In Defense of Smashing Streamer's Cameras

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This document is intended to be an updated version of "In Defense of Smashing Cameras." The update is meant to address new issues with live-streaming protests and actions, what this leads to and how to address it.

When you're at a protest you should only be filming the police and police actions.

This is not meant to be a word for word copy, but more of an adaptation for the ever-changing media, ways of producing and creating content and most specifically, those who seek to profit off of social movements.

We are vulnerable to attack. More so than ever. There are not only cameras everywhere, but now there are people with agendas with cameras, who are seeking to capture content to line their own pockets by filming others and their trauma and experiences.

Stop profiting off of BIPOC, LGBTQ+ && other groups in moments of trauma, their stories and their personal experiences. While you broadcast them for people to hear and see, it is incredibly disheartening that your PayPal, Venmo, Cash App and other payment methods are given, suggesting you (the filmer) need compensation for providing access to their story.

I'm not suggesting that these people do not deserve tips. Tip them. Appreciate good and proper journalism. Not grifters who want you to spam the hearts, smash that like button and get them money so they can fly all over to record protests. How is that benefitting the people that they are profiting off of? But don't forget that their media is based on the experiences of those who have actually lived them. They are not conflict journalists when they're begging you for your money every 10 minutes. These photographers and streamers are war profiteers. They abuse their position for their audience for financial gain, they feed their own ego through toxic social media and they discredit any movement by their disrespect for proper channels. They are grifters. Be humble.

Photographers and Live-Streamers/Media Personalities now often outnumber protesters. This has happened on multiple occasions in 2020. This is something we need to be against. Phones are dangerous. Cameras are even more dangerous. Whether it is us or the enemy that wields them, we not only participate, but now encourage the panopticon. Further, people are being supported financially in their role as providing surveillance for their own good, bad actors on the opposite

side, or for the benefit of the state/state actors. "Groups and individuals who have an interest in publicity and photo opportunities need to recognise the fact that they can make everyone else vulnerable to repression and less effective. One group's photo op is unwanted Twitter publicity for the 100 people surrounding them." And furthermore, these streams, photos and screen grabs can not only be harmful for any action taken by any one at any time, it shows the harm and risk for doxing, chud/police identification or encouraging harmful rhetoric in chats without proper monitoring. More so, certain livestreamers are police collaborators, risking the safety of everyone around them.

Taking any photos or video at a protest now puts everyone at risk. It puts everyone around you, the people you're with, strangers around you, and the people you're profiting off of at risk through your camera lens. This not only subjects others to your desire for publicity, marketing your brand, music, or personality for your actions (or whatever actions you're filming), "but can also lead to people who are ready to do something interesting feeling hesitant." Your presence prevents the movement from moving forward. Fear of exposure from you filming specific pieces, people and places is real and recorded. The camera no longer clicks, it's just another one doing a cop's job for them- state surveillance.

Publicity is the issue. Being labeled as "PRESS" is another. It's funny, because I'm going to perpetuate the narrative that there is a fake press out there, which by all means, there are. They're not press, they're media personalities, reporting their experience rather than what is happening.

If we are on the streets we are in public; we are surveilled. We can't escape this. What we can control is intelligible visibility. The reason we mask up is to become opaque, to elude intelligibility. Being photographed against our will is a direct attack against our attempts of obfuscation and ought to be treated as such. Cameras are tools of the surveillance state and dominant forms of control that our very presence on the streets seeks to dismantle- or in this case, seek to do nothing about except receive monetary compensation for transportation (cross-country), food, shelter and other benefits from their grift.

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Photographs and real time video of actions weaken actions and the ability to take them, act on them and plan any further actions by giving access to the watchers (including police and other actors) more information than they need. "This is not paranoia; it is a fact. For every police photograph, there are ten more incriminating ones on twitter. For every official observation, every surveillance camera pointed our direction, we are doing ourselves the injustice of allowing ourselves to be recorded, disseminated and documented by our peers, in the name of free speech or journalistic impartiality, entitlement, whatever you want to call it. And it has to stop."

Clout posting has its own place. Those people come and go. They get their photo and leave. Live Streamers who don't act appropriately put people in real danger. They capture moments that will lead to arrests, jail time and harsh penalties and expose individuals (intentional or not) for actions they may not want captured on film. Hiding behind the "it's a public protest I can

film what I want" is not only a bad look (especially when you're profiting off of your filming), it indicates that your motives are not in line with actual journalistic integrity, but are looking for clicks. In this case, they are saying that (in this movement) their place as streamers are larger than the abolition of the police and Black Liberation. These streamers are taking over where the Cops camera crew left off. Riot porn. Clickbait. They engage their audience with hot takes and critiques (instead of accurate reporting), which places their status as a "press" member into direct contradiction to their action. They are media personalities looking to cash in. They are not Press. There are streamers who purposely film faces, capture actions and turn footage over to the police. "These people are scum and should not be protected simply because we believe that journalists have some kind of impartiality, some right that is above our desires to protect ourselves."

But don't they have a right to be there, even if they are expressing different opinions or have different perspectives of what is going on? Sure, it's a public place. Unfortunately, this goes far beyond that. It doesn't matter why they're there, the problem is with what they're doing while they're there. The questions we need to pose to journalists, members of the press and live-streaming media personalities are: "where do you stand when it comes to social struggle? How do you act to further revolt? Simply put, journalists do not have any political right to a 'spectacle'." The medium is the massage. Their perspective, recording and commitment to not address concerns of those in the movement and rather (some) commenting that they'd rather bear arms and protect themselves, certify that they prioritize their potential fame, finances and commitment to their message, rather than the message of the movement overall. They aren't here to document properly, they are here to exploit your comrades and those at risk.

If journalistic ethics are being adhered to, they have no right to create a spectacle around themselves and focus on the incidents/actions they are covering. The spectacle becomes their version of what is happening, as opposed to what is actually happening. Their political right to a spectacle is given up with their participation or lack thereof in an action. They are not covering it, they are recording it, there is a difference. "They have the ability to participate in a moment of revolt and they forgo that capacity by consigning the event to a digital memory rather than a future possibility." Covering a protest, action or demonstration is important for the necessary documentation of speeches (with permission), important art/messages and police violence. When streamers are prioritizing their opinions, request for donations/increased metrics, or indifference on actions or what they are filming, they are not to be trusted.

Spectators do not act (there is one specific example of a streamer taking action after an incident in Kenosha, WI after a white domestic-terrorist shot protesters, which is the exception).

> "Time and again, photographers actually inhibit the unfurling of events by standing right in front of an action, rushing forward, blocking your way to support your friends and documenting your attempts to do so. Eyes without bodies do not move, but they may propel enemies. When you take a photograph at a demo before anything actually happens, if something does happen, the police can use that photograph to construct a narrative and build identities. You could spotlight someone involved in something that hasn't even happened yet, highlight that crucial piece of evidence the police will use to solidify their case against us. To inhibit possibility and limit potential is not something we should simply accept."

We must fight back against those who are putting our BIPOC community members, allies, frontliners, friends, comrades, mutual aid and medics in danger.

> "People who take photographs and post them online, without blurring faces or cropping out identities, put us at risk and we should not be complacent."

There seems to be a real stigma against smashing cameras/phones here. We must seek to change this. Their phones and cameras are tools of oppression and uphold the objectives of the state and police- capture footage (often directly to their riot wall), identify those who are captured on camera and make violent targeted arrests. Why do we permit this? Why is there a stigma against driving these filmers out? What advantage do we gain from permitting them to put our community members in danger? We must stop this. We must smash their cameras and phones. Throw them in the river.

> "That said, we are not luddites. To the contrary, we love a good photo and we cannot dismiss the seductive qualities of images in the age of spectacles. There's a reason we call it riot porn. We've even printed and framed the memories we love best. We recognise the importance of documenting certain struggles, to spread the message, to share with our friends abroad, to help ignite the fire of rebellion."

Photos and video move our enemies and their pension for state violence and riot porn. They also motivate us to strive even harder for the abolition of police and ultimately, Black Liberation. This is not meant to be a critique of all streamers and journalists, just specific ones. The footage they capture can be considered a weapon used to not only harm protesters, but allows them to profit financially off of it.

There are people who record and photograph properly. Those people are to be trusted. " We consider them part of our struggles and think of them as partisans and accomplices in social war." If you align yourself with the movement and are committed to filming/streaming/covering/photographing, here are some updated guidelines:

1. Contrary to what many protest-photography tips tell you, don't get up close. This includes streaming from the front line without permission.
2. If there are faces in your shot, blur them. A simple swirl in Photoshop won't do. We're talking about scrambling them so that the police cannot reverse the process. If you are streaming, do not film if you are not able to protect identities so faces, outfits. Do not film at a direct action early, when some of your comrades are not properly dressed or are dressing.
3. If there is distinctive or identifying clothing in your shot, blur them. Or don't film them at all, film the ground.
4. If certain identities stick out (the few Black bodies in a white protest, the few visibly disabled in a seemingly able-bodied demonstration, etc. etc.), delete the photo/video unless you have permission from the individuals to use/capture their actions. There are protesters who want to be filmed or are indifferent, please check in with them to make sure it is okay.
5. If you choose to participate as a spectator, then realise your participation is secondary to those actively engaged in the moment of revolt. This means you should step aside, even if it means losing that 'wining' shot. Your role as a reporter is different than your role as a "media/social personality."

6. If possible—and it usually is—ask for consent or indicate that you are taking a photo so that we have an option to turn away or decline. Yes, we get it. We are in a public place and you don't have to ask, but realise that failure to ask makes us suspicious of your motivations and provides us with added reason to assert our capacity for opacity.
7. Your camera is a weapon. Friendly fire is not acceptable. Nor will it be tolerated.
8. You are a partisan in social war. Become involved in the struggles you choose to document. Should they be documented? If so, how should they be documented to spread their capacities? Become a comrade and earn the trust of those around you. Except for professional activists, for the vast majority of us, this is not a career. Seeking to capitalize on that social war makes you a war profiteer, grifter is a lite term for what you are really doing. You are exploiting those who are fighting for change and seem to be happy doing so.
9. Photograph the police. And only the police. One exception can be seen as activists who want their speeches/demonstrations recorded. This should be something you ask about before filming.
10. Infer more guidelines from the analysis above.

Recently, a live-streamer was outed in a personal conversation about being "ACAB" but also turning over their footage to the police willingly. How does this make sense? There is no care, respect, or proper reporting being done to ensure the safety of those in our community. This is why we must smash their cameras and stop them from profiteering on this and any following movements or actions.

The conversation is always evolving. Live streaming protests, photographing and video recording don't have "set" guidelines… however… if streamers and photographers are willing to put their egos above the movement…

This is a call for people to smash their cameras and phones. Smash them, paint them, put umbrellas in their way, use make and distribute privacy shields, throw their phones/cameras in the fucking river.

> "Time and time again we see our friends being taken away because someone chose their five moments of fame, the titillation of seeing his photo of our fucking faces making it onto the pages of Vice, the Evening Standard, the Guardian. They choose that above standing next to their friends and accomplices and fighting against the surveillance state that controls us all. Maybe the hack is on our side; maybe they think they are spreading the word, spreading the revolt. It doesn't matter. For right now, all they are doing is contributing to a climate of inaction, of fear of action, spreading information that those who seek to bring us down will use against us. Next time you see someone thrusting their lens in someone's face, getting a little too close and personal, blocking your path to assist your friends so they can get a winning angle, we ask you not to stand idly by."

Fight back. Protect your friends. Protect your community. Black Lives Matter. Black Communities Matter. Record police brutality, not people fighting in the war to end it.

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