

Season 1, Episode 10: Black Out Tuesday X Platformitization

SPEAKERS

Hannah McGregor, Marcelle Kosman

[*Material Girls* Theme plays: “Shopping Mall” by Jay Arner and Jessica Delisle]

Hannah McGregor 00:29

Hello, and welcome to material girls, a scholarly podcast about popular culture. I'm Hannah McGregor.

Marcelle Kosman 00:36

And I'm Marcelle Kosman. And today we're taking a slightly less whimsical than usual turn to talk about something close to both of our hearts, using the internet to try to do social change.

Hannah McGregor 00:50

Mm. So tricky.

Marcelle Kosman 00:53

It's a tricky one.

Hannah McGregor 00:54

So we have been thinking a lot, you know, I think separately and collectively about calls for public statements in response to ongoing violence in Palestine. And alongside figuring out what our own actions are going to be, again, as individuals and as a team, we've also been talking about the idea of using social media for social change, and what those calls for public statements imply about the role of social media in our collective imagination. And so, in the spirit of always historicizing we're looking back to understand the present moment. And in this case, we're looking back to 2020, and the Black Lives Matter protests, and specifically to an online event known as Blackout Tuesday. Do you remember?

Marcelle Kosman 01:46

Mhm.

Hannah McGregor 01:47

Yeah, I also remember. I was one of those people who posted a black square and then unposted that black square within the same day.

Marcelle Kosman 01:53

Same!

Hannah McGregor 01:54

Yeah, but before we dive into the specific details of just what Blackout Tuesday was, Marcelle, I want you to tell me about your earliest memory of participating in some kind of protest or social change action.

Marcelle Kosman 02:10

I was in grade 11. And I attended the Quebec City Summit of the Americas, which was a protest against the expanding Free Trade Area agreement. And it was also my first experience being tear gassed.

Hannah McGregor 02:31

Whoa!

Marcelle Kosman 02:32

First and only. I don't want to make it sound like I'm more hardcore.

Hannah McGregor 02:36

Yeah, that did sound like you've been tear gassed a lot. I've never been tear gassed.

Marcelle Kosman 02:39

Yeah. And it was very incidental. So the Summit of the Americas protest was organized into different sections. So there was the green section, which was like a nonviolent, peaceful protest area. And that was where my friends promised me that we were going. And then there was like, the yellow area. And then there was the red area, which is where people were, like, going to break shit. And the police response was so powerful and aggressive that the tear gas made its way into green zones as much as they were in the yellow and red. So that's how it happened.

Hannah McGregor 03:21

Oh, cops, a long, proud history of escalating violence.

Marcelle Kosman 03:26

Mhm. Yeah, that's the one. What about you, Hannah? What was yours?

Hannah McGregor 03:28

Oh yeah, I mean, also high school, because I grew up in Ottawa. And so people were constantly marching on the parliament building. It was like a really, a really obvious place to march on, because they're right there. So the first one that I remember is a tuition increase protest that I participated in in high school. Ironically, I wasn't planning on going to university.

Marcelle Kosman 03:47

But you wanted the people going to university to be able to go!

Hannah McGregor 03:52

It seemed very obvious to me at the time. And interestingly, it seems very obvious to me now, that university should be free.

Marcelle Kosman 03:57

Yeah, same. Same. That's one of the hills that, like, I absolutely will die on it. And I am so confused that people insist on fighting it.

Hannah McGregor 04:06

It's really baffling to me that people think that education is a thing that you should pay for. Yeah, but also it's baffling to me that people think housing is a thing that you should pay for. Like, I'm frequently baffled. So.

Marcelle Kosman 04:19

Why do you guys want to pay for stuff?

Hannah McGregor 04:23

Why do you like capitalism? What is up?

Marcelle Kosman 04:26

Me, screaming into the wind. **[Hannah and Marcelle laugh]**

[Upbeat interlude music plays]

All right, Hannah, you have explained for us why we're thinking about the intersections of social media and social change right now. But let's cast our minds back to the year 2020, and talk about the material conditions that led to that event known as Blackout Tuesday and the resulting controversies in our segment, "Why This, Why Now?"

Hannah McGregor 04:56

So we're going to start with what led up to Blackout Tuesday, and then the resulting critiques, and then I'm gonna sketch in some extra material context around social media and digital activism.

Marcelle Kosman 05:07

Love it.

Hannah McGregor 05:08

So for this account of the actual events, I'm drawing on a very useful article by Montreal based scholar Kelsey Blair, called "Empty Gestures: Performative Utterances and Allyship." And Blair opens the article with an account of how Blackout Tuesday began. You know what, actually, Marcelle, this opening paragraph is such a good summary. Could I just ask you to read this paragraph for me?

Marcelle Kosman 05:35

Quote, “Early in the morning of June 2, 2020, a social media user posts an image of a single black square to their account. Soon after, another social media user also posts a black square. Then, another user. Then another. Within hours, major social media platforms, including Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter, are filled with images of black squares. The posts are part of ‘Blackout Tuesday,’ a collective action created by female music executives Jamila Thomas and Brianna Agyemang that aimed to prompt conversation about the financial exploitation of Black artists in the music industry. One of the elements of the campaign involved posting a black square on social media accounts while refraining from other social media activity throughout the day on June 2. Alongside the black square, many users included hashtags such as #BLM; #BlackoutTuesday; #BlackLivesMatter. ... As more and more users participated in the collective action, Black Lives Matter social media feeds are inundated with black squares. As a result, critical collective organizing and social justice information gets buried. This causes a second set of users to respond to the black square posts with entries of their own, discouraging users from participating in the campaign. As national and international media outlets report on the collective action, Blackout Tuesday is widely critiqued as an empty gesture, an action that has little to no meaningful effect.” End quote.

Hannah McGregor 07:25

Gorgeously read.

Marcelle Kosman 07:26

Thanks, Hannah. I feel like I just relived that day.

Hannah McGregor 07:31

Yeah, I mean, part of why I was like, You know what, just read this, because I feel like it is a pretty perfect play by play of what that looked like. It began with two activists who have an ongoing project to draw attention to the treatment of Black executives and Black artists in the music industry. And one of the things that they're doing is Blackout Tuesday, and they intend that to be an industry based protest, that is living alongside Black Lives Matter protests. But because it is coming in the context of Black Lives Matter protests more broadly, and because social media, so effectively strips context out of things, it catches on really, really quickly, people jump to participate.

And then very quickly, a bunch of other people are like, What the hell are you doing? And you know, a ton of us who jumped to participate, then are like, Oh, wait, why did I do this? Sorry, I'm actually unclear about why I do anything, so I'll delete it. So Blackout Tuesday really quickly becomes the center of these emerging conversations about performative activism. That is activism that's about the appearance of being on the right side of history, rather than like thoughtful and meaningful action in pursuit of social change. And that's already a conversation that has been circulating a lot in the context of Black Lives Matter in particular, as social media accounts hurry to make statements of solidarity that seemed to be pretty clearly empty gestures, especially when it's like there's a line in that Bo Burnham song, “That Funny Feeling,” “Bugles take on race.”

[Sound bite from “That Funny Feeling” by Bo Burnham plays:

“Discount Etsy agitprop, Bugles' take on race”]

Hannah McGregor 09:20

And it's such a perfect summary of like this moment, when it's like, well, I don't want to see the Tostitos Twitter account commenting on Black Lives Matter, but it really was sort of the height of a moment where it felt like everybody's got to say something online.

Marcelle Kosman 09:38

Okay, so I feel like the most natural question to ask at this point is, is this just how social media works? Is performative activism just inherently tied to social media?

Hannah McGregor 09:53

As a concept, I think so. I actually did a Google engram search for the phrase “performative activism.” And it's like nothing. And then in like 2010, or like 2015, it goes, just like a straight line up. So it is, as a concept, as a phrase, is a contemporary phenomenon. And it did surge into prominence around the Black Lives Matter protests. According to the Wikipedia article, it was actually Lorde who got that conversation started.

Marcelle Kosman 10:22

Sorry, wait, which Lord? Audre? Or the New Zealand singer?

Hannah McGregor 10:27

New Zealand singer. Yeah. Who was like, I'm seeing a lot of performative activism from white people. So, virtue signaling is an older concept. But, you know, it's entwined with the idea of performative activism. And of course, like hypocrisy, which is the basic accusation, has a much longer history. **[Marcelle laughs]** But performative activism specifically is intertwined with the use of social media as an inherently performative space. We're gonna put a pin in performativity on social media, because we're gonna get into that in the theory segment.

Marcelle Kosman 11:04

[Marcelle sighs] I have so many questions. Okay.

Hannah McGregor 11:08

Yeah. Because at the heart of that conversation is this much thornier topic of like, how we distinguish the real from the performative, and what real support of a political cause is and what the role of performance might be in the larger context of activism. But before we get into that, I do want to do a touch more context setting. So Marcelle, what else was going on other than the Black Lives Matter protests in June 2020?

Marcelle Kosman 11:33

Well, there was this devastating global COVID 19 pandemic that shut down everything we understood to be how society worked.

Hannah McGregor 11:43

Yes, 100%. And, I mean, maybe I feel like we both had the experience of attending Black Lives Matter rallies that summer, while wearing a mask, as we all tried collectively to figure out how to gather in solidarity without further spreading a deadly virus that was actually disproportionately killing Black people. Like it was a moment of like, really intense and fraught activism. And so the question of how and where to do one's activism, particularly when the activism is about ally-ship or protesting the treatment of a community you don't belong to, was extra fraught that summer. And I remember people drawing lines between real activism as physically showing up at a protest or a rally and performative activism as being something that people are doing online. And then others pointing out that that distinction is an ableist one, that undermines the activist contributions of folks who can't physically participate in protests or marches.

Marcelle Kosman 12:49

One of the things that I remember most clearly about this period, I think this might have been Elliott's first or second protest that we took Elliot to and trying to, like, involve her in making the sign and like she wanted it to say Happy Friday.

Hannah McGregor 13:04

Oh my God.

Marcelle Kosman 13:05

I know, I know, such a like, pure little person. And so on one side, it said Happy Friday. And then on the other side, saying like, Well, what about, you know, we talked about what is happening right now, why people are protesting and why we're going to go. So what could we say about, you know, what's happening to Black people that we could maybe put on your sign? And she said that it's bad to hurt people. And I was like, okay, okay, so we've got happy Friday on one side, and then we've got, it's bad to hurt people on the other. And this is like the thing that kind of really sticks out.

Hannah McGregor 13:42

It's fine. Nobody's crying.

Marcelle Kosman 13:46

Children are so pure, if we just give them the tools to articulate, like, what's wrong with the world.

Hannah McGregor 13:53

So the pandemic is definitely one piece of how these conversations are playing out, because it's intensifying our collective focus on the role of social media, because so many of us are stuck at home in 2020. The other sort of larger piece of context I want to add, and by larger, I don't mean, more significant, but I mean, sort of happening in the background all the way through 2020. And viewers prior

to it in the years following it is something called platformization. Marcelle, have you heard this term before?

Marcelle Kosman 14:27

Well, I have heard the term platform, like I know that we usually use the word platform to refer to the different mediated spaces that we use to express ourselves or ideas or whatever. I assume that's related.

Hannah McGregor 14:43

Yeah. For sure. For sure. Yeah. Yeah. 100% Platformization is a much larger topic that has to do with particular forms of reorganization of industry. But when we're talking about media platformization refers to the reorganizing of the internet around platforms.

Marcelle Kosman 15:02

Like Facebook, Instagram...

Hannah McGregor 15:05

Twitter and Instagram and Tumblr and Reddit and YouTube. And so the simplest way I can explain platformization as a process is through the example of Facebook. Because the rise of Facebook, essentially ate blogging. **[Hannah pretends to take a bite out of something]**

Marcelle Kosman 15:26

Oh, of course. Yeah.

Hannah McGregor 15:28

So blogs are not platforms. They're a series of separate websites that are interconnected through the logic of hyperlinks, which are like a non hierarchical lateral form of organizing. I linked to you, you link to me, we follow links around the internet. But to build a website, to build a blog, you need to build it. And that has gotten a lot easier with the rise of services like Squarespace, which are again, not platforms, but service providers that provide templates.

Marcelle Kosman 16:03

Okay, so when you say like building the website, are you referring to coding?

Hannah McGregor 16:09

I am referring to coding. Yeah, precisely.

Marcelle Kosman 16:12

Something I never learned how to do.

Hannah McGregor 16:14

Even now, knowing a little bit of HTML and CSS is going to help you out. But in the early 2000s, you had to know HTML to make a website. So it requires, you know, some level of expertise. It does now, too, I can assure you, having taught a lot of students how to build blogs, it's absolutely not intuitive. People are like, Oh, digital natives just know how to use the internet. And I'm like, I assure you, they do not. But 20 years ago, when Facebook was emerging, building blogs was a lot harder. So Facebook comes along and takes over a lot of the space of blogging, because Facebook provided a platform where they had already built everything for you. And all you had to do was pop in your information, and they took care of the back end, they made sure everybody's page looked consistent and professional and polished. And all you had to do was check the agree box on some weird data privacy agreement that you didn't even bother reading in the first place. What could possibly go wrong?

Marcelle Kosman 17:19

What are they going to do? Sell your information to the military? Come on!

Hannah McGregor 17:25

Yeah, they are, it turns out! So I think a lot of us understand now that like millions of people giving their data over to a corporately owned platform is a bad idea. I also think the prevailing attitude at this point towards digital privacy is one of apathy. Like it's too late, the cats out of the bag, they already know everything about me, corporations on the internet. So I give up. And it's interesting to watch that logic get pushed to its breaking point with Elon Musk's acquisition of Twitter, which he has made so unusably bad that people are actually starting to really jump ship. And along the way, really noticing that we have lost our public squares to tech corporations, that without Twitter, we don't have a place online to gather.

Marcelle Kosman 18:08

Yeah, it's true. The main alternative is Threads, which is just owned by meta.

Hannah McGregor 18:15

Yeah, and bad. It's really bad. It's a really shitty tool. **[Hannah and Marcelle laugh]** Yeah, and we're having right now this moment, right, where it's like some people have moved to Threads, some people have moved to Blue Sky, some people have moved to Mastodon and so we're getting this like, further fragmentation of the public spheres as people try to figure out like, where we're gonna gather and what that's gonna look like. But what it is really showing us is how reliant we have become on platforms for doing a lot of the work of citizenship.

Marcelle Kosman 18:51

Okay, so we've become reliant on corporations telling us how to do citizenship. Is that basically what I'm hearing you say?

Hannah McGregor 19:01

We've become reliant on corporations building the platforms where we do it, and shaping how we do it through design.

Marcelle Kosman 19:13

Okay, that's haunting. I do not want to play devil's advocate. That is not what I'm doing. This is a real question. Haven't we also, though, seen these platforms being used effectively for social activism? Like I remember the Arab Spring happening. I remember hashtags for Metoo, and hashtags for Black Lives Matter. Like even using hashtags as a way to organize information and access information was really useful, social causes that arose not despite but because of how social media allows people to connect and communicate directly with one another and have conversations with perfect strangers, and in a sense of being connected to strangers via a shared discourse community is like literally, the definition of a public, like that is how we make publics. We're just not doing it in newspapers. And I guess like public billboards or I don't know what people did before the internet. I wasn't alive. That's not true. I was.

Hannah McGregor 20:19

Newspapers are also owned by guys who make shitty decisions about what will and will not go into the newspaper, like, this is a much older problem of like, where do our publics emerge? And who controls the means of production?

Marcelle Kosman 20:39

Oh shit! Oh no, it comes back to capitalism, doesn't it?

Hannah McGregor 20:45

I mean, also patriarchy and white supremacy. But this awareness that social media platforms are corporately owned, and shape actively the terms of how we interact with each other. And also, they have been really central for lots of forms of activism and organizing. So how do you square these two things of like, this is a corporately owned platform, we are using it for activism? Because despite these being useful tools, we also know they're owned by corporations with a vested interest in making money. And they have all proven that they are willing to do some pretty heinous things to make that money. S

So we know, for example, YouTube's algorithms drive users towards ever more politically radical content, because it keeps them on the platform for longer, and so they will look at more ads. We know that Facebook has deliberately manipulated their algorithms to do psychological experiments on users. They did a study to see if people get sad if you only give them bad news in their Facebook feeds. And they were like, Wow, turns out people got really depressed, neat, like literally having to ask, Am I part of a psychological experiment that a corporation is running on me right now? It would be dystopian if it wasn't just real.

Marcelle Kosman 22:10

But that is also not new, right? Like people for decades, marginalized people have been unknowingly exposed to different kinds of experiments, right?

Hannah McGregor 22:21

100% 100%. What distinguishes what social media platforms are doing is just the range of access that they have, like the number of people from all around the world who are gathered on these sites. We've seen other sinister behaviors from these platforms, the rise of something called shadowbanning, where platforms will just silently disappear users or content they don't like or don't agree with. Platforms selling user information to the military, to governments. And that's all before we get into the topic of misinformation and platforms refusal to take responsibility for the spread of dangerous lies-

Marcelle Kosman 23:03

Fake news!

Hannah McGregor 23:04

Which is, lucky for me, beyond the scope of today's episode.

Marcelle Kosman 23:08

Okay, so we have these social media platforms that are on the one hand being used effectively, connecting lots of different kinds of people for important digital activism. And on the other hand, they are owned by corporations who use those platforms to manipulate us the users, and make money off of us.

Hannah McGregor 23:24

Yeah, yeah, precisely.

Marcelle Kosman 23:35

Okay, just making sure that I'm following because this is a lot.

Hannah McGregor 23:40

Don't worry, it's gonna get worse.

Marcelle Kosman 23:42

So would you say that it is fair to categorize Blackout Tuesday as an example of that manipulation? Because if I remember, right, you were saying that Blackout Tuesday came from a specific activism around the music industry, but then it got co opted into the Black Lives Matter movement more broadly, in a way that kind of shut down conversations and information around Black Lives Matter?

Hannah McGregor 24:13

It drowned out those hashtags that people were trying to use to do real time organizing, and like sharing safety information with people at rallies and stuff like that. So I don't think this is quite an example of the act of manipulation of these corporations. I actually think we need to add one more layer of context here to really understand why Blackout Tuesday was a kind of weird failure of social media activism, because on top of a landscape in which our discourse publics have become corporate platforms with extremely suss approaches to data transparency and security and privacy and misinformation, we also have to

consider how those platforms have shifted our understanding of our own identities, and what it means to perform our identities in public.

Marcelle Kosman 25:03

Oh my god.

Hannah McGregor 25:06

Yeah, because they actually change our brains.

Marcelle Kosman 25:10

Okay, I'm gonna take some deep breaths, and I'm going to ask you to help me out with some theory.

Hannah McGregor 25:15

Good. Let's do it.

[Upbeat interlude music plays]

This segment is called "The Theory We Need." And I'll confess it took me a while to figure out exactly what theory I thought we needed to wrap our heads around Blackout Tuesday in the context of social media activism. And then I started thinking about an essay by Jia Tolentino that I really love. Do you know Jia Tolentino's work?

Marcelle Kosman 25:41

I know the name, but I think, from you.

Hannah McGregor 25:46

Okay. Yeah, that's fair. Because I do quote her quite a bit in my book. And because I love her. I think she's a really smart thinker and observer of contemporary culture, particularly internet culture. She writes mostly for the *New Yorker* now, but she got her start writing and editing on sites like *The Hairpin* and *Jezebel*. So she's like part of the early feminist internet landscape. And she's been writing on and thinking about the internet for a long time. And in 2019, she released a book called *Trick Mirror: reflections on self delusion*, which is an imperfect but really fascinating collection of essays, circling around the question of how growing up on the internet has shaped or even like, misshaped like contorted our generation's understanding of identity, hence, self delusion. So questions of identity and media weave through the whole book, but I really want to focus here on the opening essay, "The I in Internet," which is where she argues that the internet has kind of broken us.

Marcelle Kosman 26:48

Yeah, the internet has, like, ruined me. It is simultaneously one of the only spaces in which I find joy. And also one of the spaces that affects me the most profoundly with just the slightest, just the ittiest bittiest

interaction will ruin my week, it's not even the screen. It's just the stuff on the screen that I choose to look at!

Hannah McGregor 27:18

Yeah. It's so pervasive in our lives now, and has so totally reshaped everything about like how we interact with each other, how we communicate, how we build careers, that it's sort of inevitable that it's going to be a major part of how we think about identity and community and selfhood and all of the things that emerge out of that, including, of course, like how we think about and engage in causes that really matter to us profoundly. It's not like, here's me over here, an isolated subject, thinking about and caring about things and developing opinions. And then I walk up to the internet to do my activism work. It's like, No, it's the media environment I am already soaking in, when I even begin to articulate who I am and what matters to me.

Marcelle Kosman 28:07

Yeah, I'm suddenly struggling to think critically about my own internet activism, because the internet is also where I do the majority of my shopping. It's where I teach. It's a lot.

Hannah McGregor 28:21

es. And you know, I remember interesting conversations, during the most intense lockdown periods of the pandemic, about the profound flattening effect of shifting from doing like most stuff on the internet to doing all stuff on the internet. And like how distressing it was to us mentally to be like, this one screen where I do my job, talk to my friends, read news about how many people are dying, and buy myself a special treat to cheer myself up. And that is all happening in an undifferentiated digital space.

So Tolentino, you know, importantly, writing this essay, pre COVID-19, pre Black Lives Matter, right? This book comes out in 2019. She's probably writing this essay several years earlier. But I think kind of most of what she's describing has only become more intensified in the years since. So Tolentino is interested in thinking about the internet as a space of performance, of the performance of our identities. And to do that she draws on a book that I've actually taught a number of times. It's a 1956 book by a sociologist, Erving Goffman called *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, which argues that human interaction is always kind of a performance, that we're modifying the way that we act depending on our social context, our interlocutors code switching, you know, like we're performing a little bit.

Marcelle Kosman 29:56

Yeah. I totally agree. Yes, yeah.

Hannah McGregor 29:59

Yes. He's not like, this is a bad thing, we're being, you know, we're not genuine. He's just like, No, this is what human interaction is like, you're presenting yourself with some level of sometimes subconscious and sometimes very conscious deliberateness. So, a vital piece of Goffman's, you know, extended metaphor of human interaction as performance is that if we are actors, we have time when we are offstage. So, sometimes you're alone. Like you're not always on, you can just be off sometimes.

Marcelle Kosman 30:37

Like literally offstage, not alone in the sense of delivering a soliloquy.

Hannah McGregor 30:43

Yeah. Not alone in the sense of delivering a soliloquy, like alone in the sense of exiting the stage and going to the green room and not performing anymore. And when we are offstage as people we continue to exist. So Tolentino's point is that with the internet, the second you stop actively performing yourself, you disappear. So like, if I stopped posting anything on Instagram, nobody's gonna see my Instagram. Unless somebody goes really specifically looking for me, I functionally am not there anymore. Yeah. So would you read this quote from Tolentino, please?

Marcelle Kosman 31:33

Yep. Quote, "As a medium, the internet is defined by a built-in performance incentive. In real life, you can walk around living life and be visible to other people. But you can't just walk around and be visible on the internet – for anyone to see you, you have to act. You have to communicate in order to maintain an internet presence. And, because the internet's central platforms are built around personal profiles, it can seem – first at a mechanical level, and later on as an encoded instinct – like the main purpose of this communication is to make yourself look good. Online reward mechanisms beg to substitute for offline ones, and then overtake them. This is why everyone tries to look so hot and well-traveled on Instagram; this is why everyone seems so smug and triumphant on Facebook; this is why, on Twitter, making a righteous political statement has come to seem, for many people, like a political good in itself." End quote. Holy shit, that is so true.

Hannah McGregor 32:51

So in this context where saying something political starts to feel like it is synonymous with political action. Having a hot take becomes a form of social currency. So you know, you know the kinds of things like people saying, Oh, that woman actually doesn't understand sexism, because she's not hot, real internet hot take, or saying that writers should be reading is ableist. A real example of an internet hot take. These are just like patently bad faith arguments that are about getting attention, because that attention not only turns into like the sort of social currencies that feel good, right, clicks and likes and engagement, but that engagement can sometimes turn into actual money. So the monetization of hot takes, and this is Tolentino's argument demonstrates how quote, "our world, digitally mediated, utterly consumed by capitalism makes communication about morality very easy, but makes actual moral living very hard." End quote.

Marcelle Kosman 34:03

Okay. Hannah, I need help wrapping my head around this. So according to Tolentino's argument, as you've explained it thus far, does this mean that all political statements on social media are just virtue signaling?

Hannah McGregor 34:21

So, Tolentino doesn't think so. And that's because Goffman, who she's working with the ideas of, she doesn't think performance or performativity is necessarily a bad thing. So, you know, we make decisions all the time about the way that we're going to perform our identities in different contexts. And those decisions that we make are tied up with our values, and our understanding of our communities. And for a lot of us our awareness that social media is how a lot of people get their information. So it's like, oh, I want to share important things on social media because that's how other people sometimes find out about things.

So we can have, you know, important conversations about the role of signal boosting online and consciousness raising and public education and all of this stuff that's like stuff that we do with social media as a tool. And Tolentino also points out that maybe virtue signaling isn't the worst thing. She says that virtue signaling, quote, “intersects with real desire for political integrity,” end quote, and that posting photos from a protest, for example, can simultaneously be quote, “A microscopically meaningful action, an expression of genuine principle, and also inescapably, some sort of attempt to signal that I am good.” End quote.

Marcelle Kosman 35:49

That makes so much sense to me, especially lately, as I've been thinking about, you know, what things I'm drawn to post, what things I'm drawn to repost, and whose stuff I'm willing to comment on and why. So it makes sense, then, the performance isn't the problem. And that virtue signaling isn't really the problem. Is it just the internet that's the problem? Because like, for all the cat videos, there are a lot of Nazis on there.

Hannah McGregor 36:16

It is kind of the internet that's the problem. But more specifically, it's the internet as we've allowed it to become. So it's the internet as a platformized corporately owned social internet, where everything is organized around the logic of the personal profile and personal identity. Posting is required to be visible to exist in the eyes of the platform, and of people who are following you on the platform. And our ability to prompt engagement via posting is directly linked for some of us to like our success in the fields we're working in. So journalists, and writers and consultants and freelancers and artists-

Marcelle Kosman 37:03

Dare I say, academics.

Hannah McGregor 37:04

Academics, for sure, rely on having a platform on social media, so that people know who you are. And to have a platform, you have to perform yourself online, as hard as you can, in a way that both suits the goals you personally are attempting to achieve, and those might be political goals, and they might be professional goals, and they might be personal goals, and they'll probably be a messy entanglement of all

of those. And then we also have to do it in a way that suits the veiled algorithmic preferences of very bad companies that are actively manipulating our behavior for profit.

Marcelle Kosman 37:50

Man...

Hannah McGregor 37:52

Unfortunately, as tempting as it is to say, like, wow, this is bad, we should all get off the internet, Tolentino, who is kind of hilariously not an optimist, argues that even that won't really help. So please read this great downer of a quote for me.

Marcelle Kosman 38:08

You got it. Quote, "Even if you avoid the internet completely – my partner does: he thought #tbt meant *truth be told* for ages – you still live in the world that this internet has created, a world in which selfhood has become capitalism's last natural resource, a world whose terms are set by centralized platforms that have deliberately established themselves as near-impossible to regulate or control." End quote.

This totally checks out based on my lived experience. But it also kind of reminds me of the way that it sounds like the internet is sort of functioning in a way similar to other kinds of norms. Like I remember a friend of mine one time, not to go into too many messy details, but was really troubled by the fact that he was being perceived as the bad guy in a relationship ending. And like, I had to have a conversation with him and was like, Well, you know, you did these shitty things. And he was like, but I don't live with those kinds of scripts. Like I don't buy that. And I was like, well, you live in a world. **[Hannah laughs]** I love you so much. You live in a world where the scripts exist. And according to these scripts, you did the bad guy thing.

Hannah McGregor 39:27

Yeah, I mean, even instead of scripts, because that itself is like ceding territory to that person. It's like we live in a society. We are interrelated and interconnected. And in many ways, the idea of opting out is every bit as individualistic as the logic of these platforms in the first place. I would like this to be the episode that we do the substack deep dive about because I am currently listening to Naomi Klein's new book *Doppelganger*, which is all about this. And she's so smart on the topic, and she in part thinks about the platformization of the social internet in terms of the privatization of the commons.

And so she's like, we used to have publics. And now our publics are privatized and corporately owned, and that has, like, fundamentally contorted our capacity collectively to have like, really vital social conversations. What I like about her take is that she frames it as a collective and political problem that needs a collective response, rather than an individualistic problem of you opt in or you opt out. But this is just the way it is. And I think it's that attitude of like, well, this is just the way it is. So you either have to play the game or go sit by yourself in a dark room. It's like that nihilism, towards the way our main infrastructure of communications have become, is, I think, a dangerous nihilism.

Marcelle Kosman 41:04

You know what? You're right. You're right. But you're getting off topic.

Hannah McGregor 41:07

I am getting off topic, because I'm just excited about this other book I'm reading right now. I think the thing to really remember here is that, yes, activists use social media as a tool for organizing and communicating and planning and educating. And those same social media platforms are designed around a model of identity that demands this constant performance of virtue by posting the right kind of thing in the right kind of way. And because posting is the only form of action that's visible on social media platforms, we increasingly collapse political action and posting together until we get to see us posting about racial politics. And everybody's like, cool. Thanks for your take, Tostitos. And, of course, Blackout Tuesday.

Marcelle Kosman 41:58

Okay, Hannah, we've got a lot of content here and I for one am ready, and I believe in my heart that you are ready for a thesis.

Hannah McGregor 42:08

You know, I think I just might be.

[Upbeat interlude music plays]

Marcelle Kosman 42:13

This segment is called "In This Essay, I Will" and in this segment, you Hannah will offer us a concise thesis statement.

Hannah McGregor 42:21

That's exactly what I'll do. The platformization of the social internet has led to new forms of digital activism that rely on the networking possibilities of social media, as seen in major social movements like MeToo, and Black Lives Matter. At the same time, these platforms encourage a form of performative posting, in which saying something online becomes synonymous with political action, making them a breeding ground for performative activism and virtue signaling. This reliance on social media platforms as the new public sphere was heightened during the Black Lives Matter protests of summer 2020. In part because of the COVID 19 related lockdowns, this flurry of performative posting culminated in Blackout Tuesday, an online protest originally meant to bring awareness to the financial exploitation of Black artists in the music industry.

But that spread through the social internet like wildfire, as people hastened to post their own black squares, lest not posting be seen as a lack of support. Ironically, this widespread posting of black squares accompanied by hashtag Black Lives Matter, and related hashtags, buried the posts, where people were using those hashtags to do actual organizing, an effective metaphor for what it's like trying to do said

organizing work on platforms that incentivize political performance for personal gain and branding. In this essay, I will argue that what-

Marcelle Kosman 43:58

Wait, wait, wait- what do you mean branding? **[Hannah laughs]**

Hannah McGregor 44:02

So this is a really crucial piece of it, right? Is that the idea of the performative posting based internet, where everything is focused around the personal profile, I'm gonna say, like in part emerges out of, but in part also produced, so isn't a kind of chicken in the egg relationship, to the concept of the personal brand. So this idea that all of us have to have a consistent personal brand that we are putting out online, and you shouldn't do off brand stuff. So that really ties into the whole logic of the self as it is performed on these sites.

Marcelle Kosman 44:48

I don't know if I use the phrase, "my personal brand" that much anymore, but I feel like I used to use it a lot, but almost always sort of semi ironically. But maybe the real irony is that it wasn't ever ironic.

Hannah McGregor 45:00

Okay, I'm gonna quote Naomi Klein's new book just one more time. Just one more time, I promise. But she does talk about how the fact that like the first articles about the idea of personal branding predated the social internet. And so people really made fun of it. And we were like, Yeah, sure. I'm a brand. Yeah, whatever you say, because obviously, individuals did not have branding budgets, did not have marketing budgets, like, how the fuck am I branding myself? And then as we were talking about earlier, a big part of what tools like Facebook and Twitter and Instagram did is basically put these marketing tools at the fingertips of any user, so that you can functionally build a brand for yourself for free.

And that had a lot of really interesting consequences for new kinds of artists being able to avoid traditional gatekeepers and produce. right? Like the rise of YouTubers and-

Marcelle Kosman 46:02

People who get famous on Tik Tok.

Hannah McGregor 46:03

Yeah, 100% 100%. And what we see a lot of the time is like the people who get famous there might be people who wouldn't have access to all of the kinds of insider knowledge and nepotistic connections you would need to get famous in more conventional media environments. But you've got these tools at your fingertips now. And isn't that cool? You know, that's the shit I say about podcasting all the time, like traditional radio was full of gatekeeping. And podcasting became this way for people who would never be allowed on a mic to make their own content. **[Marcelle bursts out laughing]** So like there are these genuinely democratic possibilities to these tools. And I say this, because I want to distinguish between

digital democracies, like what the internet makes possible, and platformization, which is what the corporate Internet has done, which was not inevitable.

Marcelle Kosman 47:08

And, you know, you say that they gave us these tools to develop our personal brands for free.

Hannah McGregor 47:15

Quote, unquote, free.

Marcelle Kosman 47:16

Quote, unquote, for free, but also, it makes them money. So like free for us. Financially beneficial for them.

Hannah McGregor 47:25

Yeah. And only free for us in a very literal sense. If we consider, like our personal data, and also the survival of democracy to be a thing that has value, then none of it is free.

Marcelle Kosman 47:44

I want to talk about a thing, but it has to do with an article that I haven't read. **[Marcelle laughs]**

Hannah McGregor 47:49

Ugh, my favorite. You know, all I want to do is have opinions about things I haven't read.

Marcelle Kosman 47:55

So we're recording this episode, in the context of Israel's intensive siege in Gaza, which is part of a decade's, nearly 75 years of ethnic cleansing and genocide of Palestinians in Palestine. And one of the things since October 7, that I have noticed is people's tendency to post about what's happening, or to not post about what's happening. And there was an article that a friend of mine sent to me, essentially, the headline of the article was, you don't need to post your opinion about what's going on.

Hannah McGregor 48:42

Yeah, there's a lot of versions of this circulating, that are saying like, hey, actually feel free to not post.

Marcelle Kosman 48:49

So here's what's complicated about that, because I have in very recent days, seen that very rightly and fairly critiqued, because not posting and being silent, is also a problem. But I have also seen a lot of posts that are flagrant, nothing posts, like wildly unnecessary statements of this is a complicated situation with a complicated history. And it's a complicated place.

Hannah McGregor 49:24

People who post to be like, I have nothing to say about this.

Marcelle Kosman 49:26

Yeah. And to those people, I really want to be like, No, you don't have to post, you don't!

Hannah McGregor 49:32

Okay. I want to prise apart some of the different functions of posting in this context. Okay. So you've referred to posting as the opposite of silence. You were like, you know, to be silent. Right? You post or you're silent.

Marcelle Kosman 49:48

I did that unconsciously.

Hannah McGregor 49:51

Yeah. Because the logic and the discourse in the soup that you were swimming in, and as we know, there are multiple forms of effective political speech? And posting on Instagram or on X are certainly not the only ones. So you might be going to rallies, going to marches, contacting representatives, doing work in your own workplace, writing statements within your workplace. Like, there's a lot of different ways people may be acting. So not posting on social media, I think should not be taken as synonymous with silence on the topic. It's the way that when you are on that platform, within the logic of that platform, only things people are doing there exist.

And so it looks like what the fuck are you doing? So that's one piece of it. Another piece of it is the like, profound disorientation that emerges from scrolling through a social media feed. And being like, I saw a webcomic about this the other day, that was like a stylized picture of a sandwich, a close up of a manicure, the worst thing I've ever seen, somebody going for a walk, fall foliage, oh, the new worst thing I've ever seen, like that experience is totally shocking to our nervous systems, to our poor animal brains. Like, it's so, you know, and this is a thing that a lot of artists and scholars have talked about and thought about, I think one of the best pieces of art about that really fucking weird effect is actually Bo Burnham's song, *White Woman's Instagram*, which I think does a really good job of getting at that like, these sites are performative and wrote in generic and personal and intimate, and, like, they're all of these things tangled up together.

And so I think when you say people are either posting exclusively stuff about the ongoing genocide in Palestine, or they are posting nothing about it, I think partly, it's that sense of like, I can't dip in and out. Like, that feels impossible. So either, this is now all I do on this platform, or, this is not what I use this platform for, and I'm doing things somewhere else, or, you know, like, I actually feel like somehow I have no political responsibility in this moment. And I'm choosing to opt out, which I do actually think is moral cowardice, but is not synonymous with not posting, right, like I do, actually, personally, kind of in light of my understanding of how the social internet works, think choosing not to use Instagram, as an organizing tool is totally legitimate. And I get why people feel like they have to choose one or the other, like, part of that is just, it's so disorienting. And I think when we are making a decision about whether to post or not to post, we also get tangled up in the multiple functions of what those posts are for. Right? So am I posting, you know, we have some friends in common, I will just say, Carly Boyce, our mutual friend,

Tommy Lantern Taro, has been posting largely like activist and organizing content with a real focus on the fact that they are, you know, a healer and a therapist. And the content that they are posting is about encouraging people to stay with the fight and to find their community and to take breaks when they need it. And it's them using this tool that they have to do part of the work that they're doing. Certainly not all the work that they're doing. But part of it.

People who have really significant platforms who use those platforms for public education, you know, aren't really recognizing its use right now, particularly in the context of a media landscape where we know that mainstream media coverage is profoundly unreliable. And so there's a lot of reliance on more independent media coverage, you know, so that's part of the context. And then there's also the thing of like, the vast majority of people have fewer than 500 followers on Instagram, probably fewer than 100. Like the vast majority of people on any of these platforms are primarily reading them. Are primarily liking other things and are not followed to such a degree that what they post is going to sway anything. So there's also this function of like, I want to tell my community in a context in which, you know, we are witnessing something awful happening. And you know, I'm talking about Palestine right now. But we can say the same thing about Black Lives Matter. But like, I want you to tell my community, like, I see this. And I don't think that this is okay. Which makes sense, it makes perfect sense as an instinct, particularly when we are in this collective moment where we know that we're often not getting reliable information about the real things that are happening elsewhere.

Marcelle Kosman 55:41

So what is happening in Palestine, right now, what is happening specifically in Gaza, but in Palestine, more broadly, right now really feels like the first global crisis that I have had sufficient knowledge about the history where I feel a sense, I don't think obligation is quite the right word. I don't feel a sense of obligation to talk about it. But I feel like I have a really good sense of how many people don't understand the details, or the context or the history or whatever. And so in that sense, it's been this really weird experience of like posting, here's some funny memes about being a Pisces, here is some really useful information by this organization out of Israel that works specifically against colonization, and works specifically for, like a Palestinian liberation or like works specifically for these goals. And they're saying this, you know, like, it's a weird experience that I'm sure other folks who have been doing this kind of public education about other global crises have been experiencing, like, here's a picture of my niece also, here is what's happening in the genocide in this community in this country.

And I got a message from an old friend from high school, who told me that she really, really appreciated the posts, because there was so much that she didn't know and she always really valued, like the insight and the consideration that I put into issues and stuff ever since high school. And so the reason I bring this up isn't to pat myself on the back. But I do really want to say thank you, that meant a lot to me, Courtney, I don't know if you're listening. But it really meant a lot to me, I appreciate it very much. But rather that I think that especially in a time of egregious ethical chaos, I think that a lot of folks listening may find themselves to be that person in their community. And that it's always okay to post and repost things. But like, I guess what I'm saying is don't feel like you're badgering your community, when you post important information that you think people need to know about, because you in fact, might be the

person who these other folks who look up to you are relying on for a lighthouse in the fog of chaotic and unreliable media.

Hannah McGregor 58:23

Yeah, I think that part of what you're getting at is why a piece of this conversation is really tricky for those of us who care a lot about communication and language and related fields like art and literature and education, where we're like, oh, speech matters a great deal. It really, really matters. Communication really matters, sharing information really matters. It's like, kind of the whole thing we do. And that can lead in moments to us over investing in these platforms. Back when I was a very active Twitter user, and there was a period of time there when I was a very active Twitter user. And I fully mentally and emotionally collapsed what was happening on Twitter with what was happening in the world, those were the same thing to me. And they're not the same thing. Like they're just not like, actually comparatively quite small percentage of the world's population are on any of these platforms, except maybe Facebook.

Marcelle Kosman 59:27

On the platforms and maybe posting.

Hannah McGregor 59:31

Posting actively and posting in English. And that percentage is like, over represented by certain demographics. So like, you know, there was like a lot of conversations about journalism happening on Twitter because like, most of the people on Twitter journalists, so then all of a sudden all of us are like, really feel called upon to basically be doing citizen journalism. We're like, oh, shit, you're right. The most important thing I can be doing is journalism. Nothing else matters other than journalism. And it's like, no, that's because everybody I'm talking to right now is a journalist. And I get caught up in that, that like, oh, fuck, the most important thing I can be doing is this thing. And it's like, well, no, but I'm also a teacher, like, in a classroom, like, I'm doing that over there somewhere.

So that sense of like, I care about communication, and here I am in this place where all we're doing is communicating. And so I can over invest in it as the be all and end all of where my politics happen. And that leads to all kinds of weird things like condemnations of not posting as being synonymous with endorsing genocide, which I just truly and profoundly do not believe. Because I don't believe that posting a meme is synonymous with doing anything to stop a genocide. You know, I don't think it's true in either direction. But also, there's a kind of falling away from more concrete and often more effective forms of organizing, when we over invest in the use of social media, which is to say, those other actions that can be really effective, which again, like, doesn't mean that sharing resources with your community is not an effective action. It just means that these platforms fuck with our sense of reality, in very real ways, and totally giving over our understandings of who we are and who our communities are, and what political action looks like, to the logics of these corporately owned platforms, is not going to be good for any of us.

Marcelle Kosman 1:01:51

Right.

Hannah McGregor 1:01:53

One other thing I would really like to try to think through with you, Marcelle, is the not identical but related question of responsibility for understanding and forming a perspective on political moments, which is tied into all of this context, like part of what happened with Blackout Tuesday is that a huge number of people who had not made any effort to actually understand what was going on with Black Lives Matter, or what people were talking about, or what the substance of the protests was, were just like, oh, everybody's saying this thing, I'll say it too.

Marcelle Kosman 1:02:38

I will own that I was definitely one of those people.

Hannah McGregor 1:02:42

Oh yeah. Same. This is not a j'accuse. I fully was like, yes, people are posting this, those people are people who I agree with. So I will also post it, and then the same day I took it down. Never let it be said that I'm not willing to admit when I fuck up, because I do it all the time. So...

Marcelle Kosman 1:03:00

I am in fact, a lemming, and I will follow my community off the cliff, if I think that we're going off the cliff for the good of the people.

Hannah McGregor 1:03:08

Yeah. So this gets us to this question of when you are faced with a really complex political landscape, how much responsibility does any individual bear for doing the work of educating themselves, and thus having a perspective that they act on, because that way, I think lies a truly soul destroying level of overwhelm. There's many terrible things happening in the world every second. There just are. And so at what point do we say, complacency on this issue is fine. But complacency on this issue is not. How do we make the call about when it's urgent? And how do we distinguish at what moments we really need to be like, Okay, fuck, I cannot, I can't sit back and not say anything about this.

Because the sense of I don't know enough about this, to have a grounded perspective, it does make sense to me, there are a lot of issues in the world that I am like, Ah, I don't know. I actually don't know. I've got my own kind of rubrics for how I think these things through. And for me, a big piece of that is not expecting myself to individually understand everything, but having a larger network of people with whom I share values, and then collaboratively doing like the work of trying to change the world to be slightly less horrifyingly cruel. And in moments when I'm like, I don't know, but what I do know are the people I have built relationships with, who I trust and value, and in moments of overwhelm, I can say, I don't have the deep knowledge of the history of Israel and Palestine that you do. But what I do have is a great deal of trust in people like you and Carly and Ijeoma Oluo, who has been doing a ton of educating on Instagram. And so I feel that, in moments where I don't have the knowledge myself, what I do feel I have done is make the effort of seeking out and building a community that I trust.

Marcelle Kosman 1:05:46

And it sounds like a big part of that community includes the people who you follow on social media. And so you follow people whose perspectives you value and whose opinions you respect and who you trust to be knowledgeable about the things that they are taking strong positions on.

Hannah McGregor 1:06:07

Yeah, which is what we're doing when we trust a newspaper, or a podcast or a peer reviewed work of scholarship, like, there isn't a thing in the world that you don't need to be critically thinking about. Like, there's just nothing, there's no resource or authority, where you can fully just be like, Oh, everything this says is true, everything this says is true, and everything this person says I believe, like, it isn't a matter of ceding responsibility to an outside authority. And I think that's a useful distinction.

Marcelle Kosman 1:06:38

Yeah, I could be a bit mistaken about the timing. But I feel very strongly that it's only been in the last decade that I have started listening to that little voice that's like, I don't know about that, you know, when like a trusted source, a source that I rely on says something that is to quote my daughter, "a little sussy." And more often than not that sense of, there's something off about this is legit, because the behind the scenes of what's happening with that feeling is something here doesn't align with what I expect from this source, or from what I expect from this person. There's something here that's happening. And it could be any number of things. Sometimes our trusted sources make mistakes. Sometimes they post black squares with the hashtag Black Lives Matter, without realizing that they are contributing to a massive silencing. **[Hannah laughs]**

Hannah McGregor 1:07:43

And again, so much of this for me comes back to like, the very concept of the echo chamber, is a function of the algorithmic logics of these platforms. And I think, a recognition that that's a problem, that like, the algorithm feeds me back my reflection, it feeds me a version of the world that thinks I'm going to enjoy looking at. And then I feed it by being like, yes. Like, like, like, like, like. When we agree to the terms of what happens on the internet is the same as what is real, if it's not posted, then it doesn't exist, then we get into the very perverse logic of, in order to work against echo chambers, I have to seek out and engage with terrible people. **[Marcelle laughs]**

Marcelle Kosman 1:08:31

No!

Hannah McGregor 1:08:32

Well, if echo chambers are bad for democracy, then doing democracy must be me personally attempting to have a reasonable conversation with every asshole on the internet, which is also kind of a version of arguments that people make.

Marcelle Kosman 1:08:46

If an echo chamber is, and I don't just mean feeling bad, I mean, like, if an echo chamber is just where you hear your own ideas, reiterated back to you, then that feels different from Oh, I didn't know that. Or, Oh, I didn't think about my actions that way. Like, oh, no, I did this thing. I fucked up. I feel bad now. But I'm going to change my behavior.

Hannah McGregor 1:09:13

Yeah! I think part of what we're getting at here is how deeply so many different categories of action and relation have gotten collapsed together. And even framing it as like, what do I personally need out of my Instagram? Like, it still falls back into this logic of like, it's a cute little digital gallery for you to curate for yourself. And you're getting fed more content based on what you've already liked. But as long as we continue to cede the terms of the conversation to the logics of the platforms, we're limited by what the platforms have decided we are allowed to do, which doesn't mean that we're not using them, but does mean that it's really useful to remember that they are tools, that they are, in fact, very literally, the Master's tools, and that they can be used effectively for some very specific things.

And some of those things are sharing information with people. You know, because you're not personally friends with those organizers. But you know, ceasefire.now.ca is posting updated actions every week, and you can go and find them. And that's really useful. Also staying connected with your community and seeing how your friends are doing. But you know that thing where sometimes Instagram will just decide that you don't want to see somebody's posts, it's unclear why it just disappears one of your friends, when we let these tools reach too far into our lives, and reach too far into our understanding of reality they will skew things in the direction of actions and behaviors and perspectives and understandings of the self that benefit them. Which again, does not mean don't use them as tools. It means that we need to remember that they are not reality, that they are not neutral, that they are not disinterested, that they were not built to serve us, and that many times if we're trying to do something useful on them, we're trying to do it against their very logics.

Marcelle Kosman 1:11:33

This is a really good reminder for why it's important to maintain in person relationships, as much as you are able we are not all able all the time. COVID-19, very helpful reminder of that. But that's why when the vaccines came around, we could give each other hugs and it felt so good. Instagram is not giving us hugs.

Hannah McGregor 1:11:55

Instagrams never hooked me even once.

Marcelle Kosman 1:11:58

No, not once.

[Material Girls Theme plays briefly and then cuts out]

Hannah McGregor 1:12:05

Material Girls is a *Witch, Please* Production, and is distributed by Acast. You can find the rest of our episodes and our other podcasts on Acast or at ohwitchplease.ca. Our website has all kinds of fun stuff we think you'll love: you can sign up for our excellent substack, which is also available at substack.com/ohwitchplease, transcripts for our episodes, and reading lists, and merch including our wonderful Weird Feral Little Guy merch. I have the hoodie. I wear it basically every day.

Marcelle Kosman 1:12:40

If you have questions, comments, concerns or praise and please keep in mind we do in fact thrive on praise. Come hang out with us-

Hannah McGregor 1:12:47

If people on the internet don't tell us we're doing a good job, we're not real.

Marcelle Kosman 1:12:51

Come hang out with us on one of these platforms that is not serving you but you can serve us on it by giving us praise. We are available @ohwitchplease on Instagram or threads or X and on Tiktok you can find us @ohwitchpleasepod and the fun thing about Tiktok is that you can watch Gaby as they are gradually becoming a real in fact Tiktok influencer in real time. It's beautiful. But most importantly, you should head over to patreon.com/ohwitchplease, the platform that truly does come closest to serving us, and just check out the embarrassment of riches in bonus content available for you there.

Hannah McGregor 1:13:38

As noted earlier, we've started a substack! Every month we're offering a look behind the scenes at the research into our episodes. So far we've got STACKs on Barbie x Petro-Capitalism, *Avatar* x Hypermediacy, and *Star Wars* x Mass Culture. And the same subscription now gives you access to The Monthly Hoot, our unbelievably delightful digest of recommendations, updates, and hot playlists for your listening pleasure. To subscribe to our substack head over to <https://ohwitchplease.substack.com/>.

Marcelle Kosman 1:13:59

Special thanks to everyone on the Witch, Please Productions team who keep this train on the rails, including our digital content coordinator Gaby lori (**sound effect of a ball bouncing**), our social media manager and marketing designer Zoe Mix (**sound effect of a record rewinding**), our sound engineer Erik Magnus (**sound effect of chimes**), and our executive producer Hannah Rehak, aka COACH! (**sound effect of a sports whistle blowing**)

Hannah McGregor 1:14:33

At the end of every episode we will thank everyone who has joined our Patreon OR boosted their tier to help make our work possible. Our enormous gratitude goes out to:

Samantha L

Sparklecinnamon

Karyn N

Elaine GM

Alitzel B

Baileigh FJ

Marcelle Kosman 1:14:55

We'll be back next episode to tackle another piece of pop culture through a whole new theoretical lens, but until then...

Hannah McGregor 1:15:03

Later, aggregators!

[*Material Girls* Theme plays: "Shopping Mall" by Jay Arner and Jessica Delisle]