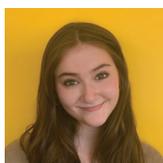


# #performativeactivism

do blue valley students believe performative activism is harmful?

Based on a poll of 117 students

Related hashtags: #blackscreen, #blackouttuesday, #socialmedia, #editorialized, #blacklivesmatter, #ACAB, #misinformation, #injustices



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You likely posted a black screen on June 2. So did 14.6 million other Instagram users. So did I. This may have started as an act of ally-ship with the Black Lives Matter movement and the systematically oppressed black people of America; however, the result of this endless sea of black screens was the birth of an inherently dangerous internet culture that values the quantity of social media posts over true quality of activism.

After what was known as *Blackout Tuesday*, the expectation on social media was to frequently post about any social or systemic issues, and if any person was not actively taking part in this, they were immediately assumed to be against these causes, an enemy of progress.

While actively communicating, bringing awareness to these issues and educating others about injustices is vital to progression, measuring the ally-ship of any one person based on their frequency of posting creates a community of toxicity.

Not only does this discourage people from taking any part in speaking out, but it also causes those who are not posting “enough” to dissociate themselves from the group due to the pressure they receive to be deemed a worthy ally.

Furthermore, the creation of this culture has led to those who wish to be seen as allies to post info-graphics and information without properly reviewing and researching the information they are then spreading to their followers.

As I scroll through social media, I often see many info-graphics that are very aesthetically pleasing. These lend themselves to be reposted by many people, which then reaches more users, so on and so forth.

However, when examined more closely, I tend to see many posts that either hold no real substance — except for stating a message — or I see blatantly editorialized information.

These posts often look like statements, such as *Black Lives Matter* or *ACAB*, accompanied by attractive graphics, which

although aesthetically pleasing for an Instagram feed, have nothing to do with the message or don't truly support the cause.

For example, I've seen countless images of Hello Kitty or the Powerpuff Girls pictured next to messages that represent serious systemic issues.

Spreading voidless messages that have no educational value does nothing but spread the statement itself. The people who claim to be allies to these movements perpetuate the stereotype that these movements are based on feelings rather than facts, which then partially delegitimizes the movement as a whole.

The expectation that those who stand with these social commentaries should be constantly flooding their social media with content regarding these topics has led to the constant spread of these false, yet pleasing to the eye, social media statements.

Not only are these posts problematic because of the culture surrounding them and the necessity of them to be deemed politically correct, but they also mask the posts that expose social injustices and facts to support the movements with which they align.

*Blackout Tuesday* took place exactly a week after the death of **George Floyd**, at the height of *Black Lives Matter* protests and riots, many of which were documented, though there were likely many of these that were drowned out by the black screens that sprawled across multiple social media platforms.

Nevertheless, posting valuable information to vocalize these movements on social media will only promote growth. Spreading information such as statistics outlining the disproportionate number of black people killed by police in America is much more educational and effective than posting a cartoon character saying *ACAB* with no reference or educational material accompanying it.

The root of the spread of this misinformation based on necessity to post does not reflect upon the movements themselves but instead on the value of social recognition of correctness rather than true social activism in modern society.