Peace, Protest, Technology: How Communication Technology is Shifting Peace Organizations and Practices

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Join via Zoom: Contact jwinter@hawaii.edu for link

In May 2020, police killed George Floyd, marking the latest instance of state-sponsored violence against a minority. This set off waves of protests against structural racism and police brutality. While most of these protests were peaceful, the instances of violence were prominently displayed by the mainstream media. During these events, nonviolent so-called ‘Peace Teams’ activated alongside these and other related social movements, deploying tactics and practices to help demonstrators maintain nonviolent discipline and help keep protesters safe from sources of violence. Communication technologies were prominent within these teams as well, introducing new modes of organizational structuring and tactics centered on violence prevention while ostensibly seeking to support overall demonstration efficacy. The mediative role of communication technologies between Peace Teams and the milieu of organizational and individual actors raises fascinating and at times difficult questions about the relation of peace teams to local contexts, the methods of social justice, and how they curate and control interactions with other actors. In this talk, I will discuss my research on peace teams: how communication technology is enabling new nonviolent tactical practices, producing new modes of organization, and interacting with a more complex and evolving narrative around social movements in the United States today.

Richard Canevez (PhD, Pennsylvania State University) is a postdoctoral researcher at the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa in the School of Communications and recipient of the prestigious Computing Innovation Fellowship (CiFellows). He received his Ph.D. in Information Sciences and Technology at Penn State University in 2020, and a B.A. in Philosophy from the University of Michigan. He currently conducts research on how communication technologies and digital media are impacting social movements and state accountability processes, with a particular focus on the work of nonviolent peace activists and volunteers. He has previously conducted research with Indigenous communities on navigating the growing digital information ecosystem, including social media practices, the development of culturally-tailored STEM and computing education, and telecommunications infrastructure on reservations. He has also conducted research with refugees on telecommunications coverage within refugee settlements and the community impacts of mobile phone use and training.

Contact Professor Jenifer Sunrise Winter (jwinter@hawaii.edu) with any inquiries.