This twelve-page InfoGuide contains definitions, examples, information, resources, and action steps to help Black communities combat disinformation on social media. This InfoGuide predominantly focuses on Twitter. However, much of the same information applies to various social media platforms, including Facebook and Instagram. It includes ten steps that Black social media users can take to help stop the spread of disinformation targeting our communities. It also provides educational resources and recommended organizations concerning voting rights, civil rights, activism, and cultural awareness.
Researchers say Black communities have been specifically targeted online by bad actors who post false information about cultural issues, attempting to increase divisions in Black communities, influence how we vote, and influence public opinions. They use cultural and racial topics like civil rights, reparations, slavery, economic agendas, and immigration to spread disinformation.
WHAT IS CULTURAL DISINFORMATION?

FALSE INFORMATION

Some things are not what they seem.

Cultural disinformation is false and inaccurate information surrounding cultural issues or topics spread by bad actors with intentions of deceiving, coercing, or shaping public opinions. Cultural disinformation is entirely intentional.

Disinformation is often shared by trolls, fake accounts, or bots but is also distributed by real people.

- Trolls are often anonymous accounts that intentionally provoke others.
- Fake accounts are created with false identities and images. Some are referred to as sock puppets often used to deceive and influence.
- Bots are also a form of fake accounts on social media. They are automated accounts frequently designed to engage with and or influence others.
DO YOU KNOW WHO YOU'RE TALKING TO?

Fake and troll accounts are on Twitter and Facebook.

Digital Black Face is when someone that is not Black pretends to be Black online. They often use stock photos, cartoons, Black historical images, and celebrity photos as profile pictures. These accounts often profess to be Black. They may even say, "as a Black man/woman, I believe...." Digital Black face is usually detected by abnormal behavior and incorrect usage of African American Vernacular English (AAVE).
Twitter account @DarnellMAGA pretended to be a Black man supporting Donald Trump for president. The @CopJrCliff Twitter account pretended to be a Black police officer supporting Trump. It had over 11,000 followers. Twitter recently suspended both accounts in a round-up of suspensions concerning fake Black pro-Trump accounts. These accounts used #BlacksForTrump.
CO-OPTED HASHTAGS USED BY BAD ACTORS TO INFLUENCE BLACK COMMUNITIES

ARE THEY REAL PEOPLE OR BOTS?

The answer is not so simple.

REAL people use these hashtags. Unfortunately, the hashtags have also been CO-OPTED by bad actors in the form of bots, trolls, and sock puppet accounts. They use hashtags to influence the Black population concerning voting and other issues. They use cultural conversations as an entry point. The accounts often use digital Black face to appear as a Black person speaking on Black issues.

- WalkAway
- Blexit
- MAGA
- BlackVoicesForTrump
- BlacksForTrump
- ADOS
- Tangibles2020
- NoReparationsNoVote

FOR MORE INFORMATION: NATIONAL BLACK CULTURAL INFORMATION TRUST (NBCIT.ORG)
WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE: REAL EXAMPLE OF A CO-OPTED HASHTAG POST

The account @BillDix15525176 used #ADOS and #Tangibles2020 to disparage the late Rep. Elijah Cummings and his wife and encouraged Black Americans to vote for Trump. The account exhibited a prime feature of fake accounts; abnormal Twitter handles with long numbers. Twitter suspended the account, but many more exist and are created every day on the platform.
SUPPRESSING BLACK VOTES

VOTES UNDER THE INFLUENCE

Trolls are trying to influence how we think about voting.

Black voters continue to face enormous hurdles in the U.S. electoral process. Voter disenfranchisement and suppression are at an all-time high. This includes poll taxes, polling station closures in Black neighborhoods, voters abruptly removed from the rolls, gerrymandering, strict voter-id and registration laws, deceptive robocalls giving false information about when or where to vote, and more.

Cultural disinformation online is another voter suppression tactic that includes troll accounts trying to influence how Black Americans think and act concerning elections. We must protect Black communities and our votes by staying informed of the various sophisticated techniques used to suppress, deter, and stop Black communities from voting.

This fake account had over 16,000 followers. It used the real photo of a deceased Black soldier. Twitter recently suspended it.

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:
NATIONAL BLACK CULTURAL INFORMATION TRUST INFO@NBCIT.ORG
UNITY UNDER ATTACK

Fake and troll accounts try to drive wedges between Black communities.

Another aspect of cultural disinformation includes fake or troll accounts attempting to drive wedges between Black American and Black immigrant communities. They post false information and data used out of context to promote anti-Black immigrant agendas. They often use the talking points of white supremacist and xenophobic groups.

Bad actors fan the flames of cultural disagreements within Black communities to create divisions and prevent the growth of Black collective and political activism. It is imperative not to fall into the trap of divisive rhetoric. We must promote Black historical awareness and work with cross-cultural coalitions among Black communities of various ethnic backgrounds.
WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE: REAL EXAMPLE OF A TROLL ACCOUNT'S ANTI-BLACK IMMIGRANT POST

On Thanksgiving Day of 2019, account @ReconIntell attacked Congresswoman Sheila Jackson with hateful and xenophobic rhetoric. The Twitter anonymous account, with no profile picture, accused Jackson Lee of being a “Sneaky African/Caribbean immigrant masquerading as a Native born Black American.” Twitter has suspended the account.

Look at the Sneaky African/Caribbean immigrant masquerading as a Native born Black American Congressmember @JacksonLeeTX18 passing out nasty unhealthy turkeys. Jackson-Lee District is worse now compared to when she arrived. @TheBlackCaucus

5:51 AM · 11/28/19 · Twitter Web App

5 Retweets 14 Likes
10 THINGS YOU CAN DO TO STOP THE SPREAD OF CULTURAL DISINFORMATION

- Remember that fake and troll accounts exist. Beware of abnormal social media handles, accounts with no profile photos, or strange images and vernacular.

- Pause before you share. If a story seems suspicious don’t share it with your followers.

- Get information from reliable and reputable sources like experts, researchers, or organizations. Share this information with your followers or network.

- Look up information or quotes to make sure you’re not misled by information shared out of context.

- Do reverse Google Searches on memes or images to locate their sources.

- Check the account. Was it just recently created, has zero followers, or a very small following? It may be a bot or troll.

- Beware of accounts with an abnormal usage of hashtags: #WalkAway, #Blexit, #MAGA, #BlackVoicesForTrump, #Tangibles2020, #ADOS, #NoReparationsNoVote, and #BlacksForTrump.

- Report accounts on social media platforms if you believe them to be fake or harmful.

- Beware of election emails or robocalls from spoof accounts pretending to be government officials. Verify voter information on your local government websites ending in .gov or with trustworthy community organizations.

- Educate your community. Share this informational guide with your networks.
SELECT ORGANIZATIONS CONCERNING CULTURAL ISSUES

CULTURAL RESOURCES:

Black Cultural Issues and History
- African American Intellectual History Society
- Institute of the Black World 21st Century
- Racism.org
- BlackPast.org

Black Voting and Civil and Human Rights
- Black Voters Matter
- Fairfight.com
- WinBlack.org
- National Coalition on Black Civic Participation
- Ella Baker Center for Human Rights
- NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc.
- Color of Change
- NAACP

Reparations for Descendants of African Enslaved in the United States
- National Coalition of Blacks for Reparations in America
- National African American Reparations Commission
- DAEUS.org

Disinformation Targeting Black Communities:
- National Black Cultural Information Trust
- Stop Online Violence Against Women
- WinBlack.org
- The Center for Critical Race & Digital Studies

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:
NATIONAL BLACK CULTURAL INFORMATION TRUST INFO@NBCIT.ORG
INFORMATIONAL RESOURCES:

Black Trolls Matter: Racial and Ideological Asymmetries in Social Media Disinformation

Twitter Suspends Fake Accounts Posing As Black Trump Supporters

Canaries in the Coal Mine: COVID-19 Misinformation and Black Communities

Stop Online Violence Against Women: A threat to an American Democracy: Digital Voter Suppression

‘Blacktivist’ account linked to Russia raised suspicion among Baltimore activists

What to know about ADOS, a group targeting Black progressives

Anti-vaccine leaders targeting minority becomes growing concern at NYC forum

After Russian trolls target black Americans, one city fights back

For more information contact:
National Black Cultural Information Trust info@nbcit.org