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Blaagaard, Bolette

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Bolette B. Blaagaard

# Postcolonial Critique in Practice: A Case Study of Citizen Media Resistance to Mainstream Media Discourses on Race

**Abstract:** This chapter focuses on how postcolonial social movements and their citizen-driven and -producing media bring light to the crisis of public engagement on race and racism in Danish society as it is produced in journalistic discourse. The chapter argues that despite theoretical and academic postcolonial and anti-racist critique, journalistic principles and practices continue to produce a public of racial ignorance and disregard for marginalized and minoritized people. The chapter explores the discourses of race in Danish legacy media and public and in particular the crisis management of the discourses in journalism, suggesting that postcolonial critique is practiced by social movements and their citizen media producing publics of postcolonial resistance. This practice enables on the one hand disruption and contestation towards mainstream journalistic reporting throwing journalistic representation into crisis, and on the other hand a journalistic reassertion of principles and practices which help sustain the criticized racial ignorance. The discussion and analysis are built on a case of 46 newspaper articles and 37 social media posts from BLM-DK's site about a racially charged murder on the Danish island of Bornholm in 2020 and the subsequent media coverage.

**Keywords:** Black Lives Matter Denmark, citizen media, legacy media, postcolonial critique, racism, murder on Bornholm 2020

## 1 Introduction

The chair of Black Lives Matter's Danish chapter (BLM-DK), Bwalya Sørensen, recently wrote on her Facebook page that she had lost her trust in legacy media's, i.e., mainstream mass media's, coverage of criminal and crisis situations. She was writing this following a tragic mass shooting in a Copenhagen shopping center in July 2022. But the reason why she doubted the journalistic performance of reporting the news on the mass shooting was grounded in a murder case, which took place two years prior. In the summer of 2020, a Tanzanian-Danish man was brutally beaten to death on the Danish island of Bornholm. It came to light that the white killers were friends of the victim as well as sympathizers of right-wing ideology, thus presenting an ambivalent discourse of racial interactions. Initially,

the Danish print and television media did not pay much attention to the murder. However, encouraged by the social movement BLM-DK as well as other citizen-driven media outlets, media and journalistic institutions sent reporters to the island to cover the police investigation into the events. Still, even after the murder had achieved public attention the focus of legacy media vexed Sørensen, BLM-DK, and other citizen-driven media producers: The racial underpinnings of the murder, to their minds, were down-played to benefit the more benevolent narrative of friends' quarrel gone awry. The coverage, then, was not only focused on the procedures of policing and carrying out justice but adhering to journalistic protocol the reports gave equal space to the two parties in the story: the victim and the murderers. Citizen-driven and activist media and BLM-DK's push to get legacy media to cover the murder only resulted in the journalistic practice deliberately ignoring the racial aspects of the murder, while focusing primarily on the friendship between the victim and the perpetrators. Moreover, the reports continued to circle back to the implicit as well as explicit critique leveled at the journalists' own practice by BLM-DK and others, dismissing the charges laid at their door. Thus, legacy media's circumvention and dismissal of the accusation by BLM-DK led to Sørensen losing her trust in the journalistic practice's ability to report fairly and suitably to all Danish citizens and residents.

I begin this chapter by relaying Sørensen's doubts and wariness because it speaks to the crisis of journalistic practice in a postcolonial society, which remains largely unacknowledged in Danish journalism. This chapter focuses on how postcolonial social movements and their citizen-driven and -producing media bring light to the crisis of public engagement on race and racism in Danish society produced in journalistic discourse and argues that despite theoretical and academic postcolonial and anti-racist critique, journalistic principles and practices continue to produce a public of racial ignorance and disregard. However, the chapter suggests that postcolonial critique is practiced by social movements and their citizen media producing publics of postcolonial resistance.

Building on a case of 46 newspaper articles and 37 social media posts from BLM-DK's site about the murder on Bornholm and the subsequent media coverage, the chapter explores the discourses of race in Danish legacy media and public and in particular the crisis management of the discourses in journalism. I start by discussing journalism theories of participation in relation to postcolonial critique to frame the analysis and argument. I proceed to present the empirical selection and notes on methodology followed by the analysis and conclusion.

## 2 Participatory and postcolonial journalism

Journalism has long been defined through the informational, educational, and civic virtues of the practice and profession (McNair 2005; 2013); “the fuel, the raw material of public opinion” (McNair 2005: 26) that as a mediated reality is in charge of presenting the audience with “a version of reality, constructed according to rules, codes and conventions which we associate with journalistic discourse” (30, italics in original).<sup>1</sup> Although the idea of objectivity has long been discussed, disputed, and rejected in scholarship as well as practice (Ward 2004; González and Torres 2011), it remains that journalism achieves accountability and trustworthiness by adopting journalistic or ritualistic objectivity through protocols and principles of telling both sides of a story and ensuring facts are verified by two independent sources etc. Journalism, then, is able to appropriately inform and educate a citizenry that believes the journalistic reports to be true “regardless of their ideology or political bias” (McNair 2005: 32) and thereby produce a politically engaged and common public. This appeal to the largest number and desire to bring people together is what Géraldine Muhlmann (2008: 6) calls unifying journalisms, which “means honouring a pact with the public, which allows journalists to aspire to a collectively acceptable approach” (10). Unifying journalisms may have many faces, but common to them all is that “the gaze of the journalist says ‘I’ and ‘we’ at the same time” (23). Seeing through the journalists’ eyes means adopting and rallying behind their perspective.

Public and participatory journalism (Glasser 1999; Singer et al. 2011) have intervened in professional journalistic practice with a style of journalism that engages more directly with its audience. Public journalism aims to make journalists activists on behalf of the process of self-governing (Glasser 1999: 3, 15), while participatory journalism refers to the interaction between professional and citizen journalists (Singer et al. 2011: 2). In this way, the collective perspective is sometimes produced through close interactions with local communities and may also present a more collaborative approach supported by technological possibilities that allow citizens to comment and discuss journalistic stories. Participatory journalism retains the journalistic desire to bring people together under a common understanding of the facts and is therefore still a unifying practice despite the citizen engagements. The dissemination of the universally accepted standards of journalistic frames and principles assumes a cultural resemblance and connection among the readers, viewers and listeners of journalistic news and features (Anderson 1991; Carey 1992). These soft structures of storytelling (Papacharissi

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<sup>1</sup> Parts of this theoretical discussion are previously published in Dindler and Blaagaard (2021).

2016) embedded in journalistic discourse are instrumental to the political understanding of the public. The resemblance among the community members is tested through journalism that presents the audience with a conflict through the resolve of which the common identity as the center of public space is reaffirmed (Muhlmann 2008: 28). The attempts at engaging the community from the ground up, still frame the news using journalistic principles and therefore rarely go beyond the assumption of cultural resemblance. In sum, despite ambitions of universal standards and inclusive and unbiased reports, journalistic principles and practices produce homogeneous communities of people.

The consequence of the journalistic ideology and practice rehearsed above is the topic of much scholarship. In his ground-breaking study of “how racism comes about and how it is perpetuated by the [white] Press,” Teun van Dijk (2016 [1991]: 5, emphasis in original) asserts that racism is produced and reproduced discursively, socio-culturally and continuously through talk and text. Because the media and, mainly, the societal elites, who are the primary sources of the press, control this (re)production, they “may be seen as the major inspirators of and guardians of white group dominance” (6). Moreover, in van Dijk’s earlier work on news journalism in The Netherlands and the United Kingdom, he finds that the media play a vital role in forming public opinions about minority groups. Thus, “the mass media provide an ideological framework for the interpretation of ethnic events” (7). These sentiments are echoed in work by Danish scholars, exploring the history of representation of visible minorities in the Danish national newspapers and tv-stations (Andreassen 2007), the discursive constructions of racist attitudes in the Danish public sphere (Hussain 2000), and migrant media consumption (Christiansen 2004). These studies position minorities in the role of ‘a societal problem’ and opposition to a national construction of ‘us,’ i.e., the white majority (van Dijk 2016 [1991]: 18; Andreassen 2007: 238). Indeed, the stereotypical, criminalized, and peripheral representation of minorities is an all too familiar and long-standing discourse found in communication and media research. For example, Stuart Hall et al. (1978) identify how news-making is an ideology-producing process that constructs newsworthiness according to a supposedly ‘objective,’ but white perspective; Edward Said (1997) writes about the political discourse of the everlasting Muslim stereotypes in the United States’ news; and John Downing and Charles Husband (2015) argue that due to journalism’s organizational structures it reproduces (negative) racial relations. Ariadne Matamoros-Fernández (2017) argues that editorial practices and policies continue to be embedded in libertarian ideologies that privilege a white and Western bias. These ideologies, she argues, are moreover extended into the digital realm. From this perspective, journalism is faced with challenges on organizational, discursive, and ideological levels. These challenges of journalistic reproduction of racist dis-

courses, ideology and organization are met with resistance and in turn produce the crisis in trust in journalistic practice.

### 3 From participation to technological critique

Focusing on the minority press in the United States, Juan González and Joseph Torres (2011) cover an extensive but mostly overlooked part of the journalistic profession. At the turn of the century, the mainstream journalistic profession – challenged by new election laws and wider-spread literacy – re-invented itself in the image of science and objectivity (Schudson 1978). However, underscored by the technological developments of the telegraph, which preferred short and easily digestible phrases, the re-invention resulted in a stereotypical representation of minorities and an exclusion of their voices (González and Torres 2011: 137–160). Meanwhile, the minority press contributed to the history of journalism in wide-ranging but parallel publications, which covered the communities and their political and social struggles for civil rights. The black press distributed its first publications in the 1820s. The newspapers and pamphlets produced news on a range of topics concerning black America, and they were far from all about enslavement and emancipation, writes Todd Vogel (2001: 1). Throughout the centuries, the black press debated diverse topics, such as “trade unions, the Spanish civil war, and cold war consumer culture.” In this way, the black press serves to stitch African American experiences into the fabric of the white mainstream. Likewise, in Denmark, David Hamilton Jackson produced and edited *The Herald* in the Danish colonies in the Caribbean (Blaagaard 2018). On the pages of this newspaper, Jackson created a far-reaching community connected to the black press in the north while seeking social reforms akin to the reforms that developed in contemporary Denmark.

While these examples show the powerful social performativity of journalism, Allissa V. Richardson (2020) convincingly argues that in the current context, black journalistic community building takes place on X (formerly known as Twitter) by means of witnessing the implications of societal politics and policing. On Black Twitter, “black people are using smartphones to create video evidence for each other – especially in instances of documenting excessive police force,” writes Richardson (2020: 17); however, “[they] are making these videos for external audiences too. They want to set the record straight in many cases.” As Houston A. Baker (1994: 15, 31) puts it: “[. . .] there is a continuity in the development of black publicity rather than a recurrent novelty” that focuses on the critical and creative “efforts, strategies and resources for leadership and liberation.” As the minority press

and the minority communities that follow continue to insist on having their voices heard and their significance recognized outside the bounded minority press, the white legacy media is challenged from yet another angle: While the reproduction of racial structures persists on the organizational, discursive and ideological levels, white legacy media is also facing the critical memory of minority communities disputing the very legitimacy of journalistic ideology and thus challenging its boundaries and throwing the journalistic practice into crisis. The postcolonial critique of journalistic practice and principles arising from minority communities cannot be seen independently from technological developments and not least their usage.

Arguably, the technological redeployment for the benefit of minority voices is a postcolonial practice. What was once a device for phone calls and connection becomes a tool for political acts of resistance. Rayvon Fouché (2006) writes that Black vernacular technological creativity is “the innovative engagements with technology based upon black aesthetics” (641). The creativity spans a continuum from weaker to stronger expressions. Fouché presents the Black vernacular technological creativity as redeployment in which technologies are being reinterpreted and used beyond their intended or imagined purpose. This is a critical approach to technology that through reappropriations and mash-up’s rethinks technology’s abilities. Reconception of Black vernacular technological creativity is expressed as a usage which subverts the purpose of the technology. I would characterize this approach as a deconstruction of technology because it shows the underlying abilities of the product, while also re-evaluating its potential. Finally, Fouché theorizes Black vernacular technological creativity as re-creation as a practice which brings about new material inventions on the basis of older and discarded technologies (642). This is the decolonization move in Fouché’s theory. In re-creating technology, Black vernacular technological creativity not only reinvents or re-evaluates, but it fashions another and independently positioned technology. If we are to understand Fouché’s use of the term technology in Foucauldian terms, Black vernacular technological creativity is broadened to encompass the everyday practices of African Americans (Fouché 2006: 640; Steele 2021: 32). “The move away from the object, to the person or the community, creates new opportunities to study the ways those marginalised engage technology within their everyday lives” (Fouché 2006: 650).

## 4 Notes on method

Considering the discussion above, this chapter explores the crisis in trust in journalistic practice and the resistance to racist discourse that are present in contemporary Danish journalism. The journalistic and social media coverage of the murder

on Bornholm in 2020, only a few weeks following the murder of George Floyd in the United States, presents us with an opportunity to gain insight and reflect on the discursive formations taking place. I am therefore deploying a discursive reading inspired by Stuart Hall (2002 [1997]) and supported by Gillian Rose (2016) in the cases of visual discourse. The analyses are based on articles in major Danish national newspapers published between 25. June and 31. August 2020. The articles were retrieved by use of the digital archive Infomedia using the search strings: “mord” (trans: murder) and “Bornholm.” The digital archive search for legacy media articles produced 46 articles and opinion pieces on the murder on Bornholm. For the social media posts, the time frame was 25. June to 12. December 2020, i.e., from the first post announcing the murder of the Tanzanian-Danish man by link to a newspaper article and six months onwards. All manually retrieved 37 posts related and referred to the murder as the main topic and not only as a side note or example in relation to other issues. The expansion of the time frame when concerning social media posts was chosen to achieve more equity between the empirical data sets collected from respectively legacy and social media.

The selected media posts and articles make up a critical case study (Flyvbjerg 1991) of media discourse in postcolonial societies that will help answer the question of how postcolonial social movements and their citizen media bring light to the crisis of public engagement on race and racism in Danish society produced in journalistic discourse. While the data contain a variety of discussions and themes,<sup>2</sup> this chapter focuses on the discursive formation built around the contention between legacy and citizen media’s participation and public engagement with the actors in the crime.

## 5 A Black man murdered or a tragic tiff among friends

From the beginning, social citizen media and legacy media chose to frame the news of the murder of the Tanzanian-Danish man on Bornholm very differently. BLM-DK’s initial post about the murder (25.6.20) is a reference to a national newspaper introducing the linked article with an indignant comment ending with “GET YOUR KNEES OFF OUR NECKS.” The comment presents the murder victim as a successful man, who had recently graduated from engineering school. “For

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<sup>2</sup> For further discussions of the legacy media articles see for instance Dindler and Blaagaard (2021) and for social media posts and discourses see Blaagaard (2023).

Black people or people of African descent it may provoke psychological or physical violence to succeed”,<sup>3</sup> writes BLM-DK. The murder is to BLM-DK a part of structural racism that oppresses people of color and punishes them for being “TOO professional. That is not allowed either.” Especially three posts by BLM-DK that announce a demonstration against the focus of the police investigations and the media’s coverage (17.11.20; 19.11.20; 23.11.20) stand out. Similar to the initial post announcing the brutal murder with the words: “GET YOUR KNEES OFF OUR NECKS,” these three posts feature text in English. One post references the last words of an African American man killed by the police in the United States, Eric Garner, before he lost consciousness and later died in a police chokehold in 2014: “I can’t breathe.” Both “GET YOUR KNEES OFF OUR NECKS” and “I can’t breathe” are phrases that have since become associated with BLM demonstrations and resistance internationally. The phrases allude to the suffocating invisibility of racism, argues Apata (2020: 242), which “has shifted its target from the black body as the object of subjugation and oppression to air.”

The second post invites people to join the demonstration and catches the followers’ eyes with capital letters in yellow spelling out “A man was lynched in Bornholm.” Lynching of course was the practice of white people terrorizing, torturing, and killing African Americans with impunity, particularly associated with the United States’ white supremacy organization the Ku Klux Klan. Finally, the third post calls for attendees to the demonstration across a black and white photo of people on a bus holding placards with slogans such as: “Freedom’s wheels are rolling” and “The law of the land is our demand.” The photo is from a demonstration organized by the so-called Freedom Riders, who were part of the United States’ Civil Rights Movement in the 60s. The words, concepts and images used in these posts all suggest that racism is a large-scale, transnational problem that is sustained through time and across space as an immovable structure. The images function as intertextual elements which allow BLM-DK to draw on the social imaginary of United States’ historical fight against racism, police violence and the prison complex.

In contrast, when reporting on the murder legacy media reject the claims of racism by using Danish authorities to counter argue and by using headlines such as: “Chief prosecutor wants racism speculations about killing removed: – people should have the real picture” (TV2 26.6.20); issuing a “warning against a people’s court” (BT 03.7.20); writing “the spokesperson for Black Lives Matter, Bwalya Sørensen, is convinced that the killing of a 28-year-old man on Bornholm earlier this week is racially motivated. The prosecutor, the police and the defense attor-

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<sup>3</sup> All comments originally in Danish are translated by the author.

neys say that there is nothing to suggest that” (Politiken 26.6.20); arguing that “chief prosecutor, Bente Pedersen Lund, says that the killing probably happened because of a personal relationship between the two accused men and the victim that went horribly wrong” (DR 26.6.20); and quoting the charring judge that it is “terrible that people are telling half-truths” (JP 4.7.20) and “the police don’t see a racial motive – but online another theory rules” (JP 27.6.20). From these assertions in headlines, it emerges that in the eyes of the authorities, claims of racism is a local and personal ‘conviction,’ speculation, or a threat to institutionalized rights. Legacy media trump the claim in a collegial interview with a journalist, who wonders “why several [people] have chosen to read a political dimension into a speculative case such as this” (KD 13.8.20). Thus, it could be concluded that, to the journalist, race is political, subjective, and speculative and therefore out of bounds to journalistic factual representation. Moreover, while racism to BLM-DK is a transnational and trans-temporal issue of oppression and resistance to Danish legacy media it is a local and separate incident leading to coverage without much historical and geographical context.

The argument for racism defined by personal intent is carried out by using authority sources such as local police, defense attorneys, and chief prosecutor, as well as friends of the accused’s (and later convicted) family. Journalists moreover spoke to researchers and professors of law, ethics, and statistical methods. Only one newspaper found it relevant to talk to a researcher of racism (Arbejderen 7.7.20) and two spoke to people of color from Bornholm with no relationship to the accused and convicted (Zetland 3.7.20; Berlingske 12.7.20). The discursive formation of racism as a field of contention and debate therefore forks into convictions and arguments aligned with legacy media on one side and citizen media on the other. Moreover, the bifurcation underscores the grounded perspectives of which words and sources to use. While legacy media attempted to undermine the credibility of activists such as BLM-DK, by letting them be explicitly contradicted by experts and by arguing for a decontextualized and hyper-local presentation of facts as they were presented by the authorities, BLM-DK connected the murder and a fair media coverage to a transnational struggle for civil rights, arguably pointing to a blind spot in the legacy media coverage.

## 6 Portrait of a murderer

Given the above, in the following I want to focus on how the accused and later convicted murderers were portrayed by legacy media and by BLM-DK. Taking a starting point in BLM-DK’s posts on a possible racist motive for the murder (27.6.20; 28.6.20; 3.7.20), I start by highlighting the particularity of citizen media’s

ability to communicate visually and with irony. Following I bring into the discussion three reports by national newspapers *Information* (2.7.20), *Politiken* (6.7.20) and *Berlingske* (12.7.20), which implicitly and explicitly respond to the critique leveled at legacy media by social media. In the articles, the reporters have traveled to the island and written feature articles all including discussions and analyses of the claims of racism and personal portraits of the accused. I argue that the newspapers reinstate a color-blindness through the principle of balanced reporting that erases experiences and perspectives.

Only a few days after the news broke about the murder, BLM-DK posted an image (27.6.20) of the leg of one of the accused, sporting a large tattoo with two swastikas and “white power” written in letters running almost from the knee to the ankles. The image was capped: “There is nothing to suggest a racist motive for the murder on Bornholm. The accused’s leg.” The first part of the caption referred to the official line, which had already been reported by legacy media. The second part connected the image to the accused and left it up to the viewer of the post to connect the dots laid out by BLM-DK. The following day (28.6.20) another post presented a mash-up of a still from the movie *American History X* in which the lead role is played by actor Edward Norton. The image is in black and white and shows Norton’s character with spread-eagled arms and a smirk on his face. It is a still from the scene in which the character has just killed a Black man and the police are about to arrest him. Norton’s character has a large tattoo of a swastika on his chest. In the background posters with the inscription “White Lives Matter” are superimposed onto the image. The image is capped “Bornholm authorities be like . . .” and in the image the text is repeated: “Nothing suggests a racist motive” and ‘signed’ “The media and authorities.”

Along with posts of this kind, BLM-DK initiated a letter-writing campaign in which supporters could write newspaper editors and urge them to cover the potential racial perspective on the case. *Politiken* (6.7.20) mentions this campaign along with the critical remarks from public intellectuals, which made the paper take action. Under the subheading “media come-back,” *Politiken* continues in the analysis by laying out what other reporters have found out about the accused. An article by *Information* (2.7.20) is referenced. The newspaper *Information* had gained access to documents and articles stating that the accused and their mother had mental health issues and were diagnosed with Asperger’s Syndrome and ADHD. In lyrical tonality, the article says: “20 years ago a young woman moved to Bornholm. She was recently divorced, and with her she brought three sons.” The article continues by narrating how the eldest son was fine and succeeded in life, but things were difficult for the two younger sons, who eventually were diagnosed with a variety of mental health issues and challenges. While the youngest brother was violent and volatile, the middle son, the article went on, told antise-

mitic jokes. Among other things, he knew the lyrics in their entirety to the racist song *White Man Marches On*, which features in *American History X*.

Despite these damning portrayals, *Information's* reporter continues the report by talking to the chief prosecutor, who repeats the ambivalent assertion that there is a "personal motive" to the murder, which apparently rules out a racist motivation to murder. Also, a friend of the deceased and the murderer is interviewed further pushing back against claims of racism, arguing that the victim and the murderer were friends. The friend rather believes the swastikas, the racist and antisemitic jokes and the interest in far-right politics, were merely a ruse to be provoking and funny. She mourns two friends, she says, because she lost both the friend who was killed and the friend who killed him. This narrative of loss is repeated in the newspaper *Politiken's* article (6.7.20), when another female friend of the accused says: "I have lost three very good friends, but I have no considerations for the two brothers and what they did. Michael [a pseudonym for the victim supplied by the newspaper] didn't deserve that, and not in the way it was carried out."

While the visual discourse of inked swastikas and white supremacy runs across the two media modalities, legacy media clearly make an effort to dig deeper and show a nuanced picture of the accused murderers. Behind this effort, arguably, lies the journalistic principle of showing both sides of a story, achieving balance in reporting if not objectivity, irrespective of the gruesome and visually supported facts of the case. Whereas BLM-DK's visual representation presented the issue with an irony, which assumed an audience in agreement and with the political persuasion that would allow them to understand the suggestions of media and procedural injustice against people of color, the strategy pursued by legacy media resulted in a discourse which at times teetered on the edge of blaming the victim. The lengths to which legacy media were willing to go to humanize the two brothers accused and later convicted of murder rested on their vested interest in supporting the initial editorial decision to not cover the story as a racist hate crime. Despite legacy media's interest in a common public, they produced an audience in agreement but in opposition to that of BLM-DK, de facto splitting the narrative along racial lines and thereby diminishing their own claim to objectivity and giving way to a crisis in trust.

## 7 Two sides to every story?

Legacy newspaper *Politiken* (6.7.20) explicitly claimed they spoke to no one who believed that it was a racist murder, however, *Berlingske* (12.7.20) and *Information*

(2.7.20) did. Still, all three newspapers underscore the social inequality on the island of Bornholm and the family's diagnoses: "A picture is emerging of a family characterized by social and mental problems, which have been allowed to escalate out of control" (Information 2.7.20). *Berlingske* (12.7.20) writes about "structural reasons for the violence" when referring to social issues rather than structural racism, and *Politiken* (6.7.20) quotes a friend of the murderers' family for saying:

If we put all the pieces together, all we know, and we were sat at a party and had to tell the person next to us what had happened, then it would be about a family who should have had help. If we make it into a question of racism, nobody sees what may have driven the family to where it ended up. At present, I think it is wrong to use this case as documentation for racism, if it leads to covering up another important problem.

This quote speaks to the collective findings by the newspapers: Racism is political and debatable, while social inequality is a factual, reportable, and relatable issue. Racism is intentional, social inequality is structural. Telling the murderers' life story in details and interviewing their friends gives the story a human face and with it comes sympathy. Indeed, social inequality removes guilt from the perpetrator and places it at society's door. Arguably, however this is good and balanced reporting: showing both sides and keeping to the demonstrable facts. However, it only works if we are all unified in our understanding of perspective and import such as medical records and court documents, on which legacy media drew. In Danish society, racism is clearly not documented and put on record. Indeed, the journalistic process of drawing on institutional experts reaffirms their value and claim to a unifying perspective. As discussed in the theoretical framing section of this chapter, journalistic practices and principles are grounded in a desire to connect to a unified public through the means of factual reporting to which we may all agree. The principles are based on a decontextualized view in which facts cannot and should not be interpreted. Thus, in the discursive production of a unified public, homogenization of experience and perspective inevitably occur.

Citizen media have allowed alternative perspectives to emerge and be heard. BLM-DK's campaign to put the murder on the media agenda succeeded but also hit a wall of self-preservation tactics instigated by legacy media. Authority sources, focus on social issues rather than racism, and a particular linguistic tonality, which rendered racism "speculations" and "rumours" and social inequality a collective responsibility underscore the unified perspective. But inconsistencies in reporting remain. For instance, why is racism in the articles understood to be political and social inequalities not? Why would a mental health diagnosis and social struggles be implicit explanations for the crime committed in the articles and not racism? Why are the murderers simultaneously portrayed as friends of the victim and therefore not racists, and portrayed as friends of the victim and yet

inescapably his killers? The questions point to an unspoken collective experience, which – it turned out – was not shared by all. It is a collective experience in which racism is not present, but social problems, stigmatization of mental illness, and casual racism among friends, are. The questions need interpretations of context and culture to be answered or to be avoided in reporting, which are qualities Danish legacy reporters evidently did not possess in this case.

## 8 Concluding notes

Postcolonial social movements and their citizen media brought light to a crisis of public engagement on race and racism in Danish society and produced in journalistic discourse, by pushing back against a journalistic coverage which did not take all citizens and residents into account. The response from legacy media resulted in a loss of trust in their ability to encompass the differing experiences of life in postcolonial societies. Arguably, the loss of trust produces a loss of inclusion and inevitably a loss of the unified public. This crisis of journalistic representation and practice in postcolonial societies is grounded in journalistic practices that count on cultural resemblance to report on and simultaneously create a common society and politics through discourse. Social movements and their citizen media produce alternative publics of postcolonial resistance which bring journalistic crisis to the fore. However, if citizens lose their trust in the fact that they are encompassed in the public which is produced by legacy media, citizen media lose their ability to stitch differing and alternative experiences into the fabric of the white mainstream media and publicity – the crisis is then expanded beyond the media to public life itself. In light of this, the case of the murder on Bornholm and the following media coverage and critique shows us the importance of inclusive and race-critical media. Moreover, the case illustrates that while inclusiveness may be common-sense to some Western media in postcolonial societies, others – such as Denmark and Danish journalism – have a long way to go.

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