

# TECHNOLOGY DRIVEN RACIAL RECONCILIATION: A PRACTICAL GUIDE FOR THE USE OF TECHNOLOGY IN TRUTH COMMISSIONS

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## Abstract

*Truth and Reconciliation Commissions have played a valuable role internationally in providing an outlet for meaningful dialogue concerning systemic factors contributing to regional instability. At the same time, technology has become an important vehicle for dialogue. This Article therefore introduces considerations about how technology can be used to expand dialogue and strengthen the objectives of American truth commissions in addressing racial inequities. As a larger segment of the population shows increasing preference for technology-based systems, this Article emphasizes*

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that technology can and should complement, rather than supplant, in-person engagements to respond to differing stakeholder preferences for online and in-person interactions. In discussing how some social media platforms have played a negative role in issues of national concern, this Article also emphasizes that there are alternate frameworks for developing online spaces that are inclusive and capable of fostering mutual understanding between different groups. The Article acknowledges the benefits and risks of communication platforms. Just as technology has introduced benefits for transportation, commerce, and entertainment, technology can also transform how reconciliation occurs without geographic limitations.

## I. INTRODUCTION

America's historical challenges grappling with racial tension and distrust of state institutions have been highlighted in the aftermath of the George Floyd protests<sup>1</sup> and social movements that have arisen to contest police brutality. These social movements have mobilized a multi-generational, multi-racial coalition,<sup>2</sup> expressing dismay with ongoing social inequities. At the same time, multiple district attorneys have recognized the value in creating truth and reconciliation commissions to help address complaints and issues raised by these coalitions.<sup>3</sup> With their focus on addressing systemic issues through community engagement, a truth and reconciliation commission (TRC)

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<sup>1</sup> The protests that developed in response to George Floyd's murder had immediate national consequences, ranging from major cities reallocating millions of dollars away from the police's budget to fund marginalized communities, "autonomous zones" being created in Seattle, and increased support to recognize Juneteenth as a national holiday. See Giulia McDonnell et al., *A Timeline of What Has Happened in the Year Since George Floyd's Death*, N.Y. TIMES (May 25, 2021), <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/05/25/us/george-floyd-protests-unrest-events-timeline.html> [<https://perma.cc/M4EG-UZRB>].

<sup>2</sup> See Kim Parker et al., *Amid Protests, Majorities Across Racial and Ethnic Groups Express Support for the Black Lives Matter Movement*, PEW RSCH. CTR. 1, 5 (June 12, 2020), <https://www.pewresearch.org/social-trends/2020/06/12/amid-protests-majorities-across-racial-and-ethnic-groups-express-support-for-the-black-lives-matter-movement/> [<https://perma.cc/SRD9-8FSL>]. From 60% of white adults to 86% of black adults, two-thirds of the general adult American population expressed some support for the Black Lives Matter Movement. *Id.*

<sup>3</sup> See generally Tom Jackman, *Prosecutors in Three Cities Launch Commissions for Victims of Unjust Policing and Prosecution*, WASH. POST (July 1, 2020, 8:50 PM), <https://www.washingtonpost.com/crime-law/2020/07/01/prosecutors-philadelphia-boston-sf-launch-truth-justice-reconciliation-commissions-justice-system-victims/> [<https://perma.cc/UL8E-M5X6>].