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## Why Your ForYouPage is Overwhelmingly White



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*Correction: An earlier version of this article published on January 12 did not attribute the statement “Anti-Black content on TikTok consists of.. shadow banning Black people, and more.” We have replaced “according to tk” with “according to Forbes.”*

In early February 2020, TikTok star Charli D’Amelio profited off the “Renegade” dance that was originally created by Black

teenager Jalaiah Harmon. While D'Amelio apologized to Harmon and eventually gave her the full credit she deserved, profiting off of Black creators is a common example of the anti-Blackness that thrives on TikTok.

Popularized during the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic, TikTok, a social media platform that allows users to create up to 60-second videos, has become an app that perpetuates oppression, racism, and the silencing of marginalized voices.

TikTok star [Anania Williams](#), a junior at Emerson College who has almost 2 million followers, said he thinks TikTok has anti-Black content because content creators and viewers are scared to see the app transition from trending dances, cooking videos, and fashion into a space where marginalized people talk openly about their experiences with oppression.

“People are scared of change, and people are scared to tackle their implicit biases,” Williams said in an interview with *The Intersectionalist*. “I just wish Black people and Black women especially didn't get punished for being different and needing different things from [TikTok].”

Anti-Black content on TikTok consists of video creators name-calling Black women, saying the n-word, shadow banning Black people, and more, according to [Forbes](#).

“I have seen a lot of videos where white girls [are] saying Black people aren't allowed to call them white girls because it's racist, or the example of white girls making fun of the way Black girls dance,” Demiah Crawford, a junior at Emerson College, said in an interview with *The Intersectionalist*. “It's just super sad because it's a space for people to be openly racist and [white people] do get a lot of support which is also sad to see.”

Shadow banning is when a user's content is taken down or suppressed on the basis that they have violated community guidelines—without notifying the original creator, according to [Refinery29](#). Shadow banning occurs more frequently to Black creators than their white counterparts, even if the Black creator's content does not violate the guidelines.

TikTok creator Jordan Simone, who has over 200,000 followers, said she experiences shadow banning frequently because of TikTok's algorithm and how it's tied to banning anti-racism content.

“Once I posted “don't be anti-[Semitic]” and my post was taken down for hate speech, which is why I censor my captions so intensely, so I don't tip off the algorithm,” Simone said in an interview with *The Intersectionalist*. “It's really annoying and makes it hard for me to want to post content, because it can be so time-consuming and energy-consuming.”

Simone also said that shadow banning isn't solely tied to anti-racist content but also any content featuring Black creators. Her friends on TikTok are shadow banned even though their videos are not political.

“Someone else had their video taken down for dangerous content, even though she was doing an *Us* cosplay with a very large and obviously fake pair of scissors,” Simone said. “They don't even post political content, they're just existing while Black.”

Not only are Black creators shadow banned more frequently, but they face additional barriers with receiving higher viewership because the algorithm purposefully uplifts white content, according to [Forbes](#).

Crawford began making TikTok videos less than two months ago and yet, her views remain low, something she believes may be from the algorithm.

“I know that my views aren't a lot, and I'm not sure if that's because of this idea that [TikTok] has where they don't advertise a lot of Black content or if it's just because my content may not be appealing,” Crawford said

Crawford also said it's frustrating to see white creators receive thousands of views for doing little to no work while Black creators continuously exhaust themselves producing content and see limited viewership compared to their whiter counterparts.

The recurring racism within TikTok has impacted Black creators' autonomy and the way they produce content. For Williams, this impact is shown through his less frequent posting.

"It's tiring to fight something you can't see," Williams said. "I try my best to turn on the camera when I'm inspired to, though."

The anti-Blackness on the app has encouraged Simone to create anti-racist intersectional videos aimed at addressing the issue at hand.

"Seeing anti-Black content inspires me to do more and educate more because I feel [like] so much racism stems from ignorance. After I'm finished being angry of course," Simone said.

The majority of the most-followed TikTok users are white, according to [Business Insider](#). This leads to the algorithm featuring more white creators on the For You Page.

"I think [TikTok] is just a way to be openly American in a sense. America is built on racism," Crawford said. "[TikTok] does not care [and] they support these racist ideals. If they wanted to do something about [it], they would. And they don't."

While giving a platform to white people and simultaneously censoring Black people, TikTok has facilitated racism and hindered anti-racist work. While TikTok hasn't been transparent about how the algorithm works, users speculate that this is another way that racism has presented itself within the app.

To combat the anti-Blackness on the app, Crawford encourages people to support Black creators by following and liking their content to increase visibility and amplify their voices.

Williams has found that using the "not interested" feature, blocking, and reporting racist content has changed his For You page significantly, and he recommends this to other Black users.

"I know for myself as a Black, queer kid, it's nice to see people like me doing what they love. Whether it's comedy or advocacy, it matters to see people doing well that look like you," Williams said. "I'm lucky enough to be doing well on the app, myself. And hopefully, I'm inspiring others to speak their minds and find humor in everything that seems scary."

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