “covert” forms racism takes in the Pacific Northwest. The energy in their voices is palpable. The pace of their speech quickens as they build off each other’s words. Sophia vents her frustration: “Seattle is one of the most unapologetically white places I’ve ever been.” Gloria erupts in knowing laughter as Sophia continues, “It’s like they don’t recognize it or think about it.”

Gloria confides that she had always seen education as a “panacea,” as a way to escape entrenched patterns of inequity. Her words are interspersed with ironic laughter as she proclaims, “But it was here, at the University, that I learned some of the most racist people are the most educated people. And when they say ivory tower, they mean ivory tower [*laughter*].”

Sophia affirms, “Yes, 100 percent!”⁴⁴

This stirring conversation with a woman who listened so intently despite being a near stranger stuck with Gloria. During their follow-up interview, Gloria emphasized to Anjuli how powerful it was to speak with someone who had a similar experience of exclusion within higher education. At the same time, the realization of how little the system had changed over the decades weighed heavily on Gloria.

When Anjuli entered Gloria’s house after the recording event, she felt more like a friend coming over for tea than a researcher. As they settled in, Gloria mused that although she is used to telling stories, she is not used to people listening and understanding in the way Sophia had. Gloria’s voice started to crack, and she really felt the loss when Sophia began to cry:

I didn't want her to cry, but I knew she understood. And we talked long enough for me to understand that some of the same problems—I know some people don't get this, but I say it anyway—The most discrimination I ever dealt with was at the University.⁴⁵

Gloria was crestfallen, but not surprised, to learn the University is still not a space where Black women can feel a sense of belonging.

Sophia did not go into the interview expecting to cry. She told Anjuli when they sat together that she had expected to be engaged but had not expected to cry. Sitting in the recording studio across from Gloria, however, she felt it build to a breaking point:

I knew I wasn't expecting myself to cry. So, I got like 45 minutes in and I was like not crying, not crying, and then she said something that really struck home with me ... I can't actually remember what she said in that moment, but I remember how I felt, and just started crying. I was like, "Oh my god, I didn't think I was going to do this." It was definitely more emotional than I thought it was going to be.⁴⁶

And, despite seeing her primary role as a facilitator supporting Gloria's words, within the process of listening, Sophia found herself relating to Gloria's stories and affirming them with brief anecdotes of similar experiences that resonated:

[S]he would bring up topics that I could relate to, so I would interject, or encourage her to speak more about that. It was very on topic about being Black women and comparing our experiences ... she grew up in Louisiana, and I grew up in the Bay Area, which were very predominantly Black spaces. And then, coming to the Pacific Northwest, and living as a Black woman here.⁴⁷

Like Sophia, Gloria told Anjuli how important it was for her to have a partner who understood her experience:

It is refreshing but especially when somebody else understands it and I guess that's what all of us want, to be understood. I think quite often, people of color understand whites in a way that most whites don't understand and sadly never will. But I think if we could tell more stories, then perhaps they would understand.⁴⁸

Although she has spent a lifetime as a storyteller and educator, during their long conversation, Gloria confided in Anjuli that she often grows weary trying to draw people out of their proverbial caves: "I say often, I don't mind teaching the same thing. What I hate is repeatedly teaching the same thing to the same people."⁴⁹ In the face of this refusal to listen, Gloria sometimes finds herself unwilling to continue speaking, at least for a time. Anjuli felt honored that Gloria opened up her home and entrusted her with the responsibility to listen differently, as Sophia had in their recording.

Difference as a resource for learning: Tammy and Jinho

Tammy and Jinho also worked to build trust and navigate the misunderstandings that arise when engaging in conversations about racism with a near stranger. They sought to build a bond through their conversation that might give them a toolkit for addressing racism going forward. Because they both identified as Asian American women, they expected to enter the conversation with similar frames of reference and similar experiences to draw from. However, this was not the case. Instead of suppressing the differences that arose between them to establish a singular understanding of Asian American womanhood, Tammy and Jinho engaged their differences with curiosity and care. In a

follow-up interview with Anjali, Tammy emphasized the trust it takes to engage in race-based conversations and build coalitions: “It takes time to build a trusted space or a safe space where people feel like they can divulge their family backgrounds or share stories about things they saw, or things that happened to them.”⁵⁰

One challenge, she noted, was that she had assumed a shared experience going into her interview with Jinho, but found that their stories were quite different:

I think one place where it was not as easy as it could have been was—and this is because we were strangers to each other—is that we didn’t necessarily share the same opinions or experiences about Korean American culture or Asian American culture and if we did, we didn’t express them in the same ways.⁵¹

Concurrent with working through the differences in their experiences, Tammy was also acutely aware of the digital receipts produced by the recording process, and how their conversation might be understood by an external audience.

Tammy felt she learned a great deal from listening to their markedly different experiences of discrimination and was moved by Jinho’s stories. Navigating the differences in their experiences opened up Tammy and Jinho to understanding both self and other in new ways. The points that resonated with Tammy were different from the points Jinho found noteworthy. Tammy was moved by Jinho’s discussion of pushing forward in her career despite often being the only WOC in the room. As Tammy told Anjali in their follow-up interview:

So that part I think was striking to me and that’s when I started to like cry at the end because I was like “Oh my God, I’m so proud of you for doing this, this is a big, it’s a big deal,” and I could tell by the way she was looking at me that she did not think that it was a big deal. But I’m like, “No, this is like a really big deal” because you have to get out ahead of the folks who are coming in behind you who are people of color and it’s gonna be great when you are successful in your career and you can help others and they can see themselves in you as a person to be inspired by.⁵²

Although they “hadn’t experienced the same things,” Jinho also felt fortunate for her time with Tammy, a fellow Asian American woman “trailblazer” in her field, and the opportunity to form a bond with a person she would never have met otherwise.⁵³ Through listening deeply to each other’s stories, to both the divergent and convergent points of resonance, they came to a better understanding of both self and other, an understanding grounded in a respect for the unknowable.⁵⁴

When people who share our salient identities behave in unfamiliar ways that intrude on our understanding of our own identities, some people have an impulse to draw lines, and dismiss these would-be close others as aberrant. As Audre Lorde argues, “we have *all* been programmed to respond to the human differences between us with fear and loathing.”⁵⁵ However, multiple registers of difference exist at the heart of intersectional identities. As Lorde continues, “It is not those differences between us that are separating us. It is rather our refusal to recognize those differences.”⁵⁶ By taking the time and creating the space for listening to the complexities of difference and navigating the unknown between self and other, Tammy and Jinho created a bond not grounded in a singular experience of Asian American women’s oppression, but from a mutual respect of the multiplicity of Asian American women’s struggles and resilience.

Within the recording studio and the follow-up interviews with Anjuli, this digital storytelling project centered WOC dyads that made space for listening, not between women who shared the exact same experiences of racialized and/or gendered trauma, but between those who shared a similar language of exclusion. For these women, participating in this project had value beyond the initial interpersonal bonds that formed. The recording process itself acted upon participants, reminding them that their stories were not only being heard by another WOC, but also being archived online—producing receipts—with the voices of others who had experienced sexism/racism in different ways, and who each had their own strategies for resistance.

WOC's stories of racism traveling online: losing control of the narrative

The participants in this project wanted their stories to be heard and addressed within the community but were wary of the risks. While online spaces worked to amplify the spread of their broadcast pieces, this sometimes led their stories to be shared in ways that caused storytellers to feel they had lost control of their narratives.

Gloria and Sophia's story was broadcast on a local community radio station. The director of the station is a WOC who also recorded a conversation with our digital storytelling project and was sensitive to the politics of representation.⁵⁷ For Gloria, working closely with familiar staff and having the power to decide what and how the material would be broadcast allowed her to feel empowered. In contrast, participants (e.g., Tammy and Jinho) whose narratives circulated in predominantly white mainstream media spaces felt a lack of control over how their stories were edited, framed, and shared. Various participants, for example, wanted to control the public nature of their stories by only sharing their first names, but the mainstream radio station refused, citing journalistic norms, and insisted on contributors' first and last names being broadcast with the stories. In another case, the station posted a broadcast clip on their Facebook page of two Black women discussing how to resist the stereotype of the angry Black woman,⁵⁸ a controlling image that, in the words of Ralina L. Joseph, flattens Black women into a caricature of "the emasculating, irrational shrew."⁵⁹ The station titled their Facebook post with the prescriptive header, "How to point out racism without being the angry Black woman," illustrating a lack of understanding of how Black women are prevented from expressing anger even, or perhaps especially, when they are the victims of racism. Black women listeners talked back to the radio station's problematic framing. As one listener responded to the Facebook post: "This title sounds more like a how-to on respectability for black women and addressing how we as black women must change if we are to address racism."⁶⁰ To reiterate: the listener illuminated the station's use of the *very same* racist, sexist framing that our digital storytellers actively *resisted* in their narrative. The ethical and stylistic norms of the station cater to the predominantly white listening audience, leaving contributors of color to refute these terms in participatory digital spaces, accept them, or keep their stories off the airwaves.

Tammy and Jinho had to negotiate the terms of airing their story with a white radio producer at the mainstream station whose listenership is 85% white.⁶¹ Tammy and Jinho's aired clip illustrates the difficulties that can emerge as a storyteller becomes an expectant observer of those listening to her ineffable stories of race. An edited clip from their interview was broadcast on the local public radio station. In the clip,

Tammy recounts how when growing up as a young Japanese American girl, she was confronted by older white men who had lived during WWII and was forced to defend herself against their accusations questioning her family's loyalty to America.⁶² When this edited clip of an intimate moment from Tammy's past was broadcast and circulated on social media, its reception left Tammy feeling unheard rather than validated.

Tammy recounted her initial enthusiasm about promoting the digital storytelling event on her Facebook page: "So I posted the photo of us [Tammy and Jinho] ... on Facebook and. . . I think it was the post that has gotten the most likes that I've ever posted." Tammy's excitement quickly dissipated, however, as she realized that as a WOC talking about racism, she was exposing herself to her entire network: "And it was sort of like somebody cracked an egg and it just ran on the top of my head and it was just like the realization was just coming true like 'Oh shit.'"⁶³ Although Jinho had been eager to share her stories of racism in the recording studio, when Anjuli interviewed her a few weeks later, she expressed concern about her story being broadcast and shared online: "things can really get distorted and placed out of context so that worries me because we're in a digital generation."⁶⁴ As a new mother who was pregnant at the time of the initial recording, Jinho expressed concern about the impacts of her digital footprint on her child. Both Tammy and Jinho had ambivalence about their personal stories of discrimination existing online.

Tammy described a mutually reinforcing cycle in which her broadcast clip was shared online with an unintended audience, causing her to feel a lack of control over her story. When this unintended audience reacted dismissively, her fears and lack of agency were confirmed:

My friends, I didn't have a problem with. My coworkers shared the clip because they're all a bunch of lefty, NPR-listening folks, who were so proud of me and so excited that they shared it on their social media without asking me and sent the link out to my entire company without asking. That felt not great.

Tammy paused for a second before continuing, "*especially when nobody responded*. First, it feels bad when it goes out and then when no one says anything back, it's like, 'Oh right. This is why that sucks.'"⁶⁵ It sucks when you lose control of who hears your story of racialized oppression. It doubly sucks when your company, or community, is confronted with this story and decides the best response is silence.

Tammy's uncertainty about how audiences were taking up her story, and her inability to circulate it selectively, undermined her sense of agency and empowerment. In this case, Tammy's careful narration of her story—her receipts—did not help her as certain audiences simply chose not to listen. At the same time, Tammy stressed the importance of having her story recorded and archived: "What I'm saying is important and it's important enough to be filed away and kept."⁶⁶ Although she could not control how listeners would take up her words, having her story exist in a polyvocal archive of receipts had power in and of itself.

Conclusion

Digital storytelling, in its attempt to democratize the act of telling, sharing, and listening, brings multiple layers of mediation to a story so that it can travel. These mediations, of

course, are neither innocent nor free of power and politics. Although antiracist digital storytelling projects cannot in and of themselves lead to systemic change, when understood as one node in a larger web of social justice organizing, such projects provide potential as spaces of listening and resistance.

Conversations between WOC storytellers allow them respite from the continual labor of having to meticulously document acts of racism (receipts) in order to be believed. Ironically, their shared stories provide evidence (receipts) of their experiences through recorded conversations. As Tammy's experience illustrates, it is impossible to control how listeners will engage with these stories once they are posted online. Nonetheless, the intimacy of the stories, coupled with their online publication as part of a larger collection, highlights how WOC narratives can be used to create an archive of receipts, inviting listeners to be accountable, to hear differently, and to take action against racism.

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