

# AMP Seeds Fall 2022 Season - Seeds Event Transcript

## The Internet is Black

Thursday, September 15th, 2022

**Brenda Hernandez:** Hello, my name is Brenda Hernandez. I am a brown, Mexican woman with black hair that is tied back. I'm wearing glasses and blue hoop earrings. I am also the deputy director of the AMP Seeds Program, a division of AMP that supports and amplifies movement leaders, makers, and shakers. I'm so excited to welcome you to the first event of the AMP Seeds season, "The Internet is Black," with Nandi Comer, Director of AMP Seeds as moderator, and our guests Eteng Ettah and Ophelia Overton of MediaJustice. Please show them some love in the chat. Bring on the emojis, show your excitement, if you will!

This event will have ASL Interpretation and closed captioning. Please be sure to turn on captions using the "CC" button at the bottom of your Youtube video frame. After the event we invite you to join us at the Seeds Cafe, an intimate space to reflect collectively on today's event. A Zoom link is provided to those that registered for today's talk. Now, let's start the show.

**Nandi Comer:** Hello my name is Nandi. I am the AMP Seeds Program Director. I am a dark-skinned brown woman with short curly hair and tortoise shell eyeglasses, and today I'm wearing a denim stone-washed shirt. And I'm really happy to welcome you two, Eteng and Ophelia, if you wouldn't mind introducing yourselves?

**Eteng Ettah:** Yeah, absolutely. My name is Eteng Ettah. I am a dark skinned black woman who's wearing red lipstick, pink glasses, and a green shirt. Very excited to be here tonight.



**Ophelia Overton:** Hi everyone, my name's Ophelia Overton and I am a mixed woman with curly hair, pink lipstick, wearing a green knitted polo, and I am a digital organizer at MediaJustice.

**Nandi Comer:** And that is what we are here to talk about today along with talking about Black people on the internet and the amazing things that they do and how they define basically culture around the world when we get on the internet, right? So, but first I really didn't want to overstep this wonderful organization you all are representing today, MediaJustice. I would love it if you all could tell us a little bit about the organization and some of the things that you do.

**Eteng Ettah:** Yes absolutely- and I realize I forgot my title, Narrative Director at MediaJustice. So, at MediaJustice we are a national nonprofit that's building a grassroots movement for a more just and participatory media. So our mandate very much is that we're seeking to build a world where everyone is connected, represented, and free. And so we do this in a variety of different strategies. So we have our advocacy and campaign work, which joins folks at the grassroots level to build power around media and tech issues such as big tech accountability, criminalization and policing the digital divide, misinformation/disinformation, and other topics that, in particular, impact marginalized communities.

In addition to our campaign work, Ophelia and I are members of the communications team. So our work is all about shifting the narrative around how people of color, other marginalized communities are intersecting with this media and tech landscape and finding ways to introduce our issues in a way that are very accessible and energized folks to want to join in on those campaigns.

And then finally we also are the hosts of what's called the MediaJustice Network which is a network of over seventy social justice arts and media groups who all come together who understand that there is an intersection between media and any justice topic you can think of whether it's- groups that are working on climate change, reproductive justice, a really great rich site for connection, for organizing, historically some of our campaigns have been born out of conversation and discourse within the network. So definitely a very multi-faceted group of folks, and those of the, that's a little bit of a snapshot of the main pillars of our work at MediaJustice.



**Nandi Comer:** That's just really rich and really amazing- I was looking, I mean I've heard about a lot of the things that you all have been doing. And your organization has like looked very different in the past- like it's gone, it's actually transformed a lot. We talk about emergent movement building and how we're being responsive to our communities but I find the history of your organization really key to, like, understanding how we move. And it kind of illuminates a little bit about how we move too, in the internet, so I wondered if you all could talk a little bit about how MediaJustice like started and then like what are some of the kind of ways in which you're focusing on recently?

**Eteng Ettah:** Yeah absolutely we're all about storytelling! So our origin story starts in the nineties in Oakland. So we were founded originally as Youth Media Council. So that's the first, initial configuration of what we know as MediaJustice today and so, that was founded by Malkia Devich Cyril, Amy Sonnie, and Jen Soriano. And so the Youth Media Council started out because Black and brown youth in Oakland were recognizing the ways that they were being portrayed in the media and how that impacted the ways that they would move around the world. And so having an understanding of how, if we constantly are fed media stories that are anti-Black, that are racist, then when Black and brown youth are showing up in their classrooms, what are their teachers thinking about them when they- you know unfortunately have interactions with the police how does that impact what those outcomes look like? And so as a result of youth coming together and being like we want to push back on this, Youth Media Council was born.

So this group of folks did everything from organizing, to strategic communication work, to independent media creation, just to shift public narrative around what it actually is like to be a young person in Oakland, and just the harmful ways that media stereotypes can impact their lived experiences. And so after that iteration, when we transitioned into the Center for MediaJustice, that was a concerted decision to take a step back and think about what are the more systemic issues in our media system?

So of course it is still very important to call out anti-Black reporting and you know hold reporters accountable. But how do we deepen our understanding of how those decisions are made and so knowing that the racist headline you might see in The New York Times is a symptom of a media system that is rooted in white supremacy and capitalism and- is for profit not for actually telling authentic stories and sharing what's



going on. So as a result of that deliberate decision to take a step back and organize around systemic issues to get to the root of these issues we're seeing, that's how today we have campaigns against everything from big tech accountability to internet rights and the digital divide to disinformation and misinformation to surveillance.

And one of my one of my, one of the favorite things about MediaJustice is that there's this understanding that media and tech, that landscape is ever evolving so even though the issues have changed, the platforms may have changed the mandate still remains the same that- our folks deserve to not only be accurately represented, but we deserve to be the tellers of our own stories, to disseminate our stories, and just be safe and free from surveillance and all the different ways that we share and interact within this landscape.

**Nandi Comer:** I love that. I love that- that there is in the sense just understanding that we have ownership and we've always been storytellers and that but people are always trying to tell our stories for us. Which brings me to what we are here to talk about today, which is "That's So Black." I just really loved this series that you all produced back in February or released back in February- it really captures some specific moments and Black history which we- if people don't know, is just like global history right? It's everybody's history but I don't think enough people are reflecting on how much it is rooted in the Black community and how Black people have defined themselves. Can you talk a little bit about "That's So Black,"- how did this come up and why was it so important to bring out to the community?

**Ophelia Overton:** Yeah that's just like you were saying it is global history and so we did want to kind of bring light to not only the labor but also the creativity that Black people have contributed to mainstream culture and the idea came about. We were just thinking about Black History Month and could we do something differently and- no shade to blog posts with black and white photos! We love them. They're useful but we're like, 'Could we do something different or- or kind of just out of the box this year?' And so, through that conversation we kind of brainstormed, 'So what is MediaJustice's role? What can we add to the conversation that's new or different and also speaks to our mission you know?'

We didn't want to put something out just to say something. We wanted it to be meaningful, and so that's kind of how the idea started. But then in terms of the format,



like Eteng was saying earlier we really wanted something to be accessible, so you know we've all been through a lot these last few years people are tired but people still care right? They still want to be engaged, and so maybe at the end of a long day they don't necessarily want to come home and read an academic paper, read a report, but they might sit down and like, watch a video right?

So you know we talk a lot about how storytelling is such a useful tool for change, but only if people want to engage with the content. And so we were thinking, 'What is the most digestible, easy way to break down these really serious topics and that's how we kind of came about this series and just like you were saying- even though capitalist America wants to say, 'Oh, America is very white and our history is very white', like so many things that we consider everyday or- that we encounter all the time, that we just take for granted, actually were brought about by Black folks. So we thought it was important to tell that.

**Nandi Comer:** [agreeing]

**Eteng Ettah:** Yeah and I would just add a plus one to everything Ophelia said! This is absolutely meant to be a celebration of Black people's cultural contributions to the internet. It's also a nod to the fact that Black people are always the earliest adopters to new forms of media. So, I'm thinking about in radio in the sixties, how organizers were using radio during the Civil Rights Movement and so talking about Black people- that our influence in internet as a medium that we've very much harnessed and influenced felt right on, so. It was also just a great opportunity to get creative, experiment, and prime audiences for future original content from MediaJustice too.

**Nandi Comer:** Well I think that this is a great moment to segue into watching these videos. We have set them up so that we get to see all four of them right after the other. Even though originally they were released individually I just wanted the audience to know that this is a special kind of compilation of all four videos, so I'm gonna just turn it over to the videos and let them speak for themselves because they're just so beautiful. "That's So Black," y'all.

**[captioned videos play]**

**Child:** Yas, queen!



**Ellen Degeneres:** Time to play a brand new game called spill the tea.

**Jonathan Van Ness:** What's our mission henny?

**Eteng Ettah:** Hey y'all this is Eteng from MediaJustice and this is Volume One of "That's So Black" happening all Black History Month. Today I'll be talking about how mainstream media has profited off popular phrases and slang with roots in Black queer and trans ballroom culture. Terms like 'gas', 'queen', 'spill the tea', and 'hunty' were once considered underground but can now be heard everywhere.

Ballroom culture became popularized in the 1980s and 90s thanks to the groundbreaking documentary, "Paris is Burning." However, Madonna's single "Vogue," is an early example of ballroom being co-opted. Now we're in another wave of popularity with shows like POSE and Legendary. And with the prominence of social media, queer Black phrases become memes and blur the lines between internet and pop culture. The internet as we know is just another site for corporations to profit off of Black culture. What used to belong to us now belongs to everyone. White producers and mainstream outlets have access to our slang, our dances, and our jokes. They think they know it so well, they consider themselves the tellers of our stories. An example of racial capitalism in action. For example these are the guys behind shows Legendary and Queer Eye.

[image of three well-dressed, middle aged white gay men sitting together]

They own Scout Productions which has made \$60 million in revenue. It's all doom and gloom though, Black people always have and always will find ways to be the tellers of our own stories.

[footage of Amanda Gorman at the Presidential inauguration]

## **[second video begins]**

It's Eteng from MediaJustice and this is Volume 2 of "That's So Black," happening all Black History Month. Today I'll be talking about AfroNet, an early internet community base for Black people to connect with one another. The internet today could've been a



very different place if we'd prioritized facilitating connection versus monetizing clicks. Founded in 1993 by Ken Onwere and driven by volunteers, AfroNet was a hub to exchange messages, emails, and electronic bulletin boards among Black people in the US and Canada. The platform was open and free.

While many innovators in the early 90s were hyper-focused on how to commercialize the internet, AfroNet's engineering team prioritized connecting Black people. Black spaces on the internet became stunted in the late 90s and early 2000s due to the rise and dominance of Big Tech platforms and commercial advertising playing an increasingly large role online. As a result, Black digital spaces didn't receive the level of economic investment needed to sustain themselves, as opposed to the hundreds of thousands of dollars Google got in its early days, for example.

Since the internet's inception, Black people have always used the internet as an avenue to find our people. To learn more about how communities are fighting Big Tech today and continuing to create our own digital spaces, be sure to tap into our campaign and network programming. And remember, everything you know and love about internet culture came from Black people.

### **[third video begins]**

Hey y'all, it's Eteng from MediaJustice and this is Volume 3 of "That's So Black" happening all Black History Month. Today I'll be talking about #MeToo and how Black women have always used media and the internet to help keep each other safe from patriarchal violence. Since Black women were first brought to this country and subjected to control by white men, our bodies have not always been our own. This country's laws were designed to offer us no protection, so we've needed to seek community, safety, and justice through other means. Many Black women turn to media and pioneered a rich history of using storytelling to affirm our experiences and expose the unique harms we've endured due to racial capitalism.

Here are four times Black women used media, the internet, and cultural organizing to demand safety from harm and mistreatment. The most well-known and contemporary example of this is #MeToo which didn't garner mainstream media attention until a few rich, white women tweeted about it in 2017. However, the movement started over a decade before in 2006 thanks to the hard work of activist Tarana Burke and other Black women activists. The power of these two words



demonstrated the sheer prevalence of women and genderqueer people experiencing sexual violence. The cultural organization strategies that made the #MeToo movement so successful can be traced all the way back to slavery.

In 1861, Harriet Jacobs published her autobiography, “Incedents in the Life of a Slave Girl”, which exposed not only the evils of slavery, but the way sexual violence was used specifically to exert dominance over Black people. This book challenged the Jezebel stereotype that Black women were naturally promiscuous and couldn’t be raped. In fact, it was not legally possible for enslaved women to file rape charges against a white man in the South before 1861. However, Jacobs’ account became the most widely-read female slave narrative and the recognition of sexual violence enslaved women endured soon became a standard part of the argument against slavery. Black women now have somewhat of a foundation of which to demand justice as history marches towards the Civil Rights Era.

While most may know Rosa Parks for her participation in the Montgomery Bus Boycotts, she played an important role in Black women’s fight for safety and respect nearly a decade before. In 1944, Recy Taylor was attacked on her way home from church. Not looking to get justice from the police, the community, including Rosa Parks, and NAACP took up the case. Parks created the Committee for Equal Justice, flooding the community with flyers to demand justice for Taylor. Their canvassing efforts resulted in widespread press coverage and the now famous Chicago Defender headline “Victim of White Alabama Rapists” ran above this photo of Taylor. We would see a similar strategy about 50 years later, although this time in the era of broadcast television.

In 1991, Attorney Anita Hill testified that Supreme Court nominee Clarence Thomas had sexually harrassed her. Unlike anything we had seen before, Hill presented her testimony in a televised live hearing that reached millions of people in their homes. The pain in her face and the indifference in the Senator’s were on full display for all to see, sparking a fierce national debate over sexual and patriarchal violence that continues today. Throughout history, Black women have never waited to be given protection, a platform, or justice. We fought to keep each other safe from violence by using media to share community resources and strategies because we know true safety comes from community and not from police and prisons. Since we know history books aren’t giving these women their flowers, join us in celebrating these media pioneers





during Black History Month and every month. And remember, everything you know and love about the internet came from Black People.

**[Third video ends]**

**[fourth video begins]**

This is Volume 4 of “That’s So Black”. Today I’ll be talking about influencers and how they only exist because of Black culture. In the early 2000s, Ashley Weatherspoon tweeted #uknowurblackwhen and within 2 hours, the hashtag went viral. This would be the start of what we know now as Black Twitter. In 2009, Twitter broke the news of Michael Jackson’s death a full hour before ABC reported on it, giving the platform unprecedented clout. From Zola’s Twitter thread to Popeye’s Chicken Sandwich, corporations recognized Black social influence and profited from viral content. Practice isn’t limited to Twitter.

In 2014, Kim Kardashian appeared on the cover of Paper magazine. Whether intentional or not, this was a reference to Saartje Baartmann, who came to be known as a symbol of colonization. Less than a year later, Kim became the most followed person on Instagram with 44 million followers. Kim, and her family, whose collective net worth is \$2 billion have profited off their appropriation of Blackness, earning up to \$500 thousand dollars per sponsored social media. Kim walked so today’s TikTok stars could run.

According to Forbes, the top 5 highest earners on TikTok collectively brought in over \$55 million last year. No Black creators made the list despite Khaby Lame having the second highest follower count on the platform and the fact that most viral challenges are created by us. For example, Addison Rae’s routine to Meg & Cardi B’s “WAP” was viewed over 300 million times. The 9th most viral video on the platform of all time. Her content led to earning \$8 million dollars, film deals with Netflix, and branded partnerships. No matter the platform, influencers have taken their clout from Black people. And remember, everything you know and love about internet culture came from Black people.

**[videos end]**



**Nandi Comer:** I just like, you have to say it one more time for me, please, that last closing line please just say it live for us all.

**Eteng Ettah:** Absolutely. Everything you know and love about the internet came from Black people.

**Nandi Comer:** Yes, yes, oh-we might have to close it that way I'm sorry. I just really really was drawn in by these videos when they came out. There are so many connections that you're making, I love that. You're also not staying within, if we will say, the screen of the internet. You're making the connections and saying in the same way that your organization has, in the same that we've been talking about today, how Black folks have always accessed media and- and we've always accessed you know broadcast media. We've always accessed newspapers. Yet there is this kind of thing about tech. There's like a stereotype about tech and Black folk and the way that we engage in these spaces. And so I actually wanted to get into that a little bit about the kind of moves that we've been making on the internet that are disrupting stereotypes and disrupting the kind of ideas that people have, while also facing a lot of this like digital divide.

I want to ask you all about how is it working within that space where like this forgetting tends to happen. How is this forgetting happening? Who's doing this? And how can we as a community kind of work towards honoring and giving our people credit?

**Ophelia Overton:** That's a great question. So I think that it's one thing where in social media and in digital spaces where the more things get shared organically the creator can kind of get separated from their work and that is a mistake. And that's fine, but that's not really what we're talking about. I think that- it's much more systemic than that. It's not just like a 'Oops! I forgot to tag them.' It's like a very active, ongoing effort by mainstream creators, also by non-Black creators of color, to kind of actively profit off their proximity to Blackness. And so, like you were saying, the forgetting. It's very easy to kind of co-opt things like our slang and that kind of thing when Black people are just not part of the conversation. So it's very easy to credit when they're not involved.

And I think that that's what's been happening. And the point of these videos is like you're just taking something that we did and saying it's yours. And then not only doing that but making money off of it and that's obviously problematic for a lot of



reasons. And so- yeah I think that that's kind of where we're at, and Eteng I don't know if you want to add on to that?

**Eteng Ettah:** Yeah, yeah, absolutely. So it's so important to make sure, whatever content you're viewing, that you are uplifting and doing the proper attributions. Especially when we think about one of the functions of white supremacy and capitalism being dictating who gets compensated for their cultural contributions and who doesn't. And so we know in particular Black people are often not recognized or compensated so that's definitely one very specific action item as folks on the internet which, you're tuned in, so that's you- so keeping that in mind as you are navigating all the different platforms that you might find yourself on.

And particularly for Black people, Black people on the internet but also Black people who create content, we're constantly navigating this dual reality where on the one hand which we mentioned before that the internet is such a beautiful and dynamic place for connection and resources and- I love Black Twitter when we come around the table and we're like, watching a show together, or listening to Renaissance, so.

There's so many great things- so many great reasons why it's great to be Black on the internet. And then on the other hand, we're constantly having to navigate this extraction of that content- the jokes, the resources, all of that. And knowing that you know corporations and any entities that use the internet and social media to surveil folks, we know that that's something that we have to keep in mind. So not only is there the threat of whatever your content or your stories or what you're putting out there being separated from you, we also know that big tech companies, governments, etcetera are monitoring social media as a way to quell any organizing that might be taking place. Since we know the internet is a place where folks are sharing about injustices in their communities and asking folks to join movements and so...It's amazing in that the reach is incredible but then there's also that downside of extraction, exploitation, and surveillance.

**Nandi Comer:** Eteng, you like hitting all of the notes I was making. I mean I was like I was over here going, 'Immediacy' and you know I had my, I had it talking about those things, but I think I wanted to- I wanted you all to if you could just speak a little bit about the kind-while there is that kind of-we're gonna talk a little bit about where we have to be careful. But I want to celebrate joy a little bit more in these spaces too. Like, I



actually want to ask you two a little off the wall question a little bit about what are the things on the internet Black folk are doing these days that are like, got your brain kind of like going, 'Oh, wow, this is beautiful how this is happening.' We've been watching shows for a while on Twitter. But I'm just curious like maybe even if it was just a happening. It doesn't necessarily have to be a cultural phenomenon that we're always doing. But what is something that you saw recently you're like 'Mm-hm we did that?'

**Ophelia Overton:** That's a great question. The other- maybe it was last week or so, I'm just scrolling TikTok and I came along this creator, Kahlil Greene, and he had this great breakdown about you know there is always this tension of Gen Z vs Millennial and he's like it's actually not Gen Z vs Millennial, it's- like generational versus white people. So basically Gen Z sounds more Black, and that's why they're constantly criticizing Millennials for sounding white, and it's like no, it's really just. His breakdown was great because it is mostly about how close or far are you from people of color and it's more about that and how much proximity you're claiming, versus like how old you actually are, what generational cohort you belong to. So when I saw that I was like, 'that's different' and I love that. So yeah give him a follow on TikTok, Kahlil Greene. Just really great content also on like politics and history and stuff too.

**Eteng Ettah:** Yeah, I also love TikTok, always on there. The first thing that came to mind when I heard the question was the Cuff It Challenge that's happening. So me personally, I've only been listening to Renaissance, which is Beyonce's new album, since it came out. So 'Cuff It', I want to say is track number four. And there are tons of different viral dances to it, of course started by Black people. And so in addition to those videos where folks are doing the challenge there also been like sub videos where Black people are like, 'All right y'all, you need to move your hips we're seeing a lot of you struggling to do this.' So some tutorials about you know hip movement, and you know how to actually nail the dance, so. That'll be my answer.

**Nandi Comer:** I'm gonna share one that like has gotten me like- I just send her videos to everyone because I love how like we, while we are being very comical, we are also being subversive in a lot of our ways. So there is a woman who creates, a content creator who creates under clara bell hooks, and she upturns stories where if European Americans were the cultural other. And so there are moments where there is a Black



woman who is asking those kinds of microaggressions that we get all the time but very much upturned and it really reveals to folk like how we are experiencing dominant culture and how it's looking at our bodies and stuff so I would definitely check her videos out. They're hilarious.

It sounds serious but it's much more hilarious than it sounds. So I think that's one of things that I also love about us on the internet is that it is very much- the way that we are. I don't know if you, you know, in my family we often times we might be talking about politics, we might be laughing, we might be crying we might- but we do it all together. And it feels like in the end we find each other in those spaces in order to do that- and so we talked a little bit about the the dangers of being on the internet with surveillance and with our movements- also the attacks that we have, like we experience often times we have to really shore up our spaces so that people aren't entering in trying to cause harm. I actually wanted to ask you more about, like the network and how organizers are working to defend themselves against that or to shore up our spaces what are some of the things that are happening in our community right now that we can look at and say okay these are where we can go to like look for more security?

**Ophelia Overton:** That's a great question. I mean part of it is just talking about it, being aware of it, that's an ongoing conversation at MediaJustice, like Eteng mentioned earlier. This tension between like there are so many liberatory possibilities for this tech, but also they're programmed by people who have these biases so that's....Yeah, that's an ongoing conversation that we have, but more specifically, I actually wanted to plug our network team.

They are hosting a political education series this fall, and it's exactly like you were saying- How do we navigate these questions? So there is a workshop, there is a panel, an interview, going over things like misinformation, how to get consent in tech, healthcare in tech, and so...Yeah, these really dangerous times and so, we're proud to offer those workshops to our network members. So yeah, I think the first one starts next week actually so stay tuned for that.

**Eteng Ettah:** Yeah, plus one to everything about that. We love our network because it's a great place where folks are sharing digital security resources, encouraging folks to join campaigns whether as a partner or supporter. And so, I think I'm thinking about recently after the overturning of Roe V. Wade when we saw a lot like a sharp increase in



conversations about digital security, surveillance, in particular folks were asking you know folks who might be using period tracking apps, ‘Who has access to this data? And how do I make sure I'm secure on the internet?’ and so we know data- selling of our data is incredibly lucrative and so I feel like during that time was seeing a lot of folks sharing a lot of really great resources and things to just consider.

So, you know, like we've been saying before with this duality with the internet, it's a beautiful place and we want to make sure that we have the resources that we need in order to remain safe. And so, I was definitely obviously it was a mixture of emotions after that overturning but I felt very optimistic because a lot of people were really recognising the ways that you know okay let me make sure my tech is more secure let me take some time to read through the terms and conditions and consider the ways that- my information might be shared without my consent.

**Nandi Comer:** Before I ask my next question, I want to also turn to our folks that are on the internet right now who have tuned in. If you have questions for the guests we do have a little bit of time for questions from the audience. Please put it in the chat. I see that you all- I saw the applauds, all the yeses to the videos- and I just want to make sure that you know we're listening. We see y'all! Please if you have a question go ahead and throw it in the chat.

I was thinking when I when I was looking at the videos there was one moment about “everybody want to sing my song”, that's a quote that I always go with from a song

“everybody want to sing my song,  
but nobody wanna live my song.”

And I was thinking about how our lived experiences often times we are trying to share our lived experiences, we're trying to share our own narratives, but then they so easily get twisted and turned and- taken up and maybe even used by other people on other platforms in ways that we didn't intend it and- or people are dressing like us. And saying our exact words. Like literally like mouthing our words on their videos. And I was curious about how you- what are some of the kind of- what might be some advice you might give to people who are like starting to do, enter into this world, and thinking about their narratives, and thinking about what best way they can like reach out to a network, what are some of the kind of advice you might give the people out right now as they are just starting out?



**Eteng Ettah:** Yeah I can kick this off- yeah I would say it's really important to think about content ownership. And so- when you do put your content out on a Twitter, a TikTok, a Facebook and if something happens where, you know, routinely like Instagram will go down and then people immediately see the ripple effects. Especially if you're using Instagram in a way that's generating income, how very disruptive that can be- so sit-thinking through even though you'll use these platforms to disseminate your content, what does it look like if you have a newsletter, or if you have your own website- somewhere that you are thinking about, what is my digital archive and where can this live in the event something happens?

And like we've been talking before, like the types of media-shifts all the time especially with the internet there might be a new TikTok next month and so, thinking about your content in and of itself, and the social media platform as a vehicle. But if you don't have that platform, what are the other ways you can ensure that- you know your content won't get lost? And you would still have access to it even if the platform you're depending on- might shut down or yeah go offline for some reason?

**Ophelia Overton:** That is such a good point it does happen like way too often for-if that's your job. Like why is it going down?- but that's another conversation so. What I'll add is that honestly find your people! It is sometimes a long road to be like a content creator and so and this is something that we- I feel like MediaJustice is so good about, is like, everything is powered by people. The internet is for finding your people and so those times when someone is giving you a hard time, because you know it's inevitable sadly, like who's in your corner to kind of help you talk through that, think through that, maybe keep you from posting something angry before you do those kind of things that you might regret. Just to really have someone who's kind of like that check for you, it's support but also just someone to talk to about, like these issues are really frustrating and it's- they're really tangled and it's something that's going to take and has taken many years to even get to this point.

So have someone there for you, have other people that you can talk to about this, so it doesn't all feel so isolating. And it can be fun at times too! You know it's not all doom and gloom. But yeah, definitely find your people.



**Nandi Comer:** Yeah it's interesting because I mean you all think about like these platforms coming down but also, and this isn't, I don't want to doom and gloom it. But it's only because it happened to me recently, like your accounts can get hacked and you can like- you can lose access and if you become a visible person online, you are subject to those kinds of things and then you do have to have a backup plan.

Luckily that only lasted a couple hours, so- my question is really about thinking forward, thinking in the future, so we think about how much TikTok was being used pre-pandemic and then how much it's being used now. And you know I'm a- I'm a date myself I'm an old soul, I'm a pre-Facebook child. And so I'm a MySpace- I was a MySpace user there and- and I was just like you know thinking coming into this, I've seen so many of us go through so many platforms I've seen us move through so many spaces.

But I also have seen the difference of like, using handbills to promote protest. Or you know and going into doing event- event online-online events versus using like your flyers to promote your events. I was curious about like what do you- where do you see new inventive things happening for movement building from MediaJustice? What are some of the more exciting things happening, online and offline, that you find that our movements are using, accessing now?

**Ophelia Overton:** Yeah that's a great question and- something that and it's not necessarily organizing but the format of it I thought was really interesting in that Psyconic and Doja Cat kind of doing that stream. And, like for hours! Like five or six hours like it's just- I think we kind of had a pendulum situation where like, things were getting really short but then also now I'm seeing this comeback with like longer form content, where you can really get into a story, or like you really just want to be in the life of someone and I think that has so much enormous potential for, like the format, like regardless of what the message is, the format of it I found really compelling because for a long time people were like, 'Oh long form is dead' but I think it's making a comeback.

**Eteng Ettah:** Yeah and when you were saying that it was making me think about I guess this was later in 2020, but artists were doing long, like the two hour set on Youtube and so- yeah definitely speaks to an interest in that longer form content that you're thinking about. And when I think about the future and Black people on the internet, I one am always very optimistic in the fact that you know, looking at our long legacy of the ways





that Black people have used media that will still continue to be using the internet in whatever iterations it looks like in the future to tell our stories, our lived experiences for organizing, et cetera-

I'm also excited about Black people creating their own platforms. So we've talked a lot of doom and gloom about all the ways that these big tech platforms are really harmful, and so I'm excited about there's a platform called Somewhere Good. I saw that Black Planet is resurging, and so what does it look like to just build out our own ecosystem- where we know that we can continue to do all the great things and the beautiful things about the internet but it's a bit safer, it's free of surveillance, it's free of hate speech shit and all the other unfortunate things that Black folks experience and so- for folks out there watching if you have those skills, if you're a Black techie you know what it look like for us to really own that we have created our own platforms and- you know, Twitter needs us.

Black people very much made Twitter, it's not the other way around, and so really owning and stepping into our cultural power there and creating our own platforms so- and then also just add just in terms of MediaJustice, so Ophelia mentioned the fall political education series that'll be happening for our network members. Our campaigns team is currently running a petition against Ring Nation which is a new show that's supposed to premiere on the 26th but is all about broadcasting footage from ring video cameras. So, trying to make Black Mirror surveillance fun. It's like America's Funniest Home Videos-esque, so we're keeping an eye on that and then our communications team producing really great, innovative content so- a lot of great things that you know we're looking forward to at MediaJustice.

**Ophelia Overton:** Yeah and one other thing that I can plug, if that's okay is that actually we are going to be starting production on season two of "That's So Black," so like in the very immediate future this is a very exciting thing that's coming up and so-actually next week we're going to start reaching out and you know, putting out a poll, seeing what folks might want to do for next season, seeing what folks are interested in. So yeah if you follow us on social media we will be putting up that poll, but also if you just have ideas or want to collaborate, we would love to hear from you. So that will be, February will be here before we know it. So yeah that's under way. So stay tuned.



**Nandi Comer:** So, I'm gonna close it out with one question for you in thinking about the internet and how we are building this collective community and-but also thinking a little bit about our nostalgia for the-the days of the past and thinking about how we can look forward to like the future in like, I want to say like an- in 2053 and like a speculative fiction sort of world, what are Black people doing? What are we- how are we-what is the kind of space that we- how are we communicating? How do you - What would you love to see like if there were no kind of-boundaries there in- I'm like, Meta has come and gone. And we're like thinking about something else now, what is the space that you're just like, 'Ah! this is gonna be the glorious space for us' Because Black people are already defining it, so what are we doing?

**Ophelia Overton:** That's a really- I love this note, yeah there are exciting things to look forward to even though there's a lot of things that we need to deal with but I would say in twenty years, I would say that there's going to be a lot more community media. Like, people are really tired of these big internet service providers. They're challenging-come talk to us about it if you want. But I think that more and more we're gonna see community-built networks, and- like Eteng was saying, we've always been there, we've always been using it but now I think it's really reaching a tipping point where people really want- it's not enough just to be like, 'I have my own social media' like, what about 'I have input into my internet.' Or electricity or like the things actually power my life aside from just social media, which is important, but like internet at large. And it might also be treated more like a utility like these are things we need to live and thrive. And now we're in control of them, so. I hope and I think that's where we'll be then.

**Eteng Ettah:** Yeah I love that. Definitely manifesting that that future for us- yeah and I think there is definitely a ripple effect like- the lower the barriers are for creating your own media, I see it creating traction in leading to what that vision that you're speaking to, Ophelia. And I'll add I'm thinking a lot about immersion so when you said Meta, so not Meta, because we know that's weird and yeah- down Facebook but- yeah what does it look like to create immersive experiences that we are able to connect with one another even if we're not physically in the same space? So what could it look like if, you know I'm in DC, but I wanna be immersed in Detroit Black culture? What are the ways that the internet or some sort of technology could facilitate that in a way that's meaningful, that's connective and rich?



**Nandi Comer:** I love that. And you know you're also always welcome to come to Detroit and hang out with the AMP people and the AMC folk. We would love to have you. So, I- with that am going to leave it for the evening thank you so much for this conversation. It was really, lovely really beautiful. I loved seeing the videos. I wanna invite the audience on their website but also check out the videos- the other content that they've created on their own website, their social media, their YouTube channel has tons of resources that folks can check out and- look up the events they have coming up. They are really doing some amazing work.

**Ophelia Overton:** Thank you so much for this evening. Thank you for having us.

**Eteng Ettah:** Absolutely- Thank you so glad to be kicking off the series.

**Nandi Comer:** Now I'll turn it back over to Brenda Hernandez.

[no audio]

**Brenda Hernandez:** Sorry, everyone! Thank you so much for joining us today. Thank you to Nandi, Ophelia, and Eteng for their work. We're so excited to have kicked off the season with today's event. I'd like to apologize. We had a small tech issue that didn't allow for closed captions during the live event. But rest assured the recording on AMP's YouTube page will include captions. Our sincerest apologies to anyone that was looking for those captions.

I'd like to give a very special shout out to our incredible ASL interpreters. And the team supporting us behind today's event. We hope to see you at Seeds Cafe coming up right after this where you can get to know some of the people you were chatting with in the YouTube, and ask some questions and sort of- Yeah collectively reflect on what we've learned today. If you would like to share your thoughts on the conversation we'd love to hear from you please go to [bit.ly/seeds2022feedback](https://bit.ly/seeds2022feedback) We'd love to hear from you. Up next in the fall AMP Seeds series we have Bodily Autonomy and Care, Community-Rooted Development, and Sound Resistance, check out our website to register- it's going to be a great season. Have a good night!



See you later!

[music]

