**2021 Union for Democratic Communications (UDC) 40th Anniversary Conference, June 23-25**

**Call for Papers: “Masking the Crisis: Social Movements, Street Politics, and the Political Process”**

To be held online due to COVID-19  
Deadline for Submissions: April 1, 2021

While masking has long been a contested practice renewed most recently around the articulation and concealment of the political identities of those employing confrontational tactics, the rise of the post-9/11 security state relegated masks to the realm of blockbuster superheroes and bandits. In 2020, however, the mask returned as a potent signifier of global struggle. In the U.S. context, after four years of movement building and popular discourse opposing the spectre of neofascism, the last year of the Trump administration saw explosions of street-level social protest around structural racism and police violence amidst a global pandemic, culminating in a white supremacist insurrection at the Capitol on January 6, 2021. The election of Joe Biden and Kamala Harris offers both the promise and threat of a neoliberal restoration.

At this conference we will discuss the politics of “masking” and “unmasking” in relation to our broader political, economic, and media crises. The fracturing of the Liberal project--exhausted by the contradictions and failures of neoliberalism--has unmasked our dire political straits, as denial becomes dogma and science is rejected in favor of bravado. While the past years have seen an inspiring rise in social movements, we risk being “masked” by the Biden effect, placated as part of a larger “progressive” bloc while the crises that brought us to the brink of authoritarianism continue to manifest.

We seek papers, presentations, and roundtables that interrogate the ways that masking and unmasking communicate and mediate our politics, and the important roles that media and communications facilitate in masking and unmasking our ongoing crises.

Possible ideas to consider include:

Things being un/masked:

COVID  
Bodies  
Social facts (loss of class status, job numbers, death, etc.)  
Technology, labor, and social isolation, strain on time and resources  
Structural racism and state violence  
The politics of race, identity, and representation  
Health care and housing crises  
Quarantine and domestic violence  
The failures of the media system  
Inequality and labor exploitation  
Global inequalities, empire, and hegemony  
The food system and climate crisis  
Migration, immigration, and nationalism  
Masking/unmasking gendered relations of social reproduction  
Masking/unmasking domestic and precarious labor  
Masking/unmasking the political economy of global logistics through consumption, commodities, and commodity culture  
Masking/unmasking through algorithms and media distribution  
Masking/unmasking the economic and social costs of higher education  
Masking political economic realities through public relations, propaganda, and “fake news”  
Masking as solidarity  
The dialectics of masking/unmasking  
Masking articulated in or through ideology theory/ideology critique  
Masks and social movements/protests (i.e. Zapatistas, Black Bloc)

Papers and panels that speak to related themes surrounding media, communication, technology, culture, political economy, activism, social movements, labor, gender, race, ethnicity, sexuality, imperialism, class, and capitalism are also welcome.

**Individual Submission Guidelines**

Abstracts for papers should be 300-500 words and include name and affiliation of submitter.\*

Notes for Enhancing Chance of Acceptance for Individual Submission:

• Don’t reveal your identity in the title or the abstract.  
• Make sure your abstract relates to either the conference theme or the organization’s mission (and ideally, to both).  
• Describe clearly and concisely (300-500 words) what your submission does.  
• Make sure it is well-edited.  
  
**Panels, Workshops, Working Groups, and Roundtable Submissions:**

Abstracts for panel proposals, workshops, and roundtables should be 300-500 words and include title, abstract, and participants invited.\* Enhancing the Chance of Acceptance for a Panel/Workshop:

• Have one member of the panel or workshop submit an overarching panel title and abstract.  
• Each member should submit an individual abstract for their contribution and, if appropriate, a title for their contribution. Also, include just the panel title so they can be reviewed together.  
• Don’t reveal your identity or the identity of anyone on the panel in any of the submissions.  
• Make sure all abstracts relate to either the conference theme or the organization’s mission (and ideally, to both)  
• In all abstracts, describe clearly and concisely (300-500 words) what your submission does. Make sure it is well-edited.

**Graduate students should submit full papers and abstracts to be considered for the Brian Murphy Student Paper Award.** ([http://www.democraticcommunications.org/.../brian-murphy.../](http://www.democraticcommunications.org/conference/brian-murphy-student-paper-award/?fbclid=IwAR0dP1Fh8KncVtbdNohg1cwQBa6NzRxqgRheuC5wc7Wn0uPlOLFQcdMLwrw))

\*All submissions undergo a double-blind review.

**Notice of Acceptance: Applicants will be notified of their acceptance no later than 1 May 2021.**

For more information, please visit our Conference Index. For any questions, please contact: udc.steering@gmail.com

**Link to Submit**:

[https://easychair.org/my/conference?conf=udc2021](https://easychair.org/my/conference?conf=udc2021&fbclid=IwAR0SzBOYOtZOQtF1MO-9hpQX0Bz4TdIUubZf5jxW1YAPRMAncuKktJbF09I).