

Butterfly Attack: Operation Blaxit | Media Manipulation Casebook

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Over the course of 3 years, a mix of [pranksters](#) and [extremists \(right wing\)](#) launched a [butterfly attack](#) campaign as part of a [meme war](#) to [muddy the waters](#) in an organic Black [Twitter](#) hashtag, and utilized [digital blackface](#) to amplify [memes](#) workshopped on [4chan](#). Overall, the campaign targeted Black [activists](#) and [communities](#) online in an effort to sow confusion, discredit authentic support, and suppress voter turnout for the Democratic Party. This campaign was [redeployed](#) several times to correspond to cultural trends or breaking news events.

STAGE 1: Manipulation Campaign Planning and Origins

The first organic use of #Blaxit (Black people's exit) as a Twitter hashtag and [viral slogan](#) dates to June 2016, a play on the Brexit referendum that passed in the UK that same month. The initial uses of Blaxit were a mix of pro- and anti-Black sentiment from a variety of Twitter users. The phrase formalized on July 11, 2016, when physician and public health advocate Ulyssess Burley III published a tongue-in-cheek op-ed on the *The Salt Collective* entitled “#BLAXIT : 21 things we're taking with us if we leave.” The op-ed explored implications of a Trump presidency on Black America, and suggested expatriation as a response. On its Twitter account, *The Salt Collective* indicated the article's popularity crashed its website.

[...]

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