# "United Breaks Guitars": Examining <Corporate Responsibility> in Anti-Corporate Protest Music

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*Abstract: When Canadian singer Dave Carroll's guitar was broken on a United Airlines flight, he expected compensation. After a year-long battle with the airline and no results, he vowed to record and release videos for three songs about his ordeal on YouTube. This paper takes a critical-rhetorical approach to the study of this case. Rhetoric allows us to understand the implications of discursive and mediated choices on messages and society. Carroll's act of protest demonstrates musical dissent, made even more apparent through his use of media. This paper examines the anti-corporate protest function of his songs through the lens of the ideograph <corporate responsibility>.*

"Thanks for the heads up! I won't fly United anymore either…"
(Viewer comment on United Breaks Guitars)

When Canadian singer/songwriter Dave Carroll's guitar was broken in March 2008, due to alleged mishandling by United Airlines baggage personnel at Chicago O'Hare International Airport, he expected financial compensation for its repair. After spending nine months following the traditional corporate complaint avenues and still being denied payment, he vowed to write, perform, and release on YouTube three songs with music videos detailing his story. When the first music video, "United Breaks Guitars," garnered millions of hits within days of its release, Carroll became a media sensation.

To date, the United Breaks Guitars (UBG) trilogy has accumulated over 12.7 million YouTube hits. UBG Song 1 has nearly 11 million views on its own.[1] According to London's Daily Telegraph: "The massive global reach of the site [YouTube] and diverse audience means even weird and wonderful performers stand a good chance of being spotted by other web users and

building up a cult following" (Beaumont and Warman 2008:35). Carroll is just such a performer. Carroll's original goal for his YouTube project was to get "one million hits in one year" from the three songs combined (Carroll 2009). Eclipsing his goal nearly tenfold in less than a year, he also attracted international media attention. His saga was retold in the blogosphere with stories from the likes of Terry Maxon, aviation blogger for the Dallas Morning News; Christopher Reynolds, staff writer and blogger for the Los Angeles Times, and a mention in the Laugh Lines blog hosted by the New York Times (Maxon 2009; Reynolds 2009; "United Breaks Guitars" 2009). The songs received traditional print coverage from Canadian national papers like The Sudbury Star based in Ontario, U.S. sources like The Chicago Tribune, and international sources including The Daily Telegraph and The Guardian (Johnsson 2009; Nasaw 2009; Russell 2009; Vaillancourt 2009). In addition to print media, Carroll was invited to appear on The Early Show on CBS and received significant coverage on CNN's The Situation Room with Wolf Blitzer (CBSNewsOnline 2009; CNN 2009). In the first four months after his story broke, Carroll did over 200 interviews (RightNowTechnologies 2009). This attention from various forms of media translated into enough buzz to make Carroll a YouTube sensation. Given all of this attention, we must ask ourselves, what is it about these songs that generated such a stir in this cultural moment?

In this article I will examine the UBG trilogy to understand how these songs have functioned as a form of mediated social protest and the implications this use of the media will have on future social movement studies. In order to more fully understand the phenomena rhetorically, I argue that these songs implicitly exhibit the ideograph <corporate responsibility>. Michael Calvin McGee proposed ideographs as particularly useful in political rhetoric as it "reveals interpenetrating systems or 'structures' of public motives" (1980:5).[2] To begin, I analyze the relationship between music and ideology, which is followed by an examination of ideographs and their potential for song-based deployment. Then I offer a brief reading of all three songs and how they exemplify <corporate responsibility>. Next comes a discussion of <corporate responsibility> shaped around historically recent uses of the ideograph. The paper concludes with an explanation of larger implications for social movements when social media are used in similar fashions.

## The Play of Ideology in Music

In order to coherently make the argument that this song trilogy displays the ideograph <corporate responsibility>, I first articulate my position that music

can and does contain and inflect ideological commitments. Music, like other cultural texts including dance, food, clothing styles, and poetry, manifests ideology. I consider "music" for this study to be the deployment of sound (instrumental, environmental, and/or vocal) in time, which represents ideas, emotions, and ideologies. This definition is necessarily broad so as to encompass the genre and style of the music in the trilogy without excorporating musics that are not generically or stylistically similar.

To understand the link between music and ideology, I start first with the associations between music and identity. In his book, *Performing Rites: On the Value of Popular Music*, Simon Frith states: "Musical taste, in short, is now intimately tied into personal identity; we express ourselves through our deployment of other people's music" (Frith 1996b:237). This conception goes beyond the choice to simply listen to music, extending it into everyday personal choices and habits such as modes of dress, hairstyles, and attitudes toward the world. M. Elizabeth Blair agrees: "Behind each style of music there is a local scene where involvement with the music and its accompanying fashions becomes an important part of the lives of the fans" (1993:23). The ability to experientially place ourselves within cultural narratives is a vital element to identity construction based on the ways in which we make sense of the world(s) in which we live. Those involved in local scenes are then able to place or inscribe identity on other listeners based solely on appearance and use of fashion as an identity statement stemming from musical involvement. Similarly, Frith argues that "identity is not a thing but a process—an experiential process which is most vividly grasped as music. Music seems to be a key to identity because it offers…a sense of both self and others, of the subjective and the collective" (1996a:110). In these assembled sentiments Frith moves beyond linking music with identity to equating music with identity. His equation is persuasive, as music and identity are so inextricably linked that they can become inseparable. Music reflects and creates culture and identity at the same time that culture and identity reflect and create music.

A consequence of equating music with identity is the ability to argue that if a listener identifies as a fan of country music, for example, they ascribe (at least in part) to the ideology (ideologies) found in that music. In their editorial forward to a special issue of the *Journal of Musicological Research*, Kay Dreyfus and Joel Crotty argue that "ideologies attach themselves to music" (2007:86). In that edition, they define ideology in a simplistic but musically relevant fashion: "we understand [ideology] to mean a set of ideas that attaches itself to music in its social and political contexts" (2007:86). Inherent in this definition is the position that music and ideology are inextricably linked.

It is clear that linkages between music, identity, and ideology can also

be articulated across genres, styles, subcultures, and in the work of other critics. Michael Newman frames his genre analysis of progressive and conscious rap with the assumption that music displays ideology (2007). He argues that progressive rap music "in fact supports a strong capitalist ideology," focusing on the monetary goals of both the singer and the listener (2007:131). Moving beyond Newman's assumption, Fernando Pedro Delgado argues: "rap also serves as a highly visible, syncretic vehicle for disseminating critiques of the dominant social order and expressing ideological rhetorics" (1998:96). Delgado's claims link Chicano rap as a music genre to the ideology of the Chicano community. In his arguments, music does more than display an ideology, it exposes the underpinnings of a racialized group thus solidifying group cohesiveness and identity. He also argues that the ideological function of music is especially prevalent in today's mediated environment: "In an information and entertainment age, [Chicano rappers] illustrate that entertainment forms are a very effective means of disseminating ideological discourses" (Delgado 1998:109). Similarly in his book, *Sound Targets: American Soldiers and Music in the Iraq War*, Jonathan Pieslak assumes the link between music and ideology in his examination of the use of rap and heavy metal music among soldiers, writing: "When I speak of metal or rap ideologies, I refer to the systems of beliefs and sociopolitical ideas represented and projected, respectively, by these musical genres" (2009:136). Here it becomes clear that music does more than just displaying ideology; music also has the potential to disseminate, promote, and inform others of ideological commitments.

Ideology also plays loudly in the music of other subcultures. Take for example the riot grrrl movement of the 1990s. Lisa B. Rundle describes the riot grrrl movement as an "in-your-face, pull-no-punches, do-something-about-it, space-claiming, brutally honest, and anti-all-kinds-of-oppression and, as if you needed more bang for your feminist buck, a screaming-out-loud kind of fun" (2005:31). In this description it is clear to see that music was a space for the riot grrrls to cite their feminist ideals and to musically externalize their identity. The ideology of the movement comes out as one in which the riot grrrls are no longer willing to accept the various forms of oppression under which women have conventionally suffered. Susan Hopkins argues that in listening, performing, and identifying with the riot grrrl movement, "Riot grrrls had apparently appropriated characteristics usually reserved for men and boys, they were loud, aggressive, angry and assertive. A loud woman was a powerful one, as the riot grrrl slogan said" (1999:12). Ann Powers of The New York Times reports that Christina Kelly, editor of Sassy magazine in the early 1990s, commented on the changing nature of feminism at the time reporting that riot grrrls, "don't want to be seen as objects, but at the same time, they're not

afraid to use it as a power thing. Women are valued as sexual objects, so the riot grrrls are going to go ahead and take that and use it to get power" (Powers 1993:1). The riot grrrls were able to articulate their frustrations and ideology at the same time as they empowered themselves through music.

In each of these extended examples it becomes clear that ideology is intrinsically present in, and can be disseminated through, music regardless of genre. Music has the potential to display ideology through its deployment of emotion, lyrics, text, and instrumentation; it is a key factor in identity formation, deployment and performance of ideology and it serves as a means to both reflect and create culture in its mediated form. Furthermore, these examples also demonstrate how ideologies in music can speak to, for, and about entire movements or subgroups and work well beyond artist opinions. While Carroll is not a rapper or a riot grrrl, his music carries ideological commitments in a fashion similar to these examples. Equipped with this background, I will move forward to a discussion of how, through this identity/ideology formation, music can also exhibit ideographs—specifically <corporate responsibility> in the case of UBG.

## <Corporate Responsibility> in Ideographic Formation

In 1980, Michael McGee theoretically proposed the ideograph as a complex "one-term sum of an orientation" or a single word that stands in for an ideology (7). He thought of ideographs as "basic structural elements, the building blocks, of ideology" (1980:7). For example, people who deploy the ideograph <equality> are revealing their entire ideological orientation based on how and when they use the ideograph. Without such foundational ideographs as <equality> above, it would be difficult not only to summarize but also to form and communicate ideological underpinnings. As such, he argued that ideographs "signify and 'contain' a unique ideological commitment; further, they presumptuously suggest that each member of a community will see as a gestalt every complex nuance in them" (1980:7). In that way, ideographs are immensely helpful not only in unique communities but also in the community of scholars as they dictate a way of perceiving the intentions, feelings, and persuasions of those using particular ideographs at specific times.

Since McGee's initial proposition, a number of rhetorical scholars have used and extended his theory and definition to their own ends. Jason Black interprets ideographs as "common terms that a given culture has been conditioned to believe and understand" (2003:314). Bryan McCann adds:

"Ideographs are the key terms and slogans of a culture that define what it means to be part of a system and how one should behave toward that end" (2007:385). As cultural markers, ideographs are relevant to both individual and social interpretations of identity and ideology, and as such they have the potential to influence group behavior. Trevor Parry-Giles identifies the power inherent in ideological and ideographic determination, writing: "Ideological shifting and ideological power emerge from a community's symbolic environment and from the ability of rhetorical leaders to utilize and express a cultural vocabulary in powerful and persuasive ways" (1995:192). Additionally, as implied in the above discussion, the meanings and connotations of ideographic terms can change over time. Celeste Michelle Condit and John Louis Lucaites traced the change in the ideograph <equality> over time in the American context in order to understand how the meaning of the word and the assumptions of ideology have shifted since the word was first deployed in the process of colonial settlement (1993). As rhetorical tools, ideographs help us understand both the historical and contemporary ideological orientations of a given community.

The deployment of ideographs in music is indicative of the ideological formations of the singer/songwriter as well as their listening audience. When ideographs appear in music there is a level of assumption at work. The singer/songwriter assumes that the listening audience knows what is meant by the ideograph in all of its complex formations and the audience assumes that the ideograph is being used in a manner consistent with the way in which they understand it. That said, it is not true that all audience members will recognize an ideograph in its deployed form or even that an artist necessarily intended to use an ideograph with its complex array of connotations. As with other forms of communication, ideographs in music may be unintentional, unrecognized, or even misunderstood.

In the next section I read the UBG trilogy with an ear toward its implicit deployment of <corporate responsibility>. I use <corporate responsibility> here to represent the delicate balance between corporate actions and customer/consumer satisfaction. I see it as the hinge between a corporation's accountability for their actions and customers' perceptions of trustworthiness and answerability for those actions—actions taken or not taken, done either in public or private. I also see it as the extent to which a corporation acknowledges their part in initiatives (positive or negative, small- or large-scale) and their ability to accept blame for negative impacts coupled with their desire or ability to work to make those outcomes positive.

## Reading the Trilogy

A consistent theme throughout the UBG trilogy, the ideograph <corporate responsibility> is never explicitly uttered though it is consistently called for, defined, and decried. Beginning in the first song, which can be found as a You-Tube video along with the other videos from the trilogy at his website www.davecarrollmusic.com, Carroll uses his musical platform to tell his narrative, positioning United Airlines as the antithesis of a company that displays <corporate responsibility> (2009). After explaining his multiple attempts to get compensation after his Taylor guitar was broken, Carroll sings: "You broke it, you should fix it / You're liable, just admit it." Heavy emphasis here on "you" firmly places United Airlines as the other, the wrong-doer, the aggressor. It becomes clear in these lines that the responsible thing to do would be to admit that they were in the wrong, accept the liability, and pay him for his losses. After nine months of following every appropriate route Carroll sings: "I heard all your excuses / And I've chased your wild gooses / And this attitude of yours, I say, must go." In these lyrics he points to the systemic nature of irresponsibility and poor customer service. This is not a one-time scenario. He is not the only victim. Instead, United has a corporate "attitude" of dismissal, blame, and irresponsibility as displayed in this song.

This theme continues in song two which begins: "What did you mean when you said you were sorry / I'm a bit confused / I think you owe for wreckin' my guitar / But you don't think you do" (2009). Here Carroll acknowledges that United apologized for breaking the guitar with which he makes a living, but indicates that he expected monetary compensation as the final outcome of that apology. He continues: "But you tell me that you're sorry and it's my tough luck / United sees no need to make anything right." Even though he has received a verbal apology, over the course of his interactions, the situation has not yet been made "right." It is clear in this song that his "tough luck" was no luck at all. Instead United is to blame for being the harbinger of bad news, and that he had been rendered incapable of performing his job because the tool of his trade was broken due to negligence. In the chorus of this song he returns to the liability discussed in song one: "If you'd just come to your senses / Accept the consequences / Of you letting certain baggage handlers smash my property." Clearly, for Carroll, the response he got out of United was not "sensible" and the company was not acting responsibly or they would have seen the error in their ways and rectified the problem immediately without so much hassle on his part. Also in these lines we see that Carroll is reasonable in his assertion that the broken guitar can actually be traced back to the actions of a couple of individuals. The connotation here, though, is that

these individuals were part of the haphazard corporate culture at United and that while the individuals broke his guitar, it was the broken corporate atmosphere of United that allowed the incident to happen. The bottom line for him is that there is "a flawed United Airlines policy" hampering his ability to get the compensation he deserves so he can move on with his life.

Song three, "'United We Stand' on the Right Side of Right," reads as a meta-analysis of the entire debacle (2010). Carroll begins by briefly recapping the problem, saying only that he had "some trouble with United." He explains the viral phenomena that followed the posting of his first song and states: "Now I'm done bein' mad at United / Essentially they broke my career." Here the audience sees that he's moved past the situation. He has posted his three songs and now he is done with the whole ordeal. Plus, the attention has been good for his career. Even though he has been performing for over twenty years, this event made him an overnight sensation. When his first video went viral, he received more attention and news coverage than a performer of his ilk could reasonably have expected to get in a lifetime of touring. Carroll appears willing to accept the benefits he has received personally, financially, and in terms of his career.

What he is less willing to accept in this song is continued mistreatment of United's customers. He sings: "But there's a long line of people with a story like mine / Who tell me in an email every day / That United needs to change in a big way." Facing problems of their own, it appears as though other allegedly wronged customers turned to Carroll—the only person they can point to who was able to receive the attention he demanded from the giant corporation. Singing that these customers are still mad, Carroll offers: "You say that you're changing and I hope you do / Because if you don't then who would fly with you?" After the media attention his songs brought to the corporation they promised a series of changes. In this song, Carroll hopes that those promises become action. The final parting shot he offers to United, imploring them toward <corporate responsibility>, is: "United needs to understand their customers ain't helpless." Clearly in his case, helplessness was left behind the moment he decided to stop playing phone tag with customer service and start actively taking part in his own compensation. This line is also a reminder that while he used his musical tools to attempt to change the face of the corporation in this circumstance, the next wronged customer will have a different set of skills with which to draw attention to the flaws in United. This line serves both as a warning to United to clear up their problems before more negative media attention comes their way, as well as a reminder to consumers that they can take action against the injustice meted out by corporations, no matter how giant or unflinching.

Throughout these songs there is a consistent call for more <corporate responsibility>. While United might find it most responsible to cover their assets and deny customer claims, Carroll is here to remind them that without customers United becomes nothing. In the weeks after the first video went viral, United stock fell ten percent costing them about 180 million dollars (RightNowTechnologies 2009). While there is no way to establish a causal relationship between the video going viral and the drop in stock value, that kind of number should be enough to call attention to the salience of <corporate responsibility> to American publics in the current cultural climate. Without ever having to utter <corporate responsibility>, Carroll drew a picture in his three songs of a more responsible future wherein companies do not systematically abuse their customers, where customers have a line of recourse when things do not go their way, and where entire corporate and consumer cultures change. With all of this in mind, I turn now to a deeper examination of <corporate responsibility> beginning with an analysis of its development and ending with a discussion of how it plays out in the business world.

## Exploring the Ideograph

Michelle Phillipov notes that "music is one site where people 'make do' with what resources they have and resist the power structures that oppress them" (2006:392). In making that claim she accurately describes Carroll's act of musical protest. In crafting his songs he followed Parry-Giles' assertion that "rhetors draw upon their symbolic environment, their cultural vocabulary, to define the ideological meaning of public issues" (1995:185). I argue in this section that Carroll is one of many rhetors who have brought the ideological impact of <corporate responsibility> to light as a public issue. <Corporate responsibility> is a dialectic tension that exists between powerful corporate entities and their (often undervalued) customers. As an ideograph, the definition of <corporate responsibility> vacillates depending on which side of the argument a given rhetor stands. In this case, United Airlines did not understand it to be within their <corporate responsibility> to compensate Carroll for his damaged guitar. Carroll, on the other hand, was adamant that United should take some <corporate responsibility> and be held accountable for their actions. There has historically been a dichotomy between what consumers see as <corporate responsibility> and the standards to which the same corporations hold themselves.

This dichotomy can be more clearly explained using other methods which McGee also proposed for understanding the force of ideographs. The

meaning of a given ideograph is unclear. McGee might say that no one has ever seen a <corporate responsibility> "strutting up the driveway," but diachronic and synchronic analyses can help toward understanding the evolution, relevance, meaning, and force of an ideograph (McGee 1980:10). Diachronic analysis is the process of understanding a given ideograph today by its previous or historical uses. Thought of as a vertical chronological analysis, McGee suggests that we may come to know what is meant by <corporate responsibility> diachronically today if we can also understand how it has been used, what it has meant, and the force it has carried in its previous deployments. Similarly, synchronic analysis is a horizontal analysis focusing on the consonance between a given ideograph and others surrounding it which color its meaning (McGee 1980:13). In this instance, <corporate responsibility> is highly inflected by <customer service>, <profit margin>, <safety>, <ethics>, and <consumer rights> among others.

In order to understand <corporate responsibility> both diachronically and synchronically, I offer several case studies of major corporations who have found themselves on the battleground between responsibility and ethical choices over the last thirty years. In these examples there are some clear definitions of what <corporate responsibility> is not, or definition through the negative, as well as some intersections between <corporate responsibility> and other interests. For instance, when seven Chicago-area residents died in 1982 after ingesting cyanide laced Tylenol, parent company Johnson & Johnson took drastic proactive steps to protect its customers (Tifft 1982). Removing millions of Tylenol bottles from shelves and allowing the FDA access to its plants as the Chicago Police Department drove the streets warning citizens not to take Tylenol products, Johnson & Johnson took an early monetary hit but retained and even improved its market share and customer loyalty for its handling of the case.

In contrast, Ford spent eight years denying that there were problems with the Firestone tires sold on its popular Explorer brand (Greenwald et al. 2000). When masses of litigants were finally able to draw enough attention to the deadly Ford/Firestone partnership, Ford was forced to replace millions of tires even though it blamed Firestone for faulty manufacturing. Firestone was later absorbed into parent company Bridgestone and no longer sells tires under its own name. That denial story is eerily similar to the Toyota manufacturing problem that hit the media in 2009. After identifying "defects responsible for some 2,600 instances of sudden, unintended acceleration—resulting in 34 deaths—since 2000," Toyota was forced to recall over 8 million vehicles worldwide (Altman 2010). In both instances here we see corporate giants stifling deadly problems with their products in order to save face, maintain

sales, and retain the profit margin. Both Ford and Toyota waited until the issue was too big to deny, single claimants received little attention but eventually the litigant base grew beyond their ability to ignore. Their actions were similar to United's in that United was able to deny, defer, and placate Carroll as long as he continued his phone campaign but as soon as he turned to music and viral videos they could no longer deny the public relations issue on their hands. It was not until both the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) and the American government were involved that the companies admitted their wrongdoing and took action. In all the cases discussed, people died. Ironically, in the Tylenol matter, which would have been the easiest to ignore, blame others, and point fingers (because the faulty products were tainted post-manufacture and not in-house), Johnson & Johnson was the most proactive. In the Ford and Toyota cases, both of which were the result of shoddy parts or poor manufacturing (in-house issues), they neglected their <corporate responsibility> until the issue was too large to resolve peacefully, thereby harming their brands.

The list of companies denying their own <corporate responsibility> in the face of public is extensive. Massey Energy Co. came to public attention in 2010 when 29 coal miners lost their lives in a West Virginia mine collapse (Hananel 2010). There were swirling allegations surrounding the company's allegedly long history of operating under lax safety regulations. Similar lax standards allegedly also led to an April 2010 explosion on the Deepwater Horizon, an oil rig in the Gulf of Mexico, which resulted in billions of gallons of oil pouring into the Gulf, unabated for months. Amid finger pointing and name dropping, BP emerged as the responsible party (Kluger 2010). <Corporate responsibility> in these cases started with the responsibility the corporations had to their employees. Workers died in both cases—29 in the mining disaster, 11 in the oil rig explosion. With histories of poor safety records each of these corporations could have thwarted disaster with a more comprehensive safety stance. Instead they each chose to attend to the bottom line: safety is not cheap. Now that people have died, company names are on the line, and in the case of BP, the entire oceanic ecosystem is in peril. It is also clear here that <corporate responsibility> covers many different arenas from the serious cases of these large companies involving deaths to the UBG case where only a guitar was harmed.

While there is not a single definition of what <corporate responsibility> means, in the above cases it is clear that there are ways to communicate <corporate responsibility> effectively and that what that communication looks like often depends on which side of the corporation the rhetor stands. Celeste Condit picks up the temporal relevance of ideographs when she notes

that an ideograph is "a particular constellation of usages, identifiable solely by the specific forms it takes in past history and the present historical moment" (1990:332). <Corporate responsibility> has been in the spotlight consistently for the last 30 years, yet even large companies have yet to learn the lessons they need to protect themselves and their bottom lines while providing quality products to satisfied customers.

With the rise of large corporations and consumer capitalism over the last century, issues regarding <corporate responsibility> have received increasing amounts of media attention. That attention is what James Jasinski, in his overview of <Puritanism>, might call a "site of discursive conflict and struggle" (2002:91). Given that as an ideograph, <corporate responsibility> intersects closely with both ethics and economics (synchronic), there has been a lot more media play around <corporate responsibility> surrounding the 2008 economic meltdown (Andrews 2008; Lengell 2009; Shear 2009). In the wake of the economic crisis, the ethics and economics of <corporate responsibility> have been consistently called into question. While Dave Carroll's songs did not emerge specifically from the economic downturn, they certainly question the economics of <corporate responsibility>.

Dana Cloud argues: "The analysis of ideographs is less a critique of how immediately successful a rhetor's strategies are than an account of the ways in which political rhetors dip into, add to, and reshape the shared cultural stock of ideographs" (1998:389). As a political rhetor, Carroll took on the task of reshaping <corporate responsibility> into a multiparty negotiation no longer controlled by the corporate power. His decision to go viral, what he calls his "Michael Moore moment," changed the landscape of social protest (CBSNewsOnline 2009). His act of protest transformed the viral sphere into an arena wherein the consumer, armed with their own talents, resources, and knowledge of cultural schema, can make a distinct impact on the social landscape.

## Viral Protest and Social Movements

In proposing the need to more closely examine mediated protest, I would be remiss not to articulate the potential paradigm shift that this research poses to contemporary social movements. The emergence of viral protest constitutes a shift in the form and function of the music of social movements. As a traditional element of social movements, Charles J. Stewart, Craig Smith, and Robert Denton argue that music has the ability to "aid in sustaining social movements. Protest songs attempt to reinforce commitment for the long haul" (2001:219). Ron Eyerman and Andrew Jamison add that in relation to

social movements "music could also provide a sense of belongingness, a shar-ing in a collective vision" (1998:138). In these instances we see that in its traditional deployment by social movements, music typically takes the form of songs sung at rallies or other events and that its function has largely been understood as a tool to sustain the movement and reinforce commitment. The traditional conception necessarily changes in the viral landscape.

In Carroll's case, the music does not sustain the movement, it comprises the movement. Musical form has shifted from decoration or entertainment at rallies to viral deployment. The function is no longer to sustain but to consti-tute, to call to action, to instigate a movement. This radical shifting of the form and function of music in social movements entails consequences to which we as scholars must attend. For example, we cannot assume that the music of social movements is only reaching the likeminded. Traditionally, participants in a movement would seek out message music or that music would find them as they acted in their social and cultural settings. In a viral world we need to pay attention to mediated buzz that draws millions of viewers to a video just out of curiosity. There is a cultural willingness (in the American context) to investigate a YouTube video because it was recommended through other media or by a friend. There is no similar willingness to attend a rally or protest event on the same scale. In the new viral arena the song may well contain the entire message of the movement and there may not be a larger physical or material movement outside of the song. In that sense, the social movement message may be constrained to a song, but that song may also be seen by millions of viewers who would have never guessed themselves sympathetic to the move-ment.

It is not my goal here to pass judgment on whether the traditional or vi-ral deployment of songs in social movements is "better." Rather, it is my objec-tive to draw attention to protest in the viral sphere because it has the potential to reach large audiences in ways that movement scholars might not be accus-tomed to seeing or analyzing. Even in this single case study we have seen how Carroll was able to transform <corporate responsibility> into a battle cry for listeners wronged by the power structure of giant corporations. A likely out-come from this shift in the use of YouTube is that Carroll's form and function will be adopted by future political rhetors. YouTube has now been inflected with the potential for social movements. As rhetorical, musical, cultural stud-ies, and social movement scholars we must be prepared to understand and analyze movements as they occur in viral settings. ❧

## Notes

1. These are the cumulative numbers as of 3 October 2011.

2. Since that time ideographs are typically represented inside angle brackets such as <corporate responsibility>.

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