

Resisting “National Breast Cancer Awareness Month”: The Rhetoric of Counterpublics and their Cultural Performances

Phaedra C. Pezzullo

*Since 1984, October has been recognized in the U.S. as National Breast Cancer Awareness Month. In 1997, the Toxic Links Coalition of the Bay Area, California, began organizing annual “Stop Cancer Where It Starts” tours to counter attempts to obscure the environmentally-linked causes of cancer. By drawing on research including participant observation, this essay analyzes the politics of these two publics in an attempt to illustrate the limits of a binary conceptualization of publics and counterpublics and to emphasize the rhetorical value of the cultural performances that constitute public life. **Key words: breast cancer activism, greenwashing, pinkwashing, counterpublics, cultural performance, participant observation***

Many of us have known someone with breast cancer or have survived breast cancer. For U.S. women, breast cancer is the most frequently diagnosed form of cancer,¹ accounting for approximately one-third of all new cancer cases in women.² In addition to the more than two million current U.S. breast cancer survivors, the Y-ME National Breast Cancer Organization claims that, “this year, breast cancer will be newly diagnosed every three minutes, and a woman will die from breast cancer every 13 minutes.”³ In response to this epidemic, breast cancer activism has increased rapidly since the mid-1980s to form the breast cancer movement.⁴ Amid growing publicity, research funds, and attention to breast cancer in the past two decades, identifying the causes of breast cancer remains a top priority for the movement.

Although much of our knowledge about breast cancer, and cancer generally, is fraught with uncertainty, it is generally accepted that at least some people have developed cancers owing to environmental pollution.⁵ Assuming for the sake of argument that the skeptical estimate of “two percent ... put forth by those who dismiss environmental carcinogens” is minimally accurate, Sandra Steingraber comments:

Two percent means that 10,940 people in the United States die each year from environmentally caused cancers. This is more than the number of women who die each year from hereditary breast cancer—an issue that has launched multi-million dollar research initiatives.⁶ This is more than the number of children and teenagers killed each year by firearms—an issue that is considered a matter of national shame. It is more than three times the number of non-smokers estimated to die each year of lung cancer caused by exposure to secondhand smoke—a problem so serious it warranted sweeping changes in laws governing air quality in public spaces. It is the annual equivalent of wiping out a small city. It is thirty funerals every day.⁷

Further, Steingraber emphasizes, “none of these 10,940 Americans will die quick painless deaths. They will be amputated, irradiated, and dosed with chemotherapy.”⁸ Despite the staggering number of lives represented, cancer advocates continue to encounter significant obstacles when attempting to bring environmentally-related carcinogens into the foreground of U.S. public dialogue.

Ironically, one of these impediments may be the success of the U.S. environmental movement.⁹ Polls consistently suggest that the majority of people in the U.S. consider themselves to be environmentalists.¹⁰ The government has institutionalized many laws and a federal agency dedicated to environmental protection.¹¹ Some even estimate that “more Americans now recycle than vote for president.”¹² Further, “green” advertising has become one of the fastest growing advertising trends for industries ranging from gasoline to plastics.¹³ The popularity of environmental discourse, however, has made it increasingly difficult for the public to discriminate between talk about being green and action taken to stop environmentally destructive practices.

To address this problem of obfuscation, environmentalists have named the phenomenon of disingenuous environmental appearances “greenwashing.” For the purposes of this essay, greenwashing refers not only to “greening” the appearances of products and commodity consumption, but also to the deliberate disavowal of environmental effects. In relation to environmental causes of cancer, thus, greenwashing has become a critical term used to identify when a person, group, or institution purports to care about environmental health (both human and nonhuman) yet does something that perpetuates the production and distribution of environmental carcinogens.

Discourses about breast cancer warrant a closer examination of greenwashing and illustrate the ways in which dominant institutions and figures engage in what might appropriately be called “pinkwashing,” by which I mean talk about women that does not necessarily empower women.¹⁴ Karen Fitts, for example, argues that although

physicians often presume cosmetic concerns are primary to newly diagnosed women, many patients look instead to high rates of incidence (one in eight women), the ordeal of treatment (slash, burn, and poison), and that the number of breast cancer deaths per year (50,000) has not diminished in fifty years.¹⁵

In other words, Fitts claims that cultural and medical discourses often promote the business of “saving breasts, not lives.”¹⁶ Indeed, although cosmetic issues are important to many women, how one looks is usually relatively unimportant compared to reducing the lethal effects of cancer and the debilitating ordeal of treatment. As in arguments regarding greenwashing, a tension exists between the appearance of caring for women and practices that improve women’s lives. I argue, therefore, that public debates over breast cancer are currently constrained in ways that are inextricably linked to environmental and gendered discourses.¹⁷ In this essay, I investigate one perhaps unexpected example of greenwashing and pinkwashing that currently frames public discourses about breast cancer: National Breast Cancer Awareness Month (NBCAM).

Designated the month of October, NBCAM is filled with activities from wearing pink ribbons to organizing fundraising marathons to sponsoring public service announcements on television. This month-long, multi-pronged campaign has provided opportunities for numerous organizations and individuals to galvanize public attention and raise awareness about breast cancer detection, legislation, and experiences. Because opposition to NBCAM is rarely heard, the discourse promoted by NBCAM arguably has become institutionalized as hegemonic “common sense”¹⁸ in the current approach to breast cancer in the U.S.

In this essay, I examine how one coalition of activists is attempting to reveal the gap between the appearance of, and the practices enabled by, NBCAM or, in the words of one advocate, “to rip off the mask of polluter-sponsored Breast Cancer Awareness

Month.”¹⁹ Specifically, I analyze the San Francisco-based Toxic Links Coalition’s (TLC) annual “Stop Cancer Where It Starts” tour. This campaign is constituted primarily by a cultural performance of noncommercial advocacy tours. Adapting the rhetoric of the traditional “toxic tour” (when environmental justice advocates travel to and through communities that have been toxically polluted), the tour takes TLC’s grievances to the doorsteps of the institutions that it believes are responsible for producing and enabling toxic pollution. Over the years, TLC has developed its tour to target corporations, non-profits, government agencies, and public relations firms, all of which arguably are powerful actors who frame public opinion and the dominant discourse about breast cancer.

As an examination of how one group of people and related institutions challenge the way another group of people and related institutions have dominated public discourse, this essay hopes to contribute to the ongoing interdisciplinary dialogues about public spheres. Rhetorical scholarship on public spheres has explored the efficacy of what feminist theorists Rita Felski and Nancy Fraser have named “counterpublics,” understood as arenas for resisting dominant spheres of public life.²⁰ Central to this research have been such questions as: What is “counter”? What is “public”? Which theories of multiple spheres can account for the efficacy of efforts to resist existing hegemonic power relations?²¹ This essay focuses on the related but often overlooked question: How can we study the creation and maintenance of “actually existing”²² public spheres and counterpublics? Answering this question, I believe, may guide public sphere scholars to consider how expanding our approaches to studying public spheres may enable us to theorize further the discourses produced by counterpublics.

Using the specific social controversy of pinkwashing environmental contributions to breast cancer, I demonstrate the limits of a binary conceptualization of publics and counterpublics by illustrating how a public discourse such as the one promoted by NBCAM can foster both conservative and progressive political ends for the breast cancer movement. I interpret the people who organized and/or enacted TLC’s tour as a counterpublic that invited/challenged those who observed to engage and, ideally, to join them. In other words, the tour performed a discourse that attempted to interpellate people into an identification with TLC, a counterpublic, so more people might strengthen the impact of their discourse. By analyzing TLC’s advocacy tour as the cultural performance of a counterpublic, I foreground the non-verbal activities that are involved in negotiating public life, including physical, visual, emotional, and aural dimensions.

This essay develops in three sections. First, I review public sphere scholarship and discuss the importance of studying counterpublics, the possibilities of such arenas, and the usefulness of drawing on participant observation to study the cultural performances that constitute them. Second, I examine NBCAM’s influence on public dialogue about cancer and TLC’s response as concrete examples of the form and function of the cultural performances of a “feminist counterpublic,” which, as defined by Bonnie J. Dow and Mari Boor Tonn, offers the “potential to function as a critique of patriarchal modes of reasoning as well as to offer an empowering alternative.”²³ Third, I analyze one of TLC’s tours as a cultural performance that attempted rhetorically to invent a space for resisting the discourse promoted by NBCAM. I conclude by theorizing about the shifting and overlapping boundaries between counterpublics in a social movement and by foregrounding the ways in which participant observation studies may help us to grasp more fully the complexity of their performances.

Public Spheres

The translation into English of Jürgen Habermas's *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*²⁴ reinvigorated a robust interdisciplinary dialogue among U.S. scholars about the "ideal" and the historical public sphere.²⁵ In describing the ideal public sphere, Habermas writes:

The bourgeois public sphere may be conceived above all as the sphere of private people come together as a public ... to engage [public authorities] in a debate over the general rules governing relations in the basically privatized but publicly relevant sphere of commodity exchange and social labor.²⁶

"The importance of the public sphere," Craig Calhoun notes, "lies in its potential as a mode of social integration."²⁷ In other words, as Nancy Fraser argues, a public sphere "designates a *theater* in modern societies in which political participation is enacted through the medium of talk" (emphasis added).²⁸ Gerard Hauser emphasizes that a "public" involves activities that "are often local, are often in venues other than institutionalized forums, are always issue specific, and seldom involve the entire populace."²⁹

For the purposes of this essay, I limit my review of public sphere literature to those works directly related to discussions of what constitutes a counterpublic, how we have studied them, and why this work is particularly relevant to struggles for social and environmental justice. Subsequently, I elaborate on the utility of participant observation studies for studying the theater of engaged, creative activities that are performed by counterpublics. In doing so, I emphasize the usefulness of performance theory to studies of public sphere activities that include but are not limited to talk.

Finding Counterpublics

Critics of Habermas's *Structural Transformation* have been skeptical about the ideal type of public sphere that he initially described: a singular, overarching public sphere in which all citizens potentially would be able to negotiate decisions of collective concern. In Calhoun's anthology on the public sphere, for example, many scholars argue "for a notion of multiple, sometimes overlapping or contending, public spheres," especially in light of the various contesting social groups initially ignored by Habermas, such as women and social movements.³⁰ In response, Calhoun claims: "It seems to me a loss simply to say that there are many public spheres It might be productive rather to think of the public sphere as involving a field of discursive connections ... a network."³¹ This argument (although using different vocabulary) subsequently has found support from most public sphere scholars. Charles Taylor, for example, argues for the utility of the concept of "nested public spheres," Seyla Benhabib for a "plurality of modes of association," and Gerard Hauser for a "reticulate structure."³² This suggests a general consensus that public sphere scholars need to theorize the complex relations among multiple public spheres more fully.

Some scholars, particularly those invested in feminist politics, have argued that when we theorize relations among publics, we need to pay attention to power relations and to the various types of publics that form in one's society. Felski, for instance, claims that "the experience of discrimination, oppression, and cultural dislocation provides the impetus for the development of a self-consciously oppositional identity," namely a "feminist counter-public sphere."³³ The hegemony of patriarchal policies and practices

often motivates feminists to respond collectively in the hope of altering the conditions and practices of gender-based oppression. Similarly influenced by the experiences of women, Fraser draws upon the second wave of the feminist movement to expand on the concept of counterpublics, which she defines as “parallel discursive arenas where members of subordinated social groups invent and circulate counterdiscourses to formulate oppositional interpretations of their identities, interests, and needs.”³⁴ Constitutive of a public’s “counter” status, therefore, is the rhetorical invention of a discourse that challenges an already existing discourse that has been enabling the oppression of a particular social group.

Given the popularity and compelling nature of Felski’s and Fraser’s arguments, recent public sphere scholarship has attempted to clarify and to expand the concept of a counterpublic. Notably, in “Seeking the ‘Counter’ in Counterpublics,” Robert Asen claims:

Consent versus dissent, public versus counter—fixing these terms as binary oppositions restricts theory and criticism. The movement towards multiplicity in public sphere theory belies such binaries. Theorists and critics would do well to seek out relations among publics, counterpublics, and spheres *as advocates in the “actually existing” public sphere construct these relationships through discursive engagement* (emphasis added).³⁵

In other words, Asen suggests that in theorizing relations among publics and counterpublics, we must be careful not to oversimplify the aforementioned power relations. Indeed, many social theorists long have argued that binary oppositions (such as black/white, man/woman) can be limiting. Lisa Cartwright additionally cautions: “The terms counterpublic or countercultures suggest oppositionality, when in fact many alternative publics are forged around the increasingly fragmented special interests that constitute the global market.”³⁶ Thus, when public dialogues reflect a multi-faceted negotiation of power, it is particularly important to recognize the complexity of various public spheres without reducing conflicts to mere binaries.

Furthermore, Asen’s argument suggests the importance of considering how discursive engagements constitute relationships among publics and counterpublics. In order to emphasize the importance of both the linguistic (talk) and the non-linguistic (non-verbal gestures, visual images, and so on) in public life, I choose to refer to both as “discourse” in my analysis of NBCAM’s and TLC’s rhetoric.³⁷ In what follows, I ask: how might the discourse promoted by NBCAM be perceived as a “counter” perspective to patriarchal discourses? Conversely, if NBCAM fosters an oppressive discourse about breast cancer, how might TLC define its discourse in opposition to that dominance? In order to account for the discursive and nondiscursive facets of these discourses, I argue that theories of performance are useful.

Studying Cultural Performances

“Moved to the level of performance,” Hauser argues, “rhetoric opens inventional spaces: places where ideas, relationships, emotional bonds, and course of action can be experienced in novel, sometimes transformative, ways.”³⁸ Performance, in this sense, influences the capacity of rhetoric to become a persuasive practice. It is the activity that constitutes public discourse.

Cultural performances, as characterized by Kirk W. Fuoss, have seven aspects. They are temporally framed, spatially framed, programmed (that is, they follow an order of activities), communal, “heightened occasions” involving display, reflexive and reflective,

and scheduled, publicized events.³⁹ When enacted for rhetorical ends, a dialectical relationship exists between cultural performances and public spheres: publics both produce and are produced by cultural performances.⁴⁰ As Dwight Conquergood observes, it is

through cultural performances [that] many people both construct and participate in 'public' life. Particularly for the poor and marginalized who are denied access to middle-class 'public' forums, cultural performance becomes the venue for 'public discussion' of vital issues central to their communities, as well as an arena for gaining visibility and staging identity.⁴¹

Analysis of such arenas, Hauser claims, "requires capturing their activity," their performances, to some degree.⁴² Thus far, most public sphere studies have involved textual analysis of secondary sources such as newspapers, magazines, congressional transcripts, and websites to capture the arguments and implications of various public spheres. In this essay, however, I hope to demonstrate that participant observation can be used in a way that might complement and/or extend the rich work that has been offered by prior studies of public spheres. Although Michael Warner has argued that a public does not require copresence,⁴³ this does not preclude the possibility that copresence may be illustrative when studying publics; thus, I believe it is worth considering when and why participant observation of a public might make a difference.

Conquergood has argued that "Nancy Fraser's concept of 'subaltern counterpublics' is very useful" in appreciating the role of cultural performances for counterpublics, yet he also reminds us that

discourse ... is not always and exclusively verbal: Issues and attitudes are expressed and contested in dance, music, gesture, food, ritual, artifact, symbolic action, as well as words [I]nvestigated historically within their political contexts, [cultural performances] ... are profoundly deliberative occasions.⁴⁴

One motive for public sphere scholars to conduct participant observation, therefore, is the opportunity to witness and record discourses that are left out of traditional written records—the cultural performances that often are altered or excluded when translated into written words.⁴⁵ Some studies of non-linguistic facets of cultural performances in public life related to textual analysis exist,⁴⁶ but the attentiveness and access to such factors enabled by the use of participant observation and the study of performance theory offer the possibility of additional approaches to this research.

Participant observation also offers an opportunity to study public discourse that is not yet recorded, a situation in which textual analysis is impossible. This is particularly important for those of us invested in counterpublic or subaltern studies. By definition, the discourses of counterpublics (for lack of a better term) are not represented significantly in mainstream culture owing to their marginalized status and/or because the perspectives expressed are what Raymond Williams calls "emergent."⁴⁷ A rhetorical model for studying public spheres, Hauser suggests, "reveals rather than conceals the emergence of publics as a process."⁴⁸ To capture a sense of the emergent process, participant observation is an attractive alternative because, as Richard Bauman argues, "[u]ltimately, the relative proportion and interplay of authority and creativity, the ready-made and the emergent, must be determined empirically, in the close study of performance itself."⁴⁹ By conducting participant observation, public sphere scholars may affirm the importance of cultural performances unrecognized by mainstream culture and, in the process of interpretation, offer a record of them.

Performance is relevant to public sphere studies as a critical perspective that informs our ways of knowing and what we desire to know. As Conquergood contends,

[t]he performance paradigm privileges particular, participatory, dynamic, intimate, precarious, embodied experience grounded in historical process, contingency, and ideology. Another way of saying it is that performance-centered research takes as both its subject matter and method the experiencing body situated in time, place, and history.⁵⁰

Through its attentiveness to bodies, performance theory enables us to account for the role of non-verbal activities in shaping public discourse. Melissa Deem adds that “[b]y allowing for the radical potentialities of the rhetorical, new understandings can be developed of the ways in which the body, affect, and desire disrupt the normative discursive logics of publics.”⁵¹

In order to explore the counterhegemonic potential of counterpublic performance, I now turn to the ways in which NBCAM and TLC have articulated their discourses about breast cancer, with the larger goal of illuminating their relationship to one another.

Breast Cancer Activism

Mary Douglas and Aaron Wildavsky have argued that “more is at stake in the debate on the causes of cancer than mere hypotheses. Whole empires of industry and of government depend on the answers.”⁵² To enhance appreciation of some of the stakes in this debate, I identify and consider the institutional justifications for establishing NBCAM and TLC, which will permit a more informed assessment of NBCAM and TLC as rhetorical interventions in public life.

NBCAM

October was designated National Breast Cancer Awareness Month (NBCAM) in 1984 by Zeneca, a subsidiary of Imperial Chemical Industries Limited. Zeneca is an international pharmaceutical company that has merged and demerged since 1912 with such chemical corporations as DuPont, Imperial Chemical Industries Limited (ICI), Merck, and Astra.⁵³ Now called AstraZeneca, it is one of the world’s top three pharmaceutical companies.⁵⁴ As one journalist characterizes the scope of the company,

It’s a case of have passport, will travel. AstraZeneca is quoted on the UK and Swedish stock exchanges. Its global corporate headquarters are in London. Group R&D [Research and Development] is directed from Sodertajle in Sweden and it has a strong presence in the all-important U.S. market. Plus sales and marketing operations in more than 100 countries; manufacturing facilities in 19 countries and six major research centres.⁵⁵

Global in its reach, it is no surprise to discover that AstraZeneca’s profits are in the billions.⁵⁶

AstraZeneca explains its motivation for marketing breast cancer detection on the NBCAM website:

Prior to their merger with Astra in June 1999, Zeneca, Inc. conducted an in-house breast cancer screening program, beginning in 1989 In 1996, the company analyzed the total direct healthcare and lost productivity costs of screening, referrals, and initial management of malignancies. The total cost of implementing the in-house screening program was \$400,000. Without the program, total direct costs would have been almost \$1.5 million (if the cancers were discovered at later, more advanced stages). Therefore, the calculated savings with the

program were \$1.1 million. AstraZeneca has published the Breast Cancer HealthSite Guide to assist other companies—large and small—in developing a workplace screening program.⁵⁷

(Astra)Zeneca's initial justification for NBCAM was one of basic accounting, not a critique of how women's healthcare has been assessed or implemented nor a desire to prevent women from developing breast cancer; instead, it was cost-effective for a company to detect cancer in its employees during the disease's earlier stages. Hence, in NBCAM's message, "early detection is your best protection," the "you" addressed was and continues to be not the broad public of "women," but female employees of self-interested companies. "Your best protection," in other words, could be interpreted as an attempt to constitute a public in response to employers' interest in profit and productivity.

Since its original screening program, AstraZeneca has added that the health of women is also a motivating factor. A 2001 company press release quoted David Brennan, President and Chief Executive Officer, AstraZeneca L.P., U.S., as saying: "The most important advantage of worksite programs is their ability to save lives."⁵⁸ Indeed, the medical community generally agrees that early cancer detection in adults over 50 increases a person's chances of survival compared to detection at a later stage.

The sponsor list of NBCAM has grown to include the American Academy of Family Physicians, American Cancer Society, American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, American College of Radiology, American Medical Women's Association, American Society of Clinical Oncology, Breast Cancer Resource Committee, Cancer-Care, Inc., Cancer Research Foundation of America, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, The Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation, National Alliance of Breast Cancer Organizations, National Cancer Institute, National Medical Association, Oncology Nursing Society, and Y-ME National Breast Cancer Organization.⁵⁹ Presumably, the growing sponsor list of NBCAM suggests the popularity of AstraZeneca's stance on breast cancer, a combination of the corporate cost-effectiveness of providing breast cancer screening and the medical fact that early detection increases the chance of a person living with cancer surviving for a longer period of time.

Although neither of these factors directly reflects feminist critiques of patriarchy, one result of NBCAM could be saving women's lives—a goal that unquestionably would be a feminist value. Furthermore, this diverse list of groups suggests that the activities involved in NBCAM offer possibilities for a wider range of purposes and agendas than mammograms. In addition, as NBCAM has grown exponentially, more people than ever before have begun to talk about breast cancer, a feminist accomplishment in itself.

Again, increased awareness motivates more women to be screened for cancer which, in turn, may save lives and helps those with cancer feel less isolated. These positive effects of NBCAM are a good reason for the symbolic pink ribbon of breast cancer awareness to resurface every October in countless venues, from television commercials and award ceremonies of the stars to U.S. postage stamps and lapel pins. In this sense, NBCAM creates and sustains a counterhegemonic discourse in relation to previous silence on the subject. At a minimum it counters indifference, which Brianle G. Chang reminds us is the "enemy of communication."⁶⁰

Besides, every step matters, right? Who cares if "Checks for the Cure" only donates five percent of each purchase to breast cancer research? Or if KitchenAid only donates \$50 for each *pink* Stand Mixer sold in the month of October? Or if it costs more money to mail a NBCAM Yoplait yogurt lid to the company than it will donate (\$.10/lid)?

These corporate charity practices are not unique to NBCAM; corporations will not abandon their desire to earn profits. If they are driven by their bottom line, isn't some percentage of the profits, however small, the most for which we can ask? With so many corporations involved, these small steps seem to add up. Although cause-related marketing is "used to consolidate existing markets, capture new ones, and increase corporate profit," as Samantha King argues in her study of breast cancer corporate philanthropy, it may be also "posited, in part, as a response to the consumer's desire for an ethical, meaningful, community-oriented life."⁶¹

The question remains: why would anyone want to resist NBCAM? Without belittling the life-altering possibilities enabled by early detection, TLC offers an answer that counters the common sense of NBCAM by asking why we have not done more to stop the sources of environmentally-linked cancers, particularly breast cancer. To appreciate more fully the politics which inform such a counterdiscourse, I now turn briefly to the origins of TLC.

TLC

The San Francisco Bay Area of California has the highest rate of breast cancer of any area in a Western country.⁶² A predominantly African American community in the Bay Area, Bayview/Hunter's Point has the highest breast cancer rate in the U.S. for women under 40.⁶³ Partly in response to these findings, the Toxic Links Coalition (TLC) was founded in the Bay Area in 1994 by representatives of groups such as Breast Cancer Action, Greenpeace, West County Toxics Coalition, and the Women's Cancer Resource Center.⁶⁴ TLC describes itself as

a growing alliance of community groups, women with cancer and cancer survivors, healthcare and environmental justice organizations, silicone survivors, women with endometriosis, and other reproductive disorders, and concerned individuals working together to educate our communities about the links between environmental toxins and the decline in public health.⁶⁵

TLC's primary effort has been to reclaim the breast cancer debate from corporations such as AstraZeneca. In other words, TLC is attempting to recast NBCAM as the prevailing public response to breast cancer and to challenge its dominance by creating a counterdiscourse. According to Greenaction, a member of TLC, the objection to NBCAM is at least two-fold. First, TLC disapproves of the initial sponsor of NBCAM. AstraZeneca, TLC argues, "profits by first producing many of the toxins implicated in the breast cancer epidemic and then by selling the drugs used to treat the disease."⁶⁶ To clarify, in addition to sponsoring NBCAM, AstraZeneca is "the manufacturer of the world's best selling cancer drug (Nolvadex, or tamoxifen citrate, with sales of \$470 million per year) ... and does a \$300 million annual business in the carcinogenic herbicide actochlor."⁶⁷ At one point, the corporation was the third largest producer of pesticides in the U.S.⁶⁸ Thus, AstraZeneca has profited from the entire cancer cycle from cause to detection to treatment.⁶⁹ Although the last two activities might appear to have positive implications for women, TLC argues that combining the three warrants a closer examination of AstraZeneca's intentions.

Second, TLC wants to shift public discourse about breast cancer from promoting mammograms to "what might be causing breast cancer"⁷⁰ or "to the environmental causes of cancer."⁷¹ In other words, TLC objects to framing cancer discourse in terms of the singular focus of detection and, instead, wants to foreground the question of

prevention. For this reason, TLC emphasizes the importance of stopping the production of carcinogenic, toxic chemicals.

To do this, TLC both has renamed and, thus, reframed the month of October as Cancer Industry Awareness Month (instead of NBCAM) in large part by sponsoring annual "Stop Cancer Where It Starts" tours. These are one-hour walking tours protesting the institutions that have contributed to environmentally-caused cancers by producing dangerous chemicals or by covering up hazardous chemical exposures to the public. Since 1994, the size of the tour has ranged from approximately 100 to 400 participants.⁷² Although a predominately European American group tends to participate, the speakers represent a range of ethnic backgrounds, including African American and Asian American activists. Both women and men are scheduled as speakers and attend as participants in this cultural performance. DiChiro notes: "The tour is always held on a workday during lunch time for maximum visibility and to accommodate working people willing to relinquish their lunch hour."⁷³ This time of the day exposes a broad audience to these activities, from the increased foot traffic on the sidewalks to the congested and, therefore, slowed vehicle traffic on the roads.

Evidence that TLC's discourse about environmentally-linked breast cancer has reached a wider audience may be found in the local television news reportage, in newspaper coverage, and in a mural that has traveled around the U.S. as a public art advocacy piece.⁷⁴ Additionally, in 2000, TLC "persuaded the cities of San Francisco and Berkeley, as well as the County of Marin, to pass resolutions naming October 'Stop Cancer Where It Starts Month.'"⁷⁵

Articles and TV news clips of TLC's tours, however, include only brief glimpses of its campaign and tactics. To examine the discursive and nondiscursive dimensions of this campaign, I attended the October 3, 2001, tour as a participant-observer, interviewed tour participants, and explored secondary accounts of the tours.⁷⁶ Although each tour differs, focusing on one tour offers the opportunity to provide a more detailed and textured account of the activities of TLC than exists, for example, in secondary sources.

Stop Cancer Where It Starts

There were five "stops" on the TLC tour I attended: Pacific Gas and Electric (for running a polluting power plant in Hunter's Point and refusing to clean up the toxins or compensate for residents' health problems at Daly City's Midway Village), Bechtel (for engineering and building nuclear power plants and raising the price of water in San Francisco), Chevron (for operating an oil refinery in Richmond, CA, that pollutes local communities with toxins and for their international environmentally racist practices), the American Cancer Society (for downplaying environmental causes of cancer and not taking a stance on any environmental legislation), and Solem & Associates (for providing public relations services to the aforementioned businesses).⁷⁷ Each stop included one to four speakers from the coalition groups and included women and men of varied age, race, ethnicity, class, and health (some had survived cancer and some had not been diagnosed with cancer). On October 3, 2001, approximately 100 people traveled to what is known as the financial district of downtown San Francisco in order to walk several blocks on this "toxic tour."⁷⁸ As the tour moved from business to business, stopping traffic, tour participants walked across streets and redirected countless people who were walking on the sidewalks as part of their everyday routines. The tour

created an inventive, spontaneous, persuasive, and risky mobile theater for cultural performance by communicating physically, visually, emotionally, corporeally, and aurally.

Visually, numerous signs on wooden sticks displayed campaign messages: "TOXINS in our world = CANCER in our bodies"; "HEALTH BEFORE CORPORATE WEALTH"; "STOP CANCER WHERE IT STARTS"; "ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE NOW." There were signs for each specific site that targeted specific green- and pinkwashing campaigns (for example, "\$OLEM & ASSOC.: *LIARS* FOR HIRE"). We walked behind a large banner held by two to four people that displayed the TLC symbol (a hand with the following design in its palm: a circle and slash, symbolizing "no," over a barrel with a skull and crossbones label, spilling liquid) and stated: "TOXIC LINKS COALITION: UNITED FOR HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE."

Four participants were asked to donate a dollar for a pin that displays the iconic breast cancer awareness pink ribbon unpredictably looping downward into a rope that reflects an upside down, yet symmetrical noose with the words: "fight the CANCER INDUSTRY; TOXIC LINKS COALITION." Choosing to link the popular symbol of the increasingly institutionalized pink ribbon with the insidious image of a noose performs a powerful rhetorical juxtaposition: silky ribbons are transformed into knotted ropes, implying that women are not just dying but are being purposefully killed. This image signifies the wash of a public awareness campaign gone awry. In other words, the symbol articulates the campaign that purports to be doing something about breast cancer, NBCAM, to death,⁷⁹ which prompts the question, "Is it true?" Perhaps NBCAM isn't perfect, but is it killing women just as publicly and certainly as a hanging would?

The performative power of eye-catching signs and costumes was constitutive of TLC's attempts critically to interrupt taken-for-granted practices on the days of their tours.⁸⁰ Several participants dramatized the tour's message by creatively embodying alternative personae. Two participants, calling themselves the Queen and King of Cancer, wore torn costume ball outfits with crowns (declaring their titles) attached to their wigs. To heighten their deadly looks, they painted their faces white with large black circles around their eyes and dark lipstick. The King's facial "skin" was peeling off his face, contributing to his aura of deterioration. Another participant strutted about on stilts. With a flowing white outfit, she moved high above us, like a haunting ghost. One woman, with the assistance of two others who helped her carry the weight, stepped into a papier-mâché puppet costume, approximately ten feet high and twenty feet wide, of a purple woman with an exposed mastectomy scar on the left side of her chest and two large hands that displayed the TLC symbol's design in their palms. Although these individuals did not speak with words on the tour, their dramatic personae invited spontaneous rhetorical engagements that enacted TLC's message, particularly on the walks between stops.

Employing inventive visual resources is a tactic with a long history in most social movements.⁸¹ Constructing such "image events," as Kevin Michael DeLuca has argued in regard to U.S. environmental and environmental justice movements, is an opportunity to "deconstruct and articulate identities, ideologies, consciousnesses, communities, publics, and cultures in our modern industrial civilization."⁸²

In their study of ACT UP, Adrienne Christiansen and Jeremy Hanson argue that the exigencies of AIDS and the constraints of AIDS rhetoric have motivated activists

to draw on the comic frame as a response. Appreciating ACT UP's tactical responses within this context, they claim, "should help us better understand and interpret the motives and actions of similarly angry, alienated, and dispossessed groups."⁸³ This may explain the actions of cancer activists who also face incredible tragedy and who have chosen to respond comically by touring and wearing costumes. Recognizing the role of such creative activities seems vital to assessing the transformative potential of counterpublic discourse.

Just before the tour began, a shiny black sport utility vehicle pulled up to the sidewalk. Some of us had begun to move, attempting to obey the police order to allow people to walk into the PG&E building, when the passenger and driver emerged. Immediately my attention was drawn to the driver, who wore a wide brimmed red hat with a black flower and a matching red dress. I then looked at the passenger. To my surprise, she was placing a gas mask on her face. By this time the driver had walked in front of the police line, unbuttoned her dress, pulled out her right arm, and exposed her mastectomy scar. As the tour crowd cheered, the two began posing for photographs. The police could not stop or detain the woman in red for indecent exposure because although it is illegal to bare a woman's breast in public, she had exposed no breast.

RavenLight, as I later learned was the driver's name, explained to me that she had participated in every previous TLC tour, although she wasn't part of TLC, in order to lend her body to such events. She also noted that she consistently stood a bit apart in order to attract attention and to allow the groups who had planned these events their space "if they weren't comfortable" with her exposed mastectomy scar.⁸⁴ Indeed, my observation of how drivers and pedestrians reacted to the tour was that those who caught sight of RavenLight's exposed body typically stared and sometimes quickly looked back once or twice before moving away. Not having time to question them, I cannot know what these observers felt. Disgust? Intrigue? Shock? Admiration? Clearly, however, they found the image of RavenLight, a survivor of breast cancer, difficult to ignore and perhaps even more difficult to forget.⁸⁵

Continuing on the tour, we walked up a steep San Francisco street and RavenLight turned to the side to look for oncoming traffic. A woman who looked to be under 30—perhaps only because she wore pigtails—stepped between RavenLight and me. When she saw RavenLight's chest, she gasped. We stopped. RavenLight glanced back in the woman's direction. The young woman then reached one hand out in the direction of RavenLight's exposed scar as she brought her other hand to her own chest, which was covered with a T-shirt that sank to her touch. Her eyes filled with tears and she said, "Sister—you are so brave." RavenLight smiled, and they hugged. In that moment, all three of us, the woman in red who risked contact, the woman in pigtails who risked reaching out to communicate, and the observer who risked sharing that intimate exchange, felt present.

What is productive about these feelings of presence is that RavenLight evoked strong and sensual reactions from others. Her body's performance of an alternative discourse suggests that if we wish to transform politics, we need to expose our physical, emotional, and political scars. We need to wonder why we feel compelled to look and/or to look away. In terms of TLC's political campaign, we need to consider the costs of our production of toxins. We need to examine the reasons why a breast cannot be present in our body politic until it is absent. By extension, we need to ask, what is the place of women in our body politic? RavenLight's body bespeaks alternative possibilities—about women, cancer, and "progress."⁸⁶ My participant observation of this embodied

cultural performance offered me the means to engage the way that some activists, borrowing words from DeLuca, “have challenged and changed the meanings of the world not through good reasons but through vulnerable bodies, not through rational arguments but through bodies at risk.”⁸⁷

For feminists, raising questions regarding “bodies that matter”⁸⁸ often reflects a desire to dispute patriarchal assumptions about sex, gender, and sexuality. Elizabeth Grosz summarizes the relevance of this project in terms of the historical articulation of women to corporeality and men to disembodiment:

Patriarchal oppression ... justifies itself, at least in part, by connecting women much more closely than men to the body and, through this identification, restricting women's social and economic roles to (pseudo) biological terms. Relying on essentialism, naturalism, and biologism ... women are somehow [perceived as] more biological, more corporeal, more natural than men.⁸⁹

Because technical, political, and popular discourses have historically tended to relegate women to bodies in a derogatory sense (as non-intellectual, utilitarian extensions of heterosexual men's desires and reproductive needs), engaging the politics of the body and embodiment enables feminists to challenge a range of oppressive practices (such as thinking that reifies a mind/body split, suppression or denial of female agency, and spatial politics of gendered labor). Resisting such patterns fosters conversations about re-imagining these dynamics, such as exploring the performativity of gender, re-examining holistic approaches to medicine, and challenging spatial boundaries that limit female mobility.

Sharon Crowley claims that contemporary women are indebted to second-wave feminists for delineating just how “the personal is political.” Further, she argues, “negatively charged cultural constructions of women's bodies as both dangerous and fragile have forced women to become highly conscious of their bodies—the space they occupy in a room, on the street, in a crowd.”⁹⁰ In other words, the lived experiences of many women arguably lead to a certain level of self-reflexivity and self-consciousness about corporeality. In the case of RavenLight, her conscious exposure of her scar, in ways both playful and defiant, performs an embodied rhetoric that pushes witnesses to confront what is dangerous to and fragile in the body politic.

In addition to physically, visually, and emotionally performing TLC's message, the tour also turned public spaces into a theater of sound. The speakers used a microphone, enabling their voices to be heard by tour participants and those passing by. Participants blew whistles, clapped, hissed, laughed, shouted, and repeatedly chanted TLC's message, “Stop cancer where it starts.” Walking amid the skyscrapers and traffic of downtown San Francisco, those of us on the tour frequently saw people peering down at us from their office windows to see/hear what all the noise was about.

The speakers detailed and elaborated on NBCAM's reactive focus on cancer. In these public performances, the interconnectedness of domination—environmental, gendered, racial, and economic—was articulated as the motivation for TLC's anti-NBCAM campaign. Excerpts from the welcome speech of Barbara Brenner from Breast Cancer Action are illustrative:

I want to tell you why I'm here and why I hope you're here. I'm here because a woman is diagnosed with breast cancer every three minutes in this country. I'm here because thirty years ago a woman's risk of breast cancer was one in twenty—and today it's one in eight. I'm here because this year in the United States alone, 238,000 women will hear the words: ‘You have breast cancer.’ And I'm here because just continuing to diagnose ever-increasing

cases of breast cancer is simply unacceptable. What we need, what we demand, and what we will not rest until we get is true cancer prevention.

Beginning with statistics that affirm the increasingly large number of women who are diagnosed with breast cancer every year, Brenner established the exigence for her and for this tour: a lack of true cancer prevention in the ongoing public dialogue about breast cancer. She also reinforced the goal of the tour: shifting from the discourse of awareness promoted by NBCAM to a discourse of prevention that addresses environmental causes. As she puts it, “we will not rest” until prevention (not awareness) becomes the goal.

Brenner then articulated what TLC believes is necessary to address prevention:

I'm here because it's time, it's way past time for people concerned about cancer to start making connections. Connections between increasing incidents of many kinds of cancer—including my own kind of cancer, breast cancer—and equally scary, childhood cancers and what we as a society do to our air, our water, and our food supplies. Connections between what PG&E does to our poorest communities like Hunter's Point and Midway Village while claiming to look out for our interests in this so-called power crisis. Connections between the pharmaceutical companies that make millions on breast cancer drugs and the message you hear every October that mammograms are the answer to the cancer problem.

Brenner used what has come to be called a feminine style of speaking by referring to her personal experience with breast cancer and by identifying with others' political struggles with childhood cancers, poverty, racial injustice (the references to Hunter's Point and Midway Village), and corporate profits.⁹¹ She reinforced the feminist belief in the fundamental connection between the personal and the political.

In focusing on the theme of connections, Brenner also highlighted the wash of NBCAM's discourse by articulating the inconsistencies between what we are told and the costs of such discourses. The appearance of NBCAM as a relatively popular discourse about breast cancer, her words suggest, may obfuscate the continued environmental degradation that causes breast cancer. This feminist rhetorical tactic of making connections is further evident in the name—the Toxic *Links* Coalition. By articulating experiences of environmental injustice with the profits of public institutions that support NBCAM, Brenner and TLC are able to suggest a critique of the discourse promoted by NBCAM as a strategy of green- and pinkwashing.⁹²

Brenner concluded her speech by defining the tour as an act of resistance and issuing a call to action:

The pressure for that type of prevention starts here, in the streets, in front of PG&E and Bechtel and Chevron and the American Cancer Society and Solem & Associates, their PR firm. And we're having a huge impact. A few years ago, Chevron began sponsoring the Race for the Cure. When are we going to see the Race for the Cause? ... So, take this tour today with hope in your hearts, with the knowledge that you are making a huge difference, and with a commitment to staying involved after it's over. Stop Cancer Where It Starts. Thank you.

Brenner's address characterized the tour as the starting place for pressure, the opportunity to make a huge impact, and a promise to build a growing community with a future commitment to staying involved. She encouraged other people to join her—to invoke a familiar cultural cliché—not just in talking the talk, but in walking the walk. She reiterated that the goal of the tour is not to promote a cure, but to begin stopping the cause. Subsequent speeches on the tour addressed some combination of the general themes Brenner outlined and the specifics prompted by each stop. When the tour participants stood in front of Chevron, for example, Henry Clark from the West County

Toxics Coalition reiterated the lack of corporate accountability for causing health complications in his community:

Although to this very day, Chevron denies any type of responsibility at all for any of the health problems in our community [boos from the crowd], we know that's a lie. They will want to blame people's lifestyles; they want to blame every other reason but those tons and tons of chemical poisons that are being spewed into our community like daily dioxins or methalyne chloride or the 127,000 tons of chemicals that were being spewed from their hazardous waste incinerator there at the Chevron-Arco Chemical Company in our community before we got it shut down and got it dismantled a few years ago. [Audience cheers.]

Similar to Brenner's tactic of making connections, Clark linked corporate pollution to public health problems. Despite Chevron's denial of accountability, Clark suggested that his community was not fooled by this "lie." According to Michael R. Riech's study of chemical disasters, the prevalence of corporate denial and community resistance to this response is common: "Private companies use administrative action to avoid or delay litigation, reduce negative publicity, and minimize the company's overall liability."⁹³ Industry attempts to contain or privatize the conflict, in other words, while communities such as Clark's hope to do just the opposite by expanding or socializing the conflict.

Appropriately, Clark subsequently expanded his local struggle to the global scene:

Chevron said that they wanted to be a "good neighbor," and we're going to hold them accountable to being a good neighbor; but, being a good neighbor is more than just talk. Being a good neighbor is taking some action and listening to the community's concerns and demands and reducing those chemicals that are being released into our community and investing some of those profits into pollution prevention and compensating people for the health damages and the destruction that has occurred in our community over the years. That would be the test of a real good neighbor. [Audience cheers.] And not only being a good neighbor to us in Richmond—because we're going to hold them accountable—but, to being a good neighbor to our brothers and sisters internationally where Chevron has their operations at—be that in ... Ecuador or be that in South Africa or wherever it's at. The bottom line, Chevron, is this here: is that you can't give no lip service to us in Richmond—talking about being a good neighbor and you're poisoning and polluting our brothers and sisters in other parts of the world—because this is one struggle, this is one fight, and we're going to hold you accountable wherever you are.

Drawing on the corporate appropriation of the phrase "good neighbor," Clark reappropriated the term by defining what such a role would entail (taking some action). Similarly, at the end of his speech, Clark directly addressed the corporation ("you"), appropriated the corporate term usually reserved for evaluating economic gains ("the bottom line"), and redefined the grounds for assessing the bottom line as accountability. Additionally, his argument, like others presented that day, made connections. It broadened the tour's struggle to the international level insofar as the neighborhood TLC was defending was every neighborhood.

The role of the public relations industry in promoting green- and pinkwashing by enabling corporate denial of accountability for the causes of breast cancer was highlighted at the last tour stop. Standing in front of the public relations firm of Solem & Associates, Judith Brady, one of the founders of TLC and the editor of *One in Three: Women with Cancer Confront an Epidemic*,⁹⁴ talked about the ways that PR has fostered a corporate-dominated discourse about breast cancer.

Brady: Maybe you're wondering why we're here in front of this innocuous looking office building –

Anonymous voice: Tell us why we're here!!

Brady: We're here in front of the offices of a public relations agency by the name of Solem & Associates –

Audience: Boo!!! Hsssssssss ...

Brady: So, let me tell you what their job is. Their job is to make sure that you think in such a way that other companies such as Chevron can profit. It's kind of a no-brainer. If people really knew what Chevron did, would they support it?

Audience: No!

Brady: If people really knew how PG&E was ripping us off, would they support it?

Audience: No!

Brady: If people really knew how dangerous nuclear power is, would Bechtel still exist?

Audience: No!

Brady: You know how come they still exist? Because of people like Solem & Associates. This PR agency has among its clients PG&E, Bechtel, and Chevron. One of their favorite gimmicks is to create what we call an astroturf organization. They create phony grassroots groups, and it is through those phony groups that they give their live voice to the public. They've done it many times In terms of PG&E, these folks here, Solem & Associates, have a very unsavory history. In 1994, when Alameda was trying to municipalize its own gas lines. Watch for it. You can bet they will do it here. And they also have knee-jerk names with words like "freedom" and "security" and stuff like that. You can imagine we're going to find groups like "San Franciscans for Utility Freedom" or "Californians for Dependable Power" or "Citizens for Free Enterprise"—something like that. And through that, through those groups, they will tell their lies.

The theme of deception ran throughout Brady's interactive speech. Environmentalists such as Brady have taken to calling PR front groups "astroturf" (versus grassroots groups) to symbolize their lack of public support or roots. As Brady's speech points out, greenwashing strategies provide "the appearance of public support and citizen advocacy" while making no attempt to engage people in dialogue that will foster just change.⁹⁵

Although the tour is the primary cultural performance through which TLC attempts to influence public debate, observers and participants were handed fliers containing information about how to become more involved with each group in the coalition. In addition, each speaker reinforced the need for participants and observers to do more after the tour. Accordingly, the tour was a cultural performance whose implicit rhetorical structures, as Richard Schechner has explained, lead to overt social dramas, which lead to implicit social processes, which lead to manifest stage performances, which lead back to implicit rhetorical structures, and so on.⁹⁶ As Victor Turner has argued, this circular pattern between the overt and the implicit, the social and the stage, helps us to appreciate that any cultural performance is part of a larger context.⁹⁷ These fluid, dynamic activities that constitute public life are what open inventional spaces to create new discourses and, therefore, alter relationships among publics and counter-publics.

Conclusion

Breast cancer is an epidemic that currently risks the lives of too many women. NBCAM brings this situation to public attention each year. Although NBCAM initially may have been inspired by profits, it has exceeded (Astra)Zeneca's original intentions. NBCAM has raised public awareness of breast cancer. It is no small accomplishment to find Americans talking about cancer and breasts in public forums without facing silence or snickering. These cultural shifts in public opinion and public discourse can be

attributed, at least in part, to NBCAM. Therefore, NBCAM cannot be reduced to “the dominant public discourse” because it has fostered a public dialogue that runs counter to the hegemonic frame that marginalizes the significance of breast cancer. As Dow and Tonn explain, a feminist or counterpublic may be identified on the basis of its twofold potential for critique and for empowerment.⁹⁸ NBCAM has met these criteria by criticizing previous silences and inactions about breast cancer and by empowering women by offering them a means to resist prevailing attitudes. Both NBCAM’s and TLC’s claims to further the breast cancer movement, therefore, arguably have been legitimate, albeit with different goals and activities.

Yet identifying the counterhegemonic potential of NBCAM as a part of the breast cancer movement does not preclude the possibility of reading TLC’s tour as a counterpublic response to NBCAM. As Robert Asen and Daniel Brouwer argue, “exclusion from prominent channels of political discourse and a corresponding lack of political power ... is neither fixed nor total.”⁹⁹ Like most social movements, breast cancer activism consists of multiple critiques and actions. Reducing public spheres and counterpublics to facile binaries, as stated earlier, often essentializes and/or is inaccurate and, hence, unproductive. Additional study of subaltern or emerging counterpublics would benefit from highlighting the ways in which power is articulated and rearticulated in specific contexts.

Further, this analysis of NBCAM and the TLC tour suggests that conflating a social movement with a single public, counter or otherwise, oversimplifies, at least in some instances. Some social movements, especially broadly based movements such as environmentalism or feminism, are made up of varied groups and forms of activism that reflect multiple identities, concerns, and opinions. That variety should be an integral part of assumptions underlying future studies of publics and how they are related to social movements as distinct, yet linked cultural formations.

My fieldwork with TLC suggests that using participant observation techniques enables rhetorical critics to explore the messy complexities of public life and the power negotiations involving emergent discourses and counterpublics. As a critical tool, participant observation compels critics to travel to public spaces to feel, to observe, and to participate in cultural performances firsthand. It also helps critics to consider the rhetorical force of counterpublics and of cultural performances, and to consider that the ways in which we interact with and engage specific publics can influence our judgments. It reminds us that publics are not phenomena that exist “out there,” involving other people and affecting bodies other than our own.

More than a visual or psychological argument, TLC’s tour created an affective and embodied theater for rhetorical engagement. In my account of these interactions, I have attempted to illustrate the ways that TLC’s toxic tour performed reversed hegemonic attitudes about breast cancer. Instead of asking why anyone would want to resist NBCAM, TLC asks why anyone would not. Instead of romanticizing detection, TLC reminds us of how horrifying the moment is when someone hears those three words, “You have cancer.” Instead of focusing on what cannot be changed, such as heredity, TLC asks, what can we change?

TLC’s campaign is based on resistance to NBCAM insofar as its prevalence has limited public deliberation through focusing on breast cancer detection.¹⁰⁰ By linking toxins and cancer, health and wealth, environmental justice and feminism, TLC has offered a potentially persuasive counterdiscourse to NBCAM’s response to the U.S. breast cancer epidemic. Prior to my exposure to TLC’s campaign, I did not question

National Breast Cancer Awareness Month, and I suspect that I am not alone. TLC's cultural performances prompt those exposed to consider more carefully the causes of breast cancer and to ask what else a month dedicated to fighting breast cancer could become.

Notes

Phaedra C. Pezzullo is an assistant professor in the Department of Communication and Culture at Indiana University. This essay is derived from fieldwork conducted for the author's dissertation, The Politics of Presence: Toxic Tours, Environmental Justice, and Embodied Rhetorics of Resistance (Spring 2002, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill). An earlier version was presented at the annual convention of the National Communication Association, Atlanta, GA, 2001. The author thanks V. William Barthrop, Carole Blair, J. Robert Cox, Della Pollock, Soyini Madison, Lawrence Grossberg, Rachel Hall, Steve Schwarze, and Ted Striphas for their feedback on earlier versions of the essay.

¹Sandra Steingraber, *Living Downstream: A Scientist's Personal Investigation of Cancer and the Environment* (NY: Random House, 1997), 47.

²American Cancer Society, *Cancer Facts and Figures 2001* (NY: American Cancer Society, Inc 2001), 11. In comparison, approximately 1,500 new breast cancer cases were estimated to be diagnosed in men in 2001, and it is estimated that 553,400 people in the U.S. would die from cancer and 1,268,000 new cancer cases would be discovered in 2001 alone (10, 7, 6). Proctor approximates that for every U.S. citizen alive, "one in three will contract the disease and one in five will die from it." Robert N. Proctor, *Cancer Wars: How Politics Shape What We Know and Don't Know About Cancer* (NY: Basic Books, 1995), 1.

³Y-ME National Breast Cancer Organization, 2001, available from <http://www.y-me.org/cancerInfo/cancer-Info.html>.

⁴Maren Klawiter, "Racing for the Cure, Walking Women, and Toxic Touring: Mapping Cultures of Action Within the Bay Area Terrain of Breast Cancer," *Social Problems* 461 (1999): 104.

⁵Not surprisingly, some still claim that "studies have never shown a clear association between environmental toxins and elevated rates of the disease." See Barron H. Lerner, *The Breast Cancer Wars: Hope, Fear, and the Pursuit of a Cure in Twentieth-Century America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 267. Another disturbing trend, according to Yadlon, has been to attribute the cause of cancer to women who have not "made the 'proper' dietary and reproductive choices," that is, who have not been "skinny women and good mothers." Susan Yadlon, "Skinny Women and Good Mothers: The Rhetoric of Risk, Control, and Culpability in the Production of Knowledge About Breast Cancer," *Feminist Studies* 23 (1997): 645-6.

⁶Some rhetoricians have written about the problematic assumptions made in studies of hereditary breast cancer. See, for example, Celeste Michelle Condit, Deirdre Moira Condit, and Paul J. Achter, "Human Equality, Affirmative Action, and Genetic Models of Human Variation," *Rhetoric and Public Affairs* 4 (2001): 92-4.

⁷Sandra Steingraber, "The Social Production of Cancer: A Walk Upstream," in *Reclaiming the Environmental Debate: The Politics of Health in a Toxic Culture*, ed. Richard Hofrichter (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2000), 31.

⁸Steingraber, "The Social Production of Cancer," 31.

⁹By most estimates, the environmental movement is considered a success. See, for example, Riley E. Dunlap and Angela G. Mertig, *American Environmentalism: The U.S. Environmental Movement, 1970-1990* (New York: Taylor & Francis, 1992); Joe Miller, "Earth Day at 30: Greener, Cleaner and Growing," *The News and Observer*, Raleigh, North Carolina, 21 April 2000, p. E1; Jonathan Rauch, "There's Smog in the Air, But It Isn't All Pollution," *The Washington Post*, 30 April 2000, p. B01.

¹⁰See Glen Martin, "Earth Day Report Card-We Still Care, Sort Of," *The San Francisco Chronicle*, 22 April 2000, p. A1; L. J. Shrum, John A. McCarty, and Tina M. Lowrey, "Buyer Characteristics of the Green Consumer and Their Implications for Advertising Strategy," *Journal of Advertising* 24 (September 1995): 71.

¹¹Richard N. L. Andrews, *Managing the Environment, Managing Ourselves: A History of American Environmental Policy* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1999).

¹²Marcy Darnovsky, "Green Living in a Toxic World: The Pitfalls and Promises of Everyday Environmentalism," in *Reclaiming the Environmental Debate: The Politics of Health in a Toxic Culture*, ed. Richard Hofrichter (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2000), 219.

¹³For evidence of its increasing popularity, see the special issue on green advertising in the *Journal of Advertising* 24 (September 1995): 21-31.

¹⁴Although I had not seen the term "pinkwashing" before, many feminists have criticized the ways in which corporate appropriations of feminist symbols, slogans, and discourses broaden the gap between talking about women and improving the lives of women. See, for example, Yadlon, 1997; Karen Fitts, "The Pathology and Erotics of Breast Cancer," *Discourse* 21 (1999): 3-20; Audre Lorde, *The Cancer Journals: Special Edition* (San Francisco, CA: Aunt Lute Books, 1997). Mark Dowie offers a brief but particularly poignant example of the appropriation of "female emancipation" for PR purposes. See John Stauber and Sheldon Rampton, *Toxic Sludge is Good for You! Lies, Damn Lies and the Public Relations Industry* (Monroe, ME: Common Courage Press, 1995), 1.

¹⁵Fitts, 4.

¹⁶Fitts, 9. This trend to contemplate breasts more than cancer in breast cancer discourses often lends itself to the sexualization of the disease. In an article pointed out to me by John Delicath, Lurie notes: "The cover of the

February 18, 2002 issue of *Time* magazine features a naked, airbrushed, very thin woman with blond hair, shown from the waist up, standing sideways, covering her breasts with one arm while the other is awkwardly bent upward. She is staring off into space with a completely disengaged expression, like a mannequin, or a blow-up doll." She concludes, "One can't help but wonder if breast cancer gets so much coverage because of the first word in the disease, not the second." Karen Lurie, February 27, 2002, "Making cancer sexy," available from <http://www.alternet.org>.

¹⁷Some may be inclined to label a study of environmental and feminist arguments and practices a study of "ecofeminism," but TLC does not use this label.

¹⁸By hegemonic "common sense," I refer to Antonio Gramsci, who defines it as historically constructed yet taken-for-granted societal beliefs. See *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, trans. and ed. Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith (New York: International Publishers, 1997/1971), 323–42.

¹⁹Bradley Angel, "Stop Cancer Where It Starts" tour speech, taped by author, San Francisco, CA, 3 October 2001.

²⁰Rita Felski, *Beyond Feminist Aesthetics: Feminist Literature and Social Change* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989); Nancy Fraser, "Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy," in *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, ed. Craig Calhoun (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1992), 109–42.

²¹See Gerard A. Hauser, *Vernacular Voices: The Rhetoric of Publics and Public Spheres* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1999); Robert Asen, "Seeking the 'Counter' in Counterpublics," *Communication Theory* 10 (2000): 424–46; Robert Asen and Daniel C. Brouwer, *Counterpublics and the State* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2001).

²²I borrow this phrase from Asen.

²³Bonnie J. Dow and Mari Boor Tonn, "'Feminine Style' and Political Judgment in the Rhetoric of Ann Richards," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 79 (1993): 300.

²⁴Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, trans. Thomas Burger (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1962/1989).

²⁵Thomas G. Goodnight and David B. Hingstman, "Studies in the Public Sphere," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 83 (1997): 351–99.

²⁶Habermas, 27.

²⁷Craig Calhoun, *Habermas and the Public Sphere* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1992), 6.

²⁸Fraser, 2.

²⁹Hauser, 32.

³⁰Calhoun, 37.

³¹Calhoun, 37.

³²Hauser, *Vernacular Voices*; Seyla Benhabib, "Toward a Deliberative Model of Democratic Legitimacy," in *Democracy and Difference: Contesting the Boundaries of the Political*, ed. Seyla Benhabib (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996), 67–94; Charles Taylor, *Philosophical Arguments* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995).

³³Felski, 167.

³⁴Fraser, 123.

³⁵Asen, 444–5.

³⁶Lisa Cartwright, "Community and the Public Body in Breast Cancer Media Activism," *Cultural Studies* 12 (1998): 121.

³⁷When I use the term "discourse" in this paper, I am referring to what Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe have defined as "the entire material density of the multifarious institutions, rituals and practices through which a discursive formation is structured." In *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics* (London: Verso, 1985), 109.

³⁸Hauser, 33.

³⁹Kirk T. Fuoss, *Striking Performances/Performing Strikes* (Jackson, MI: University Press of Mississippi, 1997), 173–4.

⁴⁰This argument parallels Kirk T. Fuoss's claim regarding the relationship between cultural performances and community. See "'Community' Contested, Imagined, and Performed: Cultural Performances, Contestation, and Community in an Organized-Labor Social Drama," *Text and Performance Quarterly* 15 (1995): 79–98.

⁴¹Dwight Conquergood, "Rethinking Ethnography: Towards a Critical Cultural Politics," *Communication Monographs* 58 (1991): 189.

⁴²Hauser, 33.

⁴³Michael Warner, "Publics and Counterpublics (abbreviated version)," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 88 (2002): 415.

⁴⁴Conquergood, 189.

⁴⁵Conquergood's argument refers to ethnography; however, it may be applied to participant observation. Although Conquergood suggested the usefulness of an ethnographic approach to rhetorical studies of cultural performances a decade ago, to my knowledge, public sphere studies have not responded. By developing a case for the usefulness of participant observation, this essay hopes to encourage all forms of participant observation, including ethnography. See Dwight Conquergood, "Rethinking Ethnography," and "Ethnography, Rhetoric, and Performance," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 78 (1992): 80–97.

⁴⁶See, for example, Adrienne E. Christiansen and Jeremy J. Hanson, "Comedy as Cure for Tragedy: ACT UP and the Rhetoric of AIDS," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 82 (1996): 157–70; Kevin Michael DeLuca, *Image Politics: The New Rhetoric of Environmental Activism*, (New York: Guilford Press, 1999); Karen Foss and Kathy L. Domenici, "Haunting Argentina: Synecdoche in the Protests of the Mothers of Plaza de Mayo," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 87 (2001): 237–58.

⁴⁷I thank Steve Schwarze for suggesting this theoretical link and Ted Striphas for locating the sources. See Raymond Williams, "Base and Superstructure in Marxist Cultural Theory," *New Left Review* 82 (1973): 3–16; Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977).

⁴⁸Hauser, 49.

⁴⁹Richard Bauman, "Performance," in *Folklore, Cultural Performances, and Popular Entertainments: A Communications-Centered Handbook*, ed. Richard Bauman (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 42–3.

⁵⁰Conquergood, "Rethinking Ethnography," 187.

⁵¹Melissa Deem, "Stranger Sociability, Public Hope and the Limits of Political Transformation," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 88 (2002): 448.

⁵²Mary Douglas and Aaron Wildavsky, *Risk and Culture: An Essay on the Selection of Technological and Environmental Dangers* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), 58.

⁵³AstraZeneca (2001), "AstraZeneca U.S. History," available from <http://www.astrazeneca-us.com/about/history.asp>.

⁵⁴"Corporate Profile: The Arranged Marriage," *The [UK] Independent*, 24 February 1999, p. 5; N. Pandya, "Jobs & Money: Jobs: Company Vitae: AstraZeneca which this week held its AGM and posted first quarter profits of £694m—up 12%," *The [UK] Guardian*, 28 April 2001, p. 23.

⁵⁵Pandya, 23.

⁵⁶Pandya, 23.

⁵⁷National Breast Cancer Awareness Month (2001), "Help Promote NBCAM," available from http://www.nbcam.org/promote_healthsite.cfm.

⁵⁸AstraZeneca (2001), "New Survey Finds Few Employers Provide On-Site Breast Cancer Screening," available from <http://www.astrazeneca-us.com/news/article.asp?file=2001102701.htm>.

⁵⁹National Breast Cancer Awareness Month (2001), "NBCAM Board of Sponsors," available from <http://www.nbcam.org/board.cfm>.

⁶⁰Briankle G. Chang, *Deconstructing Communication: Representation, Subject and Economics of Exchange* (Minneapolis, MN: MN Press, 1996), 56. I first read this poignant statement in Ronald Walter Greene's "Rhetorical Pedagogy as a Postal System: Circulating Subjects through Michael Warner's 'Publics and Counterpublics,'" *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 88 (2002): 434–43.

⁶¹Samantha King, "An All-Consuming Cause: Breast Cancer, Corporate Philanthropy, and the Market for Generosity," *Social Text* 194 (2001): 115–43.

⁶²Zillah R. Eisenstein, *Mannmade Breast Cancers* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2001), 96.

⁶³K. Nyasha, "For Women Under 40, Hunters Point Breast Cancer Rate Highest in U.S.," *Bayview Newspaper*, 28 September 2001, available from <http://www.greenaction.org/hunterspoint/press/sfbayview09281.shtml>. "A report from the city's Department of Public Health said that between 1988 and 1992, 60 black women in Bayview-Hunters Point [San Francisco's forgotten southeast corner] were found to have breast cancer—and 41 percent of them were under age 50. In the rest of San Francisco, only 22 percent would be expected to fall in that age group. The study also found elevated rates of cervical cancer but lower-than-expected rates of prostate cancer and non-Hodgkin's lymphoma among black men." In C. Johnson, "Disputed S.F. Power Plant Expected to Get 1st OK Neighbors Worry About Health Issues," *The San Francisco Chronicle*, 4 March 1996, p. A13. "Bayview-Hunters Point has two Superfund sites, areas in which federal funds pay for toxic cleanups, and more than 100 other identified toxic waste spots . . . [A] task force found that all six schools in Bayview-Hunters Point had asthma rates that averaged between 15 and 20 percent. That's the highest rate in the city, and four times higher than the state average." In J. B. Johnson, "Bayview Holding Breath on Plants; If Bid is Best, S.F. Would Buy and Shutter 2 PG&E Stations," *The San Francisco Chronicle*, 8 June 1998, p. A15.

⁶⁴For more information about the beginnings of the coalition, see Klawiter.

⁶⁵Toxic Links Coalition (2001), "Toxic Links Coalition Home Page," available from http://homeflash.net/~dlscism/toxiclinks/home_text.html.

⁶⁶Toxic Links Coalition, 1.

⁶⁷Proctor, 255, 266.

⁶⁸Judith Brady, 10 November 1999, "Cancer Industry Tour," available from <http://www.sfbg.com/News/34/06/6other.html>.

⁶⁹Similarly, "GE and Du Pont, rivals for the leads in Superfund toxic sites, sell more than \$100 million worth of mammography machines every year (GE) and much of the film used in those machines (DuPont)." Proctor, 257.

⁷⁰Greenaction (2001), "Action Alert: Stop Cancer Where It Starts!" available from <http://www.greenaction.org/cancer/pr100301.shtml>.

⁷¹Toxic Links Coalition, videotape from "Stop Cancer Industry" tour, San Francisco, CA, 1997. The author thanks Judith Brady for lending her sole copy for the author's research.

⁷²Until 2001, according to TLC activists I interviewed, the number attending steadily grew. In 2001, the numbers were slightly smaller. Although the cause was uncertain, many assumed the drop in attendance was occasioned by the events of 9/11.

⁷³Giovanna DiChiro, "Bearing Witness or Taking Action?: Toxic Tourism and Environmental Justice," in *Reclaiming the Environmental Debate: The Politics of Health in a Toxic Culture*, ed. Richard Hofrichter (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2000), 281.

⁷⁴See S. Rubenstein, "S.F. Rally Against High Cancer Rates in Bayview-Hunters Point," *The San Francisco*

Chronicle, 22 September 1995, p. A21; Syracuse Cultural Peace Workers, *Peace Calendar* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse Cultural Workers, 2002); *Who Holds the Mirror?: The Mural, Oral Histories, and Pedagogy of The Breast Cancer Oral History Action Project* (Berkeley: BCOHAP, 1998); Mary Ann Swissler, "Touring the Breast-Cancer Industry," *Progressive* 61 (December 1997), 14.

⁷⁵Toxic Links Coalition (2001), pamphlet.

⁷⁶After I participated in a tour, I provided TLC with a videotape. I subsequently discovered that TLC had a tape of a previous tour, which was incomplete.

⁷⁷The American Cancer Society was not a planned stop, but "it was on the way," and one activist was prepared to address it.

⁷⁸TLC annually obtains a permit from local police to demonstrate in public.

⁷⁹By "articulation," I refer to what Stuart Hall defines as "the form of the connection that can make a unity of two different elements, under certain conditions . . . a linkage which is not necessary, determined, absolute, and essential for all time." Lawrence Grossberg, "On Postmodernism and Articulation: An Interview with Stuart Hall," in *Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies*, ed. David Morley and Kuang-Hsing Chen (New York: Routledge, 1996), 141. Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe (1985) note that when articulations occur, the elements themselves are modified as a result; *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics*, 2nd ed. (London: Verso, 2001), 105.

⁸⁰This language is borrowed from Thomas B. Farrell's claim that "rhetoric, despite its traditional and quite justifiable association with the preservation of cultural truisms, may also perform an act of *critical interruption* where taken-for-granted practices of a culture are concerned" (emphasis added). In *Norms of Rhetorical Culture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 258. See also Phaedra C. Pezzullo, "Performing Critical Interruptions: Rhetorical Invention and Narratives of the Environmental Justice Movement," *Western Journal of Communication* 64 (2001):1–25.

⁸¹Kevin Michael DeLuca, "Unruly Arguments: The Body Rhetoric of Earth First!, ACT UP, and Queer Nation," *Argumentation and Advocacy* 36 (1999): 9–21. Recall that Depression-era labor strikers used mock performances; see Fuoss, 1997. Also recall that early preservationists and conservationists drew on images and political theater; see Roderick Nash, *Wilderness and the American Mind*, 3rd ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967/1982).

⁸²DeLuca, 17.

⁸³Christiansen and Hanson, 16.

⁸⁴RavenLight, interview by author, San Francisco, CA, 3 October 2001.

⁸⁵The politics of displaying mastectomy scars is beyond the scope of this project. For a feminist analysis of the cultural politics of such displays, see Lurie, Fitts, and Cartwright.

⁸⁶In explaining her choice of tactics, RavenLight states: "Wouldn't you think that if one in eight people had one arm or one leg, we'd ask what's going on? I'm too angry to die. I bare my de-breast in a fierce political stance. Breast cancer has been hidden under heavy layers of shame, guilt, and puffs of cotton stuffed inside empty bras for too many decades. I choose to use my body to put a face on this hideous disease." *Who Holds the Mirror?* 14–15.

⁸⁷DeLuca, "Unruly Arguments," 11.

⁸⁸This phrase is borrowed from Judith Butler's book, *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"* (London: Routledge, 1993).

⁸⁹Elizabeth Grosz, *Volatile Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Feminism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), 14.

⁹⁰Sharon Crowley, "Afterword: The Material of Rhetoric," in *Rhetorical Bodies*, ed. Jack Selzer and Sharon Crowley (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1999), 358.

⁹¹In her work on "feminine style," Karlyn Kohrs Campbell has suggested that women's historical experiences led to a tendency to display certain characteristics when speaking, such as using personal tone and experiences. Given Campbell's non-essentialist appreciation for the historical roots of this pattern, it is important to recognize that this mode of engagement is not determined by biology. See *Man Cannot Speak For Her: A Critical Study of Early Feminist Rhetoric* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1989).

⁹²TLC's rhetoric reflects contemporary theoretical discussions of "articulation," which Stuart Hall defines as "to utter, to speak forth, to be articulate" and "the form of the connection that can make a unity of two different elements, under certain conditions . . . a linkage which is not necessary, determined, absolute, and essential for all time." In Grossberg, 141. Laclau and Mouffe, 105, also note that when this articulation occurs, the elements themselves are modified as a result.

⁹³Michael R. Reich, *Toxic Politics: Responding to Chemical Disasters* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991), 186 and passim.

⁹⁴Judy Brady, *I in 3: Women with Cancer Confront an Epidemic* (Pittsburgh, PA: Cleis Press, 1991).

⁹⁵Stauber and Rampton, 82.

⁹⁶Richard Schechner, *Performance Theory* (London: Routledge, 1988).

⁹⁷Victor Turner, *From Ritual to Theatre: The Human Seriousness of Play* (New York: Performing Arts Journal Press, 1982).

⁹⁸Dow and Tonn.

⁹⁹Asen and Brouwer, 2001, 2–3.

¹⁰⁰For a discussion of the "antecedent rhetorical conditions" of public spheres, see Gerard Hauser, "Prisoners of Conscience and the Counterpublic Sphere of Prison Writing: The Stones that Start the Avalanche," in *Counterpublics and the State*, ed. Robert Asen and Daniel C. Brouwer (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2001), 36.