

SPEAKING OUT SOCIALLY

How social media helped the BLM movement to grow, and whether it impacted the movement positively or negatively

written and photos by Samantha Sussman

After the death of George Floyd on May 25, 2020, unrest and protests began. This sparked people to speak out on social media. There was a Black Lives Matter hashtag, black screens were posted in June for Black out Tuesday to show support and there were popular activism based accounts. Many have posted about protests, why they are protesting and just general support for the movement. Junior Kate Miller believes social media has helped the BLM movement to grow.

“BLM has definitely grown in its amount of supporters and its awareness because of social media. Because we are able to reach so many people through social media, the BLM movement has grown tremendously,” Miller said.

Senior Otis Jones also believes the movement has grown, but he believes it should have grown in a different way, rather than being a trendy hashtag.

“BLM on social media has grown because more people are spreading news about it but I don’t think it should go like this,” Jones said. “[BLM] shouldn’t be a social media topic being it’s a real life situation no one seems to care about.”

Other than individuals speaking out about Black Lives Matter, larger companies are beginning to as well. Companies like Target and Gap are using more inclusivity in ads. Gap in particular shows their support for BLM in advertisements, even launching a ‘Stand United’ campaign. Miller believes that companies are responding to BLM by using more diversity in their ads, but that they could donate to better help.

“I think companies definitely seek diversity and the rising impact of BLM has definitely increased the need for diversity in

companies and the desire for companies to become more diverse, which they can achieve through advertisement,” Miller said.

“Companies could donate to BLM and show their support if they see fit to do so.”

Jones, on the other hand, believes advertising with diversity as a response to BLM is negative because they are using it to promote their brand instead of promoting the movement.

“Companies could better support BLM by not talking about it; this is not a brand,” Jones said. “Companies have been better at advertising BLM, but this is not supposed to be advertised and it’s business to all of them.”

Miller believes social media can be a useful tool for spreading awareness about issues like BLM to help them gain traction.

“Just like I and many others do, people can show support for what they believe in by posting on stories and talking about what they support and trying to help spread awareness,” Miller said.

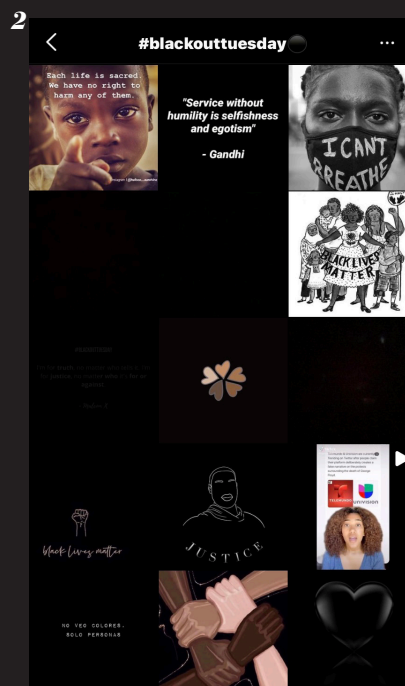
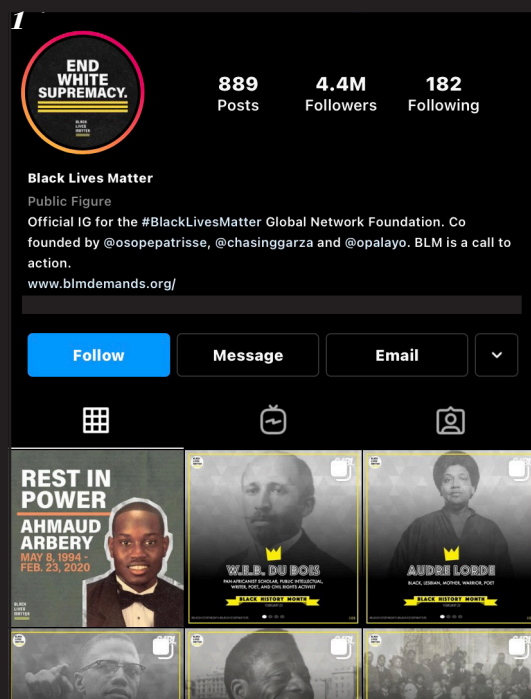
Jones believes that without social media there would not be as much support and growth that has been seen throughout 2020 and beyond.

“It wouldn’t have grown because people wouldn’t have seen how cruel people are to Black people as often as it happens,” Jones said.

Miller agrees with this because it makes it easier for people to see things that are going on in the world without watching the news.

“I don’t think that it would have had such an impact without social media. Before social media, there was a much more limited perspective of what we could see. The furthest it could go would be TV and news, but now with social media, we get to share more personal perspectives and hear real perspectives,” Miller said.

Although Jones believes having social media involved with BLM takes away from the meaning, he believes that it helped the movement grow. Miller believes that social media should become a more positive place that uplifts people and keeps the meanings behind movements like the Black Lives Matter movement.



1. SPREADING THE WORD: There are social media accounts dedicated to issues like BLM. Otis Jones believes social media accounts and posts like these helped people to see the injustices that exist in the U.S. “It wouldn’t have grown because people wouldn’t have seen how cruel people are to Black people as often as it happens,” Jones said.

2. COMING TOGETHER: In June of 2020 many people came together and posted for #BlackOutTuesday. Kate Miller believes that people should post about things they are passionate about as she has done. “I have used social media to help spread happiness and positivity, as well as awareness to what I’m passionate about. Social media often has a negative impact on the lives of young people so I try to help lift up people’s spirits,” Miller said.