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29,321 VIEWS

POLITICS

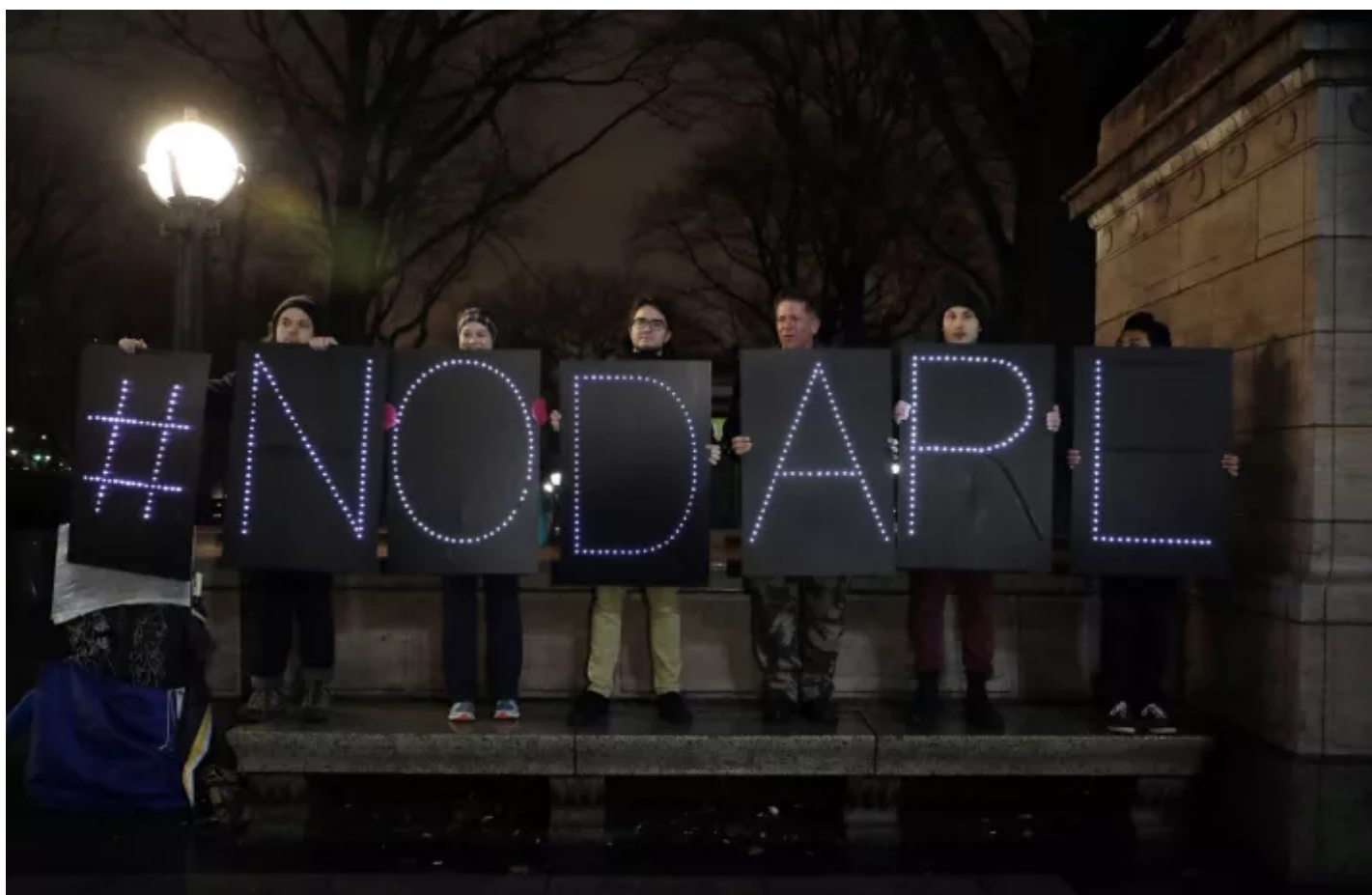
How Russians Attempted To Use Instagram To Influence Native Americans

“DEAR RACISTS IN AMERICA,” began one Instagram meme shared by the now-suspended account @Native_Americans_United, which is believed to be connected to a Russian troll farm.

Posted on October 23, 2017, at 6:04 p.m.

**Ryan C. Brooks**

BuzzFeed News Reporter



Opponents of the Keystone XL and Dakota Access pipelines hold a rally in New York earlier this year.

Afp / AFP / Getty Images

The protests against the Dakota Access Pipeline in Cannon Ball, North Dakota, were covered for the

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But for Russian trolls, the protests were another opportunity to sow discord in America — one of a series of social movements, from Black Lives Matter activism to pro-Trump populism, on which trolls appear to have seized.

An Instagram account called @Native_Americans_United_ shared images related to Native American social and political issues — including the construction of the Dakota Access Pipeline, the flashpoint for activists from all over the country, but especially Native Americans.

RBC, a Russian outlet, identified that account as one of 180 connected to a Russian troll farm intent on exploiting existing divisions and social movements in the United States, based on a major investigation into the operations of Russia's Internet Research Agency.

So far, the accounts uncovered by RBC center around highly visible tension points in American politics: protests against police violence, protests against pipelines that have become a flashpoint between conservatives and progressives, and memes popular with the pro-Trump right.

Those accounts are believed to include a [fake Tennessee GOP Twitter account](#) and payments to black activists to organize protests or hold [self-defense classes](#). This, meanwhile, would be the first instance of Russians targeting Native Americans. RBC reported that at least 33,000 people followed the @Native_Americans_United_ account.

A post from that account reads “IF AN OIL COMPANY DESTROYED THESE ‘SACRED’ BURIAL GROUNDS AMERICANS WOULD LOSE THEIR MINDS,” plastered over an image of a US military cemetery. “BUT WHEN AN OIL COMPANY DESTROYS NATIVE AMERICAN SACRED BURIAL GROUNDS NO ONE SAYS A WORD.”



Leonardo.

August 4 · 🌐

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When a country forgets its indigenous people, it forgets its connection to a living world. [#SuperOrganism](#) [#YouCantEatMoney](#)

[#Repost @native_americans_united_](#)





Via facebook.com

Another account, @Native_Americans_United (no third underscore), discovered by BuzzFeed News, also shared political posts on Instagram using the same watermark as @Native_Americans_United_.

“DEAR RACISTS IN AMERICA YOUR CAR IS JAPANESE, YOUR BEER IS GERMAN, YOUR ELECTRONICS ARE TAIWANESE, YOUR FASHION IS FRENCH, YOUR OIL IS SAUDI ARABIAN, YOUR VODKA IS RUSSIAN, AND NEVER FORGET THE LAND YOU LIVE ON IS MINE,” reads one of the posts from @Native_Americans_United that was reshared on Facebook.





Via facebook.com

Both Instagram accounts are now suspended. A Facebook official told BuzzFeed News that they aren't confirming any accounts that were or were not related to Russian meddling that the company discovered during its investigation.

Although the accounts supported the protests at Standing Rock, BuzzFeed News did not find evidence the group had contacted activists to organize protests similar to what [was](#) successfully done in Charlotte, North Carolina, with [unwitting](#) Black Lives Matter activists.

Contact Ryan C. Brooks at ryan.brooks@buzzfeed.com.

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