

TikTok and the Evolution of Digital Blackface | WIRED

By Jessica Pettway

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TikTok has an irresistible draw. In my casual use, I often find myself spellbound by its gonzo humor and mini-blockbusters, full of conceptual daring. The app's directive, it seems, is to optimize happiness. But something lurks beneath the gloss. As TikTok has grown to more than 800 million users, it has begun to mirror the larger world: the quirks, passions, and prejudices of the people who have started to populate and influence the form. I'd heard stories like Blackmon's, bits and pieces of discouragement and grievance, but I wanted to understand it fully. So I started reaching out to TikTokers in all parts of the country, some veterans of the app, others new to it, to learn about their experiences, to see what was going on.

Over a period of two months, I heard from 29 Black creators who shared stories about muted posts, in-app harassment, and incidents of racism. They said the problems on the app are deeper and more widespread than simple isolated incidents. "Ever since I joined I've felt like the app is against me," one told me. Another added, "It's disgusting how much they have allowed to go unchecked." Together, their experiences belie the perception of TikTok as an app of joy and creativity, revealing instead a place tangled up in an ancient pain—a site of blurred visions and youthful ignorances, where flattery quickly turns into mockery, mockery into theft, and theft into something altogether more disturbing.

Source: [TikTok and the Evolution of Digital Blackface | WIRED](#)