

Breaking the Silence: The Use of Color Bars

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ABSTRACT

Test patterns or “color bars” as widely used by engineers in the broadcasting industry to check on the quality of colors a TV station is broadcasting has evolved in usage and meaning. In the 2016 event of grief and solidarity on the number of laid-off employees in TV5 Network, Inc., the color bars became signifiers and symbols of varied emotions as a visual graphic in the online space.

Utilizing survey and interviews with former employees of TV5, who used the “color bars” in the online space, this paper describes the evolving meaning of transcendence of emotions as displayed by visual graphics in the online space. Raising the questions: Are “color bars” the new symbol of freedom of expression that connote to struggle and resistance against oppressive broadcasting industries in the online space? And, are these “color bars,” as displayed in the online space, translated in the assertion of rights in the offline space? If this visual graphic is the new form of resistance, is the broadcasting industry listening?

Focusing on these questions, the paper then discusses the intrinsic links among the concepts of power resistance and visual communication in the online space to elaborate on the mutual understanding on meaning expectations and resolutions between and among employees and media organizations.

Keywords: media, online, visual communication, resistance, employee relations, social media

Themes: Social media use: promises and expectations, work in media and communication industries