

Social Justice Watch 0722

[图集精选](#)

[消息精选](#)

[81 Words: Pose creator to adapt This American Life episode for FX series](#)

[97 Things White People Can Do for Racial Justice](#)

[All the president's trolls: real and fake Twitter fights in El Salvador](#)

[Drag Race queens detail horrific anti-Black racist abuse and death threats](#)

[Grindr user blackmailed grandfather and threatened to out him to family](#)

[In Belarus, wave of grassroots activism knocked by unsupported claims of foreign interference](#)

[Jeremy Roenick sues NBC Sports, claims anti-straight discrimination](#)

[Kylie Minogue set to release new song 'Say Something' from 15th album](#)

[Netflix scraps Turkish series If Only after government blocks gay character](#)

[PinkNews: After 15 years, our dedication to LGBT rights remains the same](#)

[Rob Roberts: Gay Tory MP invited intern to 'fool around' with him](#)

[Russian trans activist 'faces rape' in male prison after protest](#)

[The Eve Appeal receives barrage of abuse for standing with trans people](#)

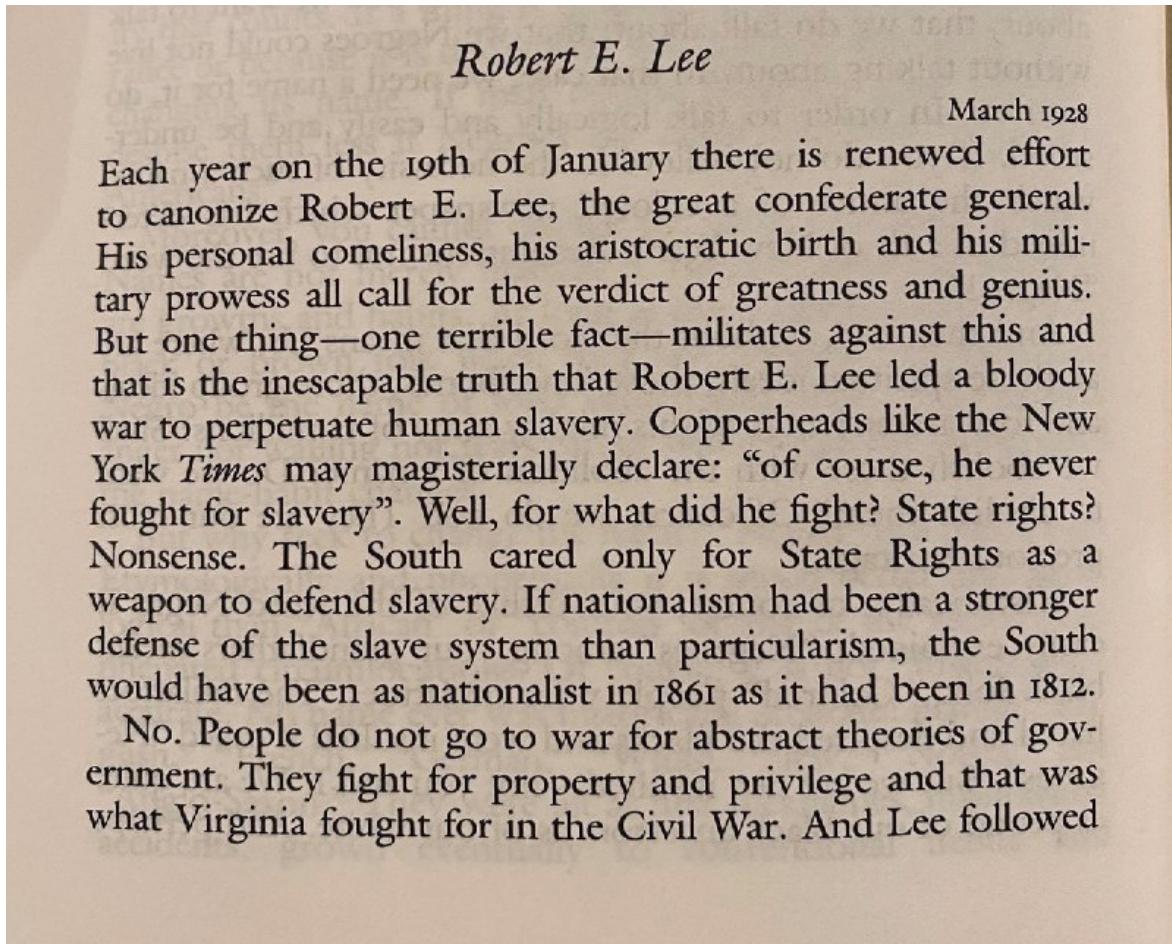
[Trans man sues Catholic hospital that refused surgery on religious grounds](#)

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镜像

图集精选

[返回目录](#)

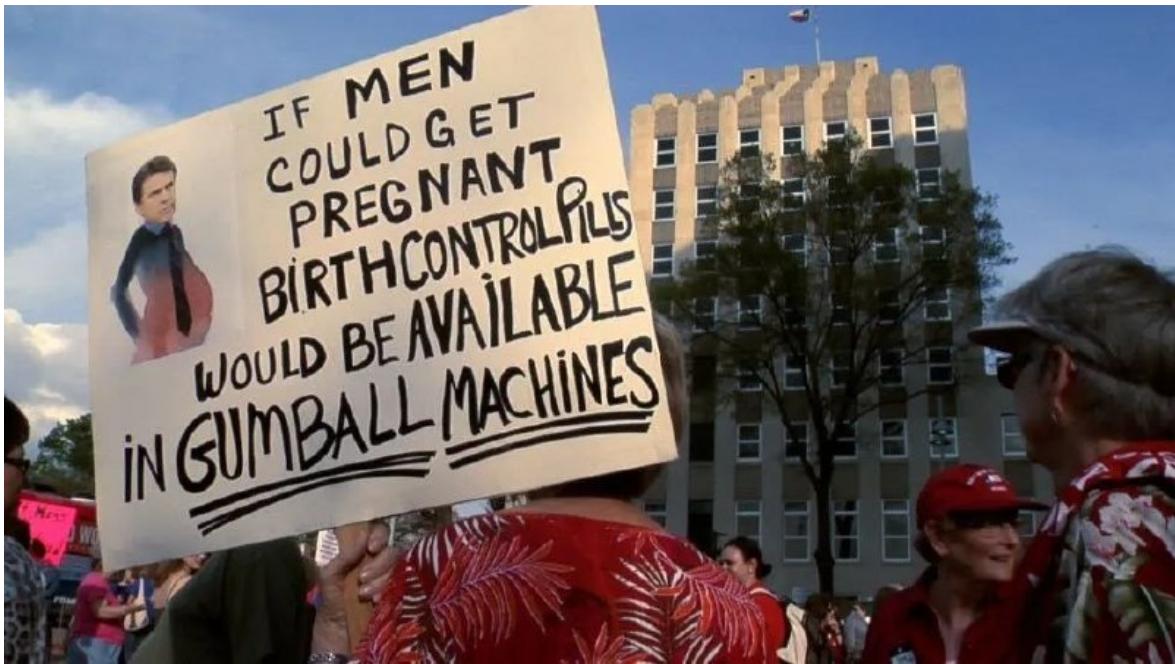


Virginia. He followed Virginia not because he particularly loved slavery (although he certainly did not hate it), but because he did not have the moral courage to stand against his family and his clan. Lee hesitated and hung his head in shame because he was asked to lead armies against human progress and Christian decency and did not dare refuse. He surrendered not to Grant, but to Negro Emancipation.

Today we can best perpetuate his memory and his nobler traits, not by falsifying his moral débâcle, but by explaining it to the young white South. What Lee did in 1861, other Lees are doing in 1928. They lack the moral courage to stand up for justice to the Negro because of the overwhelming public opinion of their social environment. Their fathers in the past have condoned lynching and mob violence, just as today they acquiesce in the disfranchisement of educated and worthy black citizens, provide wretchedly inadequate public schools for Negro children and endorse a public treatment of sickness, poverty and crime which disgraces civilization.

It is the punishment of the South that its Robert Lees and Jefferson Davises will always be tall, handsome and well-born. That their courage will be physical and not moral. That their leadership will be weak compliance with public opinion and never costly and unswerving revolt for justice and right. It is ridiculous to seek to excuse Robert Lee as the most formidable agency this nation ever raised to make 4 million human beings goods instead of men. Either he knew what slavery meant when he helped maim and murder thousands in its defense, or he did not. If he did not he was a fool. If he did, Robert Lee was a traitor and a rebel—not indeed to his country, but to humanity and humanity's God.

W.E.B. DuBois' brief note on the life and moral cowardice of Robert E. Lee is one of the single most brutal pieces of writing I've ever read [source](#)



[返回目录](#)

消息精选

[返回目录](#)

[telegra.ph/Kylie-Minogue-set-to-release-new-song-Say-Something-from-15th-album-07-21](https://www.telegraph.co.uk/Kylie-Minogue-set-to-release-new-song-Say-Something-from-15th-album-07-21)

Telegraph

Kylie Minogue set to release new song 'Say Something' from 15th album
Kylie Minogue will release "Say Something", the new single from her eagerly anticipated 2020 album, later this week, according to reports. There are rumblings of thunder in the distance. The air is heavy with anticipation. Why? Because Kylie Minogue is gearing...

This is why I say gender roles do not serve women because it was never designed with us in mind. That's how you get situations like this where being in the kitchen is a woman's thing as long as it's unpaid and they don't have any autonomy or power. [link source](#)

[telegra.ph/The-Eve-Appeal-receives-barrage-of-abuse-for-standing-with-trans-people-07-21](https://www.telegraph.co.uk/The-Eve-Appeal-receives-barrage-of-abuse-for-standing-with-trans-people-07-21)

Telegraph

The Eve Appeal receives barrage of abuse for standing with trans people
British gynaecological cancer charity The Eve Appeal has been forced to delete a trans-inclusive post about smear tests after a wave of transphobic abuse. The Eve Appeal, which funds research and raises awareness of womb, ovarian, cervical, vulval and vaginal...

[telegra.ph/Trans-man-sues-Catholic-hospital-that-refused-surgery-on-religious-grounds-07-21](https://www.telegraph.co.uk/Trans-man-sues-Catholic-hospital-that-refused-surgery-on-religious-grounds-07-21)

Telegraph

Trans man sues Catholic hospital that refused surgery on religious grounds
A trans man is taking legal action against a Catholic hospital in Maryland, US, after staff refused him healthcare because they found it “immoral”. Jesse Hammons is suing the University of Maryland Medical System and the Saint Joseph Medical Center in Towson...

telegra.ph/Jeremy-Roenick-sues-NBC-Sports-claims-anti-straight-discrimination-07-21

Telegraph

Jeremy Roenick sues NBC Sports, claims anti-straight discrimination
Sports commentator Jeremy Roenick, who was let go by NBC Sports after making inappropriate comments about a female colleague, is now claiming he was fired because he is straight. The retired hockey player was suspended by NBC Sports after he made derogatory...

telegra.ph/Netflix-scaps-Turkish-series-If-Only-after-government-blocks-gay-character-07-21

Telegraph

Netflix scraps Turkish series If Only after government blocks gay character
Netflix has reportedly pulled the plug on planned Turkish series If Only due to government objections to a gay character. According to Turkish screenwriter Ece Yorenc, the streaming giant has scrapped her series If Only just days before filming was due to...

telegra.ph/Rob-Roberts-Gay-Tory-MP-invited-intern-to-fool-around-with-him-07-21

Telegraph

Rob Roberts: Gay Tory MP invited intern to 'fool around' with him
Tory MP Rob Roberts accused of improper conduct towards two young parliamentary interns has blamed the “stress” of coming out as gay. The MP for Delyn, who was elected in December, is facing allegations of inappropriate behaviour towards a 21-year-old female...

None

[telegra.ph/Grindr-user-blackmailed-grandfather-and-threatened-to-out-him-to-family-07-21](#)

Telegraph

Grindr user blackmailed grandfather and threatened to out him to family
A 25-year-old was handed a suspended prison sentence after extorting a married grandfather he began a sexual relationship with after meeting on Grindr. Kieran Thurling was handed a 20 month sentence, suspended for two years, after threatening to out the man...

[telegra.ph/Drag-Race-queens-detail-horrific-anti-Black-racist-abuse-and-death-threats-07-21](#)

Telegraph

Drag Race queens detail horrific anti-Black racist abuse and death threats
Black Drag Race queens have detailed the abhorrent racist behaviour they have endured from so-called fans, with a number admitting they have received death threats because of the colour of their skin. Warning: contains graphic threats of racist violence....

[telegra.ph/PinkNews-After-15-years-our-dedication-to-LGBT-rights-remains-the-same-07-21](#)

Telegraph

PinkNews: After 15 years, our dedication to LGBT rights remains the same
Today marks 15 years since PinkNews founder Benjamin Cohen put the very first rudimentary version of this website live. He's been reflecting on the past 15 years in this Twitter thread.

telegra.ph/81-Words-Pose-creator-to-adapt-This-American-Life-episode-for-FX-series-07-21

Telegraph

81 Words: Pose creator to adapt This American Life episode for FX series
Pose creator Steven Canals is creating a new FX series, 81 Words, dramatising the story of how homosexuality was declassified as a mental illness. According to The Hollywood Reporter, the Emmy-nominated co-creator of Pose will write and executive produce...

telegra.ph/Russian-trans-activist-faces-rape-in-male-prison-after-protest-07-21

Telegraph

Russian trans activist ‘faces rape’ in male prison after protest
A Russian trans woman is being sent to a men’s prison for protesting a series of anti-LGBT+ constitutional changes, and activists are fearful that she may be abused or even raped. Polina Simonenko was found guilty by a top Moscow court for repeated violations...

For both hashtags, about 75 percent were retweets, higher than for most organic traffic. Since retweeting is easier than crafting original posts, a high percentage of retweets is correlated with manipulation. telegra.ph/All-the-presidents-trolls-real-and-fake-Twitter-fights-in-El-Salvador-07-21

Telegraph

All the president’s trolls: real and fake Twitter fights in El Salvador
This article was first published by the International Crisis Group. The views and assessments in this analysis do not necessarily represent those of the DFRLab. El Salvador’s Nayib Bukele won the presidency in 2019 by promising to reduce the country’s then...

telegra.ph/In-Belarus-wave-of-grassroots-activism-knocked-by-unsupported-claims-of-foreign-interference-07-21

Telegraph

In Belarus, wave of grassroots activism knocked by unsupported claims of

foreign interference

Despite Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko's claims to the contrary, there is no evidence that Russia, or any other foreign entity, has spurred the recent outgrowth of Belarusian online activism and demonstrations now flourishing amid increasing dissatisfaction...

docs.google.com/document/d/1BRIF2_zhNe86SGgHa6-VlBO-QgirITwCTugSfKie5Fs/edit

Google Docs

Anti-racism resources for white people

This document is intended to serve as a resource to white people and parents to deepen our anti-racism work. If you haven't engaged in anti-racism work in the past, start now. Feel free to circulate this document on social media and with your friends, family...

telegra.ph/97-Things-White-People-Can-Do-for-Racial-Justice-07-22

Telegraph

97 Things White People Can Do for Racial Justice

Note 1: This article is continually updated to ensure each item is accurate and needed today. Note 2: Achieving racial justice is a marathon, not a sprint. Our work to fix what we broke and left broken isn't done until Black folks tell us it's done. There...

[返回目录](#)

81 Words: Pose creator to adapt This American Life episode for FX series

[返回目录](#)



Pose creator Steven Canals is creating a new FX series, *81 Words*, dramatising the story of how homosexuality was declassified as a mental illness.

According to The Hollywood Reporter, the Emmy-nominated co-creator of *Pose* will write and executive produce a limited series called *81 Words*.

The show will be based on an episode of the award-winning podcast *This American Life* of the same name.

According to the podcast: “In 1973, the American Psychiatric Association

(APA) declared that homosexuality was not a disease simply by changing the 81-word definition of sexual deviance in its own reference manual.”

The log line for Canals’s upcoming series reads: “Until 1974, the medical establishment considered gay people sexually deviant and diagnosed them as mentally ill.

“*81 Words* tells the true story of gay activists Frank Kameny and Barbara Gittings, who risked their career and reputation to conspire with the GAYPA — a clandestine group of closeted psychiatrists — and challenge the American Psychiatric Association’s definition of homosexuality.”

Kameny and Gittings also joined forces to call for the first gay rights protest outside the White House in 1965.

The pair demanded the repeal of anti-gay laws and equal treatment for federal gay employees, as well as declassification of homosexuality as a mental disorder, four years before the Stonewall Uprising.

Pose on pause amid pandemic.

81 Words is currently in development with 20th Century Fox TV, as Canals signed a deal with the company after it produced *Pose*.

Filming on the third season of *Pose*, co-created with super-producer Ryan Murphy and regular collaborator Bryan Falchuk, been paused during the coronavirus pandemic.

Canals previously admitted that social distancing regulations might force the show to ditch its iconic ballroom scenes, which can often require as many as 150 background actors.

Earlier this year, *Pose* gave away parts of its set depicting a hospital during the AIDS crisis to help the present-day battle against coronavirus.

As the show’s production was brought to a grinding halt, it revealed that genuine medical supplies used to build the set had been gifted to real-life hospitals.

[原文](#)

[返回目录](#)

97 Things White People Can Do for Racial Justice

[返回目录](#)



Note 1: This article is continually updated to ensure each item is accurate and needed today.

Note 2: Achieving racial justice is a marathon, not a sprint. Our work to fix what we broke and left broken isn't done until Black folks tell us it's done.

1. There are varied approaches to ending police violence. The best thing to do is to follow your local Black Lives Matter chapter or other local Black-led organization to find out the proposed policy and funding changes in your city or town. Donate to your local BLM chapter, sign up for updates, volunteer, and take action when asked.
2. Campaign Zero has ten evidence-based solutions to address police violence. Contact your city or town government representative(s) and police chief to advocate for these policies.
3. Within the evidence-based solutions in #2, Campaign Zero has a project called 8Can'tWait, with eight specific policies to be prioritized to end

police violence. The website has a fantastic tool wherein you can see which of the policies your city or town have been enacted. Contact your city or town government representative(s) and police chief to advocate for the policies that have not yet been enacted.

4. Find out your city or town's policy on no-knock warrants (the policy that led to Breonna Taylor's murder). Contact your city or town government representative(s) and police chief to ban no-knock warrants.
5. Write to your state representative and senator to end qualified immunity like Colorado recently did. Qualified immunity permits government officials performing discretionary functions to be immune from civil suits unless the official violated "clearly established statutory or constitutional rights of which a reasonable person would have known." In recent years, qualified immunity has been successfully used to defend the use of excessive or deadly force by police, like in this case. Thank you to Claudia S. Murray for the suggestion.
6. Fund a project facilitated by Leap, the Law Enforcement Accountability Project, a fund that empowers activists to change the narrative around the police abuse of Black People. Leap is founded by Ava DuVernay.
7. Understand and share what "defund the police" really means. It's about a new, smarter approach to public safety, wherein we demilitarize the police and allocate resources into education, social services, and other root causes of crimes. What we're doing now isn't working — There are so many innocent people who have been harassed or killed by the police unjustly, and nearly every Black American has experienced some form of harassment by the police. Some good resources for this are this video by BLM , this Washington Post article and this Facebook post.
8. More and more stories of Black folks encountering racism are being documented and shared through social media — whether it's at a hotel, with the police, in a coffee shop, at a school, etc. When you see such a post, call the organization, company, or institution involved to tell them how upset you are. Then share the post along with the institution's contact information, spreading the word about what happened and encouraging others to contact the institution as well. Whether the company initiated the event or failed to protect a POC during an onslaught by a third party, they need to hear from us.
9. If you or a friend is an educator, buy said friend books that feature POC as protagonists and heroes, no matter the racial make-up of the class. A few good lists are [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#). And/or purchase educational toys that feature POC, such as finger puppets, Black

History Flashcards, etc for their classroom. Use these items year-round, not just in February. The racial make-up of students doesn't matter — kids of every race need to know American history and be exposed to people from different races, religions, and countries. If the friend is interested, buy them for your pal's classroom. Don't be shy to ask Facebook friends that you haven't actually talked to in ten years.

10. If you or a friend or family member is an educator, watch or share this video of Neil deGrasse Tyson speaking about his experience as a Black student telling people he wanted to be a scientist and astrophysicist. Tyson's experience reminds me of a Black friend whose high school teachers tried to dissuade her from taking AP classes, because, with the best of intentions, they thought the AP classes would be "too much" for her. Be an educator who supports and encourages, not one who dissuades. Talk to educators you know about being educators who support and encourage, not educators who dissuade.
11. Work on ensuring that Black educators are hired where Black children are being taught. If you want to know more about why and how this makes a difference for Black children, check out this episode of Malcolm Gladwell's podcast. There are some really good nuggets in there about how schools can support the achievement of Black students — from ensuring Black students aren't closed out of gifted programs by using test results instead of white teachers' recommendations to the influence that having a Black teacher has on a Black student's education to the importance to fostering a school ethos wherein Black students think, "This school is here for me."
12. Many companies have recruiting channels that are predominantly white. Work with your HR department to recruit Americans who are descendants of enslaved Africans. Recruiting from HBCUs is a good start. Work to put descendants of enslaved Africans already hired under supportive managers.
13. Donate to anti-white supremacy work such as your local Black Lives Matter Chapter, the National Council for Incarcerated and Formerly Incarcerated Women and Girls, the NAACP, Southern Poverty Law Center, United Negro College Fund, Black Youth Project 100, Color of Change, The Sentencing Project, Families against Mandatory Minimums, A New Way of Life, Equal Justice Initiative, and Dream Defenders. Join some of these list-serves and take action as their emails dictate.
14. Support Black businesses. Find them on WeBuyBlack, The Black Wallet, and Official Black Wall Street. Another great list is here. Yelp now has a feature to search for Black-owned businesses, and Etsy features Black-

owned businesses here. Thank you Corinna Tricarico for the info on Etsy.

15. Bank Black. It doesn't have to be all of your checking or savings. Opening up an account with some money is better than no account at all. You can use the link from #14 (type "banking" in the Category field) or this site to find a bank. At the very least, move some or all of your checking, savings, mortgage, etc out of Wells Fargo as a part of the divestment movement to protect Standing Rock.
16. Don't buy from companies that use prison labor. Find a good list here. While Whole Foods is on that list, but pledged to stop using prison labor in 2016, they haven't made amends for that abuse. You can't pour gas on a burning building, decide to stop pouring the gas, then walk away like everything is fine. Until Whole Foods pays reparations, they stay on the boycott list.
17. Stand outside of the stores from #16 with a sign that reads "[Company] uses prison labor" even if for 30 mins a few times a month.
18. Read up about mandatory minimum sentences and watch videos about this on Families Against Mandatory Minimums (FAMM's) website. FAMM's website includes work being done at the federal level and state level. Call or write to your state legislators and governor about reducing mandatory minimum sentences for non-violent drug crimes.
19. To reduce mandatory minimum sentences on a federal level, call or write to your federal legislators in support of the bipartisan (sponsored by Sen Lee (R-UT)) Smarter Sentencing Act (S. 2850) which reduces the length of federal mandatory minimum drug sentences by half, makes the Fair Sentencing Act's crack sentencing reforms retroactive, and expands the "safety valve" exception to mandatory drug sentences.
20. To reduce mandatory minimum sentences on a federal level, call or write to your federal legislators in support of the bipartisan (sponsored by Sen Paul (R-KY)) Justice Safety Valve Act (S. 399, H.R. 1097), which would allow judges to give sentences other than the mandatory minimum sentence for any federal crime.
21. To reduce mandatory minimum sentences on a federal level, call or write your federal legislators in support of another great criminal justice reform bill, the Second Look Act, which would make reduced sentences for crack convictions from the previously passed Fair Sentencing Act retroactive, reduce mandatory minimums for people convicted more than three times for drug crimes from life without parole after the third offense to 25 years, reduce mandatory sentences for drug crimes from 15 to 10 years, limit the use of solitary confinement on juvenile prisoners, etc.

22. Call or write to your state legislators and governor to support state-wide criminal justice reform including reducing mandatory minimum sentences, reducing sentences for non-violent drug crimes, passing “safety valve” law to allow judges to depart below a mandatory minimum sentence under certain conditions, passing alternatives to incarceration, etc. Study after study shows that racism fuels racial disparities in imprisonment, and about 90% of the US prison population are at the state and local level.
23. Call or write to state legislators, federal legislators, and your governor to decriminalize weed. No, not because Black folks use weed more frequently than white folks. Because Black Americans are arrested for marijuana possession far more frequently than whites.
24. Call or write to state legislators to require racial impact statements be required for all criminal justice bills. Most states already require fiscal and environmental impact statements for certain legislation. Racial impact statements evaluate if a bill may create or exacerbate racial disparities should the bill become law. Check out the status of your state’s legislation surrounding these statements [here](#).
25. Find and join a local “white space” to learn more about and talk out the conscious and unconscious biases us white folks have. If there’s not a group in your area, start one.
26. Join or start a Daughters of Abraham book club in your Church, mosque, or synagogue.
27. Join your local Showing up for Racial Justice (SURJ) group. There is a lot of awesome work going on locally — Get involved in the projects that speak to you.
28. Do deep canvassing about race and racial justice. Many SURJ groups are organizing them, so many people can do it through your local SURJ group. If they’re not already doing it, start it.
29. Research your local prosecutors. Prosecutors have a lot of power to give fair sentences or Draconian ones, influence a judge’s decision to set bail or not, etc. In the past election, a slew of fair-minded prosecutors were elected. We need more.
30. Call or write to state legislators, federal legislators, and your governor to end solitary confinement in excess of 15 days. It is considered torture by the UN, and it is used more frequently on Black and Hispanic prisoners. For more information on solitary, two good overviews can be found [here](#) and [here](#).
31. Watch 13th. Better yet, get a group of friends together and watch 13th.
32. Watch The House I Live In. Or get a group of friends together and watch it.

33. Read Ta-Nehisi Coates' article The Case for Reparations and From Here to Equality by William A. Darity Jr., A. Kirsten Mullen. The US has already participated in reparations four times. Thank you to Clyanna Blyanna for suggesting this addition.
34. Participate in reparations. One way is through this Facebook group. Remember reparations isn't just monetary — share your time, skills, knowledge, connections, etc. Thank you to Clyanna Blyanna for suggesting this addition.
35. Read The New Jim Crow by Michelle Alexander. Better yet, get a group of friends together to read it like a book club would — read, then discuss. Buy it from one of these Black-owned bookstores.
36. Read Caught by Marie Gottschalk. Better yet, get a group of friends together to read it like a book club would — read, then discuss. Buy it from one of these Black-owned bookstores.
37. Read Between the World and Me by Ta-Nehisi Coates. Yep, get a group of friends together to read it like a book club would — read, then discuss. Buy it from one of these Black-owned bookstores.
38. Read A People's History of the United States by Howard Zinn. Thank you to Steve Senatori for this suggestion. Buy the book from one of these Black-owned bookstores.
39. Read Orange is the New Black by Piper Kerman. The information the author shares about the ease with which one can be charged with "conspiracy" to sell drugs, the damage done from long sentences that don't fit the crime due to mandatory minimum sentencing, the ever-present threat of solitary confinement at a Correction Officer's whim, and other specific harmful practices in the prison system are well done. Get a group of friends together to read it like a book club would — read, then discuss. Buy the book from one of these Black-owned bookstores.
40. Read The Color of Law by Richard Rothstein. Get your friends on board reading it, too. Buy it from one of these Black-owned bookstores.
41. Especially if you or a friend is an educator, read or share bell hooks' Teaching to Transgress. Buy it from one of these Black-owned bookstores.
42. Read Nikole Hannah-Jones' The 1619 Project.
43. Buy books, choose TV shows and movies, and opt for toys for your kids, nieces, nephews, etc that show people from different races, religions, countries and that teach real American history. A few ideas: the books, toys, and flashcards from #9.
44. Decolonize your bookshelf.
45. Listen without ego and defensiveness to people of color. Truly listen. Don't

scroll past articles written by people of color — Read them.

46. Don't be silent about that racist joke. Silence is support.
47. Follow Patrisse Cullors, Opal Tometi, Alicia Garzia, bell hooks, Luvvie Ajayi, Melissa Harris-Perry, Van Jones, Ava DuVernay, thenewjimcrow, Laverne Cox, DeRay Mckesson, Rev. Dr. William J. Barber II, Ibram X. Kendi, and Killer Mike. Follow them with the intention of listening and learning only.
48. Read Awesomely Luvvie, Blavity, Madame Noir, The Root, The Grio, and Jamelle Bouie's opinion pieces with a desire to learn and understand better the lives of Black Americans.
49. Find out how slavery, the Civil War, and the Jim Crow era are being taught in your local school. Advocate that history is taught correctly and certain parts are not skipped over or barely mentioned. Advocate that many voices be used in the study of history. Is the school teaching about post-Civil War convict leasing, the parent to our current mass incarceration system? Talking about slavery alone, is your high school showing images such as Gordon's scoured back, a slave ship hold, and an enslaved nurse holding her young master? Are explorers, scientists, politicians, etc who are POC discussed? Are male and female authors who are POC on reading lists? In my mostly white high school, reading books like Having Our Say, To Be a Slave, The Bluest Eye, and Their Eyes Were Watching God was really important. A great starting list of such books is here. A great starting list of such books is here. Are Japanese internment camps being discussed? Is history explained correctly in history books? As an example of a severe failure to teach the reality of slavery and its ramifications, check out image 1 and image 2 . There are a lot of great resources out there with a little googling, like PBS's resources for teaching slavery, this POC Online Classroom blog, Teaching for Change, The Zinn Project's This Day in History, Teaching Tolerance at the Southern Poverty Law Center (thank you Adajhand), and The National Association for Multicultural Education.
50. Arrange for cultural exchanges and cultural ambassadors in your local school's classrooms. The International Classroom program at UPenn and People to People International are options. The Dept of Education has a good list. Cultural exchanges via the interwebs are very valuable. Actual human interaction between people from different races, religions, and countries (ie: cultural ambassadors) and students in the physical classroom is ideal.
51. Seek out a diverse group of friends for your kids.
52. Seek out a diverse group of friends for you. Practice real friendship and

intimacy by listening when POC talk about their experiences and their perspectives. They're speaking about their pain.

53. Watch these videos to hear first hand accounts of what our Black brothers and sisters live. Then read everyday people's experiences through the hashtag #realizediwasblack. Watch the rules Tik Tok user @skoodupcam's mother makes him follow just so he comes home each night. Share with others.
54. If there are Black children/teens in your life, contribute to their college savings plans. You can also contribute to an HBCU or to the UNCF. Thank you to Rev Dr Pollard for this contribution. Consider making HBCUs and the American Indian College Fund beneficiaries through your will or living trusts. Thank you Janice Crawford for this contribution.
55. Call or write to your national legislators, state legislators, and governor in favor of affirmative action. Encourage friends to do the same.
56. Write to your college/university about implementing all or some of these diversity strategies that effectively promote racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic diversity on campus. Write to the public universities your tax payer dollars support about implementing these diversity strategies.
57. Recognize that in the same way saying "slavery is a necessary evil" (Thomas Jefferson's words) was acceptable by many in 1820, the same way saying "separate but equal" was acceptable by many in 1940, choosing to not condemn white nationalism, the fact that Black people are 2.7 times as likely to be killed by police than white people, the fact that unarmed Black Americans are roughly five times as likely as unarmed white Americans to be shot and killed by a police officer, that the fact the Black imprisonment rate for drug offenses is about 5.8 times higher than it is for whites, etc are acts of overt racism in 2020.
58. Write to the US Sentencing Commission (PubAffairs@ussc.gov) and ask them to:
 - reform the career offender guideline to lessen the length of sentences
 - change the guidelines so that more people get probation
 - change the criminal history guidelines so that a person's criminal record counts against them less
 - change guidelines to reduce mandatory minimum sentences for non-violent crimes
 - conduct a study to review the impact of parental incarceration on minor children. With more data, the Commission could modify the Sentencing Guidelines and allow judges to take this factor into account when

sentencing individuals for non-violent crimes.

— conduct a study to review whether the Bureau of Prisons is following the Commission’s encouragement to file a motion for compassionate release whenever “extraordinary and compelling reasons” exist.

— consider amending the guidelines to reduce sentences for first offenders.

59. Read Van Jones’ short and to-the-point article about the racial biases of reporters. More examples are [here](#) and [here](#). Check out this article discussing how media coverage of the opioid epidemic — which largely affects suburban and rural whites — portrays it as an outside threat and focuses on treatment and recovery, while stories of heroin in the 1970s, crack-cocaine in the 1980s, and other drug problems that impact urban people of color today have focused on the drug user’s morality. Keep an eye out for such biases, and use social media and direct communication to the media outlet to call them out when they occur.
60. Donate to groups that are working to put women of color into elected office, to get out the vote, and to restore voting rights to disenfranchised voters.
61. Know our American history. Watch Roots, 12 Years a Slave, and Selma, to name a few.
62. Check out Black movies, TV, and other media that show POC as lead characters and in their full humanity. Queen Sugar, Insecure, Dear White People, The Carmichael Show, Blackish, Grownish, Atlanta, 2 Dope Queens, Black Panther, A Wrinkle in Time, Get Out, Girls Trip, Sorry to Bother You, United Shades of America, Mudbound, How to Get Away with Murder, Scandal, The Cloverfield Paradox, Sorry to Bother You, Blindsight, BlacKkKlansman, Little, If Beale Street Could Talk, Queen and Slim, A Black Lady Sketch Show, PBS’ Great Performance of Much Ado about Nothing, youtube videos of Amber Says What, and Pose are a few. Share them with friends. In addition, if you can’t watch the whole video, watch 13:12 to 15:17 of this discussion about working in Hollywood when you’re not white.
63. Know what indigenous land you’re living on by looking at this map and research the groups that occupied that land before you did. Find out what local activism those groups are doing and give your money and time to those efforts.
64. When people say that Black Lives Matter is a violent/terrorist group, explain to them that there are fringe groups that are being misrepresented as part of BLM. If conservatives don’t want to be lumped in with the KKK, they can’t lump violent protesters in with BLM.

65. When people ask, “Why aren’t you talking about ‘black-on-black crime’?” and other myths about BLM, let Francesca Ramsey help you with those talking points.
66. Stop shopping at Amazon and Whole Foods. They advertise on -that’s to say fund- white supremacist media. An easy alternative to Amazon is buying from Black-owned businesses through webuyblack.com, featured in #14. Also check out this “How to Stop Using Amazon” Facebook post.
67. Be honest about our history. One genocide, another genocide, then apartheid. It sucks, but it’s true. We’ll never be free from our history unless we’re honest about it. Denial is our pathology, but the truth will set us free.
68. If you have a close relationship with a young person of color, make sure he/she knows how much you love them. Love and affirm that child. Thank you to Rev Dr Pollard for this contribution.
69. Write to your city or town government representative to replace Columbus Day with Indigenous People’s Day like these cities did.
70. Donate to Standing Rock through the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe.
71. Write to your city or town government representative to divest from banks that are financing the Dakota Access Pipeline, private prisons, and detention centers. Seattle, Davis, CA, and Los Angeles divested from banks that are funding the Dakota Access Pipeline, and there are campaigns going on in many cities to divest. Cities like New York and Cincinnati have divested from private prisons. Start here: <http://howtodivest.org/>
72. Personally divest your investments in private prisons and detention centers. Start here. Many people are divesting from Wells Fargo for their substantial role in Standing Rock and from private prison companies Corrections Corporation of America (CCA), GEO Group, CoreCivic, and G4S.
73. Get your company, place of worship, etc to divest from private prisons and detention centers. Since the start of a national prison divestment campaign, higher ed institutions, churches, and corporations have divested.
74. Write to your state legislators to end cash bail. It means that a someone who is legally innocent is put in jail because they can’t afford bail. It means that a defendant can be released pre-trial because of their wealth, not how much of a flight risk they are. It puts more people in detention (which tax payers pay for) and affects a defendants’ ability to maintain employment, access mental and physical healthcare, and be in communication with their family and friends, etc. Housing the approximately 500,000 people in jail in the US awaiting trial who cannot afford bail costs US taxpayers \$9 billion a year. Thank you to Elizabeth B. and Cynthia Astle for suggesting this addition.

75. Support organized efforts to end of cash bail by donating to The Bail Project. Bail out a Black mother through The National Bail Out. Thank you to Elizabeth B. and Cynthia Astle for suggesting this addition.
76. Attend town halls, candidate meet-and-greets, etc for political candidates and ask about ending mass incarceration, reducing mandatory minimum sentences, reducing or ending solitary confinement, decriminalizing weed, ending cash bail, divesting from private prisons, divesting from banks, divesting from banks that finance the Dakota Access Pipeline, etc.
77. Read this article about an overt white supremacist's son's journey to relinquish white supremacy and watch this video about Daryl Davis, a Black man who gets KKK members to disavow by befriending them. For those you know who are overtly racist (see #57), think about ways you can create exposure for them to people who don't look like them, share their religion, etc. Jane Elliott says, "People who are racist aren't stupid, they're ignorant. And the answer to ignorance is education." Frederick Douglass notes, "It is easier to build strong children than to repair broken men." It may be best to focus on children, adolescents, and young adults currently being raised by overtly racist parents. Maybe it's tutoring them so they could get on a college track, encouraging them to study abroad, or turning them on to colleges where not everyone looks like them and shares their religion, etc. Maybe it's spending time with them on some regularity and showing them the achievements and beauty of non-white cultures. Be creative.
78. Talk to the white people you know who aren't clearly upset by white supremacy. Use "I" statements and "I care" messages ("I feel [feeling] when you [behavior]"). They need to know you see a problem. Call them out, and call them in. As a start, ask them to watch the videos in #53. For people you know who've been radicalized by FOX News and other nationalist (not conservative) media, who've been so pummeled with fear and hatred of "the other" that they've become ISIS-like towards others, how can you and other family and friends guide them through conversation to show them that their actions are now in direct contrast with the values they feign to purport?
79. A wise former teacher once said, "The question isn't: Was the act racist or not? The question is: How much racism was in play?" So maybe racism was 3% of the motivation or 30% or 95%. Interrogate the question "How much racism was in play?" as you think about an incident. Share this idea with the people in your life when they ask, "Was that racist?"
80. Credit Black men and women. Kara Springer, a Black woman artist, created

the image/public art that begins this piece. It's called A Small Matter of Engineering, Part II. Christian Campbell tweeted to ensure the art was attributed appropriately and correctly.

81. Watch Jane Elliot's blue eyes/brown eyes racism experiment here. Watch Jane Elliot's a follow-up on the blue eyes/brown eyes racism experiment on Oprah here, and watch Jane Elliot and Roland Martin's conversation at the University of Michigan's Women of Color Task Force here. Thank you to Jourdain Blair for this suggestion.
82. Anti-racism is a global fight. Don't buy electronics or jewelry made from conflict minerals. Find an overview and rankings of electronics and jewelry companies' efforts to source conflict-free minerals here. At your place of work, establish a policy that your company or organization will only purchase electronics from companies that are top-rated. Write to companies on the list and ask them to improve their rank.
83. Read this article by educator and activity Bettina L. Love about the harm done by schools to their Black students. Ensure your local school/School Board has a clear and strong policy of zero tolerance for racial slurs, physically touching a child to discipline them, invasions of privacy like strip searches, hair discrimination, etc. "Zero tolerance" means loss of a job, loss of a pension, and mandatory reporting to state Department of Education. If and when school officials don't comply with their own policies, or when a school refuses to create these policies altogether, use resources at your disposal like social media, local news media, connections to the School Board, etc to hold them accountable.
84. Visit sites of American concentration camps, memorials, and museums dedicated to teaching about the genocide and apartheid, past and present. Old Slave Mart Museum in Charleston; The Legacy Museum: From Enslavement to Mass Incarceration in Montgomery; the National Museum of African American History and Culture in Washington, DC; the International Civil Rights Center & Museum in Greensboro, NC; the Whitney Plantation near New Orleans, the quarters of enslaved people at Monticello in Charlottesville, VA; a tour discussing the lives of enslaved people at Mount Vernon, VA, Underground Railroad locations, etc. Google sites, museums, etc where you can learn about Black history and current life near you or at your next travel destination. Thank you to Charles Chukwuemeka Ekeke for this addition.
85. We need to raise children who understand race and are comfortable talking about it. A few resources for that: the book Raising White Kids by Jennifer Harvey, the NPR podcast Talking Race With Young Children, these

children's books, and these resources compiled by the Children's Community School in Philadelphia.

86. Write to your state representative and senator to ban voter ID laws, ease the voter registration process, implement early voting, and implement voting-by-mail. The unfortunate reality of efforts to "fight against voter fraud" is that voter fraud isn't statistically a problem in this country. Even The Heritage Foundation counts only 1,285 cases of voter fraud... since 1998. Just like poll taxes, literacy tests, and grandfather clauses were "race-neutral" policies that inhibited Black Americans from voting until the Voting Rights Act of 1965 passed, voter ID laws, cuts to voting registration processes, and cuts to early voting are efforts to inhibit Black Americans from voting today. A well-off white person in my life lamented that their children could easily get their ID, so why couldn't anyone else? This person neglected to recognize that her children had cars to get them to the DMV, lived relatively close to the DMV, had the time to go, etc. This excerpt from the previous link is quite striking: "In the 1930s one Georgia man described the situation this way: 'Do you know I've never voted in my life, never been able to exercise my right as a citizen because of the poll tax? ... I can't pay a poll tax, can't have a voice in my own government.' " Saying, "Just get your ID!" today is the equivalent of saying "Just pay the poll tax!" in 1964. Remember that the restrictive voting laws passed since 2013 have been considered legal only because the Supreme Court gutted the most powerful protections of the Voting Rights Act. Thank you Alice Smith and Sarah Weiss for this suggestion.
87. Ibram X Kendi says we need to move beyond saying "racist" and "not racist." Instead, some white people are practicing anti-racism by (1) divesting themselves of white fragility and defensiveness and choosing to continue to learn and listen to Black folks and (2) dismantling white supremacy in the institutions around them. White supremacy is not just targeted murder of Black men by police. White supremacy pervades every institution — places of work, schools, all levels of govt, banks, places of worship, etc. It is our work to dismantle white supremacy in all of these institutions, not just the police. Those who are not practicing anti-racism are perpetuating white supremacy. And we cannot do the external work without doing the internal work.
88. Contact your high school and college/university to create a class that teaches white privilege, use of racial stereotypes by individuals and the media, the subconscious nature of racism in every US institution (schools, companies, etc). This class should be mandatory for all students. One such

class is CFE 444 — Schooling & Diversity at Syracuse University.

89. When people lament that the policing problem is just “a few bad apples,” share the following evidence that it is not: comedian Amber Ruffin discussing her police encounters, the Buffalo cop who intervened on a chokehold and lost her job and pension, the Minneapolis police union chief who used his powerful position to try to justify George Floyd’s torture and death, and the Philadelphia Police Union President who, in his position of authority, called Black Lives Matter protestors ‘rabid animals.’ Remember that the fourth stage of genocide is “dehumanization, wherein members of a particular group “are equated with animals, vermin, insects or diseases.”
90. Check out this Anti-Racist/Anti-Fascist Education playlist.
91. Don’t gentrify neighborhoods.
92. Support that new apartment building proposed to be built in your neighborhood. Don’t participate in “snob zoning,” which is opposing new builds of apartments because wealthy white folks are afraid the apartment building will “change the character of a community.”
93. If you or a friend or family member is an educator, ensure anti-racism is in your teaching practice. Some resources for this are the book Pedagogy of the Oppressed by Paulo Freire, the book Lies My Teacher Told Me by James W. Loewen, American University’s Summer Institute on Education, Equity, and Justice, Teaching Tolerance, The National Seed Project, The NAIS People of Color Conference, The Race Institute for K-12 Educators, the book The Guide for White Women Who Teach Black Boys, Teaching While White, the White Privilege Conference, and specifically for white teachers of middle school students, the website The Collaborative.
94. Array is an independent film distribution and resource collective founded by Ava DuVernay. For students of all ages, Array is creating learning companions for the works they produce and distribute, starting with When They See Us. Check out the learning companion for it here.
95. Work on this excellent document of scaffolding anti-racism resources.
96. Check out the White Ally Toolkit, which helps white folks become more persuasive in conversations with racism skeptics by empowering and equipping us with best practice communications skills based on listening, storytelling, and compassion.
97. Remember the wise words of Twitter user @itsjacksonbbz: You will continue to mess up racism. So continue to be teachable, open to correction from POC, and vigilantly monitor yourself for defensiveness and white fragility. You never “arrive” as an ally you must continually *practice* allyship.

[原文](#)

[返回目录](#)

All the president's trolls: real and fake Twitter fights in El Salvador

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El Salvador President Nayib Bukele speaks at a news conference in Ilopango, El Salvador, May 18, 2020. (Source: REUTERS/Jose Cabezas)

This article was first published by the International Crisis Group. The views and assessments in this analysis do not necessarily represent those of the DFRLab.

El Salvador's Nayib Bukele won the presidency in 2019 by promising to reduce the country's then sky-high murder rate and tackle corruption. Homicide rates have indeed fallen sharply since his election. But Bukele's policies have proved controversial. Critics say the president's actions, such as cramming gang members into cells without daylight, and strong-arming the parliament and high courts, violate human rights and erode democracy. At the same time, these policies have made him more popular than ever, with many Salvadorans attributing the drop in homicides to his no-nonsense approach.

The conflict between these two camps is fierce. One of its main battlegrounds is online, particularly on Twitter. Bukele relies on tech to address citizens directly, and to that end he regularly takes selfies and posts memes (at one point sharing a picture of himself in a spaceship). Even though fewer than half of Salvadorans have regular access to the internet, Twitter has become so central to Bukele's

public messaging and government operations that *The Economist* recently ran a story about him titled “My Tweet is Your Command.”

Crisis Group has documented a concerted effort from both Bukele’s supporters and his opponents to shape the online narrative around his more controversial policies, in part through artificial means. Focusing on competing hashtags — #BukeleDictador (“Dictator Bukele”) and #QueBonitaDictadura (“What A Lovely Dictatorship”) — both sides of the political divide engage in ferocious online slanging matches. The result is to present Salvadorans with artificially polarized choices: reject Bukele, despite his apparent successes; or support him, and ignore the abuses committed by his government. The reality, as we show in our new report *Miracle or Mirage? Gangs and Plunging Violence in El Salvador*, is more complicated and nuanced. But as social media-fueled polarization intensifies, the risk is that both sides will shun the complexities of tackling gang violence in an effort to win the online popularity contest and the forthcoming elections in February 2021.

The hashtag wars

Part of Bukele’s approach to El Salvador’s security and health challenges is undoubtedly hardline. Shortly after taking office, he deployed joint military-police units to fight gangs and tightened restrictions on prisons, including forbidding family visits. He ordered the armed forces to occupy the legislature in a failed attempt to coerce it into ratifying a loan to fund his security strategy. After a temporary rise in homicides, Bukele backed using “lethal force” against gangs. The administration posted images on Twitter of near-naked gang members chained to one another. COVID-19 presented a new threat. Bukele has responded by detaining citizens who disobey the strict nationwide curfew in crowded “containment centers.”

International and domestic critics have responded with a stream of criticism calling Bukele a “dictator.” Still, many Salvadorans view these uncompromising policies as responsible for the reduction in homicides and the country’s relative success at staving off COVID-19. As a result, Bukele still has an approval rating of nearly 90 percent. Our new report suggests that reality is more complicated. In fact, the declining murder rates may owe not only to the tough measures Bukele publicizes but also to changes in the gangs themselves and fragile non-aggression pacts between them and government officials. These nuances are missing entirely from the online fracas.

Two competing hashtags used on Twitter shine a light on these battles. #BukeleDictador first trended after the occupation of the legislature in February, and again in response to the president's handling of COVID-19. #QueBonitaDictadura was deployed to fight back against this hashtag and negative press more broadly. To analyze the hashtags, we looked at posts (original tweets, replies, and retweets) through Twitter's standard API, a set of procedures allowing access to the platform's searchable data. Since this method restricts us to a week's worth of posts, for #BukeleDictador we were able to collect 29,948 tweets posted between April 27 and May 9, 2020. For #QueBonitaDictadura, we pulled out 33,251 posts since its first use on April 28 until May 9.

Documenting manipulation

A first concern is whether these hashtags are artificially boosted. Inauthentic activity on Twitter takes many forms, from bots (automated accounts) to "sock puppets," human accounts with deceptive online identities. Such manipulation is often difficult to detect, as no one metric definitively proves an inauthentic account — some people just use Twitter oddly. Accusations of manipulation in El Salvador have largely focused on the use of troll or net centers, involving paid humans running accounts to spread certain messaging. Bukele himself was implicated in a troll center case targeting newspapers in El Salvador, and recently the government accused the left-wing opposition Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (FMLN) of running a troll center.

There is evidence of suspicious behavior associated with both hashtags. Figure 1 shows posts per hour for each of them. For both hashtags, about 75 percent were retweets, higher than for most organic traffic. Since retweeting is easier than crafting original posts, a high percentage of retweets is correlated with manipulation. The volume and timing of posts (both retweets and original posts) for the two hashtags otherwise look very different. #QueBonitaDictadura peaked within four hours of its first use, and dropped off almost completely within a week. Though we do not capture its peak, #BukeleDictador was tweeted one to five thousand times a day, a rhythm that continued even in late May.

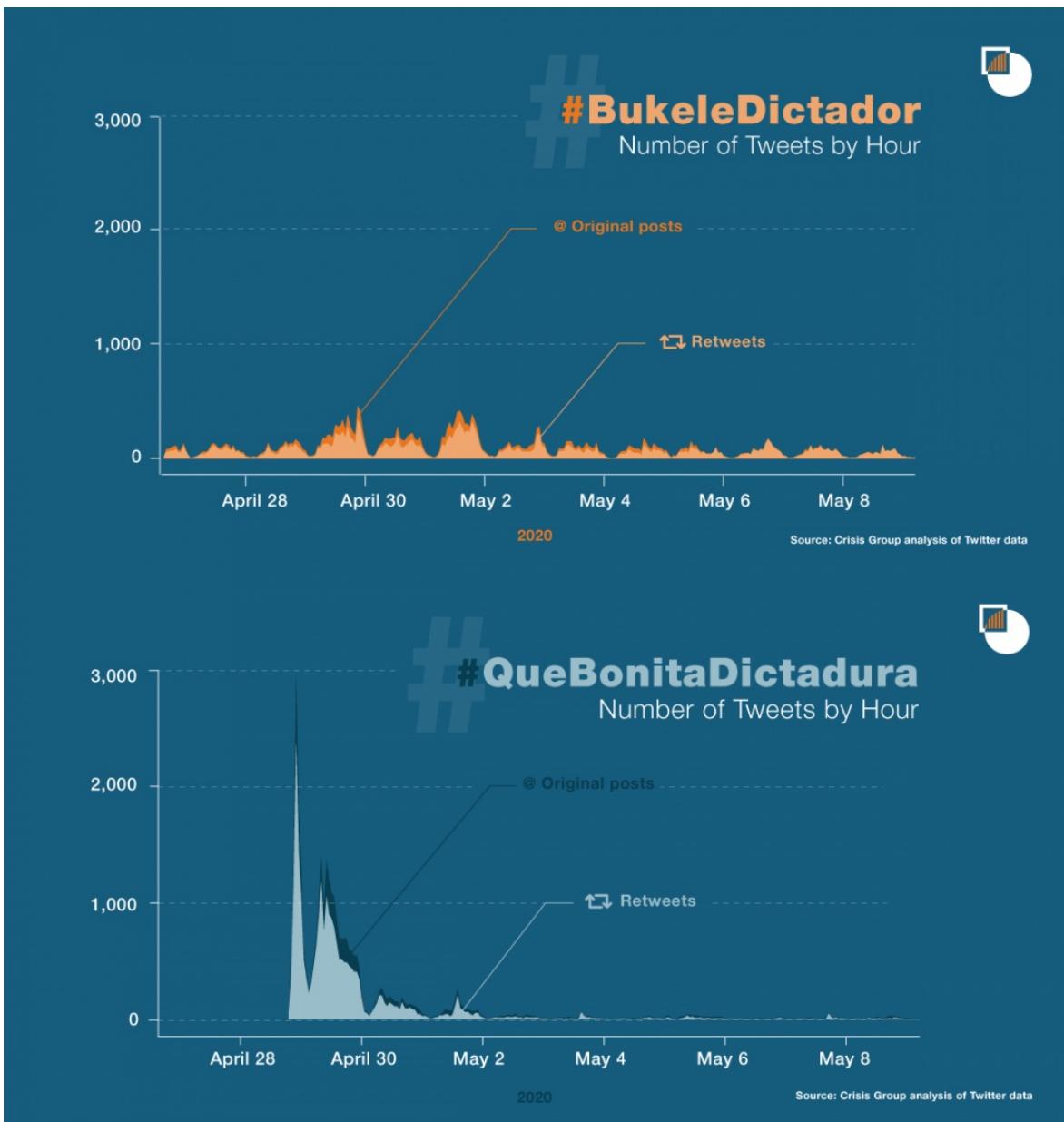


Figure 1: Tweets per hour for the two hashtags. (Source: Crisis Group/Twitter)

Use of both hashtags points to manipulation in various ways beyond the high proportion of retweets. Some 4.4 percent of #BukeleDictador posts and 5.6 percent of #QueBonitaDictadura posts were from accounts deactivated by the end of May, a signal that Twitter may have found users suspicious. The Coefficient of Traffic Manipulation (CTM), which measures deviation from regular traffic, similarly points to suspicious activity. Using recent activity and user characteristics, a number of measures try to score accounts according to the

likelihood that they are bots. Depending on the method and threshold we use, estimates for the percentage of tweets produced by bots range from very low (15 percent) to quite high (70 percent) — the enormous variance shows how challenging it is to identify non-human users. But whichever method is used, the estimates of how many tweets are generated by bots are always similar for the two hashtags. Both appear to profit more or less equally from fake, or non-human, tweets.

#BukeleDictador was propagated by a small number of accounts. Fully 62 percent of tweets came from 500 users with suspiciously high rates of tweeting: in one week, they collectively posted more than 300,000 times, well in excess of standard estimates for suspicious activity. Two accounts posted more than 3,000 times in two days. Some 26 alleged opposition trolls have been outed by the administration. Eight are no longer on Twitter, but the visible histories of the remaining users in the list show that they dramatically increased posting in late 2019 (in some cases after long dormant periods). In violation of Twitter rules, these accounts frequently copy-pasted themselves — repeating the same exact message, but directed in reply to different users — and occasionally copy-pasted each other. At least two accounts use profile pictures of other people passed off as their own.

Bukele's supporters, meanwhile, appear to have been building a network of pro-government accounts since the week he took office. Figure 2 shows the date of creation for accounts that tweeted the two hashtags: there is an unmatched spike in #QueBonitaDictadura users joining Twitter in the weeks directly after Bukele's inauguration on June 1, 2019. This is suspicious. We would expect a smoother bump if supporters joined Twitter to champion Bukele, given that he had been preparing to take office for close to four months and this spike began several days after his inauguration. While other salient events — Bukele's election, for example, or the military occupation of the legislature — also saw an increase in accounts created, these bumps are smoother and dwarfed by the inauguration. In one day (June 6), nearly as many pro-Bukele accounts were created as in the entire month leading up to the inauguration.

For both hashtags, many of the accounts posting them were created recently, which tends to signal inauthentic behavior: as accounts get deactivated, new ones crop up to replace them. Some 8 percent of #BukeleDictador and 14 percent of #QueBonitaDictadura accounts were created in just the previous two months. These users were responsible for 10 and 13 percent of tweets,

respectively.

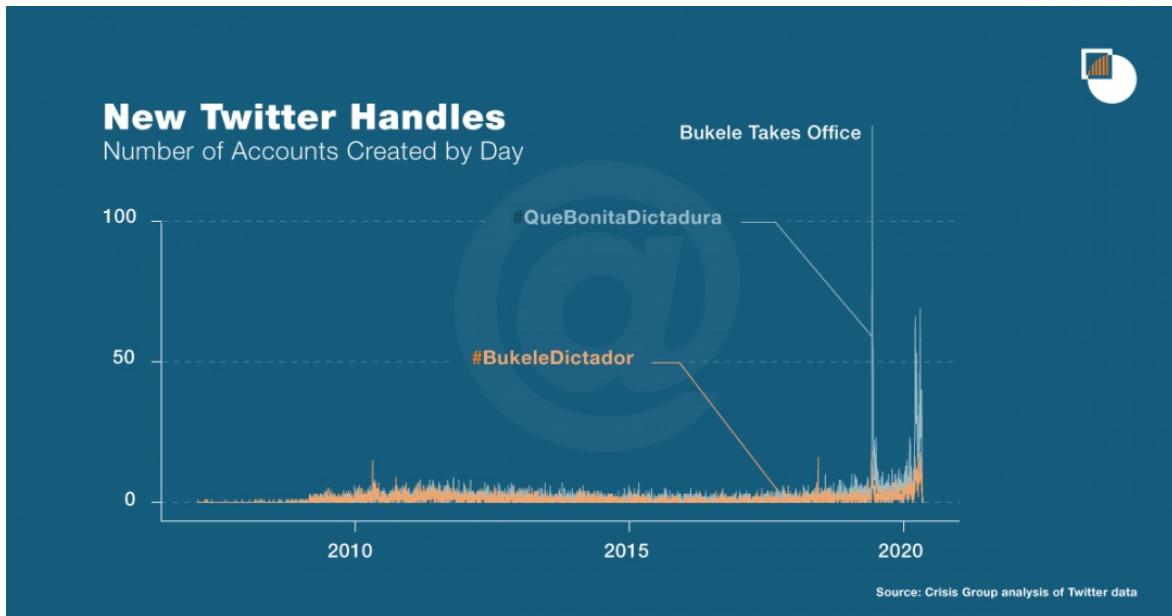


Figure 2: Creation date of Twitter accounts amplifying the two hashtags. (Source: Crisis Group/Twitter)

Amplifying Elites

Though these hashtags were spread in part through artificial means, real political elites set the content. #BukeleDictador gained popularity after being posted on Twitter by deputy Alexandra Ramírez, whom the government alleges coordinated the FMLN troll center. The role of political leaders in designing opposition rhetoric was also visible in another case, when right-wing opposition politicians and a number of other accounts with large followings posted identical, copy-pasted tweets over the course of an hour.

#QueBonitaDictadura was first posted by Porfirio Chica, a communications and public relations strategist who ran a “secret network” and “propaganda machine” that aimed in 2015 to reelect ex-prosecutor Luis Martínez, who is now in prison on corruption charges. Chica claims that his services to Martínez were free, but the website *El Faro* discovered text messages from him on the former prosecutor’s phone referencing costs. Chica is tightly linked to Bukele; *Foreign Policy* identified him as a campaign consultant, and *The El Salvador Times* called him a member of the Bukele campaign’s “circle of trust.”

Just after 7pm on April 28, 2020, Chica tweeted three times in quick succession

with the same structure: #QueBonitaDictadura alongside a picture of the security services helping an elderly or disabled Salvadoran. #QueBonitaDictadura was tweeted or retweeted 621 times over the next two hours, including once, shortly after 8pm, by Bukele. At 9pm, *Última Hora*, a digital publication owned by Chica, posted a story that #QueBonitaDictadura was trending. Over the next two hours #QueBonitaDictadura was tweeted or retweeted 4,324 times, including eight retweets from the president in a five-minute window.

A version of these dynamics plays out among elites at large. Among our data we identify 54 opposition and 102 pro-government elites who are either verified or have more than 2,000 followers. Elites were responsible for less than 1.5 percent of posts, but they were disproportionately influential: 19 percent of #BukeleDictador posts and 31 percent of #QueBonitaDictadura posts retweeted them. Elites played a particularly influential role in getting #QueBonitaDictadura trending, with most of their posts in the hours directly after its first use.

International users also play a role in propagating the hashtags, particularly #BukeleDictador. Relying on self-identified location, roughly equal proportions of both hashtags' users claimed to be living in Europe, the U.S. or Canada. But 12.5 percent of #BukeleDictador accounts self-identified as Cuban, Venezuelan, or Nicaraguan. Bukele broke from the FMLN when he ran for president, and the vast majority of these accounts are dedicated to propaganda for current and former left-wing authoritarian leaders in Latin America, such as Fidel Castro, Hugo Chávez, Nicolás Maduro, or Daniel Ortega. The most retweeted #BukeleDictador post among the sample came from an anonymous user claiming to be in Nicaragua, describing herself as “a Sandinista, revolutionary woman, Nicaraguan, *chavista*, communist, leftist.” This suggests #BukeleDictador extended to a network of international, and often suspicious, accounts.

Competing Narratives

These hashtags propagated two polarized interpretations of Bukele’s policies: that they are either eroding basic liberties or bringing peace. Some of the most retweeted #BukeleDictador tweets accuse the president of violating human rights and democratic values:

“Prohibited from public transit. Prohibited from thinking. Forbidden from dissenting. The master of El Salvador has again broken the law and

declared a State of Siege. Forbidden from crossing municipal borders. He will decide when you can buy food. #BukeleDictador God will judge you one day, tyrant.” (*Retweeted 454 times*)

“People also loved Hitler and Pablo Escobar. They were popular, but this doesn’t mean one wasn’t a massive genocidal psychopath and the other a murderer and drug trafficker. So stop with the f***ing popularity. #BukeleDictador” (*Retweeted 238 times*)

#QueBonitaDictadura instead depicted Bukele as the purveyor of peace and security. Some 19 percent of #QueBonitaDictadura posts included one of ten photos of the military providing services, such as helping an old man carry bags of rice. Google Image Search shows that several of these images originally appeared in past tweets from Bukele’s communications department.

Activating Online Networks

#QueBonitaDictadura and #BukeleDictador are two online rallying cries in a broader conflict over the president’s policies and style of governance. Closer analysis of accounts that make use of one or the other of these hashtags shows that they are part of a consistent pattern of using Twitter to promote or denigrate the president. To explore this behavior, we pulled together the history of the 500 accounts that tweeted #BukeleDictador most often, which we consider suspect anti-Bukele accounts, and the 542 #QueBonitaDictadura users who joined directly after Bukele’s inauguration, which we consider suspect pro-government users. So that we could explore behavior over time, we included only accounts that tweeted fewer than 3,200 times in 2020, the maximum number of posts we can view through Twitter’s API.

Opposition accounts paint Bukele as corrupt (#WhoPaidForTheOsirisTrip, a reference to a payment scandal), ineffective (#IncompetentGovernment), and authoritarian (#WeWillDefendDemocracy). The hashtag #WhereIsBukele smeared the president for his perceived absence during the coronavirus crisis, which prompted the meme of him in a spaceship (Bukele himself posted, “the rumors of my abduction by aliens are totally unfounded” in response). Pro-Bukele accounts’ most-used hashtags promote the president’s policies (#TerritorialControlPlan, referencing the president’s security policy), smear the opposition (#ReturnWhatWasStolen, a rallying cry against corruption) and show support for him (#ImWithBukele).

Not surprisingly, both sets of accounts appear most active when Bukele faces a significant crisis. Figure 3 shows variation in tweeting among the sample of opposition (left) and supporters (right). Daily posting is visually represented as a percentage of the mean of each group — since the two sets of users are very different, this allows a better comparison of how their tweeting patterns change over time. The accounts tweeted steadily until a spike in posting just before Bukele’s February occupation of the legislature. Supporters’ top hashtags during this period were #PlanControlTerritorial (“Territorial Control Plan”) and #ElPuebloManda (“The People Rule”); opponents’ were #LaDemocraciaSeDefiende (“We Will Defend Democracy”) and #BukeleDictador. The onset of the global COVID-19 pandemic then led to a sustained period of higher engagement.



Figure 3: variation in tweeting among the sample of opposition (left) and supporters (right)

Tweeting for El Salvador

Bukele’s supporters and opponents are both immersed in a sustained effort to shape the online narrative around the president’s policies, including through possible platform manipulation. Though less than half of Salvadorans have regular access to the internet, given the centrality of Twitter to Bukele’s government — he announces firings, establishes policies and criticizes opponents on the platform — it is perhaps not surprising that the two camps have taken their fight online. But inauthentic activity may have worrying

consequences for how both domestic and international audiences interpret politics in the country.

Our findings show that Bukele’s opponents and supporters use Twitter as a tool to inflame, polarize and simplify political debate in El Salvador. Opposition concerns about Bukele violating democratic principles and civil liberties are important, but labeling him a “dictator” is an exaggeration that overlooks his accomplishments. Supporters present Bukele and his security service as forces dedicated to peace and the public interest, but whitewash their abuses of power. Starkly polarized takes on these life-and-death issues are hardly conducive to responsible decision-making and compromise, and instead seem to encourage legislative gridlock at a time when Bukele and his opposition should instead engineer long-term strategies to cement the welcome decline in homicides.

Elections in February 2021 will determine how many of Bukele’s supporters enter congress, and — as in the rest of the world — the battle for votes is happening partly on Twitter. The fact that at least part of this online battle is the result of artificial amplification of messaging on both sides adds to concern that the Twitter debate is stoking a climate of hostility that serves partisan political interests. This distracts from a very necessary debate about how to cement Bukele’s successes while moving away from “iron fist” policing and toward policies aiming at preventing gang violence.

Jane Esberg is an Economics of Conflict Fellow at International Crisis Group.

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Drag Race queens detail horrific anti-Black racist abuse and death threats

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As artists and performers, all we want to do is create; all we want to do is spread love. Unfortunately, the reality of our reality television experience is that the “fandom” of the show can be toxic at times. My sisters and myself have received countless letters of hate and death threats since our appearance on television. Listen and watch as a few of my POC sisters and I share our stories, along side some of our allies who are also demanding that this treatment of queens who are not white ends now. I am forever grateful for the experience RPDR provided me and I remain a viewer and avid fan to this day. My hope though is that one day the fan base learns to treat me and ALL of my sisters, regardless of race, with the love and respect we all equally deserve.

A post shared by Honey Davenport (@honeydavenportofficial) on Jul 20, 2020 at 11:58am PDT

Black *Drag Race* queens have detailed the abhorrent racist behaviour they have endured from so-called fans, with a number admitting they have received death threats because of the colour of their skin.

Warning: contains graphic threats of racist violence.

Mayhem Miller and Kennedy Davenport are among the queens to discuss their experiences in a frank short video, *The Reality of Race in Drag*, shared by Honey Davenport on Instagram.

“Upon being announced as a contestant on *RuPaul’s Drag Race*, I received 30 messages calling me [a bleeped racial slur],” says Honey, who appeared on season 11.

“I received tonnes of messages, comments in my [Instagram] Lives, asking me to kill myself.”

Mayhem Miller says that until appearing on the show, she had “never had a fan – or someone posing as a fan – write me and just call me flat out a [bleeped].”

“I’ve had fans ask me why I wasn’t dead yet,” adds Kennedy Davenport. Ra’Jah O’Hara, another season 11 queen, echoes this by saying that she had been told “I should kill myself, that I should be hung from a tree, that I should be gutted like an animal”.

At one point, a screenshot shows a direct message to Chi Chi DeVayne threatening to throw acid in her face, and warning her to “get ready for the next massive [sic] shooting”.

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Grindr user blackmailed grandfather and threatened to out him to family

[返回目录](#)



A 25-year-old was handed a suspended prison sentence after extorting a married grandfather he began a sexual relationship with after meeting on Grindr.

Kieran Thurling was handed a 20 month sentence, suspended for two years, after threatening to out the man to his wife, children and grandchildren unless he paid him.

The victim, who has not been named, had been exploring his sexuality on the hook-up app when he met Thurling.

The two had sex around eight times before Thurling warned the victim he would put up posters outing him around Devon, where they both live, unless he gave

him £400 for his silence.

After the grandfather told him he wouldn't be able to raise the money, Thurling gave him five more days, but upped the amount to £600. He was told to leave the cash in a secret hiding place.

Terrified, the victim contacted police, but because their encounters had been largely anonymous was unable to identify his blackmailer.

Officers set up a sting, instructing the victim to leave an envelope filled with paper at the agreed drop-off point. Police arrested Thurling when he went to retrieve it on the evening of January 20.

Judge David Evans at Exeter Crown Court told Thurling: "Having met initially on the internet, you threatened to expose his sexuality in a way calculated to cause him the utmost anxiety and fear," DevonLive reported.

"With his family background, such a revelation would have turned his life upside down at a relatively late stage in his life. The psychological misery that would have resulted for him and others doesn't bear calculating."

Because Thurling admitted blackmail from the start, had shown remorse and was under psychological distress of his own, the judge allowed him to walk free from the court.

Brian Fitzherbert, defending, said he had been diagnosed with depression and suspected ADHD, which would leave him vulnerable in prison.

As well as his suspended sentence, he was handed 150 hours unpaid community work and 25 days of rehabilitation activities.

He was also banned from contacting his victim with an indefinite restraining order.

[原文](#)

[返回目录](#)

In Belarus, wave of grassroots activism knocked by unsupported claims of foreign interference

[返回目录](#)



Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko takes part in the celebrations of Independence Day in Minsk, Belarus July 3, 2020.
(Source: REUTERS/Vasily Fedosenko)

Despite Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko's claims to the contrary, there is no evidence that Russia, or any other foreign entity, has spurred the recent outgrowth of Belarusian online activism and demonstrations now flourishing amid increasing dissatisfaction with government officials. As the Belarusian presidential election approaches in August 2020, several initiatives have sprung up critical of the president and his administration, drawing attention to economic stagnation and the repression of political freedoms in the country. Alongside a wave of protests, these include several hashtag campaigns, such as #нэ мой президент ("Not My President") and #HelpBelarus.

Lukashenko has insinuated that the wave of discontent sweeping Belarus is not the result of authentic grassroots activism, but rather evidence that foreign entities, particularly Russia and Poland, are meddling in the Belarusian presidential election. Russia has certainly exerted political pressure on Belarus to

encourage further economic integration with Russia, which Belarus maintains would endanger its sovereignty and Lukashenko's already shaky grip on power. There is no evidence, however, that the outpouring of civic activism currently underway in Belarus is driven by anyone other than authentic Belarusian activists.

The president has capitalized on anti-Russian sentiment in an effort to consolidate and maintain his power amid mounting disapproval of his rule and a formidable domestic opposition. Lukashenko has been in power for 26 years, having won every presidential election since Belarus secured independence in 1991. Although he is likely to secure another victory in the upcoming elections, this time he faces at least one viable opponent: Viktor Babariko, former chairman of the Russian bank Belgazprombank. Babariko is a member of the country's political and economic elite, and is not considered to be a "puppet candidate" controlled by a foreign state.

Lukashenko has suggested that Babariko is financing his campaign with money obtained via "financial scams." On June 18, 2020, Belarus authorities blocked Babariko's electoral funds and arrested him and his son. He remains in the race with another grassroots candidate, Svetlana Tsikhanovskaya, the wife of Sergei Tsikhanovsky, a popular opposition blogger in Belarus who was arrested for organizing protest rallies in the country.

These barriers to free and fair elections are among a long list of grievances for which Belarusians took to the streets. On May 25, 2020, hundreds of Belarusians in Minsk protested against Lukashenko's repeated failure to enact social distancing measures and a public health response to COVID-19. The DFRLab has previously covered how Belarusian citizens took matters into their own hands by instituting a voluntary, grassroots-led "People's Quarantine."

Lukashenko has suggested that he is willing to resort to physical force to stay in power. On June 23, he called on the military to suppress civil unrest and "protect sovereignty" from "hybrid threats." The use of Russian meddling in the protests is most likely a convenient way to justify political and civil oppression.

"Not my president"

After the detention of Babariko and his son, social media accounts primarily from Belarus' digital creative sector started posting content addressed to

Lukashenko personally. “I cannot call myself a person who is interested in politics,” wrote a user named Yekaterina, who identified herself as an animal rights activist. “When I look at you, I do not feel anger or disgust, I feel shame.” Another Facebook user named Dima Kurash, who identified as a stand-up comedian, wrote: “Aleksandr Grigorevich, you are #notmypresident. [...] Monopoly of power — no, I do not judge you, but if we lived just fine, and fine — it is not even living good.”

The DFRLab identified at least 29 posts containing the hashtag **#нemойпрезидент** (“Not My President”) on Facebook and that addressed Lukashenko personally. Similar posts appeared on Instagram as well.

Though Babariko was arrested on June 18, the first post in this style appeared on June 6. Valeria, who identified herself as head of digital at the JCS Digital Agency wrote: “Aleksandr Grigorevich [Lukashenko], you are not my president. As a manager, I can say: you have lagged behind the times for many years.” At the end of her post, Valeria thanked and tagged Facebook Dima Kurash, who inspired her to write a post with the “not my president” hashtag.

Valeria [REDACTED]
June 6 at 2:15 PM ·

#УсталБояться #немойпрезидент
Александр Григорьевич, вы - не мой президент.
Как руководитель и менеджер, я с уверенностью могу сказать: вы отстали на много лет.

Причины современного эффективного менеджмента - это:
- уважение
- свобода мнений идей
- постоянство итераций и процессов
- базовая эффективности и социальной ответственности
- равные права и возможности вне зависимости от гендера
И ни одно из них, уважаемый Александр Григорьевич, не обеспечивается в нашей стране: угрозы и насилие, отсутствие сильных лидеров и эффективности, непрозрачность экономических, социальных и политических результатов.

В последние дни вы подвели черту в своем мнении о народе Беларуси и, в частности, о женщинах.
Численность женщин в Беларусь, если вы не знали, составляет 5,1 млн, или 53,4% общей численности населения. В городах и поселках городского типа проживает подавляющее большинство женщин (79%). И если наша Конституция и ваше правительство не подходят для большинства населения страны - то, кажется, пора их пересмотреть.

Пока наша страна держится на главу только благодаря нам, беларусам. Это мы работаем, это мы платим налоги, это мы платим за пространство, разделяя его за границей, что беларус - это не последний приоритет, а красивая страна. Но это не благодаря вам, уважаемый Александр Григорьевич, это вопросы вам и вашему "менеджменту".

Вы называли нас народом. Что ж, нас не очень много - но нас хватает, чтобы обеспечить эту страну, а еще себя, своих близких и не только. Например, чтобы защищать животных, поддерживать одинаковых пожилых людей и тех, кто потерял близких во время пандемии, и тех, кто нас лечит и спасает. А еще мы обеспечиваем деньгами вас, выбранное вами правительство и других известных вам.

Я, пожалуй, на этом закончу. У меня множество вопросов к вам, как к менеджеру - и еще больше, как к человеку.

Вы не мой президент, Александр Григорьевич. И ни я, ни моя страна - не ваша собственность.

Спасибо Dima Kurash за вдохновение. Давайте перестанем бояться, давайте говорить, что болит и где нужно исправлять - давайте объединяться. Я за любовь, мир и развитие, которого мы достойны

Dima Kurash
June 5 at 9:28 PM ·

никогда не молчал, и не буду

БЕЛАРУСЬ
СТРАНА ДЛЯ ЖИЗНИ

DIMAKURASH.COM
Обращение к... | Основано на реальных
Александр Григорьевич, вы — не мой президент. Я никогда ...

5.1K 156 27 Comments 18 Shares

The initial posts that triggered the hashtag **#notmypresident** (**#немойпрезидент**) in Belarus. Translation of the text in pink box from Russian: “Aleksandr Grigorevich, you are not my president. As a manager, I can say: you are lagging behind the times for many years.” Translation of the text in blue box from Russian: “Thank you Dima Kurash for the inspiration. Let’s stop being afraid, let’s start talking about what hurts and what needs to be fixed. Let’s unite. For the love, peace, and development that we deserve.” Translation of Dima Kurash’s post from Russian: “I was never mute, and will never be.” (Source: Valeria Kremeneckaya/archive, left; Dima Kurash/archive, right)

On June 5, the Dima Kurash account posted a link to a blog post that started with the words, “Aleksandr Grigorevich, you are not my president.” Later, Kurash

posted a compilation of similar posts on Facebook, Instagram, and Telegram, writing that he had managed to inspire people to speak up against the current regime.



Dima Kurash

June 22 at 9:10 AM ·

...

Меня слишком часто пытались убедить в том, что я ничего не смогу сделать и повлиять на ситуацию вокруг. Я наталкивался на стену непонимания так часто, что начал считать барьером к другой жизни самих же беларусов. Сейчас - это не так.

За 26 лет власти удалось убедить большинство в том, что:

- больше нет никаких достойных кандидатов;
- невозможно в одиночку ничего решить.... [See More](#)

kybinsky.pashka 6ч.

Если кто не понимает почему Лука не святой и #НЕМОЙПРЕЗИДЕНТ

Короче

Нужно подвести какую-то черту. То что происходит сейчас в стране - это мой ответ на вопрос «почему я положил свой диплом на полку?». Мол, камон, ты же сдал обществоведение на сто баллов, окончил юридический факультет БГУ, вроде не глупый парень, почему ты не работаешь по специальности?

Мои преподаватели учили меня читать уверенностю могу сказать - вы задержались в прошлом, а я хочу идти в будущее. Я хочу жить в третьем тысячелетии по-настоящему в цент... Еще



11DKSNBOnf8SqoghrHyFxOzgOkpZN3Y-IN8zyLGfqUaQ/viewform?edit_requested=true
#немойпрезидент #конституциядлявсех
#женщинисила

Закон, права человека, уважение, порядочность, интеллект, альтернатива - чужие слова для усатого самодура, возомнившего себя президентом

#НЕМОЙПРЕЗИДЕНТ +6

826 47 комментариев Поделились: 134

2 Shares



43

Dima Kurash's post listing other posts that he claimed to have inspired. Translation of the first paragraph from Russian: "They tried to convince me too often that I cannot do anything and I that cannot influence situation around me. I stumbled on a wall of incomprehension so often that it made me think that Belarusians themselves are the obstacle to another life. Now that is not the case."

(Source: Dima Kurash/archive)

There are several indicators, or rather lack of indicators, that suggest that accounts that engaged in the #NotMyPresident digital flashmob are authentic.

First, their identities can be confirmed via other open source mentions. For instance, Yekaterina, mentioned on her Facebook profile that she is from the city of Gomel and cares about animal rights. Her name appears in a Belarusian media publication about a dog saved in Gomel. Yekaterina is also listed as a volunteer from the Gomel animal rights NGO named Dobrota. Yekaterina has liked the page of the NGO on Facebook too.

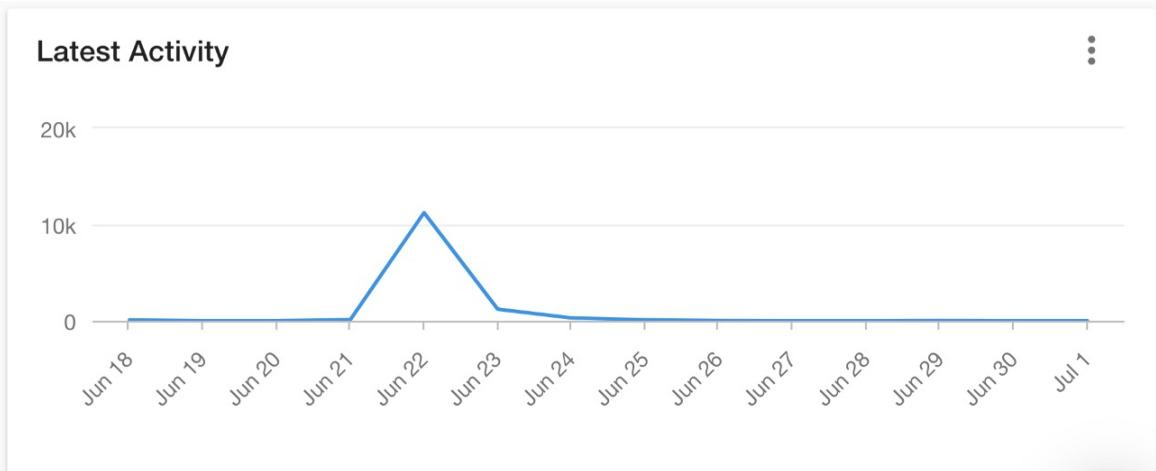
Second, they use the same identity consistently on various platforms. Dima Kurash, for example, mentioned that he works at Stand-up Comedy Hall, which is described as “the first stand-up club in Belarus.” His Facebook profile links to his YouTube channel and features footage of him performing stand-up comedy.



Screenshot from Dima Kurash performing stand-up comedy. (Source: Дмитрий Нарышкин/YouTube)

Help Belarus (#helpBelarus)

On June 22, the #helpBelarus hashtag began trending on Twitter.



Daily number of tweets containing the hashtag #helpBelarus from June 18 to July 1, 2020. (Source: @acarvin/DFRLab via Meltwater Explore)

The most retweeted tweets called on raising awareness about the situation in Belarus by amplifying the hashtag. Most tweets came from accounts with their locations set to Poland.

 berenika
@zimnypocalunek

na białorusi tez zbliżają się wybory prezydenckie, aresztowano głównego kontrkandydata Łukaszenki bez możliwości dopuszczenia do niego adwokata, ludzie wyszli na ulice, bo mają dość kontrolowania wyborów i fałszowania głosów, chcą demokracji, pomóżmy im #helpBelarus

Translated from Polish by Google

presidential elections are also approaching in Belarus, the main opponent candidate Lukashenka has been arrested without the possibility of admitting a lawyer to him, people have taken to the streets because they are fed up with controlling elections and falsifying votes, they want democracy, let's help them #helpBelarus

 azizi
@tigredaisy

KAŻDY KTO WIDZI TEGO TWEETA ODPOWIADA Z TYM HASZTAGIEM. #helpBelarus

Translated from Polish by Google

EVERYONE WHO SEES THIS TWEET RESPOND TO THIS HASHTAG. #helpBelarus

Wzywamy do solidarności z nimi. Białorusini, prosimy Polskę oraz cały świat, jedynie walczyć dalej i rozpowiadzają bandyty i faszyści.

06.2020 na Białorusi dzieją się zatrzymania, którzy wyszli protestować przeciwko zaprzecza prezydenta Wiktorowi Babarikowi viktar_babarikow

Białorusini zawsze chcieli być częścią 400 lat. Teraz chcemy wiceprezydentem Wiktorom Babarikowym. Wspólnie pokonać Łukaszenkę. Polscy nielegalni zatrzymują ludzi, dzienni. Policia najczęściej nie jest ubrana w oficjalne ubrania. To są przestępcy w Europie, 200 km od Polski.

Wiktor Babarik jest teraz w a kilkudziesięciu miastach Białorusi umysłu, aby wesprzeć nowego kandydata w głosowaniu w wieczerniu.

12:21 PM · Jun 22, 2020 · Twitter for iPhone

1.5K Retweets 2.1K Likes

wocita BLM
@louisq4

Nagłośnijmy ten hashtag aby ludzie dowiedzieli się co się dzieje na białorusi!!! #helpbelarus

Translated from Polish by Google

Let's publicize this hashtag for people to find out what is going on in Belarus !!! #helpbelarus

miss_oletta Warszawa

Lubi to brycovid19 i tysiące innych użytkowników miss_oletta My_Białorusi, prosimy Polskę oraz cały świat o pomoc !

Od wczoraj 19.06.2020 na Białorusi dzieją się zatrzymania niewinnych ludzi, którzy wyszli protestować przeciwko zatrzymaniu kandydata na prezydenta Wiktora Babareki @viktar_babarek i jego syna, Szymona.

Władze reakcji policji nielegalnie zatrzymują ludzi, dzieciaki,biją kobiet i chorych. Policja najczęściej nie jest ubrana w oficjalne mundury, a tylko w zwykłe cywilne ubrania. To są przestępstwa na skale kolosalnej.

Wspierajmy solidarność z narodem białoruskim. Pozostajemy nam jedni do końca dnia i roznosząc informacje, że krajem rządzą bandyci i faszysty.

Białorusini zaczęli chodzić i śpiewać w dobrań relacjiach z Pańskim w wieku 400 lat. Tessa charytatywnie im mówią, ale już z nowym prezydentem Wiktorem Babarekiem @viktar_babarek. Tylko razem z nami możemy pokonać Lukaszenkę.

Wiktor Babarek jest teraz w areszcie, władze stworzyły pukowią, które nie mają nic wspólnego z rzeczywistością.

Udostępnij! Oznacz znajomych! Pomóżcie Białorusiom!

Examples of tweets with the hashtag #helpBelarus. (Source: @zimnypocalunek/archive, top left; @tigredaisy/archive, top right; @lanapoesies/archive, bottom left; @louihq4/archive, bottom right)

The two most active Twitter accounts using the hashtag were @autokrytyczym and @pozytywnie__. Both mentioned the hashtag 80 and 72 times, respectively,

which accounted for only 0.05 percent of all of the tweets from Polish accounts using the hashtag. This suggests that a small number of hyperactive users were not responsible for making the hashtag trend, a tactic often observed in inorganic Twitter traffic flows.

Nevertheless, both accounts behaved as amplifiers of the hashtag. Below is an example of their timelines on June 22.

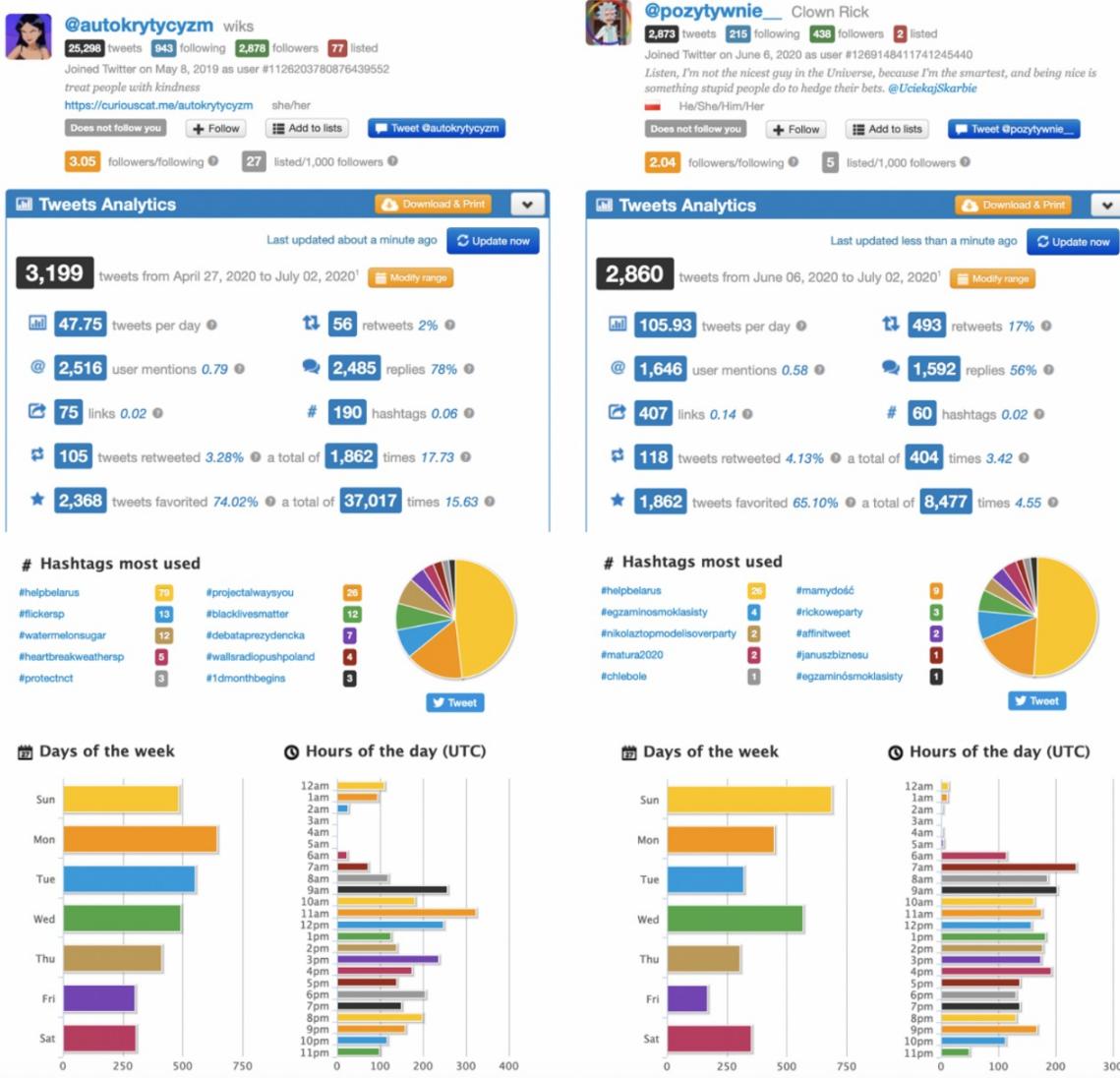
The screenshot displays a Twitter timeline for June 22, 2020. The interface includes a top navigation bar with 'Top', 'Latest', 'People', 'Photos', and 'Videos' buttons. On the left, there's a sidebar for the account @autokrytyczym, which has 2,800 tweets. On the right, there's a sidebar for the account @pozytywnie_____, which has 2,000 tweets. The main area shows a series of tweets from both accounts. The tweets are mostly in Polish and encourage users to use the #helpBelarus hashtag. Some tweets include English translations provided by Google Translate.

Examples of the tweets by @autokrytyczym and @pozytywnie____ on June 22. The tweets on the side include Google Translate translations from Polish to English. (Source, from left to right, top to bottom:
@autokrytyczym/archive; @autokrytyczym/archive;
@pozytywnie____/archive; @pozytywnie____/archive;
@pozytywnie____/archive; @pozytywnie____/archive;
@pozytywnie____/archive)

For example, @autokrytyczym suggested its followers to use the hashtag #helpBelarus in replies to make it trend on Twittter. In another Polish tweet, @pozytywnie____ implied that he mobilized his followers to use the hashtag.

Both Twitter accounts used cartoon avatars for their profiles and were anonymous. They also produced many tweets per day — @autokrytyczym posted an average of 47.75 times a day over a three-month period, while @pozytywnie____ posted an average of 105.93 times a day in just under a month.

Nevertheless, both accounts mostly engaged in Twitter conversations in which they interacted with other users, suggesting that their operators were human users. They also did not tweet through the night in Poland or engage in consistent 24/7 activity, which is often a hallmark of inauthentic accounts.



Analysis of @autokrytyczm and @pozytywnie_ account behavior on Twitter. (Source: Twitonomy)

The accounts engaged with other hashtags involving political and social issues, including #blacklivesmatter — but they consistently did so in Polish, increasing the likelihood of their authenticity.

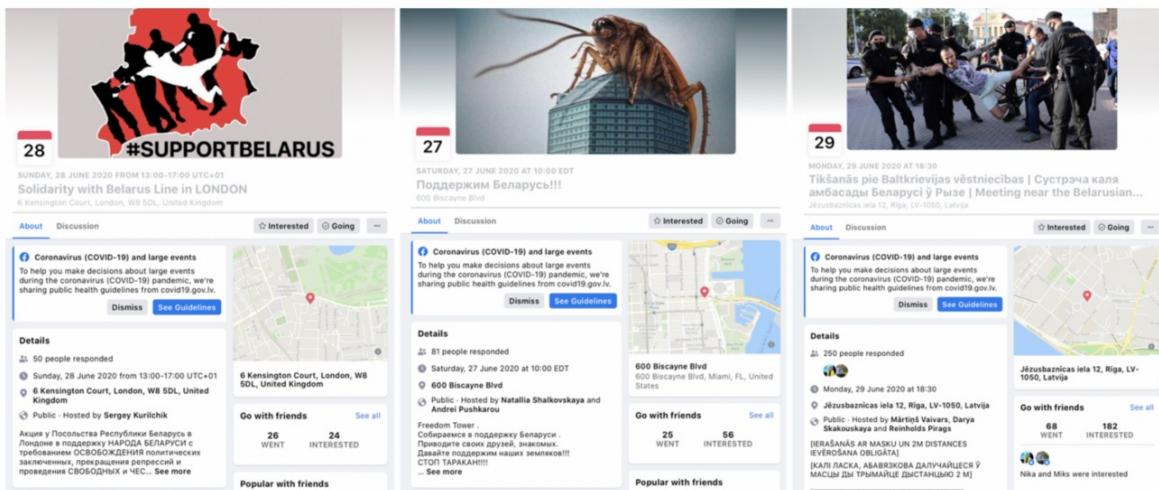
Solidarity rallies across Europe

In the case of Polish accounts tweeting about #blacklivesmatter, it is critical to not underestimate the potential scale of authentic coordinated civic action and solidarity. This is especially true for an issue that is increasingly salient across the globe. Black Lives Matter protests have swept across multiple cities in the

Balkans and Central Europe, including the Polish capital of Warsaw.

In a similar manner, multiple cities on both sides of the Atlantic held solidarity protests with Belarusian citizens. The DFRLab identified and geolocated 23 solidarity protests against political repression in Belarus that took place from June 19 in Kiev to July 1 in Brussels. At least six of these solidarity events took place in the United States.

The DFRLab examined the organizers of these events. In most cases, the organizers were members of the Belarusian diaspora. Some of them had expressed criticism of Lukashenko before, like a co-organizer of a solidarity protest in Florida. Others, like the co-organizer of an event in San Diego, did not have a history of posting political content, but appeared to be spurred to political action by the situation in Belarus. The visual identities of the Facebook events, event descriptions, and banners were distinct, and the protests actually took place. There was no indication that they were fake or organized by nefarious actors using astroturfing techniques to create the false impression of grassroots support.



Examples of Facebook events for the Belarus solidarity demonstrations. (Source: Solidarity with Belarus Line in LONDON/archive, left; Поддержим Беларусь!!!/archive, middle; Tikšanās pie Baltkrievijas vēstniecības/archive, right)

As domestic dissatisfaction with President Lukashenko's government bubbled over in Belarus, Lukashenko turned to a common scapegoat for political leaders with an authoritarian streak: foreign interference. In particular, Lukashenko alleged that Russia was meddling in the upcoming Belarusian elections by way

of Poland. One of the indicators of this alleged foreign interference was the large number of Polish accounts posting on Twitter expressing solidarity with Belarusians, as well as a number of solidarity protest events on Facebook organized throughout the world. Yet the origin and nature of these online activities show no indication of foreign interference or nefarious activity. All of the evidence suggests that the wave of civic activism currently sweeping Belarus are grassroots movements steered by Belarusian civil society members and those standing in solidarity with them — whether President Lukashenko likes it or not.

Nika Aleksejeva is a Research Associate, Baltics, with the Digital Forensic Research Lab.

Follow along *for more in-depth analysis from our #DigitalSherlocks*.

[原文](#)

[返回目录](#)

Jeremy Roenick sues NBC Sports, claims anti-straight discrimination

[返回目录](#)



Sports commentator Jeremy Roenick, who was let go by NBC Sports after making inappropriate comments about a female colleague, is now claiming he was fired because he is straight.

The retired hockey player was suspended by NBC Sports after he made derogatory comments about his co-worker Kathryn Tappen on the *Spittin' Chiclets* podcast in December last year.

Speaking on the podcast, Roenick fantasised about having a threesome with Tappen and his wife.

“I’m swimming with my wife and Kathryn, and they’ve got their bikinis on, and they look f***kin’ smokin’,” he said.

“A*s and boobs everywhere. It’s great.”

NBC later confirmed (in February) he would not be returning to the network. Now, Roenick has filed a lawsuit with the New York Supreme Court where he accused the network of violating laws that prevent discrimination based on sexuality or gender, according to *Variety*.

The lawsuit reportedly draws attention to a promotional video made by NBC figure skating commentators Tara Lipinski and the Johnny Weir, who is openly gay, in which they suggested that they were having an affair.

Roenick’s lawsuit claims that the video was only considered allowable because Weir is openly gay, stating that Roenick mentioned the video to his supervisor Sam Flood when he was dismissed over his comments on the podcast, the outlet says.

Flood allegedly then told Roenick that Weir “is gay and can say whatever”.

Jeremy Roenick also claims he was fired because of his open support for Donald Trump.

The lawsuit claims NBC Sports terminated Roenick’s contract without good cause and without giving him the opportunity to correct his actions.

As if that wasn’t enough, the former sports commentator also reportedly suggests that he was fired because of his open support for Donald Trump in 2016.

In the lawsuit, Roenick alleged that he asked Flood for permission to speak at the Republican National Convention in 2016.

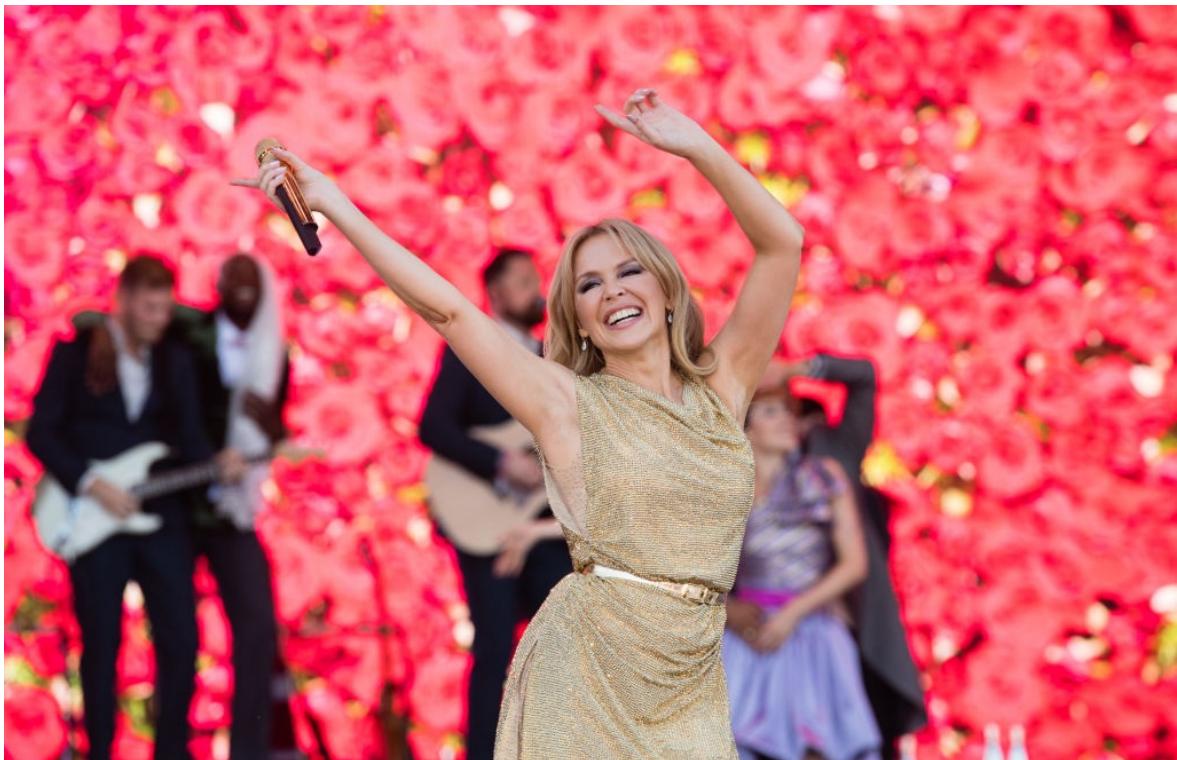
Flood allegedly told him: “I’m not saying what you can do. You know who you work for. You work for NBC. That would not look good on your NBC record.”

[原文](#)

[返回目录](#)

Kylie Minogue set to release new song 'Say Something' from 15th album

[返回目录](#)



Kylie Minogue will release “Say Something”, the new single from her eagerly anticipated 2020 album, later this week, according to reports.

There are rumblings of thunder in the distance. The air is heavy with anticipation. Why?

Because Kylie Minogue is gearing up to release a new song.

The Australian singer-songwriter and queen of our hearts is reportedly set to release a new disco-inspired track called “Say Something” this Thursday (July 23), *The Sun* reports.

So while we might not find ourselves “Spinning Around” to the song on a dance

floor anytime soon thanks to COVID-19, we can at least sing along in our bedrooms and imagine the disco pulsing around us.

The new Kylie Minogue song will ‘spread joy’.

“‘Say Something’ is upbeat and summery,” an unnamed industry insider told *The Sun* of the new Kylie Minogue song.

“It’s been a grim few months for everyone so Kylie feels like now is the perfect time to put it out and spread some joy.”

The song will be the lead single from Kylie’s upcoming fifteenth studio album, which is expected to be released later this year, and comes just over two years after the release of her chart-topping, country-inspired record *Golden*.

“From what I’ve heard of it so far, the new record is set to be a disco classic,” the insider added.

“It’s everything you want from a Kylie album. Fans are going to love it.

“She has been working on her new music for a while now but everything has really come together in the last few months.

From what I’ve heard of it so far, the new record is set to be a disco classic.

[原文](#)

[返回目录](#)

Netflix scraps Turkish series *If Only* after government blocks gay character

[返回目录](#)



Netflix faced censorship from the Turkish government (Jakub Porzycki/NurPhoto via Getty)

Netflix has reportedly pulled the plug on planned Turkish series *If Only* due to government objections to a gay character.

According to Turkish screenwriter Ece Yorenc, the streaming giant has scrapped her series *If Only* just days before filming was due to begin.

The screenwriter said the show was cancelled after the government refused to grant a production license, citing objections to the inclusion of a gay character.

She told local film news website *Altyazi Fasikul*: “Due to a gay character, permission to film the series was not granted and this is very frightening for the future.”

The concept for the scrapped show revolves around an unhappily-married mother being sent back in time 30 years, to the night her husband proposed.

There were no gay sex scenes or indeed any physical contact involving the show’s gay character, Yorenc said — but the show faced objections regardless.

Turkey’s ruling Justice and Development party has admitted to taking issue with Netflix productions in the country.



Party spokesperson Mahir Unal told the Financial Times: “Must we collectively apologise to Netflix? What do they want from us? Do we have to bless everything Netflix makes, find it proper and sanctify it? Is there no subject where we have a right to raise reservations?”

Rather than revise the show and write out the gay character, Netflix reportedly opted to scrap the show entirely.

A Netflix spokesperson said: “Netflix remains deeply committed to our Turkish members and the creative community in Turkey. We are proud of the incredible talent we work with.

“We currently have several Turkish originals in production — with more to come — and look forward to sharing these stories with our members all around the world.”

Netflix has previously denied ‘editing out’ gay character to appease Turkish government.

It is not the first time Netflix’s attempts to grow its Turkish production arm have

faced controversy over LGBT+ issues — with a media frenzy in April after reports that a separate Turkish Netflix original series, *Love 101*, was to feature a gay character.

When *Love 101* debuted on Netflix, however, it included no visible gay content.

Turkey's media censorship bureau, the Radio and Television Supreme Council, claimed credit for the omission. An official told BBC Turkey: "With bilateral talks, the problem about that character has been removed."

However, Netflix remains adamant it did not make any cuts to *Love 101*, suggesting that the show was never intended to include a gay character.

A spokesperson said: "We did not edit *Love 101* to remove an LGBTQ character from the show – there never was one in the first place."

Netflix originals from outside Turkey that include LGBT+ content, such as *Orange is the New Black*, continue to be available to subscribers in the country, which is a key emerging market for the company.

[原文](#)

[返回目录](#)

Rob Roberts: Gay Tory MP invited intern to 'fool around' with him

[返回目录](#)



Tory MP Rob Roberts has not apologised for his conduct

Tory MP Rob Roberts accused of improper conduct towards two young parliamentary interns has blamed the “stress” of coming out as gay.

The MP for Delyn, who was elected in December, is facing allegations of inappropriate behaviour towards a 21-year-old female intern and a male parliamentary staffer.

Tory MP Rob Roberts accused of propositioning two young staffers.

In messages to the young woman published by the BBC, Roberts, 40, invited her to “fool around” after complimenting her “lovely legs”.

He wrote: “Just thought we could have some fun maybe, no strings. I might be gay but I enjoy... fun times.”

The woman told BBC Wales the messages left her feeling “incredibly sick” and she “didn’t really feel comfortable” returning to parliament afterwards.



She explained: “The culture of politics can be quite toxic when it comes to these things especially when you’re a girl dealing with an MP. It was just horrific.”

Roberts is also accused of inviting a young male parliamentary staffer to dinner, which led to them moving positions.

In messages about the exchange, he admitted: “[I told him] that I liked him and asked him to dinner. Really poor judgement on my part, hands up. He didn’t react very well because it created a problem for him that I felt that way.”

“The chief whip was involved, lots of drama.”

MP blames ‘mental stress’ of coming out.

In a statement to the BBC, Roberts said: “I have found the last few months and the ‘coming out’ process to have been particularly challenging and the cause of a great deal of mental stress to me.

“Creating a story from this interaction which has been dealt with amicably seems calculated to add to that stress, which is distressing.”

A Conservative Party spokesperson said: “Our party takes all allegations extremely seriously and has safeguarding and complaints processes in place to investigate complaints made to it under the party’s code of conduct.”

In May, police were called to Roberts’ house to disperse an illegal lockdown birthday party.

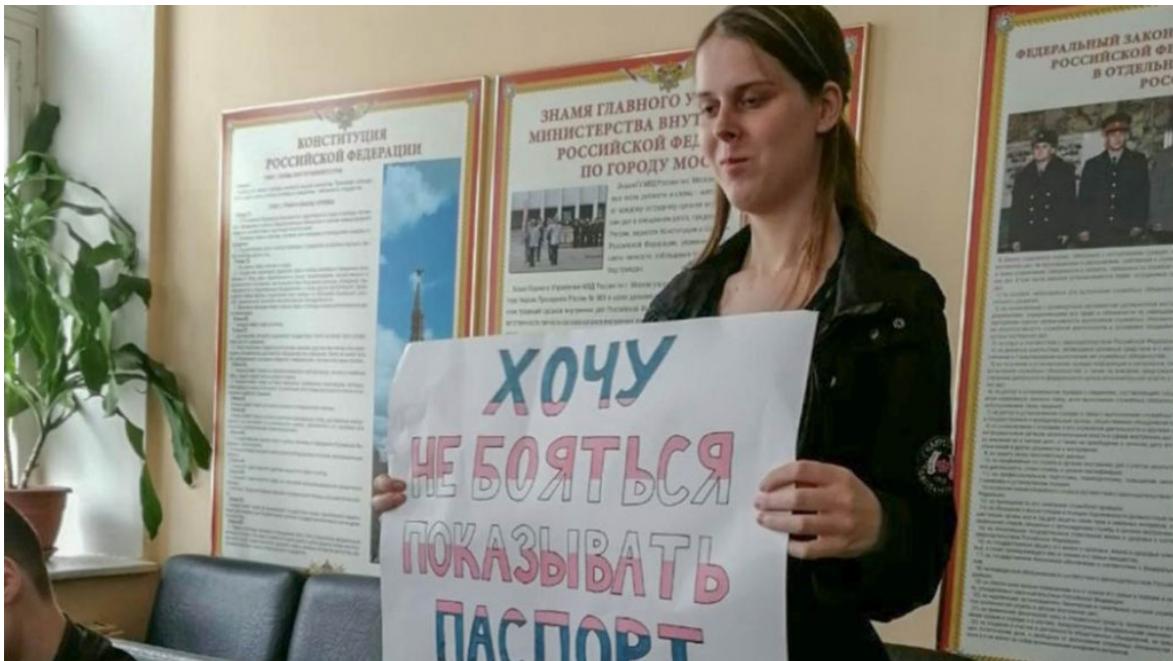
Roberts said he was 200 miles away at the time of the party, adding: “My family have been reminded of the guidance set out by the government.”

[原文](#)

[返回目录](#)

Russian trans activist ‘faces rape’ in male prison after protest

[返回目录](#)



Trans rights activist and ally Mila Zemtsova clashed with Russian police. (Twitter)

A Russian trans woman is being sent to a men’s prison for protesting a series of anti-LGBT+ constitutional changes, and activists are fearful that she may be abused or even raped.

Polina Simonenko was found guilty by a top Moscow court for repeated violations of protest rules after demonstrating against changes that will see Vladimir Putin effectively erase trans people and eradicate any chance of marriage equality being achieved.

As a result, activists said Monday (20 July), she will be sentenced to 14 days in a men’s special detention facility.

LGBT+ rights group Grazhdanskoye Obshchestvo expressed fears that

Simonenko will be subjected to lewd remarks from male prison officers as well as threats of rape from inmates, a cruel and humiliating result of Russia's incarceration system that offers little protection for or consideration of trans inmates.

"There could be rape," the group said on its Telegram, according to The Moscow Times. "It's disgusting."

Last Saturday (18 July), hundreds of demonstrators poured onto the streets of Moscow in an open challenge against Putin's volley of constitutional changes, many of which LGBT+ activists fear will strip the country's already flimsy queer rights back even further.

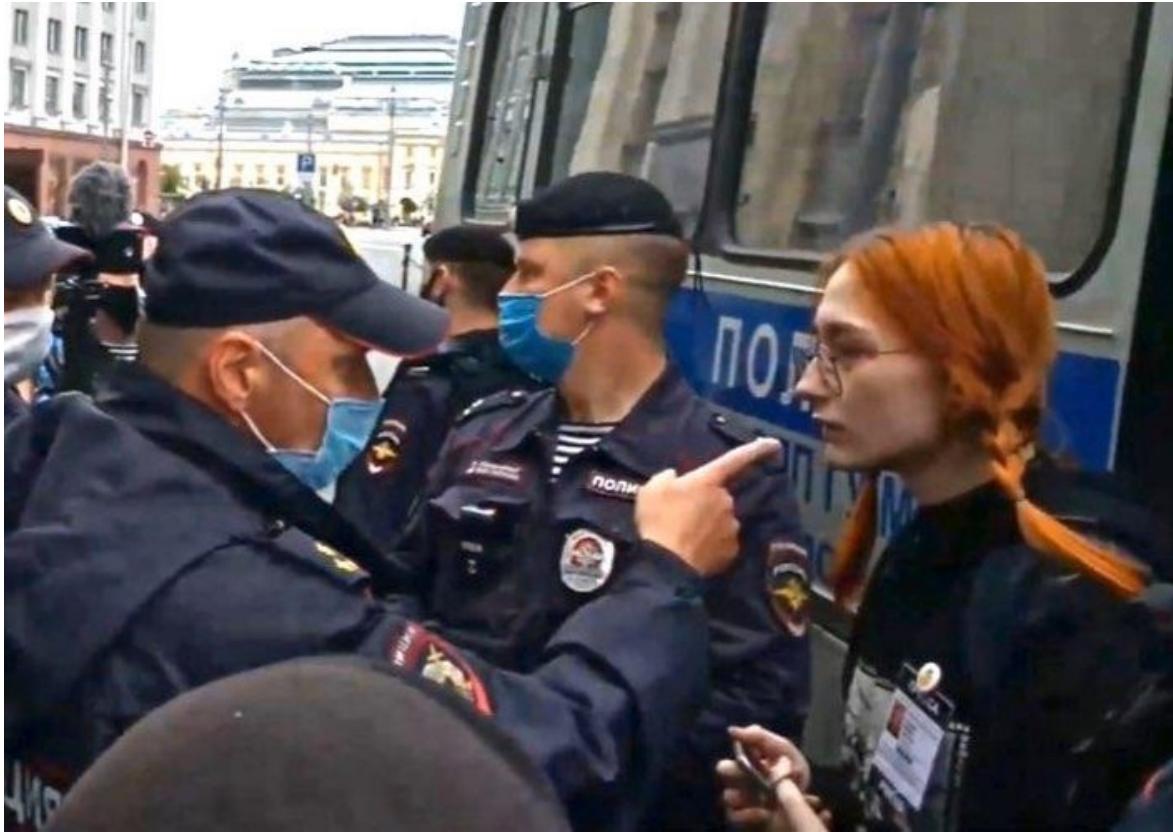
Many involved the scattered protest stood on street corners and even outside police stations, photographs and videos taken on the ground showed.

Russian police reportedly spied on trans activist while she used a station bathroom.

Simonenko and Mila Zemtsova were two of more than 30 people arrested, with police officers reportedly refusing to give reasons for the arrests.

Many arrested protesters were later charged with "violation of the rules of participation in a public event" and subsequently released.

However, Simonenko and Zemtsova were both detained. During detention, Freedom News reported, the two were brutally tortured.



Officers did not allow Zemtsova to use the restroom and was later beaten by cops after she refused to enter the courtroom, they said.

Simonenko was reportedly beaten by officers and was even spied upon when using the restroom.

Zemtsova was ordered by judges at the Tverskoy District Court to pay a fine of 20,000.

Putin and his cronies are moving to roll back even further LGBT+ rights in Russia.

In a package of hot button pledges made in the run-up to the referendum, Putin said he would overhaul the country's constitution to define marriage as between a man and a woman.

Same-sex marriage is already banned, meaning a constitutional re-write will only make a pathway to LGBT+ equality even dimmer for Russian activists.

The marriage law was announced by conservative lawmaker Elena Mizulina — the architect of the country's anti-LGBT+ propaganda law. She described the bill, which will tweak Russia's Family Code, as being "aimed at strengthening the institution of the family".



A slew of constitutional amendments has banned same-sex marriage in Russia and granted Putin power until 2036 (Getty)

Trans rights will be further eroded in the slew of changes. It will be virtually impossible for trans Russians to marry, adopt children or change the gender markers on their identification documents, effectively preventing any trans people from legally changing their gender.

Russia voted to amend the constitution in a referendum, the results of which were announced before polls had even closed, so one-sided was the result. The ultimate prize for Putin was a change allowing him to rule until at least 2036.

Putin crowbarring the constitution was, political analysts said, a tacit way to rally interest in a public referendum on his rule.

Although some commentators stress that the vote was vastly symbolic, considering that Putin has already netted the necessary approval from parliament, regional governments and the courts.

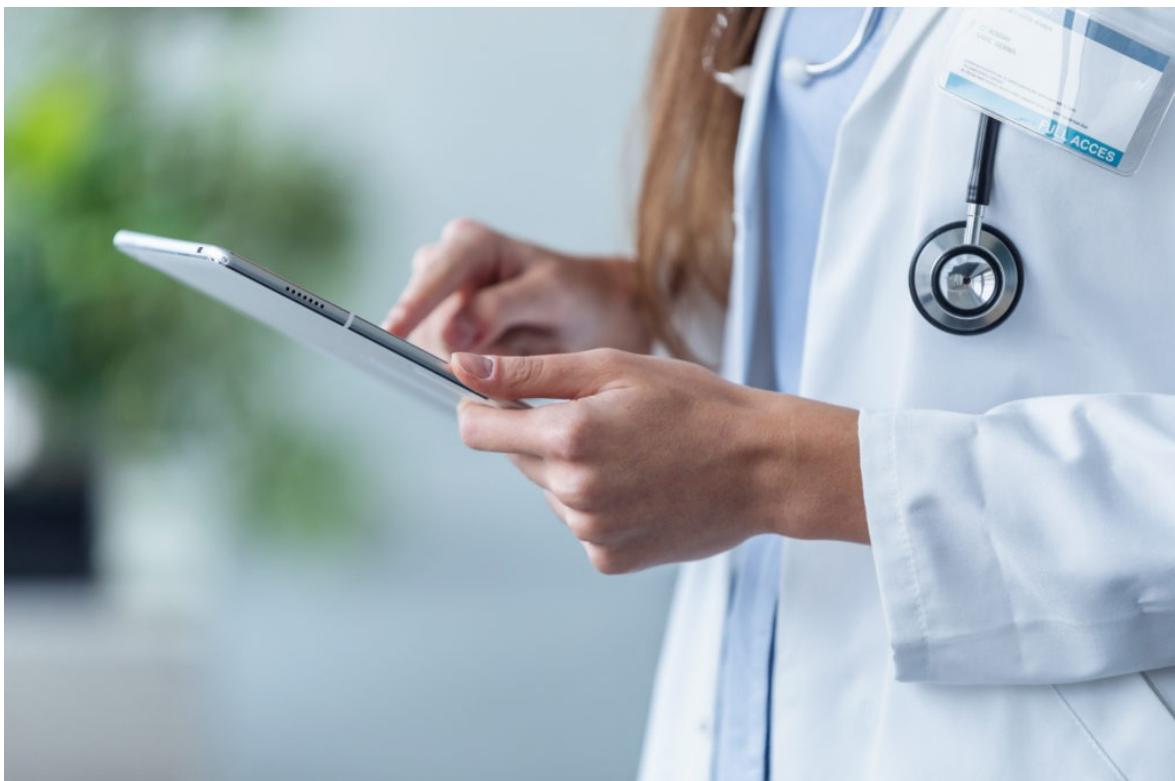
In fact, not only had the constitutional amendments already been enacted, the newly-amended constitution had actually been printed and sent to bookstores for sale — before the vote even happened.

[原文](#)

[返回目录](#)

The Eve Appeal receives barrage of abuse for standing with trans people

[返回目录](#)



British gynaecological cancer charity The Eve Appeal has been forced to delete a trans-inclusive post about smear tests after a wave of transphobic abuse.

The Eve Appeal, which funds research and raises awareness of womb, ovarian, cervical, vulval and vaginal cancer, was responding to an anti-trans online campaign that's been rumbling this month.

The campaign, “Only Females Get Cervical Cancer”, began on Twitter – and led to Jo’s Cervical Cancer Trust, another charity, releasing a statement earlier this week emphasising that “everyone with a cervix” should have access to cervical cancer screenings.

Also in response to the anti-trans campaign – which claims that it harms women to use inclusive language like “people with cervixes” in awareness-raising campaigns for smear tests – The Eve Appeal published a series of Instagram posts.

“A few days ago there was a hashtag trending on Twitter that I can only now bring myself to type out in full,” wrote Karen Hobbs, herself a survivor of cervical cancer, in a post on The Eve Appeal’s Instagram page.

Hobbs continued: “How we have reached a point where transphobic people are arguing over and trying to take ownership of who ‘gets’ cervical cancer?

“It’s vile. It’s also really triggering for people who’ve actually had the disease. I’m including myself in ‘people’. It’s upsetting, and I’ve had a cry over it, because how people can get possessive over cancer is beyond me.”

She added: “Yes, someone called Karen is triggered. I appreciate that’s hilarious.”

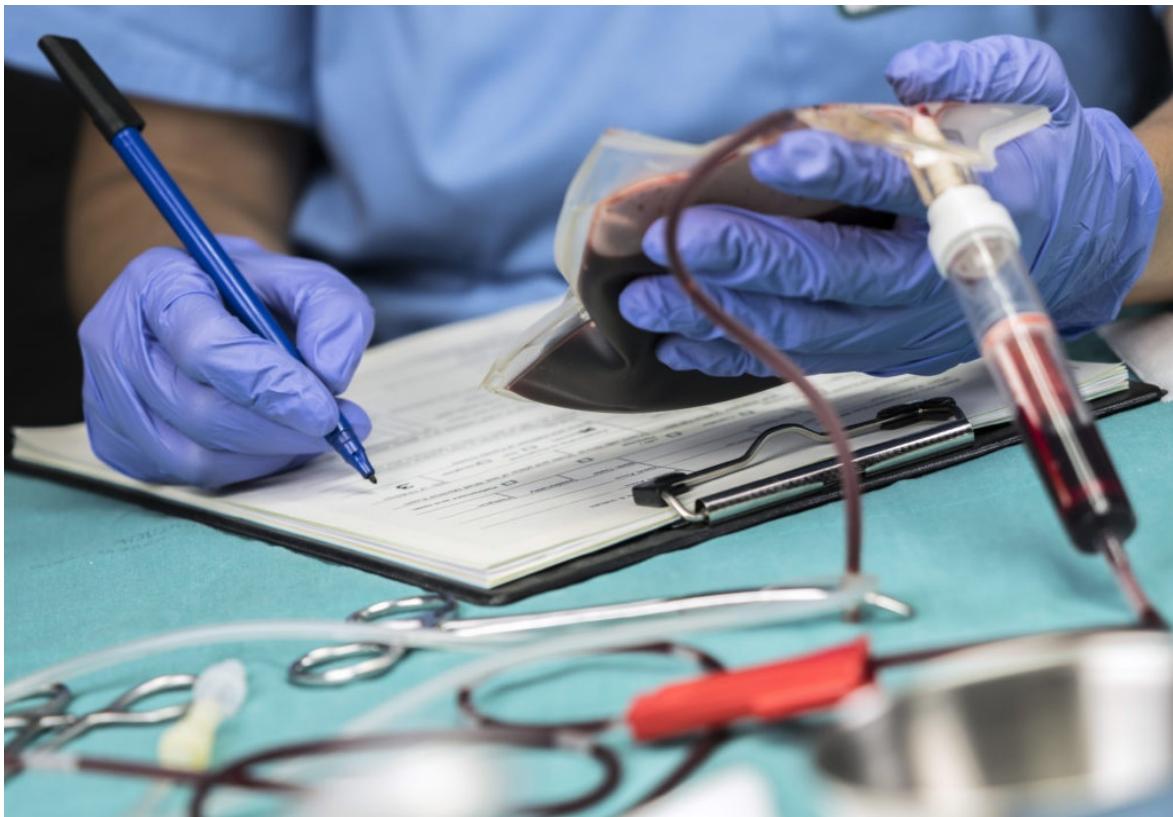
Excellent post by cervical cancer charity, @eveappeal, on Instagram – calling out transphobes
(Screenshots in thread) pic.twitter.com/AlrQwvKrqa
— Helen ♀ (@mimmymum) July 16, 2020

[原文](#)

[返回目录](#)

Trans man sues Catholic hospital that refused surgery on religious grounds

[返回目录](#)



A trans man is taking legal action against a Catholic hospital in Maryland, US, after staff refused him healthcare because they found it “immoral”.

Jesse Hammons is suing the University of Maryland Medical System and the Saint Joseph Medical Center in Towson for violation of his First and Fourth Amendment constitutional rights and his rights under the Affordable Care Act, a plank of healthcare policy in the nation.

Hammons visited the hospital after his physician recommended he undergo a hysterectomy to treat his gender dysphoria.

An administrator told Hammons that gender dysphoria does not qualify as a medical issue demanding treatment, according to the lawsuit filed last Thursday (16 July).

Hospital staff therefore refused to perform the routine procedure, regularly executed on cis women, because it “would violate Catholic religious doctrine, as announced in the Catholic directives”, it continues.

The suit states that under the directives, Catholic healthcare organisations do not allow staff to participate in “actions that are intrinsically immoral, such as abortion, euthanasia, assisted suicide, and direct sterilisation”.

The hospital, purchased by the University of Maryland Medical System in 2012, is run by the Catholic Health Initiatives, a faith-based healthcare network. An agreement made with the Archdiocese of Baltimore means that healthcare providers at the hospital must follow Catholic guidelines.

University of Maryland Medical System officials stressed to the Union Bulletin that its staff do not discriminate.

Trans man refused surgery for gender dysphoria represented by ACLU.

Coming at a time when Trump officials are overseeing a harsh rollback of healthcare for trans people, Hammons is seeking to contest a view that US president Donald Trump is increasingly seeking to wire into law – that religious belief trumps LGBT+ lives.

“Discrimination is not a part of religious liberty,” said Reverend Lura Groen, Hammons’ wife.

“As Jesse’s spouse, I see the pain discrimination — and the fear of discrimination — causes on a daily basis.

“As a faith leader and taxpayer, I am appalled that this act was done at a government institution and in the name of religion.”

Hammons is being represented by the American Civil Liberties Union, which has led much of the legal resistance against the Trump administration.

University of Maryland Medical System officials said that patients seeking care not available at Saint Joseph due to the directives can instead seek care at the network's other hospitals, emphasising its trans health programme for youth.

The hospital follows the Ethical and Religious Directives for Catholic Health Care Service, a set of guidelines formed by the US Conference of Catholic Bishops.

The University of Maryland Medical System allowed the hospital to continue to follow the directives as a condition of its purchase.

[原文](#)

[返回目录](#)