

There are issues with the paper, which is a collaboration between journalists, practitioners, and academics rather than just academics. It was made to prioritize timeliness and relevance to practitioners rather than perfect academic rigor. However, all objections currently raised in post-publication review are based on what is in the paper, and not outside contextual factors that were unknown during the review process: thus, to identify these issues *after* publication as reasons to possibly withdraw the paper is an abnegation of responsibility on the part of the journal in setting up the review process, and indeed (as we discuss further below) a capitulation to harassment as a strategy.

We first address concerns raised by the two post-publication reviewers alongside what we see as even more far-reaching concerns than what these reviewers identified. We present a reframing that would put our findings into a better and more defensible context.

Next, we address larger questions raised by the way in which the post-publication review was undertaken in the context of publishing about misinformation.

### CONCERNS ABOUT THE PAPER

From both the two post-publication reviewers and from our own deliberations, we identify two groups of concerns: conceptual, and methodological. Conceptually, we conflate sources of evidence from Twitter volume with the specific rhetoric of individuals, which creates several key logical gaps. Methodologically, we juxtapose two separate methodological approaches in an attempt to provide “triangulation”, but there is a missing link between them that weakens the argument.

However, we believe the paper can be reframed thusly: the core empirical finding is that *the content that receives the most engagement around the #ADOS hashtag relates to emotional grievances related to identity*, as compared to material grievances related to policy, or to cultural celebration, or to advocacy. The “grievances related to identity” is established by qualitative analysis, and the “most engagement” is established by analyzing the volume of tweets.

We would amend the paper to say: that finding does not mean that the other content is not present, or even in the majority on the production side, whether on Twitter itself or beyond what we considered on Twitter. Nor does it say much about the nature of this engagement (which, despite our manual investigation of the tweets that received the most engagement, might be more critical than supportive). We would also reiterate a point we make frequently in the paper, that the grievances in themselves are not unjustified.

This core empirical finding then supports an argument about how (legitimate) grievances are being strategically weaponized in harmful ways. We recognize that without being able to have evidence of intention, this is only an argument (about, for example, what is a dog-whistle) and not proof. Furthermore, what we label as “harmful” (such as xenophobia) is a value judgement.

As for the significance, or generalizability, of this reframed finding: it is an existence proof of the pattern of weaponization. However, like with any social media research, it is extremely difficult to measure how activity on social media affects activity off of social media, or indeed whether there is any effect. This weaponization may exist but not be present in any significant amount, when compared across platforms. This weaponization may exist but have no real impact, when considering the world at large. These are questions for which we currently do not have evidence, and which was not something we could have determined with the scope of the study.

## CONCEPTUAL CONCERNS

Subsequent to publication, and upon review as well as feedback from colleagues, we realize that there is a key logical and conceptual flaw in the paper. Namely, we never properly address the question of, or take a consistent position on, an all-important question: *who gets to speak for the term “ADOS”?*

There are several possible answers to this question:

- (1) Those who have claimed ADOS in organizational/institutional terms
- (2) Those who use the term on Twitter
- (3) Those who use the term online, both on Twitter and elsewhere
- (4) Those who organize under the term, such as in local chapters
- (5) Those who personally identify with the term
- (6) Those who fall into the category—Black American descendants of persons enslaved in the US—that the term seeks to codify and succinctly label

In our paper, we specify our boundary as Twitter, and more specifically, the use of the term ADOS on Twitter: that is, we define our scope to be in terms of (2). Whether this is a good boundary or not is something we address below; but an issue that exists regardless is how our rhetorical analysis is strictly about (1), but we then use (2) to argue for the generalizability of that rhetorical analysis.

We indeed fail to consider (3) in not taking into account activity on YouTube, as well as other possible venues—e.g., Clubhouse (although data collection there is not possible).

We also fail to consider (4), which may be in direct conflict with (1). For example, a politically successful local chapter in California (4) split with the ADOS movement’s self-identified founders (1) in January 2021. As in the Tweet below, the chapter is now being led by [@chrisorganizsac](#), who has broken from Carnell.



### Tweet



**Chris Sacramento Organizer** · 1/24/21 ...

Speaking for myself, as the elected 1st Facilitator and co-creator of the National Assembly of American Slavery Descendants, (& now its newly elected Secretary), id like to thank [@BreakingBrown](#) for her tweet, as well as her reparations advocacy. I wish her org the best of success. [twitter.com/BreakingBrown/...](#)

You're unable to view this Tweet because this account owner limits who can view their Tweets. [Learn more](#)

25 30 114

You're unable to view this Tweet because this account owner limits who can view their Tweets. [Learn more](#)



**IAM ADOS\_NORTHakaSUP...** · 1/26/21 ...

Tone don't even worry bout it. GUESS WHAT!! I'm still on your side and got yo back brother from another mother ❤️❤️

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This organization has been renamed National Assembly of American Slavery Descendants (“The Assembly” for short), and are on Twitter as [@naasd](#). Previously, while still under the ADOS banner, The Assembly is credited with the passage of [AB 3121](#), titled *The Task Force to Study and Develop Reparation Proposals for African Americans in California*. While this organization no longer associates as ADOS, and while this split happened after the period considered in our paper, it points to the nuance that is lost by considering people who have organized under the title “ADOS” as the same as those associated with the national organization, or the same as Twitter activity.

Abandoning the ADOS brand, perhaps people who agree with underlying justice claims but reject the toxicity that happens under the label, may be becoming a larger trend. For example, a blog that was previously titled “ADOS Health and Wellness,” and was a great example of engaging with the disproportionate effects of systematic racism on COVID-19 for Black American descendants of persons enslaved in the US under the ADOS banner (a co-occurrence around which we did not find making up any visible portion of engagement on Twitter, but this blog show indeed exists), has now renamed itself to “Freedman Health and Wellness.” Only the old use of ADOS in titles: Please find examples here: remains

<https://freedmenhealthandwellness.com/2020/04/07/pandemic-racism-can-ados-cope-with-the-covid-19-infection-in-a-racist-healthcare-system/>

<https://freedmenhealthandwellness.com/2020/03/16/the-effects-of-covid-19-will-hit-the-ados-population-worse-but-not-from-what-you-think/>

An open question, and one that we address when analyzing the larger context of this post-publication review, is the extent to which we can draw a link between (1) and (2). The only way in which these are connected are interpretations of “dog whistles” that maintain plausible deniability (for example, can we say that tweets that direct Twitter followers to “go after” a particular person or organization are encouraging harassment, or only calling for legitimate protest?). If we decide on a high bar for being able to reject plausible deniability, then we cannot say whether the content that is associated with the most engagement is informative about the nature of something that can be identified as ADOS.

For example, Cornel West (who had attended an inaugural in-person ADOS conference organized by Carnell and Moore) publicly distanced himself from the xenophobia associated with the ADOS movement, while praising Carnell and Moore as individuals during a podcast interview uploaded to YouTube on July 12, 2021 ([here](#)), granting them distance and absolving responsibility for how the ADOS content that receives the greatest engagement on Twitter relates to hostility and toxicity.

## **BOUNDARY SPECIFICATION**

Both reviewers took issue with how we limited our study to Twitter. As in much of social media research, we are restricted by what is available. We did also try using Crowdtangle, and did manually search Instagram, but did not find as much activity there (possibly because it does not exist, but more likely because it was not accessible). There were indeed posts related to ADOS, but it was harder to systematically track the extent to which there was engagement with this content. And, while we did look at resources on YouTube, we did not do a systematic analysis of content here because it would have taken much longer, and we prioritized making timely findings. Thus, if it turns out that the volume of relevant content on YouTube is both far greater than that on Twitter, and is fundamentally different in terms of the kind of rhetorical patterns we see, then it would be a serious blow to the *generalizability* of our findings. We maintain that the finding would still be valid within the boundary specification of Twitter, but again it may not be substantively meaningful.

Taking the specific example of the COVID-19-related video on YouTube that reviewer 1 considers: our findings should be reframed to say not that such content did not exist, nor that it did not receive engagement, but that it was not what received engagement in the context of the term and hashtag *ADOS on Twitter*. This is a far more limited statement, but one that we argue still reveals something about priorities and attention.

## **METHODOLOGICAL CONCERNS**

Reviewer 2, in particular, raised a number of concerns that we seek to address.

### **On Measuring Twitter Networks**

Reviewer 2 believes that a superior approach would have been to consider the networks of people who use the ADOS hashtag, rather than just volumes around the hashtag.

This was an approach we considered, and did considerable work towards. However, we ultimately did not formalize this analysis because the porousness of any boundary we tried to draw around a “network” would, we felt, make our findings indefensible. That is, it is certainly possible to collect networks, and we did so, but we decided that this was an inadequate approach. Our exploratory research also found that some Twitter networks (for example, “follower” and “friend” networks) could potentially introduce users into the network that were not actually ADOS adherents, given the numerous journalists and politicians that follow the most active ADOS members. We attempted manually sorting through these, but often there were not enough collected tweets to even have enough data to decide on where to draw a boundary. Relying on frequency counts from the Twitter firehose sacrifices content validity, but it achieves an unambiguous boundary.

Our collection relied instead on the most prolific hashtags associated with #ADOS, and we use these tweets to represent the major interests of ADOS participants during this period. This is similar to the approach taken by other researchers to construct online networks, such as Black, Feminist, and Asian-American Twitter (Freelon et al. 2018).

Freelon, Deen & Lopez, Lori & Clark, Meredith & Jackson, Sarah. (2018). *How Black Twitter and Other Social Media Communities Interact With Mainstream News*. Knight Foundation.

**To address some other specific objections from reviewer 2:**

“The replication materials posted on Dataverse also do not provide code to replicate the analysis of news stories.”

The analysis of news stories: this was done manually and so there was no code to replicate. Unfortunately, the third-party service through which we gained Firehose access only let us access Firehose tweets through a combination of a time series- and keyword-based search, and then manual investigation of results. We were not able to download tweets from the Firehose to conduct analysis more systematically.

“the authors do not discuss how they identified the news stories related to the frequency spikes in their data.”

This was done manually, by looking at the tweets and determining the content of the spike, again because the nature of the access precluded any other type of investigation. When the spike was associated with retweet activity, making it clear what was producing the spike, we offered the tweet as an illustration; but in other cases, we chose what we agreed as a team was a thematically representative tweet. However, it is possible that a given spike was the result of two overlapping underlying events, something we did not formally examine. We also do not distinguish which displayed tweets are chosen via judgement, and those chosen because of the number of retweets (and then what portion of the overall activity of that day is represented by those retweets).

“However, it does not appear that the article contains direct results reported from the timeline data, follower lists, networks, STM, or supervised machine learning.”

This is correct. The analysis, including reports generated by the scripts uploaded to dataverse, was conducted by the research team prior to the goal of writing an academic paper for this venue. That is, this is a description of the early, exploratory phases of the project, which formed the background understanding and context, rather than the source of the findings presented in the paper. We did not go into this point in depth, because of the constraints of the venue’s brief methodology section.

## CONCERNS RAISED BY REVIEWER ONE

“A plausible, innocuous alternative hypothesis, therefore, could be that the ADOS founders keep up a steady stream of ADOS-related commentary, but garner the most upvoting when events relevant to the African American community draw in wider audience participation.”

Based on our reframing, our findings are really only about what garners attention, and not necessarily about intention. However, see the section below about plausible deniability.

“To scientifically rule out this alternative hypothesis, the authors would need to show that the founders tend to mention #ADOS statistically significantly more often in conjunction with newsworthy events than not.”

## RESPONSE TO REVIEWER NUMBER ONE

We thank review 1 for their impressive investigative work and use of the Internet archive. In the end, the main/only objection raised about the paper was not about inaccuracy, but about the qualitative analysis not being sufficiently neutral and objective. We understand that examining contentious topics and groups on social media is difficult, particularly when those groups are sensitive to their borders and take great pains to ensure insularity and messaging. In this case, the majority of the research team self-identify as persons who, if given the choice, could use the term ADOS themselves (American Descendants of Slaves). We offer this reflexivity here to denote our positioning to the group and to be transparent about our subjective and objective capacity. **We disagree that this would rule out the alternative hypothesis;**

“The claim that the phrase “borders matter” is a play on “black lives matter” is not at all substantiated in the article. The authors offer no evidence against the possibility that @breakingbrown was simply expressing that borders are important via a perfectly ordinary usage of the word ‘matter’.”

We vigorously disagree that the use of “borders matter” is not a play on Black Lives Matter. However, we acknowledge that there is no “scientific” way to resolve this: we would first argue that Black audiences would immediately make that connection, although we have not verified that empirically (and, given that the important thing would have been how people interpreted it *at that point in time*, it is perhaps impossible to now test). Second we would argue, based on context, that this connection was made deliberately: Carnell has rhetorical savvy and knowledge of the Black community. But without being able to test intention, again this cannot be determined “scientifically.” See the section below, as well, on cultural competency.

“Why Nkonde et al 2021 feel that identity was the central thrust of the tweet is unclear”



This is again a qualitative, interpretive decision. “Top Cop Kamala Harris’ ’ is an attack based on her record; “not ADOS” is an attack based on identity. Again, it is based on a legitimate connection that notices how diaspora members outside of the descendants of persons enslaved in the US frequently exclude the concerns of that group (which we also make supporting citations about), and so the argument is not that the attack, in itself, is illegitimate; but it is an example of the pattern we identified and argue is illustrative of a larger strategic pattern that has harmful effects.

“Setting aside the authors’ unsubstantiated interpretations of the tweets themselves, the larger allegation (that ADOS activists exploit breaking news events to advance their agenda) bears reflection. Scientifically speaking, to justify this claim several alternative hypotheses would need to be discredited. Firstly, it is evident from Figure 1 that there is a steady level of background chatter on #ADOS throughout the course of the 10-month study period. A plausible, innocuous alternative hypothesis, therefore, could be that the ADOS founders keep up a steady stream of ADOS-related commentary, but garner the most upvoting when events relevant to the African- American community draw in wider audience participation. From this view, the ADOS founders are not timing their tweet strategically, but events relevant to the broader African-American community (Boseman’s passing, Biden’s announcement that Harris will be his running mate) accidentally lend them greater visibility. To scientifically rule out this alternative hypothesis, the authors would need to show that the founders tend to mention #ADOS statistically significantly more often in conjunction with newsworthy events than not. No such exercise is undertaken, however.”

In summary, while the rebuttal draws on some evidence from outside of the study’s data collection period, I generally find their criticisms to be justified. The argument by Nkonde et al 2021 appears to rely entirely on subjective interpretations of a handful of tweets tweeted by the ADOS movement’s founders, Yvette Carnellus and Antonio Moore. While these interpretative claims occur within an atmosphere of scientific method and big data, the role of these data and methods is never clarified, leaving the reader to wonder if they factored in at all.

### **STM Descriptive Analysis**

The exploratory phase of this study, which set the groundwork for the paper in question, adhered to the following analytic procedure:

1. Each week, the research team used the Twitter REST API to gather tweets using a number of ADOS hashtags, including #VoteDownBallot, #ADOS, #NoADOSunder1k (a follower building hashtag for #ADOS affiliated handles) and #ReparationsNow. We also looked at top #ADOS public users in specific geographic locations in the United States and made API calls to collect their timelines each week, in addition to making API calls to search the specific geographic locations for the above mentioned hastags. These various API calls began on 8/13/20 and concluded 11/11/20.
2. Within each week's API call, we conducted a number of descriptive analyses, including: frequency counts per day/hour; analysis of most shared links; most liked tweets; top tweeters; a brief network analyses of top tweeters; top hashtags, top mentions; top tweeting locations; word network analysis of all tweets for the week; and a superficial sentiment analysis.
3. Following descriptive statistics, if sufficient tweets (greater than ~5,000) were pulled within a given week, we conducted an STM analysis of tweets for that week. The STM analysis did not specify any prevalence variables, though sufficient data are collected via the REST API to make further analysis possible for all weeks.

Each week's API calls, including data and R code used, are saved as rmarkdown/ html files, and are available upon request for review.

### **VALIDITY OF FINDINGS**

While a paper agreeing with other academic or evidence subsequent to publication is neither necessary nor sufficient for determining if its publication was justified, it does help maintain overall confidence in the findings. We do note that, since publication the ADOS Foundation, Carnell and Moore's 501(c)(4) organization, has offered a position on the COVID vaccine: they position this as a personal choice and invite followers to "sound off," giving implicit support to vaccine hesitancy or denialism. Like much of the content that happens on Twitter around the term ADOS, there are deep systematic issues concerning the legacies of medical racism—but the most immediate way in which medical racism is affecting Black communities around COVID-19 is in not giving equal access to the life-saving vaccine [CIT], rather than (as in the past) using Black populations for experimentation.

	ADOS and COVID		
Year	Name of Target	Why	Link
2021	ADOS Suppoters	The ADOS Foundation seems to want to have a public position on COVID vaccination.	<a href="https://twitter.com/adosorg/status/1429815834797477890?s=21">https://twitter.com/adosorg/status/1429815834797477890?s=21</a>

We do however have evidence that Yvette Carnell was asking Black Americans not to vote in the Presidential Election, please find her remarks during an episode of CNN’s United Shades of America, that aired August 16, 2020, [here](#). And we continue to find evidence of their anti democratic message, associated primarily with the involvement of Kamala Harris in the 2020 presidential race, where the charge was that Harris was not really Black because she did not have blood ties to the United States. In 2019 Malcolm Nance, a counterterrorism and intelligence consultant for the U.S. government, [warned on Twitter that](#) ADOS were leading a cyber attack against Harris, making this behavior worthy of note. Please find some examples below.

	ADOS critique of Democrats		
Year	Name of Target	Why	Link
2019	Yvette Nicole Brown (actress)	Supporting Kamala Harris	<a href="https://www.dailykos.com/stories/2019/5/19/1856371/-We-should-be-discussing-reparations-for-slavery-Beware-those-with-a-right-wing-agenda">https://www.dailykos.com/stories/2019/5/19/1856371/-We-should-be-discussing-reparations-for-slavery-Beware-those-with-a-right-wing-agenda</a>
2019			<a href="https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/a-few-liberal-activists-challenged-kamala-harriss-black-authenticity-the-presidents-son-amplified-their-message/2019/07/07/f46c4b8a-9ccd-11e9-85d6-5211733f92c7_story.html">https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/a-few-liberal-activists-challenged-kamala-harriss-black-authenticity-the-presidents-son-amplified-their-message/2019/07/07/f46c4b8a-9ccd-11e9-85d6-5211733f92c7_story.html</a>
2019	Kamala Harris (VP)	For not being Black enough	<a href="https://slate.com/news-and-politics/2019/07/kamala-harris-not-black-ados-reparations-movement.html">https://slate.com/news-and-politics/2019/07/kamala-harris-not-black-ados-reparations-movement.html</a>
2019			<a href="https://theintercept.com/2019/02/13/ados-kamala-harris-cory-booker-russian-bots/">https://theintercept.com/2019/02/13/ados-kamala-harris-cory-booker-russian-bots/</a>
2020	Democratic People	They did not want Black people to vote in the 2020 Presidential Election	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gM4sOILHq-Y">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gM4sOILHq-Y</a>
2021	Joe Biden	To say why they did not vote for him in the 2020 Election	<a href="https://www.inquirer.com/opinion/commentary/biden-black-voters-reparations-american-descendants-of-slavery-20210127.html">https://www.inquirer.com/opinion/commentary/biden-black-voters-reparations-american-descendants-of-slavery-20210127.html</a>

## WHY IS THE ADOS MOVEMENT TARGETING THE MISINFORMATION REVIEW NOW

There are a number of academic papers about ADOS being published in communication journals, and a new one about to enter review. However, this article is public facing, and published at the time they secured their 501(c)(4) designation and launched as an [advocacy foundation](#). We assume this is so ADOS can receive the type of philanthropic donations received by racial justice groups during the 2020 Presidential Election (personal communication, Virgilio, 2021). The first attempt to align ADOS with the Black Lives Matter message occurred in August 2021, when the *Register Guard*, a local paper serving Eugene, Oregon printed a picture of a member of the American Descendant of Slavery movement asking for the Black Lives Matter movement to become focused on ADOS priorities: you can read the article [here](#).

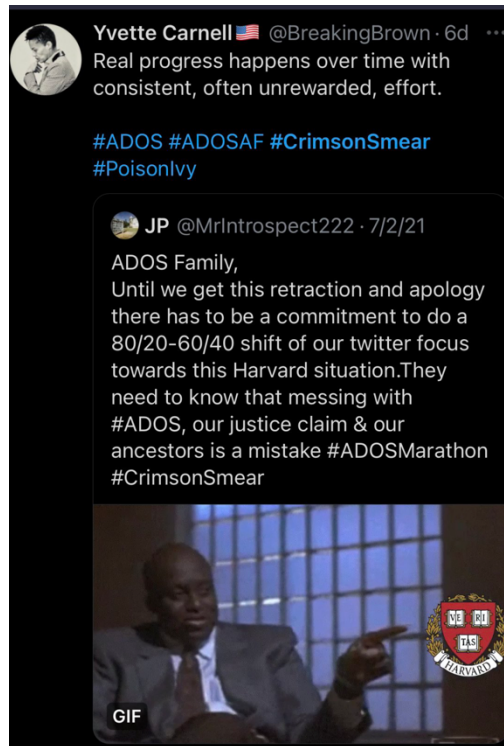
The post publication review of this article is part of ADOS's legitimization process. In their eyes, they launched a pressure campaign and *The Misinformation Review*—or, rather, Harvard University—acquiesced. This will be communicated as a “win”: that campaigns of harassment are successful, and (despite *The Misinformation Review* being a tiny part of Harvard) even powerful, legitimate organizations will not serve as effective gatekeepers against them. Of course, the gatekeeping role of powerful organizations is a mixed bag: historically, this has excluded positive movements outside the mainstream (especially racial justice movements), but now also covers excluding negative movements outside the mainstream like climate change deniers, anti-vaxxers, and the most blatant examples of “scientific racism” (although unfortunately negative influences within the mainstream are seldom kept out).

Another example of the strategy of prioritizing publicity and reputation is on display by how a compliment about the organization, offered by journalist Marc Lamont Hill during a interview with Yvette Carnell on the Black Channel News (BCN) network, is being circulated among their membership (watch the video from 01:20 [here](#)). This is being amplified on *blksitenews*, and *moguldum*, both of which are online locations for pro ADOS news, and could be used in future fundraising activities and beyond, read more about this tactic below:

	ADOS Legitimization Strategy		
Year	Name of Target	Why	Link
2021	Black Lives Matter Movement	BLM should advance ADOS ideology, this was covered by a local newspaper in Eugene, Organ	<a href="https://www.registerguard.com/picture-gallery/news/2020/08/04/black-reparations-group-calls-for-refocusing-of-blm/42134449/">https://www.registerguard.com/picture-gallery/news/2020/08/04/black-reparations-group-calls-for-refocusing-of-blm/42134449/</a>
		video of the interaction between Yvette Carnell and Marc Lamont Hill, key points current reparations video 01:20, ADOS vision 02:34 and Pan Africanism from 11:34	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zNuLO_cdaMc">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zNuLO_cdaMc</a>
2021	Black News Channel:	A compliment about ADOS activity is being circulated on a network of pro ADOS news sites	<a href="https://www.blvcklists.com/black_news/dr-marc-lamont-hill-ados-is-most-powerful-and-influ/2ef9faa6bed">https://www.blvcklists.com/black_news/dr-marc-lamont-hill-ados-is-most-powerful-and-influ/2ef9faa6bed</a>
			<a href="https://moguldom.com/367417/dr-marc-lamont-hill-ados-is-most-powerful-and-influential-group-in-reparations-conversation/">https://moguldom.com/367417/dr-marc-lamont-hill-ados-is-most-powerful-and-influential-group-in-reparations-conversation/</a>
			<a href="https://sw-ke.facebook.com/BreakingBrown/videos/3129687440588571/">https://sw-ke.facebook.com/BreakingBrown/videos/3129687440588571/</a>

## TIMING OF THE MISINFORMATION REVIEW'S LETTER OF CONCERN

This article was published in January 2021 and attracted little attention until members of the American Descendant of Slavery (ADOS) launched a targeted networked attack on the authors, what they saw as the supporting institutions and funders of this work at the beginning of July 2021, see below.



(We note that we took great pains to cite evidence in support of the underlying *justice* claims of reparations for Black American descendants of persons enslaved in the US, and indeed also of the sources of cultural grievances such as the greater wealth and prosperity of Black immigrants, and negative cultural attitudes among Black immigrants to Black American descendants of persons enslaved in the US. Conflating attacks on the activity that happens under the ADOS label with attacks on the justice claims of Black American descendants of persons enslaved in the US, positioning ADOS as the only legitimate way to pursue those reparations, is a common tactic).

The attack on Shorenstein is in line with their attacks on journalists who draw attention to the divisive nature of ADOS rhetoric. The first time this came to the attention of the paper's authors was in 2019, after a segment on the Joy Reid Show discussing ADOS activity aired on MSNBC, please see attacks on Nikole Hannah Jones, Roland Martin, and Farah Stockholm, below. In the text exchange between Nkonde and Donovan on July 12, she seemed to be unaware of their behavior and made it clear she saw a problem with this paper, rather than viewing ADOS' harassment of staff at the Shorenstein Center, as part of their standard operating behavior. This analysis seems to be missing in this process. Please find an example of their journalist strategy below:

Year	ADOS Journalists		
2019	Name of Target	Why	Link
2019	Shireen Mitchell (researcher)	Discussing ADOS on MSNBC	<a href="https://www.buzzfeednews.com/article/ryancbrooks/black-activists-twitter-bots-2020-election-trolls">https://www.buzzfeednews.com/article/ryancbrooks/black-activists-twitter-bots-2020-election-trolls</a>
2019	Joy Reid MSNBC	Demanding an apology after a segment about them	<a href="https://www.change.org/p/joy-ann-reid-respect-the-ados-community">https://www.change.org/p/joy-ann-reid-respect-the-ados-community</a>
2020	Nikole Hannah Jones	They say she stole ADOS talking points	<a href="https://threader.app/thread/1282481052104220672">https://threader.app/thread/1282481052104220672</a>
2020	Farah Stockholm (NYT)	Writing and article on ADOS when she called them trolls	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2019/11/13/reader-center/slavery-descendants-ados.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2019/11/13/reader-center/slavery-descendants-ados.html</a>
2020	Black Journalists	ABC News Did A Story on Them	<a href="https://abcnews.go.com/US/controversial-group-ados-divides-black-americans-fight-economic/story?id=66832680">https://abcnews.go.com/US/controversial-group-ados-divides-black-americans-fight-economic/story?id=66832680</a>
2021	Roland Martin (journalist)	For being of Haitian ancestry	<a href="https://abcnews.go.com/US/controversial-group-ados-divides-black-americans-fight-economic/story?id=66832680">https://abcnews.go.com/US/controversial-group-ados-divides-black-americans-fight-economic/story?id=66832680</a>
2021		Critiquing a segment Martin did on Biden	<a href="https://twitter.com/BrianCJohnson10/status/1432909834840649728">https://twitter.com/BrianCJohnson10/status/1432909834840649728</a>

### **WHY THIS PAPER SHOULD NOT BE USED TO DELEGITIMIZE THE CALL FOR REPARATIONS**

We also recognize that delegitimization of ADOS can be used as a way to delegitimize reparations—just as US conservatives used the communist support of the Scottsboro Boys as an excuse to deny the legitimacy of their justice claims (a case we specifically cite in the paper).

While it is incidental to any questions about the validity of the paper, we want to state unequivocally: we support reparations, and believe that Black American descendants of persons enslaved in the US form a distinct group with a specific legal and moral claim to reparations from the US government specifically. While we do not believe that this is the *only* group of Black Americans or members of the African Diaspora that deserve reparations, or that the United States is the *only* body against which descendants of enslaved persons have reparations claims, or that slavery and segregation are the only things for which reparations are morally



due, these do not dilute the specific, pressing claims for reparations that are owed to Black American descendants of persons enslaved in the US.

Indeed, the paper is not about the lack of legitimacy of the claims made under the banner of ADOS, rather than seeing the evidence we cite showing those underlying claims as legitimate being “gotcha” points at which we refute ourselves, such evidence is central to our argument. Legitimate claims are being weaponized. It is a frequent strategy to frame critiques on activity that happens under the banner of ADOS as attacks on those under sense (6) of ADOS, (those who fall into the category—Black American descendants of persons enslaved in the US—that the term seeks to codify and succinctly label). But there are plenty of supporters of Black American descendants of persons enslaved in the US, including supporters for the moral and legal bases and pressing moral need for reparations now, who reject the narratives, framings, and activity that happen under the banner of ADOS, or the specific individuals who have positioned themselves as the leaders of the movement occurring under this term. We reject their claims to being the only legitimate group pursuing reparations, or their strategy based on grievances and xenophobic dog-whistles being the only way to pursue reparations.

Recognizing Black American descendants of persons enslaved in the US as a legitimate cultural identity, developed over centuries and existing outside of and predating conservative misinformation (and even liberal erasure) is crucial to recognizing the historical legacy of violence that impacts this group. Our position is that the concerns of this community are not separate from, but interconnected with demands for reconciliation and redistribution throughout the African Diaspora against colonial powers, regardless of their involvement in the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade. As members of the larger Black and African communities, we see reparations for Black Americans as empowering all of our claims moving forward, and creating resources for intra-diasporic support mechanisms that do not currently exist. We also recognize that the larger diaspora often fails to reciprocate the solidarity given by Black American descendants of persons enslaved in the US, and that this needs to change. To separate the liberation of one group impacted by anti-Blackness and the racialized hierarchy that spread through colonialism from others—whether that exclusion is of Black American descendants of persons enslaved in the US by members of the larger African diaspora, or exclusions under the banner of ADOS of Black immigrants to the US—based on the differences in the nature of the mechanisms of violence and dehumanization they were exposed to as a group, is harmful and was not the intention of this paper.

## **THE IMPACT RACE AND GENDER ARE PLAYING INTO THIS PROCESS**

Our interdisciplinary team represents many disciplines, and professional backgrounds, including an Assistant Professor at the State University of New York at Buffalo whose research interests include using computational social scientists to understand the development of online social movements, a disinformation investigator who at the time led investigations at MoveOn and now works for Twitter's disinformation team, a journalist and social media manager, and an academic data scientist.

This is a largely female-led team that includes Black scholars from other communities of color. According to text exchange between Nkonde and Donovan, this is not an expert team. Further to this, Donovan shared that the Misinformation Review has been targeted by groups highlighted by authors but no action has been taken to appraise this work. The author team therefore cannot help but assume the decision to enter into a post publication review is driven by the implicit and explicit race and gender based biases of the reviewing team, as well as a lack of concern for the health of Black online communications.

## **LIMITS OF THE REVIEW PROCESS: LACK OF CULTURAL COMPETENCY**

It seems that the post-publication review was done by individuals who did not understand the role cultural engagement has played in advancing the ADOS message. We theorize that Carnell and Moore seek to advance anti-immigrant sentiment among people using the ADOS hashtag using cultural products, because their followers have an emotional connection to the figures in Black histories being discussed. Communications scholars argue that this emotional connection to the character reduces the cognitive barriers to our persuasion (Murphy, Frank, Chatterjee, Baezconde-Garbanati, 2013). We used the death of Boseman in this context. The reaction to this event that gained the most engagement under the #ADOS hashtag was offered as an example of how engagement under the banner of ADOS differs from engagement not under this banner. Instead of just expressing shock, the tweets under discussions illustrated how they used this incident to advance anti-immigrant sentiment.

The first campaign ADOS levied against a Black group was through the critique of film. For example, in 2019, ADOS launched a campaign against the film *Harriet*. They used it as an example of how foreign-born nationals displace Black Americans in the labor force. While a perfectly legitimate point, they used this case study to launch Project Takeover, a campaign ADOS developed to embed anti-immigrant sentiment into the NAACP and the Urban League. It is unknown how successful this campaign may have been. However, the NAACP's Southern Burlington County chapter did cancel a planned screening of *Harriet*, upon the advice of an ADOS supporter. The attacks were also levied against the movie extended beyond the actress. ADOS members also targeted Barry Jenkins, the Oscar-winning director of the film. He discussed this experience with journalist Hannah Nikole Jones, another ADOS target, during a 2021 interview in the *Hollywood Reporter*. ADOS attacks on Black people are largely viewed as "trolling" by the mainstream Black community, who engage in strategic silence (boyd and

Donovan, 2018), along with colleagues at peer institutions receiving the same types of attacks. We are therefore shocked that a journal housed at an academic center that is the home to one of the authors of pathbreaking inoculation strategy would engage with the critiques with a group that have been attacking journalists from the *New York Times*, *Buzzfeed*, *MSNBC*, as well the administration of legacy civil rights groups since 2019. Please see below:

Year	ADOS Narrative Strategy		
	Name of Target	Why	Link
2019	NAACP	NAACP Southern Burlington County Cancel Harriet screening because of ADOS	<a href="https://www.inquirer.com/news/new-jersey/harriet-movie-naacp-comcast-civil-rights-law-1866-cancels-screening-new-jersey-20191028.html">https://www.inquirer.com/news/new-jersey/harriet-movie-naacp-comcast-civil-rights-law-1866-cancels-screening-new-jersey-20191028.html</a>
		The movie Harriet was used to encourage ADOS members to join legacy civil rights organizations and take them over	<a href="https://www.inquirer.com/news/civil-rights-comcast-adosp-naacp-takeover-chapters-new-jersey-harriet-20191115.html">https://www.inquirer.com/news/civil-rights-comcast-adosp-naacp-takeover-chapters-new-jersey-harriet-20191115.html</a>
2019	Cynthia Erivo (actress)	Black British actress playing Harriet	<a href="https://thegrio.com/2019/07/25/british-actress-cynthia-erivo-faces-harriet-backlash-due-to-past-tweets-mocking-black-americans/">https://thegrio.com/2019/07/25/british-actress-cynthia-erivo-faces-harriet-backlash-due-to-past-tweets-mocking-black-americans/</a>
2019	Black people in Hollywood	They only want Black Americans to get Black parts	<a href="https://medium.com/@alethas3019/the-new-blackface-has-a-black-face-663eb56dc2c3">https://medium.com/@alethas3019/the-new-blackface-has-a-black-face-663eb56dc2c3</a>
2019	Idris Elba etc	They argue Black Americans are being erased	<a href="https://twitter.com/behembaba/status/1159990155823984640">https://twitter.com/behembaba/status/1159990155823984640</a>
2021	Barry Jenkins (film director)	Casting Non Black Americans in Black films	<a href="https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/tv/tv-features/barry-jenkins-nikole-hannah-jones-1234950961/">https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/tv/tv-features/barry-jenkins-nikole-hannah-jones-1234950961/</a>

## **POLITICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

Lastly, we wish to express our disappointment that these issues were raised by the MisInfo Review post-publication. While post-publication review is a normal, if rare part of academic research, the founders of the ADOS organization (and now, 501(c)(4) organization) will not be the last to raise strenuous objections to having (potential) misinformative or disinformative narratives identified, and this should be something that the MisInfo Review is prepared for in advance.

The paper was a collaboration between practitioners and academics and represents compromises to make that collaboration happen; if this had been a purely academic project, this would likely have been the first draft in a series of revisions that may have taken more than a year before acceptance. Indeed, the venue explicitly advertises itself as providing relevant materials for journalists, policymakers, and other practitioners, and prioritizes timeliness. We do not get timeliness for free; it either requires balancing competing interests, or an influx of far more resources (such as having the additional reviewers, perhaps even doing the replication, before rather than after publication).

This means that the MisInfo Review has a heavy burden to prepare for challenges that will come up based on the nature of its topic, and will need to decide how to balance rigor, timeliness, and resources, or else its experimental model will have failed. Misinformation thrives on plausible deniability. There might be an accidental convergence between "Black Lives Matter" and Carnell's use of the phrase "borders matter"; any Black audience members who immediately grasped a dog-whistle argument being made between racial justice and the need for xenophobia might have simply been mistaken. Similarly, Tucker Carlson might be honestly expressing spontaneous opinions, and it might be a complete accident that his opinions completely resemble white supremacist ideology and talking points, such that we do not have grounds to hold him accountable for mere resemblance. This is certainly a principle that has been and will continue to be exploited by promulgators. The more we allow for plausible deniability, or for some grace given to possible innocence of "intentions", the less grounds we will have for combating misinformation.

Lastly, for the MisInfo Review to pass on the post-publication burden to authors to defend their work against rejoinders from misinformation agents is creating a disincentive for people considering whether or not to put themselves in the crosshairs by participating in the study of misinformation. Instead of using Harvard's institutional power to shield authors from blowback, the publication risks becoming a lens to focus greater blowback on authors. At the very least, it should put resources into raising these issues pre-publication, rather than post-publication. Conversely, if it is not willing to back up authors publishing on controversial topics, it should reconsider whether it is capable of publishing a relevant, timely misinformation publication generalizable to the whole US population.

