

Posting for change

October 16, 2014 12:00 PM Benton Oliver
newwave@tulane.edu



Social media may be more powerful than we think, according to speakers at the 16th Annual Diversity Convocation hosted by the Tulane University Office of Multicultural Affairs. (Photo by Paula Burch-Celentano)

Social media may be more powerful than we think, mobilizing causes and shining a public spotlight on people who might otherwise have been silenced.

“Attention is currency and marginalized voices are finding an audience through the power of social media,” said [Mychal Denzel Smith](#), Knobler Fellow and contributing writer for *The Nation*.

Smith was one of several guest panelists who participated in the “Hashtags & Retweets: Activism and Social Media” panel discussion on Wednesday (Oct. 15) at the Tulane University Office of Multicultural Affairs [16th Annual Diversity Convocation](#).

“The power of social media is that we don't forget Marissa Alexander when the cameras turn off,” said Smith, speaking about the black Florida woman whose 20-year sentence was overturned recently after having fired a warning shot when her husband attacked her and threatened their child in 2012.

Smith focused mainly on black female activists during his presentation because October is Domestic Violence Awareness Month, using the turmoil in Ferguson, Missouri, and St. Louis as an example.

“From lynching to now, black women have been the freedom fighters whose names we don't know,” said Smith.

[Félix Manuel Burgos](#), a language lecturer in the New York University Department of Spanish and Portuguese, and Deon Haywood, executive director of New Orleans-based [Women With a Vision](#), also spoke, along with Tulane Department of Communication faculty members [Vicki Mayer](#) and [Mauro Porto](#).

The panelists also discussed instances in which social media helped mobilize a population against injustice. Burgos and Porto discussed social media's role in a 2013 Farmers' Protest in Columbia and 2013 demonstrations in Brazil concerning an increase in public transit fare and the economic consequences of hosting the World Cup.

“Social media brings far-off issues into our homes and lives, and in doing so, unveils similar issues closer to home,” said Haywood.

Benton Oliver is a senior at Tulane University majoring in music, communication and German.

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