

## Case Study 1: TikTok\*

*“Videos being taken down, muted or hidden from followers: These are all issues that some TikTok creators say they’re facing for posting Black Lives Matter content.”*

TikTok - a video-sharing based social media and one of the fastest growing apps - continues to face bias allegations from Black and minority content creators. The platform has transformed into a hub for activism in 2020. However, a number of content creators say that they have either experienced noticeable decline in viewership and engagement on their videos after posting content in support of the *Black Lives Matter* movement or noticed recent instances where they felt that TikTok’s community guidelines weren’t being fairly applied to Black creators. Even on the heels of TikTok’s pledge to effect positive change for its Black creators, some users say they’re still seeing similar patterns of unequal treatment play out on the platform. When asked to address the claims of sources in this story TikTok U.S affirmed that they “unequivocally” do not engage in “*shadow banning*”. *Shadow banning* is an umbrella term under describing recommendation practices that limit the spread of content without notifying creators and often based on discriminatory motives.

This has become an increasingly widespread concern among users on not only TikTok, but also Twitter and Instagram and other social media. Due to the nature of the concept of shadow banning, it’s difficult to substantiate whether it is or isn’t happening. Recommender systems could be influenced by habits and preferences of active users rather than intentional racism.

TikTok has previously admitted to suppressing posts from physically disabled, LGBTQ and overweight users as part of what it said was a set of what was intended to be “anti-bullying” policies, raising questions for some users about what they see and what gets filtered by TikTok’s recommender system — which uses a number of factors, including likes, shares and accounts followed, to predict what users will be interested in seeing on their For You feeds.

\*This Case Study was inspired by an article from TIME published in July 2020  
<https://time.com/5863350/tiktok-black-creators/>