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## Where do we go from here: The social and cultural power of Black Twitter in 2020

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THE FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY

*SCHOOL OF COMMUNICATION*

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?  
THE SOCIAL AND CULTURAL POWER  
OF BLACK TWITTER IN 2020

By

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A thesis submitted to the School of

Communication

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for graduation with

Honors in the Major

Degree Awarded:

Spring, 2022

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## Committee Members

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## Introduction

Twitter is a microblogging platform, where users can send messages of 280 characters or less (“tweets”) to other Twitter users. In 2006, Twitter began as an SMS text-based service, which limited original tweets to 140 characters. As the platform expanded, the character limit increased to 280 characters. Twitter’s slogan is “See What’s Happening,” highlighting its ability to deliver global conversations, news, and trending topics. On the platform, users can spark conversations through tweets. Users develop a following base, in which those followers can view and interact with a user’s tweets.

Interactions on twitter hold distinct terminology such as retweeting, quote retweeting, an @reply comment, and likes, to highlight the platform’s purpose of sharing content. Outside of direct interactions, the use of hashtags is commonly associated with Twitter practices. Hashtags are created by using the pound symbol and followed with a short phrase to signify a topic (#hashtag). Hashtags are used to usually set a trending topic or simplify a statement. Twitter users are able to search specific topics, hashtags, or people to keep up with trending topics and conversations on the platform. Academics and researchers have coined the term ‘Black tags’ to connect Black Twitter users with their own identifiable community on Twitter. For the purpose of this study, several ‘Black Tags’ will be identified to connect online discourse to cultural moments in 2020. Examples include #thanksgivingwithBlackfamilies, #OscarSoWhite, #BlackLivesMatter and #SayHerName.

### *Black Americans on Twitter*

According to Neilson reporting, 40% of African Americans are on Twitter (Neilson, 2017). Black Twitter users are 81% more likely to be on Twitter daily versus other Twitter users, and 40% believe Twitter is real and authentic. According to Ipsos Connect, the number one ways

African Americans use Twitter is to see what is happening, which suggests the platform's ability to keep users in the know. Majority of Black Twitter users use Twitter as a source of entertainment and keeps them in the know, while 43% of Black users use Twitter to satisfy their curiosity and 27% of Black users utilize Twitter as a platform for inspiration and creativity. Overall, Black Twitter users love to discuss trending events and topics. In 2019, top hashtags included #betawards, #thelionking, #demdebate, #juneteenth and much more. Top mentions included @lilnasx, AOC, @theesatlion, @therealdonaldtrump and much more. Moreover, the Black Twitter audience gravitates to several engaging communities surrounding topics on Black Entertainment (75% female, 30 yrs. old), Sports (77% male, 28 years old), Pop Culture (52% male, 32 yrs. old), Teen Pop Culture (82% female, 24 yrs. old) and Hip Hop Fans (84% female, 23 yrs. old). In addition, this showcases Black Twitter users are connected through influencers/celebrities, aligned with cultural moments.

### *Black Twitter*

According to Sarah Florini (2014), Black Twitter users are most visible in trending topics, featured topics where Black users represent the majority of tweeters, or topics that are directly associated to Black culture. Black Twitter consist of Black users, who have dominated Twitter discourse. Black Twitter is not a separate entity from Twitter. Like Black culture and identity, it is not monolithic; rather, it is a virtual community of collective voice on a variety of issues and topics. Black Twitter reveals a growing digital landscape of “Black users networking, connecting and engaging with others who have similar concerns, experiences, tastes and cultural practices” (Florini 2014). Dr. Meredith Clark, defines Black Twitter as, “a digital safe space where Black people exchange ideas and opinions that are centered on the Black experience, where all dialogue is unapologetically black, and is exclusive to things that impact the black community.” God-is

Rivera, Global Director of Culture and Community at Twitter, identifies three themes of Black Twitter: Protection, Reinforcement and Celebration.

Black Twitter is known for its humor, political, social, and cultural discourse. Between 2013-2019, I have examined notable discussions on Black Twitter—both global and national. The timelines captured are relevant to social and political discourses between 2013-2019.

In 2013, the hashtag #BlackLivesMatter first appeared on Facebook after the acquittal of George Zimmerman in the murder of unarmed 17-year-old teen, Trayvon Martin. While Black Lives Matter formed outside of Twitter as a community organization, the organization used Twitter as a platform to facilitate their call for the protection of Black Lives. The hashtag moved to Twitter and other online platforms as the death of Trayvon Martin rallied millions in protest at Million Hoodie March, in which individuals demanded justice and brought awareness to racial profiling. In 2014, #BlackLivesMatter resurfaced following the murder of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri, and the subsequent non-indictment of the officer involved, Darren Wilson. As of 2017, there were 66,159 tweets with #BlackLivesMatter—373 prior to Michael Brown’s shooting; 19,942 after Michael Brown’s shooting, and 45,844 after the non-indictment of Darren Wilson (Ince, Rojas & Davis 2017). Indicating the evolution discourse surrounding calls for action around the death of an unarmed black teen.

In 2014, #IfIDieInPoliceCustody created a political and social discourse about being Black in police custody amid the death of Eric Garner, Sandra Bland and Tamir Rice, who all died in some form of police custody and presence. The African American Policy Forum introduced the hashtag #SayHerName on Twitter when an increased number of unarmed Black woman were murdered in police brutality or racist acts. Examples of these tweets include:

@sistadbarnes “#IfIDieInPoliceCustody I did not resist I did not have a gun I did not commit suicide. Let the truth leak when activists speak #blacklivesmatter” (July 13, 2016).

@joshuadubois “Aiyana Jones. Rekia Boyd. Kayla Moore. Shelly Frey. Tanisha Anderson. Miriam Carey. Yvette Smith. Darnisha Harris. Shereese. Francis. #SayHerName” (May 22, 2015).

An increase in the use of these hashtags have formed large political and grassroots movements dedicated to political and social advocacy of Black Americans, especially in face of police brutality.

Discourse on Black Twitter has also spread awareness of the Black social experience in facing racist systems and oppressions. In 2015, #AskRachel surfaced when Rachel Doleza, President of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) was exposed for claiming to be African American despite being a white woman. Following this exposure, Black Twitter coined #AskRachel tweets with quiz-like questions about Black culture and traditions out of sarcastic humor. Underneath the humor, users were able to use the #AskRachel hashtag to display the authenticity of Black Culture. An example of an #AskRachel tweet is as follows:

@Coopahman “Which picture describes what happens when you forget to take the chicken out before your mom gets home? #AskRachel” (June 12, 2015).

In that same year, #OscarsSoWhite appeared when there were no people of color nominated for the Oscars. April Reign, founder of the hashtag, coined this hashtag with one simple tweet:



@ReignOfApril “#OscarsSoWhite they asked to touch my hair. [emojicon]” (Jan. 15, 2015)

In seconds, April’s tweet went viral across Black Twitter users and into mainstream media. In an interview with Reggie Ugwu, Reign says, “It could’ve been a bunch of different things—there were no women in the director’s category, there were no visibly disabled people nominated—so #OscarsSoWhite has never been about race. It’s about the underrepresentation of all marginalized groups,” (Ugwu, 2020). Therefore, the hashtag showcases the significance of bringing awareness to issues surrounding race and representation. This twitter moment brought social awareness to the Academy of Motion Pictures racial practices and shifted toward a national conversation in mainstream Twitter discourse. #OscarsSoWhite illustrates resistance transformative strategy, which will later be discussed.

In 2017, social awareness heightened amongst Black Twitter when Tarana Burke coined #MeToo in light of sexual assault and harassment. The hashtag and movement grew beyond Black Twitter to a global feminist conversation, heightening the awareness of sexual violence against women. #BlackGirlMagic, #BlackExcellence and #BlackBoyJoy became largely known hashtags amongst Black Twitter users who would advocate for the love and appreciation of Black people. This social discourse became widely known coined saying, phrases and hashtags to emphasize Black beauty, love, and success.

Cultural Twitter moments bridged by humor and collective experiences include #ThanksgivingwithBlackFamilies and #GrowingUpBlack. #ThanksgivingwithBlackFamilies connected Black Twitter users to tweet jokes about similar experiences they had during Thanksgiving, whereas #GrowingUpBlack users talk about their collective Black adolescent experiences. Examples of these tweets are as follows:

@JJaxenn “Aunt: how’s college? Heard you’re failing a class. Me: how’s your looking for a man search? Heard you’ve been divorced for the 4<sup>th</sup> time. #thanksgivingclapbacks #ThanksgivingwithBlackFamilies #Thanksgiving” (Nov. 28, 2019).

@shaytalon “#GrowingUpBlack you had to spend the whole day outside because your mama got tired of you coming in and out.” (July 14, 2015).

A chief cultural discourse on Black Twitter occurs during the Black Entertainment Television (BET) Awards. According to BET (2018), Black Twitter turns into a Black family reunion every time the BET Awards Show is on. During the awards show, Black Twitter users and celebrities join together to tweet about key moments of the show through hilarious tweets. Examples of these tweets include:

@TooTurntLeah\_ “everyone on black twitter rn [right now] #BETAwards” (Jun. 26, 2017)

@tweetlauf “You can’t tell the Migos squaring up to Joe Budden don’t look like Prince’s crew on Chappelle Show” (Jun 26, 2017), when Migos almost fought Joe Budden at the pre-awards show.

The premier of Marvel’s 2018 Black Panther film and the premier of Beyonce’s 2019 Homecoming special on Netflix indicated a cultural Black Twitter moment for users. The anticipation and significance of Black Panther showcased on Twitter as fans posted pictures in Wakanda-themed outfits, masks and dashikis with hashtags #WakandaForever. Beyonce’s 2019 Homecoming film became a trending topic about amidst its release on Netflix. Black Twitter users and Beyonce fans tweeted #HOMECOMING with their thoughts and commentary of her 2018 Coachella performance.

## **2020: Into A New Decade**

As a new decade started, the year 2020 held notable moments in the US. For the purpose of this study, I will be analyzing the Covid-19 pandemic, the murder of George Floyd and increased police brutality, National and Global Advocacy, and the loss of prominent figures in the Black community such as Kobe Bryant, John Lewis, Chadwick Boseman and Pop Smoke.

### *Covid-19 Pandemic*

In March, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared COVID-19 a global pandemic, as confirmed cases reached 200,000 patients and exceeded 8,000 deaths across 160 countries (Spinelli and Pellino 2020). According to the Center for Disease Control (2020), COVID-19 is a respiratory illness which can be transmitted from person-to-person. In response to a global pandemic crisis, the US declared a national emergency, in which federal funding was used to contain and fight the disease. The US introduced a travel ban, universities and schools shut down in-person classes and stay at home orders went into effect. In late March, the US Senate and President Trump passed the US CARES Act to provide economic relief and recovery to Americans, with expansions in unemployment insurance (AJMC 2020).

The COVID-19 Pandemic affected the way Americans interacted with others, such as wearing masks and keeping social distance. The outbreak interrupted the way individuals work, go to school, attend religious services, care for their children and connect with friends and family. While Americans were adjusting to a new normal to remain healthy and safe, wearing a mask became political. Resistance to wearing masks and Coronavirus regulations became a political issue amongst Democrats and Republicans. According to The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research, Democrats are more likely than Republicans to wear a mask when leaving home, 76% to 59% (Lemire and Wesissert 2020). Two-thirds of Black adults (64%) reported their lives will remain changed in major ways after the pandemic is over, compared to Asians (56%)

and Hispanics (53%) (Barroso 2020). Moreover, the start COVID-19 pandemic raised questions and concerns around the appropriate support and attention toward the care and support of vulnerable populations and marginalized communities.

### ***A National Awakening: Racial Turmoil, Again?***

The 2010s steered conversations on racial injustice and the protection of unarmed Black men and women in police custody. As a new decade approached, 2020 showed America that the fight against racial injustice continued. The new decade started with feelings of anger, exhaustion and fear amongst Black Americans, as they saw numerous killings of unarmed Black men and women by the police, and counterprotests inspired by racist rhetoric and ideologies.

As a refresher of the most notable racial incidents of police violence in the 2010s, it is as follows:

- 2012: Trayvon Martin (17) Sanford, FL: Neighborhood watch George Zimmerman acquitted on “Stand Your Ground Law”
- 2014: Eric Garner (43) New York City: Sold untaxed cigarettes and screamed “I Can’t Breathe”
- 2014: John Crawford III (22) Dayton, OH: Played with BB gun in Walmart
- 2014: Michael Brown (18) Ferguson, MO: “Hands up. Don’t Shoot” coined
- 2014: Tamir Rice (12) Cleveland, OH: played with air pellet gun in park
- 2015: Walter Scott (50) North Charleston, SC: Busted taillight and shot by police
- 2015: Freddie Gray (25) Baltimore, MD: Possessed a switchblade and was in coma in police van
- 2015: Sandra Bland (28) Waller County, TX: Missed turn signal and found in jail cell dead.
- 2016: Alton Sterling (37) Baton Rouge, LA: Selling CDs in parking lot
- 2016: Philando Castile (32) Falcon Heights, MN: Informed police of registered gun in car, shot multiple times in front of girlfriend and child.
- 2018: Stephen Clark (22) Sacramento, CA: Held cellphone in grandmother’s backyard, And countless others.

Considering the large scale of events in the 2010s, it is evident the continuation of acts surrounding the violence of unarmed Black individuals continued into 2020. In February of 2020, Ahmaud Arbery was fatally shot by two white men while jogging in a Georgia neighborhood. The two men

pulled near him and yelled racial epithets immediately after shooting Arbery (BBC News 2020). The aftermath of Arbery's death led to protesters and activists demanding justice and the arrest of the two men. #IRunWithAhmaud and #JoggingWhileBlack went viral on Twitter. Joggers, majority Black American, posted pictures online of themselves while on a run to showcase solidarity with Ahmaud Arbery. This sparked a continued conversation of race, death and accountability in the US. Ahmaud Arbery's death revealed the horrors of racism are even more visible in 2020. In 2021, the three men were then convicted of his murder.

Breonna Taylor, a 26-year-old EMT worker, was killed in her home when Louisville, Kentucky by a police officer, where they broke open her front door and fatally shot her while sleeping. Breonna's death sparked national Black Lives Matter and #SayHerName protests, which focused on the protection of Black women in face of policing. Following her death, the "Breonna's Law" was passed to ban no-knock warrants and hired a new interim police chief in Louisville (Levenson 2020). A demand for justice ignited in protests and rallies around the justice for Breonna Taylor.

On May 25, George Floyd, an unarmed 46-year-old man, was arrested and killed in Minneapolis police custody after purchasing cigarettes with a counterfeit \$20 bill. In a video recording, Floyd laid unconscious and pinned to the ground beneath the knee of three police officers for eight minutes and 46 seconds. Floyd's last words were "I Can't Breathe." In those 8 minutes and 46 seconds, George Floyd died. 8 minutes and 46 seconds symbolized a powerful implication to the dangers of police brutality against Black Americans. At memorials for George Floyd, grieverers stood in silence for eight minute and 46 seconds, activists walked 8.46 miles and lawmakers knelt for eight minutes and 46 seconds. (Bogel-Burroughs 2020). The death of George Floyd led to a national awakening of racial bias, injustice and police brutality. Following his death,

riots and protests across the country ignited in US cities—Minneapolis, New York, Atlanta, Washington D.C. Moreover, corporations, community leaders, lawmakers and many more looked to social media, specifically Black Twitter to become those change agents and have conversations around diversity, equity and inclusion for Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC).

As continued footage surfaced of police brutality and blatant racial injustice on social media platforms, Twitter served as a platform for videos to go viral and reach global audiences. In 2020, Twitter and social media platforms served to help rally Black Americans and their allies in advocacy of #BlackLivesMatter, #SayHerName #JusticeforBreonnaTaylor and #DefundthePolice. It raised the stakes for social activism on and offline. From May 25 to June 19, 2020, Twitter saw an increase in conversation about Black Lives Matter, where its “staggering number of tweets—an average of 230 tweets per second.” (Oliver, 2020). For Twitter to align itself and go the extra mile with the conversations had on its platform, God-is Rivera, the Director of Culture and Community at Twitter took those conversations offline onto billboards to amplify its users’ voices. Twitter’s billboard campaign was seen in cities including Philadelphia, Louisville, Oakland and many more highly populated Black cities in America, for people to read and feel the words users were feeling, whether it was pain, fear or positivity. As a media platform, Twitter aligned itself to social advocacy and racial justice to mirror the conversations had on its platform to bring awareness to both its platform and the reality of Black America.

In observation of a culmination of events in 2020, overarching questions to consider throughout the study include: *Through the lens of Black Twitter discourse, what does it mean to be Black in 2020?* and, *What role does Black Twitter play in strengthening a collective cultural identity in 2020?* Moreover, *Is Black Twitter a form of escapism for Black users to immerse themselves in their cultural movements? How has Twitter given them a mic to channel discourses of cultural thought in 2020?*

## Literature Review

In a 2009 article, Choire Sicha coined “Black People Twitter” following a trending hashtag #uainthittiniright. Sicha’s article was the first mention of a “Black Twitter”. He describes his obsession with ‘Late Night Black People Twitter’ as awesome because of its chat-memes and trending topics. Sicha says, “it’s huge, organic, and seemingly seriously nocturnal.” According to a 2009 Pew Research Center project, 26 percent of Black Americans used Twitter, whereas white users made up 19 percent (Florini 2014). In 2010, researchers found Black Americans comprised 12-13 percent of the U.S population and made-up 24 percent of the seventeen million Twitter users in the U.S (Florini 2014). Black Americans are using twitter in numbers beyond their demographic representation. Black Twitter usage became increasingly visible as the integration of social media and daily habits began to rise (Florini 2014).

A substantial Black presence on Twitter is indicated as Black Twitter. Brock (2012) states Black Twitter is “understood as a user-generated source of culturally relevant online content, combining social network elements and broadcast principles to share information” (530). Understanding Black Twitter as a medium for the sharing of culturally relevant content showcases how Twitter’s discursive conventions and features facilitate Black cultural discourse online. Brock (2012) highlights three elements of Black discursive style on Twitter:

1. A culturally relevant hashtag—cultural specificity
2. Network participation, of either comment or retweet, by close affiliates
3. Viral reach of a trending topic

These elements highlight a unique activity that allows outside users to notice this discourse. Twitter’s hashtag feature (“#people”) is a user-generated metadata tag used to organize Twitter conversations. Hashtags in Black Twitter have become trending topics through racialized and culturally specific hashtags, dubbed as ‘Blacktags’ (Sharma 2013). It is important to note that

trending topics and hashtags are not the same; however, they both organize and capture popular topics. Black Tags emerge as a representation of African American Vernacular English (AAVE) in the form of humor, social commentary and political activism/awareness. #YouOKSis, #BlackGirlMagic and #BlackBoyJoy exemplify Black tags used on Black Twitter, specific to the Black experience and identity. These culturally relevant hashtags have had viral reach and has become trending topics on Twitter.

The increased visibility of racialized hashtags, tweets and comments on Black Twitter has given mainstream white culture a peak into the way Black people talk and joke amongst each other (Andre Wheeler, 2019). Andre Brock says, “It was one of the first spaces that white people could see how creative black people are with our discourse, and how we used a technology that wasn’t originally designed for us.” Brock’s statement illustrates how culture shapes online social interactions and technology, despite its original intent.

In 2013, #BlackLivesMatter first appeared when George Zimmerman was acquitted in the death of Trayvon Martin, which led a vast movement online, particularly on Black Twitter. Its political and social connotation brought Black online discourse into mainstream gaze and awareness, which is seen today.

Between May 26 to June 7, 2020, #BlackLivesMatter was used roughly 47.8 times on Twitter and an average of 3.7 million times a day (Pew Research Center 2020). A national awakening both offline and online after the murder of George Floyd by a police officer led #BlackLivesMatter to go viral and reach millions.

In an interview with The Atlantic (2015), Meredith Clark, a professor at the Mayborn School of Journalism at the University of North Texas at the time, breaks down Black Twitter into three levels:



1. Personal Community, which reflects user connections within some other dimension other than Twitter
2. Thematic Notes, where users tweet collectively about certain topics. An example of thematic notes could be TV shows, album releases, ideologies.
3. The intersection of personal communities and thematic notes on a specific topic, where users can learn more about different networks and how it is linked—it becomes a meta-network. An example is #SolidarityIsForWhiteWomen or #AskRKelly.

Clark's break down showcases an interconnected community of culturally relevant topics, personal relationships and common experiences. Clark's break down of connection highlights a black frame of reference to interest in specific issues/trending topics, while also sharing culture and language to a linked group of Twitter users.

### ***Critical Technocultural Discourse Analysis***

Critical Technocultural Discourse Analysis (CTDA) pulls from technology studies, communication scholarship, and critical race theory to understand how culture shapes technology (Brock 2012). As an analytical technique, the approach analyzes interactions between technology, cultural ideology, and technology practice (Brock 2018). This study will use this critical approach to examine the cultural practices on digital spaces. Andre Brock (2018) illustrates how CTDA is used in Black Twitter through several findings. One finding suggests Twitter's Short Messaging Services (SMS) protocol contributed to large numbers of African Americans buying smartphones with broadband access. Another finding found Black Twitter practice includes cultural references and discourse conventions, known as Signifyin'. Brock's final finding include differences in reactions to Black Twitter discourse, where people viewed Black Twitter through the lens of racial stereotypes and a phenomenon, and others argued Black Twitter to be a legitimate technical

discourse (Brock 2018). Overall, Brock's use of CTDA evaluates technological mediums through artifacts, practices and cultural beliefs, which assisted him to critically analyze Black Twitter.

In Brock's study of Black Twitter through CTDA, he incorporates Omi and Winant's (1994) racial formation scholarship, in which race is a sociocultural construction, drawn from ideological tensions, historical, and cultural representations (Brock 2018, 1016). Internet identity functions in close proximity to whiteness, in which white, male, middle class identity dominates the social structure of the Internet (Brock 2018). Applying W.E.B Dubois' (1903) concept "double consciousness", where Dubois states, "One ever feels his twoness, —an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts...in one dark body," highlights Blackness being shaped by multiple discourses. This identity lies at the intersection of Black communal solidarity and a national White Supremacist ideology (Brock 2012). Dubois' racial formation concept coincides with CTDA to highlight how the formation and existence of Black identity offline shows up online. Online Black discourse has been shaped by offline understandings of their racial identity, whiteness coded in technology and awareness of "appropriate" use of technology.

### **Theoretical Frameworks**

Scholars have broken Black Twitter into various levels and defining features. To examine the culturally rooted understandings of race and communication, scholars have developed theoretical frameworks. The theoretical frameworks examined are Critical Race Theory and Signifyin'.

#### ***Critical Race Theory***

According to Derrick Bell (1995), Critical Race Theory (CRT) is "a body of legal scholarship...a majority of whose members are both existentially people of color and ideologically committed to the struggle against racism, particularly as institutionalized in and by law" (898). CRT is often expressed in first person, storytelling, narrative or any creative form,

which allows traditionally marginalized groups to share their truth and collective experiences. Critical race theorists empower and embrace historically excluded views because they believe in collective wisdom (Bell 1994).

The tenants of Critical Race Theory include (University of Michigan, 2021):

1. Race is a social construction.
2. Although individuals can indeed be racist, racism and its outcomes are perpetuated in society through social processes above and beyond individual actions including through cultural norms, institutional rules, and laws and regulations.
3. Treatment of individuals based on race is embedded within social systems and institutions.
4. Listening to and understanding the lived experiences of individuals is essential for understanding the lived experiences of individuals is essential for understanding how racism works.

Using this framework, Black Twitter becomes a medium for users to form its own resistance to an intersection of racism rooted in mainstream media, technology and society. Applying the theory to users on Black Twitter, Black twitter users can be identified as critical race theorists, who have collectively shared stories, thoughts, emotions and personal work related to culturally relevant topics, whether socially or politically. Bell (1995) identifies critical race theorists as someone who hopes of transformative resistance strategy. Transformative resistance strategies are seen in notable Black Twitter moments, such as #BBQBecky, #OscarsSoWhite, #BlackLives Matter, and even the use of memes to tweet, respond and retweet.

The #OscarsSoWhite hashtag coined by activist, April Reign, is an example of how CRT is a transformative resistance strategy. In 2015, the Oscars nominated 20 white actors, which created an uproar on Black Twitter, later becoming a mainstream Twitter discourse. Following Twitter's uproar with the Academy of Motion Pictures, mainstream magazines and journalists in

the entertainment industry reported on the academy's lack of diversity. The #OscarsSoWhite led to the Academy setting specific inclusion goals for its members who vote on Oscar winners. The initial tweet by April Reign reads:

@ReignOfApril “#OscarsSoWhite they asked to touch my hair” (Jan. 15, 2015)

The tweet highlights the first use of the hashtag, but most importantly, the cultural relevance of “asked to touch my hair.” Employing CRT, Reign is referencing a common collective story of Black hair and the preservation of culture. Reign's tweet illustrates a common narrative relevant to the Black experience becoming a part of collective wisdom. Reign's tweet signifies a transformative resistance strategy to the Academy of Motion Pictures' lack of diversity and exclusivity to whiteness. Black twitter users followed Reign in this discourse, in seriousness and humor. Many tweets read as follows:

@Reagangomez “The game is rigged. We know this. And in 2015, it needs to be called out. #OscarsSoWhite” (Jan. 15, 2015).

@joyannreid quote retweet “#OscarsSoWhite black people can't even get nominated for the movies about black people...” to @dlberes “*Creed* and *Straight out of Compton* both got one nomination each, but for the white people involved (actor, screenwriters). lulz” (Jan. 14, 2016).

Both tweets serve as a call to action against the exclusion of Black actors and shows up as resistance to the white establishment. Forbes (2020) reports the Academy of Motion Pictures met its diversity goals and added 819 members. While most members are still white men, progress was made from the creation of one tweet, from Black twitter, and with a viral hashtag. This creative form of discourse illustrates the use CRT online and the formation of cultural identity, in a resistance struggle against a dominant group. Overall, CRT is discourse itself, which can be liberating in fighting racist practices and resisting oppressive structures.

***Signifyin'***

Signifyin' is a genre of linguistic performance of multiple meanings, involving wordplay and misdirection (Florini 2014). In *The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of African American Literary Criticism*, Henry Louis Gates argues African American literature is "double-voiced," in which there is a process of repetition and revision (Euell 667). Gates defines signifyin' as the language of trickery, in which its words and gestures arrive at "direction through indirection" and can mean several things (Euell 667). Black tropes and cultural familiarity form Black oral tradition. It allows for Black figuration in many different forms, whether it be metaphors, oxymorons, analogies, irony, humor, parody, and much more. Jazz music is an example of how Signifyin' shows up in cultural forms, in which African American elements in music require an interpretive view, where doubleness and intertextuality are present in its rhetoric and discourse (Vad 348). The title of Gates' work, *Signifyin' Monkey*, is an example of Signifyin' because it reverses a racist image and illustrates a Black person sitting at the intersection of discourse, tropes, and ambiguity, which refers to the idea of repetition and revision. Signifyin' is a known practice in Black American oral traditions, which shows up as an expression of Black identity.

Robert Alexander's *I Ain't Yo' Uncle—The New Jack Revisionist Uncle Tom's Cabin* is an example of Signifyin' in literature, in which the title itself is an example of revision and response to the original *Uncle Tom's Cabin* by Harriet Stowe. *Ain't Yo'* brings Black oral dialects to life in the title as it introduces a parody of the Stowe's original work. Alexander's work uses Signifyin' to challenge the stereotypical characterizations used in the original work. Gates says the concept of Signifyin' is by examining African American culture from inside. He says, "to step outside the white hermeneutical circle and into the black," (Vad 349). Gates' remark is not only illustrated in Alexander's work but also highlights two cultural worlds, black and white, of different rhetorical meanings and discourses embedded in cultural, political, and social understandings. To step outside the white circle can be analyzed through Black Twitter discourse. Black Twitter has

designed itself separate from the white society and immersed in Black vernacular roots and rhetoric.

Florini (2014) states, “Signifyin’ allows Black Twitter users to align themselves with Black oral traditions, to index Black cultural practices...to communicate shared knowledge and experiences (224).” It becomes an outlet for Black Americans to share their offline identity on Twitter. Signifyin’ involve cultural and historical implications. Historically, Black Americans have had to navigate racial oppression, and Signifyin’ provided an opportunity of resistance for Black Americans through encoded communication. It fostered group solidarity. While it has been historically ingrained in the Black community, it is vital for members of the community to possess forms of cultural knowledge and cultural competencies. Florini (2012) goes into depth through a 2010 Black Twitter moment when #DrakePunchlines and #FakeDrakeLyrics surfaced to mock Drake lyrics.

@Charles\_star: “I got ride like a bicycle. Huffy. Am I the world’s worst rapper? Puffy. #fakedrakelyrics.” (April 23,2010)

Florini’s #DrakePunchline example illustrates that participating in the hashtag requires multiple forms of cultural competencies to understand the user’s content. There is a needed familiarity with both the rapper and his lyrical constructions in Hip Hop to understand the tweet. While Hip Hop has a large base, its political and social meaning is central to the Black experience in America. The Signifyin’ tweets holds a close proximity to Black racial identity.

While the encoded communication consists of historical, cultural and social meaning, it also is used as a social critique. Twitter Signifyin’ frequently speaks to the shared experiences of Black Americans, who share experiential knowledge about being Black (Florini 2014). This theoretical concept used as a social critique will be very vital to use when analyzing the social and political events that occurred in 2020, regarding race in America. Recurring hashtags of

#BlackMamba, tweets of Black Lives Matter and discourses on diversity, equity, and inclusion on Black Twitter will be important to analyze how Signifyin' shows up in tweets as a social critique. As seen in the literature review and through an examination of theoretical frameworks there are common themes of resistance, transformation, culture, identity and agency.

## **Methodology**

### *Overview*

I conducted In-depth interviews for the study. In-depth interviews were appropriate for the study because it provided valuable information and allowed for interpretation and understanding of the subject matter. Semi-structured questions were prepared and distributed to twitter users, who identify as Black, African American or African, between the ages of 18 -30. (N=10). The participants identified themselves to be Black or of African Descendent, and between the ages of 21-25. In-depth interviews took place online through Zoom, a conference call platform. Using in-depth interviews ensured quality data because it explored the subject and various implications. The interview consisted of 19 items and focused on four concepts.

Reference Appendix X for items.

### *In-depth Interviews*

### **Sample/Participants**

A nonprobability method of convenience was used to recruit participants, and were recruited through social media platforms, such as Twitter and Instagram. Twitter and Instagram were chosen because it was the most used social media platforms amongst users between the ages 18-30. Participants were aged between 21-25, and predominately used Twitter on a daily basis, between 3-5 hours a day, and 21-30 hours average weekly. Moreover, interests of the participants

varied across several topics such as Sports, Entertainment, Creativity, Fashion, Music and Pop Culture.

### ***Procedure***

Participants were contacted on social media platforms, Twitter and Instagram, to garner interest in participating in the interview. The participants were contacted using my personal account thus leaving space for skewed contributions. For participants who agreed, instructions were provided for scheduling and study purposes. Following consent, participants accessed a link to schedule an interview time and date, which sent both the participant and I a calendar invite with a zoom link. On the day of the interview, we joined the call, and the I introduced both myself and the study's purpose. Participants were then be asked to introduce themselves and answer following questions presented by the researcher. Interviews were recorded and transcribed. Refer to Appendix A for consent form, Appendix B for Researcher Statement of Purpose.

### ***Instrument***

The instrument consisted of a total of 19 pre-designed items. All items were used as a guide to go with direction of the participant through follow up questions. The interview touched on a few themes and demographical information. Themes included: Perception of Black Twitter, attitudes toward the impact of 2020, developed collective cultural identity, developed resistance identity. Refer to Appendix C for interview questions.

## **Research Results**

The participants of the study have all shared similar accounts around Twitter being a space for Black Twitter users to come together around all factions of society, their life and trending moments. For the purpose of this section in the study, participant accounts will be organized amongst three main themes showcased in their interviews: Community, Accountability and Joy.



For most participants, many of them expressed the value in Black Twitter being a place for everyone with similar life experiences to come together as it brings joy and entertainment. Participants expressed the value of Black Twitter calling people out and focusing on an accountability measure for each other, known celebrities, brands, etc.

### *Community and Culture*

For participants in the study, several of them explained Twitter to be a place for users to be real and authentic. In comparison to Instagram, many of the participants discussed how Twitter is an app of opinion, in which it showcases the bad and good of reality. In contrast, it was discussed that Instagram only showcases the “good”, rather than the reality. One participant exclaims, “People aren’t afraid to speak their minds,” which signifies the platform Black Twitter gives users to be heard or seen. During the 2020 election, one participant says, “During the election, I was like, I had to remember that like, okay, you know, although I do feel safe in my job, let me not get too crazy. But I was definitely pretty vocal about like, my opinions on Twitter,” which signifies the safe space Twitter held for them and their voice, especially during a polarized time.

Within this community, participants discussed the importance of support and how it uplifts Black users. One participant, a black creative, says, “I can post, I can make a YouTube video, post them on Twitter, and I get like 20 retweets. Of those 20, I only know seven people or six people and so it's just like, it's cool to know that like, obviously, it's not like 1000s. You still have like the sense of like, this community so I think Twitter's doing like a really good job.” This participant reveals the importance of Black Twitter’s network and its impact on supporting user’s content, whether it be creative or not.

One other participant describes this supportive nature of Black Twitter as an aspect of wanting to see everyone in the digital space succeed. They exclaim, “There's a lot of people out

there who've grown so much off of Twitter whether they're like a Twitter comedian and now they're like verified... there's tons of avenues there and I feel like the black community on Twitter is very supportive. Like, someone is selling socks, and you know, the sock is ugly, we're like, 'No, I'm just going to reshare' because I could tell homegirls trying to get to 10,000 likes, we're gonna support each other regardless and give those reviews, give those likes, give those retweets so it's definitely a sense of community to want to see each other grow and push each other to get further in life." This participant's notion showcases the support within the community through utilizing Twitter interactions to uplift each other in the digital space.

Many participants saw this during the Black Lives Matter and political unrest against police brutality, in which users on the platform joined forces to commit themselves to helping others in the moment, no matter if they knew them. A participant says, "...oh, also how some police brutality incidents were happening. And Twitter, Black Twitter went at it. And we're calling the police departments, calling the lawyer to make sure we can help these people out, like starting GoFundMe, like Black Twitter was really moving as a strong force to make some change to get some justice served. So, I think that also showed how powerful Twitter was at the time." The participant illustrates the collective community support amongst Black Twitter users.

One participant exclaims, "I strongly believe that a lot of the trends we see we see today and even in the year 2020 are carried by Black Twitter. I just think that Black Twitter find the way to always rise to the top in terms of how they carry out their ideas, whether they're new or they're they kind of resurface. Maybe it was happening 10 years ago, and they bring something back," they continue to mention, "Black Twitter has a stronghold on just like culture and American culture as a whole. And it's for the good, in terms of like sometimes it gives people a chance to actually like show the creative powers. But I still don't believe they get enough credit."

This participant's statement reveals the cultural power of Black Twitter users and its impact on American society, while also indicating the lack of credit given.

Another participant emphasizes this sentiment by saying, "Especially because black people are often suppressed a lot when it comes to our creativity. Or when it comes to just anything...anything that we try to do. It's a lot harder for us to get our foot out there. So those retweets and likes definitely make an impact for sure." It becomes clear the formed community is aware of Black Twitter success and the credit given. The respondent's sentiment showcases a reflection of how the work done within a digital space, not only contributes to mainstream culture but also becomes unnoticed.

Participants also describe Black Twitter's community to be filled with inspiration around fashion, sports and photography. Moreover, the communal aspect of Black Twitter was discussed especially in light of the Black Lives Matter Movement in 2020, in wake of the death of George Floyd. Many people talk about how educated and exposed they became to everything that was happening especially during the pandemic. One participant exclaims, "But it was just like that's like kind of like an excuse, to not pay attention to things. And so that kind of like woke me up. And I feel like made me blacker than ever. So shout out to Twitter." Moreover, it showcases the impact of both the COVID-19 Pandemic and the Black Lives Matter movement allowing Black Twitter users to not only wake up but also become in touch with their identity.

There was an overall agreement between participants on the influence of Black Twitter and its contribution to society's trends and topics. Several participants discuss how many Black influencers from Black Twitter are the founders of current trends in our mainstream society. In reference to Black Twitter users, there were many discussions around the power of Black Twitter voices. Participants share the impact Black Twitter has given them to become exposed to a diverse group of Black people in their own 'little' communities on their timeline. One participant explains

the importance of every users voice by saying, “ to understand that like, in a weird way, like we're all connected, like their experience is probably, um, you know, giving you like a warning for something you may experience in the future or like, maybe just keeping you aware of something that could occur to you in the future,” which highlights an intersection of exposure and education facilitated by empowered voices on the platform.

Several of participants discuss the various identities and topics that exist within their Black Twitter Timeline, such as Caribbean Black Twitter, Black Liberals Twitter, Black Creative Twitter and much more. For instance, many participants described Florida Black Twitter, specifically the cultural aspects of it like South Florida. One participant describes his South Florida Black Twitter experience in depth by describing ‘Club Twitter’. Club Twitter is a space for Black Twitter users, specifically from Broward and Miami-Dade County, to listen to music and live tweet together. Club Twitter is central to one local DJ, who sends a link for everyone on their timeline to listen to and tweet memes while doing so. Unique to Club Twitter is the music specific to South Florida culture and dances which bring Black Twitter users back to their childhood and growing experience. The participants close by saying, “I know as black folks like, we took that club Twitter stuff pretty seriously. And it definitely was on entertainment for sure.”

More so, many participants believed Black Twitter to be a new way in which users can socially advocate for their communities, bring awareness to issues, while also, holding large companies accountable for their actions; however, Black Twitter users expressed that it does not replace the traditional forms of advocacy for their communities. Participants believed the answer to the social reality surrounding the troubles of Black America involve grassroots movement with a mix of social media. It is evident many of them believed in holding on to traditional acts of social advocacy because they saw several non-black Twitter users take on roles of social activists through Twitter and Instagram, which did nothing better the problems surrounding the

community. One participant says, “We need to gatekeep Black Twitter. Its for us and only us to be ourselves and bask in blackness. We need them [non-black users] to fight the fight with us, but on the streets,” which signifies the value of Black Twitter, not only toward social activism but to their identity. This showcases unity and solidarity amongst one another.

### *Accountability*

While community was stated as an important implication of Black Twitter, one participant elaborates on cancel culture by assuring Black Twitter to be an accountability measure. More so, like any other social media platform it can bring people down. In this case, Black Twitter was known to call people out in 2020 for specific ways in which either big brands or celebrities acted around Diversity, Equity and Inclusion.

A participant exclaims, “Twitter has a great accountability focus where they can call people out at all times...like uhm no, but in 2012, you said that you don’t like these types of people but now you support them,” indicating Twitter’s platform perpetuating cancel culture through the opiniated implications of the platform. Another participant exclaims, “But I think it's gotten stronger in 2020 and 2021. Now because they don't play like people are actually afraid of canceled culture. Like, they tiptoe on what they're going to tweet what they're going to write what they're going to retweet, because you never know what's gonna come back and bite you and someone's gonna hold you accountable for it.”

### *Joy*

In regard to 2020, many participants express the year was filled with a whirlwind of events that allowed them to be more educated and exposed to the realities of their identity. For many participants, they felt as though the death of George Floyd brought several emotions and opportunities for them to educate themselves and others. In the study, participants discussed their timelines being filled with raw footage and pictures of police brutality and protests across

America every second on their timeline. Specifically, the video of George Floyd's death being a monumental moment for them because many of them expressed it was the first time, they saw raw footage of someone being murdered and crying for their life. Due to this, many of the participants also talk about insisting they stray away their phones to disconnect from information related to Black Lives Matter. Many of the participants described their timelines filled with depressing content related to the reality of Black America, such information they discovered about the horrors of slavery, Jim Crow and systemic racism masked through law enforcement.

Outside of the negative discoveries Black Twitter users found positive moments to come from it. One participant expresses, "...because it's like, when things aren't going well in life, all you can do is kind of laugh and just try to, like during the lockdown, like I, like I mentioned, before, I was depressed, I was going through a lot. But it's like, Twitter always found a way to, like, make me at least keep me entertained, if not laughing just like keeping my mind focused on something. So...I'm, and then just black people in general. I feel like since we always find a way to make jokes out of things that shouldn't be joked about." This comment showcases the joy Black Twitter brings to moments of despair.

Moreover, one participant expressed this cultural moment to be a revolution, and how excited they were that people were finally paying attention to what was going on. This participant goes on to talk more about Black Twitter being a safe space for them to tweet and voice their opinions. They continue on to discuss Black Twitter allows them to escape into a space where they can relate, feel comfortable and valid in their voice. Most of all participants exclaim Twitter to be "pure comedy". The comedic joy of Twitter was expressed numerously amongst participants which showcase the importance of Twitter being an escape mechanism for Black Twitter users. Many users talk about moments such as the BET awards, sports during the pandemic like NBA and VerzuzTV.

A participant exclaims, “the 2021 BET awards. I personally didn't watch the BET awards, but just being on Twitter and seeing everyone react to it and posting memes and posting videos and JTS, bad haircut and all these things. And it's like, these things just they made my night and I don't even watch the show. But certain things like that Black Twitter just always finds a way to keep me entertained. And that's one reason like I can't see myself enjoying another app as much as I do, Twitter.” The participants account of joy during a cultural moment like BET showcase the commitment Black Twitter has had on ensuring its users are entertained.

The results in the study provided additional context to the research questions presented. Understanding participant answers and perspectives, Black Twitter strengthened identity through exposure and education in 2020. To be Black in 2020, was not joyous to the same degree they usually find joy on the app. To be Black in 2020, meant constant reminder of the disregard of their bodies and health, as seen with the murders of unarmed Black individuals and the COVID-19 Pandemic. Moreover, to be Black in 2020 is to constantly lean on individuals who look and share similar experiences. Identity in 2020 for Black Americans was rooted in not only grief, but also support. It was a time for Black Americans to reflect deeply on the state of their being and the country. These results in the study, particularly around support and community, showcase Twitter being a moving force in bringing people together to form a collective front. This collective front indicates their identity on the platform—Accountable, Authentic and Hopeful. While Twitter was place for Black users to form identity around these tenants, it allowed them to be optimistic for generations to come as their state of existence was becoming more visible.

As seen in the results related to joy, participants focused largely on the platform ability to always bring them happiness or joy. Whether it was live updates the NBA Finals, “Stimmy” memes, political jokes around Kamala, it allowed them to disassociate from the outside world and bask in joy. In 2020, participants exclaimed how they saw an increase of tweets with #BlackExcellence, #BlackBoyJoy or #BlackGirlMagic. It allowed them to celebrate their identity more than ever.

One participant says, “Black Twitter is Twitter,” which illustrates the dominate discourse taking place amongst Black Twitter users. Twitter, being a media platform for opinions and thoughts to be shared,

gives Black Twitter users a platform to hold a mic and feel their voice is heard at the table. In 2020, the platform allowed for them to take control of the existence, voice and conscious in the most authentic, real and urgent way possible. Twitter reveals its democratized characteristics and provided an opportunity for Black Twitter users to show up and show out for its community.

### **Conclusion**

In 2020, several events contributed to Black Twitter facilitating cultural and social discourses for Black Twitter users. Black Twitter users were presented with moments of reckoning with the existence and realities of Black America. Moreover, it allowed a space for Black Twitter users to escape in community and joy and hold everyone accountable. Black Twitter users found themselves holding their mic and pressuring mainstream society to give them credit and hear them out. Black Twitter served as a democratized space meant to give each user a voice to hold their community together. Black Twitter users were faced with creating their own spaces of joy and accountability while basking in Black culture.

Black Twitter users were able to reflect on mainstream society and its implications on Black life, while also existing separate from the realities of it. More so, Black Twitter users found themselves more passionate than ever about their community and identity, as many saw Black influencers, athletes and celebrities face the same implications of their skin color, allowing them to become humanized and equal to all other ‘everyday Twitter users’. In this year, the platform illustrated the power of communication and resistance in the joy it brought Black Twitter users to stand up and stand out for its community. There was a strong occurrence of protection and accountability for the safety of Black lives, intellectual property and creative output. Using Dubois’ double consciousness theory, Black users were able to settle in on their “Negro” identity because it was a safe space for them. Additionally, they were able to exist outside of the Mainstream context, yet still impact it.



## Limitations, Implications and Further Research

### *Anticipated pitfalls and benefits*

The limitations of this study include my status as a student, recruitment strategies, a homogenous sample of participants and the subjectivity of content. While I am interested in the intersection of media, communications and multiculturalism, I am no expert in the pedagogical studies of these topics, nor a professional at a media/tech company or conglomerate. There are several points related to the platforms technological aspects missed in the study, which can affect and imply several meanings to the research presented and better understanding of the research. Due to the subjectivity of the content, several interpretations of 2020 and its cultural moments for Black Twitter users involve a level of opinion and subjectivity, left for an individual's interpretation. The second limitation includes the recruitment strategies of the participants, in which I used my personal social media accounts to reach out to participants. In doing so, this strategy skews and opens up bias participant contributions in ways in which they have a connection to my personal account or perceive it. Moreover, gathering a homogenous sample did not allow for a more diverse representation of contributions. Many of participants were college students, from the southern region of America, and considered themselves Generation Z. Thus, many of the participants ideals aligned closely.

The implications of this study include the significance of Twitter being a driving force for social change and public discourse within a digital landscape. Additionally, this study illustrates technology evolving outside of tech and becoming a safe haven for Black Twitter users to escape and resist the realities of Black America. Through the lens of Black Twitter, this study reveals how the media platform is able to amplify millions of marginalized voices to exist within their own state, conscious and mind. The platform allowing this to occur strengthens ties within the Black community and amongst its users to stand in solidarity. While the reality of Black America

consists of invisibility, Twitter provides a platform for users to become visible amongst one another. It allows users to take control of their culture, take pride in it and use it as a vessel for change and progress within their communities.

The topic of Black Twitter and its cultural relevance during times of social, cultural and political unrest opens the doors to many future topics. The research presented formed relevant and timely points surrounding racial identity and community during a time of technological and media advancements. The research gathered illustrates the perception and meaning of what it means to be Black in 2020 through the lens of modern tech and media, which furthers exploration in how companies and conglomerates can use its platforms and technological advancements to increase corporate social responsibility (CSR) in a sustainable manor, while also ensuring BIPOC users and audiences are visible. In this research, Black Twitter Users provided first-hand accounts from their experiences and illustrate their contribution to steering culturally and socially relevant discourse around the Black experience, thus furthering white spaces for further research to be explored around how the platform can increase visibility of Black Twitter users, yet still preserve the culture and authenticity of Black Twitter.

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## Appendices

### Appendix A: Consent Form

#### Consent Form

The Power of Black Twitter.

You are invited to be in a research study, examining the power of Black Twitter in 2020. The study analyzes how Black Twitter contributed to social and political discourses relevant to numerous occurrences of 2020. You were selected as a possible participant because you are an active user on Twitter and identify as Black. The study asks that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

This study is being conducted by Ni'A Landon, student at the School of Communication, Florida State University, [npl18@my.fsu.edu](mailto:npl18@my.fsu.edu); 786.606.8762.

#### Background Information:

The purpose of this study is to understand the role of Black Twitter during 2020, and how have Black twitter users utilized the platform to steer cultural conversations of resistance, change, and community.

#### Procedures:

If you agree to be in this study, we would ask you to do the following things: Click the Calendly link provided to you by email and schedule a date and time that works best for an interview.

#### Risks and benefits of being in the Study:

The study contains no foreseeable risks.

#### Confidentiality:

The records of this study will be kept private and confidential to the extent permitted by law. In any sort of report, we might publish, we will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely, and only researchers will have access to the records.

#### Voluntary Nature of the Study:

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with the University. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.



General Introductory Questions–Black Twitter

1. Tell me about yourself, interests, and hobbies. How does this align with your online feed and interests on Twitter?
2. How important do you think the Twitter platform is in today’s society? (Sweeney, 2014)

Perception of Black Twitter

3. What does “Black Twitter” mean to you?
4. Do you think it is ok to use “Black Twitter” as an umbrella term for all black users? (Sweeney, 2014)
5. When did you first notice you were a part of Black Twitter?
6. Tell me about one of your favorite Black Twitter moments, how was it impactful?

Attitudes toward the impact of 2020

1. How have the increase in visibility of police brutality and racial injustice impacted your life, offline and online?
2. What were some of the most notable events of 2020, political or social?
  - a. How has twitter covered this moment? In what ways have you participated in the discussion of its coverage?
3. What has your experience been on Twitter during the current events of 2020? Can you reference a moment?

Collective Cultural Identity

1. What commonalities have you shared with others on Black Twitter?
2. Do you believe you have sensed community with users, even if you don’t know them?
3. What topics have been shared on Black Twitter that has resonated with your identity?

Developed Resistance Identity

1. Has Black Twitter become a form of advocacy?
  - a. Has it took the place of marching or rallying?
  - b. Has Black Twitter become a way for you to have your voice heard when it comes to events of racial injustice, issues, education or pop culture events?
2. In what ways have Black twitter brought hope, happiness or laughter to your feed?
  - a. How have you used Black Twitter to bring joy or change?

Demographical Information

1. Age?
2. Which generation are you apart of? Reference list:
  - a. Gen X
  - b. Generation Y (Millennials)
  - c. Gen Z
3. How often do you spend on Twitter daily?
4. How often do you spend on Twitter weekly?
5. When did you first make a Twitter account?



## Appendices D: Transcripts

### Participant #1

**Researcher:** All right. Hi. Hello, thank you for joining my research on cultural influence of Black Twitter. Before we start to really get into like the nitty gritty questions, can you tell me about yourself, your interest, and your hobbies? And how does that align with your online feed on Twitter?

**Participant:** Sure, I appreciate you presenting this opportunity, always love help out, this research is really interesting, but in terms of myself. So I attend Florida State and entering my senior year. So I'm almost out of here. I don't think I'll be back in Tallahassee for a while once I graduate as the goal at least. But I'm studying Business, specifically in marketing and management information systems. So my interests kind of rely in terms of that revolve around the intersection between communicating with people and the technology that happens behind it in the world of business. And that's across many different areas, whether it's tech, finance, personal finance, like consumer goods, all of it like studying, like studying human interaction and things like that. So that's really fun just there in terms of other hobbies. I'm a prior basketball player, so I enjoy sports, my feed is heavily involved with the NBA. Also, the Olympics, track and field, being Jamaican. And then also my feed, I enjoy cooking. Coming from a Caribbean background, as well as like a huge piece of that. And then also being from Broward, like a strong culture and, like for Twitter, just in terms of like the things that we do, and overall black culture as a whole. So like features on my feed, like fashion, street wear that type of stuff as well, just the intersection between sports and the world of fashion as well. So that's like a generic, I guess, an intro to how that kind of shapes my online presence in terms of I interact with those platforms individually, Twitter.

**Researcher:** Nice, thank you. And so how important do you think the Twitter platform is today, in today's society?

**Participant:** I think it's pivotal. I even tie it back to like, my first time using Twitter, I think I was in high school. And it was a friend of mine who was like, hey, like you're not on Twitter, or Instagram, or on Facebook, like you don't have a Twitter, you understand how it really works. Like, they don't understand how you position tweet. Liking, Retweeting was foreign to me. But now think about it. It's so common to wake up in the morning. And I like recap what happened the night before, like through Twitter, just because I can see like if I fell asleep in NBA Finals, I can come back and see what the highlights were. Or if there's a new tag or I see something that's like people are tweeting about my timeline, or heard someone tend to want a group chat, I want to go check Twitter. So, it's a keeping up with current events. Misinformation obviously runs rampant. Sometimes you have to fact check for updates. But it's, it's a great source of laughter. I think half of my camera on Twitter memes and I send it all in my group chats. So, Twitter does make me a funny person. And when it comes down, like having a group chat and friends and all

that.

**Researcher:** Nice, I can definitely agree that Twitter is hilarious. But now we are going to get into the perception of Black Twitter. So, when you think of black twitter, like what are the first things that come to mind? And why?

**Participant:** The first thing that comes to mind is Black Twitter is Twitter and our pain. Just in terms of like you mentioned, even in your intro, I strongly believe that a lot of the trends we see we see today and even in the year 2020 are carried by Black Twitter. I just think that Black Twitter find the way to always rise to the top in terms of how they carry out their ideas, whether they're new or they're they kind of resurface. Maybe it was happening 10 years ago, and they bring something back. So any of the verbiage that you use, any of the funny comedy, any of the trends you see from fashion standpoint, a style standpoint, or just overall how people are leading their lives for a particular point of time. I really feel like Black Twitter has a stronghold on just like culture and American culture as a whole. And it's for the good, in terms of like sometimes it gives people a chance to actually like show the creative powers. But I still don't believe that enough credit is given to those black creators who coined some of these things that run rampant all across society after they start those strengths.

**Researcher:** So, I know you talked about like, a lot of credit is not given to black creators. Can you expand on that like elaborate if there's any examples of how you see they're not giving that much credit?

**Participant:** Yeah, so I think about something as simple as the compensation and the opportunity that happen as a result of your social media presence. So everyone wants to be an influencer and we're seeing it happen on every platform like your IG influencers. Tik tok is a new one now. But Twitter's kind of like one of those havens, it kind of starts where the trends that and that matriculating to other areas of social media, it's traditionally probably start there. And those black creators are never given the credit. So in my opinion, there are other counterparts who have been, particularly my white counterparts, who will take some of these, these ideas and trends that are created, and they get a chance to see reap the real benefits of it. And it's, from a competition standpoint, not only like from a monetary standpoint, but also just opportunities that come off of it, whether it be a career move, or it's an opportunity to expand your existing brand, and those things as a whole. So it takes so much fighting for black creators to finally get the credit they have that by the time they do get it, the trends that they probably created have already gone through their lifecycle. And aside, there's no way for them to kind of have reparations, and that's sort of, that's a word that happens around black people all the time. But it's just like, it's like the same thing where we did something anomalous. And so people are taking credit for it, you won't even get a chance to see, you see the impact ad, but people won't get be able to recognize that you were the one who started this, and gave them the experience that they tie, like a period of times we talk about 2016. But like so much like 2016 was like that, as well as anything in 2020. So, like, a specific example, I think of is, like how many times we've seen, like black woman that has created different clothing, and then there's, like, large, mass fast fashion retailer that will steal a design,

and then they make money off of it. And there's no credit ever given. And I mean, that's that's a choice, that's millions of dollars. So it's kind of frustrating to think about it where like, everyone knows the impact it has. But once again, when it comes time to give the credit necessary and actually reap the benefits of your intellectual property, which is your ideas, there's no chance for them to do that.

**Researcher:** Right, I completely agree. And do you think Black Twitter is a driving force in calling some of those things out? When it comes to not giving black people credit? Or just any of those types of like, issues?

**Participant:** Are you talking more from the standpoint of like, they end up standing up for themselves? Or I guess I'm—

**Researcher:** Standing up for themselves? Or like if they see something like a white person taking a black woman's clothing, like do you think Black Twitter has called...is known for calling people out for calling those types of issues and standing up?

**Participant:** Yeah, they definitely are. Sometimes people think is more abrasive, but I don't see anything wrong. Just because it happened digitally. Imagine if someone came into your home, and they stole like your TV, you'd be pissed off because like this is my property, I own this. Now the hard part is that when you go into an open form, intellectual property gets really really dicey. Because now it's like it's out there. And it's more of the ethics of people to recognize this was an idea to begin with. And more than understanding as well, I think the next step for like people as a whole, and even understanding how intelligent property works is, how can you ensure that you're protected from a legal standpoint, before you even get there. Because that's another way to just ensure that you have the vacuum that no matter what happens, you can still get the credit that you rightfully deserve. But Black Twitter definitely does a great job of calling people out. The hard part about it is you can call him out and but then sometimes the people who've done it are so so big and so large that a little bit of negative publicity won't even hurt their brand that much. And that's it's like, perpetual that they can consistently do it. And then they recognize, okay, they have no original ideas. And so they're just reaching out to people.

**Researcher:** Thank you. Yeah, you're definitely your examples are reminding me of I don't know if you know, the artists Dapper Dan. He's like a Harlem artist from back in the day. But basically, he made this design and Gucci took it. And in 2017, Black Twitter went through like, like basically created this whole campaign to like to take down Gucci. And Gucci decided to become more inclusive. And they added Dapper Dan to their inclusivity like council or whatnot. So, he can talk like he can basically work on fashion diversity. So it was really interesting, like how Black Twitter can really be that force, but also how intellectual property is like, really important to understand. So, thank you. And if you can tell me about one of your favorite Black Twitter moments, it doesn't have to be 2020. It could be recent; it can be back in the day. It could be certain hashtags, like what was your favorite moments and how was it impactful?

**Participant:** I accidentally opened up my Twitter that is probably my bookmarks. But I think I think as a whole I think one of the one of the most impactful moments actually came around last year when people's started to recognize like it wasn't, it's not black people's job to do your work to upskill like yourself on understanding the plight in the shelter that Black people go through. But I think what was really, really powerful about it was they were able to do it in a way where like, it was still light hearted, like you could see like a very, very serious tweet, but it still had a spin on it, where no matter if you you had that experience, or you didn't, you were able to understand and like conceptualize the issue that was here, but also recognize it wasn't like this just became like a really dark place to be at because I don't want to consume that type of information. But no one should consider that information back to the system. But I mean, most of my black sort of moments are always tied, like back to basketball. Even just like understanding how creative people get like if someone gets that it gets crossed, and how quick people will create memes to the entire taglines. One thing about moments I like, when Steph Curry crossed Chris Paul, he loved that he they had like all these different dances going and all the creatives who know how to use like, Photoshop, and everything came out of nowhere. So I think those moments really powerful because it brings people together. I think as a whole, you enjoy even like people that quote unquote, failures or like bloopers that happened to them. And it humanizes people that we look up to as a society. So I think it's a pretty great place to get a laugh. And I think Twitter is the most lighthearted platform that I have, by all means. But also, you know, people will snappiness if you say some outlandish stuff,

**Researcher:** Right, and so when you say like if you say some outlandish stuff, like, What do you mean by that? And how like they call people out?

**Participant:** Yeah, so I think there's been a space where people feel comfortable right now, which is great to call people out when they're wrong. And it's not the call out culture with like, I'm telling you, you're called out and then you're canceled. And like, we're not going to do anything about it. I'm talking about where people have made bad decisions or even idea like learning about history, because I think about how the Tulsa race riots just this year became like a huge topic. And a large push that that's the total race riots even talked about on Twitter, right, I can at least see for at least five years. But it's like mainstream media and the connection between like, the power that certain celebrities like LeBron James and Russell Westbrook took to use, like their media platforms and empires are trying to build to help educate the masses. So that's one of the aspects of being able to call out instance, America, on the misinformation and just like the scraping away of black history that we've never got a chance to hear about. Because I remember like my first time ever hearing my actually my dad came across a PBS documentary on like black business in America. And that's my first time ever hearing about it. I was like, 2017 2018. And I was shocked. Like, I had no idea who people like Ursula Burns were like, all like, like the very first, one of the big businesspeople. They're like the founder jet magazine and didn't even know anything existed. So, I think it's great that in a space where we're starting to see a lot of times people are able to highlight the inequities that are there. And also, just call out people who are wrong, like, who who create narratives about people or like about black people, the whole, you know, that we're not, we're not

barbaric, you know, we're extremely creative. Like we're highly intellectual people, we just have found a way to make sure we do in a way to be Don't suppress our creativity in the process. And it's something that our counterparts, they envy, and being able to highlight that and call people out about, like, their qualm, the hole within themselves, I think is one of them, actually, it does a good job of. And I think it's been helpful, just like people to gain confidence and like more black kids to see that there's nothing wrong with them being black. Like it's actually a very, I think it's a superpower anyway. So that's how I feel like that is like a really great job of holding people accountable, and really holding our own accountable who sell out as well, but that's a conversation for another day.

**Researcher:** Yeah, that was really good. And so now we're going to move towards 2020. Like discussing the attitudes towards the impact of 2020. And so when you think of this past year, when you think of this past year, what are the first things that come to mind?

**Participant:** Um, I think about the health pandemic, but negative thoughts on like, the black community in like being in recognizing that social media was a great way to show the disproportionate effects of pandemics as a whole and like what is institutional Racism. So how systemic in a sense, but it became glaringly apparent that black and brown communities are adversely affected. And 2020 had like a very educational lens, in my opinion, in terms of like put like Twitter became a place where people were able to create, like an open forum. And you had a space now where there's been 1000s of very, very educated people. And you're finding out people have PhDs who are in analysis programs or educators across the board or historians, and they had that space to help create a sense of community around some of these topics. But they don't have a more lighthearted side where even the stimulus, like stimuli, the word of the year where it I'm pretty sure its like a Google search in terms of how many times that word is used, across platforms across social media probably is one of the most used words the entire year. So I think it was really helpful to help highlight some things. And even from a personal standpoint, it it's like you're able to see the communal struggle that was there. And like, you know, you didn't really feel like you're going through it alone. And I think it was, it was powerful in a way but also like, reinvigorating a sense of, of, there's still so much more work to be done. And recognizing that our cross, you know, successes of success landscape, whether you're wealthy or you're not like you're in a low socio-economic portion of society, those same struggles were apparent regardless, and being able to see that you couldn't hide behind your wealth, because no matter what, like you still wake up in the morning, and you're black. So I didn't doubt that was very powerful to see that. And that's the thing that really stood out to me in terms of 2020 as a whole.

**Researcher:** And that was really good. So, based on those, what do you think about 2020. ike, how has Twitter covered those moments for you? How has it amplified the visibility of, you know, what 2020 and encapsulates for you?

**Participant:** I would say, amplified in a way, no pun intended. But I will say it amplified it a way, in the way that it just made me realize like the unspoken responsibility. And it's, it's people

reside on either side of the court. And in terms of thinking about, like, finding the way that you can best educate and help people. Because I have black cards, there's a conversation about being able to address unconscious biases. And sometimes I think that people kind of just immerse themselves in different communities. And in this sense, it's a, it's a digital community, like, you could, if you remove the internet, the community is no longer there. But the, but the internet is there, because you can kind of immerse yourself in it. But I think it just like showed how, if it's used properly, this could be a great space for people to unlearn, and relearn, and really, like put themselves in somebody else's shoes. And I think that was like one thing I would take away from it. Like, especially with like, the career path I want to take to recognizing how there's so much structural inequities in corporate America as a whole. So that was really powerful. And then also, just to see like, it was, it was nice to see that people didn't lose their creativity, especially in such a dark time. Like, it was nice to see black people still lean on their creativity, whether it was through music, it was through art is through spoken like poetry, all the type of things people are able to lean on some of those things like, actually have health, healthy coping mechanisms with the amount of trauma that we were forced to, like consume, and one year, that's like, I think every black person in the world needs some form of therapy after 2020. At a minimum, at least, like have one conversation about a case, that was a lie. Like, I can only imagine people who live in households who who, there, they don't have these conversations, or they don't know how to have that conversation, or they're in areas where they feel isolated. So I was kind of glad that at the least maybe the space can help people that maybe they may not have that sense of community physically at this moment in time, but they can at least some way find it digitally until they can find both. I think being able to find both in the world we live in is going to be really helpful for people to like, just maintain, like your mental health as a whole with everything that goes on, on a day-to-day basis.

**Researcher:** I think you bring up so many important points. And when we talk about like racial trauma and mental health or whatnot, and so I have two questions. It'll be two parts either thing. So, when we talk about police brutality, and its increase, like how did the increase in the visibility of it impact your life offline or online? You can discuss either one, specifically online, this is Black Twitter. And then also, how did you reckon with that moment, of racial trauma and high visibility of police brutality?

**Participant:** Yeah, that's a great question. And I think when it comes to online, how it really just impacted my life, it really made me like recognize going to PWI, we come out of a lot of friends who don't have my experience. And seeing some of the comments, and just like a level of insensitivity was definitely frustrating. And sometimes it's like, very, very disappointing, just because it's like, you look me in my face, and you say that you're my friend. Or at least you act that way, at least as an acquaintance who has no qualms with me whatsoever. So I don't say praise a lot of my like, the people I surround myself with. Because I just felt like, it wasn't an environment that was accepting of like, who I was, and conditions like you, they had conditions. And I'm cool with you, because we have this thing in common. But if push comes to shove, the way that I was, like, I would support them, they wouldn't support me, and really just made me

recognize like, you have to actually have a to a mutually beneficial support system, like, I live in your back when, when, when things are hard on me and you don't mind when when things are hard for you. And we don't, we don't feel any way about it. Like that's just the level of support we have for each other. So I think I also was able to see that there are a lot of people who I've never met before my entire life, that they can be more supportive of you and things that you're going through than those who are who you can see every single day. And that's where I think I saw the power of like the online community. And if it's done properly, you can create just that, like that, I think was one of the most important things, you can just create a really great community and a space for people to grieve. Because in terms of the police brutality, like for me, personally offline standpoint, that was a lot to take in, because I think a lot of time people will see me and they say oh, like you don't like we've heard people are like you don't sound like like if I heard you on the phone, I never would have thought you were or the things you do on campus or the things that made doing your own individualized, they like they think you're like a different type of Black person, but really, I'm the same black person, whether or not you think I've been incarcerated or not whether or not you think I'd have any run into the law. Because if I'm in that situation, they're not gonna care that, you know, I'm as soon as about to graduate with two degrees, they're gonna say, well, you're just another black kid who we think did something wrong. And that's like a very hard thing for someone to kind of come to grips with, because I think it was really helpful. As you know, like Miles, Kendrick, and Julian, we kind of had to lean on each other a lot in that moment. And we have we have, that's what the main group that I have on Twitter, I thought of you and Kendrick. And really just made sure like, we made sure we were okay, like mentally, because the year 2020 was like a big reassurance, I think for any black person. And even when it comes to police brutality, a black man of how much this world doesn't care about you in how we can flip in a moment instance. So I told my friend, I remember I told one friend, I was like, I remember leaving the house to go to the grocery store, which is five minutes later, and I take them I had my driver's license four times. And I was like, isn't the same spot every single time. But it was just like the, I didn't want to be in a situation where like, the pain that I saw people go through like having to put my family through that pain off of a trivial task, that shouldn't be something I have to think about. So I found myself like resorting a lot more to just like journaling and making sure that we check in on people because that like so that that racial trauma is not something that was very easy to consume as a whole. It definitely was a big eye opener, because we saw things like Trayvon Martin, but I was younger, where, you know, I can still be considered the black boys worthy. But now like at 21 years old, I'm no longer considered that. And this is like a, like a national thing where okay, this is a, you really know that that could have been me off of a simple miscommunication in the grocery store. So I think that's how the how like a regulatory both in an offline and online instant.

**Researcher:** Thank you, that was a really good point. And I wanted to go back to when you talked about, you know, being at a PWI and still understanding that I'm still black, you know, like, I'm not this, you know, how they treat you with conditions in a way. And so, I would say like, I want to ask, do you feel like your voice is more empowered on Twitter? versus say in a physical space that isn't as black?

**Participant:** Um, great question. I think our first point Yeah, we got to PWI like you're treated like the talented tenth, which I have my my issues with. But I think because of the space that like the digital community, you people feel more comfortable supporting you when they know that there's it's sad, but it's the harsh reality when they know that there's there's less for them to lose, so to speak, and there's less to lose In a digital standpoint, like as long as I'm not using any vulgar language, but I'm still making my point, people can look at it and say, Okay, well, that's Kahleel's username. But they still look at that. That's my digital presence. And there's a you can garner far more support in that way. Because he feels like there's, there's less to lose as a whole. And I can't knock people who are trying to protect their livelihood. Like I get it, everyone's just trying to survive at some point in time. And it's a lot harder to do that, especially when you're in spaces that don't look as much like you, as is going to PWI, where if we talked about critical race theory on campus, they'll look at me like, What the hell is this kid talking about? Like, why is he bringing this up? This has nothing to do with the events, but of course, they and they'll say that to my face, but they don't recognize that the same things that I would say in a digital form is what I'm saying to you right to your face, I just have to dress it up nicer for your feelings, which is frustrating. But I know that if I really want an ultimate goal of you understanding what I'm trying to say, I have to do that. So I think that's where the sense of support feels stronger online, because people who look like us have less to lose, in my opinion, like, if I if I were to walk in, let's say, walk in a black rock and say, "what you said was racist." But or versus I say aligned with, you know, corporate America has been continuing to work on in terms of their support of black and brown people that has a different message, if I were to say that to my managers face, because I think people are able to take separate the actual statement and what you're saying versus like being directed at them when you said online versus when you say in person. And so it's like a structure that people have issue with issues as they always think you're attacking them. But it's like, no, you just, you're just a messenger. I'm just letting you know what the message is. And I want you to carry it to people that I mean, never had contact with

**Researcher:** Definitely, And then I just want to go back to one of your passions or interests on sports. And so during this past year, and on like Black Twitter, how did you see sports really come into light for the black community? You can go any different area, whether it be like Kobe, or just like the bubble and how the NBA responded, NFL responded, just like, you know, elaborate on sports in 2020.

**Participant:** Yeah, so sports in 2020 was a really, really important in my opinion, it was one of the bright spots in terms of providing some normalcy for people. And I think one of the strongest forms was the bubble. And that's both the NBA and WNBA. But I really want to highlight the WNBA as well, because they they really forced the hand of like making sure that the the level of equality that's necessary for women who play sports at a high level was was brought to light. And despite women seem like such a fraction of NBA players, they were far more women who were willing to speak out in terms of all the events happened in 2020. But I think it was, it brought these major leagues and understanding of because the platform they have, you can't just say like,



shut up and dribble, like they have these platforms. And people are going to turn towards athletes to bury some of the biggest social, direct like, like social trends or the issues that are happening in society, and one of those being pleased brutality. And I think that was really powerful. Because on one hand, you're able to see like great basketball being played. But also, you were able to see this space, and people were forced to have it, like, put it in front of their face. And people no longer were able to hide behind like their overt level of racism, like you saw people saying, Why the hell is that black lives matter on the court. But it was less about like, we're not talking about the movement, we're talking about just like people's lives, like lives, who don't entertain treatment. And I think when you have stars, who are the kind of the icons of our American society come out and they support that we're able to humanize something like a bronze I look at 6'8 two hundred and something pound. Yes. If it wasn't for me being the best basketball player on the planet. George Floyd could have been me. And that's a hard thing for people to really understand. But that's like, that's what happens. And it's, it's really, it's really sad. And you have to get to that point, we have to draw that level of comparison. But that's the only way it clicked in some people's minds. And then people were forced to recognize there is a really huge issue here. No matter if you're a multimillionaire or you're someone who who was at the lowest economic tertile of America. So that's, that's why I like sports. Literally give it a roll is like eliminating some of those things. And the NFL did a terrible, terrible job. They always do. In my opinion, because I think that's they just have so much room where they have to grow and it's harder for NFL players. because they don't have as they don't have as many external streams of income, like, like like a soccer player or NBA player, they cannot make a dime a dime from their actual contracts for the respective leagues. And they will still be probably the one of the highest paid athletes in the world. But take the best player in the NFL, they don't have as many endorsement deals or external ways of actually making money. So there, they still have that, like, I need it kind of feel like they're still in place. If you feel the way I felt where I can even think about it. So the NFL has an understanding of my opinion, and they can come in, please the way that their athlete by their their players show up in terms of a soul on certain social issues.

**Researcher:** Right, thank you. I definitely agree. And then now we're just going to go into a few like more questions. What commonalities have you shared with others on Black Twitter? And do you believe that you have sensed community with your youth, like the people you follow or the people who follow you? And even if you don't know them?

**Participant:** Yeah, in terms of commonalities, I think there's like a, I felt like a strong, like a lot of people who talked about like having a coach, which on a day to day basis, or I can appreciation for like sneakers are like how they're saying things that black people turn towards. And it's more of just like, these things provide, like different sense of joy. So I found like, way more people who buy like custom art or who are into anime, like Black people who are into anime, or people who custok shoes, and like, Hey, I'm gonna, when I have the money for, I'm gonna buy some stuff from you. And then like, being able to see like, more black businesses, like people who are just like really about their grind, and like they're trying to do what they're passionate about. So I thought that was a really, really cool to see like that, that sense of community there and step away

from like, some of them are like mainstream things that we see. And as a result, like you like Jada, where people our like, “Oh, my God, where did you get that.” And now to see that Jada doing her thing is like, I felt that period of time created a space for people to just like really delve in and like bet on themselves. And you find out that you found a bunch of people that went against the narrative, like black people don't want to do anything, you find a lot of people who were like very, very hardworking, who are very ambitious. And they want to think for themselves, and they wanted to change, like, the livelihoods for them and their future, their family. So I thought that was a strong thing. I think you also just found like people who were far more versatile than like, the way that society wants to paint us, like people who like black moguls in terms of business. And then they get on Twitter, like they're the same person, because maybe the fuck out on Twitter is like, hey, like, I'm, I'm here, just like y'all like, I'll be at brunch lit just like y'all. And I still show up on Monday. So I think that was pretty cool to see the duality of people. But you don't really get a chance to see unless they kind of have a space to come out of their shell, so to speak. And see, I was I was I was really cool to be.

**Researcher:** Nice. And then this is two last questions. So do you believe that Black Twitter has become a form of advocacy or has taken place of marching and rally?

**Participant:** Um, I think it's, I don't think it'll ever really take the place. But I think it has become another form of advocating for, for the rights and the thing that you want to see change. But I also think like the way that lawmakers are going, it's also in some ways been a safer option to still eliminate some of the issues. So in times where like, when things get really, really hostile, I think you can still have this platform, you can still have this forum, in a sense, to still make sure that people can't really silence you. So And like anything else on the internet never dies, like it'll always be there. So it's a another way to hold people accountable for their actions, especially when they want to erase it, which they try to do time and time again, to our history. So that's been a I think, I think Black Twitter has been able to cultivate, and it's giving people a chance, who traditionally wouldn't feel comfortable to use their voice to recognize that there are other people out there who are willing to support them, using their voice and talking about things that they go through things they see and being able to vocalize and continue to hold people accountable for it.

**Researcher:** And then how have you use black Twitter to bring whether it excuse me, whether it be joy, happiness or change? How have you used black twitter?

**Participant:** Yeah, so in terms of joy, I think about just like the pure comedy that I see. And I think the Some of the crazy stuff that I read, they they basically, it doesn't make sense how people are to live their life like this, but to each its own. That's like, one of the biggest things help, like the joy and happiness standpoint. And then the last question you said was more for like using it to inflict change, right? I think for me, another thing that's been helpful is like, in the height of a, when everything was happening last year, I was able to use this space to like, help highlight, like black creators, like through a program that I did was like a local restaurant, and then just like, really get a chance to see how. So one of my biggest things like when one of my ultimate goals

is like, I don't ever want to say like making a life and then like, you get to a certain point where you're the only one there and it's lonely in the sense, like, I do want to bring people with me, and it doesn't have to be like people have the same interest as me. So I know, there are people out there who are far more creative than I am from, like an art standpoint, whether it be like through fashion, whether it be through music, poetry, that all of it like, there, there's, those are things I think always deserve to be highlighted. But it's a side of our culture that kind of has always been trying to be drowned out. So being able to even kind of have like a touchstone of how you can use the spaces and the things that you learn in other areas, and help create a space for people to to, to do what they love and showcase it and kind of give them that credit that they rightfully deserve. So that's one thing I was saying. And also just being able to hold people accountable and like speak your mind, maybe recognize that you can't be pushed around no matter, you know, how high or how much responsibility you have, what title you have, because your thoughts or your thoughts. And as long as you're respectful about if you don't agree with me, then by all means you can go our separate ways. So just being able to show that as well has been helpful. For myself, and also like, I think for people who don't always feel comfortable speaking their mind that they don't know what repercussions are gonna add from it. So I hope that answers your question.

**Researcher:** Yeah, it definitely does. Thank you. And so that's the end of it. And before we go into demographical questions, is there anything else you want to add? In terms of Black Twitter 2020, its cultural influence.

**Participant:** Oh, and then lastly, I want to add is, if there's one thing that 2020 showed me, like everything that happened is despite the amount of trauma that America puts us through, like, we still find ways to find the silver lining, and still the light that they try and suppress shine. So I think as much as it's there's, there's so much to ask to change. That's one thing I want people to really understand is this space was able to show that we as long as we actually do work together, we can do a lot of really, really amazing things. And it's a matter of just continuing to support each other, continuing to recognize that, that support doesn't always just mean, I'm liking or retweeting your stuff that actually means like showing up for them. And they actually showed up for physically as well, like, take that digital community and make sure it matches in a physical community. Because there are a lot of people out there who they felt isolated for so long. And we have to make sure we have out each other because now no one else is looking out for it. But like, but us. So I think that's one thing I would say is 2020 definitely taught me is that you have to really make sure you find ways to show up for each other. Because if you don't, no one else will, it's going to be conditioned, like it has to be unconditional always.

**Researcher:** Right. Thank you. That was beautiful. And so now for demographical information, if you can please state your age?

**Participant:** 21.

**Researcher:** What generation are you part of?

**Participant:** I think they will move to Generation Z now. I think it's what its called.

**Researcher:** Gen Z and on a daily basis, how often do you spend time on Twitter?

**Participant:** Yall bout to read me but at least once or twice a day, more than two hours a day probably.

**Researcher:** Okay. And on a weekly basis, how often do you spend on Twitter?

**Participant:** I think I open Twitter seven days a week?

**Researcher:** So okay, all right. And do you have it by hours do you do you think you know by like hours how long maybe?

**Participant:** I can open my screen. Yeah, so that I have like an hour and a half on social media per day. And then my leading ones are Twitter and Instagram/ Twitter being number one at about like 45, It's anywhere between 45 to 55 minutes. Okay. It just depends on the week.

**Researcher:** Okay. And on a weekly already, ah I already said that, when did you first make your Twitter account?

**Participant:** Oh, I think its on my Twitter page, Right?

**Researcher:** Yeah.

**Participant:** Its, I joined September 2014.

**Researcher:** Okay, cool. You've been on there for a while. Yeah. Alright, well that's it for the interview. I'm going to stop recording thank you again.

**Participant:** Of course

## **Participant #2**

**Researcher:** Hi, Judy, thank you for participating in this research. Before we get started, if you can tell me a little bit about yourself, your interest and hobbies, and how does that align on your online feed and interests on Twitter?

**Participant:** Yeah, definitely. Thank you for having me be a part of this first off. This is amazing. I love what you're doing. Um, but yeah, so I am Judy, I am currently a senior at Florida State University. So my time is about to be ending. Um, and I majored in psychology. So this is why like, I'm interested in things like this, because it's literally my major. Um, and I My hobbies include, like reading, um, I write, so I write like poems and stuff, it's like to myself, I don't publish it. And like theater and everything like that. And, um, yeah, so just definitely interested because Twitter's like, amazing. And it's like, everyone's own personal diary. And then you just get to see other people's opinions about things that might not even matter to you or do matter. So that's why I thought this, you know, being a part of this would be cool.

**Researcher:** Cool, and so how does your interests and hobbies align with what you see on your Twitter feed?

**Participant:** Yeah, I love the fact that Twitter starts taking information from you as in like, what you like or what you respond to. So it better generates your feeds and things that are relatable to you. So if I'm liking things about, like, you know, music all the time, and there's very specific genre, Twitter will definitely make sure that I see that on my timeline, which I really enjoy. And there's not that extra fluff. And then it's also good for discovering things. So if something is funny for everyone, you're going to see it. So if it's a joke that people are sending to each other, and everything like that, and you haven't seen it on your timeline, yet, you will see it and you will be a part of that, you know, laughter, um, which I think is great, because not many like social media sites do that social media sites, although they do tailor to your interests. They don't leave time for like exploration, or like having, you know, being able to get information elsewhere other than like, you know, what you're seeing or who your friends are seeing. So Twitter is a great community for that, honestly.

**Researcher:** Definitely. And so, like, based on what you're saying, How important do you think it is, to today's society? So with everything going on, and how you describe Twitter, like, why is that so important?

**Participant:** I think for today's society, most people don't, you know, watch TV, in a sense, like cable TV. So back then we used to always watch the news, you would know all your weatherman

and things like that. Now, that's not the case, we get our news from social media. And that's just how it is because it's quicker. And it's also more reliable in a sense that you can always fact check when you're listening to the news, like you automatically trust them. Because it's like, well, they had to, like, make sure it was right before they put it on television. But then they always, you know, do next like, you know, next week oh, we have to retract what we said because that's wrong or whatever. Um, so So for it's to me, it's easier to get information. And I think that's why for today's society, Twitter's like really huge on that aspect. Because not only can you know what's happening, like, right now, you can know what's like, you know, what other people think are going to happen about, you know, this situation, or you can just try to figure out other things. So that, that that means, like, you know, oh, you saw someone, some celebrity was doing something, and it's like, well, let me catch up on other celebrities, because it's like, now I want the news. And you can instantly have that information. So I think for today's society says we don't watch like cable TV as often, um, social media, especially Twitter has become our news outlets, for sure.

**Researcher:** Right, I definitely agree with you. And so now we're gonna get more into the perception of Black Twitter. So when you think of Black Twitter, what are the first things that come to mind? And what does it mean to you?

**Participant:** When I think of Black Twitter, I think of like my community, like my Twitter, Black Twitter, in a sense, is Twitter for me. I'm not you know, how people say like, oh, on the white side of Twitter, or on the Hispanic side, it's sort of like, I don't see that information on my feed. And that's also because Twitter definitely, you know, tailors it to your viewpoint, obviously, they realize, Oh, she's watching. So let's just round up everyone. But in that sense of, like, just having that feed, like, yes, but Twitter is just because, you know, we all relate to that information. But Black Twitter has become like a movement now. So now, in a sense, where we start trends, if it's on Black Twitter, like, you know, this, this is gonna, you know, be something that's on all social media sites, or this joke, this outfit or whatever happening is gonna be like, you know, this massive thing. And you don't really see that much with like, you know, other sides of Twitter, I guess. Um, and it's a lot more than just like a race thing. I believe. I just, it's so cultured in a sense, um, which which is amazing, because it's like, we're just here opinions. We see how other people and other races and other people from different cultures kind of look to our opinions. And either for a laugh or something else. I'm Black Twitter has kind of become its own thing in centrally, and it's a great marketing tactic for Twitter. I'm just having the fact that you know, Black Twitter's his main thing that's like, you know, oh, this is what happened on Black Twitter or whatever. It's like, well, if you don't have Twitter, you still see Black Twitter. So I think it's huge. And I love it, honestly.

**Researcher:** And so when you say I like what you talked about how its cultured, can you elaborate a little bit more on like, the culture aspect that you see on your Black Twitter feed?

**Participant:** Definitely Black Twitter to me, ranges across many diasporas. Um, and maybe that is just because the people I follow are from different diasporas or anything like that. But

whenever, like, let's say, Wizkid concerts, that's something that's been, you know, being talked about on Black Twitter, Twitter in general. And seeing so many people from different cultures that are black, that's still like our fan of this specific topic that's going on and still rave about it, still talk about it, we're all either talking about the same things. And that's really cool to me, because it's like, it's cultured in the sense that it's brought all the cultures together within, you know, the African diaspora. So within that sense, it's like, okay, if you're African, or your Haitian, or your black American, or your Trini or whatever, Black Twitter, still your space, in a sense, and it's, we're all accepting, and we all stand up for each other as well. So it's like, if someone is talking about, you know, a, if someone from white Twitter talking about how bad FuFu is, or whatever, like, everyone is just like, No, it's like, fine. And it's, it doesn't just have to be people who are from Africa eat that, you know, so I think that's when I say like, culture is just an intertwining so many different aspects of black life. Um, and that's, I really love it.

**Researcher:** Yeah, definitely. And so can you tell me about one of your favorite Black Twitter moments and how was impactful, it doesn't have to be like, 2020, but it can be just in general.

**Participant:** I always try not to, like, bring up COVID Because I feel like I was gonna say COVID, but that was truly it sounds bad. I don't like COVID. But COVID as a topic during Black, like, no black twitter, and like, its era of like, hype, um, was really funny, in a sense, like, it was just, it was just because it's things like, it made COVID may people sit down in their homes, you know, and really, they're just on social media. And that's their only outlet to talk to other people. So the things that you would be outside, maybe you're in a, you know, a social setting, and you keep to yourself, Black Twitter was like no. We're all bored. We're all like, you know, at home not doing anything, we all hate these masks, like, let's just keep on going with these jokes. And these funny things, it's like, it was really uplifting towards a point in time, which shouldn't have been, you know, um, so I think that was like one of my favorites in that whole era, and it's still happening. Probably a lot less because of mandates are getting less restricted. But during that time, when like, COVID was like, big and you know, everyone was like scared and shocked and didn't know what would happen. You just saw people being not afraid to speak their voices and not afraid to hold back on what they say. And I think it's because we erased that social aspect like the personal the physical like actually seeing each other in person. So we got to really know how people think by what they tweeted. Basically

**Researcher:** That's a really good point like how we get to see how people act I haven't had a tweet it is there like a specific reference or example that you can think of on your feed? Were you noticed like the way someone's tweeted was who they are, type of thing?

**Participant:** Oh, definitely, um, within the COVID example, or just in general?

**Researcher:** in general, it could be in general

**Participant:** Well, recently so this is like a very recent topic, um, the topic about Lil Durk and India and how they had their like, you know, someone I think someone tried to rob them or whatever. And some people on Twitter were like hyping up India because she no basically had the strap like protected or whatever. It was shooting alongside Lil Durk. And it was just like, well, she has children. Yes, children. She also has a will to live um, and people were trying to make you like relationship goals So that's really what I mean by you can see how people think by what a tweet because people who agree with that have a different, you know, thought about relationships than people who are just like, it was like survival like everyone would have done it or like, even if you wouldn't have done it, it's not something to praise because they shouldn't have had to even do that in the first place. You know, we shouldn't be praising trap tragedy, in a sense. Um, so with that, that's one of the topics where it's like, oh, you're that type of person, okay?

**Researcher:** And so on Black Twitter like, say see those, you see those people who think differently? Or you know, you'd be like, Oh, that's just that person? Do you still feel that sense of community with them? Even though you'd know that they think different from you?

**Participant:** Oh, yeah, for sure. Like, um, and that's a basic human trait. I mean, no one's gonna think the same of you all, I would hope someone doesn't think exactly the same as me. So, and that's just what just what makes us people, but I feel like since we are, you know, black, we definitely have to have that sense of community. Regardless, there is a tweet, I'm minus all of the profanity. It was basically like, Oh, um, it was like, it was talking about how, oh, I, I, like, you know, like, friends or like, girlfriends, and like, you know, I'll support girls. But some of you guys are really dumb. It's in that aspect, where it's like, I'm gonna support you guys because you're black. But some of y'all aren't really, you're missing a lot of screws in your head. And that's okay.

**Researcher:** Right? That's so funny. Okay, and so when did you first notice you were a part of like Twitter?

**Participant:** I first, so I didn't join. I was kind of late to the Twitter wave. I'm not I think about it. I, I joined Twitter because of something that was happening on Twitter that had to do with one of my friends. So it was one of those like, oh, no, I have to support you know, so I was like, I'm gonna go on Twitter to you know, be a part of this conversation for my friend. So that's kind of how I got into Twitter. I didn't have Twitter before, I never really was using Twitter. I came when I came up, when people were like, really on Twitter was like, during high school, whatever like that. I barely had a phone all throughout high school. So I wasn't really on social media, like at all I got into social media in like college. Um, so after joining Twitter thing that was like, the end of my freshman year, maybe close to the end of my freshman year of college, I'm just tweeting and like having people that like, you know, I don't really talk to in person or like, you know, I don't see as often or I've never even met before, and like them replying or, like, you know, thinking something as funny, or having the same shared experience with me. I was like, oh, yeah, I'm on Black Twitter, for sure. Because everyone around me, who I knew was definitely on Black Twitter have the same, like, we're sending you the same tweets that I saw on my timeline. So I'm like,



Okay, I'm in the right spot. I'm not like in the weird part of YouTube, where you're just like, watching a black screen, like, you know, I'm with everyone else. And we're all here. In a sense. Yeah.

**Researcher:** That's nice. And so now we're gonna get into 2020. And more, so your attitudes towards this past year. So when you think about this past year, like what are the first things that come to mind?

**Participant:** I think of the first word that comes to mind when I think of this year is... wow, that was a hard question. Every word that's coming into my head isn't actually a word. So I would say thrilling. I would say this year, it's thrilling because everything's coming back. It's Return of the Mac, basically, like this year, um, parties or you know, that weren't happening, or whatever are coming back up, or socials, or events that weren't happening are coming back up, or people are like, starting to travel more. And I think it was because COVID really scared a lot of people. They're like, Oh, this is what life could be like, if you know, I didn't go out and enjoy life. Yeah, no. So a lot of people are enjoying life, you can tell through Twitter, too. Everyone's on trips, or everyone's talking about what they want to do, or concerts and things like that. And all that we had all these things before the pandemic, it's a lot more now. Because it's like a kid, it's like, you can have a toy and you can play with it all the time or whatever, you're gonna get bored of it. But as soon as your parent takes it away from you, you're like, wait, I want it back. And you're gonna, like, once you get it back, you're going to appreciate that toy a lot more. So I think now we're all appreciating life a lot more. Um, and that's also a great space to be in because now people are tweeting and it's like, happier, they're thrilling, or they're being daredevils, you know, and it's like, wow, like, I didn't expect you know, someone to do that. Now, maybe I should too. Um, so this year has been fun in the sense of the aspect of like, you know, thrills and you know, Adventure seeking, and everyone just like trying to get back to their old ways, quote, unquote, um, and there's a lot more like the years not over, so I'm waiting for the next like, big Twitter moment, I guess.

**Researcher:** Right. But my question was, like, towards 2020. So this Oh, yeah. So based on like your description of this year, how is it based off like what happened last year?

**Participant:** Um, yeah, so are you asking like, for how did I feel in 2020?

**Researcher:** Yeah, so like, what when you think of this past year, like 2020 In general, what are the first things that comes to mind? Like what happened, it could be how you felt. Yeah.

**Participant:** In 2020, the first word that comes to mind for that was routine. Um, so I, I would, I was always a tough person, like, I would go out here, and then here and there, whatever, but I wasn't like, out, like everyone else was before, like, you know, the pandemic, and everything like that. I wasn't doing that. Um, if I'm talking to my friends, I'm probably not seeing them in person type of thing. So when COVID and all that happened in 2020, and everything was just like a standstill. It was like, I've kind of been doing this already. But now I'm bored. Because it's like, I

have to do it. And I don't like to do things where it's like, I was already doing it. But now you told me to do it. Now. I don't want to do it. So um, yeah, I would definitely say it was very routine, very monotone insensitive. Yeah, I didn't like it.

**Researcher:** And so a while it was a routine was Black Twitter part of that routine? And how to really affect your life, whether it be online or offline, like the things you were consuming?

**Participant:** Yeah, I would say, it made me feel like, I wasn't going through the, you know, the, the movements of like the pandemic alone. In a sense, everyone kind of felt the same way. Everyone hated it. Um, so I think it brought me closer to like everyone that I'm like, friends with on Twitter or anything like that, because we're all just miserable in a sense. And misery likes company, for sure. So knowing that, you know, I'm not just like tripping, or I'm not just like, oh, you know, maybe everyone else is like, fine with this. It's probably okay. So going on Twitter and seeing that everyone is not fine with it was like a relief. It was like, Okay, I'm not. I'm not, you know, being crazy, in a sense,

**Researcher:** right? That's a good one. And so when we think about 2020, I just want to touch on like Black Lives Matter. And those protests that were happening. So how has the increased and visibility of police brutality and racial injustice impacted your life, whether that be offline or online? You can give like a few examples, based on like Twitter, or also just in your own experiences.

**Participant:** Yeah, for sure. Um, during the times when, like, the protests and everything that were happening, I would say, it brought me to a place. Not a place, but uh, how can I say, it kind of brought me in a mindset that, although I knew I was art I was in, you know, I was like, Yeah, I'm very pro black, in a sense, like, I'm black. Like, why should I be, um, it definitely made me a lot more aware of things. Um, and, like, I had like, my few my first, like, protests, we were protesting in Tallahassee, like I was a part of that, and everything like that during COVID. So like, wearing these masks, and it's also like, raining, it was raining a lot in 2020. And I hated that. I don't like rain unless I'm sleeping. Um, so in that aspect, it just made me like, reflect on like, Okay, could I be more pro black? Like, you know, am I doing enough for my people. Um, so, and then also, like, seeing everyone share their opinions, or like, share stories, and talk about, you know, everything that's been happening with the protests and the Black Lives Matter movement and all that on Twitter and getting that information? It's like, wow, it's a lot of things I don't know. And, um, during that time, Twitter was definitely a source for like information. And I think that was great. Now, not all information is good information. And there's definitely some times when some people think that they're, you know, making sense. And they're not. Um, but other than that, I it changed my awareness, I would say for sure.

**Researcher:** Nice. And so like, on Black Twitter, what was your experience? Like? What were people saying? What were people feeling? In terms of like, retweets, comments, likes, what was the what were the topics because like, I know there's police brutality there was protecting black woman with Breonna Taylor, who were talking about sexual assault, like it was just so much

going on. And like, what was like that for you? That was based on my experience, but what was it like for you?

**Participant:** Oh, yeah, definitely same boat. There was a lot going on different it was like a different topic, or a different news story, like every week, um, and sometimes it got overwhelming. And I didn't realize I was as desensitized as I thought I was. Um, so when I did see, you know, police brutality stuff. A lot of black people are kind of like desensitized where it's like, okay, this again, like, when is it gonna stop? Um, but Twitter is during COVID and everything everyone was at home. So it just was magnified. That sometimes was a bit overwhelming. It was a bit um, depressing. Um, because it felt like being on Black Twitter. Everyone is talking about the same thing and we're also trying to voice our opinions and then share stories too. So there are times when like, like, like the topic with the sexual assault or protecting black woman. And then women started sharing their own stories. And it was like, Whoa, like this is happening to more people than I thought it was that are close to me or like, you know, Mutuals of Mutuals so just seeing that and being a part of that, um, oh, it was very informational. But at some times, it was definitely, like overwhelming sometimes just like, Okay, I got, I'm putting this down. I have to take this in doses for sure.

**Researcher:** Right? And so, um, what cultural influence do you think Black Twitter has?

**Participant:** Oh, global. I think I think that the influence that Black Twitter has is kind of like no other. Because you don't just get information, obviously, it's called like Twitter, because most people who are part of this community are black, but you don't just get information about the black culture. I think it's become this thing where you're just getting information period. And it's just uplifted by these black voices. And I believe that black people also just always have a different approach to everything. So how they share information, how they tell stories, I mean, we're the original storytellers. So on Twitter, when you're seeing these people are, you know, talking about topics and everything like that. It's so global, because if I were white, and I, you know, someone showed me something from Black Twitter, or just like how all the, like Instagram posts or whatever they post, like black sort of stuff, and they would be like hashtag Black Twitter, this is where it came from. If I were white, seeing that, I wouldn't be like, Oh, I, I can't really relate, like, some things you can't. For sure. Like, it's not like if I, as a black person were to go on white Twitter, I would not be able to relate out. As if a white person were on the White, Black Twitter, they wouldn't be able to relate to some instances, or at least under stand. Um, so when I say global, I just mean like, it's, it's a community for black people, but it doesn't exclude anybody else. Um, I just think anyone who is like, you know, not black or whatever, and wants to share their opinions about it or anything like that, kind of have to watch their words carefully. Um, but other than that, yeah, it's definitely it's Twitter, black, Twitter's Twitter.

**Researcher:** No, that's a really good point. And I have a question here from this research that I did. And it was, Do you think it's okay to use black Twitter as an umbrella term for all black users? Do you think all black users are part of Black Twitter?

**Participants:** Oh, that's like the word like bipoc. When they say it's like, oh, like, this is these, these are all the non white people, and we're just gonna put them in group we're gonna call that. And, um, I particularly don't like the mass use of the word. Because they're, they're like, people of color does not, you know, they don't all share the same type of lifestyles. Um, so, in that sense, with like, Twitter, where it's like, Oh, do you think like, you know, all black people are on Black Twitter. We're different humans. So, you know, if someone were to grow up in a, you know, a lifestyle where they're around white people all the time, or do different things. Um, they will, like, you know, not be, I would say active on there, like, maybe see a bunch of the stuff that, you know, Black Twitter, in a sense posts or whatever, but it's still an open community. So it's like, you can join anytime or like, you can, you know, you know, where to find us kind of thing. Um, but I don't, I would say that like, making it the word for, like, all like black users on Twitter. Um, I don't see the problem with it. I don't I don't see why anyone want to reject it, they're black. But I do see where it can be kind of iffy, where it's like, oh, well, I kind of have different interest in you know, most white people do. And the cool thing about it is like, we're very different people. So it's like, okay, that's fine. But you know where we are.

**Researcher:** And so are you part of different types of Black Twitter? And that makes sense. So you know, there's like, academic Twitter there's like South Florida Twitter like what are those types of Twitter's that you're part of?

**Participant:** Oh, for sure. Um, so yeah, I'm definitely a part of like, a lot of different things because I'm I definitely have a lot of different interests. So I I'm mostly part of like music so like musical stuff, I'm definitely like a part of that. I'm hearing like new tweets about a new album that came out or this artist is doing that that's something that I'm that's pretty much my whole feed, but in other instances, um, I am sometimes on political Black Twitter, where we're talking about politics we're talking about police brutality, you know, talking about leaks, big important, um, forgot the word for topics. Um, so that instance on it I'm a part of different ones. And I know other people who are a part of ones that I'm not, you know, like, most of my friends are on big on like, tik tok like the tick, like, you know, when people repost tik toks. And I don't see them when people send it to me, because I just don't use tik tok as much as others. So that's an aspect where it's like, oh, okay, like, I'm only a, I'm a mutual in that community. Like, I'm not really on it, but I see all this stuff anyway, because my friends do. Um, so yeah, I'm definitely a part of different Black Twitter subgroups, I would call them. Yeah.

**Researcher:** Cool. And I'm sorry, I lost the last question. So in 2020, like, you talked about music. So what were some big events, notable events that were impactful for you within music in 2020? And how was Black Twitter like that cultural reset or influence and relaying that information? Or just giving us something new?

**Participant:** Oh, yeah, for sure. I think when, during 2020, when COVID was happening, and everything like that a lot of musical artists kind of had to approach their marketing in different

ways. And I like to see it, because I definitely like when artists market themselves, I think it's just at the talent is, to me is like the easier part. And I feel like the marketing aspect is like getting to know you know, an artist or whatever, that's hard. Because like me, as a person, I wouldn't want to share my private life through with millions of people that's wired. So whenever they have the courage to do that, or have the courage to be like, Hey, guys, I'm in, you know, my room. Right now, I'm a normal person, like y'all. And this is what we're going to talk about today. And they would like tweet, or like, they would just share information, or just talk randomly, just about random subjects, because they couldn't have their concerts and they couldn't have, you know, all of these things that they before. That's what we were doing to keep up with them. So they had to kind of change how they, I would say, related to regular people in a sense. So music for me in 2020 was more about the artists themselves. So learning a lot more about like, who these people are that I'm listening to, more so than the actual, like music that they were putting out because something

**Researcher:** right, and so what I recall from 2020 was verzuz and so how was that for you as someone who's very interested in music and like, how did your community on Twitter come together?

**Participant:** I think verzuz was something that just always just should have happened. And we just don't know why it just never did. And then it finally did. And we're just like, alright, thank God, like, you know, it's like the group FaceTime, it's like, well duh. You know, like, it should have been a thing. So, when verzuz were happening, I think people were pre gaming, like on Twitter for these verses. So they were like, Oh, um, well, the most recent one, although it's not 2020 But the most recent one that happened with like, Soulja Boy and him there, it's just a lot of people that were just talking about it before like, Oh, my money is on him where my money is on her and things like that. Or it's like what you're gonna wear to the versus tonight you know, things like that, that were on Twitter. And it was just like, Okay, so we're all enjoying this, you know, party, I would guess or concert, but we can't really in person. So we're all coming together, and then we're talking about it after the show. So it's like a pregame then, you know, the verses happened? And then we're talking about after like, Oh, no. Oh, Gucci Mane being shouldn't have did that. Oh, my God, what did you do? Why did you say that? Like, you know what I mean? So it was really cool. I like the fact that we have versus I like the fact that they're still going, I'm still waiting for somebody to do drake. I know who can? Well, we just don't have to put future on it and let future get a couple of songs in that. This one.

**Researcher:** Okay. So how do you, so I know you talked about like being on Black Twitter and like having that voice relating to people, Do you feel like your voice is empowered on Black Twitter? versus say, you're in a physical space, and it's mainly white?

**Participant:** Oh, for I definitely feel like it's a different experience. And I definitely feel more empowered on Twitter, especially on Black Twitter. Because, and I say this to say like, because if I were to say anything wild, or like, wrong, somebody is gonna see it and they're gonna be like,

No, and that's that type of like, I'm that type of transparency or that type of like, actually, like, wow, somebody heard me even if I'm wrong, doesn't happen in settings with you know, mostly like white counterparts, or in social prefer, especially professional settings as well. If I were to say something wrong, maybe they would, you know, correct me or whatever, but this there's this kind of like, I would say, like societal politics where it's like, okay, let's just, let's just let the you know, the little black girl think that she's okay, like, let's just not say anything. Um, but no, I want to be heard. Oh, right. Wrong. You know, whatever it is that I'm saying, and black sooner definitely gives people the space to do that. Now, obviously, sometimes it comes with backlash. Sometimes it doesn't. But that's all the we're playing Russian roulette at this point, like, somebody, somewhere is gonna disagree with you, or somebody, someone's gonna agree with you, and then someone else is going to distribute with them. So then you get roped into it. So at the same time, I still like the fact that it's empowers black voices. Because that's just something that doesn't happen in you know, settings that we are normally in with our white counterparts.

**Researcher:** Yeah, I definitely agree. And then lastly, when we talk about just attitudes towards 2020, and like, just Black Twitter in general, in what ways have you seen like issues that you're passionate about amplify on your timeline?

**Participant:** Oh, for sure, I would say, um, during all the time when they were talking about all the sexual assault allegations against women. And also, like, during the time when it was like a bunch of like police brutality, and everything that was happening, and they were also talking about voting rights as well, for black people, I think, seeing that and seeing how these there was influencers on Twitter, you know, hyping up the conversation, everything like that, making sure that everyone saw or whatever. And these people that were like, you know, maybe I didn't even know them, but had a blue check, you know, oh, talking about these topics. It's like, okay, like, you know, something is being heard. And then now Black Twitter is this thing where someone tweets something profound and gets a bunch of retweets. And it could be something big about like, you know, sexual assault or police brutality. And then you would see it on somebody new station, like, they would screenshot it and, like, crop it, and like, talk about it. And it's like, social media before wasn't something that you could take to actual news, I think like, you know, like, it wasn't revered as this, like, credibility source. And now it is a lot more. And I think with that, that that's something that's just crazy to me, because it's like, wow, this new generation, like, we know, like you can't, you have to take everything with a grain of salt, obviously. But social media is definitely coming this thing where it's like, you can get real information on here. And whatever you want to speak about whatever is important to you, you can give people that knowledge. Right, and they will receive it.

**Researcher:** And so do you believe you have found a sense of community with the users you follow? Or follow who follow you on Twitter? Even if you don't know them?

**Participant:** Oh, yeah, for sure. Like, just the other day, I had a Twitter friend that I'd never met in person, invite me to go out with her because she was like, Yeah, I'm leaving Tallahassee, and

like, you know, you're one of my Twitter people. And I know you're entirely so like, Let's hang out. So it definitely gives people a sense of community. And it also is a great place for people to like, know each other, like get to know people and find other people. Um, I know, some people use like, friend, I wouldn't say finance, like dating apps or whatever like that. I don't, I'm not on them. I don't know how to I don't, I can't flirt with people. I don't know I do. But it's kind of Twitter's kind of like that. But like for friendships, and some people also find dates on Twitter, too. Um, but it's definitely like that for friendships and a community. Although my Twitter now is like, private, and I love it, because I can just say whatever I want, because I know who's watching me, and I know who can read it. Um, and aspect, having that community is really cool.

**Researcher:** And so what commonalities Have you shared with them? In your community?

**Participant:** Oh, yeah, for sure. Like, I would say, some have to do with, you know, growing up as an immigrant, you know, um, and having like, this topic about, like, the differences with parents and like, patient, you know, households and African households and this type of households. It's like, oh, wow, we have a lot of similarities. Um, and also school to, like, how people feel about, you know, graduation now, how people feel about college now, like, dang, is it even worth it? Um, it's come, it's become a place where it's like, wow, a lot more people think that the same things I do, than I thought they did. Um, and some things that I think that are like, too outrageous to say someone said it. Originally, like, I was just thinking that, but I want to say it. So thank you for saying it for me. So that's where the community aspect definitely comes into play for that for sure.

**Researcher:** Definitely. And so now we're just on a last few questions. Do you think how has Black Twitter become a form of advocacy for Black Twitter users and like, do you think is taking place of marching and rally?

**Participant:** I wouldn't say it's taking place a marching rally, but it can definitely be this type of communion, where we come together first, to talk about how to plan to march and rally. So is it This meeting spot I would say are like this hub for people that black twitter sort of is. And it's great for amplifying what we really want to do or like, you know, actual, actual actionable steps to take to, you know, get justice justice for something. So whether that be like planning on March or planning, you know, something, or letting people know about a protest that's happening. And then also with money, like donations wise, a lot of people raise a lot of money through Twitter. The crowdfunding on Twitter is insane. I'm also black, you know, black artists, and just posting a picture, and people are like, Oh, my gosh, like, this is great. Okay, I'm gonna buy because you're a black art display. So I wouldn't say it's taking place of anything. I don't think that, um, Twitter is, is something that can be a negative? Um, I think it's, it can only just amplify at that point.

**Researcher:** Right. That's a really good answer. Thank you. And then lastly, and what ways has black twitter brought you like hope, happiness and laughter? And how have you tried to enact change through the platform? That's kind of a big question.

**Participant:** That's deep. Oh, what happened was the laughter. Okay, well, um, oh, first part of that question. I think, Black Twitter. I don't, I don't know. Maybe it's like, my little FBI agent working or whatever. But whenever something happens, or like, I'm just in a really bad mood, and I just go on Twitter, it's something on there, like a quote, or somebody tweeted something that literally aligns with literally what went through at that moment. Um, so that's where it's like, okay, like, I can get through it, because somebody else is going through it. And they look like they're going through it through, you know, so when people use jokes, to hide pain, too, it's like, okay, I know, you're really hurting. So you know, but it's funny. So it also makes me like, you know, be uplifted. So for that part, I would say, like, just just getting on it at the right time at the right moment. I think, for most people on Black Twitter, like, it's literally anybody on there relates to you at that point. So how it has kind of like, just impacted me in my life, I would say, um, I know that I can see the difference between when I didn't have Twitter, and to now, um, because I wouldn't be able to make friends. Like, I'm, I'm not, I'm a professional networker. I'm not like a friendly networker, like I don't like I'm awkward, and I'm shy. So in that aspect, I'm just on social media. It's like, okay, I can show you my personality, and you don't ever have to meet me. And I think that's great. Oh, it's impacting an aspect because I definitely feel like I've grown as a person too. I would look at my old tweets as like, Okay, you're welding? Or it's like, that didn't make much sense. Like, think about that a little bit more. Um, so yeah.

**Researcher:** Yeah, I feel you I definitely understand. And so any last things you want to say about like Twitter and its cultural influence specifically, like in 2020? Or just in general?

**Participant:** Yeah, I would say just like, in 2020, I feel like Black Twitter was the little thing that we all needed, and didn't know that we wanted. Um, I think that Twitter was great with their marketing in that aspect where they like actual Twitter, you know, amplified black sort of as, like, if Black Twitter is trending, you're gonna see that that is trending. You're gonna see the topics, you know, Twitter's gonna make sure that even if you're not on Black Twitter, you know what Black Twitter is? And you know, Instagram is gonna pull up some stuff from Black Twitter, these new people, news, people are gonna put some stuff up. And it's like, oh, okay, like, people hear us, people like us, to an extent. People want to know more about us. And how, and so being able to just like call out stuff too. So like, the big on 2020 was a lot of people online shopping. And people were calling out fast fashion, like a lot more. And me someone who's like, obsessed with shopping. It was kind of like, oh my gosh, like, yeah, we are, this isn't okay. And all these small artists, you know, do need a voice. So Twitter was really good on that aspect of like, making people a lot more aware of their daily life choices, literally. And Black Twitter just amplified that and also made it a little bit more funnier, for sure.

**Researcher:** Thank you. And so that's really the end to the interview. And then now I'm going to ask demographic questions. So if you can please state your age.

**Participant:** 21.



**Researcher:** And what generation are you part of? Gen X Gen. Millennials or Gen Z?

**Participant:** I was born in 2000. So Gen Z. I don't know. I don't know. I don't listen to them.

**Researcher:** And then on a daily basis How often do you spend on Twitter?

**Participant:** I would say I'm on Twitter, like every single time I'm working, because it's my phone's right there. So I'm just looking at it so often, like hours or something like, um, I would say like maybe like, eight, six hours a day, which is probably a lot, but yeah.

**Researcher:** And so based on that, on a weekly basis, how often do you spend on today?

**Participant:** I would say days or hours, like hours, hours, I'm 40 hour weekdays? I would say probably a good like 30 something. Yeah. Or use a good number. Yeah. Sounds very. Right.

**Researcher:** And when did you first make your Twitter account?

**Participant:** I first made my Twitter account in 2019. Can I look at the actual date? Do you want that? Okay. We'll do that. I believe I think I made it actually in June. So like my birth month? Yeah, June 2019.

**Researcher:** Okay, cool. All right. So that's the end of the interview. So I'm going to stop the recording now. Thank you again.

**Participant:** This was fun.

### **Participant #3**

**Researcher:** Hi Kizzy, thank you for coming to my interview today on the cultural influence of Black Twitter. So just to start off, if you could tell me a little bit about yourself your interest and hobbies, and how does it align with your online feed?

**Participant:** Okay, so well appreciate y'all for having me. My name is kiswood Diogene and a little bit about myself. I'm from South Florida, but now I live in Atlanta. Ever since I was like, I want to say maybe 11, 12 I've been taking photos. So I've really been into photography. I'm in like, now I work in tech, which, which is cool. But like being in Atlanta, it allows me to kind of like, do the passion on the side and still, like, you know, work in tech and still be in the day and age of what's going on. And so, I guess like, how it relates to my feed is when, when you kind of take photos, and you're into photography, photography is kind of like at the center of everything that's like creative, whether it's like music, arts, fashion, and all of that. And so, I feel like that,

that love for photos, really shows like how everything else in my life works like from me paying attention to how musicians dressed and how they act, and what they look like in photos and how buildings like and all sorts of things. And so I feel like my, my feed is like, always very creative, or very funny. But, um, it's always in between the two. But I think like, my love for photography kind of like steers me into those things to pay attention to all the creativity and stuff like that.

**Researcher:** Nice, thank you. And so when you talk about creativity, so as a black creator, on whether it be Twitter, Instagram, any social media platform, how are those platforms important for your creativity and the content you put out? So

**Participant:** I guess the, the way that I would see, it's important, I would probably give like three ways. The first one is more so like inspiration. And before like social media and whatnot, if you took a picture, like you probably didn't have any way to share it, if you were like, you know, small time, like, you know, I guess like small fry in a game, but like now on social media, like you could literally I've seen posts where people show like the setup, and then the results of the of the actual photo and those do 1000s and 1000s. And that, like it just exposes you a lot. So I feel like First off is just kind of like inspiration, seeing other black creatives doing what they do doing what they love, and how it kind of like how that one tweak can take off more and end up changing like their whole lives. And, and so I guess the second thing is just kind of like, I guess like it kind of keeps you trendy. Like, you'll always know what's going on. Like, I remember, I'd always been taking digital photos and then probably sometime I want to say last February. I saw like some assault film photo, and I had never really been like into film and whatnot. But like, just because of the way that actual photo look, which was also doing numbers on Twitter. Um, I was just like, let me like, let me look into this. Because, you know, I've been shooting my whole life might as well just try and change things up and got into film. And so now I do like film photography and digital. But that's all thanks to a tweet that I saw of like, someone doing the, you know, the setup and the results. And I was like, what cameras? Like, would you do that with? So? Yeah, so I guess it comes down to like, you know, just like a little bit of inspiration, just keeping you like in the game keeping you updated? Um, and then yes, yeah, I guess what those would be my two E's. I can't I can't think of a third one that I had in mind. So

**Researcher:** Thank you. And so I know you talked about, like, how influential like that one tweet was. And so overall, how important do you think the Twitter platform is in today's society?

**Participant:** Honestly, like, I can't speak for everyone else. But I can't remember the last time I turned on CNN, I can't remember the last time that like, I've watched the Grammys or the Emmys, but because of Twitter, or like, you know, just social media in general. Like I know, everything that's going on, like, and you know, just even like, aside from like, my hobby when it comes to like World News and what's happening, like, I'm always like, I never feel like I'm left behind or like, I'm not I'm not aware of what's going on. And because of social media, I feel like that kind of allows me to, you know, not only it not only does it benefit me as a creator, but like, it just benefits me is like a like a black male, like an individual that's growing up and just knowing

what's going on because like the importance of news is like ridiculous. And so social media just kind of in a weird way. Like I say that I can't see myself living without it. But I don't say that from like an addiction standpoint. I say that from like a like, I'm not downloading CNN, Fox News, ESPN, all those apps, like I'm just gonna go on Twitter. Click what's trending and just literally read through all of those and know what's going on. So it's definitely super, super important for me.

**Researcher:** Thank you. And so now we're going to go over to the perception of Black Twitter. So when you think of Black Twitter, what are the first few things that come to mind? It doesn't have to be in the past year, but just anything.

**Participant:** So first thing that comes to mind is comedy. Because I swear, I don't think there's any Twitter besides like Black Twitter. That's like, as funny as Black Twitter iss. But besides that, though, I kind of think of it as like support, because you kind of have like your own group of friends or whatnot that probably follow you on Twitter. But like, let's use, like Sha'Carri, for instance, who's running trac. Like, see, I'm kind of into track. So I kind of knew about her for from a few months, but like, look at what's going on with her right now, as far as like the, like, the whole drug situation or whatnot. Like, that's, to me, it's not even that big of a deal. But I guess I'm not an Olympic issue. But then, like Black Twitter is so supportive behind that, it's to the point where like, people are fearing that views are going to go down because of this one individual. And like, so when I think of Black Twitter, not only do I think comedy, but I kind of think of like supporting that community, like people sometimes are just like, hey, like, you know, I'm, I'm a black owned brand, and I make hair hair products for people who have dreadlocks, and the support system that will come from Twitter, because people will push you just because they feel like, like, hey, like, you look like me, you understand my struggle, and I want you to succeed. And it doesn't take them takes them less than a second to support you. And we can even look at it from like when when people are missing. Like when not when you see like a black, young black girl, or like a young black man who's like missing, Twitter can put in matter of hours can go from like, one person seen it to 60,000. And that's just like the power of like, blacks, I'm like, the support that comes from like Black Twitter. So to me, I just I see him as like, not only comedy, but as it's like the most like supportive and like loving system. But it could also bring you down to like, you know, every social media platform,

**Researcher:** right, so okay, when you talk about, you know, the fact that Twitter can support you, but it can also bring you down, like, in what ways is Twitter cultivating community? Like, is it? Are they cultivating it in the right way. And you kind of explained it already. But when you thought we talked about, like, Cancel culture and everything, like, how does it affect you as a user, or to other black users.

**Participant:** Thank you kind of, it kind of puts these, in, like, unintentionally puts these thoughts in your head like that, like, you know, we can talk about, like, canceled culture, we could talk about Justin Laboy, who, you know, we're like, his a huge support, his huge support system is

like black women. And so he gains a lot of that support by putting down black men. And so it's just kind of like, he's unintentionally putting, like, negative thoughts on you. And I'm not saying that it's wrong, it's working for him. And that content is hilarious. But it's just like, we're unintentionally creating these like narratives around like black males, or like, like, with canceled culture. And we're unintentionally creating narratives, sometimes without all the facts. And sometimes without all the information, and you already have this judgment of someone or something. And you've never actually experienced that situation, or you've never actually, you weren't there, or you don't know everything that's going on. So it can definitely, um, you know, be supportive, but it can bring you down and it can do it unintentionally without you even like realizing.

**Researcher:** Right? That's a really good point. Um, and then when did you first notice you were on Black Twitter?

**Participant:** I think I think the first time I noticed was probably like, I want to say this was a high school or like, maybe early college where people do club Twitter. Like, we were like, really, really late at night like it would go into like club Twitter. And people would just be on their tweet and like the most the most wild or like Twitter after dark, and stuff like that, and it would just, it would just be the wildest stuff but sometimes it'd be like a lot of like, really funny stuff too. And so like club Twitter. I don't know if it was started by black folks, or if that's like a Black Twitter thing, but like, I know as black folks like, we took that club Twitter stuff pretty seriously. And it definitely was on entertainment for sure.

**Researcher:** Right? Can you like, like, elaborate more on what club Twitter is? Or was?

**Participant:** I guess like, from I get from my knowledge, clump sorta was essentially like a bunch of a bunch of little Like folks who are online late at night, and we're just tweeting each other like, it's just like a huge community like involved in like a bunch of tweets going back and forth. And you kind of call it like a club because like, there's so many people paying attention. And so with like a club, you kind of have like a million people on. I mean, like, not like you have a bunch of people in the club. And so like with Twitter, you have like, hundreds of people that's online right now. And we all have the same jokes like no matter, you could post a funny tweet. And in a matter of seconds, you get like 50 retweets, because everyone's paying attention. And so club Twitter was just like, a, I guess, like an online club, kind of like a chat room. But like, no one needed to be in the same room. Like we was just refreshing the tweets and just watching what's going on.

**Researcher:** Thank you. I remember Club Twitter, that was fine. And so tell me about one of your favorite Black Twitter moments. I know you talked about club Twitter, Twitter after dark, but like in terms of things that were very, like, monumental or notable for you as a user.

**Participant:** Give me like one minute let me let me kind of like think about this real quick. That is a good one. There's, there's just I feel like there's just been so many. Okay, so I'm big into like,

okay, I guess I'll just kind of start with this one. And then maybe I'll think of some other ones. But like, I'm big into sports. And so like, I follow like a million sports. Twitter's accounts, like keeping up with everything from like soccer. to, I don't know, volleyball, like it really doesn't matter. So the question was, like, are we looking at, like a positive thing? Or are we looking at a negative thing or like, okay, so I'll start off with a negative one where it kind of exposed me so I've been watching soccer almost my entire life. And so there's a man who's named Mario Balotelli, and he's a soccer player for he plays for the National Italy team, a bunch of clubs as well. And there was a point in time where he was playing in Europe, and they were throwing, he's black and they were throwing bananas at him. Because they were calling him a monkey. And this was like, you know, obviously, it's not like we hadn't seen like racist acts on on live TV on video. But this was kind of crazy for me because like sports was always seen as like the safe zone. It's just like, okay, like, you know, sport unites the world and all this and that was a huge for me to see and be like, damn, like, the sport that I really like, you know, these teams that I'm like, I really enjoy watching. And I'm, I'm literally watching someone who I like, love to watch getting absolutely embarrassed, humiliated, disrespected. And so like, that was a huge moment for me, like as a black male, kind of just like, that was like a moment where I realized like, sports wasn't safe like I always knew it was trash talk, like I always knew there was like that. All the other stuff that goes on to I talk trash don't even play sports like, but that was like a moment for me where I was like, damn, like, these are like absolute millionaires are like, top, top 20 in the world type talent. And they're getting humiliated as if like, they have no, like, they have no rights or something like that. So it's just it that kind of threw me off, but it like really exposed me until like, a lot of the negatives, but then, um, we can take something like, like, I'll use Sha'Carri. Sorry, if I butchered her name. And so, just like a couple weeks ago, when she was doing all this, like, all these like monumental things, and like Twitter was just like, amazing. And it was I know, like, there was a lot of limelight on her, but this was there were so many other black athletes being exposed as far as like, their unmatched skills like they were showing, um, Gabriela who is the gymnasts, the gymnast. And then they were showing Sha'Carri they were showing other track stars. They were just, it was just at that moment, like they were really exposed and like, all these black athletes, like yo, like, we're here. Like, we are like taking over and like whether you like it or not, it's just like it's happened like Naomi Osaka, and so all that stuff. Um, I don't know if I'm answering the question correctly. But those are I guess, like monumental moments for me because like, as a sports lover and like, as somebody who likes to see black folks achievement in anything that they do. Um, it was just It was a very positive moment. But I've also seen like the negative from it as well.

**Researcher:** I think it's a good point about like sports, black people and entertainment. And so just to jump to like this past year and 2020, what ways have you seen those like topics amplified and Twitter discourse in this past year, so like, whether anything about sports or black culture this past year, that was notable.

**Participant:** So I really paid attention on last year, Juneteenth. And so around the time after, like, um, Mr. Floyd passed away. Obviously, like the world was like in a, in a shot, but it's not like

anything that we had seen before. But it was kind of like, the first time like, we kind of like watched it, like, literally watched it, like, undeniably, and so, um, that was like a, kind of like a traumatized moment. But on Juneteenth, for black culture, you saw a lot of these companies who were scared to speak like, um, a lot of these companies were, let's say, let's use DoorDash, they had created like a black owned, and like, you know, because to order only from black owned areas, Yelp, made like a black own to review black owned restaurants and brands. And so I thought that was like, you know, aside from all the stuff that's going on, because there was a lot of negative stuff going on as well. But like, that was like a very big moment, in, um, just in black culture in general, because now you have like, these be small black businesses that are struggling, because they were, like, businesses were closing down due to COVID at alarming rates, but like, the, the black businesses that were closing down was, like, even more ridiculous. And so them kind of being involved in like these companies taking like that step forward, to kind of show like, hey, like, we want to support you, whether they meant it or not, like, it was just like, you couldn't you can hold it even like, um, urban one, which is like a black news channel, or black home news channel. That was so yeah, it was like a black home news channel, and you watch their stock literally go from like, it's like, \$6 to like, \$40 in a day. And so, I feel like, you know, that was just like a huge cultural thing that, but I think Twitter played a huge role in that too, because we were putting black businesses like no tomorrow. And so, yeah, I think that was like a huge thing for me in the past, like in 2020 When I was looking at, like black culture, in general on social media and exposed to the world.

**Researcher:** Okay. And so, in terms of black culture, but even, just to jump back to that point about sports, and 2020. And when you were talking about, like, so many brands and businesses were supporting Black culture, I think about like the NBA and like how they have over COVID-19 And then like their jerseys had like Black Lives Matter, things like that. You had the NFL and I think this past year was the first time you saw the NFL kind of make a stand in a way. So what are your thoughts on that, like in terms of different sports organizations in 2020, making that stand when in the past years, they weren't before?

**Participant:** So I feel like every, I'm not gonna, I'm not going to put the NBA in this because I feel like the NBA is the most vocal of all, so but I feel like everything like with the NFL, they're like, every other brand, like I'll compare them to, like Under Armour, who is like, very, Under Armour is a very pro Trump brand. And I'll just use Trump like that just they're just a very pro Republican brand. In general, like very much business over people, profits over people, like all of that. And, um, in this past year, you kind of see these brands just like, oh my god, like this is this is good publicity for me. Like, they started to kind of like understand the importance of the black dollar they started to understand like, the the profit that comes from supporting Black folks. And so like, the NFL I kind of feel like they did it just because of the simple fact that the pressures were on the majority of athletes are black and not that the pressures weren't on them before but this time it was at like, a ridiculous rate. And I know that they feared a lockout because they were they were losing money at like, ridiculous amounts, because NFL the games is what like really makes the money. And so they kind of had to kind of just stick with what's what's poppin right

now, and I feel like you know that I can always look at it as negative but I can see it as a positive too, because that kind of forced them to start putting in certain initiatives, and, um, you know, hiring more black talent, hiring more black HR talent. And so it kind of like pushed him to do that because of all the things that were going on right now. But I feel like it didn't probably come from good intentions. Like it just kind of came from my heart. This is the hype right now, we don't want to be left behind because Nike was not playing no games like they took off first quarter when it came to, to like supporting like black folks like when it came to their commercials when it came to their support. When it came to like blackout day, they were just not playing, and Nikes like a top 20 brand in the world. And so they saw Nike made, I think more money around that time that I think they'd ever made. It was some crazy statistic or something like that. And I think these other companies are just like, what, like, we want to make money too. And so if this means like, we got to support black folks, like, like, let's do it. And so I think like a lot of those sports, sport related brands and sport companies like the NFL, I'm kind of jumped in for the hype, but eventually it kind of is better for them in the long run, because they invested into it. And now they got to seek out they got to make sure that their investment pays off.

**Researcher:** That's it really good point. Especially just how like, the investment in the money plays a role within the support of black folks. But and so when you were talking about just like the Black Lives Matter thing that was happening, not thing, but you know, black lives matter that's happening this past year, like what was your experience on Twitter during that time? Were you in the discourse? Like, how are things covered for you?

**Participant:** I feel like for me, it was like, it was a bunch of videos and like different protests, different things, like I was on the Discover part a lot, just kind of watching like the news stuff. But I was also like, when I was scrolling through my feed, there would be like, tons of videos. Tons of it's like, whenever something is, and like, forgive me because it sounds kind of bad. But it's just like, whenever something is hot, like a topic, it's hot. Like the amount of content that goes to it is insane. And so you see a bunch of things that were being ignored, a bunch of things that weren't being paid attention to being pushed, because like we're just Okay, now you're watching now. And so my feed was literally for probably about a month, like protests, police brutality, um, young girls going missing young black girls more than, just the black black businesses being shut down. It was just, it was a lot. And I felt like instead of being consumed by that negativity, I kind of just kind of took it in, it was just like, even as a as a black male, I feel like I didn't pay attention to all of this, I can only do so much. But it was just like that's like kind of like an excuse, to not pay attention to things. And so that kind of like woke me up. And I feel like made me blacker than ever. So shout out to Twitter.

**Researcher:** And so, like, a lot of what you said, was trauma basically like a lot of racial trauma. And so how did you reckon with that moment of racial trauma,

**Participant:** I feel like in those moments, it's, it's more so like less about, for me, at least, like giving less of an opinion and more and being more like a listener. Because I feel like even within,

like the black community, like when it comes to trauma, if you don't experience that you tend to stay quiet, like, don't talk about it, you don't you just kind of stay away like that ain't that ain't me, that didn't happen to me, I'm chilling over here. So, like, I had, unintentionally been kind of like a shoot, I'm chilling over here, just because like, you know, I really be in my own little bubble, and all this. But then, when you're kind of like, in these situations, and people are talking about, like, their experiences, like their trauma, and like their problems, like, like, those are the moments where you kind of have to, like, just sit down and listen to it, you have to take it. And then like you have to understand that like, in a weird way, like we're all connected, like their experience is probably, um, you know, giving you like a warning for something you may experience in the future or like, maybe just keeping you aware of something that could occur to you in the future. Like, even just people like knock on wood. I've never gotten a ticket. I got pulled over plenty of times, good, good experiences, but it never been nothing to me. But like after hearing like my friends experiences like getting pulled over it was it would be to the point where every time someone gets pulled over the photos in the group chat, like you like did it like I was on the phone with one of my friends. I'm driving, get pulled over he's inside you'll stay on the phone. And that kind of like took me back I was like damn like, this is like, right now it's like elevate he's just like stay on the phone just like put the phone down but just like leave it on speaker and I was like So before I was like, damn, like, I'm scared, like, I'm scared as hell now. So I feel like it just, it really allowed me to really take in other people's traumas and to understand that you really can't stay quiet. But like you have to, you have to listen to these people, because these things are going on. And just because they may not be happy to you doesn't mean that they're not happy.

**Researcher:** That's a really good point. And do you think that the COVID 19 pandemic, like made it easier for you to be that listener to be like, glued to Twitter and things of that nature?

**Participant:** Yeah, 150%, because I'd already been on my phone a bunch, but with COVID working from home, all that, like, it's like, I couldn't ignore it. Because like, there wasn't even like, you couldn't go on Twitter and see funny memes for for pointing time unless you were scrolling for a minute, because it was just too much serious stuff going on. And it's still going on. But like, it was different at that time.

**Researcher:** Right? And so, um, do you think Black Twitter has become like a form of advocacy when we talk about Black Lives Matters? So has it taken place of like marching and rallying? What do you think?

**Participant:** Feel like it's kind of I don't know if it's taking place, but I think it's helped it. Because, you know, even like, when I was saying, like, what the, when like a crime is occurred or someone's missing. And with the power of Black Twitter now, it puts things in people's faces. Because like, when it's involving us, or when it's like, relating to something that's going on within our community, we push it like crazy, until these athletes are exposed to it, these tons of people are exposed to it like even on the young lady who I think like she murdered her partner or something like that, because he would put constantly like raping her and like, treating her terribly



and and like that, that like made it to like Kim Kardashian or something like that. And like, obviously, you know, Kim Kardashian is not black, but she has like the connections to benefit black society. And so like that was like, pushed and so I think definitely Black Twitter hasn't necessarily replaced like marching or standing up for things or protesting, but I think it's more so like, amplified on like a on like a global scale, because we can still March here in Florida, but if nobody in, in DC know what's going on. It's like, is it really hitting everybody like the way that we want it to?

**Researcher:** Right. And I think you bring up a really good point about like, how it reached Kim Kim K. So do you think Black Twitter is big enough to have that impact on either be brand, celebrities? Like how are we able to get together and reach like Kim K ? Why do you think so?

**Participant:** I think your kind of, it's like a like, like the bottom of the food chain to the top type of thing. And so like it kind of starts off with us not to call us nobodies. But like, I'll just use I'll use Twitter terms like we aren't verified. So it starts off with us. Like, you know, retweeting retweeting, one of us may have a friend who's verified that friend retweets it, that friend may know XYZ who are verified, they retweeted, and then it slowly gets to like, the top of the food chain. And so I feel like, it's definitely a collective effort. Um, but it definitely starts off with us at like the bottom of the food chain, it slowly gets into people with more and more recognition. And then it goes into more and more and more, all the way up to the people who, in a weird way, are so popular that they're kind of disconnected from social media, but they can't help but see what's going on.

**Researcher:** Right. Thank you. And so I'm trying to find the other question. So okay, so do you feel on Black Twitter, like for you as a black user that your voice feels more empowered, say in that Twitter discourse or online versus say, your online, your offline? And like a whitespace? That makes sense predominantly? whitespace? Sure.

**Participant:** That's a good question. I feel like I kind of feel like it's a little different for me, just because, like, I work with like, I work in tech, but like I work specifically with, like, engineers and designers and data science, like usually, those people are, are much more on my side. And so as a black male, if I if I feel uncomfortable, or if there's something offensive, um, like I say, it was no fear of like being taken by being it's being taken wrong or people not really paying attention, but if I'm speaking from it perspective, I do feel like people's voices are heard more a lot on Twitter over their spaces because, like, you don't feel comfortable when you Oh, I'm not saying you don't feel like general people sometimes don't feel comfortable, like, going to talk to their white male 45 year old Republican manager and being like, hey, like, what you said was offensive to black folks, like, you don't feel comfortable doing that or saying that. Um, whereas like on Twitter, if you tweet it, someone else can be like, I agree. And then that I agree can take off and like, a couple 100 retweets you feel like, I'm not alone. Whereas like, in that workspace, you're just kind of like, damn, like, if I save this, like, I'm the only I'm the only black person on the team. I'm the only one who feels like this. So on the general perspective, I do feel like that Twitter play is like, a lot more. But in my personal situation, because of the environment that I

work in, I don't feel like, like, I feel like it's about the same. Like, I can be like, hey, like, you shouldn't talk about black folks like that. And everyone would be like, do we say something crazy? Like, I'm so sorry, but, and like on Twitter, I feel like it'd be kind of like the same, the same kind of reaction if something were to happen.

**Researcher:** So what commonalities Have you shared specifically with people on your, like Twitter feed?

**Participant:** I would say during the election. During the election, I was like, I had to remember that like, okay, you know, although I do feel safe in my job, let me not get too crazy. But I was definitely pretty vocal about like, my opinions. And and I think I was more vocal on Instagram than I was on Twitter, just because I felt a little bit more safer on Instagram, which, because of Twitter, it could, it could go really, really fast. But I still was not like scared to kind of say what's on my opinion. And on election day, you could definitely well, after election day, you could definitely tell who I was, like rooting for and how thankful I am that, you know, the other thing that didn't happen? So, um, yeah, I definitely was a very vocal, and I felt comfortable to the vocal on Twitter. But um, during those times, a lot of people are paying attention to Twitter. So I kind of was a little bit nervous about how fast something could could could I guess, could blow.

**Researcher:** do you believe you, you have a sense of community with like, the people you follow on Twitter, your followers, and even if you don't know them?

**Participant:** Because I feel like I follow a lot of people who kind of think like me, but then I also follow a bunch of people who, who are doing like these crazy things. And like, it's just, it's just nice to kind of like, watch their experiences. But I do feel like you know, what, the people that I do interact with, that I retweet that they retweet me, I feel like we, we have this, but this sense of like this commonality, like this same kind of way of thinking, but like still having like, different opinions on things. So yeah.

**Researcher:** Okay. Okay. And these are like the last few questions. So What topic are you most passionate about, about the black community? And how have you seen that show up on Black Twitter?

**Participant:** Ah, honestly, I feel like it's just like, I want to say black talent. But that's just so that's so broad. So I'll see like black creatives. And with Twitter, you know, you know, the newest songs that come out in seconds. You know, like, what photographer shot this Billboard magazine cover in seconds. And so I feel like the creative communities, it's so hard to succeed in. And so with Twitter, like, it's so it's so great to see how like, you know, with how like, your support can be like, I can post it, I can make a YouTube video, post them on Twitter, and I get like 20 retweets of those 20 I only know seven people or six people and so it's just like, it's cool to know that like, obviously, it's not like 1000s You still have like the sense of like, this community so I think Twitter's doing like a really good job or like black creatives, like that black creative community

is doing a really good job of just kind of like wanting to see each other succeed even though it's it's such a doggy dog world when it comes to that when it comes to the creative stuff.

**Researcher:** So and then this last question so and what has Black Twitter brought you hope, happiness or laughter like just name a moment where he was just It could be the last time you laughed on Twitter, like what was that moment or how did that feel?

**Participant:** I think definitely yesterday when that young girl won the spelling bee, that was like, it was just so joyful because she did like a spin. And like, you know, that's not usually what you see when, like, somebody like when something like you see, yes. You know, or like maybe some cursing because they're so excited but like, she literally spine I was like, Yo, this this is like angelic and all data has been posted like her playing basketball, like in the you know, there's just funny things. It's like, I don't know if you've ever watched that movie where it's like, we don't use more than 10% of our brain. We were just like, Yeah, she definitely using more than 10% because he dribbling and doing spelling and all this stuff. So it definitely made me laugh. Like it was. It was like it was joyful, like a happy moment to to see like her success. And it was just like it was it was beautiful.

**Researcher:** That's nice. Um, and then do you have a unless you want to say about Black Twitter that you just want, you know, viewers to know, I'm saying viewers like this YouTube.

**Participant:** Twitter wouldn't be the same without black twitter. And people can take it how they want. But it was a sight. Pay attention to the memes, you laugh at the Tik Toks that are posted the clips you got on your phone, black sorters literally, like part of the heart and soul of Twitter.

**Researcher:** That was a good closing. And then now I'm going to get to demographic questions. So if you could please state your age.

**Participant:** Hmm. So I'm 23 years old.

**Researcher:** Okay. And what generation Are you part of? So there's Gen X, Millennials, Gen Z.

**Participant:** Okay, so I know I should know this. But if I was born in 97, I think on Gen Y, I think. I don't know they be changing in the years so much. Let me I should know this again.

**Researcher:** Okay, so millennial is 1980 to 95. So you're like early Gen Z?

**Participant:** Yeah. You said, yeah, not 30 yet, not 25 yet.

**Researcher:** On a daily basis, how often do you spend on Twitter?

**Participant:** On a daily basis, I want to say maybe about like three hours in total on it. Like just spread it obviously, like spread out.

**Researcher:** And on a weekly basis. How often do you spend on Twitter?

**Participant:** Oh, obviously, well, like three times seven. So probably about 21 hours I'll say.

**Researcher:** And when did you first make your Twitter account?

**Participant:** I want to say seventh grade. So this was like 2011 2012. Give me one sec, Join 2011

**Researcher:** Okay. All right. Well, thank you again. I'm gonna stop the recording now.

**Participant:** Sure.

#### **Participant #4**

**Researcher:** Hi, Taylor, thank you for coming to this interview. And so just to start off, if you could tell me about yourself interests and hobbies, and how does that align with your online feed, and interests on Twitter.

**Participant:** So my name is Taylor Knight, I'm 24 years old. I work in journalism. My interest is pop culture, fashion, entertainment, the Caribbean culture as well. Those are typically like my main interests when it comes to anything social media, or like my feed. I also like dancing and singing here and there. So music is also of interest in dancing. That's pretty much what my social media feed reflects.

**Researcher:** Nice. And how important do you think Twitter is in today's society?

**Participant:** I think Twitter is more important than people think. I think Twitter has more of an influence. And people think, I think a lot of businesses have popped off from Twitter, like one retweet can equal a million retweets, or when it comes like fashion trends. And when it comes to political conversations, when it comes to calling people out on like, canceled culture, Twitter is definitely the root of all those things. It could be positive, it can be negative, sometimes, from what direction you can go into, but I think Twitter has a great influence on the black community and sometimes black pop culture, I feel like a lot of trends have started within the black culture that tends to spread out through all of pop culture that becomes like, Oh, it's a it's just a trend right now when it originally started with the black community. So I think Twitter has a very good accountability, focus where they can call people out at all times. Oh, no. But in 2012, you said that you don't like these kinds of people. But now you're saying you support them? Like, let's find the balance of it. I'm saying blacks are definitely has some positives, but also has some negatives to I would say, I think, the entertainment factor of Black Twitter, like when it comes to it's also

really funny, too, when they do call people oftentimes, like oh my god, it's so funny, like, you laugh and you kiki with it. But sometimes you don't know how that can actually affect the person who the joke may be about. During my personal experience, I did a video a freelance video for an organization one time and it was literally like a makeup video I did. I literally was just like, I made up a story for the company, whatever they want in a creative storytelling. And I actually wore this t shirt I'm wearing a Britney Spears t shirt. And someone from I posted a video on Tik Tok and someone on Twitter saved the video and posted it on Twitter to start a conversation like like 1000s of people are like ranking on me like oh my gosh, why is she wearing Britney Spears t shirt . Yeah. But it's like I was just doing a video for to push myself career wise, that ended up getting like backlash on Twitter because I was wearing a t shirt with a white woman on it. So it's like there's those different aspects of it too, that you just don't expect sometimes. But I feel like I may be rambling. Let me know who in the right direction and Oh, cute. Yeah, so like, I think that definitely shows you where the black influence Twitter can definitely have like a negative poll too. Although it has a lot of positive I, I didn't even get any followers from it. So it's like, oh, man, I could have got a positive from it. But the video got views. It did what it needed to do got attention. But you know, the mental mental health part of it was like a kind of a damper. I had to like, turn myself away from constantly reading the comments and stuff. Um, but, yeah.

**Researcher:** So as a black creator, and like creative. How do you think Black Twitter cultivates communities for creators? Like I know, you talked about it's toxic, it has, you know, certain negative attributes, but in its totality, in what ways do you think like creators are benefiting from the platform.

**Participant:** it's like free marketing, like, you can just put it out on there, and you just don't know what will pop off. So it's like, you have to be consistent with the content or anything you create, creating posts on social media and Twitter, because you just never know when it's gonna pop off. And like the amount of people who can see it, especially if your pages public. Again, you never know who's gonna see you know, that one retweet could be that one influencer who likes it and and shares it with their friends. There's just so much opportunity with social media and especially with Twitter, one hashtag could lead you to 1000 opportunities. There's a lot of people out there who've grown so much off of Twitter whether they're like a Twitter comedian and now they're like verify how do you like comedy night like late night comedy shows there's tons of avenues there and I feel like the black community on Twitter is very supportive, even if you don't say if like, I'm selling socks, and you know, the sock is ugly, we're like, No, I'm just going to reshare because I could tell homegirls trying to get to 10,000 likes like we're gonna support each other regardless and give those reviews give those likes give those retweets so it's definitely a sense of community to want to see each other grow and push each other to get further in life. And just each other growth the end of the day, sometimes I feel like a lot of black creatives feel like their work tends to get ripped off from from other people. And it's like Twitter, because some that brings back that accountability effort of worse Twitter like, Oh no, this person posted their design in 2009. And now Kim K is posting it 2016 thinking it's like her own thing. It's like no it started here. So Black Twitter will like come in and like full force ready to attack and be like, No, we're

gonna lift our queen and king up to show them like no, this is we're here to support you Kim K like you didn't take that design properly. Like there's that two different that support factor is there. The retweets even if it's like you don't want you don't want to retweet some times I'm I don't want to retweet this but whatever, then we just like get to show some love out there. Even if it's a random stranger, you just want to show it regardless. Especially because black people are often suppressed a lot when it comes to our creativity. Or when it comes to just anything alive, politic, politics, anything that we try to do. It's a lot harder for us to get our foot out there. So those retweets and likes definitely make an impact for sure.

**Researcher:** Yeah, definitely. It's so important. And then just again to like the perception of Black Twitter. What does Black Twitter mean to you personally and your life? As a user?

**Participant:** I, to me, it means like straight comedy, like it's a comedy show. Like I'm like, Oh my gosh, like laughing and cackling as I'm like scrolling through just, I feel like sometimes I'm on Twitter scrolling and like they point out the thing sometimes like say, if it's a random photo of a dog, black Twitter like, oh my god, zooming into the back corner, you see like something crazy? Like, oh my gosh, and how did they spot that you're like just dying like saving bookmarking the image or something like that. I think it's straight comedy. For me whenever I want a good laugh, I really go on Black Twitter and just go ahead and calculate for the night. All right.

**Researcher:** And so when did you first notice like you were a part of like Twitter, have you always been part of it.

**Participant:** I think I went to predominantly white high school. So I was on Twitter, like middle school in high school, so I was on twitter in middle school or whatever. I'm in high school. Most of my feed was white stuff like white, like followers, like everything pretty much in the white community. And then when I got to college, and I joined the Black Student Union, I got more black friends. So like my feed was really just majority black people. So like I was getting in the conversation, seeing different things learning about different cultures, too. I learned a lot from Twitter, actually, in social media, about different cultures I didn't know about I have a Caribbean background like Jamaican. So I kind of always stayed within like the Jamaican culture. Like I've never really jumped out of that to learn more about the Haitian culture, the African culture, like all these different cultures out there, like learning about the Afro Latino culture more through Twitter, like, I've learned more about it than I did in school, because School doesn't teach you those things, too. So I learned a lot about my heritage, just from being on there and picking up those things. I kind of forgot which question was going sorry, can you repeat the question?

**Researcher:** And it was when did you first notice you were a part of like Twitter.

**Participant:** Okay, yeah, so I would say in college when my following followers increase in my followers became black followers, pretty much I started following more black influencers who are also putting me on game to like, how did your hair properly I'm like, Oh, wow, this whole

time, I'm just burning my hair, which I'm doing it again because my job but I'm like burning my hair. There's no curls anymore, or learn how to do makeup. So it's like I was that's pretty much my join the conversation. Yeah, when I went to college and increasing my black followers black following everything.

**Researcher:** And so if you can tell me about one of your favorite Black Twitter moments, and how was it impactful for you? And it doesn't have to be to 2020 but just overall, one of your favorite moments.

**Participant:** Gosh, I feel like I'm not gonna know unless I go scroll through my Twitter and like, see the bookmark. Okay, there's okay, this is like, there's some tweets that are I just don't even know where these people find the images or the means. I'm like, where did they find this? And it's so hilarious. I've saved it and I'm like, using it all the time now. Like it's my goat like it's my name. I'm like, yeah, like throwing it out there. Honestly, there's so many moments of Twitter that I can't even like pinpoint one that's like my favorite moment. I'm gonna go back to the whole like video I made because I was kind of like haha, I'm I'm popping off Hey, like there goes there goes Taylor all these people's retweets love to see all the word talking positive from it. Okay. That's yeah, I guess that is one of my favorite moments just to see that I made a video that was impactful and like started conversation because that's something I do want to continue doing. So I saw what avenue I probably should stick to when it comes to having videos like go viral in a sense.

**Researcher:** right? And then we talk about viral like going viral. How do you think the Black Twitter like Black Twitter has contributed to so many things going viral? whether it just be like moments like similar to your experience, but even just like trends such as like, say her name, Black Lives Matter, or things of that nature and how has that like impacted society?

**Participant:** I think Black Twitter definitely has a huge influence like the me too movement started with the black woman. And we see the impact that has made not just some social media, not just for like our versus Gen X or Gen X. That's also a carnival band. Sorry, if Im confusing that.. But we see the impact that's have literally in big corporate organizations that like make sure they instilled a certain protocols now. So a lot of black influencers definitely have started a lot of change in our society that sometime isn't recognized. And like a lot of people don't know the person who started the need to move it was a black woman. And so you have to like research and dig and dig and dig and you find you're like, Why wasn't that easier for me to find? makes me question that sometimes it should just be the first thing on Google search. I think when it comes to me too move it, that's like, the biggest thing that I was like, Oh, my gosh, of course, say her name. Also, very big movement, too. I think, when we speak. I think people get nervous when we speak sometimes. So they never know what we're going to say and what direction you can go into. But when we speak, it's so powerful that it starts movements, it starts changing this world that's often needed. And sometimes it's like, you know, sometimes some people tend to stay quiet. But it's like your voice is needed in these conversations, to make those change for your community to make something different and greater, so that we could make sure society is running the way

that feels good to us that justice is being served or just that we're being heard in general, like we can't continue holding our voices either.

**Researcher:** So I completely agree. I completely agree. And then now we're just going to go more into the impact of 2020 and your attitudes towards that. And so just to start off, like when you think about this past year, what are like some of the top three, four things that like come to mind.

**Participant:** Definitely the pandemic that was still you knows going down now. That was very big on social media on the Black Lives Matter movement. The injustice is the police brutality. Like I had to turn off social media too, because it was giving me too much information sometimes, like it was giving me more information than the news and like the raw footage of it that it was also like kind of hurting me too. I was like, Okay, I need to turn off. I could have I had to like unplug from social media, I would say for like, the longest I was a week I've published a bit longer, but it's also hard because like, my job was like always on social. I would say definitely. Pandemi, police brutality, Black Lives Matter movement speaks is the main things that come to my head when it comes to 2020. Social media was on and on and on about giving you again, the raw footage of COVID of like the real things going on with people like bodies being like piled up in like a random field in New York City or police brutality incidents. Still, some of them to this day, I have not been brought into light yet just on social media were retweeting where, oh, also how some police brutality incidents were happening. And Twitter, Black Twitter went at it. And we're calling the police departments, calling the lawyer to make sure we can to help these people out, like starting GoFundMe, like Black Twitter was really moving as a strong force to make some change to get some justice served. So I think that also showed how powerful Twitter was, and also canceled culture canceled culture has been going on for a little while now. But I think it's gotten stronger in 2020 and 2021. Now because they don't play like people are actually afraid of canceled culture. Like, they tiptoe on what they're going to tweet what they're going to write what they're going to retweet, because you never know what's gonna come back and bite you and someone's gonna hold you accountable for it. If you're a Christie Tegan, like a lot of her tweets from the past are biting her on the button now and now she's like, Alright, I need to just get off of Twitter. It's like, yeah, I can have your fun, but you have to be cautious now of what you're doing. So I think Twitter definitely is no longer a place of I want to say free speech, because it is always free speech. But you have to be very cautious and how you speak like, if you don't like pizza, you cannot say you know, like pizza, someone's gonna come for you. Like a random pepperoni account is going to be like, I'm the pepperoni person you are banished from whatever pizza so you have to be very cautious. Now with social media, a lot of it is a lot of things that shouldn't be political are political now, like, just like random things. If you don't like to come, I don't know, just like random things. Now they're like, very like, you have to tiptoe around now, just be very cautious of how you say it because you never know who you're going to offend. And then who will cancel you, the pepperoni may cancel you and you're like, dang, I can never get pizza again or something. So being cautious of all those things that Twitter, social media has influence on.



**Researcher:** Right. And so do you think Cancel culture is a way of Black Twitter finding community of like commonalities, or do you think it's a way that we've kind of torn each other apart? Basically, the question would be like, is he increasing or is it becoming stronger with Cancel culture or not?

**Participant:** I think it's becoming stronger. I definitely read up to that because if you see someone doing blackface, maybe in 2008, you're like, oh, Like he just kind of like sigh like, I don't like that they're doing that on Black Twitter now you're gonna like going crazy on keyboards, like look at them right here then someone's gonna retweet it so so I'm gonna comment another photo of them doing it in 2005. Like, it's gonna build up a like a whole case as a building up of how this person and like valid facts about this person shouldn't be canceled. So I think it builds a sense of community that we can continue defending ourselves and trying to own some get older culture back again, like when it comes to the braids conversation when it comes to just certain areas. But I do see sometimes that on the Black Twitter, I'll say the black community. We won't hold our own community as accountable as you will to other cultures. But I'm going to backtrack on that because recently, Michael B Jordan, he released a line of rum called Jouvvert. And he's not from the islands like say if he was from Jamaica, okay, he can get away because Jamaicans do Jouvvert. But its a Trinidad and Tobago tradition. So for him to do that Black Twitter, Well, I'm gonna say Caribbean Twitter because Caribbean Twitter was premier Twitter when they said, 48 hours later he changed the name. So it's like things like that too. You do see the community coming together trying to make sure no one is done to appropriate their culture for profit just so they know where the money's at. And I think other cultures to have jumped on the bandwagon for canceled culture like the thing is, yeah, the like Harry Webster, fine with the hairajuku phase that she had going on. The Japanese culture came after like, hey, like, this is not cool. Like you can't be doing that. And you know, she still kind of carries on with it. It says that she did it because she admires a culture, but they're still holding her accountable by calling her out for it. So I think other coaches have jumped on the bandwagon too, of canceling people. Like that's not cool that you're doing that, like let's cut it out. And because it gets depression on social media, they end up canceling because social media is how a lot of people make their money nowadays, you make their influence, like people aren't really watching live TV anymore like that. It's social media they're checking for So social media tells you Nope. Kyla, Kyla William just canceled and then she's canceled.

**Researcher:** That's true. I definitely agree with all of that. And like, I think cancel culture just so interesting, um, even when you think about like, like our Kelly, our Kelly was like a huge like person, and you know, the black community. And then you see certain members on Twitter who agree with him who don't agree with him. And so how that causes like a rift in discourse. That's, that's really interesting. And then also when we think about 2020, and like, how has the increase of the increase in visibility of police brutality and racial injustice impacted your life, whether it be online or offline? And if it wasn't increased now in 2020, or you've already seen this visibility before?

**Participant:** I would say in 2020, I saw a lot more because a lot of people I think is it's like, I always knew this was going on. I always knew this, like, that's why I'm very extra cautious. I leave my house at a certain time or what I'm wearing or how I'm dressing like, I'm very cautious of those things at all times. And even now, I live in a predominantly white area in the Midwest, so I don't leave my house class a certain time because I don't know what's going on. I just don't know. The other day on Juneteenth I got pulled over and I was nervous I literally had my phone recording I said My name is Taylor Knight and I'm at this location. I got like literally getting a full rundown because of what I see on social media. Because I want to prepare myself for God forbid or whatever may I hope not you know to happen. What but could happen at the same time. Um, I've seen a lot, a lot of things about police brutality throughout 2020 that has scared me to know that it's dangerous to be a black person. And it's like sad that I can't just live freely and care for ya. And like carry on I have to be very cautious of my surroundings. Who I'm chatting with, with who's looking at me kind of crazy from a distance, which police officer is like giving me a brain or giving me like a scowl or something. So I'm a lot more on guard now when it comes to leaving my house versus before I would say because certain situations of course the TV shows you what they can because sometimes anyway, show they don't show you the worst of the worst to that sometimes you can't even show that on TV. But social media can show you all of it with no filter, nothing like it doesn't matter and be able to see that stuff. It's just like that can happen. Someone can pull you over for what like whatever for like chewing gum just like you know, foolishness. So even just seeing those things happen. I'm like, Okay, I need to, I don't know like what can I even do so have you questioned like, what's the right thing to do? What's the best way to get out of the situations and you never know. So you just hope and pray you're just never in those who never stopped by somebody or just Yeah.Oh, yeah. So a lot of fear has developed, I would say after 2020 seeing a bunch of the police brutality, things on social media, and again, it's like I've seen it before. Like, I've seen it in like little baby every six months, you see, like a post on Facebook from someone back in the day, whatever, like, oh my gosh, I hope they're okay, blah, blah, blah, are you here to store like, Oh, they got pulled over. But you think, oh, maybe because they were driving drunk or blah, blah, blah, but not really knowing that wasn't the situation that actually happened. So that's true.

**Researcher:** And then I think about during that time, especially this past year, when all these videos were just coming out, and I remember Black Twitter, like there was points where they'd be like, take down these videos, so like that. You wouldn't see people's faces, and things of that nature. S, it's very interesting how like, Twitter can also affect, like, real life physical space when it was protesting rallying everything.

**Participant:** especially when it comes to the protesting. Yeah, like, people were covering up their face. What 100% Because they don't want people to like, screenshot this into their job or their title, like, protest and show like this world needs change. And it's like, why am I gonna get backlash for peacefully protesting like, yeah, yeah.

**Researcher:** So what are some of the most notable events of 2020 whether it be political social cultural to you? And I know already actually like, what do you think of what to you like really impacted you? In 2020?

**Participant:** Um, I would say the pandemic actually pack I don't know they both kind of um, first I'll say the pandemic because just see how like precious life is of course everyone knows life is so precious can be gone in seconds. But just seeing how precious like life is and like how family is I really, I when the pandemic hit, I left New York and I was remote in Florida for pretty much all of 2020 So I was able to really connect with my family like cherish those moments with them and I had friends who were my roommate was still in New York and like hearing like the mental like their mental health depleting during the time was like scary like I do have some friends who like are still suffering like severely right now who are like pretty it's pretty deep and they I don't Yeah, it's pretty deep to see like how mental health is so strong and you know people Oh, yeah, mental health mental health, but actually witnessing like someone who you're close to go through some really tough days and not sure if they'll ever recover from it is it's sad it's actually really sad to see so I would say that but then of course the Black Lives Matter movement. I cry like multiple times throughout the year just thinking about it and like having to make sure I knew to not watch the news all the time knew to take stay off of social media because it did that also affected my mental health and just again, how I felt about people around me I was like, okay, like let me be careful with you. Oh, I saw you retweeted that not really feeling you anymore. Like you know my ducking and dodging people that really know who's who's for me like who's gonna be there for me if I ever need help or something so I would say that made me be more considerate of who's in my circle. Definitely join my family time more be these precious moments and something their situation where my versus someone okay, I'm trying to figure out the right way to say it's okay, so a friend of my father's son was stopped by police officers and he's like new to the area in Florida and the only person that dad need to reach out to was my dad. And I was like, and the guy son was caught up with the police officer and I was like, I don't want you to go down like why don't go because you don't know I was like don't go like I don't know who this boy is like I'm looking out for you don't go but he's like I need to go I need like we can be afraid I'm just like he left he actually went and didn't even tell us when I when he came back he's like yeah, so blah blah blah. I was like are you kidding me? Like you did that and he didn't tell us you're gonna go you're gonna pull up all these police officers who are like talking to this guy because like just the whole situation with the guy right? I'm a white guy tried to shoot the young man try to like shoot to shot his car. Actually, he dodged the bullet and the police came over. And you know, that could go so many ways. Then my dad pulls up after the police pull up. I'm like, they could have thought you were like trying to get out you know, right. That was actually this. That was one of the scariest moments I would say just not knowing like what could have happened and like you need to realize to Sir, like you're not invincible, like anything could happen. Anything could happen. It doesn't matter who you are what you think you have, like Macari roll up. It doesn't matter. Because at the end of the day, good luck. Oh, it's so yeah, and having to also teach like my younger cousin. That's how I put my like my little sister like, having her realize these things too. She's 14. Let her know like hey, like, gotta be cautious like don't also like don't feel oppressed or feel scared to speak up.

cuz you want to speak up if someone does you wrong, but be cautious of the people who are around you again. Like even I'm like rambling but even this year a young girl called her the Edward. And the coach she called her that there was like this class like zoom situation they had going on, but it was like, it's like a chat room for like this, they go on chat room after like, Haha, Tiki with each other, whatever. And my sister's camera was off, and another girl was like, Oh, is that N word, blah, blah, on this call. And my sister goes, good thing I was recording you this entire time and sent it off to the school and that girl got reprimanded for that. But if you like situations like that, you have to like it's again sucks that my 14-year-old sister has to be cautious of like situations like that not having people recorded just in case they try her like to get her evidence back on them. But I've seen that this movement has also given a lot of a lot of the younger generation confidence to speak up. And to not hold their tongue. I think the older generations are nervous to speak up and hold their tongue because they don't want to lose their job. They don't want to be looked at a certain way or feel like they're being aggressive, or where on this new agent, like, if you don't want me in your space, I'm gonna I can leave, or I'm gonna be I'm gonna make whoa, I'm gonna be comfortable in this space and make my way and you're gonna have to tolerate it. Like it's one or the other. Like, we're not going to just like, okay, you don't like the black girl? No, we're gonna either own the space, or we're gonna leave this space and find a new space that's better. Like it's one or the other. And I love that confidence that is building up on people. We know. We can leave wherever we want, we can go wherever we want to go. As long as we're ambitious, we're confident we just want to keep striving for more. It's all possible, right?

**Researcher:** And so on, like social media. What differences have you seen from like, Gen Z, millennials versus like, our older like black users on social media?

**Participant:** Gen Z they are, they are ambitious. That is what I'm gonna say is they like lip gloss, they're gonna make a whole lip gloss line, and they're gonna sell it with their little label like they, they're trying to get to the bag a lot faster than like the older generation trying to get to the bag. The old generation wants to traditional route first don't do this, then you got to do that. And then you get the job and you stay there for 50 years. No, no, Gen Z, millennials. We're like, Okay, we don't like this bag anymore. What's the next bag? Okay, even if it's a year after it's like, oh my gosh, you're leaving a job after a year? Yeah, I'm bored of this job. I want to make more money. I feel like I can do better. On to the next thing. I think I'm Gen Z is a lot more free spirited, ambitious, open minded to new possibilities. And, and I will say like daredevils like, they just want to go for it if it fails, like, okay, cool. It failed. I learned a lesson I gave it a try. Let's try again. Right? Let's give it a try. Some people are fortunate enough that say they fail, they move to the city and it doesn't pan out, you go back home, you get your stuff together, and you get ready to go back out again. Like you just keep it pushing and keep on going. So I would definitely commend them for that for just being those go getters.

**Researcher:** Right? And definitely agree. And so when we think about just to go back to 2020. Um, what was your experience on Twitter during those events? Like, what did you see? What did

you retweet? Like? What was really like, what were you going through during that time? I will reference a moment.

**Participant:** Um, I can't reference too much. Well, I was pretty much liking everything that showed that I supported the movements of everything like seeing what whatever tweet or retweet I could do, like, I would engage with it to make sure it was getting the views that it needed to or posting in other places, or tagging someone just to make sure that they also saw the post, whether it's a police station or something. I was trying to as much as I could as a Twitter user that Twitter allows you to do pretty much but I didn't notice at some point I was starting to there was a phase of like Black Twitter black social media users. Were checking people who weren't black like to see let's see what they posted. Oh, data post anything. Is it two weeks? Oh, off the list. unfollow in a month. No, I did that too. I I did I was checking person clothes. Oh, oh, she's at the beach. Okay.

And it's like, it's definitely shouldn't be like that. I shouldn't have to like, be tracking people to see like, if they follow it, it's like, that's their opinion. Of course that hurts my feelings. And then you kind of just disassociate but I shouldn't be trying to track people to see like, oh, it's been to share the posted anything like she's removed. But I didn't notice a lot of people doing that, especially on Twitter, like, Oh, she hasn't retweeted anything. Is she with us? And she against us? Like, so those conversations definitely happened. I even had some conversations, my my old friends who aren't black. I was like, I was calling them I was like, I feel like it's really strange that you haven't checked in on me. Or you haven't shared anything on social media, like what's your perspective on things? And some people like oh, you know, I'm just nervous to like, I don't want to say the wrong thing. But um, you know, that could I think I understand why also, like, don't understand, too, it's like a half I don't know, kind of like a weird space. But then some people, you know, they're like, you know, I don't agree with it. And then you're like, oh, like, so. But then some people that sometimes you also reflect too. And like I did some reflecting after I did those did have this conversation. I was like, why did it like that wasn't really that close to those people. So it's like, why did it really matter? Like you kind of knew where they stood regardless. So why did it? It's like, Did it feel good to just call them out? Because those are like the main people who weren't black? Who were like, kind of near your circle? Did it feel good to be like, Oh, you're not with the movement? Why not? But it's like, I don't want to talk to those people for like, I haven't spoken for six, eight months. So like, Why did I really call them out? You know, so I would say situations like that. Definitely watching your nonblack followers. Again, supporting any way I could on social media, whether it's a share, to go fund me donating to go fund me, denote you know, don't know where the cost really going to go on the cover. I did something I like supporting this person, I got them out. And since I'm not I donate to a few places and never followed up on the person even got out of bail, honestly. Right. It's right here. It's on my conscience. Like, let me just go and donate whatever I can.

**Researcher:** So do you think Twitter has given us like that, Do you think during that time it gave us like that power to act? And to feel like you're making that change?

**Participant:** Yes, 100%? I totally agree. I think it makes us feel powerful makes us feel like we're making a change in our community. And it's like, sometimes you wonder, like, looking back, I'm like, did I really do, like, did I actually help somebody like, you don't know either. Like, I feel like it's best to be on the field. And like going out there and doing stuff that you could actually see the change you're doing and actually, like, connect with the people you're helping out. But social media is still a way of support to it's still a way to get out there connect to connect to people like virtually and have those conversations, some people made a bunch of friends on social media throughout the time to everything going on, because it connected with that person on the same topic or whatever, or also wanted to work together to make some website or some kind of Zuma that or whatever going on. So I'm trying to think Yeah.

**Researcher:** And how do you think and thinking back to 2020? Like, how do you think that black users Black Twitter took the death of many of like black heroes, so whether it be Kobe Bryant, John Lewis, pop smoke, Andre Harrell, like people in pop culture, who black people looked up to, at a certain point in their time, and how do you think, what did you see when you were on that app? And how did they take it?

**Participant:** So I'm going to speak on the Kobe, Kobe stuff because I remember that day I my wife, it was supposed to be fine. Leaving New York that day, fly back to Florida, and all of a sudden, oh, my gosh, Kobe. Kobe said, I'm like, What are you talking about? Like, and I don't really watch live news I kind of scroll social media or watch like digital news. And he was like, he said, I was like, What are you talking about? And in the moment, like, I just saw his like, he looked like flush. Like he looked like oh my gosh, like he's dead and he thought off of social media. So that is like he's scrolling scrolling. I saw like he him kind of like I don't want to kind of like getting the going down and getting really down and like sad about it. I was just like, oh my gosh, like this is really serious. Like I didn't even know that like I didn't we didn't discourse I didn't realize how like big of an influence Kobe was for him like how much he admired him just seeing like his instant reaction like hearing my dad talk about it, like people that work so sad about it. And it was just like, wow, this is you don't realize someone's influenced until they're until they pass away, which is really sad. Sometimes like not sometimes that's sad all the time, that you don't see someone's see how much influence or like impact someone's made on people's lives until they pass away. And like see how much influence Kobe has on people like conversations we had to this day. It's pretty intense to just, it's sad to say that he has gone but definitely he had a big influence. And I think to this day, social media still talks about it. Still sharing graphics, people won't even know we're into sports. We're sharing these graphic, like, different things about him like supporting the family supporting the kids. I think a lot of people follow the family more now. Because of his past and just to see how they're evolving or how they're just, you know, coping with his death too. Yeah, it was a blast. Pretty good. Are we even like, we'll bring up old times and like they were alive. Like your biggest achievements are just good moments of them. But sometimes people just think like, okay, Kobe Bryant. He passed away just the basketball player. No, there was a lot more to them a lot of other layers to him. Sometimes they bring up the good and bad layers too. They won't let you just think of positive or bring up

the bad things too. Sometimes, like okay, oh, did you know they had that situation? But here's all the good things that he did. Here's the different philanthropy events he's done. Here's him being a great dad who was kids So it gives you a good recap. I will say definitely use it. Yeah, obviously a good recap of that person's passing in, like, what they've done for our community. Right. I think that was a really good point, especially about Kobe because you see the influence they had especially on black men. Mm hmm. Community and you could really see that on Twitter and on social media and a lot of people's BIOS now have his saying to like, that's like their new thing. Now. Of course, people said Kobe here Kobe here, you know, they turned 24 Yeah, 24 years. We are Kobe year. But now it's like Mamba year mama year like mama see tell you like all those different things to are pretty cool to see. It definitely is.

**Researcher:** And then what commonalities have you shared with others on Black Twitter, whether it be on your feed or whatnot?

**Participant:** I would say being Caribbean and also being a black woman in predominately white spaces. Living in predominately white areas, I would say that's a big one. But it's like you're trying to find your place and like this isn't really my place, but I live here. So I guess it's my place. Like finding that like I've checked with a lot of people on that. And then my Caribbean roots that's always a fun entertainment videos to connect with on social because people are wild and my creepy culture is wild. It's just great. Your mom does that too, great. Not the only one with the wild Kirby mom got it. So.

**Researcher:** And do you think that commonality that you share with other users like you may not know that, but like, do you feel more connected online? Versus like if you were in a physical space?

**Participant:** Yes, because I feel me it's easier to be vulnerable online than it is to be in person because it's like, I don't know, I think because with social media, you don't have to wait for their instant reaction like oh, how am I going to take like, whatever, go on with your tweets, Oh, whatever. So it's easier to just like carry on Be yourself and just move on from there. And even like there's just a lot of things I connect with to like little things little quirks that you have within yourself that you realize, oh, other people do that to gray like I'm not the only one I thought I was like a weirdo who I don't know get something clean sometimes at three o'clock in the morning just because I just like random quirks like that. You're like haha, great. I'm not the only one wow, there's 100,000 of the people who do this to great. No, I'm not the only one. I'm sad to say that's pretty cool. But it's easier to convince people on social because you only have to worry about how you look like your profile picture looks like what are your best photos ever so I'm fine at start chatting and go with it. A lot of people met like their partners on social media, their best friends jobs like a lot of different things. Um, so it's it's pretty nice to connect on social sometimes me some people who are little. Who you know, don't, who don't connect as well on there too. And you guys can go back and forth at it. But most of the time I feel like it feels it feels good to know you're not alone with Twitter.

**Researcher:** And so, um, when we talk about like a collective cultural identity that's like one of the topics I have in what ways like I know you don't know the people on Twitter, but how have you created that community with them? I know you talk about like the commonalities or whatnot, but how do you maintain that community on your Twitter feed?

**Participant:** So because I want people to interact with my stuff I like I like I like I like I retweet I comment haha girl even sometimes I know what's going on and I'm just liking things just to be like okay, 'Kayla consistent, like are consistently tweeter of mine so I'm going to give her the love back.' So I do that that's also me doing as a content creator to to kind of make sure my engagement is like being met. Um, but yeah, pretty much by doing that just retweeting and be like liking things or I'm also not a person who's afraid like at the ICU or something, that's you and I want to know, where do you got it from? Hey, hey, girl, where'd you get this from? is so cute, or again, I'm, I've moved to two cities like by myself before so like, I'm also not afraid to be like, Hey, I love your energy. Let's go grab a drink, like and see what happens from it too. Because that's, I think that's a good way to find friends too. Like just hashtagging the city and seeing like what people like have that hashtag and we kind of just feeling their vibe out from their social and like waking up and then it can go well, it can't go well sometimes you just kind of see go with the flow.

**Researcher:** And as a content creator like how has hashtags and just like Twitter Instagram rarely like benefited you as a creator?

**Participant:** Um, a lot. Definitely a lot I would say sometimes there's like these random like scammers who comment on my Hey, it's a comment Hey, how you found I would say it helps. I would say it helps a lot actually. Because you like touch in certain areas like fashion food camera, like just random things for you page and people follow them okay. And they like your they somebody will just literally go off of their social media through hashtags versus like, if you're looking for a topic, just go on there and click the latest stuff and like you engage with it and you go with that. So it's helped a lot. And something I also want to mention is that I would say the black community has helped me grow so much within my career with the platform I do have I onset to take them for a lot of the opportunities I do have because they're so supportive, like so, so supportive of everything I do whether it's me like I don't know drinking water. Yes, girl, you drink that water. Oh my gosh, can I get that water? It's like things are like, you know, I you know, it's just good to feel like hide from the community. It's like people who I don't like I know love, but don't really know how to type yet because I Okay, girl go off. Like, do you like this? Yeah, what you're trying to do like, right, so I love that support. Yeah, Black Twitter, Black Twitter, black social media. Always comes through.

**Researcher:** And then I know we talked a lot about advocacy and like the pandemic and racial injustice, but in what ways has like Twitter brought you hope happiness and laughter? When you think about some pop culture moments, I know versus TV was huge. In what ways have you been brought joy.



**Participant:** on the verses battles? were amazing. Because, I'm like, Oh, I felt like I was at a concert like dance with them. Like I felt really good having the verses battles, for sure. you know, concerts had been had were put on hold during the pandemic, that was a great resolution, whoever thought of the idea originally, kudos to them. Um, social media brought me a lot of joy, a lot of laughs a lot of like, things. I would say hobbies actually expose me to a lot of hobbies. I am so used to being a busybody. But during the pandemic, I learned to slow down. And then social media also just show me a lot of different ways you could live life, like, whether it's like learning easy cooking recipes, I got to cooking more. Or if it's traveling to places and spending a certain amount of money, like traveling on a budget, like I learned that from social media, or also seeing like career growth, like when people do their testimonies on Twitter, like, I started from this point in my life, and now I'm here with the Rose Royce. Oh my gosh, like, oh, my gosh, that could be me. Like, seeing those stories play out. It's pretty inspiring, because you're like, okay, that couldn't be me. Like, that person started the same way I started me if I keep on working. And I see that it's possible. Like, it's not impossible, if you continue to, if you continue to push yourself and feed yourself by energy that you're me and the people around you to support you. It all could happen. And social media is proof of it. Like some people like if you think back to like the night, the early 2000s, who would have thought that people could be making money off of YouTube, like literally tell you how to make do makeup? Like no one would ever thought that. So there's so many opportunities with social media, too, that it continues to show you that, hey, anything is possible.

**Researcher:** It definitely does. And that's all the questions I had. Is there anything you still want to add about Black Twitter, its influence? And we can go forth with that. And then after that, I'll just ask you some demographic questions.

**Participant.** No, I'm good.

**Researcher:** You're good. Okay. And so, if you could just state your age.

**Participant:** 24.

**Researcher:** And what generation are you part of? Gen X, Gen Y, which is Millennials, or Gen Z?

**Participant:** Gen Y.

**Researcher:** And how often do you spend on Twitter daily?

**Participant:** Three hours.

**Researcher:** Okay. And on a weekly basis, how long do you think he spent on Twitter?

**Participant:** I would say 21 to 25. Because I use it a lot now for work to to see what's trending. So yeah, I would say 21 to 25 hours.

**Researcher:** Okay. And when did you first make your Twitter account?

**Participant:** I'm gonna say 2011.

**Researcher:** Okay. 2011. All right. And that's all the demographics I had. You have any questions?

**Participant:** No, I enjoyed this interview. Thank you.

### **Participant #5**

**Researcher:** Hi, Sandro, thank you for coming to my interview today. Today we'll be discussing the cultural influence of Black Twitter specifically in 2020. And just to start off, can you tell me a little bit about yourself your interest in hobbies? And how does that align with your online feed and interest on Twitter?

**Participant:** Alright, so my name is Sandro, thank you for inviting me to your study on Black Twitter. Um, I have, I have been on Twitter since 2013. So that means I have been on Twitter since I was 13 years old. Um, I, I'm very interested in sports. So that's something that I that's something that affects to my online feed. I'm also interested in a lot of TV shows and movies. And then honestly, I'm just interested in just being around black people. Not only in Twitter, but in real life. So that's also something that makes me delve deep into the Black Twitter community online. Um, and yeah, I just, I have a lot of interest in hobbies. And somehow, some way my timeline finds a way to meet all of my, all of my fulfillments in life.

**Researcher:** Thank you. And so, in your opinion, how important do you think the Twitter platform is in today's society?

**Participant:** I think it's really important, um, mainly because, like, there's a lot of social media platforms. But I feel like Twitter is probably the most unfiltered social media platform. And what I mean by that is, people aren't afraid to speak their minds on Twitter, on people. Yeah, no like that. Yeah, people like, Instagram is mainly more for pictures and showing the good things about your life and all the good things that are happening. But I feel like Twitter is where people really like Delve into their lives. And they not only talk about the good, but they also talk about the bad and like, they give more, they're more opinionated on that platform. So I feel like a platform like Twitter that allows people to be opinionated is always necessary, because you get to see all these different viewpoints from all these different types of peoples. So that's why I feel like Twitter has been very important, especially during the pandemic as well.

**Researcher:** And when you say it's important during the pandemic, can you elaborate on it? Like, why?

**Participant:** yeah, so, basically, with the pandemic, we were all basically locked down for a couple months. So having a social media platform like Twitter, we were still able to, basically, we were still able to talk to each other, we were still able to see how everyone was feeling like I'm seeing where everybody's mental health was that being able to react to the news of the unfortunate incidents, unfortunate things that were going on during the time, there was a lot of like, we're able to coordinate protests coordinate, um, things that we were able to go ahead, and we were able to do things that without that platform, we would have been able to do. Um, and then also people used it as an escape, like, being stuck at home all day is very depressing. I myself was very depressed I was I just wanted to be outside. So having Twitter, although it wasn't healthy, but I was averaging like probably like eight hours a day on the app during peak lockdown. So and it was something that just allowed me to escape from being in my room all day or being in the house all day. And I feel like a lot of people were in the same boat, where they just use Twitter to escape from being locked down the whole time during the pandemic. So that's how I feel like Twitter helped a lot of people during this pandemic.

**Researcher:** Right. Thank you. And so now we're going to get more into the perception of Black Twitter. So what is when you think of Black Twitter? What is the first thing that comes to mind? Or a few things that come to mind when you think of Black Twitter and what does it mean to you?

**Participant:** So when I think of Black Twitter, um, well, first off, the first thing that comes to mind is black people. Um, just the fact that we Twitter's for everybody Twitter's not just for black news. But the fact that black people were able to create their own spaces on that app to the point where people now refer to it as Black Twitter just shows our significance on that app and like all the things that we talk about, um, because we talk on Twitter the thing about Black Twitter it's, we have serious topics but we also like play with each other is not just all serious like when it's time to get serious let's say something like the George Floyd incident or just the all the matters of injustice with the Black Lives Matter movement and everything, like we get serious but at the same time, Black Twitter finds a way to have light hearted conversations or just like thought provoking conversations like the famous topics that people always go to on black Twitter's like the \$200 dates and the and the What's up, man? So many topics we talk about the \$200 dates and like what is considered a day or things such as like, would you rather have dinner with Jay Z or a million dollars, things like that, where it's like, you'd really started to see how people think. And it's just interesting, like being on Black Twitter how, how we all might be black, but we all don't think the same. And it's just very interesting to see how Black Twitter provides all these different viewpoints that we're able to see like, wow, even though we're all the same, we probably share the same experiences and everything. We don't think the same. We all have different opinions on different things. And it's just interesting to see how black people think differently from each other.

**Researcher:** That was a really good answer. And so I know you're talking about how like certain black people think differently. So do you think it's okay to use black Twitter as an umbrella term for all Black Twitter users?

**Participant:** No, no. So I feel like Black Twitter. No, that's like the same way. A good analogy would be like Republicans. Like, it's like, being a Republican is fine. Um, that but I feel like there's a lot of Republicans that don't align themselves as Trump supporters. Same way on Twitter, Black Twitter, I feel like it's a certain I would say it's a certain hive mind where certain black people don't see themselves as a part of Black Twitter, Black Twitter, it's its own thing. Like, it's hard to explain, because I'm so delved deep into Black Twitter, that is like, I can't see myself out of it. But I know that there are black people that use Twitter and don't see themselves as a part of Black Twitter. It's one of those things that when you're on Twitter, you'll you'll notice when you're like starting to become a part of Black Twitter. It's not just as soon as you join Twitter. Oh, just because you're black, you're immediately thrown into Black Twitter. No, you you start to follow certain people, you start to see certain topics over and over, you start to see certain things and then you realize like, yeah, these conversations these topics. Yeah, I'm deep in Black Twitter now. So it's definitely one of those things where I wouldn't consider every black person to be a part of Black Twitter. And I'm, and honestly, I'm gonna be honest with you, this might be it. But I feel like Black Twitter has gotten bigger than Black Twitter, where it's like, people of color, like a lot of like gum, for example, like, I see a lot of Latinos, a lot of Asians, a lot of just other minorities participating in Black Twitter topics. And it's not like we shun them or anything, and they're all invited. It's just Black Twitter. It's mainly African Americans and black people. But I, it's gotten to the point where it's like, minorities in general, just would rather be in our space than anywhere else on Twitter. So I feel like Black Twitter has gotten to that point where it's kind of inclusive for everybody. But it still has that black core, if that makes sense. Right?

**Researcher:** I think that's a really good point. And so would you say that's a concerning? Like thing that's emerging that that Black Twitter is allowing different people like not different people, but people of color into our space? Or do you think Black Twitter is just focused on its core for black culture?

**Participant:** no, I completely understand. Um, I feel like Black Twitter, I'm allowing people of color that are on black. I feel like that is that's fine. To an extent. Um, I feel like a lot of people of color on Black Twitter see themselves as like allies, you know, hashtag Black Lives Matter. Or like, they were against what happened to George Floyd? Or like, it's very rare. You see someone that isn't part of the Black Twitter movement. Be on Black Twitter, if that makes sense. So it's like, I just see it as honestly ally ship. I'm Black Twitter. I mean, yes, it's fun to be all black, all black space and everything, but at the same time, just like in the world, like, no, no, especially in America, no place is like 100% Black, like, there's always gonna be different types of people, there's always gonna, so it's better to be inclusive than to completely shun everybody else out if

that makes sense. Because then that just makes like Twitter look, it makes us look, I'm not gonna say makes us look bad. But it's better to have allies than to have enemies, if that makes sense.

**Researcher:** And just to go off of that, because I think you're doing a really good topic. So when it comes to moments on Black Twitter, where we're talking about Thanksgiving, what black families are like, just those cultural norms in the community. How do you think If there's an emerging like group of non-black POC coming in, how are they able to, you know, relate or to interact with that discourse? If we're talking about cultural norms?

**Participant:** Um, yeah, that's that's a great question. Actually, that is a great question. I feel like, it gets to the point where a lot of a lot of non-black people of color, especially the ones that like participate in Black Twitter, they get so deep into our culture that I'm not going to say that they become black or that they, but they, they they understand, they start to understand the discourse, maybe when they first like, start becoming a part of Black Twitter, they might not understand certain things that we're talking about, or certain topics, or they've never been introduced to that because the people around them have never introduced them to those things. But I feel like being on Black Twitter long enough, especially during the pandemic, when we were all locked down. So we kind of had no choice but to either be on our phones or computers or TV. Um, it got to the point where they kind of learned a lot of our everything. So from lingo to culture, to the way people think, to the way people don't think, and just the seeing how non black people of color are, I would say, appreciating our culture. There are some that you could say they're appropriating our culture. But for the most part, people that especially like non black people of color on Black Twitter, they seem to appreciate our culture. And they try to be like us, and I completely understand I, if I wasn't black, I probably want to be black too. I'm not gonna lie. So um, yeah, I see. I just see them as appreciating our culture. And especially with all the time that bit as more time passes on Black Twitter, non black people of color are going to understand like, what black people think and like, how they react and how we deal with certain situations and certain actions and discourses. So I just feel like it's over time, people love non black people of color would just get used to Black Twitter and black cultures in general.

**Researcher:** Okay, and so now we're just gonna move into more your perception of Black Twitter. So if you could tell me about some of your favorite Black Twitter moments in general, it doesn't have to be 2020. But some that you can, it could be memes, it could be certain moments hashtag.

**Participant:** Alright, so Oh, man, that wow, that was a lot. Um, so, um, I don't know, if, man, I'm gonna have to censor myself. But Yahoo, they posted a post about Trump and the Navy. And the hashtag they made ended up saying hashtag N word Navy like, and ending with the heart er. So it was hashtag and er, Navy. And blacks would have seen that. And they just ran with it. And they just made memes all day about like, basically a black owned Navy and like how we would like be how we will be barbecuing on it and how we would like put rims on the boats and like, just like, it was just a fun time. It was just, that's one thing I love about Black Twitter, they always

find a way to take something that wasn't supposed to even be meant to be funny. And they just like run with it. And it becomes the funniest thing for like, the next week to three weeks, if not months. Um, for example, another classic black Twitter moment was when, um, famous rapper Future. Um, he was having an event at a club, and he didn't want a women over certain weight to get into the club. That's something that that's very, like offensive to most people. But Black Twitter somehow found a way to just make jokes and like, everyone was laughing like, it was like, it was like something that most people would be considered offensive, which I mean, it is offensive at the end of the day, but Black Twitter found a way to take that and just make it into comedy for the next week or so like it certain things like that and things such as, what's another serious moment and then just like things in general, um, memes that really caught on would be there's actually like, so there's a lot of local things or things that happen locally, but since it gets put on Black Twitter, it gets amplified to, you know, a bigger audience. So you'll see a lot of like, local neighborhood beefs, somehow get onto Twitter. Not everyone is like asking about like, what's going on with these people? Is it that level of commodity I don't think you see that on like, other parts of Twitter where it's like, now people are like, interested in what's going on with this person's life and why they trying to fight this person and it's like, wow, like we're literally one big community where If you put something on Twitter, like we're all gonna react to it, like, it's something that that's another reason I appreciate Twitter so much it, it basically, Black Twitter, it's one big family, and families fight and families love and families do all these things. And like, you noticed that being on Black Twitter, that like, it's really just we all we always find a common thing to like to rally around, for example. Um, so for example, a good example would be anytime there's like a bigger award show, like, let's say recently, the 2021 BET awards. I personally didn't watch the BT awards, but just being on Twitter and seeing everyone react to it and posting memes and posting videos and JTS, bad hair cut and all these things. And it's like, these things just they made my night and I don't even watch the show. But certain things like that Black Twitter just always finds a way to keep me entertained. And that's one reason like I can't see myself enjoying another app as much as I do, Twitter.

**Researcher:** was a really good answer, especially like how it's impactful just like as for you as a user. And so when you talk about, like, the fact that we can make joy out of serious topics. Where do you think that comes from? Is that so when you let me just reword it. So considering the state of black people in America, you think about some of the struggles and things of that nature, why do you think it's easy for us to make jokes and joy out of seriousness, especially on Twitter? Is Twitter like, a proxy to our lives in America? How do you see it?

**Participant:** Yeah, no, I agree. Yeah, no, you're right. Twitter's definitely, approximately to our lives in America. Um, I feel like, the thing is, sometimes when things aren't going your way, the best thing to just do is laugh. You know, the best thing to do is just joke. Um, some of the best comedians are like the most depressed people, because it's like, when things aren't going well in life, all you can do is kind of laugh and just try to, like during the lockdown, like I, like I mentioned, before, I was depressed, I was going through a lot. But it's like, Twitter always found a way to, like, make me at least keep me entertained, if not laughing just like keeping my mind

focused on something. So I'm, and then just black people in general. I feel like since we always find a way to make jokes out of things that shouldn't be joked about. Um, and I don't know if that goes back to slavery, or that trauma. I don't know if that goes back to but it's always like, being down as a black person in this country all the time. It's, it's tiring. So it's always best to just make jokes out of the things that people don't find as funny. Um, like, for example, like, for example, let's say when there's, when there's a Black Lives Matter protest. And and, for example, let's say something happens where, okay, this is a very specific example. So there's one point during a Black Lives Matter, protests, things got out of hand, some people ended up going into a target. And then there was a lady outside the target in a wheelchair, trying to apprehend these people. And they sprayed her up with a fire extinguisher. It's like, what is going on? It's like one of those things like, what the hell? Like, why did what just happened? But it's like, we make jokes out of that stuff. Because it's like, it's like, it's one of those things. That's like, what just happened? Like, we should be taking this seriously. Like, what? Like, why did that lady just get hit with a fire extinguisher like what's going on, but it's like, we make jokes about everything. And it's something. And that just fits with my personal how I think personally, like I take life, I take life seriously, obviously, but it's like, at the same time, it's like, sometimes you just got to joke about things, because that's the only way you could make sense of everything that's going on the world by joking about it. Because if you're just depressed all the time, that's, that's gonna do nothing for you, that's just gonna mentally, physically, emotionally just exhaust you all the time. So it's always best I'd rather I'd rather be joking all the time than being pissed about the world all the time. And during the pandemic, there's a lot to be pissed about the world, especially as a black person. So the fact that we as black people as a black movie, were able to find jokes or missed everything that was going on this past year. That's an accomplishment in itself. And I feel like that's something that helped a lot of people not lose themselves in a time where a lot of people are losing themselves.

**Researcher:** Right. And so now we're just gonna go more into this past year 2020. So when you think of this past year, what are some of the first things that come to mind? Any events, whether it be political, social, or cultural.

**Participant:** Yeah. Um, anything so? Yeah, no a lot a lot happened in the year 2020, like, a lot. And it was, it was like every single like week, one big event was happening at some point. So the biggest ones would be probably the George Floyd incident, which then, you know, led to a lot of the Black Lives Matter movement, having protests all around the not even just around America around the world. We had people in England, people in Israel, like people everywhere, like, they were showing their support for black lives. And that was just something that was very, like, I'll never forget that like, that was a very 1000 very special moment, where a lot we were seeing like how we had allies all around the world that you never would have thought about, you know, um, another big thing that happened um, in terms of entertainment in the black community, I'm Tori lanes allegedly shooting mega stallion in the foot. That's that was when that happened a lot. Like I like Twitter definitely was in disarray, like, and just a lot of people in disbelief, they weren't sure what to think like, these two that we're seeing as like, a budding couple at that point, all of a

sudden, one shoots another and like, it was it was, that moment was crazy. That was a whole that was a whole experience if you're on Twitter at the time, um, another classic moment of 2020 was just seeing Wow, 20 to 2020 was so long, that in March, sports got shut down. And then before like, By October, the NBA came back up, MLB came back up, and just watching sports with no fans, it just felt so weird. And then they started introducing like fans on the Zoom like our like, and it was just also weird, like looking back, it's like, we're really like, we're down so bad that we're all you're watching sports with like fans on Zoom, and like frickin and it's like, and that's, that's man 2020 was just such a long year with a lot that happen and what else and then we found ourselves then the vaccine like news of vaccines were starting to pop up that there were studies that the Pfizer vaccine looked like it was starting to do good and, and it'll happen so fast, because these vaccines got produced in like six, seven months, like, so this is all happening so fast in terms of the fact that vaccines take years to like, produce and study. And so all these things were just in 2020, it just felt like there's 12 months in a year and 2020 just felt like 2024 months, it felt like two years in one year. And a lot of people, graduations people have to do in virtually through zoom and, um, what else, everything like few people can have funerals, people couldn't see their loved ones in the hospitals, people couldn't. A lot, a lot, a lot of things happened in 2020. Most of it was very depressing. Most of it, I would never want to go through again. Um, but in a lot of the depressing things we were able to find like when I say we I mean like unlike Twitter, a lot of people were able to like still joke about things we were still able to, you know, we were still able to make make fun of some of the things that were going on. Because, like I mentioned, it's impossible, like, you can just keep living your life depressed, although everything around you is depressing, although like all the events you wanted to go to were canceled. Everything is getting delayed pushed back for another year or two. It's like, you just got to find a way to just still enjoy your life. And I feel like Twitter was definitely Twitter of like, for me and for a lot of people, like I mentioned was just an escape that was necessary. And that's, and that's a reason why I appreciate Twitter and just the Black Twitter community keeping me sane throughout all of the bullshit that was 2020 I'm sorry, I don't know if I could curse but all the all the things, all the bad things that was 2020

**Researcher:** that was a really good list. And so Okay, so out of everything you said. You can pick one and just tell me about like that experience of how it was covered on Twitter, Twitter, like how you participated in that discussion? Um, well, what was that experience? Like? What was the discourse like?

**Participant:** Yeah, so the main one, obviously, was the George Floyd like incident and 2020 I'm just watching that video watching that video of a cop on the man's neck for like, nine minutes like, watching the whole thing and basically watching a man's life slip away as a knees on his neck saying he can't breathe calling for his mother. That was that was some deep stuff and like we're already Hold on locked down, like depressed and now we're seeing the video of this man being murdered basically. No, definitely. And it's like that that kind of messed me up. That messed me up mentally. And I found myself like, I just found myself in a point in a position where it's like, because this is of course, this is the first time a black man has been killed by a police officer.



This isn't the first time a black man has been unjustly killed by a police officer. But it's like, being stuck at home and just constantly seeing like, if not a video of the what happened. The picture of George Floyd, like his family mourning, the scene all that was just it was very deep. It was very, it was very emotionally, emotionally draining. And I definitely, um, what I did what I personally did when it came to that, um, I found myself tweeting about it, I found myself sharing like, formatives about like, what you could do in terms of like donating? Um, I found a Twitter I did donate, I donate it to his foundation. But yeah, no, I found myself with George Floyd, I definitely found myself more more connected to what happened to George Floyd than what happened to anything else before him. Because, of course, the first the first major black tragedy I remember, in my lifetime that really affected me because I was still a kid and see what was up another basically another kid getting killed with the Trayvon Martin incident way back in God like 2013. And that was eight years ago. But um, yeah, so that's the first one. But it's like, it didn't affect me as much as George Floyd because like, with George flow, you actually watched like, if you watch the video, you actually see a man loses life, you actually see a man, like pass away something that could have been avoided, like the police officer, honestly did not need his knee on the man's neck for nine minutes. Like, the man was under handcuffs. He was restrained by three police officers at that point, like, it shouldn't have been at that me should have been off the neck like one minute into the video. But um, yeah, and just that just it. It definitely is. Starting from the George Ford incident, there was a point in time where Black Twitter was very, very tense, like, like a lot of people didn't want to a lot of people were like, not happy about anything. Like an example of this, that to this day, like always, like kills me looking back. It's like, people whose birthdays were around that time like, they can even post a picture of themselves or post a post something always my birth, like, people always the first comment was like, read the room, or like, what are you doing? Like, Black Lives Matter is more important thing like, bro, like, just it's looking back. Like in the moment, I understood, like read the room. But looking back, it's like, wow, we even let people like celebrate their own birth. We like that. It was just such a tense moment for everybody that is like, we could have celebrated anniversary like without people being like, read the room kind of celebrate anything without people saying read the room. That was always the first thing. And it was just it was just a very dark moment and on Twitter, and then in reality, because then we see all the protests pop up. And then there was counter protests. And then police started getting involved in shutting things down. And it was definitely, it was a scary moment to live through. And Twitter definitely was a tense time to be on at the time for sure. But yeah, that's probably the biggest moment for 2020 That affected me and affected a lot of people.

**Researcher:** Right. And so like hearing your talk about just this dark times, like it felt like traumatic in a way like it was a tragedy and things of that nature. And so how do you think Twitter allowed you and other black user users to really reckon with that moment? And to really sit back and be like, damn, like, this is really happening black lives, like you said a moment? Um, how did Twitter really amplify that reckoning? Is it Twitter, it probably isn't to it, or maybe it's the pandemic, maybe it's, you know, we're just tired. Many years. So like, what do you think it is that allowed us to really reckon with this racial trauma? Or even just like, if you don't want to talk about the racial trauma, but even just the trauma throughout the year, like people are dying, dying

from COVID a lot of white heroes died. So I know people love hot smoke. They love Kobe like John is how do you think we were able to wreck him and move on from that time? Was it Twitter? Was it just people surrounding our community? What do you think it was?

**Participant:** Man, yeah, man, that just you saying all those things just reminded me how long 2020 was because, like Pop Smoke passed. Late January, and that Wait Wait no no Kobe passed late January and then Pop Smoke past like it was like February or March. But it was like it was the beginning of the year like see, I'm having trouble even remembering the exact months. But it was like so early in the year a year that I considered like two years in terms of how long though? But yeah, no, all those deaths and all that trauma, it definitely. It was bigger than Twitter for sure. Like you mentioned, it was like, it was a mixture of everything. So all these traumas, the trauma of the injustice is going on in the world. The celebrity death that you mentioned, like Kobe Bryant, pop smoke, John Lewis, we just lost a lot of people in general in 2020, due to COVID, due to old age due to due to a lot of things, man, a lot of people pass the 2020. And it was just it was just sad to see how like it was on a weekly basis. Like you just see all these all these people dying and and you see the numbers because they were posting the COVID numbers like being on Twitter every day, you saw the COVID numbers, you saw the infection rate skyrocket here in the US and in the world in general, places like just seeing like, places like places like Italy, or places in Europe get completely shut down. Because like everyone is dying, it's like, what's going on with like, Are we are we gonna survive this, like, when when COVID first got declared a global pandemic, and everyone had to be stay home for at least a couple of weeks. And that just really showed the magnitude of everything that was going on, like, because I'm gonna be honest, in February COVID was being mentioned in the news. And people were joking about it on Black Twitter, we were joking about it. Um, we're like, it was whatever like, because we never been through a global pandemic like this. I mean, we've had minor minor pandemics, like you know, the swine flu, influenza, like certain minor ones that like, we're definitely dangerous, but it wasn't that it gets to the point where it just started infecting and killing as many people as COVID-19. So to see the CDC say, Okay, this is a global pandemic, stay home, start wearing mass, there's just, it'll happen so fast. And at the time, it was just, it was a lot, it was a lot. And for anyone who, and I feel like for anyone that, um, was already going through a lot in life, this pandemic only dropped in lower. And as I'm, like, not only Twitter, but like social media, in general, it just really turned into a very depressing dark place like Facebook, as well, um, Instagram, people weren't posting as many pictures because they were stuck at home, there's really nothing to post, um, and just the internet, in general, it was just a very, it was a very dreary mood. And that's why I'm glad that I kind of have Black Twitter that although it was a very depressing and dreamy mood, people were still able to find ways to just get their minds off of that, or like, just start new conversations about things that would don't have anything to do with COVID that we could just talk about, that we could just relate to. And it was just, it was the lot and the fact that all those deaths, like because there was already a lot when we had to lock down and stay locked down. And it was a lot seeing all those COVID numbers and the infection rates and people dying when they shouldn't be dying like because at first there was a lot of there was a lot of jokes in the in the Black Twitter community that Oh, black people can get COVID or this and that or like, you know, black people

are immune to that. The next thing you know, oh, NBA star Rudy Gobert gets COVID and then the joke was oh, he's French he's not black and then next thing you know, NBA star Donovan Mitchell has to all okay, now by the get go. And it was just like things like that, where it's like, we're still finding ways to joke about such a serious thing. That it was like, it was like wow, like, Despite all this trauma that we're going through being locked down being stuck at home, we're still finding ways to joke about something that's killing a lot of people something that's infecting a lot of people something that's missing a lot of people up to this day, like a lot of people will not a lot of people but there are still people that haven't regained their taste back like or regain like this smelling back. And every every couple of weeks, there's a new variant that we got to worry about. And it's like, wow, we still make we still somehow find ways to although the mood overall is depressing. We still find ways to joke about it or just like, you know, poke jokes at these serious ass topics. And that's why I feel like like Twitter was a great escape. Um, and then not only for COVID like The Celebrity deaths. It's so interesting with Black Twitter when it comes to the death of someone that most people in the community love like Kobe Bryant, for example. He, I mean, obviously, Kobe Brown was bigger than just black people. Kobe Bryant was a global sensation, like he was loved by a lot of people everywhere. But most black people love Kobe because he represented something that well, first off, he was a legend in a sport that's loved by majority black people. But not only that, he was he was a role model, you know, a loving father, loving husband, um, he already retired from he already retired from basketball before he died, but it's like, he was doing bigger things like he just won an Oscar for a short film that he made dear basketball, and it's like, he had so much to live for in the scene. Honestly, when it first happened, I didn't believe it like, and it was I seen it I like because it was just unconfirmed reports. Oh, the helicopter that Kobe Bryant might have been flying in like crashed and is like the seem to be survivors. And just processing all those news. And you're you're on Twitter. And as the hours go by is like always looking bleak. Like, oh shit. And then the killer, the one that always like confirms TMC when TMZ says someone died, it's a wrap. Like you can't even argue like TMZ Yeah, those guys, as soon as they say someone has passed, that's when you know, 100% Someone has passed, and during the pandemic TMZ was reporting a lot of celebrity deaths. So um, I definitely started following TMZ during the pandemic, just to see like Who else paths like what other great what other celebrity what other well known person past due to due to COVID, or just due to anything, because 2020 was just a very wild year where a lot of people were just passing away. And that and Twitter definitely helped in not only keeping me informed, but also, despite such a dire situation. It also helped keep me entertained, if that made sense. So Twitter, definitely. Twitter, definitely. Twitter was a very necessary app for me during the pandemic, because without Twitter, I wasn't going to watch the news. It was just too depressing. Without Twitter, I probably would have just been watching Netflix shows and TV shows all day, because I couldn't watch the news it was every single day was just too depressing to turn on the news and see what everything that was going on.

**Researcher:** Yeah, yeah, it was very important to just disconnect during those times. Mm hmm. Do you feel like as a Twitter user that your voice is more empowered on Black Twitter, say, versus in a physical space where you're not surrounded by as many black people?

**Participant:** Oh, wow, that's actually a very good question. Um, I feel like, I definitely have a bigger audience on Black Twitter. Um, like, like, I prefer, of course, I prefer being around like friends, like, I mean, I prefer being around black people like physically and everything. It's just because when you're around black people, there's just a certain hard to explain, there's just, it's a certain vibe that you know, can't be recreated or can't be recreated over the phone. It's like, the mannerisms, the Oh, when we all laugh, you all scatter away or like, certain things that you could joke about just based off of body language, just offer facial expressions that don't translate well through the phone. So I always prefer being around black people and just speaking to them physically. But I feel like Black Twitter definitely has allowed me to voice my opinion and amplify it compared to before, um, because just having a good, having a good amount of followers on Twitter just allows you to go ahead and say things and like these things. Normally, they get retweeted or when they get liked, people could see it, so it just amplifies your audience even more. So I feel like Twitter is a great place to like spread a message. Or just if you want to get a point across as posted on Twitter, see, people when people start retweeting when people start liking it that basically amplifies your message throughout Black Twitter and throughout Twitter in general. But I personally just prefer talking spreading my messages or just being around black people physically, I'd much rather prefer that over Twitter.

**Researcher:** And then, um, a lot of the questions I have, I'll you honestly touched on most of them. And so just one last one, like what topics or What topic are you most passionate about, surrounding the black community and how have Do you like? How's that translated onto Twitter like you as a user, like tweeting, retweeting, liking that? And have you shared commonalities with other people on Twitter?

**Participant:** Oh, yeah. Well, I'll start by answering that last part. Oh, 100%. Yeah, no being on Black Twitter, you find a lot of people will, depending on the type of person you are, but a lot of people do share, we share a lot of the same ideas. I'm just I feel like a lot of black people in general, especially if they're on Black Twitter. I feel like it's become it's become a there's been actually I'd say there's been a lot of groupthink, like, by groupthink. I mean, like, when one when one, let's say one big, black Twitter user or like basically a user on Black Twitter with a lot of followers, they'll go ahead and say something and then people join along. And like, for example, and it's very common in social media in general, but especially on Twitter, where like, you'll have one person, like a great example of this is like the rap artists, Russ, a lot of people have probably never listened to a Russ song or never cared to listen to Russ. But it's like the cool popular thing to say, oh, rust sucks. Rust can't make good music, because certain people just say, and people are gonna run along with it, because Oh, wow, this person said that rust sucks. Oh, then rust definitely sucks. Like, they probably haven't even given the dude's music a chance. But so there's a lot of groupthink on Twitter. And it's deeper than Black Twitter, there's a another side of Twitter, there's a lot of scientists who understand Twitter Kpop Whoa, kpop Twitter, enemy Twitter, like don't stand Twitter, there's a lot of sides of Twitter where you see, like, a lot of people have a hive mind. So just, if you're on Twitter, and you're a part of a group of people, you're most likely going to start thinking like them, or they're going to start thinking like you and the commonalities are

going to become blurred lines, because everyone's gonna start thinking the same or have a lot of the same ideas at some point. Um, but back to the first question that you asked, um, that was, what's that one thing, one main thing that I won't say, I'm in terms of Twitter, trying to think, I mean, besides the George Floyd, which already touched upon that, I just probably say, like, just the Black Lives Matter movement, like that's one thing that we can't really let die. That's one thing that I'm always gonna stand for, of course, me being black. And just, it's deeper than. And that's another thing, people, people that are against Black Lives Matter. They're really against the organization, black lives matter. But when I say black lives matter, I mean, bigger than that. I don't mean the organization. I just mean like, black lives matter. Like just one sentence, Black Lives Matter. Like, I don't care about the organization, I just want to get the point across that black lives matter. And then when you when you say that on Twitter, and you find yourself interacting with people outside of Black Twitter, then they always try to do the Oh, but what about the other lives? Are you trying to say White lives don't matter? Or like, what about Blue Lives? Like, it's all these things? Like, it's, that's one reason I'm always gonna fight for black lives matter, because people always find a way to try to like, put us beneath them, if that makes sense. It's like, we're just saying that our lives matter to we're not trying to go ahead and say that your lives don't matter, because you're not black. And it's something that we've seen all throughout 2020. If you're on Twitter during those protests, a lot of people were just constantly like, oh, all lives matter. They kept counting Black Lives Matter where all lives matter. Like, I get what you're trying to say. But it comes off as very obtuse, because there's no reason you should be trying to counter a black lives matter. Because the black lives have been black lives have been since since slavery, black lives have literally been seen as beneath. So it's like for us to just say black lives matter. And then people just have to counter all these things. But then when you see like, for example, in 2020, with all this Asian hate that was going on, we've seen all this Asian lives matter. We've seen all that, but they weren't countering that. If anything, they were they were Yeah, they're like, Yeah, Asian lives do matter. And then you see Joe Biden and Kamala Harris sign all these bills. Oh, you can't if you do this to Asian person, you're going to jail for life like, but black people we've been struggling for God knows how long and you don't see all these bills get signed for us. So that's just that's just one one example of how Black Lives clearly don't matter to a lot of people and that's why I that's always on some. That's always something I'm going to keep fighting for. Because at the end of the day, black lives matter. So that's how I feel about that.

**Researcher:** Thank you. I feel the passion in your voice about it. And so that's really all the questions I've had, like a lot of them you touched on, it was a really good interview. And so before we end, I'm going to answer demographical questions. But if there's anything you want to say, related to the cultural influence of Black Twitter, and before we start into the demographics.

**Participant:** yeah, I mean, the cultural influence of Black Twitter, I mean, the cultural influence of black people in general, it's, like, you, we always get copied, we always I, like I said, it's either appreciation or appropriation, but at some point, black people always be copied from our style and music, to our styling clothing, to our style, to our style period, like, people are just going to copy us. And that's something that's never going to change. And it's just black people, black

people around the world. I mean, hip hop is the number one genre in the world, we have. A lot of the most famous athletes in the world are black now. And we just have, we're starting to have more black people in power, more black millionaires, more black billionaires, and just, it just goes to show that black people are never going to die off, black people are only going to get stronger. So you can I mean, as you can see, like, a lot of black people have been unjustly treated and things like that. But we're still gonna make something out of nothing. Like, we're always going to find a way to just continue living in this world. That's not fair, not just, and we're going to try to find a way to make something out of nothing like a lot of people have done. And that's just something that black people and black. That's something that non black people are always going to follow where they're going to follow the trend. And it seems like the trend for the past 50 years in America has been black people so that I feel like yeah, the culture influence is literally like, you can't even put a value on it. It's priceless. How much black culture and Black Twitter has influenced America and the world in general.

**Researcher:** Right. Thank you. And so now again, to demographics, if you could please state your age.

**Participant:** I am 22 years old.

**Researcher:** And what generation Are you part of?

**Participant:** Oh, that's a good question. Honestly, I get so confused with the generations that I feel like being born in 99 was such a weird spot. Um, I? Yeah, I wouldn't put myself into millennials. Because isn't Millennials up until like, the mid 90s. See yeah, when it comes to generations? It's hard. I'm not gonna lie. For me. It's hard.

**Researcher:** Millennials are like from like, late 80s to like 95-96.

**Participant:** Yeah. And what's the generation after that? Gen Z? Yeah, so I guess I'm a Gen Z baby. Yeah. Yes. I mean, yeah, Gen Z. I mean, yeah. That's crazy. We're getting old. Yeah, Gen Z.

**Researcher:** Okay. And then let me get that other question. On a daily basis. How often do you spend on Twitter?

**Participant:** Oh, man. Um, so I have a full time job now. So on a daily basis. Now, I probably spend like, two hours on Twitter. But during a pandemic, I was definitely spending eight hours on Twitter on a daily basis.

**Researcher:** And on a weekly basis, how often do you spend on Twitter on Twitter?

**Participant:** Twitter, weekly basis? Let me do the math real fast. Probably like 15 hours, like 1520 At most, but 15 hours seems fair.

**Researcher:** Okay. And when did when, um, when did you first make your Twitter account?

**Participant:** Um, it was 2013. I can't remember the exact month but it was 2013. I remember that.

**Researcher:** Cool. Alright, so that's it for me. I'm just going to stop recording. Thank you again.

### **Participant #6**

**Researcher:** Hi, thank you for agreeing to participating in this interview. We're just going to start with some general introductory questions on Black Twitter. And so just tell me about yourself your interests in your hobbies? And how does that align with your online feed? And the things that pop up on your Twitter feed?

**Participant:** So, my name is Mika. I'm interested in social justice or like, I guess. What's the word radical politics, if you will? So that's a lot of my timeline versus the regular jokes that, you know, Black Twitter has been interested in.

**Researcher:** Okay. And when you say like regular jokes, what does that look like on Black Twitter?

**Participant:** So like, um, I guess the way that we tend to make fun of common everyday situations, so I remember that one time, I don't remember if it was 2020. But that girl that got stranded in Atlanta. So there was jokes about that on my timeline. Or what's happened in my time when people make up all sorts of names for the pandemic. So, Kenny, panoramic panorama? Yeah. Stuff like that. So I get those classic jokes.

**Researcher:** Okay, nice. How important do you think the Twitter platform is in today's society?

**Participant:** I think it's extremely, extremely important. I think it's there's a lot of conversations whether good or bad. I don't know if this happened in May 20. But the one I most memorably recent was, like, the debate about whether poor people should have children. So stuff like that, really, I guess, my sorry, polarizes back Twitter, but shows like, sometimes a sense of elitism that some of us can have. So I mean, to me personally, you can't separate poor people not having children without saying it's eugenics or like, just classism. Right? Right. Because the reality is, in my opinion, is that capitalism needs us to create poor people, if not the system collapses, because if someone's not disadvantaged, someone can't make, you know, tons of money. Right. And so some people think it's unethical.

**Researcher:** Right, that's true. And so when you think about so you just talked about capitalism, and elitism and a lot like within the black community, and even just in general, how do you think Twitter was able to bring those types of topics to the forefront for, say, people who don't know about those topics?

**Participant:** I think it introduces new perspectives, I think it um, what's the word? It kind of also helps you find your community, within your own community? So like, I find people who agree with me, and I find people who think the opposite of what I think they find people who agree with them. And that's how they make connections. Right? Right, it's definitely find your community within your community. So some people will find other black liberals, I will find other black radicals and think similar to what I do.

**Researcher:** Right. You can find those niche targets. And I think that's what's great about Twitter, like, you can, although you're black, it shows the intersectionality as well in whether your views your perspective, your identity. So I like that community piece. And so now we're gonna get more into the perception of Black Twitter. And it does right now doesn't have to be around 2020. Just overall Black Twitter. So what does it mean to you? Like, what is when you think of Black Twitter? Like, what is the first thing that comes to your mind? If you can recall an experience? Or where you realize like, oh, like, I'm in Black Twitter? Yeah, just like, talk to me about that.

**Participant:** I feels good to have a sense of community. Although I don't always agree with Black Twitter all the time. It's good to like, I guess, be surrounded by people I'm comfortable with living in a predominantly white society kind of don't get a break from white people. And that can be very exhausting, when you're constantly racialized and traumatized by these racial dynamics. So being surrounded by people like you, who don't necessarily, I guess the word racialized you constantly, it's refreshing to just be a person, right in that space. You're not like a black person. You're just a person among these people.

**Researcher:** Right. And how do you think that's different from the online interaction versus say you were in a physical space with a bunch of black People, do you think it will be the same experience that community peace?

**Participant:** I think it's a bit different. I feel like on Twitter, people are more likely to feel more, I guess, raw, or unfiltered. I guess in public, you kind of have the sense that people are listening or that you might not be in a truly black space, because it's hard for you to find truly black spaces, because you have to fight for them. So many colleges are against, like black people grouping together talking about segregation or whatever nonsense. On Twitter, you don't really get that you're not going to hear people say, Oh, you're segregating yourself, because it's, it's not as obvious on social media.

**Researcher:** So, do you think it's okay to use black Twitter as an umbrella term for all black users on the app?



**Participant:** African Americans, it would be like Afro Caribbeans, Afro Latino next. There, the different sub genres like Afro Caribbeans will have different conversations. But overall, they're still a part of Black Twitter, like Black is more, I guess, a better descriptor.

**Researcher:** And so say, Black Twitter, had they have their own community like discourse? And there are some black users who don't agree with that? Would they still be considered as part of Black Twitter?

**Participant:** Depends. I guess it depends on if I agree with them. If you're conservative, I'm not claiming you. But I honestly don't see like certain kinds of black people be involved in those spaces, right? Like, I don't, I guess it's because I just don't interact with them. But I don't see black conservatives or black Republicans, me involved in black theater. But I guess if you want to be technical, they probably have some sense of community amongst themselves as black Republicans or black conservatives, because there's more than one of them. I guess, if you wanted to technically say, you're part of lucky

**Researcher:** And then, if you could just tell me about one of your favorite Black Twitter moments? In general, whether it be something very small scale, a huge scale Black Twitter moment, and how was it impactful for you?

**Participant:** See, there's so many. I guess I would say maybe a cello. That was very nice. Beyonce is very talented, she's good at what she does, but other people want to recognize it or not. And people come together and enjoy that she did her own thing was Coachella to the point where they call it it's called the cello. So I really enjoyed watching everyone enjoys, I guess you could say it wasn't as polarizing as other. Yeah, it was a joyous moment, you would say, like, you know, mutually enjoyed by everybody. Yes, taste.

**Researcher:** Right. Okay. And so now we're going to get into the attitudes towards 2020 So when you think of this past year, what is the first things that come to your mind? When you think of the year 2020?

**Participant:** Probably pandemic and racial trauma think twice when you opened up a lot of can of worms for some people  
2020 most for me personally shifted me from black liberalism to like black radicalism for me personally.

**Researcher:** And if you can explain the difference and how you transition through those two

**Participant:** So I used to be a black liberal so I used to think that you know, there is a possibility for POC unity I think there's possibility for my allies to like coexist with us stone but I used to think that you know, I wasn't as against capitalism. But it's to me when you realize that those

things are I guess not as easy to solve, I guess. I feel like you shift into black radicalism because because like um, I guess it's like with a white allies and POC unity. The truth of the matter is that there's just so many anti blackness within those communities. It's hard for you to say that, Oh, this group of people can be useful or like I as helpful in the fight against what was it racism, I guess. Like within those communities, although they claim to be progressive and liberal, they still have anti black tendencies. So whether they use a V, although not being from the community, or they have like these subtle ways of thinking of black people that they don't realize is very problematic. So like, even like, when some white girls or non black people talk about crackhead energy, we think about where that comes from. And who that mainly affects it's a harmful term. It's also making fun of like, black people from the 80s, who were severely damaged by the crack epidemic, But if you tell them like that, stuff like that, they're like, that's just a joke. It's not as serious. But when you look at the history behind the things that they say it is that serious,

**Researcher:** And do you think Twitter was able to? Do you think it's able to educate viewers on some of the points that you just told me about?

**Participant:** I think so. But I think it heavily depends on how receptive you are. So for me, personally, I guess I became a black radical because of the things that other people said and I was like, you know, you're absolutely right. So like, especially with like, I guess one good example would be fat phobia. So a lot of fat activists on Twitter made me realize how I am even fat phobic whether I want to or not, like if I gain weight, I'm gonna start seeing myself as disgusting. But if I see someone fat, I generally don't think they're disgusting, but I do have internalized fat phobia. But by listening to them, I realized how I can be better and unlearn. fatphobia and make me being a member of society a safer space for fat people, especially if that black people It also makes me aware to more of their issues like how in health care, all their their all their issues are just solely, I guess, blamed on their fatness. When that might not be the case. Fat people can be healthy. Yep. In fact, I see I mean, if you if you look at lizard lizard is way healthier than me. I just started going to the gym after years. Like there's always still fat muscle, I little seems to eat a more balanced diet than I do. Right. But I don't get judged for my body as much as she does, right.

**Participant:** I just, I think that it's not honestly, I don't think he's even is about health, because if it was you would see more shaming of people doing drugs. Well, there's shaming of people doing drugs, but depends. Or you would see a more shame of like alcoholism, a lot of people get wasted every weekend, or every even every day that's not healthy. But society sees a fudge, so it's acceptable. Or you'll see a bunch of skinny girls eating like a lot of unhealthy food like sweetie, the way that sweetie eats is a joke, but it's not like shaming her versus Lizzo exists and she gets chewed up. So it's really about how we perceive fatness. Because it's not even about health. It's just that we hate it.

**Researcher:** And what are some topics that when you see around black women that have been amplified and talked about whether that be colorism, whether that be sexual assault in 20s, like you know, things of that nature. When you think about Briana Taylor and how her life matters,

in what ways have Black Twitter consolidated that point around the protection of black women, or even have showed you that black women aren't protected in a way.

**Participant:** So, I see both, but it depends on the type of black women so and colorism does play into this. So it's like sweetie, for example. People don't really attack her personally, even though I would argue that she's not the best rapper. Sometimes he would make fun of that. And I guess you can see that's me. But like, people don't really, I guess the word you could say bully her, versus like fat, or dark skinned women, they get less less of a safety net. Especially dark skinned women. They're off masking lines, like even when Megan the stallion, and you can say that she is obviously a woman, she has the body type where it will be obvious. But still, she's even masking lines, even with a tutorial in situation. You I wouldn't even say she's protected and she's not even dark skinned. So I guess it also plays into the whole white supremacy issue of like, um, I guess the white damsel in stress, not that like light skinned black people are white, but they're closer to whiteness, I guess, based on their complexion. So they're more, I guess, what's the word they're more seen as a victim. Which is pretty dehumanizing for dark skinned women. So I do see a lot of people bringing that up. And talking about a lot more especially in 2020. And how like, I guess, in depth, colorism is so like, even with like, a small, a growing movement of peoples in DRC. Women are beautiful. But it's the kind of dark skinned women they're seeing. They're beautiful. It's like, dark skinned women are like exceptional in any race or any skin color, you're going to find people just just drop dead gorgeous, you know. But at the end of the day, when they see regular dark skinned people in the world, or just regular, they're not like drop dead gorgeous, or just, you know, normal looking people. They're not treated or as I idealized as like people like Ryan destined or just like, you know, drugs and crutches.

**Researcher:** That's really good point. So I guess feature ism also plays a role in how that same amount received. is true. Really, it's pretty complex. Yeah, it definitely is. And as we jump from that topic, when we think about in 2020, police brutality, ratio, and justice, overall, in general, how has that increased? If it is an increase in visibility impacted your life, whether that be offline or online?

**Participant:** Well, for me, personally, it kind of makes me sad, I guess. So although police brutality is a major issue among black men, I feel like black women get raised on the topic, as well as black non men and by non men. I mean, like trans non binary black people, those people, they get erased from the topic, and they are definitely people who experience violence from the state in a severe way, especially trans people or non binary black people. So I guess it's just sad to see us and raised because although the George Floyd situation was incredibly sad, but you can see the difference between Briana Taylor and George Floyd, like, people kind of even I guess the word. That's what Robert is saying. I'd be on a terrorism movement, I guess we could say was, he wasn't taking us seriously, people may like memes about it, like arrest the guys who locked up Brown, I mean, killed reality or stuff like that. I didn't necessarily, it may have me, it may have happened. I didn't necessarily see that with George Floyd, I think he was taking a bit more seriously. And I just feel like we're gonna Taylor got forgotten. She never got the same amount

of energy as tourists Floyd. And even like, when conversations of state violence or police brutality comes up, they're always like, you know, black men aren't vulnerable, and so on and so on. It's like, black women are also vulnerable. Black non men are also vulnerable. But we kind of get erased from the conversation, which is why we use say her name, but even that got commodified by non black people, which is upsetting because it's, it's a term for a reason because we get erased right?

**Researcher:** good point, say her name. And that originally did start on Twitter as a Twitter campaign for black women. And so in what ways has the influence of Black Twitter been co opted in non black, whether it be online groups or outside online groups in a way but if you could talk more about that?

**Participant:** So I would definitely say with almost every term, um, even like cultural appropriation, a lot of non black people you Is there a term but it was it was originated to specifically talk about black issues and how, you know, the culture that we did create despite slavery. It's being co opted by other people and stolen versus with other racial groups, I feel like I don't know, I don't feel like their culture has been stolen, in a sense. I feel like cultural appropriation is more appropriate for black people. Because the culture that we have, I guess, okay, I say, I'm not sure how to put it, I guess, um, the culture that we have, it's just so fragile since we basically created it from start. Despite all the trauma that we have been through. You could also say that for black lives matter, like, came up with all eyes matter, Blue Lives Matter. And although they want to say that it's completely different, it's, it's really just retort to Black Lives Matter. Or there's another one, I guess, what's the word? Intersectionality was predominantly a black issue. other racial groups used it, but didn't really recognize the, I guess, the NIT and grit of what it truly is. Because intersectionality is all about how different parts of black identities influence a larger issue. So capitalism and racism and colorism think all come together and are not separate issues, white supremacy, they all come together, they all function at the same time. I am a black woman, I am black, as well as a woman at the same time. So my gender and my racial identities coexist. At the same time, I can't separate them. I'm not black one time and a woman one time. Other women they tried, like other groups, they'll try to like I guess kind of erases intersectionality, they'll try to say the patriarchy is more important than racial trauma. And it's like, both are happening at the same time. They both exist at the same time. They both reinforce each other, which is a whole point of intersectionality. Right? There's, there's definitely other stuff I just can't think of right now.

**Researcher:** No, it's okay. I completely understand. And so what are in so when we think about just 2020? Overall, what are some of the most notable events to you? Whether it be political, social, cultural, anything, what are some that just like, you instantly think of whether it brought you joy, or, you know, sadness or whatnot.

**Participant:** I guess for me, it would be more probably the commodification of black activism. So you saw with the black squares, or people saying black lives matter, but then they're not saying it anymore, because it's no longer a trend. I definitely see like how black activism has now become

a facet of capitalism. So people are making songs about it, which I don't like, or peep, they're activists who profit off of these stuff. They go on news. And, you know, I feel like because it's being commodified, the issues are no longer I guess, being taken the proper way. It's more about making money or making it look good than it is about helping the people in the community that you're fighting for. I feel like it's becoming a prophet versus something that's actually supposed to help people. Right. So like, even like with some of these activists, when they do the things that they do, if they did it from a good place, not from like a profit, or just a visibility kind of plays, when people the community tell them, hey, what you're doing is wrong. They will listen. There was one activist I believe, I think Tim Martin writes his mother called her house for basically commodifying her son's death. And if you cared about the community that you're fighting for, you would look at yourself and you'd have some sense of introspection and say, This mother is right. I am using her son's image for money. And I should stop that, but it's not about the people that you're fighting for. It's about money or profit or visibility or just looking good, right? So that's what's I guess harmful or scaring me that you know, these very important movements are becoming I guess a part of capitalism you know, just trying to sell something a form of capital or trauma is now once being sold again back to us.

**Researcher:** And, and are there other notable events?

**Participant:** Um, I guess I could talk about something happier. I did enjoy like, you know, people making jokes. Are you good? Are you that's a bit insensitive. But you know, it's it's very difficult living in a pandemic. So sometimes the jokes helps you get through it. So the jokes, you know, a penny pendulum, whatever keyword they came up with it was it, it made it less miserable, if you will.

**Researcher:** Right. And so the part two of this of that question is like, how has the two ever Twitter covered these moments? And what in what ways have you participated in that coverage? So like, when you talk about the commodification of black activism, and you know, the jokes around the pandemic? And what ways have Twitter specifically Black Twitter, like, amplified those moments, as well as how have you participated in those moments?

**Participant:** Like I've tweeted about stuff that I disagree with or agree with, I like tweets that I found were funny, or, you know, or I agree with, I think, like Twitter has led to these discussions coming off of social media. And it also has led to me finding people I agree with, or me learning from other people. Like when they have their opinions about different topics. I'm like, you know, you're absolutely right. Sorry, what was the other part of your question? Again? I feel like, how, how is Twitter covered these moments? And in what ways have you participated in the discussion?

**Researcher:** So I think Twitter covers it very well, and sometimes for prolonged periods of time. So I remember with like, porch, people having children, that discussion went on for like days, or specifically to the commodification of black activism.

**Participant:** Yeah, so I see, like, a lot of people I follow, being very wary of the very popular activists, even like Shaun King, is a classic example of someone who commodifies something that should not be commodified. Right, he definitely makes a profit off of these things. I'm not an example. Although people don't want to recognize it as Jay Z. Jay Z profits off of this, he will say, Oh, he hears about the community hears about racism and systematic injustice, but then he's in league with a bunch of rich white people don't care about us. At the end of the day, he is a black capitalist. So he's going to align with his class. He doesn't care about the black community as much as he says, because if he did, he would care about poor black people. And there's no way he can do that while also recording wealth. So I do see a lot of discussion criticizing Jeezy. And there are also people praise GZ. They're like, well, you know, he speaks about some very real issues. And although that may be true, you could also argue he's just regurgitating what black female activist has been saying for years. Right? Because it's coming from a man's mouth, it sounds more profound.

**Researcher:** That's a really good point.

**Participant:** Even with J Cole and the Noname situation, we can even see that. So I'm only inside because although I understand why people were coming from in terms of like saying that, Oh, well, not everyone in the community is going to understand, I guess these are the social concepts as well. You're not going to know theories and so on. Because you know, their average, their average working class, people are not going to know what mobilization is, or whatever. And that is true, but I feel like when it comes to no name, it's not a fair day, because she, she does a lot about educating people. She has a book club for prisoners, where she gives them books, and she discusses the books with them. So I don't feel like that's the same. For her. She was mostly calling out what I was talking about the commodification of black activism, how like these rappers a Tonsley talk about, you know, social issues or racial injustice. But when these issues come up, they're nowhere to be found. Or they they're just there for the photo op. Because if they generally cared about these issues, one they wouldn't be as hoarding as much wealth, or two, you wouldn't see so many cases of them abusing black woman.

**Researcher:** Right. And so, just to go off of that, when you think about in 2020, the protests that was happening so much coverage, celebrities coming out donating brand saying that they'll do this and that how has in your Black Twitter experience, how did they interact with those events?

**Participant:** So like the noname and Jay Cole, in your experience on your online like feed, where there are people who agreed with it, who didn't agree like what were their thoughts, what were their reactions, even to the protests that was happening to the brands who were saying this? And that, that basically, I'm sorry, I'm rambling. But like, what was your response to, like you said the commodification of black activism on online or offline. So, um, I would say there are I saw a lot of people who agree with Jay Paul and a lot of people Gruden on him. Some people felt like no name was specifically calling out Jay Cole, when she was just speaking in general, it is a fact that there's a lot of people make songs about social injustice. But when it's time for them to put their,

their money where their mouth is, or their actions where their mouth is nowhere to be found. And that's just a fact. She was specifically talking about Jay Cole, if Jay Cole believes in his heart of hearts, that that's not him. And, you know, he shouldn't have been offended and the whole song about it. But I feel like colorism and sexism plays a role. I find that a lot of men find it hard to criticize other men, or even call them out. So they'll go as far as to even go beyond logic to protect them or to defend them. Because if a man is right, I'll say he's right, for they're rarely, right. So I just thought this whole situation was done, because I'm like, she was right. And if you had any sense of introspection, you'd realize. And he, even the song, he was kind of, I guess, to me, asking her to hold his hand through all this and like, you're a rich, black man, rich, biracial black man. In a society that you're very protected by. So you should do some of the work on your own. You're also college educated, you're not stupid. No one should hold your hand. So I'm not even responding to that feedback. Well, you be like, I guess classes are leaders by saying that you don't want to hold people's hand and like, I think it depends on the context. And the situation. Obviously, if you're not as educated as I am, I will I would break it down for you, I would hold your hand. And I think she does that especially it's obvious, but the book club, right? What Tico is a grown man with a college education. And he's rich, so he has time, right? If he was interested in this, he would listen to the people of his community, especially black activist, black female activists.

**Researcher:** I completely agree. And then just as we move on, we have like 15 minutes left. But um, we're gonna talk about a developed resistance identity. So how Black Twitter has developed this idea of resistance among users, whether that be to white society, mainstream media, and you talked about a little bit earlier, and I wanted to know, what do you think about how Black Twitter has formed resistance? And what have we resisted? Have you seen online?

**Participant:** Um, I guess I would almost say everything like, you know, I see a lot of discourse of us resisting, like, I guess, will be a good example, some of the stuff that our parents would except. So people turning, paid time off into prepare the others. That is a very strong way of us rejecting capitalism or even white society. A lot of people are pushing back against the idea of professionalism. Why can't I wear braids to work? What's wrong with my tattoos? Like all these kinds of things that we have discussions about is really us resisting white society and even capitalism if you want to go as far. So I think we we don't really react to conversations, we steer the conversations.

I like that, that and so do you think in its essence when you think about 2020 that Black Twitter has also took place of marching and rallying and protesting has been just like a proxy to that.

I think it's a just as a powerful tool as like physical demonstrations. Because whether the larger society wants to admit it or not, Black Twitter is rather powerful. And it's very scary to some people, even like things on Tik Tok when I remember they were making like, some very insensitive racial jokes there. I think there was one trans Asian girl was in a cotton field or something. Black Twitter, eat her up and he made her very scared and cried. Yeah, so people are fearful of that. So back to her has a lot of more has a lot more power than we think we do. Especially if we're united on the topic. Yeah. And so, and just I think it's just as powerful because

it can change shift culture even like, I guess, I wouldn't even say punish because there's they don't lose anything really, like they can move on their life is not ruined, even though they think it is. But it does give us a sense of accountability. Like when you want to hold them accountable, sometimes you can turn to Black Twitter, and they can do that for you, which I think is very important.

**Researcher:** I definitely agree. And so I think you, you've touched on like the idea of having a voice and Black Twitter, allowing us to have that voice to whether it be tearing somebody up if they say something disrespectful or whatnot. So in what ways has like, you think it's amplified people's voices? Specifically, your voice? How do you think your voice has been amplified? Online on Black Twitter versus whether you're in physical space in whether is your classroom or, say, a white dominated space? How do you think your voice differs?

**Participant:** I think it differs a lot, you know, in a white dominated space, like I said earlier about us not having as good as black spaces in public as it is online. I feel like in white spaces, you're inclined to be a little bit, I guess, what's the word appeasing? You don't want to be too aggressive with your black politics? Because then my people are gonna think you want to murder them all. That's not the case. But because I guess their whiteness is so important to them, that they see as an attack on them versus when you have discussions online. Yeah, not all black people are gonna agree with you. But you're about to find like a community of people who listen to you, or who also thinking the same things that you do. So whether you don't know how to put it into words. And that point is very real. For me personally, sometimes I'll have I'll think certain things, I have no way of putting it into words and someone like Twitter puts it into words so eloquently. That is, it makes you feel heard or seen. You're like, that's exactly what I was thinking. I just couldn't put it into words how it happened. So like, um, although technically, it's not Twitter, there were there was a conversation on Tik Tok, how like, autism is viewed from a white lens. So like a lot of the features from autism, it's, it wouldn't coincide with black people very well. So for example, like, autistic people can tend to feel like ostracized or excluded or feel weird. You could say that for any black person. Because we live in a racialized society. So stuff like that it puts into words stuff that I never imagined I needed to put into words. So that person telling me that, you know, autism is not even coded for black people, because it's seen from a white lens. That's really important that makes you feel seen or heard, because you're like, oh, maybe I am not just a weird person, or weird black person. I, there's something that explains the way I am.

**Participant:** Okay. So like, even like, especially with autism, like, um, some of the features that you see, it's easier for you to identify them in white society that it is in black society. And it is a it is a known fact that a lot of black girls find it difficult to get diagnosed with autism. And I feel like a huge reason of that is that I guess what the word would be, I guess, um, how often we are ignored in the health care system, and also how these features are not taken as seriously in black women or black little girls. So with black people often feeling excluded or feeling, I guess, anti social or are having even special interests. That would look a lot differently in black children, and he would invite children. Sometimes if their special interests might be just seen as escapism. So like, people who live in very traumatized zones, might have special interests, or other, I guess,



personal traits that would make them autistic but it's not, they're not seen as autistic because I guess they live in such a traumatized zone that it just it's not perceived as such. And if I'm making sense, I don't know a lot about the topic, but it just made a lot of sense to me how like autism or other issues don't get picked up as easily in the black community because these things were defined through white lenses, right? So what also happens is a lot of black people with autism might get misdiagnosed as schizophrenic. And it's very common for doctors to just diagnose people with schizophrenia. And I feel like, this is my personal opinion on my educated opinion. But like, I feel like we get diagnosed more often with schizophrenia, because we just have our community suffers so much from racial trauma, like my cause. I guess what white society might seem as a psychotic break was just like they're just exhausted, of being constantly racialized or constantly traumatized by what they look like. So I feel like that's how they end up cutting corners on a schizophrenic, when really, they're just just so traumatize like racial trauma is not what is it sort of a mental illness.

**Researcher:** I'm just writing down. I really enjoyed that piece. Because although, of course, the topic isn't as related to blacks. But I think what's important is how you're able to identify, learn, and continue what you've learned to others like me, you're educating me, based on what you see on your social feed. And we touched on the idea of escapism, and I know it was specific to autism, as well as racial trauma. I think those two are really important, we think about how we've cultivated community resisted, um, and the way we act online. And so I really did enjoy that piece. And do you think that for you personally, or for anyone, you know, on your feed, that they are experiencing that escapism, and that racial trauma and that is perpetuated on their feed on what they say what they retweet what they like? Do you think there's a connection there?

**Participant:** I don't think so. I think that for yourself is a really great tool for escapism. Yeah. Pretty addicting. It's, it's a place where you can be yourself, and you can enjoy yourself, and you can learn and you can find out more about who you truly are. So that's really what rang true for me personally, I used to identify as liberal more, I guess, identify with leftism, or like, just black radicalism. And Twitter helped a lot with that, because the conversations that people would say, I was like, I totally agree with that. And I, then they would criticize certain things. I'm like, You're absolutely right. So I think Twitter provides a great tool for stuff like that. It teaches you a lot, but also shows you how different people can think from you, which is important.

**Researcher:** Right? And so just to like, move away from like, the racial trauma, the bad things, bad the bad things, but you know, the things are just more realistic. In what ways have you been like, given joy on the feet? I know, you talked about jokes, but like, Were there certain moments where you just felt happy to be on Black Twitter? Throughout 2020?

**Participant:** Hmm, definitely. It I think it touches back on the escapism. So like, I'm with like, Chloe Bailey and Holly Bailey, like, the conversation around their music, or their talents, or even Beyonce, or Nicki Minaj. Like, people coming together to enjoy their art or their music. It's very refreshing. And it's a great way to escape from constantly being racialized or, you know, traumatized by society. It's like, I'm enjoying this one thing with my community. And it's very

good. So like, even with the vs thing, it was nice watching people enjoy music. It was just refreshing to see people talk about music on the timeline, and just the kind of joy that it would bring you make me happy. Right? There was a way of escaping the reality of the pandemic and everything that was going on at the time. It was just this, it was a moment in time where you could just enjoy yourself. You didn't have to think about much.

**Researcher:** I definitely agree. And now is there anything else you want to like talk about mentioned related to the topic, it could be anything. Before we get into the last set of questions, sure.

**Participant:** I just want to I just think that black twitter is a powerful tool and it's it's very underrated. It's because conversations creates conversation it it draws culture it It shifts culture it it's very powerful whether we like to say so.

**Researcher:** Okay, so now we're just gonna get into like demographical questions. So if you could just state your age

**Participant:** 21

**Researcher:** What generation are you part of? So Gen X, Gen Y, Gen Z?

**Participant:** Gen Z.

**Researcher:** Okay. And how often do you spend on Twitter? How often do you spend on Twitter daily?

**Participant:** probably eight hours a day off work

**Researcher:** And how much how would you say for like weekly?

**Participant:** 56 hours

**Researcher:** when was the first when did you first make a Twitter account? Like what year?

**Participant:** 2014.

**Researcher:** Well, thank you. Well, thank you for participating in this interview. Let me just hit the record.

**Participant #7**

**Researcher:** Hi, Jada. Thank you for participating in my research on the cultural influence of Black Twitter. So before we start, if you can please tell me about yourself and your interests and hobbies? And how does that align to your online feed and interest on Twitter?

**Participant:** Hi, my name is Jada Harvin. I'm currently a senior at FSU. Some of my interest in hobbies are art. So I have my own business. And through there, I create artwork, I make clothes, stuff like that. So I feel like through my interests on Twitter, I see a lot of that as well. So I see a lot of different artists, especially black artists on Twitter. I'll get familiar with new up and coming small businesses through Twitter. So I feel like that is like a lot of my feed as well pop culture too.

**Researcher:** So thank you. And so how important do you think the Twitter platform is in today's society?

**Participant:** I feel like Twitter Oh, without Twitter, a lot of people wouldn't be recognized in a sense. Because like, it's so easy to just post something and then people will retweet it, you'll go viral. And then you can literally run your business off of Twitter, or you can meet new people off of Twitter and get connections. So and like just bring awareness to things that you wouldn't normally have, like thought of, or people wouldn't have normally thought to think about or even know, I feel like it's necessary in this day and age, like social media, in general is necessary for a lot of things now, especially since everything's online to where it's like, because of the whole pandemic. So it's like a big tool to keep people connected.

**Researcher:** so as a black creator yourself, how has Twitter like amplifying your work in your voice online to really like, connect with other artists or just people you want to buy, like your business, you know,

**Participant:** Oh, I feel like is putting me is brought me opportunities, I probably wouldn't have gotten otherwise. So like just to work with certain people or certain people see my work and I, so then I get people see in and they'll hit me up. And it's like very casual. And then you could just build a relationship off of that and, or I'll be introduced to new other artists work and then I'll reach out to them. And then I can form relationships with them. And then there is building a community versus doing it in person, which is harder now. But you can just go online and then

**Researcher:** Yeah. And so do you think that the platform is giving black creators to really, to really be themselves to really like put themselves out there on different platforms force versus like other creators you seen who aren't black?

**Participant:** Yeah, especially now, because of, especially in 2020. I feel like all like these businesses want to hop on hold Black Lives Matter trend. And then through Twitter, they're seeing it and people were calling them out on Twitter. So then they saw like, oh, we need these black

creators to help us get this content out there. So you see these people finally getting recognition jobs, all through that platform. Versus like before Twitter. It wasn't it was very hush hush like, oh, or you weren't put into certain positions, or you couldn't get to certain positions. Were not through Twitter, and they will call you out about it. Like if you not so I feel like what was the question?

**Researcher:** You answered it. Yes. Okay. Yeah. Yeah. Okay, so now we're gonna get into the perception of Black Twitter. So when you think of Black Twitter, like what are the first things that come to mind?

**Participant:** I think, I don't know like funny memes and videos. I feel like a lot of that comes from Black Twitter. I'm just different. Even things people will say like lingo is like, oh, that's from like Twitter, or he just reference back to it. Like, and I just think of a community like some other day asked me was Black Twitter, how do I get on Black Twitter? And I guess it's like, selective on who you follow. And because I feel like there's no like, Oh, let me open the door. And this is not like that. But it's just, I guess, your feed and then what you get from it. And then I feel like it travels outside of it too. Because you see like references and pop culture, often Black Twitter, right?

**Researcher:** Do you think you can name a reference of like something that was from black culture, like white culture, but Black Twitter, and you were like, This is Aarthi. So like, for an example, hashtags, Thanksgiving with black families, or like...

**Participant:** Oh my god. Oh my god. Any examples or it doesn't have to be happy. hashtags, but more so like moments where you was like, wow, Black Twitter did this or like, it was just like that community aspect. Oh, I feel like the things that come to mind are like, especially like Thanksgiving that one you put in my head, I gotta think now. So it's like a lot, especially it cannot think about people put like vines on Twitter stuff like that. And then those are big again, like a large Oh, he got my knee bigger like videos that will go viral on there. Um, it's a lot of stuff on like Twitter. Just everything like the things people say I can't it's so ingrained is hard for me to really sit back and think is this from like Twitter. Or like, just because so much stuff. Oh, and that's okay. Like you can keep on thinking but the fact that you said it's ingrained, so would you say Black Twitter is part of the culture? Black culture? Why do you think so Oh, especially now because so many people can't, you'll get on there. And then a lot of people can go in there and have shared experiences as well as learn about new experiences, too. So without it, I think it keeps us as a community connected, in a sense, because you'll see something and be like, Oh, I can relate to that. Or oh, I never thought of that. And this was like you keep that those relationships.

**Researcher:** Right. In a sense. Yeah. Yeah. And so do you think it's okay to use the like Black Twitter as an umbrella term for all Black Twitter users?

**Participant:** Um, no, well, yes. And no, I feel like cuz, I don't know. You can say. That's a hard one. I feel like Yes. Because I don't like to generalize people just because you're black doesn't mean you're on Black Twitter. Because, but I feel like, yes. I'm gonna say no, just the fact some people are within like, you know, a black Twitter is and then just because, but just because you're black, doesn't mean you're in Black Twitter type thing, or you're not in participating in that, I guess. There's I know, there's other Twitter let her like this nurse Twitter, for people who are interested in the whole that whole nursing?

**Researcher:** No, I feel you. And so when did you first notice you were part of Black Twitter? Oh, I feel like back in high school. I made a tweet. And it went viral on Black Twitter. So like, in this was a tweet.

**Participant:** It was Oh, um, I could pull it up on my phone. Yeah. Oh, it was the I so Bo's, like when your teacher tells you to write an essay, and all that is, and that's all that okay. And this, right? And so Okay, what about that tweet do you think made it went so viral on Black Twitter? It was funny. I feel like some people could relate to it, because that's how they some people didn't actually talk about it. So home and when they tell a story, so that people that Oh, I can relate to that. And then it just kind of kept going. And then people thought it was funny.

**Researcher:** Right, so a lot of what you're saying is like this community aspect relating and so for you on Black Twitter as a user, like what commonalities Have you shared with others on Twitter? So what are like some topics where you're just like, I get that or I understand, and things like that, and how do you relate just like, certain topics as far as growing up or mental health, like, especially within the black community,

**Participant:** they'll talk about certain things and like, wow, I can relate on that. Or I'm just like, dances and stuff, funny things and jokes. It's like, you kind of see that commonality. And it's like, oh, we all here we all went through that.

**Researcher:** Right. Okay, and so now we're gonna go into attitudes towards 2020. So more so like speaking specifically to this past year. So when you think of this past year 2020 Like what are the first things events that come to mind? When you think of this past year?

**Participant:** Oh, definitely the pandemic, Black Lives Matter movement, like George Floyd, I'm Kobe. A lot of happen this year. What's his name? Chadwick. Um, what else? A lot of death this year and a lot of just change though. It's a lot of depth, but a lot of them change as far as like, just the way people are starting to realize how certain things aren't okay. Like it bring it to attention. Like that's not okay type thing, I guess. That's the best way I could put it.

**Researcher:** And so how was that impactful for you? As a Twitter user? Were you part of that those discussions? Like how did you feel during those moments where it's like you're learning or you see other people become more self aware, and has that like really changed your impact you.

**Participant:** Um, it kind of put a lot of things into perspective as far as how they're so like, just, if we really all come together, we can really make our own table. And so like, we don't have to, we can make our own table, like, it's just a matter of coming together and putting in the work, and how you can really shake the whole system put in place, especially just seeing all these, like high school before all these companies now realizing, wow, we need the black dollar, because without it, we're nothing. So it's kind of seeing that and how important impactful we can really be. Um, it also made me realize how much of the internet in this like, as we move on in life, like in the future, how important is going to be to actually just have an internet presence because of COVID and everything online. So it's like important, though, it's not just a joke. It's like, you can really make money off of this, you can really become something off of this,

**Researcher:** No, I definitely agree. That was a really good answer to like I you said like you can we can create our own table. And it shows you know, that influence or impact that Black Twitter has. And so when you talked about like, there's there was a lot of debt. How did that how was that covered on Twitter? Like, what did you see some of your followers say, some of the people you follow, like, talk about, like those deaths like Kobe and Chadwick, like you, you explained,

**Participant:** It was a lot of just embracing their legacies. It was sad, but it was like, damn, they really did that. Kind of, like they did that. And then just it kind of motivating to, in a way, like, just to see the impact they left. It's like, what do you want to do with your life? And like, just how can you further move, I guess, the community, and how we keep their legacy alive? Or with George Floyd? How, if all was coming together, like what, what can we really do to like, make a change in life? And I guess, since we're young, too, it's like, you have all these hopes and dreams. And just seeing that, too. It's like, it's motivating to just see where we can bring this. Right.

**Researcher:** Yeah, I definitely agree. And so how did Twitter cover those moments of like, the pandemic and Black Lives Matter? Did you see like a lot of facts? What were people saying?

**Participant:** There were a lot of facts just about everything that happened, especially and then, you know, with the video of George Floyd. So it was like, we had evidence. So it was like, we had the video or like, it was it was more on top of it, then the news like, especially with the protests, like people were like finding our protest work and twitter or just new, like facts, watch out for this, like, different there's putting facts on knowing your rights. So it's like, you can learn through Twitter, like more so than me putting off CNN or something, like you will learn more through the app. I mean, you offset the fact check everything because you know, people can say anything, but it's just it puts that idea in your head.

**Researcher:** Yeah, no, definitely. And so, um, you talked a lot about, like, you know, racial trauma, there was like, a lot of deaths, just things related to like the black statehood, if that makes

sense. Or just the state of blackness? How did you reckon with that moment on Twitter, like, was Twitter a place for you to escape to like, because everything was just so much going on? Or was it a place where I was like, Okay, this is a lie. And I have to, like, take a break, like, how was that for you? And like, were some of your followers a support system in a way.

**Participant:** So it was sort of moments where like, Honey, a break, but other moments are people were trying to, like, you know, uplift each other on the app, too. So it was like, you have both you have moments that were really dark. But then you have moments that were full of joy, and like, just you see just happy moments with people. And then so like, okay, there's like trying to find that balance where like, all right, I know, sometimes I need to take a break from the app. But sometimes when you go on it, you will see things that make you laugh, like you still have those means you still have all that everything that's so funny coming out of it. So it's just I guess, finding that balance too. And then I mean, social media in general. I feel like it's important to just have a balance, like, cuz some moments just to take without all those distractions.

**Researcher:** Yeah, definitely. That was really good. And so when you looked at like we talked about the video of George Floyd, there was like an increase of visibility of police brutality, you saw Everybody, Shawn justice, how did that impact you have that impact your life during that time, like offline and online? offline? And I know I talked about George Floyd, but there was like Breanna Taylor and Alex. And so even if you want to relate that to your identity as a black woman, like, how was that impactful for you offline and online?

**Participant:** I guess off what I want to talk about first, I guess, online, it was just it was it was tough to put this in words. Like online, you were just more aware. Like, I mean, we always know what happened. But just watching it was very, like, damn dark. It was like, damn it, but it also, you know, it happens. So just, I guess it's like, oh, now we have visibility, we have proof. Like, we're not just saying all these things. And then you're like, oh, Nah, no, you can see it for yourself. Like, it's not a lie. I'm offline, too. I feel like people are just more well, I guess we're like, the people I surrounded myself with were more supportive and more willing to, like, go out and make a change. And one wanted to do something to go out and make a change, and also motivated me to want to go out and like do more for the community. Um, so I guess you have both and they all like to, like you saw like, all these different people who needed help and like, funds and then was like, wow, I can help you. I don't have to physically like go to you, but I can still help. Or I can still help out the cause. So just that finding different ways to help people, I guess online and offline, as well as just by me mental health wise to you and think about it. It was a lot. It was a roller coaster that year, it was a roller coaster. Cuz then this is a lot going on.

**Researcher:** And so when you say roller coaster, what do you mean by mental health bike? Just it was just so much going on? And it was hard to really like focus on your mental health or what do you mean by that,

**Participant:** um, just because everything going on. It was a plus, we're all in quarantines. I feel like us being isolated from each other also played a big factor in just it was a lot of a lows a lot. But then, you know, highs and the lows. It was just a lot of lows. I feel like as far as it because there's just a lot. It was just a lot of lows.

**Researcher:** Yeah. And so I know you've been focusing on the lows, and the focus on the highs of 2020. Like, what were some moments that were just like, you saw black people on Twitter really come together and like joyous moments,

**Participant:** like I remember, I think beats made some commercial, I forgot that, you know, I'm talking about it was this beat, I was like, wow, we really doing it, like you saw like you see all these own different people being represented and spotlights. You're like, Damn, you're doing that. You're doing that. So I was just seeing Matt, um, just all the content being put out there. Because it was now like, it's just so much. And now people actually are recognizing how creative us as black people are and what we really bring to the table. So I feel like those were really like the highs, like just seeing like, Damn y'all doing that. I've got that job or Yeah, like, isn't seeing that. Right. And so when people were like doing their thing on Twitter, like did you see like Black Twitter really like celebrating them? Like how did Black Twitter really like? You know, amplify really beat those highs. Um, you see, they all like blow up retweets, you see them getting positioned, put getting put into different positions, like, as far as jobs. So I guess just people were celebrating it, like we get we finally get in our flowers are flowers. So just that well, those moments to those are like the highs?

**Researcher:** Yeah. And then also, um, as a black user, on Twitter, do you feel like your voice is more empowered on the platform versus like, say, a community, like physically in a community that's not as black? Or it's like majority? Not?

**Participant:** I feel like on Twitter, two people are and I guess since this the social media, two people feel more inclined, like it was easier for me to like, retweet you, or like, repost it or whatever. So I feel like on Twitter, too, is gonna I feel my voice makes more of an impact. And then just learning how to take that and like apply it within the real world tool to get my voice out there. So but Twitter definitely, like helps put push forward. And it's like an easier way to because it's like nothing for you to like you're retweeted.

**Researcher:** Right? So now that we're talking about like voices and what you believe in what is something that you're really passionate about, about the black community and how have you use your voice to relay that on Black Twitter.

**Participant:** I feel like fashion like as far as when it comes to fashion, we are like the trendsetters. So just I'm putting that out there and just engaging with these up and coming fashion designers like that black fashion designers, I feel like because at the end of the day, they're going to be the ones years from now who are setting the next trends. So just bringing light onto that I feel like



fashion as within the black community is so important because all these different styles like Kim Kardashian, all them are wearing where you think they got it from. So just like fashion is definitely what I'm most passionate about. Yeah.

**Researcher:** thank you. And so now we're gonna go more into just like, like the community aspect of Black Twitter. So do you believe that you have sense community with users even if you don't know them?

**Participant:** Yeah like, I have different art friends say on Black Twitter. And so it's like, I have those. And then, like, I've never met them, but those are like, Oh, I could hit you up, like, what do you think about this, and then it's like, I have those friends. You don't have friends. Like you could tweet something and up, even on a more local scale to I have my black South Florida friends, you tweet something, and we all relate to that. So it's, um, you have different I think communities within Black Twitter, but at the end of the day is all black Twitter.

**Researcher:** That makes sense. Yeah, definitely. And so what topics Have you shared on Black Twitter that has resonated with your identity? So I know you're talking about fashion and fire? But are there any things that really relate to who you are as a person? And like, have you found people who resonate with that as well? Hmm,

**Participant:** that's interesting, I guess, um, as an artist, for sure. I guess just Gen Z, I guess as a being black in Gen Z, too. That's a big thing. I feel like we have our experience is so much different from someone say like, older or like, younger than us. So just growing up Gen Z, us having technology at such a young age, I feel like we have those to relate to. So those are the other other things as well.

**Researcher:** Nice. And so you've really answered a lot of my questions, even if, like part of one question you answered, basically, most of them just the last few questions, like do you think that Black Twitter has become a form of advocacy? For black people nowadays? Yeah.

**Participant:** um, I feel like to a lot of people get, like, I guess this whole and you have canceled culture too. So like, if certain people are doing wrong, like they'll call you out on it, or like, you'll get caught out on it. So like, you see people like these Karen's losing their jobs because of something they did. So you have that because of like Twitter, I feel like and like it just pushes it puts people in better positions. I didn't know Karen's, like the white lady's like call the cops on you will just act crazy for no reason. I don't specifically know exactly who was like the first Karen or where it started. But I just know that there's like a general name for them now, but I know watching the news the other day and they're like those Karen's so like, Think that Karen originated from black users tired of white women calling you know, harassing them? And was that on Black Twitter? Or was it just in social media in general, black people just say, I first time you saw Karen, where what platform was it on? I think it was on Twitter. Actually.

It was like boom, Karen's so yeah, I think I think it probably came from Twitter. I wouldn't be surprised if it did.

**Researcher:** Right. Okay, and so has Black Twitter become a way for you to have your voice heard when it comes to events on racial injustice, education, pop culture? Like it's the same kind of question like do you feel like your voice is really hurt?

**Participant:** Yeah, to an extent like I'm not no celebrity on Twitter or nothing, but I mean, I could put my opinion out there and then people will engage. So yeah, I think it is okay.

**Researcher:** And in what ways have Black Twitter brought you hope, happiness or laughter to your feet?

**Participant:** Oh, just just in general, like all the I'm seeing people succeed, just the funniness. Um, just the all of that just brings me hope for the future. I guess seeing people like you see, like, who from us growing up like, doing better things now. So it's like, damn, I can really see myself doing that too.

**Researcher:** And just to be on a happier note to end on a happier note, like, how have Twitter Black Twitter really brought you like, happiness? And I would say in terms of like, can you tell me on like something on Black Twitter? That's really what made you laugh recently or this past year? What is one of your favorite events that was like it brought a culture together?

**Participant:** It was just, it was fun. It was, you know, funny things like that. Oh that's a good one. Cuz I've been on Tik Tok recently, a lot. But, um, I feel like they can go what's it called hand in hand, but I guessing I love I guess I'm Black Twitter, the aesthetics that people put out there. So like the whole aesthetic, which we're finally getting recognized for the long nails, the big hoops braids. I just love that whole aesthetic and how it just finally being appreciated versus like, Oh, that's good. Oh, no, like, that's like a thing. And like, we're finally being celebrated for it, I guess or like recognized for it. So I feel like that is just like, wow, are we really doing that/

**Researcher:** Thank you. And so that's really all that I have. And if you if you can leave any other thoughts or comments related to the cultural impact of Black Twitter.

**Participant:** Oh, sorry, another thing that came to mind to the whole, you know, the whole SpongeBob memes in a sense, we were using like, those. Those alter for sure, like what's been like always making me laugh. So I like those. And then what was the last question? Oh, sorry, if you have any last comments, or whereas the say about Black Twitter, like the cultural influence of it? Oh, I feel like Black Twitter is gonna, as we move forward, when we look back on it, it's gonna be something that we talked about in history. I feel like, it's gonna be something that we call historical. I feel like what?

**Researcher:** That was nice. Thank you. Okay, and so now we're going to get into demographical questions. So if you can please state your age.

**Participant:** I'm 21.

**Researcher:** And which generation are you a part of?

**Participant:** Gen Z.

**Researcher:** Okay. And on a daily basis, how often do you spend on Twitter?

**Participant:** I'll say a few hours. Like in total.

**Researcher:** Yeah. So like, if you give me like a number, maybe like on average?

**Participant:** Two, two, okay. I'll say, like, collectively, I'm on all kinds of apps. So I will say two on Twitter.

**Researcher:** okay, and then on a weekly basis, how often do you spend on Twitter?

**Participant:** Yeah, let's just say 14.

**Researcher:** And when did you first make a Twitter account?

**Participant:** 2012.

**Researcher:** Okay. All right. Well, that's it for the interview. Thank you again, Jada. I'm going to stop the recording

### **Participant #8**

**Researcher:** All right, hey, Tevin. So thank you again for your interest in the Black Twitter interview the 20. I'm sorry, the interview on the cultural influence of Black Twitter. So just to start off, if you could tell me a little bit about yourself, your interests in your hobbies? And how does that align with your online feed and interests on Twitter?

**Participant:** Okay, so my name is Kevin fuller. I graduated from my high school in 2018. I currently attend Baruch College for information technology. For the most part, my main hobbies are technology and cars, especially the the technology side of the new modern cars, I love working

on those and figure on figuring out what makes it what and how it works. And I also have been lucky enough to get into real estate. So that's just a little by myself.

**Researcher:** Nice. And so how are all those interests and hobbies that you have aligned with the things you see on Twitter or your online feed?

**Participant:** So for prior to 2020, I want to say, my social media, especially Twitter has just been more for memes. But I took it more so since I've been home so much than 2020, I took it as an opportunity to rebrand. So most of my social media now really just focuses on cars or real estate. If it's not something educational, but fun, I usually don't interact with it. Especially the car side of it, if that makes sense.

**Researcher:** Yeah, that makes sense. That's nice. And so, um, when you know, cars, and technology is very general, in a sense that, you know, it's a topic that trends a lot and like, it's just global, you know, so do you ever see a lot of Black Twitter users in those type of conversations? When you're like, looking at cars or real estate? Like, we, when you're looking at real estate? Like, is there something about like black people, real estate or black people in cars, like something like that?

**Participant:** Okay, so I it's more so um, I don't know, if I could say, oh, I'm just gonna go correct term, the white people. So, um, white people that I really see in these roles, but there is one that I follow heavily. His name is MKBHD. Or Marcus Brownlee. He's one of the number one tech journalists. So he, he's on my timeline and feed a lot. And he's one of the if he's not the biggest, he is the second biggest when it comes to this technology journalist. He reviews products and stuff like that. So I've always since I started following him, and how he's passionate about tomorrow's technology, and cars, I really that resonated with me for the simple fact that I haven't seen somebody that looks like me doing that before.

**Researcher:** That's nice. So how does that you know, because those, like you said, those topics are really like white dominated. How does that make you feel like as a user, like, as a person who wants to get into real estate to see someone who looks like you doing?

**Participant:** you know, the damn thing basically, for me, it's how I want to, I want to make it in that field. So others that look like me can say, hey, even though I came, I wasn't born in this country. I came here and I still found a way you even when I school wasn't the best thing for me. Because when I go to school, and I do what I have to do, it's something that I have to stay on top of myself because it's, it doesn't connect for me. It's more so of a I have to do this. Not that I want to do this, versus with the technology and the cars. It's like, I love this and then to find out real estate, you could incorporate that into it. It's like, I love this. This is what I want to do. So I want to be an example for another. Another little black boy walking around or just scrolling through. And I just happen to pop up on a page like Hey, who's this person? What does about

**Researcher:** oh, that's nice. That's amazing. And so, um, how has Twitter like really developed that type of like, you know, the way that you think about, you know, that representation within those fields?

**Participant:** Um I wouldn't necessarily say Twitter did that for me, I want to say more more. So Instagram and YouTube, okay? It's more so of you, it's late night on YouTube, you know, you put in one video you're interested in and one thing leads to another. And next thing you know, it's 3am. And then you find yourself watching the same person's videos over and over and over again. So that's what happened with me. And Mark has. Oh, that's and that's when I went from YouTube to Instagram to his Twitter account, and I'm like, Hey, let me find out more. I don't know if that makes sense.

**Researcher:** No, it makes perfect sense. It makes perfect sense. Because, you know, sometimes Twitter isn't always the end all be all, you know. Um, and so just to move the conversation towards you know, more, you know, we talked about your online feed and your hobbies. In what ways do you think Twitter is important in today's society? Networking, just a sheer? You never know who's on the other side of that phone? Or what are the what, what ever device? I've made random conversations with random people in the DMS is like, Hey, I would have never met you because you're in another state. If it wasn't for Twitter and social media.

**Participant:** Right. away. Yeah. And I think that's a really good point. Because you said, like, networking, in what ways have like for you, as a Twitter user been connected to people? You don't know, but it feels like you know them? Um, does that experience been? It's definitely in the beginning, I found it weird, cuz, you know, you're not supposed to talk to strangers, especially on the internet. So you know, when you're posting something, or interacting with somebody else posts because I don't really post a lot. But and then, you know, you kind of, I want to say develop that friendship. I don't Yeah, friendship, you started talking to them, like on the timeline, and then, you know, the DMS and then next thing you know, it's like you've known this person for the last six years of your life. So it's, I feel like once you get over the initial hurdle of not knowing not not no sorry. Once you get over the initial hurt hurdle of feeling wrong, you could get some serious opportunities. We never know who or what is what

**Researcher:** right. So true. And so now we're going to move the conversation more towards like Black Twitter and in your purse when you when I say Black Twitter was the first thing that comes to mind when you think of it

**Participant:** clap back clap back and definitely how if one thing like the incident that happened the other day with the white man that put his address out there threat and said he thought in the family that we lived in the house prior to that how black people came together. So like why hair black Twitter, its initial reaction is clap back. And when you come for one you come for all nice. So it's like that community piece. But also the the clap backs the jokes and so when you say clap backs, can you reference a moment where you've seen that it could be weather recent in general? Okay, so let me go on Hold on, let me pull something up real quick. Okay, so like this

isn't necessarily a clap back per se but like yesterday when the woman in Victoria's Secret who was screaming and chasing the black lady around Victoria's Secret, I don't know if you've seen that and how the white people in the store was Basically trying to pin the blame on the black lady even though all she was doing was recording after the white lady hit her and was screaming at her. And that was crazy. Um, but how the Black Twitter came together and this quote says, Well, I quote this person poses since we can't pass a bill to stop mother modern day lynchings Can we at least classify white fragility as a felony? And then it's like, one, one, her posting this seven minute video to social media, how black people came together and like, hey, we need to change. Wait, I'm sorry. That was the came together not to clap back.

Oh, no, it's okay. So gone. Okay. Um, how they came together and just had this conversation of these laws needs to be changed, because time and time again. A white woman's tears is like, I don't I don't know how to describe it. But a white woman's tears is like the end all be all letter. Why if a white woman cries, then she's automatically right. Just like the the tous massacre when they burnt down on them houses. All that came from a white lady crying saying a black man touched her. But in reality, she said on her deathbed. That never happened. And you saw all this one white lady said something with a few tears, and they burnt down the entire black community. So from that was I forgot what year that was. But that wasn't long ago. And to still see right women act like that. And a black lady getting blamed for recording when all she did was record and the other lady hit her because in my opinion, the black lady should have swung back but I could see how how that that would have escalated the situation more. And then she probably would have been the one going to jail. Not the white lady and you know, you black, you wrong, you white you right. That's the way the system is set up. And I believe the year was 1921. might be wrong, though.

**Researcher:** Yeah, no, that's so true. I think that's it's interesting how we're able to connect, you know, social media to history and to real life. You know, like this still happens today. So that was a really good point. And then like back to the clap backs, do you have a reference to that? Or it doesn't have to be a referencing be an example of like, just elaborating on what clap backs are?

**Participant:** Pretty much it's a clap backs. I'm more of a joke. Have you said something slick? So I've had a response for you. I'm like, You could have called out my wardrobe and I called out maybe your hair wasn't done and you know, who told you to leave the house like that? That? So I have examples somewhere. Give me 30 seconds honestly, I can't find my examples right now. I don't know where they went.

**Researcher:** No, it's perfectly okay. That's okay. And so, um, when did you first notice? You were on Black Twitter?

**Participant:** Um, I want to say from what I got into Twitter around 20 Miller 2019. Somewhere around there, so I haven't been on Twitter long but I've always preferably try to follow black people. Everything I do I try to moreso do it for with the urge of following or helping black not necessarily what so I discovered Black Twitter was a thing when Shade Room or Bollinger or

somebody posted black Twitter's response and I'm like, Hey, that was all over my timeline. Then I was like, okay, so this is what Black Twitter is. That's how I got there.

**Researcher:** Okay, and what's one of your, um, what's it like one of your favorite Black Twitter memories or like moments you can think of? So like one example. Um, I think about The first thing when I think about Black Twitter for me is like Thanksgiving with black families, or something like that, like what are some moments with in Black Twitter or like different memes that like, just come to mind and you just love?

**Participant:** One, the first thing that popped into my mind is the 2016 election, when Trump the day after Trump won, how the means were, nobody better say shit back to me on the boat ride back to Africa. No, I better have the ox on the boat ride back or don't nobody tell me nothing when it comes to this purge or just things like that. How everybody just the situation, we didn't know how bleak it was about to become. But we always found a way to make, like, make a joke out of a bad situation. That's what I love about my Twitter. You can never take it too serious. Right? And so how do you? Why do you think that we innately make so many jokes and laugh and have these different, you know, memes going on on our feeds. When in reality you the state of black America isn't jokes and giggles. Humor is always black people's escape. It's a coping mechanism. Um, I can tell you the amount of times where I've been in some situations that I'm like, oh shit, or just excuse my French, just like football. And all I could do is laugh. Because what else am I supposed to do? And then, as a black man, you know, you're not supposed to cry, you're not supposed to show certain emotion. So I just think laughter and making jokes is what holds the black community together? Because it's, it's an escape. And I feel like that's where we all we all just try to escape the current situation in America. Because 80 90% of us will nobody asked to be in our situation. So I feel like the laughter and the joking and the never looking, trying to be sad. Sad about it for too long is what makes us us. And that's our escape, if that makes sense.

**Researcher:** Now, that's a really good point that escapism and so for you, as a user. Have you do you use Twitter to escape? Is there some times where you know Black Twitter has allowed you to escape suffering to some of the realities?

**Participant:** Yeah, all the time. Just, um, the joke's on you. You know, you see one thing you click on the thread and it just leads to a whole joke and next thing you know, a 32nd thing 32nd clip or tweet turns into 45 minutes. Oh my God. Where does the time go? I was supposed to be I supposed to be cleaning my room because that happens all the time. It's like, or you're doing homework. And it's like, Oh, whoops. So it's definitely an escape.

**Researcher:** Yeah, no, I can definitely see that. And so Okay, now we're gonna move the conversation and said 2020 The you know that it is towards 2020 and so keep it we're still gonna hold on to that escapism piece because I think that was a really good point that you made. And when you think about 2020 Like what is some of the first things that come to mind when you think about this past year? Um,

**Participant:** we started off with a bang with us almost going to World War Three certainly after that was the pandemic started and then the toilet paper situation and I'm everybody the schools getting shut down everybody's home. The the air literally smells cleaner. The me really getting into my hobby with cars, because that's when it really got heavy. Was there was nothing else to do. Um what else the election? Um, this isn't 2020 but it relates to 2020 The, the insurrection of the capital on the six um I think of the killer Hornets and how the world came together to support nurses and doctors, and then how America the government for even though just like the brief two month period, it made it seem like they actually cared not just about black people, but about their people in general. While that was later revealed to be false, as it always is, it, it was like, even though we're falling apart, due to this pandemic, it there was hope for humanity. So Twitter kind of put all of that in into one place. That was a great list of things that just occurred in 2020.

**Researcher:** And so, when you were on Twitter, what was that experience? Like? Like seeing all these different news talking about what were three? The COVID 19 pandemic, like Black Lives Matter? Like, how was that experience for you on Twitter, like, as a user?

**Participant:** Okay, um, why do our three that made me scared because I'm like, I'm not ready to go to war. I'm not trying to get drafted. Um, if it came down to it, um, George, George Floyd, I should have mentioned this, it slipped my mind. I don't know how that situation just made me angry. And I just, um, there was just anger. So I, that was the only thing I could feel I didn't know what else to feel. And then to see how everything is black people's fault, when the man did nothing wrong. That's how the the world views us. I'm sorry, what's the question again?

**Researcher:** No, you're, you're on point. Like, just how you feel? Like how did you feel during that time? While on totally? What did you see what you were on right to track like, exactly how you felt what you think?

**Participant:** The pandemic when it first started, I was like, I was scared. For um, I was scared to see how sorry, I was scared. Like how every how does virus came out of nowhere, and you don't know who has what, and you're seeing the the infected cases rise from one to five to 15 to 1000. So I don't know where we are right now. But I know it's well over 25 30 million cases. So it's like, am I gonna be the one to get it next? Am I gonna die? What's going on, and then me knowing that the, the support, lack of support in the black medical community is real. I'm like, if it's between me and a white person, they're going to pick the white person that made me scared to catch this disease to the point where I wasn't going outside. If I was outside, I head on to mass and I was sitting in my yard. I didn't go to nobody's house and go to the grocery store. If I could afford it. It was Don't come near me. I won't come near you. Um, so that made me scared. What else? They got better. But that was even though I'm vaccinated. The virus is still on my mind. Because it's like, wow, I know, I won't die. If I catch it. It's still there. And for me, personally, I know, the family will their family. There was the son 21 years old, he went out to a secret party caught, caught the virus came home. Infected his mom, his dad, his two sisters, his little brother. And I want to say the cousin I'm not really sure of the other person. Everybody died except him. So



yeah. So it's like, seeing that me knowing the person is like, this. This is serious. Like, how, how am I gonna feel if I'm the one that goes out, catches this virus and brings it back into my house now. It's like, every now and then everyone around me dies because of me. It's like, how am I supposed to feel besides scared and like, damn, I cause everyone's death. And the only thing I'm gonna want to do is suicide. Huh? There's deep Tavish right? Yeah. Yeah, that's, um Oh, 2020 was just a different year when it came to feelings. I felt so much different emotions when it came to the experience of it, you have to be there to understand. Right? That's how I can describe it. I definitely resonate with many things that you said. And thank you for all of that, like, because some of that, you know what you were saying and all the events, it kind of evoked this like moment of racial trauma of just trauma in general, like COVID. And what were three and everything.

**Researcher:** And so how do you think you and your followers reckoned with that moment? Like, how did you guys deal with that? Was Twitter an escape? Or was that a time for you to just go away from it?

**Participant:** You know, for me, I fell off of Twitter due to all of all of all of the news, because it's like, every day, something worse happened. So it's like, I fell off, and it became more of a, that's why I actually got into, because I was always into cars, but me falling off of social media, really. I need to put my attention and my time somewhere else. So that's what happened for me. I, to the point where I wasn't even on Twitter for like, two, three months, it just at first, it was weird, because it's like, what am I supposed to do? And it felt like a part of me was missing. But falling off and putting the energy somewhere else is how I ended up escaping it.

**Researcher:** Thank you. And so um, what influence and this is a big idea question, and it can go anywhere. But what cultural influence do you think Black Twitter has? Like, just in general, it could be in sports, it can be in like cars, real estate, or it could be political affairs, anything like what influence do you think Black Twitter holds?

**Participant:** It holds a lot. It holds from hip hop, to sports, to hip hop in sports over to design and design like there, those are some of the biggest ones because the sports is predominantly dominated by black athletes, whether that's basketball, football, even tennis, and you see this year with the Olympics, how the star athletes from America, and track was black, and swimming was black in gymnastics was black. So it's like, they we it's a lot of influence coming from the black community. Um, and that's just sports when it comes to design. A lot of the stuff that black people used to get called ghetto or ratchet back for a few years ago, it was trendy now. Um, the, the that was designed, hip hop is like, culture. Vultures like white people want to rap like us. They want to sing like us. They're trying Jack Harlow for an example. He's white, but he imitates black culture. Right? He um, he's a rapper, but rapping started in the black community. It was looked down on. Um, this singer, songwriter, rapper, whatever he is called an F. Um, he, he he's a rapper. He still has influenced from well, not still. I don't want to say well, you're still right. He he's white. He raps like us. He talks like us, they Eminem, while Eminem doing the best rappers ever. In my

opinion. He even in his song, he literally said, I'm I'm probably the worst thing since Elvis Presley to use black music and make myself wealthy. So it's like, they know they're imitating us from the shoes, the hair, the long acrylic nails, the wigs, the there's white girls putting braids in their hair now. Not knowing because their hair and texture isn't meant for that kind of stuff. Their hair is gonna fall out there, from the golds in their mouths there. All of that was looked down on like, that's ratchet that's ghetto. Your hair shouldn't be like this. You can. If your wig is colorful, that's ratchet. That was it was ratchet a few years ago even in When we were in high school, there was ratchet. But now, that's the big thing. So it's like, they want to be like us while still having the white privilege.

**Researcher:** Yeah, that that is very true. I definitely agree about all of that. And so with moments like you said, like the the black fishing like white girls imitating black women or, you know, the the culture biting of black of blackness, really? Um, how do you think Black Twitter has responded to that type of stuff?

**Participant:** Black Twitter calls it out. And that's what I love about them being so vocal about it, they don't care, they want you to know that you're getting it from us. And we deserve credit. And I love that aspect about it. Now, you if you're going to take from us, we deserve credit, minimum, we deserve a lot more than that. But you need to say, Hey, I got this from this. That's, that's what it comes down to. Is and given us the right, Rep. perforations, not reparations. Um, I'm the right payment for it. Because you're stealing my look, and you're making millions off of it, I deserve a portion. I deserve to not have to worry about food, when you stole my look. I deserve to have medical, medical health care where I don't as a woman, as a black woman, you're far more likely to die during childbirth. You shouldn't have to worry about that. So it's like, we, I love how they want a quality and they're so vocal about it. And I think because we have the platform now, we could do that a few when our parents were growing up, or not even necessarily our parents, but that in between generation, or groups of people, they didn't have the ability to voice their opinions like we do. So and it's because of Twitter that we could do that.

**Researcher:** Yeah, that's amazing. I definitely agree. How Twitter's that driving force for that. Um, and then also just to touch on, I'm going to bring the conversation to Black Lives Matter. Yeah. And all that best happened. Do you think and you know, at that moment, 2020, we saw this moment where black people, the urgency to change, the state of black America was at the forefront of everywhere, like, I mean, and you can arguably agree that black people been going through this or some may not agree. But it was at the forefront of everything, media, social media, like politics, all of that. And so, like, what was what was your experience do that in terms of like, was it increasingly visible that priests police brutality was a thing? And I really show injustice? Like really impacted you? Or did you already know this? And how did Twitter amplify that moment?

**Participant:** I already knew it. Um, it made it not necessarily to the black community, but I feel like more so to the white community that tried to be like oblivious to things. It really put it in their

face more. But one thing I hated about, about not black lives matter, but I hated how white people, certain white people like, oh, this matters now. It's not about it mattering now. It always matter. And it will always matter. And I hated how, in the politic season everyone was. That was their main selling point to get black voters because they know while black voters make black people make up so much of this country. We don't show up to the polls. So it really irritated me how that was everyone's driving factor in politics, or black lives matter. Black lives matter police reform. It's I know politics is a sticky game. And I know, I know this. However, it's month what? Seven. Joe Biden's about to be in office for seven months. And I know nothing happens in politics overnight or in seven months. But I'm not just talking about him. I'm talking about all of the the Sanders that was elected the con just the congress people stay and low from the local level and the state level to the federal level. It's got all swore that I was going to change something, but we put on the sea and it's like, well Where are you now? So that's one thing I really hated about it. And then, um, I hate how I know. I just hate how they took advantage per se. Like, I know even though Democrats have control of the Senate, that that's not true control because of how thin the margin is. I'm just, I don't I just hated how it's being handled now. I feel like and what the next election season is for 2022 year, Black Lives Matter is gonna come up again. It's just gonna be like, we only care when we need votes. And that's what really irks me about it. We shouldn't matter to you every 246 years, we should matter daily. Because without us, what does this country have? Stopped stoplights were invented by a black man. Yeah, a lot of the things I want to say, the light switch, I could be wrong on that. But the point is a lot of the things that we have today were invented by black people.

**Researcher:** And then on a matter of that of the injustices or whatnot, do you think that Black Twitter is taking the place of the tactics that does like marches and riots? And is being used by black people as a platform to have their voices heard?

**Participant:** To an extent, Yes. Um, I feel like talking about it and going, going to the Capitol, whether that state, local or federal, is a different thing. Because you can talk all you want, but if you're not willing to go out there, and and show something that you care, it doesn't mean anything. And we really saw that with the whole George Floyd Black Lives Matter situation. It's, for years, we've been screaming Black Lives Matters. We had a little rally here, the little rallies there were allowed about on social media. But they didn't start taking a serious until millions of people were in the streets every day. They didn't take a serious until we was right out there. So I feel like it has to be a hybrid in order for us to truly move it along.

**Researcher:** That's a great point. That hybrid and um, do you believe that for you, you have your voice feels more heard on Black Twitter? Yes. And why?

**Participant:** Why, so because they know that they don't know what I look like, but they know what I look like. And then we all have a similar background. It's like, I don't know you, but I'm pretty sure if you're in America, we've all been through these one of these kinds of experiences. Whether that's being stopped by the police for no reason being followed around the store, being profiled just for walking around outside. It's like they know what I look like they know what I've

been through because they've done it. So I feel like black people on Twitter getting me more than a white person while a white person could be very much an ally and very much ver with us and marching and louder Venice. It doesn't they don't know everything I've been through. Because at the end of the day, if it comes down to me and um, I don't know, me and Jessica, for a job interview. Um, we have all of our stats are identical, down down to everything, but she's more likely to get the job because she's white. So I don't at the end of the day, they always have that little advantage just because the skin tone while Jessica could be out there supporting me and a black pro black lives matter. It's that they're gonna pick her whether I'm more qualified or we're the same down to every last detail Though just cuz she's white. So black people on Twitter definitely understand me more.

**Researcher:** That's good. And I just I want to dive more deeper into that. You know, you say you guys have a common background. So what does that mean? Like what commonalities Have you shared with others on black sweater? And how is that specific to like who you are as a person your identity?

**Participant:** it's more so for like I said, I I been walking around, I've literally there's \$1 General less than a mile away from my house. I've walked to that dollar general i One point I shot there every day after school, walked out there, got my chips, got my candy, everything, to the point where the the main cashiers that were there, they know who I was my name. versus this one particular day. It was a new cashier, a white older lady, she called the police on me, because I was walking around for too long in a hurry. If I was to post that exact story on Twitter, I can guarantee at least 10 people from Black Twitter will share a similar story whether it's Walgreens, Walmart, Sam's any any chain, they will know there's there was a time when I was taking the trash out in just my shorts. I didn't have on a shirt. The trash the garbage truck just came pick up the trash can. So I took I was going to bring the trash can back into yard from the side of the road, police officer pulled up and asked me what am I doing here? Where do I live? I looked suspicious for taking the trash out. I know if I was to post that. another black person will have that same encounter as me. So that's I'm like they understand me.

**Researcher:** Yeah, that's, I think that's a great point. And so how does that physical interaction and commonality relate to on Twitter?

**Participant:** So like, are there people saying certain tweets that like, you just, you got it? Like they understand it, They have that same experience, Or like, you know, definitely like you, they just tweet about being pulled over. And it's like, Oh, I understand that. I know exactly about that. Yeah, it's just even though it might the tweet might just be five words. Because then like I got pulled over today, for driving while black. I know what that's like, I got started. They pulled me over because my music was too loud. I know about that. So like, I don't while we were all living different lives. That's what that's another thing holding us together. Yeah.

**Researcher:** That's great. And I think honestly, um, the questions I did, have you touched on all of those, like, this was really great answers. And just like to end the question near more so like, what topics on a more lighter note, really, but like, what topics are you most passionate about in terms of the black community? And how do you see that across your Twitter feed?

**Participant:** Repeat the question, let me know.

**Researcher:** But yeah, what's the topic regarding the black community that would in which you're passionate about?

**Participant:** I'm the auto oil for my timeline is the automotive design, designing the next generation of cars? Recently, there's been more and more black people going into it. Because all the big name automotive build a lot of companies, they mostly have hire Italian white guys, traditional, older white guys. So to see more black people going into that field is I don't know what to say. I don't know how to describe it. I don't I think I give it to me, and it's, it's nice to see your heart like think Yeah. Okay. And then one last question. Um, what topics have Mike not topics are things that like, just bring you so much joy or laughter like, if you could reference a moment where you just was laughing on your feed, it could be now some type some years ago. Go whenever, like what was it on Black Twitter that brought you so much joy. Um it was what Joe? I think I want to say was little Duvall a few days ago I resonate with little Duvall for how he doesn't take nothing serious. Um, so I forgot what celebrity he got into a back and forth with. I don't know if you saw it a few days ago when he was talking about paying what were they going back and forth? Oh, Safari cheating on Erica or Oh yeah, I forgot her name, um, how they're supposed to be getting a divorce. But you're mad cuz he's with another woman. So I like I found it funny how he was just like, why are you upset? Um If I knew if I knew this was gonna be one of the questions I would have had more answers on. It's okay. It was just more so love Duvall. He the joke is always jokes with him. So that I don't really know. But what I did like, what the past graduation season, how black people really came together to show out for each of those graduations. Even though you don't know the person you haven't seen this person in a year plus due to COVID. Um, I forgot what state that was Louisiana, I think or whatever they were. They were having the in person graduation. And the group of black kids got up and started dancing because they did it. So and then more black people more black kids joined in. So battle, it was nice to see. Yeah, that's nice. Like that community aspect. Yeah. That's nice. And so that's really all that I have. And is there any last thing you want to say like for the readers like what you want them to know about black hoodie? I'm black, black Twitter , wireless, a very fun place to be. It's a very dangerous place to be due to the fact that it's unapologetically black. So if you're uncomfortable with that, then it's not the place for you. I'm unemployed, on apologetically black. That's the last thing I want to say. And I love that.

**Researcher:** That's nice. Thank you, Tevin. And if you have any questions for me,

**Participant:** what made you all want to do this? Or is it for like class?

**Researcher:** Now? Okay, I can answer that one when we finished recording. Alright. Yeah. Okay. And then, before I end the recording, I'm just gonna have you just some demographical information. So if you can please state your age.

**Participant:** 21.

**Researcher:** Okay, and the generation you're part of?

**Participant:** unfortunately, Generation Z.

**Researcher:** Okay. And on a daily basis, how often do you think he's been on Twitter?

**Participant:** I'm probably about now probably about 45 minutes to an hour a day. Back then, probably about two and a half, three hours a day.

**Researcher:** So yeah. And on a weekly basis, how often do you spend on Twitter?

**Participant:** Probably no more than seven hours.

**Researcher:** Okay. Okay. And when did you first make your Twitter account?

**Participant:** 2019.

**Researcher:** Okay, thank you. Alright, so that's it for the interview. I'm going to stop the recording now. Okay.

### **Participant #9**

**Researcher:** All right. So, thank you for coming to my interview Tariq. And to start off, I'm going to just ask you tell me about yourself, what are your interests in your hobbies? And how does that align with your online feed and interest on Twitter?

**Participant:** Okay, well, my name is Tariq Melvin. I'm a senior biology major at Florida A&M University. Um, I want to be a perfusionist. And I, my, a couple of my hobbies are dance, cooking and working out. So basically, that's what consists of my social media timelines. Especially I'd say it's out there algorithm is very good with that. It's like, that's just basically what what I kind of see on a day to day basis when I go on my social media.

**Researcher:** Okay, thank you. And to you, how important do you think the Twitter platform is in today's society?

Participant: Oh, it's very, very important. Um, usually Twitter is the first place. I find out information as far as what's trending or what's a hot topic going on. I don't really follow much blogs or anything. So when I do go on Twitter now I just want to know what's going on today. I'll go on the trending searches, I'll go on the worldwide and as well as you know, my regular, you know, trends for me.

Researcher: Okay, and so now we're going to get into the perception of Black Twitter, your how you perceive it. So if you were to define Black Twitter and a few words, what would that be? Or what does it mean to you?

Participant: Black Letter to me, kind of I would say is a modern? Oh, how would I describe that? I would say it kind of gives like cookout by but for our generation, but virtually, if that makes sense. So basically, keeping up with everything that's going on in Black Entertainment, or any entertainment as any major headline, and making light of it, or finding comedy in, of course seriousness in those matters that are more serious.

Researcher: Right. And if you can give me an example of a time where like, it was a joyous moment, or like a serious moment, and like you were you were part of that Black Twitter conversation.

Participant: So joy is I got to brainstorm. And it doesn't have to be specific to 2020. But like, it could be in general, like anything you think of can I do negative because it's probably more negative? Yeah. Okay, um this is bad. You know, I'm gonna be on Twitter like that. Like I do, but I just, honestly, just pace would have been Twitter. So can I talk about that? What like me Twitter kind of a little bit? Yeah. Okay. So yeah. negative aspect? Fan, you Twitter? Or I could do a positive aspect of any sort. Okay, I'll do a positive. Um, no, I'll do a negative one. Okay, so I think that venue, Twitter is a bit. Um, what's the word I'm looking for? I don't know. I just feel like everyone is a bit sick in the head when it comes to the fan via Twitter, the way they like, obsess over the school, like their school pride kind of turns into an obsession. And so I think that's kind of a good and a bad thing because it promotes the school and it promotes school unity. But at the same time, it's kind of like, there's more to life than FAMU and for someone who doesn't, um, but who comes from a more urbanize part of the country. And that's more fast paced moving. And I feel like a lot of people who go to failure look for more calmer places. We never talked about school, you know, in South Florida like that on Twitter day to day to day, but every time you go on Twitter, they're talking about them family family. And so that kind of aspect is usually to a fault if that makes sense. Right? Because there's you got to broaden your mind broaden your horizon.

Researcher: Right. And so like as a FAMU student, do you see a difference in like the pride shown on Twitter versus like in a physical space? Do you think they're more prideful, online or in person?

Participant: Um, I think they're a little bit more platform. mine, it kind of matches both. I'm not gonna lie, they are kind of like, very prideful in person as well. Um, but online, they kind of do take it, they they're gonna say what they don't want to say in person, online.

Researcher: And so what does that tell you about Twitter just as a platform? Is it able to give people a voice? Or?

Participant: Oh yeah, it definitely amplifies the voice of what people are feeling on campus. Um, or from what they just see, it definitely gives people a space to kind of like, say and relate to others. So because usually when one person says it, or like says something, how they feel or what they've experienced a witness, then the next person is going to say yes or no. An example of that is, you know, now social media is getting used to kind of expose a lot of people who are sexual predators on campus and stuff like that. And there was an incident where a guy was sexually assaulting people in the office actually, I think it was fifth new veterans affairs and like that, and apparently a guy who the girl was dating who worked in the office, she confided in the guy she was talking to when he went and stumped them out. And so um, yeah, definitely gives people a voice now again, it could be to a fault because he posted it not thinking about the repercussions that could possibly have put the school in jeopardy for yes for the cause. But it kind of puts the school at risk when they have to defend people like that for doing those things, even though it could technically be deemed okay. It was just the time in a place

Researcher: right, That's a really good answer. And so just to go back to the whole perception of Black Twitter when did you first notice you were on Black Twitter or even family Twitter?

Participant: Um, well, I noticed that I was on like Twitter back in 2011. Because that was when I first made Twitter I didn't go on it consistently. Because I was more so on Facebook. But um, with the conversations that were on there, I don't really like remember vividly, but I do know it was like a small bit of my elementary school friends and everyone's on Twitter heavy, but you did get like a lot of vine uploads and of course those are catered to the black community so a little bit more of cooking videos and just like fun can we do like without give like chopped up noodles and not shut them up the pot dogs and noodles and stuff like that. Um, and basically relatable content of that nature is what I kind of see early on and when you talk about relatable content on your specific online be like/

Researcher: What do you see what commonalities Do you see what some of your users that people you follow or to follow you? What are some commonalities y'all have?

Participant: Well let me see. I have to go on my Twitter because there's some real world here okay, because I feel like I have to just say this, okay, because I feel like my Twitter feed is so random, maybe that's a commonality everyone just tweets what's random. So it could be things from what's going on in their personal life, or one incident in their day and they tweet about how they feel. Or even like things that are trending so the verses that are trending right now those



typically come up on my feed every week and or whatever they like have one with hip hop or rapper one that kind of takes us back and right now um the big one that's on is the bow wow, I think it was I didn't watch it because I was I think sleep or at work yeah, I was at work but it was the bow Well, versus was a soldier boy was a soldier boy and bow or soldier boy in the Romeo. soldier boy and bow but lo Romeo came on stage. Okay, yes. Okay. And so I did see someone talk about why they love Romeo perform ICDC college. And so that sent me that because it was just like everyone was able to relate seeing that on the Jerry Springer when they would like stay home from school. There was the holiday often you will watch Jerry Springer or Maury in that ICDC college or come on on that channel. And it kind of was very humorous to us. Because it was just you never saw colleges advertising. So I know that's one thing that's kind of common seeing those. I'm kind of like sad Cycling, I feel like Black Twitter is kind of a cycle. You kind of it's very random, but it's kind of a cycle. At the same time, you're going to see the verses, you're going to see the COVID. Top, you're going to see the shootings you're going to see. Let me see what else, you know those kinds of things, the movements and the accomplishments that they had within the community. And this is from all over,

Researcher: right? And then when you think about certain seasons in the year, so like a Christmas or holidays, like, do you see commonalities between you and some other black users? Like whether it's Thanksgiving? Or can you talk about that? Like, what do you see on your feed around those times of the year? Oh, yeah,

Participant: definitely. On Thanksgiving, we see. One commonality that we see on our plate is baked macaroni and cheese. Most people do ham as well. And so we kind of the topic of discussion is whether the macaroni looks good. Comparing them I know whether I say it or not, I just automatically the first thing that comes to my mind, is it even my mom's or it's just it's gonna compete, or what ingredients are in that macaroni that makes it look like that. And so those kinds of things come up with thanksgiving. And then sometimes we're there trashing the plates or folding the plates in half, there's always those people who you don't want to cook serve dishes. And you have to kind of hide it from them that you don't want to eat it. So those are always funny to see. Because we all have had those family members who you'd like to leave the cookie on your libation. Because, like, I don't know what they do. And then as far as Christmas, I usually see a lot of it's kind of a moment where everyone kind of rejoices about kind of what they're able to get for others. So mainly those who are have families or who have spouse, partners and everything, they can kind of show the gifts they give them. Let me see that kind of like brings me to Valentine's Day, similar things happen on Valentine's Day, where they kind of give the they showcase the gifts and the romantic setting that they have. Well, what else also first, I'm going on a tangent here. But first school, that's a big thing in our community, posting your first day of school outfits, and we will always see people little meme saying us on the first day of school, it'd be a little kid looking excited picking out his outfit. And even though it was uniform, it was what you put together and knowing that that first day of school, freshen with the hair, cut the hair do everything coming together isn't gonna put you know that everything into perspective, like we're back.

Researcher: Thank you. And so now, just one more like last question about Black Twitter, if you can tell me about one of your favorite moments, and how was it impactful for you. So it could be weather this past year or in general, like what are your some of your favorite moments, it could be back to high school college anytime.

Participant: So, um, one of my favorite moments, is I'm trying to think whether Alex say the Nipsey Hussle moment, because I do have kind of a fault to that. But seeing a lot of black business owners post their like companies because it's very like motivating. It shows that times have changed. When I think about my grandfather and the people who owned land and owned equity and stuff like that, um it was usually on the male side. And it wasn't very many of them to have that. So that my grandpa he had three properties in my grandma, when they got married, she basically took them over after he passed. And so it's very refreshing to see, he also did kind of construction, business and labor work. So that's what a lot of the men did back then. But now you're starting to see a lot of women, black women open up their own nail salons, open up their own even doing nail tech work themselves. As well as doing hair. And they do the of course the hair field is very, very broad as far as what they can do and there's plentiful money in that. So it's very great to see black women, um be these you know, big entrepreneurs and 100k figures and it's great to see that it can be you went to high school way people you just you know may have seen around people who you just follow on Twitter and you know, you guys made sure we follow each other it's the kind of mutual unspoken support because always in the back of your mind, you're gonna say Oh, I'm going to go definitely when I get a chance I'm going to stop by and support them. Or I'm gonna you know, do this or do that to in favor of supporting them or even just spreading the word posting their reposting their, their posts about you know, their grand opening And they're, you know, things of that nature in just a support. So I think that's kind of been my favorite thing because I know back then when I was on Twitter, it was a lot more laughs joking and stuff like that. So although a lot of people may complain that it kind of has been taken to a more serious side, it's because the movement of the black community is also moving into a more serious, um, you know, I don't want to say cutthroat, but it's more, because it's not cutthroat. It's kind of it's not really, I want to say cutthroat, but go getter. That's kind of the way that Black Twitter and social media wants the black community is being used.

Researcher: That's a really good answer. So now we're gonna get more into like a more serious kind of topic on just this past year. 2020. And so I was thinking, Oh, BT, or is this tonight? I don't know. Oh, Lord, that's another black city. Yeah. So when you think of 2020 Like, what are the first things that come to your mind? I'm just like, instantly this past year.

Participant: So the first thing that comes to mind at 2020 is when I first heard the COVID Coronavirus. This is actually a bit in 2019. But 2020 I remember I was waiting for the pressure of Donald Trump to be applied when it came to controlling the virus. I was expecting borders to be shut down with, um, well, let me say export or not export but, you know, traveled out of the country to be shut down for a moment or to be slowed down unless it's for business or you know,

a necessity kind of thing until we can kind of get testing to see where in the country the Coronavirus is spreading. And then from there, we kind of move forward because the way that they I had watched a documentary and it was basically talking about the beginning of the Coronavirus. And as far as Wuhan, it showed doctors in distress crying and patients literally overflowing emergency rooms and dying as they were waiting to be seen. And so I can only imagine what would have happened, or the fear that could happen, especially with me being a biology major and kind of understanding how germs spread. And I was already a germaphobe back in fifth grade, I could eat a chip out of a person's hand if they gave it to me. So I was kind of waiting on that pressure to be applied as far as safety protocols and tracking the virus.

Researcher: Right. Okay. And so when you think about so he's talked about COVID-19 and Coronavirus, how do you think that made an impact on the black community in 2021?

Participant: The black community I think it definitely shows the lack of trust that we have in the government. And as far as how we feel safe within the within America. Because a lot of us were hesitant to take the vaccine and not the vaccine and jumping ahead. But a lot of us may have felt that a young jump let me say we felt that some of us felt that we're immune to it. Because we came from Africa and a lot of the times I know back in early US history we came here in the Europeans met with Native Americans and Africans and Latin got sick and died from us. Because we're we live a more what's the word I'm looking for? Tribal lifestyle. And so with, you know, you kind of being out in the wild, you kind of just grow, you know, immunity to a lot of the diseases that Europeans have not. And so a lot of us kind of were I felt like we're taking with this virus, like we're gonna be okay. Until, you know, testing and stuff amped up. And they realize that, hey, this virus is kind of like attacking that's kind of harsh because of our underlying health conditions. Right?

Researcher: And on Twitter, how did you see what was Black Twitter saying during the COVID 19 pandemic? Like if you can recall some moments whether it be tragic whether it be like funny what was some moments during the COVID-19?

Participant: I don't Okay, so I only think I could ever because it to me the whole 2020 has been so long to the point where it feels like a like a blur. A blur. Yeah. And so what I do remember is that I'm the guy who was like, barely got arrested. I think she came out and spoke about the Coronavirus and all that complaint My mind is like when she was the Coronavirus like that I'm thinking. So it does show that we still kind of find humor in serious situations because it is the day I feel that with everything that I can He has gone through humor is one way that we keep ourselves. So it just kind of acting like that's kind of been instilled into us from. And just in history, even in Africa, they're very jolly and very, you know, celebrated and very thankful and grateful everything they have, even though they have to work hard on the day to day basis to ensure that their necessities are secure.

Researcher: Right. And so, um, thank you for talking about the COVID 19 pandemic, your answers are great. And so now we're going to jump to war, the Black Lives Matter movement that happened. So thinking about the death of George Floyd, Briana Taylor, so many countless others and the protests that ramped up during 2020. And just to start off, like to get into that police brutality conversation has, like, how have the increasing visibility of police brutality impacted your life online or offline? Was it didn't just start in 2020? Or you've been new this?

Participant: Well, I've been to about police brutality. You know, one thing I can I was talking with my brother about were twins, by the way. I'm gay, he's straight. And so a lot of the times we kind of collaborate, and we talk about how things could have been different. If we both were straight. I always say that we both probably would have been in a path of trouble. And just to kind of hit this one point, as far as the outlook that even as a black man, we've haven't ourselves, it kind of was normalized that black men were going to jail when I was in fifth grade. And all throughout pretty much elementary school, my older brothers who were about two years older than me, both of them had already been in legal trouble and had been running from the cops and stuff like that, never hear about it. And so in that both them and their friends. So I'm thinking especially the friend group that I had, before, I was visibly visibly being myself, I could easily picture as doing the same thing, or you know, kind of going down the same path. And so I definitely recall a time where my brother was writing for the police and the dogs had attacked him and everything of that nature, and the police had beat him up. I didn't see any pictures from a mom did tell me and my mom did take a stance that she no longer will participate in jury duty because of her biased opinion. She's not going to be able to be fair when it comes to the lack of acknowledgement and issues with how police treat black men in especially on first contact upon encountering an incident. And so I definitely that police brutality was going on. However, cameras definitely put it into perspective for me, because I can't say that when I was in elementary school, there was majority black, and there was white, and Spanish people as well. But I never had experienced racism directly because of course in South Florida, you have a lot more diversity. And a lot of the time shranked white European descent are outnumbered from diverse communities. And so it's not as you know, vulgar in your face. However, I did those videos that have surfaced, especially with the ability to upload footage to social media and go live in within a matter of seconds. It definitely showed me that other places around the world where blacks are not the majority. The racism is very much present in in your face, and the police brutality and the prejudice that the police kind of show to what the community is very relevant. So it's definitely made it more in your face for me.

Researcher: Thank you for that. And so during during that time of like the racial injustice, the police brutality, do you recall what your feed look like? What What were some of your followers saying? What were things that you were retweeting liking? Or were you even on Twitter at that time? Because I know some people took a break. So if you could just recall that experience during 2020

Participant: Okay, I will say that I was on Twitter, but I also was not on Twitter. It was kind of because it was a frustrating battle for me. I felt that what I did see me start with what I didn't see I did see a lot of people displaying their anger quote in the videos in commenting on how unruly it was, and how something needs to change. I did see a lot of United unity within the community, especially with me living in a college town. A lot of people kind of went out and did protest and went to the Congress and I think a lot of people have a lot of verbal to say, but to me, I felt like we need more action. I felt that the Black Lives Matter movement, I have a kind of opposing, I don't want to say opposing because I do support everything they do. But I kind of feel like the way that is organized is a bit off. Because I feel like there's more that we need to fight for, and that we need to bring to the forefront other than police brutality. Because I feel like police brutality is not what needs to lead the fight. I feel like it's a result of what the government and feel like it's a result of what um yeah, I would say of what the government is not trying to acknowledge as far as what the black community has went through, and the impact it has on the actual behavior that we encounter from black woman in black men. The family dynamics that we have encountered, as far as the jailing, I did mentioned earlier that I thought it was normal for us to go to jail, not everyone went to jail, my dad hit my uncle, every black, I can count on one hand, probably the black men that I can think of who have not been to jail. And that's as far as you know, without me brainstorming. And again, some people are just not going to speak on so I don't know, because a lot of people I didn't find I went to jail until I was over in high school. So I do feel like I was off of Twitter, because I'm let me not say off. But I even if I was on Twitter, I wasn't feeding into it. Because all I could think of was, we need to hit them where they hurt. Because we've been verbalizing our issues, even putting it over social media, and people are still not talking about it. The President is still not addressing what they can do to make sure that we feel like we're heard. Considering they know that this is an ongoing, you know, issue, they just tried to make it seem like Oh, the 1960s were so far away. When I think about it in 1947, my grandma was born and she grew up a sharecropper in South Carolina. And the fact that I could not go back in history, or how can I explain to my children, when the time comes? that hey, we what part of Africa are we from? Well, I don't want to claim the American flag, because they don't claim it. They don't hear us. So I can't stand behind them. Um, so what can we know? What can I do? What am I going to say? Well, you know, during the transatlantic slave trade, a lot of slaves from West Africa, were taken as far back as we can count, the farthest back that we can go to find my identity of South Carolina. We know that's where they were working on plantations, and my grandmother was a sharecropper. So that kind of identity crisis is going on, especially coming from a place like South Florida where a lot of identity is and a lot of diversity is being displayed. And so that's just from a cultural standpoint, as far as what I feel needs to be kind of pushed to the forefront of the Black Lives Matter, as far as the agenda against the black men and putting them in jail. And then, as far as drugs as well, I feel like the imbalance between drugs, there's no reason that drugs should be legal, but black men should be or anyone who was selling drugs should be incarcerated. The only thing I can see that is illegal is the fact that it wasn't taxed. And they could kind of work something out and pay back or, you know, something like that, to work it out. Or bring to the forefront of the movement.

Researcher: I think those were really good cultural points that you touched on, especially about the just like, what needs to be in the forefront and the fact that like, we can't just always voice our opinions on social media sometimes. And so that brings me to one of the questions I have and like, do you think Black Twitter has become a form of advocacy? And like, has it taken place of real physical protesting and marching? And is that good? Is it okay?

Participant: I think it does. I think it definitely has, because you're saying as far as by Twitter? Yeah. Yes, I think? Well, first, of course, the news. A lot of times these things go under the radar. And because we get the video footage, and we post them. We as a community, I feel that it brings the national headlines and once it goes trending on Twitter, and that name goes, and we did a little description, shooting or this or that. And we go on that hashtag. Now we see the news reporters are starting to pick up on it. Now we're seeing CNN started talking about it. It's becoming a national headline that the government must address or it must acknowledge and this is very, very important because it not only is it made letting our voices be heard, but it's allowing us other communities to empathize with us and see that, hey, we're not just shouting, and we're not just, you know, complaining, we're speaking from actual situations that we have to deal with life must still go on for us, and those who are meant to protect us. Um, I think a lot, a lot of people, a lot of white people, or even just those who are more fair skinned to see that there is a difference with how the police protect them versus how they protect and treat us for blacks. Right. So I feel like we kind of have gotten to support some white people are starting to support and see, you know, the issues that we face.

Researcher: Right. And so, just to get into a lighter note, because I know he talks about police brutality, black lives matter COVID What is something that you're passionate about? And how has that been reflected online?

Participant: Okay, well, I am passionate about my sexuality, I don't really show it as much, because there's a lot to learn about it. And I feel like it's, it takes a lot of like, mental energy, it's a kind of go deep into it. And it's just a lot. And so, um, I don't really showcase no social media. Um, I do. Let me think, how do I, I mean, well, I just recently kind of started, well, I have my phases, sometimes I'll post about it. Like, when I first came out, I posted like, a pride thing at the beginning of June, um, I posted, you know, small things here and there, like, I'm more myself, I could show my feminist side, um, a little bit and stuff like that. So on that aspect, but I do kind of want to go more into advocacy. But I have to make sure my advocacy is aligned in the right direction, because the black experience is very different from the white gay experience. And that can definitely go back into again, um, the treatment that black men had, before we got our freedom, and how their emasculation kind of puts fear in seeing the escalation in younger black men, and how they made parents who beat it out of them or, you know, you know, just the precedent. And so there's a lot that I kind of have to, you know, gather on that. So that's, I haven't gotten into the fact of actually, for finding that passion, because I do plan to do so maybe with YouTube and things of that nature. But, um, I have to be consistent. And I want to make sure that when I do kind of take that stance, I'm in a spot that I can actually make changes and bring education to though, you know,

Researcher: and based on your passion, have you do you feel like you've since community online, on Twitter, with some followers who have that same identity as you?

Participant: Um, honestly, not really only because I feel like I've grown up so like, closeted this whole time, to the point where it's just like, the life that I do have isn't that it just does not align with that. And I say, not that, but I say like the black LGBT community, because I feel like, they're a lot out there a lot more out there. Um, what's the word I'm looking for? I don't know. Cuz, okay, I'm speaking kind of based off of personal as well. But just the connections that I've kind of made with the people who are gay in the LGBT community. And this is basically from one specific organization that I'm involved in, in school. But of course, becoming internet social media. I feel like I mean, I don't know, they're very shallow, I don't really know too much about like, I don't know, there's, there's gotta be something more to them. But I only had like, experiences surface. And so I feel like me, I've done so much stuff reflecting and learning and stuff of that nature. I don't know that they have done that, or I don't know, they always been that way. I don't I think I have to maybe talk a little more about that, to kind of get an understanding, but I don't really feel like we kind of align on a social media, more so on social media.

Researcher: Thank you. And then just one last question. Actually, two last questions. Do you feel that your voice is more empowered on through on Black Twitter versus whether you're in a physical space and when I when you make that physical space, a space where not everyone looks like you if you've been in that type of space?

Participant: On Black Twitter, as far as my voice I don't think my voice on Black Twitter is strong because it will be in person. Because a lot of the times I feel the need to comment on things. And this can be a wide variety of topics or issues. But I have to tell myself, you know what, just forget it, because by the time people come on Twitter for different reasons, one, sometimes people don't want to see all of that. Um, and I thought that topics I see I will end up speaking on are going to be too serious to put into characters or limited amount of characters. And so by the time I start typing out messages, I'm and then I have to use another suite to kind of follow up on that. And then we get into a whole back and forth is still not enough time and through words or through text, they're not going to get the emotion or the they're just not going to get the same message that I will get if I were to tell them in person, or to hold a panel because I did do a panel and I did, I was able to answer questions about I think the LGBT experience was a while back, I kind of forget. But, um, I and it's definitely a difference with energy. And receptiveness to the information that is being put out. And so just to avoid devaluing my voice, I don't go and posts a lot about what I feel on Twitter. Just because I feel like people can keep scrolling if they want. Or people can like you, you don't know these people. And you don't know you have to kind of dwelve into it's not about how they respond, or I'm more interested in why do they feel the way they do, regardless of how they feel. Because then I can give me an understanding. And hopefully I can give them an understanding of our different views and come to we don't have to come to a common ground. But as long as you understand each other's point of view. I'm from a more

personal aspect. Um, then it becomes more sensible. And I feel like limited characters on Twitter are not assessable as face to face conversation.

Researcher: That's a really good answer. It's actually one of the first and it was different from everyone else's. I really appreciate that. Well, yeah, that was actually the last question. So do you have anything you want to mention add about Black Twitter before I get more into the demographic questions. Thank you for answering those questions. I'm just gonna actually demographical question so if you could please state your age.

Participant: Yes, I'm 21 years old.

Researcher: Okay, and what generation Are you part of? For reference? There's Gen Z, Gen Y's millennials and then Gen X is like probably our parents.

Participant: I think we're what Gen X 21 year old Gen Z. Gen Z. Okay. Yeah, Gen Z whatever. I don't really keep too much into the generations but I do know I live with that generation. Yes. Okay.

Researcher: And on a daily basis how often do you spend on Twitter

Participant: So for Twitter, it says I use 56 minutes so far. Okay. daily average. Oh, daily average is 36 minutes. Yes.

Researcher: Okay. Okay. And then do you can you find weekly basis?

Participant: Yes, weekly would be I think it's 56 minutes as well.

Okay. Let me see. Or if it's daily, you could do like a 56 times a week.

Oh, yeah, I'm sure I can't be 56 Let me see. That is strange, and I can't figure this out.

Okay, it's okay. We can leave that question blank.

I could probably figure it out, though. And then just send it here. All right.

Researcher: That's cool. And yeah, and I just added in, when was in and the last question is, when did you first make your Twitter account? Let me see.

Participant: January 2011.

Researcher: Okay. 2011. All right. Well, that's all for today. Other questions, but do you have any questions moving forward before I pause the recording?

Participant: No, that's all

**Participant #10**



**Researcher:** Okay, cool. So hi, Whitney, thank you for joining my research study today we'll be discussing black to Twitter and as cultural influences. So just to start, we're going to talk about just yourself. So like, tell me about yourself, your interests, your hobbies, and how does that really align to your online feed?

**Participant:** Okay, well, thank you so much for letting me participate. I am Whitney, I am a senior here at Florida State, studying environmental science, and double majoring in Spanish. I am born and raised from Jacksonville, Florida. And so my hobbies I love watching movies, reading, spending time with loved ones, things like that. And I think my values, I definitely value like, positivity things like I'm really not into reality TV shows, per se, or just anything that can have a negative effect on me like I don't follow a lot of well known celebrities, neither Well, no, like, I follow music artists. I love music, too. So I do follow, like music artists, but I don't follow a lot of influencers, because I don't really like how it can affect my like, body image and things like that. So I think all my values and interests align with my social media feed, because I follow a lot of more, I want to say edgy, like, educated like political pages, but I do follow people that watch what they say. And do take the time to educate their followers and posting positive things in light. So

yeah. Nice. And so how important do you think Twitter, the Twitter platform is in today's society, flutter is so influential, it literally bring so much awareness to these big companies, even to all these social neighbors, social media, just all these media outlets, and it causes so many movements, I really feel even like relating to 2020. And our Black Lives Matter movement continuing. I think a lot of companies attempted to speak on it. I don't know if it was as successful as it could have been, but bringing more awareness to their customers and things like that making all these statements. I think Twitter played a big part in that. And just educating everyone on what was going on when the news wouldn't show it, you know? So

**Researcher:** that's a really good point. So now we're going to go into the perception of Black Twitter. What does Black Twitter mean to you?

**Participant:** I'm Black Twitter means to me. It's like when I go on Twitter, I could be on there all day. Like, it's such a wide variety of content, like you have your humorous posts that like us, as black Americans, or even black people in general can relate. And it's just like comforting. And then you hear what's going on in our communities. And you're more informed and you're just like, dang, like, what can I do to help the situation or I'm glad I know this is going on, like, I need to share this too. And just even hearing uplifting posts, like oh, this black business opened up or this person is doing such a good thing. So it's just like a mixture of great content, aspiring content, and then it's just like, Okay, this is what the world needs to work on. Because it shouldn't just be us just working on these issues. Because it's so tiring, like we fix everything. So I just hope like non black people see these? See this content? And they're like, Okay, how can we help from our position? So this, I feel like Twitter is just very informative. And it helps, I feel like it helps a lot of people in their lives.

**Researcher:** Right. I think you brought up a good point about like non black people seeing it and being like, How can I help and like this idea of ally ship? How do you think that how do you think ally ship can contribute to the growth of Black Twitter or vice versa?

**Participant:** And that is a good question. I think there can be aligned to find and like boundaries in the sense with Ally ship because, yes, you can be an ally, but still, I think the main point is respecting what this community can say what they necessarily do. For instance, like if you're an ally, like you're not saying the N word on Twitter, like you're not going to be doing that you're if you're an ally, I feel like you shouldn't have to indulge in Hair culture, I feel like you don't have to do all that. But um, for Twitter, and ally, like just sharing, you know, you can say, a tweet from your point of view. And I think starting off like, I know, my position I can never like fully understand something like that like, showing that you recognize the difference, and then addressing the problem instead of really putting yourself exactly in our shoes. So I think ally ship can help because it'll show us like, oh, you care, like you do want to approve these social issues that we have these racial issues we have without being disrespectful about it. Right?

**Researcher:** I definitely agree. And so when did you first notice you were on Black Twitter?

**Participant:** Oh, my gosh. So I've had a Twitter account numerous times, I will go on Twitter. During the school year in college, I be like, dang, I'm on this ally. I gotta say, Well, my account, so I will disable. But my most recent Twitter account, I've had it since August 2020. And even before I was on Twitter, on Instagram, you would see all the Twitter posts, or select the ones you know, from like Twitter, so I still see some things. But I knew I was on there right away just from my friends, and who they would follow, follow who they would. And it's just like, I'm instantly on Black Twitter, like, I've never, I've never been off.

**Researcher:** And so just in general, not to not specific to 2020. But tell me about one of your favorite Black Twitter moments, and how is it impactful?

**Participant:** Um, I think it's really nice. That digital creator, maybe not, if that's the right thing, but he goes to FAMU and he created that meme from the cartoon show, and he like made him black and like that whole viral thing, and everyone had their own scenario. And we all could relate. Just like things like that. Oh, I also love Thanksgiving, like black Thanksgiving tweets. Because we're just like bread, we really have so much in common. It's just so comforting that we share these experiences together.

**Researcher:** Right. Now, those are really good moments. The family one was a good one. Because from there he got that deal. Did he like? I forgot the name of the cookie banner was a big company. Okay, and so do you think it is okay to use black Twitter as an umbrella term for umbrella term for all black users?

**Participant:** I wouldn't I personally don't see a problem with it. I I don't, I don't think it's a problem. Because Black Twitter as an umbrella term. It's just I think it's just expressing like, it is a wide variety for Black Twitter for all black users. I mean, some black users may not even be on Black Twitter. But I want to say it's a problem. I guess. If you want to elaborate on it, or I'm good. Can you explain more about the question? I don't think I understand fully not.

**Researcher:** So it's just saying that like, are all Black Twitter users part of Black Twitter eras? Right? Like your answer, right? And when you're saying the problem is just saying like, you know, is it like a group thing type of thing, like, you know, we have our Black Twitter, Tallahassee, FAMU FSU, like say there's like a black user who goes to a PWI. And his Twitter feed isn't black or like he's, or like, you know, I'm saying Does he is he still part of Black Twitter?

**Participant:** Okay, but you will not to the right. Yeah. Okay. Yes. Um, I agree with what I was saying before. So like black conservatives, I feel like they're a part of like Twitter. We see their input on things. We take that in, um, how they see our black sort of posts? I don't know. So I guess in a sense, they are on Black Twitter. I feel like black users who aren't a part of Black Twitter when they don't even interact with black tweets, in a sense, or tweets that talk about our culture or anything like that revolving around blackness, as a black user. If you don't interact with that at all, then no, you're not a part of Black Twitter. But I do not think it's a problem to say generally, like users do have some type of Black Twitter interaction. Right, right.

**Researcher:** Okay. And so now we're going to go into the app towards 2020. So just looking at this past year, like what is the first thing that comes to mind when you think of 2020?

**Participant:** Disappointing. Disappointing. On so many levels. This is so disappointing. And I think Twitter played a role on my perception of 2020. Because just seeing so many people agree with my general opinion on 2020, and then they're giving, like backup information like, I don't know, providing. So for instance, with COVID, and how our government, even statewide and nationally treated it so poorly treated the pandemic, I just, it was nice to see Twitter, like my at least on my feet, agreeing with me, and then providing more information, I will get upset. So that was disappointing. I'm seeing George Floyd and the even the trial that was this year, but just that whole the whole situation, that whole his murder, that was beyond disappointing, upsetting. So 2020 was like disappointing, and upsetting. It was just,

**Researcher:** yeah, I feel you. And so, um, I know, we talked about what do you think of but what was the most notable events of 2020 Let it be political, social, cultural, pop culture, anything that just like is notable to you.

**Participant:** Um, I have to say that COVID 19 pandemic was, was very significant to 2020, because it has carried on to 2021. And it just, it made that year like, 2020 is not a normal year we would ever had we ever had in our lives. And we lost a lot of people. And that was just crazy. So I think COVID-19 and just the whole pandemic culture too, because in the pandemic, tick tock,

like blew up. And now, everyone, so we have like, black tick tock, and we just have all these artists that are, wouldn't even have their platform for their music, now have a platform and they're like, getting streams. And so I think without the pandemic, tick tock wouldn't be even successful. So I think the pandemic influenced a lot of things to start, and even this culture, I feel like it's a culture within the pandemic, just like certain things would not have been happening, if that did not happen.

**Researcher:** Right. And so but so you say to COVID, COVID-19 pandemic, how has Twitter, specifically Black Twitter covered this moment? And in what ways have you participated in that coverage?

**Participation:** Um, that is a good question. I think, in general, Black Twitter was very understanding about wearing masks and understanding the importance of protecting yourself and not really, at least on my feet, not really encouraging gatherings, like just what the CDC was saying in the beginning, like, you know, to protect yourselves. I think Black Twitter was very much less ignorant than other counterparts when it came to this pandemic. But now, when it comes to the vaccine, I feel like what Twitter wasn't really for Is It wasn't really for the vaccine, like some people were like, you just see some opinions. And then some people, of course, they're bringing up the Tuskegee experiment. And just like, other reasons why. So that was interesting to see. So just hearing basically, like, we do respect what we're being told, but then when it came down to the vaccine, it was just mixed opinions.

**Researcher:** Okay, I think that was a really good point, just like the difference of viewpoints of like, Black Twitter, just Twitter in general. And so what was your experience on Twitter during the current events of 20? And I just give a reference like, and you can also give a reference to but whether it be Black Lives Matter, George Floyd pandemic, the election, like, what was your experience? Was it fun? Was it just like informative? What was it?

**Participant:** Um, it would only be fun because of the memes from like, everything. An event that would have happened there were always memes. And it was just like, okay, like, it helped you get through the hard times. The disappointing moments. I mean, even Briana Taylor's case. That was that I was upsetting because no one like they got acquitted. So it was just like, I think, was on Twitter that time. Maybe not because I joined in August, but, um, overall, it was only fun because the memes, but I would there would be moments like during after George Floyd's murder, I would have to like take breaks off Twitter, like, I cannot be on there for long because it would just be like, too, too much. Upsetting is a okay word to use. But it would just be like too much to intake, because we just get so emotionally upset about it. And I can't be mad all day. So I just had to take a break. Sometimes, because, you know, it just reminds you like, this is really going on. And I don't really know, I can fully do except to support these organizations. I'm trying to help us. But yeah, it was fun sometimes. But it was informative as well. And yeah, yeah. And I think your point about like, taking a break, I've gotten that a lot are like in the research. And I think it's interesting because people go on to Twitter, especially black Twitter to escape from sometimes

the reality of what white America gives us. And then we see 2020 with all the protests and the racial trauma, there was no way to escape that.

**Researcher:** And so how do you think you as a black person in America, a black person on Twitter reckoned with that moment, like mainstream society, you're already dealing with this racial trauma? And then you go on to Twitter, and you see all this racial trauma? So for you, how did you reckon with it even say you didn't? Like how did you go through that?

**Participant:** Yeah, so I definitely did not watch the news as much while like summer 2020. I just would watch local news. And I would never watch like, See, I didn't really watch CNN like that, because I already know, it's a lot going on. So I already took a step away from that. And then going on Twitter, I just, I would immediately see, okay, this is a lot for me at this moment. So just putting my phone to the side altogether, and just trying to first comments of down like praying, meditating. Because, yeah, and then just trying to figure out other things to do. So that's when I was reading more and working out, I was working out a lot more. So just doing other things to really cope in a sense of what was going on. I probably should have talked to someone, but not necessarily a therapist, or like talk to a friend about what was going on. But I just feel like everyone was going through it. So I don't know, talking with one person probably could even help them too. But I just didn't really want to talk about something with another person, because that could probably upset them too. I don't know. So I just kind of did my own thing to reckon with it like, yeah, just handling on my own and doing what I know helped me.

**Researcher:** Right. And then just related to the black community in general. When we think about discourse on Twitter, what is one topic that you would say you're passionate about that you enjoy talking about on Twitter, retweeting about, what what does that topic?

**Participant:** Oh my gosh, so anything about us as black women and our femininity and those conversations where we're still having these debates about what a woman should be or how women should be, and just that even some women, but mainly men have the audacity to still feel like a woman is just one way. So I like retweeting those and seeing those also, like saying things about the LGBTQ plus community, with black people about black people in that community. I like retweeting that for awareness from my followers. I don't have that many followers, but it's mainly my friends. And I don't want my friends to be ignorant. So every tweet that stuff, especially dealing with trans black trans people, I really don't like the transphobia. That happens in our community. So I retweet stuff like that.

**Researcher:** So you see, do you see in your Twitter feed people who think and agree, just like you have that same commonality?

**Participant:** Yes, yes. And then when I click on the tweet, and I go through the comments, that's when I see disagreements. So I be like, okay, but I like the tweets that are like arguing for what I stand for, like in responding to those people. I usually don't respond that much. But I do support

those that do like that take that time, because it's a commitment, you got to keep going, they're not gonna stop to embed.

**Researcher:** And so do you believe that you have developed a sense of community with those users, even if you don't know them?

**Participant:** To an extent, I feel like I could. I don't know like Twitter, like, yes, you can comment. Um, and like in agreement, instead of just liking or retweeting. And I don't really do that as often. So sharing words with my users, or with those users, I don't do that often. But, um, to an extent, like, yeah, we share the same opinions and values or so I would just show that by liking or retweeting it. So, to an extent, I feel like do more, just be like, I'm gonna candy, but for now, it's like, okay, that's nice. And I feel like we went through some of these questions already.

**Researcher:** So in what ways has Black Twitter become a form of advocacy? We think of like, resistance and marching and rally, do you think it's taken place of that?

**Participant:** You said, you do, I think it's taken place of that, like, um, I want to say, replacing those I'm at are those ways of advocacy. But I do think it is another one on the list, especially in our generation. It is a powerful tool, we do have, just as long as you have a lot of people siding with you, you know, like, and you get a lot of exposure to what you're saying? I think it does. But I still think the axe that you do in person with a large group of people still gives more impact, like you see the numbers in your eyes, like on Twitter, like you just see the actual numbers, not people not faces coming together. So but I still think it's a good thing because it hasn't changed so.

**Researcher:** And do you feel like your voice is more empowered on Black Twitter, like on the app or whether you're physically in a white dominated space?

**Participant:** Definitely on Twitter. Definitely on Twitter. Because since we do go to a PWI, it's like, it's okay. I will say, let me not say it's tough. But when it comes to those situations, it is tough to be heard for me at least because, yes, I am not afraid of confrontation. I'm not afraid for standing up what is right. However, it's very uncomfortable to do it alone, because you're the only black person in the room in the class. And it's still I won't I try my best not to let horrible like to let things slide. But sometimes I do if I feel like okay, maybe I don't need to fight this battle right now. So I think I'm like Twitter, like, we're fighting for everything. Like, it does not matter. I'm a big problem or a small problem. Like, we're gonna say, No, this is wrong no matter what. So I do feel like it's easier to do it on Twitter.

**Researcher:** And does it feel good? Like, what is that feeling that you get when you go on Twitter? And you You say your boys like, are you appreciated? Do you feel seen? How does that feel for you?

**Participant:** Um, for me, I definitely do appreciate it. I think the best way I can describe it is comforting. It's like, Hey, I'm not alone in this, just like many of our family members before like, has had to go on has had to go through the same issues just years and years later. It's just nice to know you have some people backing you up. So it is comforting. It is empowering. I'm very appreciative. So yeah, definitely comfortable would be my word.

**Researcher:** Yeah, that's a nice way to describe it. And I know we talked about the pandemic, we talked about Black Lives Matter, like many of the things that invoke the drama, but what things like on Twitter has brought you hope or happiness or laughter to your feed. And how have you used Black Twitter to bring you joy?

**Participant:** Yes, so on my feed, I follow black comedians in a sense, they're not like full blown yet but um, for instance, I think drew ski is one of them. I follow him. I follow this other girl. I forgot her name. I think her name is like Kayla, maybe no Shayla. But she does like a lot of oh, how your black aunt would act or your black grandma like those type of scenarios and just be going on and it's just so funny. So just being able to relate to that. So that has brought me joy, hearing the nice uplifting stories about someone opening their business or things like that, oh, share this, this person just opened up their business I think that's lines. And even seeing like, accomplishments, people post on Twitter, like their fitness journeys, um, what else getting a job, and I don't even know this person. And the tweet just went viral. It's just like, that's nice. And when they're our age, like, you go, like, you know, yeah, it's always nice to see that, like you said, it's comforting. Um, and then you also mentioned you ski and drew ski has become like, very popularized like this past 2020.

**Researcher:** How do you think like, just Twitter coverage and like us on Black Twitter have like, really pushed influencers over like people to like, find their mark, and things of that nature, especially in 2020. We were virtual, like, how do you think that helped?

**Participant:** I think it helped a lot, because we really didn't have nothing else to do, but be on our phone sometimes. So just being on there all the time, that gave influencers a chance to really hone in on their craft, like, let me put in the more hours than I couldn't have done in a pre COVID world. So just having the time to make all this content, and we're eating it up. And they just blow up like crazy, because everyone's just on the social media apps. Yeah, I think we it was like, their chance to set their chance to shine. And then we helped them in a sense. So it wasn't like we did all the work. They definitely had the opportunity to make more content because we were in quarantine or lockdown.

**Researcher:** Yeah. So that's all the questions I've had, is there anything you just want to bring up about the topic, um, anything you want to say about like Twitter and its influence.

**Participant:** Um, overall, Black Twitter is a great thing. It can be toxic sometimes. Because a viral tweet can go viral, a tweet can go viral. And it's just like, not a great opinion to have on a

situation like you just know, it's like an ignorant opinion. And you have people in the comments, like trying to educate the person, and then you still have majority of people still feeling the same way. So it's still like, we still have work to do as a community. But overall, I'm just glad we have this platform just to even share our thoughts in a safe in a safe space. Because at the end of the day, we can have our own opinions. So we're all different people. So I definitely don't think we should all think the same, but at least have I'll have the same like respect levels for everybody in our community, no matter who they are and how they identify, you know, right?

**Researcher:** That was beautiful. Okay, so if you don't have anything else, I'm just going to go into demographic questions, and then we'll be all done. So what's your if you could please state your age?

**Participant:** 21.

**Researcher:** And what generation Are you part of? Gen X? Gen Y, which is Millennials or Gen Z?

**Participant:** Gen Z.

**Researcher:** Okay. And how often do you on a daily basis? How often do you spend on Twitter?

**Participant:** Hmm. Out of the 24 hours, I would say or hours a day breaking it up? For Okay, let me say four hours.

**Researcher:** Okay, okay. Yeah. And on a weekly basis, how often do you spend on Twitter?

**Participant:** Oh, okay. So multiply that by seven. We have 28 to six hours. No, it was four times seven. Okay. I'm gonna look hot on me. I'm gonna look on my phone. Because you know how it tells you what apps you use. How do I do that? On here we go. Well, Twitter takes 7% of my battery. Okay, that's what I needed to see. Oh, tampo I'm sorry, my phone's just vanished. But your phone activity? Yeah, go to I went to screentime in settings.Oh, there we go. So this week. I've spent three hours on Twitter. Actually, that's not a lot with me. Maybe I should change my answer. Now. Ni'A Um, so weekly, we'll say three to five hours. And then daily. We'll say no more than an hour. Okay.

**Researcher:** And then when did you first make a Twitter account?

**Participant:** First, it was 2014.Okay, so you've been on there for a while. Yes. On and off though because I kept deleting I delete my accounts all the time. But okay. 2014



**Researcher:** All right. And that's it for the questions. Is there anything else before I stopped the recording? No. All right, cool.