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## Understanding the Impact of Social Media and Slacktivism on Disaster Relief Efforts

After the 2005 devastation of Hurricane Katrina, philanthropy organizations around the country mobilized to provide relief to the distressed areas of the Gulf Coast. At first, money came slowly, and charities had difficulty procuring the funding they needed to launch a full relief effort. Even the United States' federal government, for all its might, was highly criticized for its sluggish, under-funded, and largely ineffectual response. Fast-forward five years, to the next major disaster to capture the public's eye: the Haiti earthquake. The damage was catastrophic, the human loss immense, and once again, relief efforts organized as quickly as they could to help. Yet this time, the swiftness of the response was nothing short of miraculous. Donations poured in, the money came easily, and organizations were able to move in with the agility they had lacked in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. Given the contrast of the two relief efforts, the question begs asking: what changed? In this paper, I endeavor to prove that social media and slacktivism played crucial roles in facilitating the speed and efficacy of the Haiti relief effort, especially when compared to the botched effort that followed Hurricane Katrina.

First, what is "slacktivism"? Though there is no official record confirming the identity of the person who initially came up with the word "slacktivism", the general consensus is that the term originated during the 1990s as a clever and faintly ironic abbreviation of "slacker activism". Wikipedia, in a widely quoted but entirely unsupported declaration, suggests that Dwight Ozard and Fred Clark coined slacktivism

in 1995 at the Cornerstone Festival in Illinois.<sup>1</sup> Crafting an exact, all-encompassing definition of the term is no easy task, but the concept is intuitive. Slacktivism describes an act of charity that requires little time and minimal effort, while rewarding the slacktivist with the feeling that they have made a difference in the world, regardless of whether they actually have. Common examples abound, from that chain email imploring you to sign one petition or another, to the Facebook status that asks you to “like” a cause, to the Tweets that solicit funding for philanthropic organizations. Text message donations are also an important subset of slacktivism, and, fortunately, are easily captured statistically.

The jury is out on whether slacktivism is a legitimate and effective expansion of the realm of activism. Supporters of slacktivism include Clay Shirky, NYU professor, TED lecturer, and author of Here Comes Everybody: The Power of Organizing without Organizations as well as Cognitive Surplus.<sup>2</sup> Polling the American population, a recent Georgetown University study found that most Americans support social media slacktivism, stating, “6 in 10 Americans believe that social media is valuable in facilitating visibility and support of causes”.<sup>3</sup> Critics of slacktivism include New Yorker columnist and international bestseller Malcolm Gladwell<sup>4</sup>, as well as Evgeny Morozov, a scholar at Stanford and fellow at the New America Foundation. Blogging for the

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<sup>1</sup> "Slacktivism." *Wikipedia*. Wikimedia Foundation, 18 Apr. 2012. Web. <<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Slacktivism>>.

<sup>2</sup> Shirky, Clay. *Clay Shirky's Internet Writings*. Web. <<http://www.shirky.com/>>.

<sup>3</sup> Center for Social Impact Communication, Georgetown University. "Dynamics of Cause Engagement - Final Report." *Slideshare*. Slideshare Inc., 22 Nov. 11. Web. <<http://www.slideshare.net/georgetowncsic/dynamics-of-cause-engagement-final-report>>.

<sup>4</sup> See Gladwell, Malcolm. "Small Change." *The New Yorker*. Condé Nast, 4 Oct. 2010. Web. <[http://www.newyorker.com/reporting/2010/10/04/101004fa\\_fact\\_gladwell](http://www.newyorker.com/reporting/2010/10/04/101004fa_fact_gladwell)>.

magazine *Foreign Policy*, Morozov succinctly outlined the main criticisms of slacktivism, stating, “‘Slacktivism’ is an apt term to describe feel-good online activism that has zero political or social impact. It gives those who participate in ‘slacktivist’ campaigns an illusion of having a meaningful impact on the world without demanding anything more than joining a Facebook group... ‘slacktivism’ is the ideal type of activism for a lazy generation”.<sup>5</sup> To Morozov, and the body of critics he exemplifies, slacktivists are lazy, disingenuous, and too inert to effect real change.

Which side, for or against slacktivism, should we sympathize more with? What lessons does each have to teach us? Should we be optimistic about the evolution of slacktivism? To answer these questions, let us start by analyzing the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. Katrina began as a tropical depression and then storm originating over the Bahamas, reported by the United States National Hurricane Center on Wednesday, August 24<sup>th</sup>, five days before it would eventually reach the Gulf Coast. After causing minor damage in Florida as a category one hurricane, Katrina began its journey across the Gulf, building in magnitude at a frightening rate. In four short days, Katrina grew from a category one to a category five, inspiring governors Kathleen Blanco of Louisiana and Haley Barbour of Mississippi to declare pre-emptive states of emergency for their respective states, and ultimately inspiring President Bush to do the same.<sup>6</sup> When Hurricane Katrina finally landed on shore as a category four, it decimated much of the Gulf Coast, and most notably, the city of New Orleans.

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<sup>5</sup> Morozov, Evgeny. "Foreign Policy: Brave New World Of Slacktivism." *NPR*. NPR, 19 May 2009. Web. <<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=104302141>>.

<sup>6</sup> Dyson, Michael Eric. *Come Hell or High Water: Hurricane Katrina and the Color of Disaster*. New York: Basic Civitas, 2006. Print.

In economic terms, official estimates of the damage done to the Gulf Coast by Katrina surpass \$100 billion, reaching as high as \$125 billion.<sup>7</sup> Initial costs of the clean-up effort ranged even higher, approaching \$200 billion.<sup>8</sup> Commenting on the wreckage caused by Hurricane Katrina, Senator Thad Cochran of Mississippi stated, "This is going to be the most expensive natural disaster that's hit the United States in history."<sup>9</sup> The value of the vibrant culture Katrina destroyed, impossible to capture statistically, brings the damage estimate even higher. New Orleans, "the Big Easy", lay wasted, with two-thirds of the city's 145,000 homes destroyed, along with businesses, hospitals, universities, and much of the city's infrastructure.<sup>10</sup> Speaking of Katrina's aftermath, Africa Brumfeld, a long-time New Orleans resident captured the essence of the spiritual devastation that Katrina brought with the economic devastation, stating "This was home...but I can't come back to live. Going through that again is too scary".<sup>11</sup>

The Hurricane Katrina relief effort constituted an absolute failure of the Federal government to provide for its citizens, and a professional embarrassment for the people charged with providing for victims left in the wake of natural disasters. When Katrina struck, the Federal Government had multiple agencies to deal with natural disasters, the

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<sup>7</sup> "NOAA Home Page - Hurricane Katrina." *NOAA Home Page*. NOAA, 12 Feb. 2007. Web. <<http://www.katrina.noaa.gov/>>.

<sup>8</sup> McKinnon, John D., David Rogers, and Dionne Searcey. "First Estimates on Katrina Costs For Washington Hit \$200 Billion." *The Wall Street Journal*. Dow Jones & Company, Inc. Web. <<http://online.wsj.com/article/0,,SB112599372071532529,00.html>>.

<sup>9</sup> Gaul, Gilbert M., and Ceci Connolly. "Cost of Katrina Is Expected to Break Records." *Washington Post*. The Washington Post, 01 Sept. 2005. Web. <<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2005/08/31/AR2005083102395.html>>.

<sup>10</sup> Daniels, Ronald J., Donald F. Kettl, and Howard Kunreuther. *On Risk and Disaster: Lessons from Hurricane Katrina*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 2006. Print.

<sup>11</sup> *Storm That Drowned a City*. NOVA, 2005. PBS Special. *NOVA*. PBS, 22 Nov. 2005. Web. <<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/earth/storm-that-drowned-city.html>>.

most prominent of these being the Federal Emergency Management Agency, FEMA. Designed to deal with emergencies that overwhelmed local and state governments, FEMA was created specifically to mitigate calamities such as Katrina. Yet when the time came to exercise its fundamental mission in the aftermath of the hurricane, FEMA failed spectacularly. As starving victims waited for food and medical assistance, watching civilization crumble before their very eyes, FEMA stalled in their relief efforts. Tied up in bureaucratic procedure, FEMA moved slowly into New Orleans, failed to utilize the full capability of entities willing and able to provide relief, and obstructed the entry of private and public agents who could have provided supplemental relief on dubious grounds. The most obvious example occurred in the case of the USS *Bataan*, which responded immediately to the Hurricane equipped with helicopters, physicians, hospital beds, food, and water, but once arrived, never received authorization for full mobilization of its much-needed resources.<sup>12</sup> Incompetence and bureaucratic inertia ruled the day.

Slacktivist involvement in the recovery effort after Katrina was relatively paltry. Text message donations contributed a meager \$400,000.<sup>13</sup> About 9% of Internet users reported giving money explicitly to the Hurricane victims, 24% reported sending emails or instant messages about the disaster, and only 4% reported posting online material

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<sup>12</sup> See Dyson, Michael Eric. *Come Hell or High Water: Hurricane Katrina and the Color of Disaster*. New York: Basic Civitas, 2006. Print.

<sup>13</sup> Choney, Suzanne. "Mobile Giving to Help Haiti Exceeds \$30 Million." *Msnbc.com*. Msnbc Digital Network, 21 Jan. 2010. Web. <[http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/34850532/ns/technology\\_and\\_science-wireless/t/mobile-giving-help-haiti-exceeds-million/](http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/34850532/ns/technology_and_science-wireless/t/mobile-giving-help-haiti-exceeds-million/)>.

about the disaster.<sup>14</sup> At the time, social media was limited primarily to MySpace, a fringe site that failed to capture much of the American population, and texting was still in its infancy. Dial-up Internet – that now unbearable combination of dial-tones, slow service, and clunky visuals – was still a reality for many Americans, which deterred these citizens from using the Internet for purposes beyond what was absolutely necessary and utterly conventional. Charity was not one of these purposes.

Five years after Katrina wreaked havoc in the Gulf, a magnitude 7.0 earthquake rocked the small, vulnerable island of Haiti. While Katrina impacted only a small part of America, the earthquake demolished the entire nation of Haiti. What little infrastructure Haiti had was destroyed, taking down with it the rudimentary institutions that made civilization possible. Chaos reigned as the victims of the earthquake fought to acquire the basic necessities of life, further straining resources that were scarce even in the best of times. Infectious diseases spread through the country, with deadly outbreaks of cholera reported among the survivors of the earthquake. Lacking the domestic support network that helped victims in Katrina, Haitians turned to the international community for help.

Even before the earthquake, Haiti was economically impoverished, and its citizens were in disastrous health. Over 70% of the Haiti's population lived on less than \$2 a day, which contributed to severe malnourishment, inadequate healthcare, and

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<sup>14</sup> Morris, Stephen, and John Horrigan. "13 Million Americans Made Donations Online after Hurricanes Katrina and Rita." *Pew Internet*. Pew Internet & American Life Project, 24 Nov. 2005. Web. <<http://pewinternet.org/Reports/2005/13-million-Americans-made-donations-online-after-Hurricanes-Katrina-and-Rita/Data-Memo.aspx>>.

unsanitary living spaces that lacked access to clean water.<sup>15</sup> Among the Caribbean nations, Haiti had the highest incidence of HIV/AIDS, with a 2.2% infection rate among adults. Tuberculosis was prevalent, the second leading cause of mortality in Haiti behind HIV/AIDS, as was malaria.<sup>16</sup> The ratio of civilians to physicians was shockingly low, with only 0.25 physicians for every 1000 civilians. The same was true of the ratio of hospital beds to civilians, a meager 1.3 beds per 1000 civilians<sup>17</sup>. Haiti's infrastructure was well behind the rest of the world, with rudimentary structures poorly equipped to deal with even minor earthquakes, much less major ones such the one that struck in 2010. These preliminary factors compounded the difficulties of the relief effort, which were already gargantuan.

Yet where the United States failed in its response to Katrina, it generally succeeded in its response to Haiti. In the critical period after the earthquake struck, private and public agencies moved in with speed and efficiency, delivering critical supplies of food, clean water, and human capital to alleviate the crisis. Within twenty-four hours, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) had teams on the ground providing support for the Haiti victims.<sup>18</sup> Entering the country, aid workers

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<sup>15</sup> Weisenfeld, Paul E. "Successes and Challenges of the Haiti Earthquake Response: The Experience of Usaid." *Emory International Law Review* 25.3 (2011). Web. <<http://www.law.emory.edu/fileadmin/journals/eilr/25/25.3/Weisenfeld.pdf>>.

<sup>16</sup> *The Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation*. Fact Sheet. The Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation, 26 Feb. 2010. Web. <<http://www.kff.org/globalhealth/upload/8053.pdf>>.

<sup>17</sup> United States of America. Central Intelligence Agency. *CIA - The World Factbook*. Web. <<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/rankorder/2227rank.html?countryName=Haiti>>.

<sup>18</sup> Weisenfeld, Paul E. "Successes and Challenges of the Haiti Earthquake Response: The Experience of Usaid."



faced an estimated 1.5 million people made homeless by the disaster.<sup>19</sup> To deal with this massive displacement, the USAID built transitional shelters, known as t-shelters, each of which can house up to five people. In the months after the disaster, more than 25,600 of these t-shelters were built, providing housing for approximately 128,000 people.<sup>20</sup> By the time the rainy season arrived, USAID had provided 1.5 million people with basic shelter materials. In addition to the displacement, over 300,000 people were physically injured by the earthquake and required medical assistance.<sup>21</sup> The United States Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) dispatched medical teams to Haiti in order to provide this assistance, in the end treating over 30,000 patients and performing hundreds of surgeries.<sup>22</sup> Critically, by six months after the quake, USAID provided clean water for 1.3 million people daily, and had contributed significantly in the distribution of nutritious food for over 4 million people over the course of the year.<sup>23</sup>

Slactivism, spawned by the technological revolution of the late 2000s, played a significant role in the relative success of the Haiti relief effort over the Katrina effort. When the Haiti earthquake struck in January 2010, social media, texting, and other forms of interactivity had fully embedded themselves in the American psyche. Facebook logged

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<sup>19</sup> United States of America. United States Agency for International Development. Office of the Haiti Special Coordinator. *Shelter Solutions: Fast Facts on the U.S. Government's Work in Haiti*. U.S. Department of State, 15 July 2011. Web. <<http://www.state.gov/s/hsc/rls/168715.htm>>.

<sup>20</sup> *Id.*

<sup>21</sup> Weisenfeld, Paul E. "Successes and Challenges of the Haiti Earthquake Response: The Experience of Usaid."

<sup>22</sup> *Id.*

<sup>23</sup> United States of America. Office of the Haiti Special Coordinator. *Haiti: One Year Later*. U.S. Department of State, 10 Jan. 2011. Web. 11 May 2012. <<http://www.state.gov/s/hsc/rls/154255.htm>>.

over 100 million users in the US<sup>24</sup>, Twitter recorded nearly 50 million tweets per day<sup>25</sup>, and the number of blogs on the Internet had exploded. Cell-phones had evolved into smart-phones, newly enhanced with astounding capabilities, including built-in GPS functionality, high-speed Internet access from nearly anywhere through 3G Wi-Fi Internet networks, and the ability to store and run a seemingly infinite amount of applications, colloquially termed “apps”. Once an awkward and frustrating process, texting was now done with slide QWERTY keyboards and slick touch screens, facilitating its rise in popularity and fueling the demand for continuous interconnectedness.

The most obvious contribution of slacktivism came in the form of direct charitable donations, solicited by NGOs, private charities, and celebrities such as Wyclef Jean, a prominent Haitian-American musician. The American Red Cross raised over \$35 million within 48 hours of the quake, including more than \$5 million from text message donations, a record for the organization.<sup>26</sup> For the Red Cross, the final figure on money raised through text message donations eventually rose to more than \$30 million, and in total, the amount of money raised across-the-board for Haiti surpassed \$40 million<sup>27</sup>, over

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<sup>24</sup> Eldon, Eric. "Facebook's January US Traffic by Age and Sex: Growth Led by Young Women, Grown Men, and Their Parents." *Inside Facebook*. WebMediaBrands Inc., 1 Feb. 2010. Web. <<http://www.insidefacebook.com/2010/02/01/facebooks-january-us-traffic-by-age-and-sex-growth-led-by-young-women-grown-men-and-their-parents/>>.

<sup>25</sup> Gill, Kathy E. "Twitter Stats: Monday 22 January 2010." *WiredPen*. 22 Jan. 2010. Web. <<http://wiredpen.com/2010/02/22/twitter-stats/>>.

<sup>26</sup> Kinzie, Susan. "New Technology Speeds Donations for Haiti Relief Efforts." *The Washington Post*. The Washington Post, 15 Jan. 2010. Web. <<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/01/14/AR2010011404663.html>>.

<sup>27</sup> Smith, Aaron. *Real Time Charitable Giving*. Publication. Pew Research Center's Internet & American Life Project, 12 Jan. 2012. Web. <<http://www.pbs.org/idealab/Real%20Time%20Charitable%20Giving.pdf>>.

one hundred times the amount raised by the same method after Katrina. Charities other than the American Red Cross had similar success with texting campaigns, leading their executives to express disbelief regarding the amount of money generated through this new medium. Spokesman Jonathan Aiken of the American Red Cross commented on the phenomenon, stating, ““People text up to three times at 10 bucks a pop. You're talking about roughly 300,000 people actually spontaneously deciding, 'I can spare \$10 for this.' And that's remarkable.”<sup>28</sup> Facebook and Twitter users, while they did not raise significant amounts of money directly, helped spur this mobile giving as people flooded the web with news about Haiti and pleas for donations.

Despite this fundraising triumph, donated money did not necessarily translate to resources on the ground, and slacktivist giving did not always gravitate to trustworthy charities. Overwhelmed by the complexity of the task at hand, humanitarian operations struggled to distribute resources effectively, and were often caught between helping the Haitian victims and trying not to undermine the internal recovery. Aid groups also faced criticism from members of Haitian Government, who felt that foreigners were keeping them in the dark and usurping the rightful authority of the Haitian government. Haiti’s Prime Minister Jean-Max Bellerive summed up this criticism when he reprimanded foreign aid operations for their opaqueness, stating, "The NGOs don't tell us...where the money's coming from or how they're spending it. Too many people are raising money

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<sup>28</sup> Gross, Doug. "Digital Fundraising Still Pushing Haiti Relief." *CNN*. Turner Broadcasting System, Inc., 15 Jan. 2010. Web. <[http://articles.cnn.com/2010-01-15/tech/online.donations.haiti\\_1\\_earthquake-haiti-haiti-relief-twitter-and-facebook?\\_s=PM:TECH](http://articles.cnn.com/2010-01-15/tech/online.donations.haiti_1_earthquake-haiti-haiti-relief-twitter-and-facebook?_s=PM:TECH)>.

without any controls, and don't explain what they're doing with it."<sup>29</sup> The media fought to increase this transparency, reporting on fraudulent charities that siphoned away money ostensibly collected for Haiti victims. One such charity the media exposed was Yele Haiti, which was initially founded by Wyclef Jean. Of the \$16 million the charity raised, much of it through text message donations, only about one-third went to emergency efforts.<sup>30</sup> The rest went to cronies and mystery businesses. As Aaron Smith found in his report on "Real Time Charitable Giving", mobile giving is characterized by impulse rather than reasoned judgment, with more than three-quarters of mobile givers reporting that they did little research before sending in their money.<sup>31</sup> Once their money was sent, 58% of these mobile givers reported following the reconstruction effort in Haiti minimally or not at all.<sup>32</sup> Both of these findings demonstrate fundamental problems with slacktivism as a means of charitable giving.

Social media played a crucial role after the Haiti earthquake by doing what it does best: connecting people. By providing a fluid platform for distributing knowledge instantly and to a broad group of people, social media facilitated cohesion within and among agencies working on the ground. Dave Yates and Scott Paquette noted this fact in their paper, "Emergency Knowledge Management and Social Media Technologies: A

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<sup>29</sup> Associated Press. *Billions for Haiti, a Criticism for Every Dollar*. *The Guardian*. Guardian News and Media Limited, 6 Mar. 2010. Web. <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/feedarticle/8976738>>.

<sup>30</sup> "Wyclef Jean's Haiti Charity Comes Under Fire Again." *Rollingstone.com*. Rolling Stone, 28 Nov. 2011. Web. <<http://www.rollingstone.com/music/news/wyclef-jeans-haiti-charity-comes-under-fire-again-20111128>>.

<sup>31</sup> Smith, Aaron. *Real Time Charitable Giving*. Publication. Pew Research Center's Internet & American Life Project, 12 Jan. 2012. Web. <<http://www.pbs.org/idealab/Real%20Time%20Charitable%20Giving.pdf>>.

<sup>32</sup> *Id.*

Case Study of the 2010 Haitian Earthquake”, reinforcing the importance of well-designed knowledge structures as “paramount for organizational survival and effectiveness in turbulent, fast changing environments.”<sup>33</sup> The concept is not new among aid agencies, but the pre-social media *ad hoc* communication systems were inadequate in dealing with crises such as Hurricane Katrina. Email was limited in its scope and relatively slow, able to provide textual information between individuals and small groups but unable to distribute information universally to all relevant parties, current and future. Cell-phones enabled disparate individuals to coordinate their efforts, but, like email, lacked in its ability to distribute information universally. Both of these knowledge structures also failed to allow for the quick exchange of visual information, such as pictures and live video. Though television held this capability, and still does, it too fails as a way of relaying information, mainly due to its lack of interactivity, reliance on centralized news structures, and inflexibility of content, content that is periodically interrupted by irrelevant advertisements. Social media sites, such as Facebook and Twitter, overcame these limitations, providing universally accessible, content-dynamic platforms for distributing knowledge.<sup>34</sup> As an added advantage, social media sites allow for prospective interaction, creating permanent bases of knowledge that agents outside the initial communication can access after the fact and capitalize on, something that cell-phones, email, and television fail to offer.

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<sup>33</sup> Yates, Dave, and Scott Paquette. "Emergency Knowledge Management and Social Media Technologies: A Case Study of the 2010 Haitian Earthquake." *ScienceDirect*. Elsevier Properties B.V., 24 Nov. 2010. Web.

<<http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0268401210001453>>.

<sup>34</sup> See Yates, Dave, and Scott Paquette. "Emergency Knowledge Management and Social Media Technologies: A Case Study of the 2010 Haitian Earthquake."

Social media expedited communication between aid groups and the federal government of the United States, the latter of which took a primary role in coordinating the international Haiti response. In the aftermath of the earthquake, the United States government took over many of Haiti's airports to speed landings and get supplies on the ground. While this was generally an effective strategy, a number of aid organizations reported that their planes, carrying crucial supplies of food, water, and equipment, were being denied landing authorization. One such organization was Doctors without Borders, which had a number of planes blocked from landing. In response, the organization tweeted, asking: "why aren't our planes able to land?"<sup>35</sup> During the Katrina relief effort, such calls went unanswered. This time, the Air Force's twitter feed responded directly to the tweets, and soon, Doctors without Borders was receiving calls from high-ranking federal officials trying to get the planes on the ground.<sup>36</sup> Jason Cone, the communications director of Doctors without Borders, concluded that this responsiveness was due to the Internet, stating in an interview with NBC news, "It clearly was a fire-starter to have this sort of communication online."<sup>37</sup> To put it bluntly, Twitter saved lives.

The Hurricane Katrina relief effort was a disaster. The United States federal government floundered, obstructed private aid agencies, and left desperate victims waiting for help that sadly never came. Conversely, the United States' response to the Haiti earthquake was largely a success. Within twenty-four hours, teams were on the

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<sup>35</sup> Cohen, David. "Social Media & the Haiti Disaster: 'Twitter Helped Save Lives'" *SocialTimes*. WebMediaBrands, Inc., 1 Feb. 2010. Web. <[http://socialtimes.com/social-media-the-haiti-disaster-twitter-helped-save-lives\\_b51788](http://socialtimes.com/social-media-the-haiti-disaster-twitter-helped-save-lives_b51788)>.

<sup>36</sup> *Id.*

<sup>37</sup> *Id.*

ground, supplies were being delivered, and humanitarian operations were doing everything in their power to alleviate the crisis. Social media contributed to the Haitian cause by aiding coordination between teams on the ground and by helping aid organizations correspond with the United States' federal government, which managed much of the international response to Haiti and controlled the ports of entry into the country. Slacktivism brought in money to finance the operations and raised awareness to inspire further donations. For aid operations fighting the ravages inflicted by the Haiti earthquake, social media and slacktivism were invaluable assets. Future relief efforts would do well to remember this fact as they go forward to fight the tragedies that punctuate human existence.