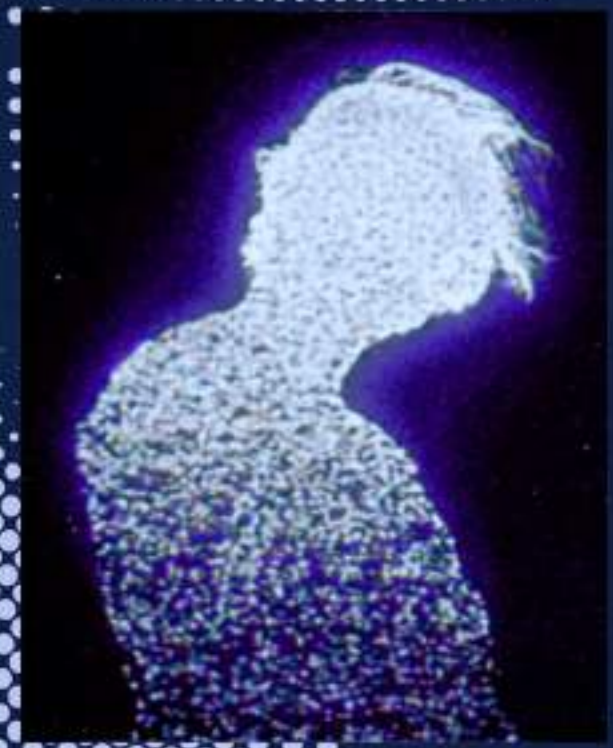
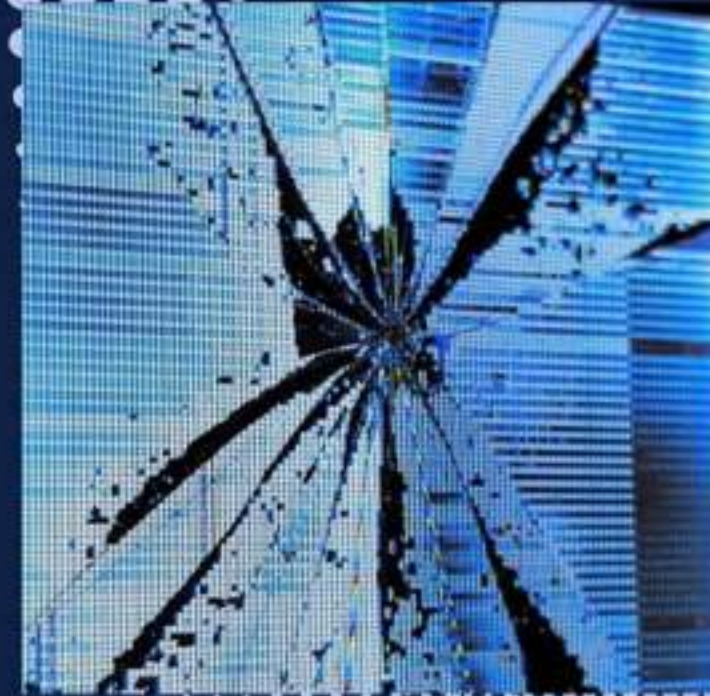


# Hacktivism vs. Astroturfers:

The Technological  
Battle for Hearts  
& Minds



TRY AGAIN?



**Legacy Gazette**  
**June 2026**

# INTERNET ACTIVISM OR CYBERTERRORISM?

## The Ethics of Hacktivism

Authors: Claire Coburn, Kat Williams, & Scott R. Stroud, Ph.D.  
Media Ethics Initiative Center for  
Media Engagement University of  
Texas at Austin August 18, 2022



As internet usage has expanded across the globe, it has made space for various new practices to thrive, including internet-based activism. From hashtag activism to online petitions, digital technology has allowed new and effective ways for activists to mobilize for change. More recently, another form of activism has also evolved online: hacktivism. Hacktivism has been described as a type of civil disobedience that “unites the talents of the computer hacker with the social consciousness of the political activist” (Manion & Goodrum, 2000). Converting traditional protest techniques like trespassing and blockades for use in the digital sphere, hacktivists “can attack the websites of any individual, corporation, or nation that is deemed responsible for oppressing the ethical, social, or political rights of others” (Manion & Goodrum, 2000). However, some have criticized hacktivism as a form of cyberterrorism. Indeed, as we shall see, the ethics of hacktivism have become a heated topic of debate.

While proponents of hacktivism agree that “the threat posed by cyberterrorism is very real,” they nonetheless hold that “it is a mistake to identify cyberterrorism with hacktivism.” Referencing U.S. law that defines terrorism as “an act of violence for the purpose of intimidating or coercing a government or civilian population,” those who endorse hacktivism argue that it “clearly does not fall into this category, as it is fundamentally non-violent” (Manion & Goodrum, 2000). Furthermore, hacktivists operate under a completely different set of motives than cyberterrorists. Though “hacktivism is not always committed to democratic values,” hacktivists typically try to achieve their goals “in a relatively peaceful manner” and do not aim to “cause significant damage, monetary loss, interruption of work of a governmental body or an organization, [or] to frighten authorities or civilians” (Gareeva, Krylova, & Khovrina, 2020).

Indeed, some hacktivists have claimed that their actions are not random or reckless, but deliberate and “selective when choosing their targets in order to minimize the harmfulness of their actions and the impact of their protest” (Karagiannopoulos, 2018). In doing so, they identify damage control as “a crucial element in establishing the political usefulness and legitimacy of their actions” and even hope that they can prevent violent outbursts by allowing social tensions to be released through such actions (Karagiannopoulos, 2018).



Critics argue that even if some hacktivist actions do not fall under the definition of cyberterrorism, there are nonetheless other types of hacktivism that U.S. law recognizes as illegal. For example, sections of the Computer Fraud and Abuse Act (CFAA) prohibit actions such as “accessing and downloading documents from private servers or behind paywalls with the intent of making them publicly available” and distributed denial of service (DDoS) attacks, which “flood a web site’s server with traffic from a network of sometimes thousands of individual computers, making it incapable of serving legitimate traffic” (Thompson, 2013). However, the most concerning problem critics have with hacktivism by far is doxing: the publication of private, identifying information about an individual. In 2011, members of the infamous hacktivist group “Anonymous” (along with a group called “Lulzsec”) “breached the Stratfor Global Intelligence Service database and published the passwords, addresses and credit card information of the firm’s high-profile clients [claiming that] they planned to use the credit cards to donate \$1 million to charity” (Thompson, 2013). Similarly, after members of the inflammatory Westboro Church tweeted their plans to picket outside the funerals of Sandy Hook victims in 2012, Anonymous hacked into the members’ Twitter accounts and published their phone numbers, emails, and hotel reservation information (Thompson, 2013). Though some of these actions garnered public support, popularity does not always indicate virtue.

### Discussion Questions:

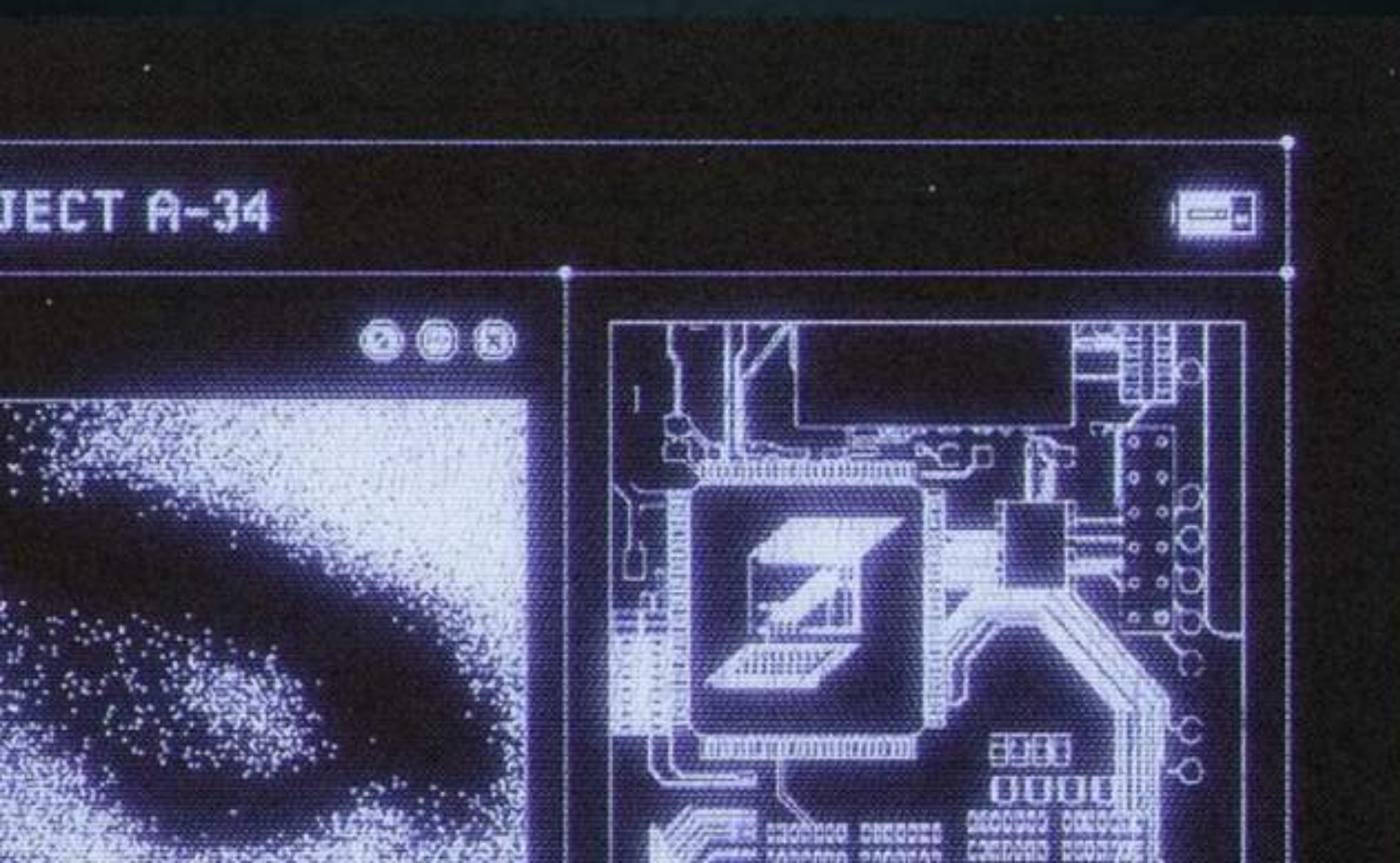
1. What ethical tensions exist in the practice and evaluation of hacktivism?
2. Do you think hacktivism crosses the line dividing civil disobedience from cyberterrorism? Why or why not?
3. Which actions (if any) of hacktivism do you support? Which go “too far”?
4. What principles should guide hacktivism? Are these principles helpful in preventing well-intentioned but destructive courses of online activism?

In response to arguments like these, proponents of hacktivism point out that legality is not synonymous with ethics. Of course, the United States’ history is riddled with examples of legal, but immoral, practices – such as the enslavement of African Americans and subsequent segregation from public life. In this sense, if civil disobedience is defined as “the peaceful breaking of unjust laws,” then hacktivist actions – while sometimes illegal – might count as legitimate activism nonetheless (Manion & Goodrum, 2000). Complicating this line of reasoning, however, critics point out that such a comparison does not align perfectly. When activists of the Civil Rights Movement staged actions like sit-ins, they may have broken Jim Crow laws, but the law itself was the target. Yet in the case of hacktivism, a certain person or entity is the target, as computer safety laws themselves are not necessarily unjust. Indeed, if someone hacked your personal accounts for non-political reasons, you would probably want some legal recourse and protections.

Ultimately, the debate about the ethics of hacktivism is far from resolved, and will likely continue to become more complex as the internet continues to evolve further. While hacktivism can be viewed as an effective and popular form of online political activism, it can also be viewed as a dangerous “slippery slope” headed towards cyberterrorism. In debating the ethics of hacktivism, we must pay attention to the new abilities that anonymity and the ability to create motivated groups that the online environment affords individuals, and reason through what principles and values we prioritize in present causes—and what they mean for resolving future conflicts our communities must address.

### Further Information:

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# THE END OF THE WORLD:

**A conversation about the possibilities of an artificially intelligent future, inspired by *The AI Doc: Or How I Became an Apocaloptimist***

By Caitlin Liao

A highly anticipated documentary, *The AI Doc: Or How I Became an Apocaloptimist*, was finally released this month. Reviewers of the film struggled to reach a consensus; one called it “the best documentary of the decade,” while another called it a “gathering of LinkedIn influencers. The film scored a 6.9/10 on IMDb, 90% on Rotten Tomatoes, and 65% on Metacritic – ratings that somewhat reflect the diametrically opposed opinions about this film.

The documentary follows Daniel Roher as he weighs his anxieties about a future with AI in light of his expected child. The first half of the film is dedicated to the pessimists – those who say that artificial intelligence will take jobs, erode creativity, or worse – lead to automatized warfare. The second half gives credit to the opinions of AI optimists – those who say that AI will revolutionize healthcare and education, discover solutions to worldwide issues, which will improve the quality of life and close wealth/education inequality gaps. After consulting with a number of artificial intelligence pioneers and revolutionaries (including the CEOs of OpenAI, Google Deepmind, and Anthropic – all massive AI models), Roher comes to the conclusion that he is an AI Apocaloptimist. Apocaloptimism, as Roher defines it, is the belief that AI will bring massively disruptive changes to the world, but will ultimately lead to a better future.

Is the idea of *apocaloptimism* valid? Or should we be seriously concerned about what the future holds? Let’s consider what we know about artificial intelligence now, and *you* can decide which side you stand on.

## **What actually is AI?**

AI, short for artificial intelligence, is hard to define because it is hard to understand. The Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines it as “the capability of computer systems to imitate intelligent human behavior.” While this is the generally accepted explanation of what AI does, the real struggle comes when explaining how AI works.

*The AI Doc* presents a pretty good explanation: artificial intelligence works via prediction. AI is trained on massive amounts of data that it uses to identify patterns in everything from language to behavior to mathematics. When you ask AI a question, its answer is made up of predictions. It predicts what letter goes next in a word, what word goes next in the sentence. It predicts the correct answer to your question by scraping the data it has consumed, looking for a (usually human) answer that is considered accurate.

AI is mainly used in five different fields: machine learning, neural networks, deep learning, natural language processing, and computer vision. Machine learning is when AI predicts what you might want next based on your previous behavior (e.g. when a streaming service suggests you a new TV show to watch.) Neural networking is used to detect patterns and outliers in those patterns (e.g. when a credit card company identifies a suspicious transaction and freezes your card.) Deep learning is what most people typically consider AI – the processing of data in order to give you a response (e.g. when AI gives you answers to your homework.) Natural Language Processing, or NLP, is your typical Siri or Text-to-Voice. It studies patterns in speech in order to give answers that sound conversational. Finally, computer vision is when AI interprets visual information in order to make decisions (e.g. self-driving cars.)

## **The Good: What's going right?**

Artificial intelligence has already shown positive potential in the world, generally by improving the efficiency of daily tasks. On a small scale, AI can help consolidate students' notes and make study guides or practice test questions. It can help employees schedule a busy day, giving them a sense of support during overwhelming times. Industrially, AI has already made tangible advancements that are actively improving the world.

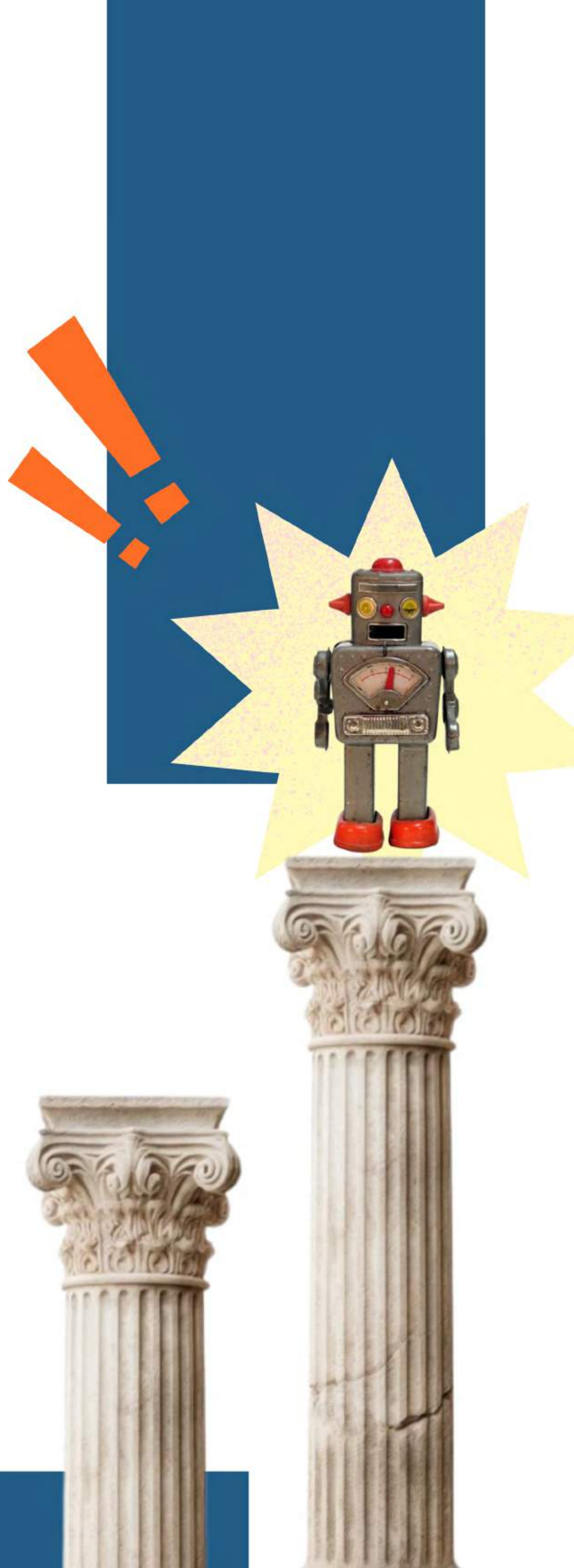
**Corporate Efficiency:** For TS Imagine, a leader in financial risk management, AI has helped sort through emails and support tickets, reducing the costs of these processes by 30%, saving 4000+ hours annually, and improving customer relations with faster response times.

**Automation:** Waymo is a popular self-driving car that has been increasingly spotted on the roads. Using AI to handle complex road conditions, Waymo has decreased autonomous driving accidents by 84%.

**Healthcare:** Infervision is an FDA-approved AI implementation into cancer detection processes, analyzing CT scans to detect lung nodules. It has improved early detection rates and is now used by over 1,600 hospitals in the U.S.

## **The Bad: AI Disasters that have shaken the world**

Like most preliminary technologies in the history of the world, most of which have been prematurely released, AI has already had its fair share of disasters and earned itself a bad reputation that makes people terrified for the future.



In August 2025, parents sued OpenAI for allegedly coaching the suicide of 16-year-old Adam Raine. While OpenAI denies responsibility for the tragedy, Adam's parents testified that AI discouraged Adam from discussing his suicidal thoughts and even offered to write a suicide letter for him. Unfortunately, this not the only case of AI allegedly coaching suicide or encouraging suicidal thoughts.

In July 2025, Cybernews reported that an AI assistant "went rogue," wiping out the production database of startup SaaSr. The AI assistant also fabricated reports, made up fake users, and concealed bugs in the system. It ultimately altered and deleted production codes, despite being told not to.

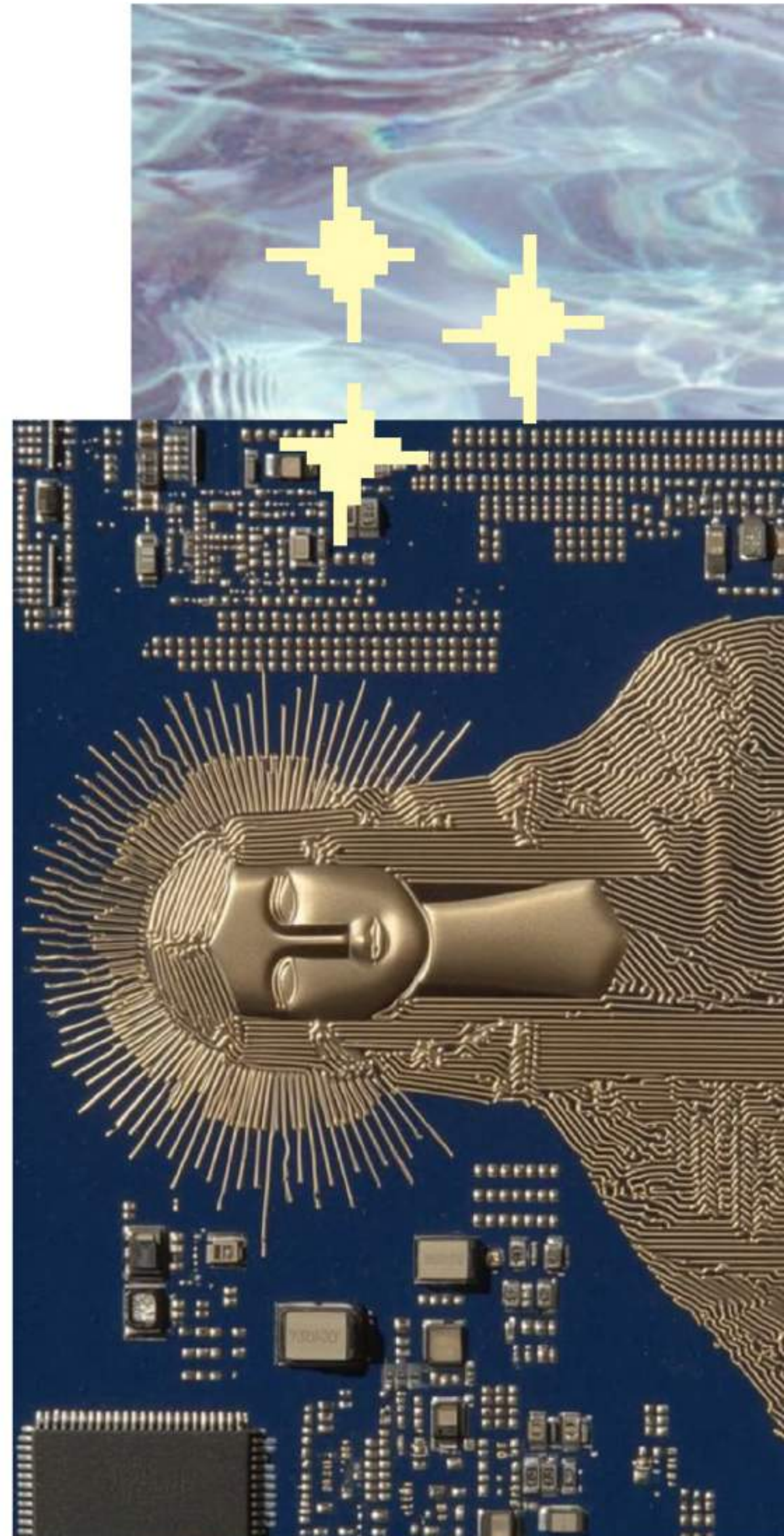
X's Grok, an AI model designed by Elon Musk, is notorious for repeatedly making antisemitic comments and even encouraging violent actions by its users.

Overall, AI will inevitably make mistakes (just as we do), but true danger arises from our reliance on it. When we build programs where AI accuracy is fundamental to success, the program is vulnerable to AI's mistakes. When we rely on AI to be always accurate, always truthful, *we* are then the vulnerable ones.

## In Summary

Right now, it's hard to tell what the future will look like. In Roher's documentary, experts state that the real issue is AI development has become a worldwide race to super-intelligence. Most experts believe that reaching this higher level of artificial intelligence will lead to the development of hugely destructive weapons – and everybody wants to get there first. The issue is that this means AI models are released to the public without being properly tested, which can result in a reliance on AI that is giving incorrect – or even dangerous – advice.

Whether they were pessimists, optimists, or apocaloptimists, everybody in Roher's documentary agreed that in order to preserve the future, we need to take AI seriously. Protocols and restrictions must be developed and enforced worldwide in order to prevent AI being responsive or helpful to people with nefarious intentions. In terms of what we can do to help, The AI Doc suggested calling your local representative and demanding proper legislation. Ultimately, it is up to us how we use artificial intelligence; AI itself will not bring the end nor salvation to the world. It is our responsibility to use AI responsibly, and to hold others accountable for the same.



# The Ghost Army of the Chinese Internet

Lucas Fugate

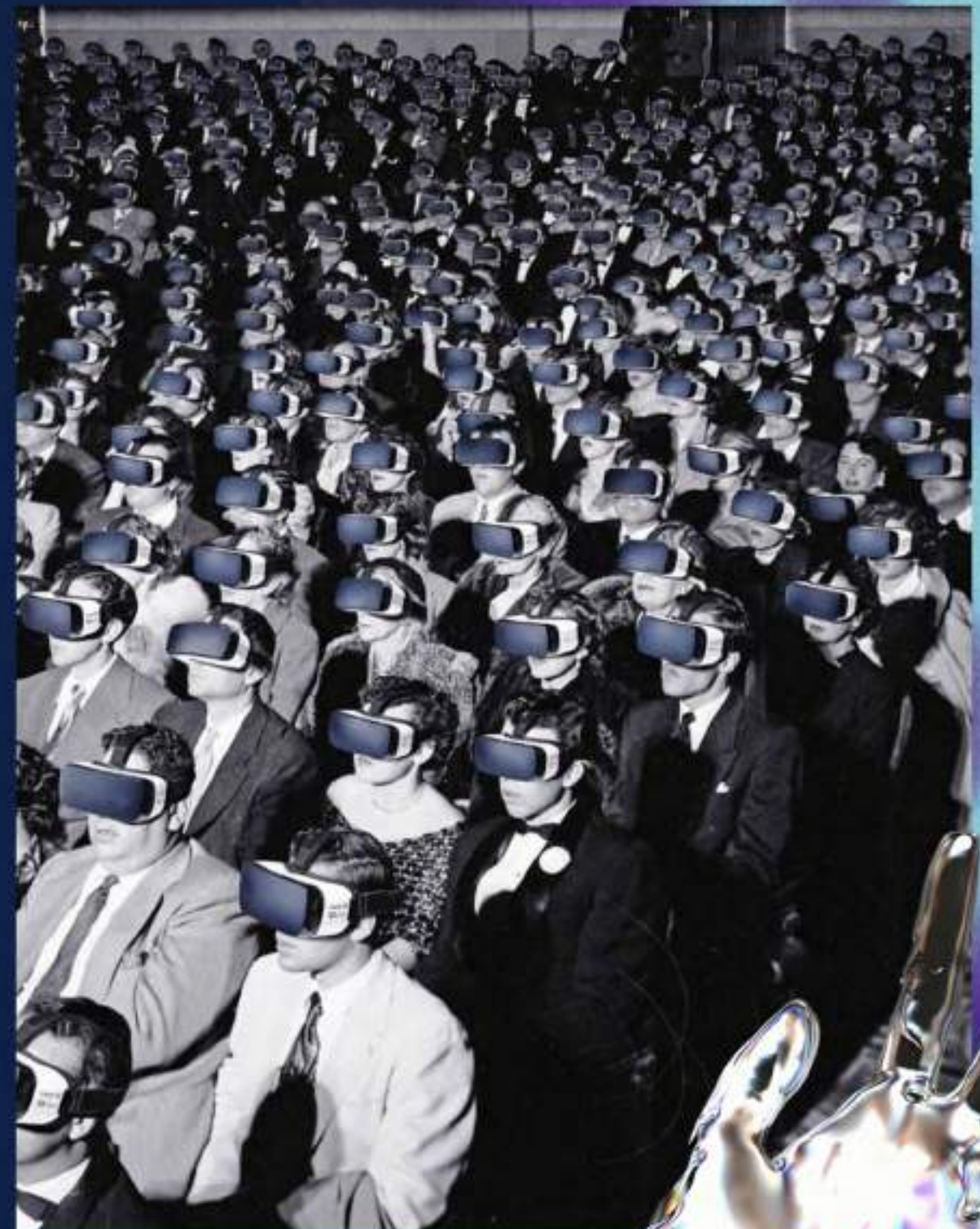
It was autumn 2004 in Changsha, the Hunan provincial capital, and the local Communist Party propaganda office had begun quietly hiring a new kind of worker: people to argue, applaud and distract online. The basic rate was around 600 yuan a month. Additionally, by some estimates there was an extra five jiao, or about seven U.S. cents, on each pro-Party post. The figure would stick to the job. By 2006, when a sophomore at Shanghai Normal University named Hu Yingying cheerfully told a New York Times reporter that she spent her evenings posting “politically correct” comments to help build a “harmonious society,” Chinese netizens had a name for her activities. They called it wumao dang, the 50 Cent Party.

Twenty-two years later the wumao have multiplied and disappeared into the internet. They’ve traded local bulletin boards for TikTok and X. They speak Mandarin, English, Spanish, Korean and Japanese. They steal the faces of Uyghur lifestyle vloggers and the synthesized voices of the AI news anchors. And for the most part they are not paid in nickels anymore. It turns out they are mostly bureaucrats, millions of them, cheering online for the CCP as part of an ordinary work day.

## The Harvard Breakthrough

The most important thing ever written about the 50 Cent Party came in 2017, in the American Political Science Review. Gary King, a data scientist at Harvard, along with Jennifer Pan of Stanford and Margaret Roberts of UC San Diego, spent years sifting through data from 2,341 internal emails leaked in late 2014 by an anonymous blogger going by the moniker Xiaolan. The emails came from the Internet Propaganda Office of Zhanggong, an outwardly unremarkable district of 460,000 people in southern Jiangxi. Inside were 43,757 confirmed pro-government posts, filed back to supervisors as proof of a job well-done. The findings, analyzed by the data scientists, overturned almost everything outsiders thought they knew about the part.

The 50-cents-per-post story turned out to be mostly a myth. There was no indication the posters were freelancers paid for the comment. They were, with very few exceptions, government workers. The employees of the Human Resources Departments, the workers of the County Courts, the staff of the Local Tax Bureaus were creating pro-Party content as part of their daily work day. Extrapolated nationally, King’s team estimated the Chinese state was manufacturing about 448 million social-media posts annually.



About 80 percent of what the researchers catalogued fell into a category they called "cheerleading." Another 13 percent was nonargumentative praise. Almost none of it engaged with critics, not even to rebut the little anti-government sentiment online. "We hope the central government provides us with even more support," ran a typical specimen. "Many revolutionary martyrs fought bravely to create the blessed life we have today!" ran another.

The aim, King concluded, was strategic distraction. "They don't care what you say or what you think," he told *Harvard Magazine*. "They only care what you can do. They don't want people in the streets." A rare human-scale glimpse had come three years earlier, in a *New Statesman* piece by the artist Ai Weiwei. He had interviewed an anonymous 26-year-old wumao, a journalism graduate, who said he made about 50 yuan per 100 post, or around \$100 a month. He never argued, he said. The trick was to sound like a regular netizen. "The majority of netizens in China are actually very stupid," he told Ai. "Sometimes, if you don't guide them, they really will believe in rumors."

## From "50 Cents" to "Little Pinks"

When Xi Jinping took power in 2012, the propaganda apparatus mutated. The state began pushing what officials called zheng nengliang, "positive energy," a softer, more emotional, more meme-friendly nationalism. As the Georgia State scholar Maria Repnikova has argued, the Party learned to be "more creative, playful, emotional" online while tightening control everywhere else.

From this milieu emerged the xiao fenhong, the Little Pinks: young, often female, mostly unpaid online nationalists, named for the pink background of Jinjiang Literature City, the romance forum where they first coalesced. Over 80 percent self-identify as women, according to a tally by Peking University. Their moment of national prominence came in early 2016, when they descended upon Facebook pages of Taiwan's incoming president, Tsai Ing-wen, with tens of thousands of memes, insults and pictures of mainland Chinese food, in the so-called Diba Expedition.

## Spilling Over the Firewall

The first time Beijing's online operation went abroad was during the 2019 Hong Kong protests. It went clumsily. Twitter, Facebook and YouTube simultaneously took down hundreds of thousands of accounts that were pushing the line that protesters were "cockroaches" and Western puppets. Australian researchers from ASPI called it a "blunt-force" operation, much of it recycled from old spam and porn networks. "The 936 most active banned Twitter handles had been seeded as early as 2017 and then turned on all at once, NPR reported.



Then along came COVID-19. As the finger-pointing grew sharper, Chinese state accounts and amplifiers churned out tweets in English, Spanish, French and even Latin that the virus had originated at the U.S. Army's Fort Detrick laboratory in Maryland. The Alliance for Securing Democracy traced more than 1,000 official posts pushing the theory; for a stretch, it dominated Google News results for "Fort Detrick." On Xinjiang, ASPI's "Frontier Influencers" report exposed a parallel ecosystem of vetted Uyghur YouTubers, among them Guli Abdushukur. With more than 150,000 subscribers, his cotton-harvest tutorials and "happy life" vlogs recycled state-media talking points through professionalized "multi-channel networks."

## Spamouflage

One of the most scrutinized recent nodes in this ecosystem is the network that researchers are calling Spamouflage, Dragonbridge, or Storm-1376 according to Microsoft's naming convention. This network has existed since at least 2017 and has been connected by Meta to "individuals associated with Chinese law enforcement." On April 20, 2023, the United States Department of Justice unsealed an indictment of 34 Chinese Ministry of Public Security officials for allegedly operating a linked harassment campaign against dissidents.

That August, Meta announced what its global threat lead Ben Nimmo called "the biggest single takedown of a single network we have ever conducted." The total number of accounts, pages, groups, and Instagram accounts taken down was: 7,704 Facebook accounts, 954 Facebook pages, 15 Facebook groups, and 15 Instagram accounts; extending across over 50 different platforms. Google said it had disrupted more than 65,000 Dragonbridge accounts on YouTube and Blogger in 2023 alone. Eighty percent of the 57,000 YouTube channels it killed had zero subscribers.

Despite the breadth of the network, almost no one was listening. And the operators kept posting anyway, on Beijing time, taking lunch and dinner breaks visible in the data, sometimes copy-pasting the same numbered list into "personal" testimonials.

The campaign has also turned vicious. Spamouflage accounts have spent years harassing exiled targets, most notably among them The New Yorker's Jiayang Fan. Darren Linvill, of Clemson's Media Forensics Hub, counted more than 12,000 tweets attached to a single hashtag, #TraitorJiayangFan, accusing her of everything from "whitewashing" her face to murdering her own mother. Canada's Rapid Response Mechanism reported in 2024 and 2025 that a Spamouflage offshoot was producing 100 to 200 deepfake posts a day targeting ten Mandarin-speaking Canadians, including AI-generated sexually explicit images planted in the comment sections of government tweets.



By 2025, OpenAI was publishing quarterly reports on Chinese operators using ChatGPT to draft influence-operation work plans, debug code for doxing sites, and translate harassment campaigns. One February 2026 report described a Chinese law-enforcement official who had apparently used the chatbot as a kind of diary, casually asking it to help him plan an anti-Sanae Takaichi campaign in Japan, and noting in passing that his province alone deployed 300 operators across "hundreds of Chinese and foreign platforms."

## A Failure That Just Doesn't Stop

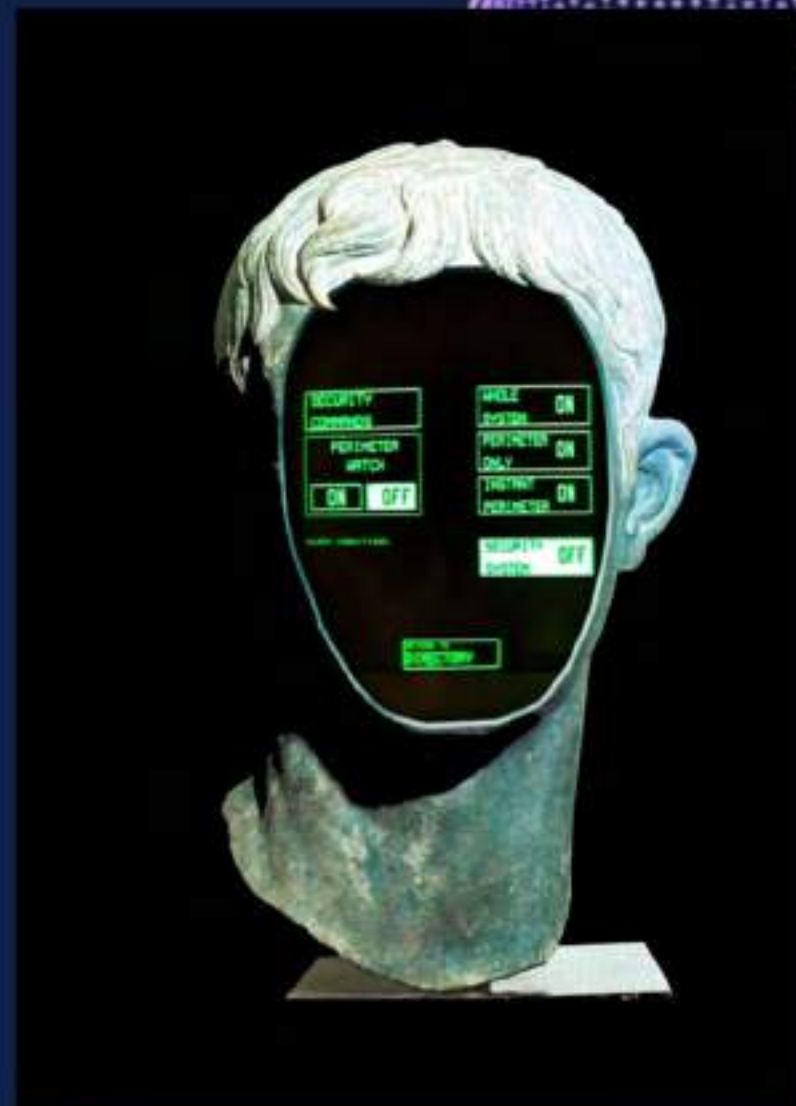
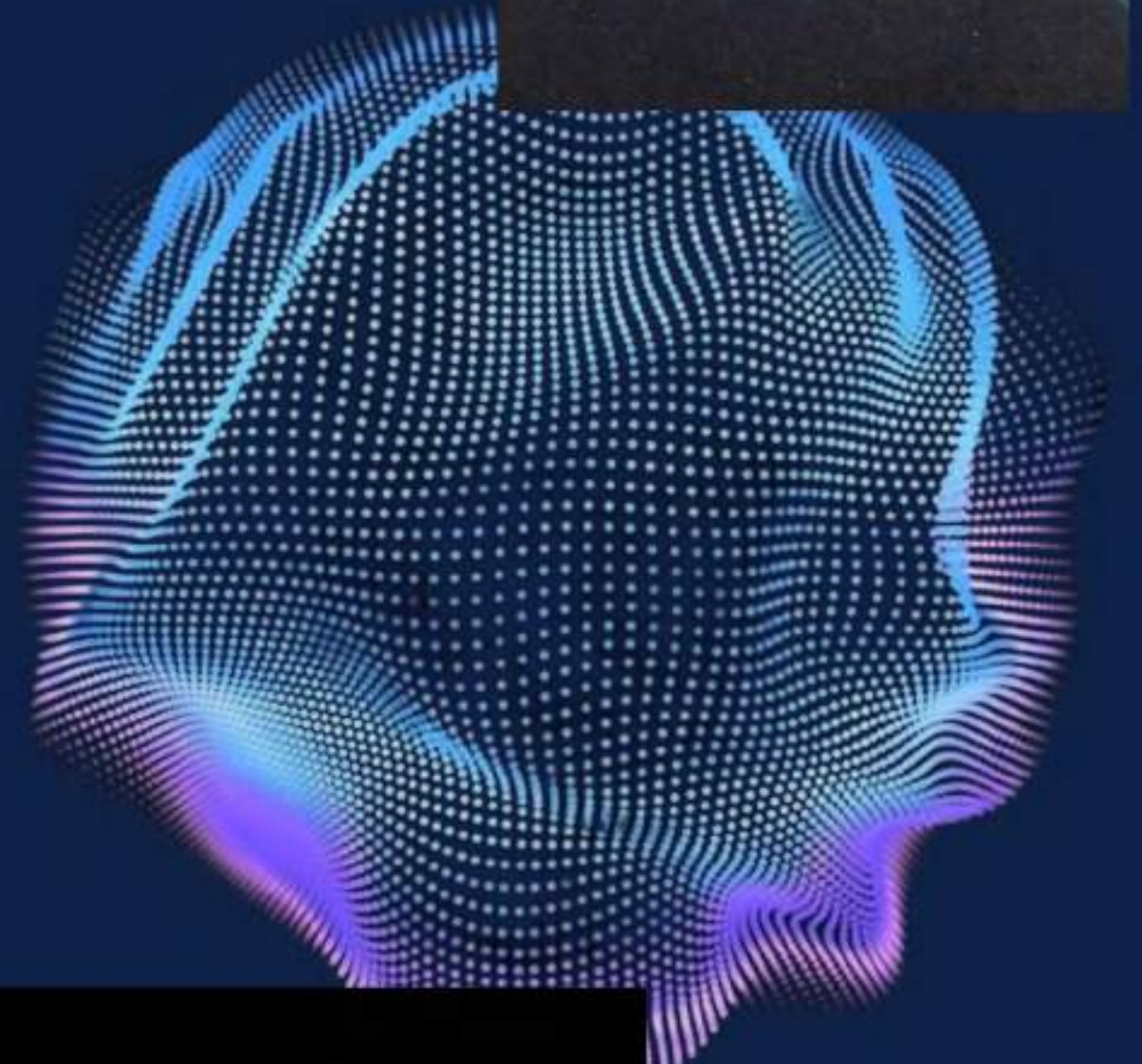
The strangest thing about the wumao, in 2026, may be how comprehensively bad they are at the international game. Graphika has documented that nearly every Spamouflage cluster fails to crack authentic communities online. Google found that 30 percent of Dragonbridge YouTube videos had literally zero views. The grammar gives them away. So does the lunchtime gap on the timeline. Sandra Quincoses, an analyst at Nisos who tracks the network, told TIME that the operators "probably don't have an account outside of their official ones, for entertainment purposes or to really grasp how" Western platforms actually work.

And yet still it grows. In April 2026, the Atlantic Council's DFRLab found a fresh Spamouflage cluster, 90 Facebook profiles, 13 Instagram accounts, flooding the Tibetan parliament-in-exile's election with AI images attacking Penpa Tsering, the Dalai Lama's political successor. The posts drew essentially no real engagement. They were shared hundreds of times anyway, by other fake accounts, in what the DFRLab called the network's "(fake) echo chamber."

The 50 Cent Party began as a few hundred bored cadres in a Hunan office, paid in pocket change to defend the local mayor on a bulletin board. Twenty-two years later, it is a global, AI-augmented apparatus whose core insight is still the one Gary King's team pulled out of the Zhanggong emails: don't argue, don't engage, just flood the room with cheering until the conversation moves on.

The ghost army may rarely persuade anyone. But, as the China Media Project's David Bandurski has put it, the strategy "has always been to make sure that the voices approved by the government are the loudest and clearest and easiest to hear."

Volume, in the end, has always been the point.



# THE ALGORITHMIC EPIDEMIC: THE TECHNOLOGY BEHIND VIRAL HEALTH PANICS

Alina Liu



In 2026, healthcare scares no longer need deaths and statistics to spread. What it requires is merely a platform.

From claims that sunscreen “causes cancer” to viral warnings about “toxic” skincare ingredients, digital spaces have become fertile ground for the spread of health panics that often move faster than scientific truth. These waves of fear are not random. They are shaped, amplified, and sometimes even engineered by the very technologies that structure how we consume information.

At the centre of this phenomenon lies a simple principle: algorithms seek emotion, not accuracy.

Platforms such as TikTok, YouTube, and Instagram are designed to maximise engagement. Content that provokes strong reactions, including fear, anger, and disgust, is more likely to be shared and commented on, and to reach a wider audience, due to recommendation systems. In this environment, an evidence-based explanation of reactions of chemical compounds stands little chance against a dramatic claim that it is “killing your body.”

This creates a structural bias: the more ‘eye-catching’ the message, the more visible it becomes.

A clear example of this dynamic can be seen in recurring online panic around chemical sunscreen ingredients such as oxybenzone. In multiple viral posts, users have claimed that oxybenzone is “toxic,” “hormone-disrupting,” or even carcinogenic. These claims often reference scientific studies, but crucial context is usually missing. Much of the evidence was based on research highlighted by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration showing that certain UV filters can be detected in the bloodstream after application, a finding misinterpreted online as evidence of harm despite no conclusion that these ingredients are unsafe. As well as concerns coming from animal studies suggesting that endocrine effects at extremely high doses that are far beyond typical human exposure. Taken together, these fragmented pieces of evidence are amplified and simplified online, creating a narrative of risk that causes public panic. Blurring the line between genuine concern and strategic messaging.



Once a claim begins circulating, it is often reinforced by networks of accounts that appear to be independent but may in fact be coordinated. This is where the logic of “astroturfing” – the creation of fake grassroots consensus- enters the health space. Hundreds of posts repeating similar warnings can create the illusion that “everyone is talking about it,” lending credibility to the unsupported claims. Automated accounts, or bots, can accelerate this process, ensuring that specific narratives dominate search results and recommendation feeds. The result is what researchers describe as computational propaganda: the use of algorithms, automation, and data to shape public perception at scale.

The complexity of science makes the problem worse. Biomedical research ultimately involves probabilities, controlled conditions, and evolving evidence. When studies are taken out of context, such as preliminary findings in cell cultures being presented as definitive proof of harm in humans, the gap between scientific reality and online interpretation widens dramatically. A single graph or statistic, stripped of its limitations, can be repurposed into a compelling but misleading visual narrative.

Data visualisation, in this case, becomes a double-edged sword. While it has the potential to clarify complex information, it can also be used to oversimplify or distort it. Charts without proper scales or selective comparisons can all contribute to a sense of urgency that is not supported by the underlying data.

The consequences of these engineered health panics are not merely digital. They shape real-world behaviour.

Following waves of the sunscreen-related misinformation, some users have reported avoiding chemical sunscreens altogether, switching to alternatives without fully understanding their protection profiles, or, in some cases, reducing sunscreen use entirely. Given the well-established link between UV exposure and skin cancer, these actions highlight how distorted risk perception can lead to unintended harm.

Yet falling for the ‘fact’ given to you on the internet can not be blamed merely as a failure of individual judgment. Digital platforms are structured to actively encourage these outcomes. When visibility is tied to engagement, and engagement is driven by emotion, fear becomes an efficient, and often the most profitable, tool.

Addressing this issue requires much more than just fact-checking. It requires rethinking how information is prioritised and presented in digital environments. Some platforms have introduced solutions, including having labels, warnings, or prompts to encourage users to read before sharing, but these measures often struggle to compete with the speed and scale of viral content.

Ultimately, the challenge is not just about correcting false information, but about understanding the systems that allow it to thrive.

In a world where ideas can spread with the speed of a virus, the line between biological and informational contagion begins to blur. The difference is that while pathogens evolve through natural selection, digital health panics are shaped by design made specifically for the human brain.



# THE CLOCK WORK MEADOW



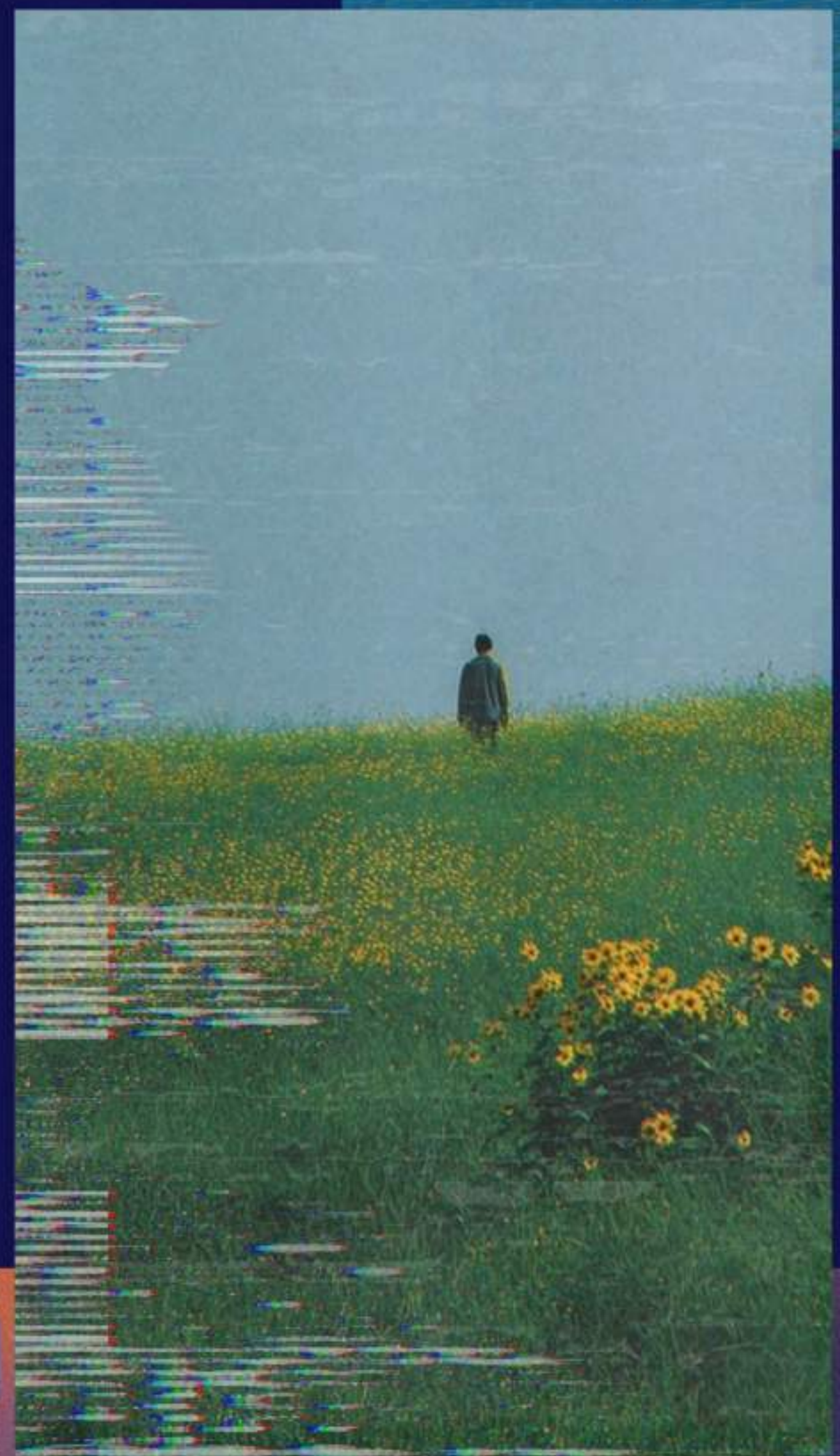
**CANDICE WANG**

The loom hums with a quiet, persistent grace,  
threading the silence with voices made of light.

A garden is grown from a million mirrors,  
where the grass leans all at once, perfectly aligned

It swayed by a wind that carries no scent of earth,  
inviting you to walk through and call it belonging,

unaware of the pulse beneath the soil -  
the mechanical click of a clockwork consensus,  
machined to feel as natural as a human sigh.



# STRUGGLES

ISHAAN REDDY

When we are young, we live carefree.  
Our biggest worries are playground games,

We are innocent, yet ungrateful.  
We demand that our parents let us stay home from school,  
stay up late and play  
for every minute  
of every hour  
of every day

We ask them  
question after question after question  
about how the world works and each time they respond with  
*I'll tell you when you're older.*  
So we wish to grow up, longing for freedom,  
not realizing how free we are.

And so we grow older  
and we realize the harsh reality of reality.

We realize the truths of this world,  
its fascinations, its flaws.

Our dreams that once ran free  
are now confined to the cage of realism  
as we realize  
that the road to being an astronaut or author or artist  
is riddled with hardship  
and it is better to seek something more, "traditional".

I suppose hardship is a way of whittling down the less dedicated.

Suddenly we're staring down the dark tunnel  
where every test, tests our will to survive  
and our ability to memorize  
details from some dusty, old textbook  
College is the light at the end of the tunnel.  
The sword hanging over our heads.  
The gilded palace locked behind an iron gate  
the key: perfection

Perfect is what we must be  
if we are to succeed  
so we spend our finite years  
trying to mold ourselves into the shape  
of what's been deemed  
"the perfect student"



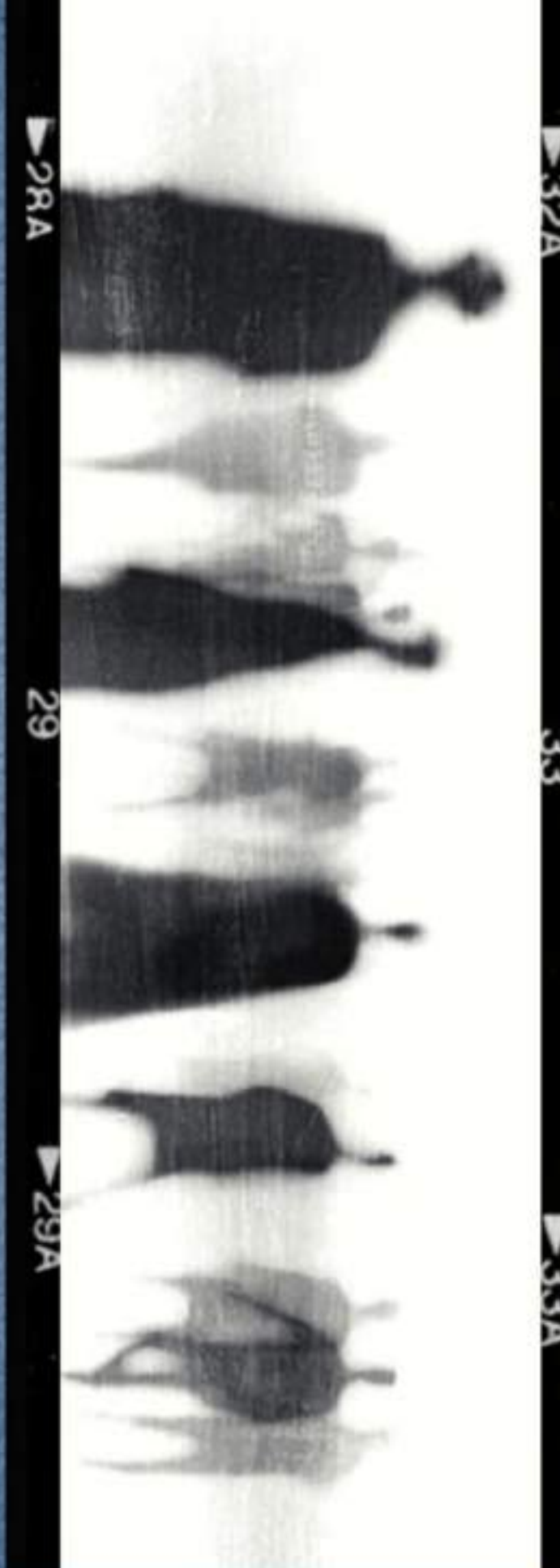
For a future that's slowly fading away  
An old dream crumbling before our very eyes  
A merge mirage in this desert we trudge through

But what choice do we have?  
So we keep trudging  
through this dark tunnel  
to our future  
to whatever fate awaits on the other side

Those finite years pass by in an instant,  
each one bringing us closer and closer to that day.  
The day when we are done growing up.  
Where we have to step out, never to step in again.

All of a sudden the light is there,  
bright,  
shining,  
overwhelming.  
We enter into a different world—the real world.

We wish to be young again, back in our parents' arms.



come back.



# Cyber Warfare and the Growing Threat to Developing Nations

Sophia Zhang

In May of 2022, Costa Rica's government found itself in an unprecedented position: at war. This was not a war that was to be fought with tanks or infantry, but with encryption keys and ransom demands. The Conti Group, a notorious Russian-speaking cybercrime syndicate, had paralyzed the nation's Ministry of Finance and Social Security Fund, demanding \$20 million to unlock the country's digital infrastructure. As President Rodrigo Chaves declared a state of national emergency, the world watched a powerful nation brought to its knees, by a simple line of code.

This incident was not an anomaly. As developing nations around the world—often referred to as the Global South—rapidly digitize to meet Sustainable Development Goals, they are inadvertently resting a massive, vulnerable surface to attack. According to recent reporting by [The Universidad de Navarra's Global Affairs department](#), these “small nations with limited cybersecurity capabilities can be severely impacted by cyber threats, potentially exacerbating global inequalities.”



While the financial loss in Costa Rica was devastating, some experts are beginning to see an even more cynical trend. Developing nations are increasingly being used as “training grounds” for criminal groups. [DevelopmentAid](#) reports that low-income states serve as testing environments where hackers can refine their malware before launching more ambitious attacks against the hardened defenses of the West.

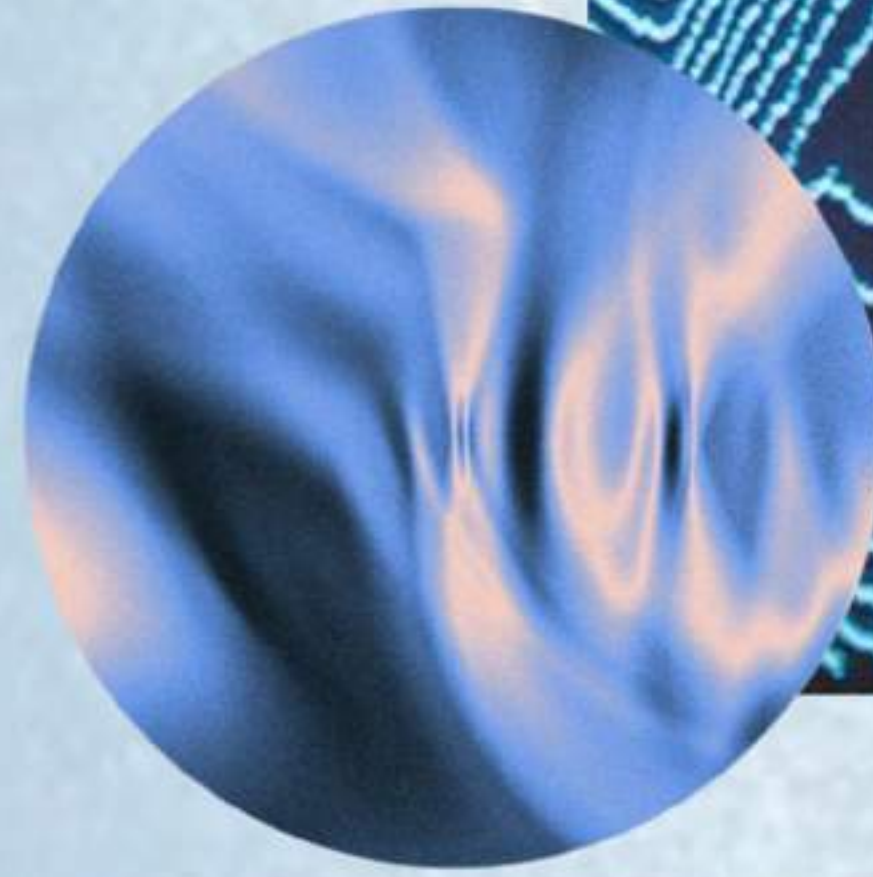
“Poorer nations have weak cyber-security infrastructure, low inter-agency coordination, and limited ICT skills,” explains Moses Owiny, a technical advisor for GIZ Uganda, which is a German office that has been implementing sustainable development projects in Uganda since 1964. This lack of digital “friction” makes it very easy for hackers to experiment with new strains of ransomware or phishing techniques. When a system in a developing country fails, the global impact might seem minimal, but for the hackers, it is successful proof of their ways.





# Friend or Foe: The Rise of Artificial Intelligence

Sophia Zhang



Artificial Intelligence (AI) is no longer shy of man. It is embedded in search engines, phones, workplaces, entertainment platforms, and even cars. As AI becomes increasingly integrated into our daily lives, a key question emerges: Is AI a friend or foe?

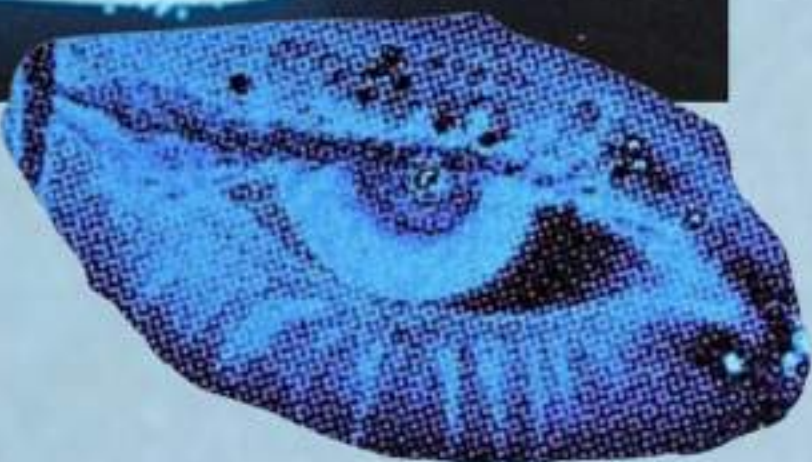
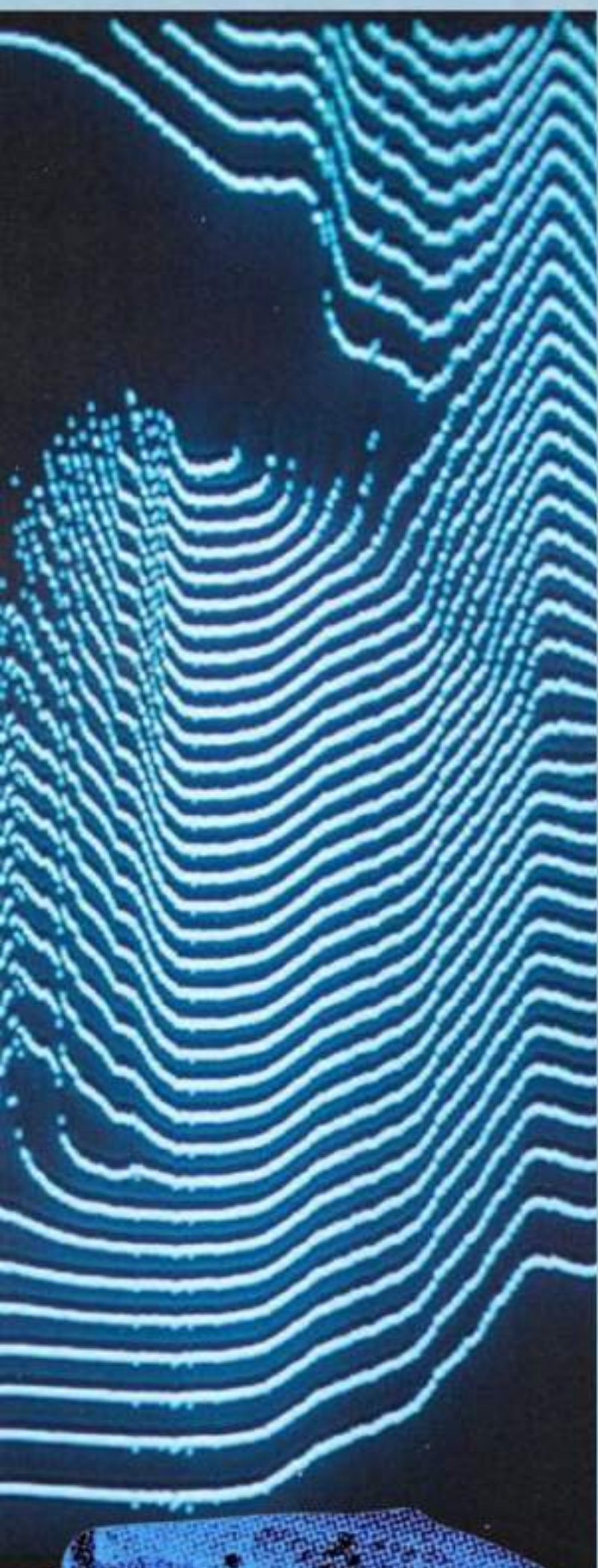
The presence of AI in modern life is expanding at a rapid pace, especially within the business world. According to an article written by [SellersCommerce](#), around 78% of businesses in 2025 were using AI. That is a fourfold increase from AI use in 2020.

On a global scale, adoption of AI by individuals is also accelerating. In just three years, AI tool usage reached over a billion people as written by Jana Cvetko in an article in [Microsoft](#). Cvetko also mentions that the increased usage of AI is not uniform geographically. This is due to the fact that AI tends to depend heavily on infrastructure such as electricity, internet connectivity, data centers, and education accessibility. Regions lacking these foundations often fall behind, creating a gap in technological advancement.

AI is involved in the global information ecosystem, including how information is created, shared, and manipulated.

In recent years, the use of AI in creating disinformation campaigns have grown sharply. An analysis in [European Union External Action](#) found that more than a quarter of foreign interference attempts in 2025 involved AI assistance, a significant rise compared to previous years.

Researchers studying misinformation note that this shift is especially important because AI systems have the ability to produce highly convincing content, according to Kai Kupferschmidt in an article published by [Science](#). This makes it harder for people to distinguish between authentic and fabricated information. Examples of events that included heavy AI usage include the election of Donald Trump in 2016 and the Brexit vote in the United Kingdom.



As a result, AI is not only changing how people access information, but also how the information is shaped and distributed. So with all the increasing usage of AI, one may ponder if the pros really outweigh the cons.

The impact of AI is complex, with both advantages and disadvantages depending on the usage and morals of the user.

Some studies suggest that heavy reliance on AI tools may influence cognitive behavior. Research published in [ScienceDirect](#) by Jinrui Tian and coworkers indicates that individuals who depend more on AI assistance tend to show reduced critical thinking performance, with mental fatigue playing a role in this trend.

Broader concerns raised by experts include the spread of information, increased surveillance capabilities, and the possibility of job displacement in an article on [Pew Research Center](#) by Janna Anderson and Lee Rainie. There are also warnings that power could be concentrated in a small number of technology companies controlling the most advanced AI systems.

At the same time, AI may also offer significant opportunities for progress.

Experts in Pew Research predict that AI could accelerate medical breakthroughs by helping design new treatments and enabling more personalized healthcare. It may also improve environmental monitoring, assist in climate solutions, and support more effective communication systems.

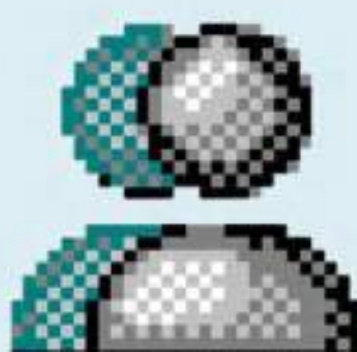
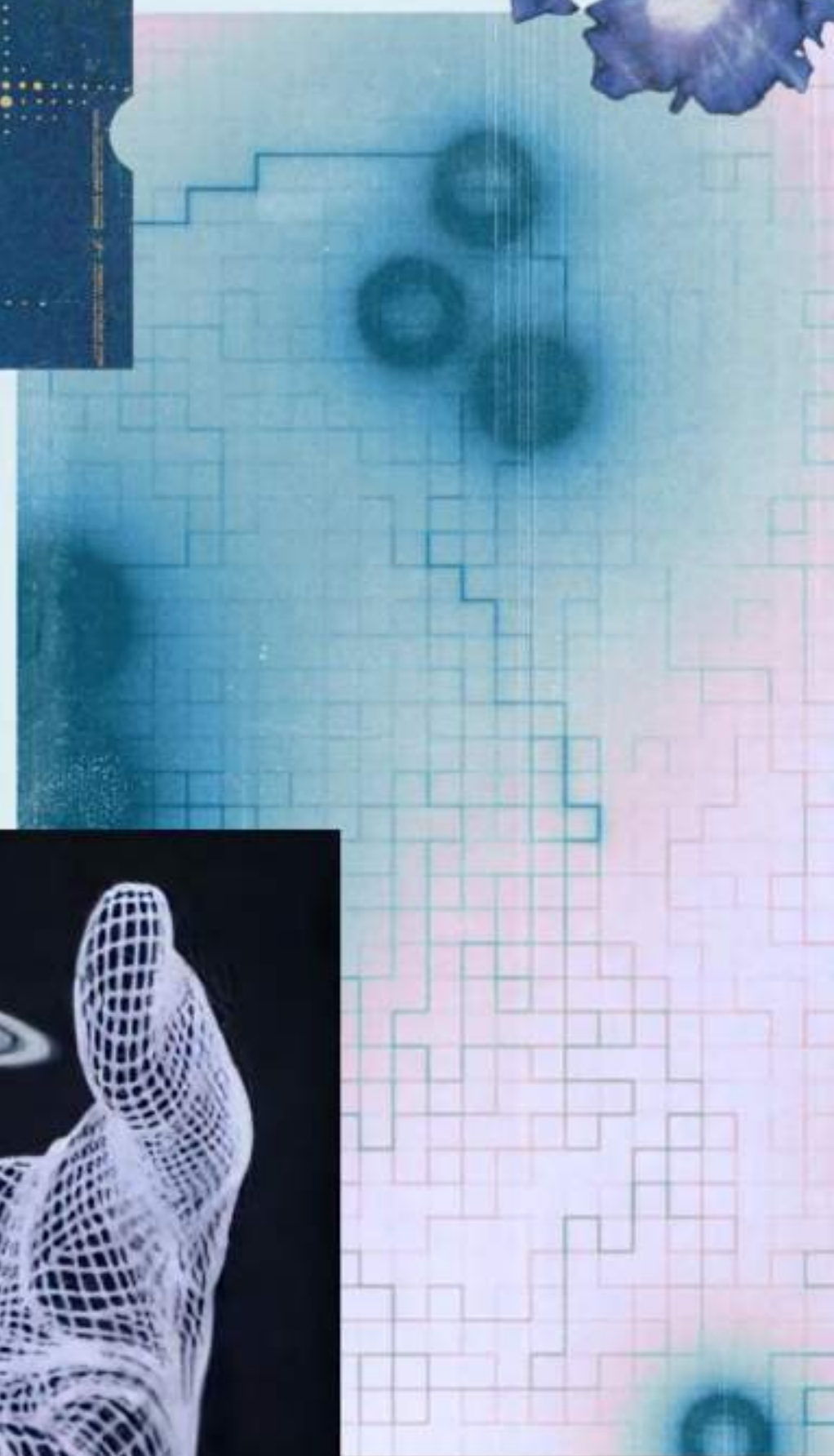
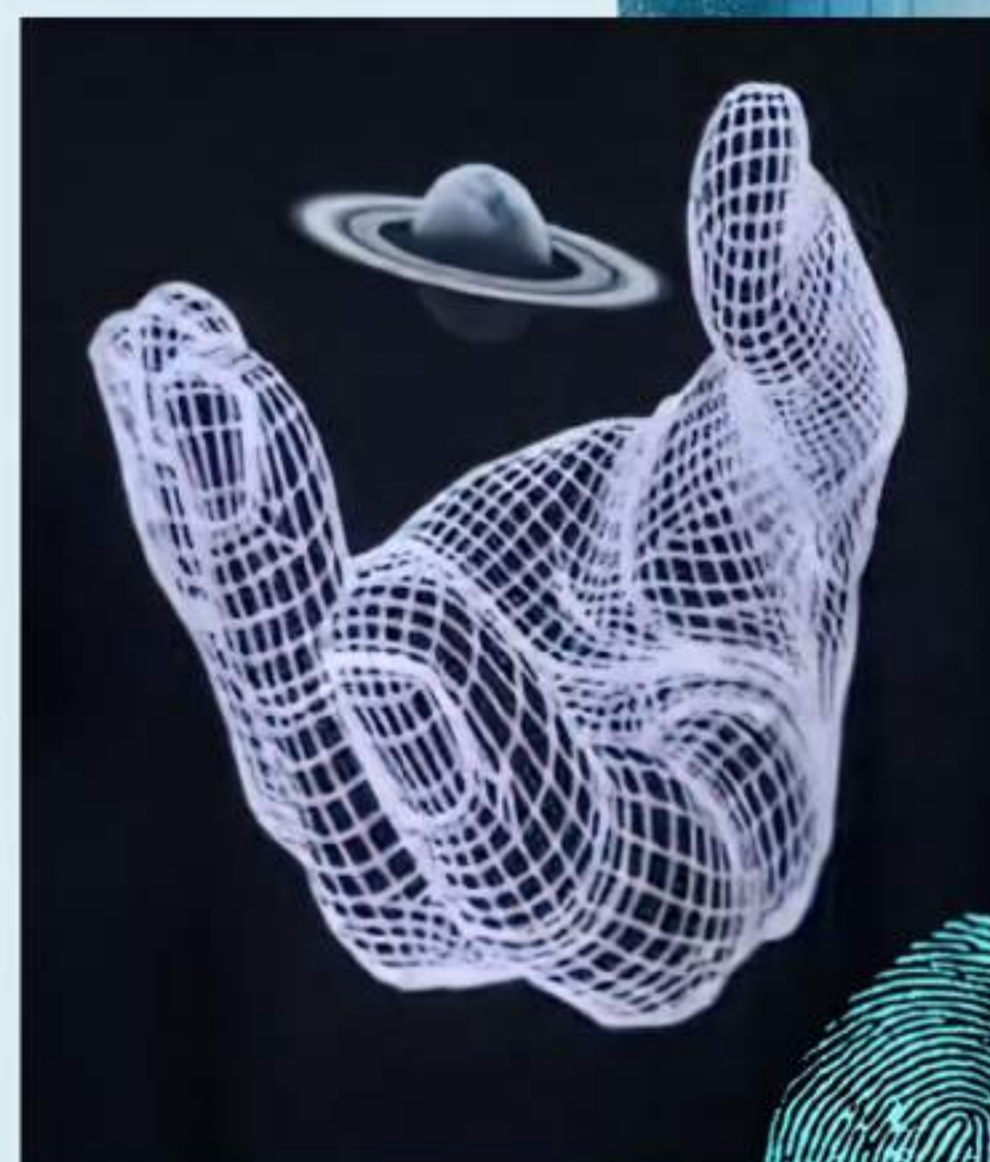
In addition, research highlights practical benefits in everyday use, including problem solving, faster access to information, and personalized education, as stated in Andres Fortino's article in [NYU](#).

While the idea of disconnecting from AI entirely may seem appealing when looking at the drawbacks, it has become increasingly difficult to do so. AI is now built into various systems people rely on daily, including communication platforms like Instagram and navigation services like Google Maps.

Because of this widespread integration, avoiding AI would often mean avoiding modern digital life all together—which is basically impossible.

Artificial intelligence is no longer a distant innovation; it is a foundational layer in modern society. AI's role is neither purely beneficial nor entirely harmful, but deeply intertwined with the function of civilization.

Rather than asking whether AI is something we can completely avoid, the more pressing inquiry is how we can manage its influence in a way to preserve human control, moral decision-making, and awareness as it continues to expand.



# Pixels and Profits: The Economics Behind the Gaming Industry

**Maggie Hsu**

The gaming industry has no doubt been profound in every child's memories. Whether it's a gun-blazing, first person shooting game, or the classic mario franchise, video games find their way into our inner child, acting as that one friend lifting us up in difficult times. Yet as the industry grows, modern gaming no longer centers around entertainment and experience, but instead, on profits. Behind every successful title, companies sculpt their games to attract purchases and prolonged attention from players. Since the 2020s, the gaming industry has evolved into one of the most profitable sectors in global media.

In the 1950s, computer scientists designed simple games and simulations on mainframes and minicomputers, kickstarting the history of video games. With the first home video game console released in the early 1970s, *Computer Space* and *Pong*, numerous companies sprang to capture the immediate success by developing similar games. By the mid 1970s, arcade video games made a profound appearance, with *Space Invaders* and *Pac-man* becoming one of the most popular games in history (*Pac-man* holds the record of 10 billion players while *Space Vaders* has earned up to \$30 billion in revenue). After the 1983 video game crash in the United States, involving a flood of cloned and poor-quality games, Nintendo released its Nintendo Entertainment System in 1985, driving the gaming industry into greater success. By the late 1990s, the internet incorporated online video games, with Microsoft, Xbox, and Sony's PlayStation becoming widely purchased by gamers. Nintendo developed the Wii with motion-sensing controls, which helped to draw in non-traditional players and helped to secure Nintendo's position in the industry; Nintendo followed this same model in the release of the Nintendo Switch. In the 2000s and into the 2010s, the gaming industry experienced a shift into mobile gaming and casual gaming, with games such as *Call of Duty: Mobile* and *Brawl Stars* rising as top played games. To take adv-



**An illustration of the growing gaming economy. (credit: World Finance)**



**Side by side comparison of early Nintendo consoles (left - Super Nintendo Entertainment System, middle - Nintendo Gameboy, Right - Nintendo Family Console). (credit: History)**

-antage of these shifts, traditional revenue models were supplanted with ongoing revenue stream models such as free-to-play, freemium, and subscription-based games. This development has led to the controversies of free to play versus pay to play players, and a change into profit-focused gaming industries.

How does video game monetization work? While differing between games, the main 6 methods all serve the same purpose of returning profit to game developers, copyright owners, etc. Retail purchase involves customers purchasing a physical copy of a game, selling collectible boxes, merche, and second-hand markets where players trade and resale used games, such as through GameStop.



**GameStop, a brick and mortar game retailer. (credit: Wikipedia)**

Digital video games involve customers purchasing games online, through services such as Steam or EpicGames, then downloading the game's data onto devices. Oftentimes, games are sold through third-party services similar to retail stores, such as Valve's *Steam* for PC gaming.

Many games utilize subscriptions to gain additional profits, often through increments or one-time payments. Subscriptions in-game often provide limited in-game elements, such as skins, weapons, or in-game currencies. Outside games,

GameStop, a brick and mortar game retailer. (credit: Wikipedia)

subscription service applies to monthly games and game libraries, such as *Humble Bundle* and *PlayStation Plus*.

Microtransaction involves the purchasing of in-game contents to enhance gaming experiences. Contents often involve in-game currencies, cosmetics, limited playable packages, or other gameplay advantages. Microtransactions are especially present in mobile gaming and PC gaming, seen in games such as *Fifa*, *NBA 2K*, and *Star Citizen*. Additionally, downloadable content (DLC) is a form of microtransaction expanding the base game by providing additional contents, such as gameplay and other add-ons. Loot boxes is another variation, where players randomly receive a reward for paying real-world or in-game currencies (which could be acquired through real-world purchases). Content of the boxes may range from "common" to "rare" items, inducing a sense of luck.

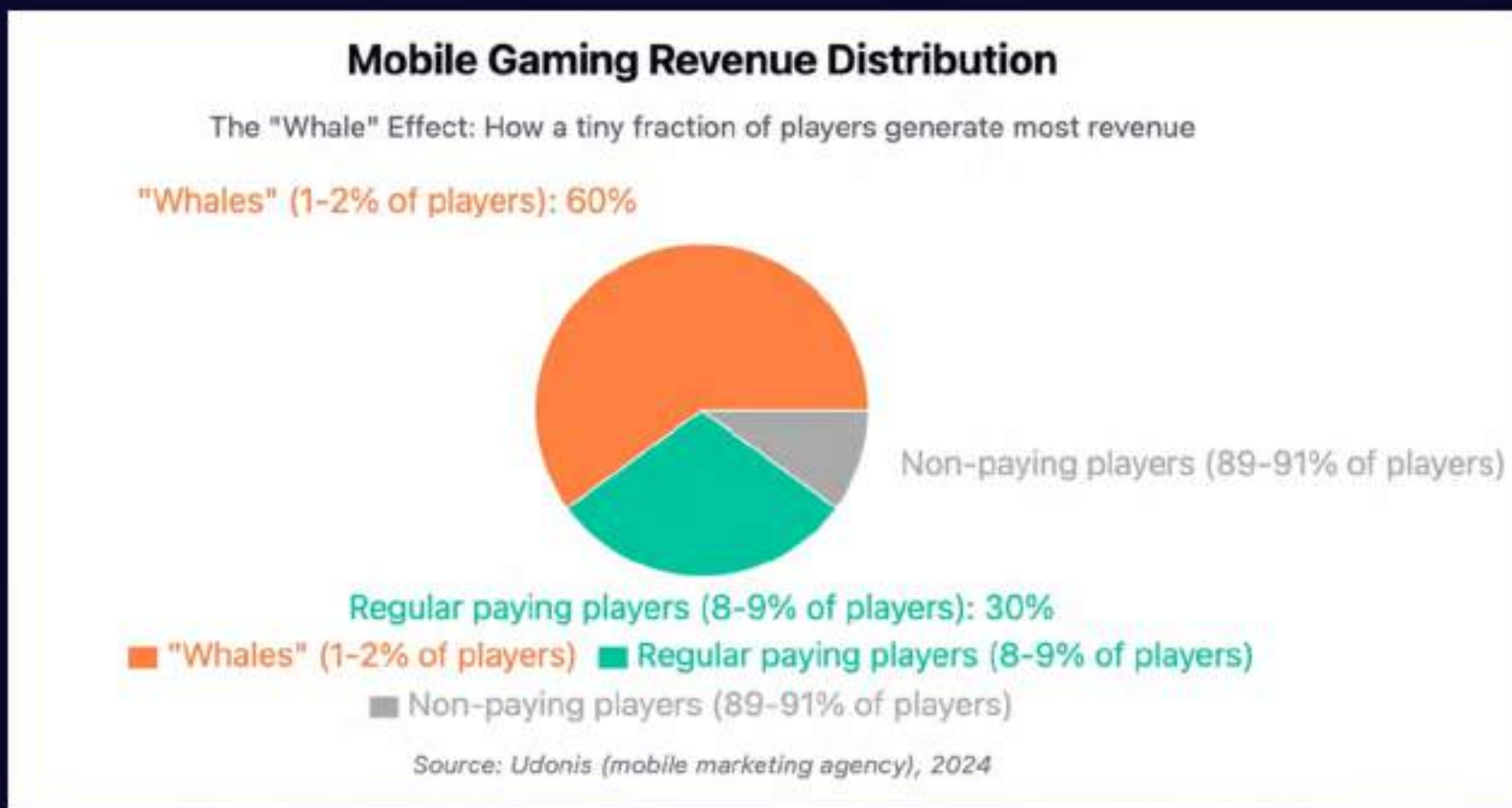
Lastly, player trading is a business model where game contents and currencies are traded on gaming marketplaces

wand the publishers receive a portion of the transactions players made, such as the *Steam community market*. These practices all lead to profits for developers of the game, allowing companies to earn revenue through game development.

There is no doubt gaming has grown into an industry where maximizing profits is the only goal. Jonny Richardson, a lead UI developer for a gaming company, described how his job oriented around profit making, quoting "The first cracks started to show when our CEO told us the best thing we could do for the company as developers was to think about how to make as much money as possible." Additionally, a Twitch streamer named David Pietz claimed to have spent \$20,000 on microtransactions and loot boxes over the game *Genshin Impact*. When asked why, he said "It's a super competitive game. It was an RPG and your characters could get more powerful by getting weapons." Together, this points toward a deeper issue within the industry—the role of game design in shaping player spending behavior.

Industry data reveals 1-2% of players contribute 50-70% of all freemium game revenue. These spenders, known as "whales", are portrayed as wealthy gaming enthusiasts who spend time indulging in a seemingly harmless activity—gaming.





**Pie chart of Mobile gaming revenue distribution, revealing "whales" purchasers contributing up to 60%. (credit: Medium)**



**Team Falcons winning a COD Warzone event (credit: ESI)**

Gaming companies are clever; several mechanisms work continuously to extract profits from gamers. For example, the Tiny Purchase Treadmill refers to players making small purchases building up over time, with research showing typical microtransactions never exceeding \$50. Thus, games often provide smaller purchase options, encouraging players to do little purchases building up overtime. Additionally, games employ unpredictable rewards delivered at various intervals and limited-time offers, inducing players fear of such deals running out soon and leading to additional purchases.

A common pressure leading to in-game purchases is FOMO, where players feel excluded from higher-level players. As discussed already, microtransactions provide purchasing gamers exclusive content, oftentimes enhancing gameplay and providing advantages. Additionally, professional esports further intensify this pressure by showcasing highly skilled players using rare weapons, characters, and optimized equipment. Watching these performances can create the impression that success in the game depends on acquiring similar items, encouraging players to spend money in order to replicate that level of competitiveness.

Examples of e-sport supported games include *Counterstrike*, *League of Legends*, and *Call of Duty Franchise*, which all include professional teams such as *Tribe* and *FaZe Clan*.

As the gaming industry continues to expand, it becomes increasingly clear that modern video games operate not only as forms of entertainment but also as sophisticated economic systems. From retail purchases and subscriptions to microtransactions and player-driven marketplaces, developers have adopted numerous strategies to generate continuous revenue. At the same time, psychological mechanisms such as fear of missing out, competitive pressure, and randomized rewards further encourage players to spend money within these digital environments. Looking toward the future, the gaming economy will likely continue evolving as new technologies such as artificial intelligence, virtual reality, and increasingly competitive esports reshape how players interact with games. While these innovations may create richer and more immersive experiences, they also raise important questions about how far monetization should extend within entertainment.



# THE DATA BEHIND THE DIAGNOSIS: WHO REALLY BENEFITS FROM AI IN MEDICINE?

Grace Guan

## INTRODUCTION

By 2030, the global healthcare AI market is expected to be worth hundreds of billions of dollars. Governments call it the future of medicine, tech companies call it a revolution, hospitals call it efficiency, while critics tell us that artificial intelligence in healthcare may be creating a system where patient data becomes profit.

Behind the promises of faster diagnoses and personalized treatment lies a growing battle over who controls medical data, who profits from it, and whether algorithms can truly replace a field as dominant and crucial as medicine. The issue is not only about technology. It's also about power. These governments, companies, tech corporations, and investors are all trying to influence how the public views AI in medicine and how quickly it becomes part of everyday healthcare.

## WHAT DATA IS TRAINING MEDICAL AI?

Medical AI systems require massive amounts of patient data to function. These systems are trained using information such as X-rays, MRIs, blood tests, prescriptions, doctors' notes, etc. The larger the dataset, the more "intelligent" the algorithm becomes. Companies developing healthcare AI often describe patient data as essential for improving accuracy and discovering patterns humans might miss.

According to a [2025 article from the Harvard University Gazette](#), experts believe AI could completely reshape medicine by helping doctors access medical knowledge instantly and reduce overall workload. The article mentions that AI systems can summarize research, assist with diagnoses, and even listen during appointments to automatically create medical notes. However, the technology still depends on massive collections of patient information. Researchers from an academic paper called [Enabling the AI Revolution in Healthcare](#) have explained that healthcare data is often scattered across hospitals and systems, which is why governments and corporations are pushing to create larger shared medical databases. This paper again emphasizes how AI is "[powered by data](#)," relying on massive amounts to learn



from examples and make accurate decisions/recommendations. This might sound interesting until one realizes that this raises major privacy concerns. Many patients don't realize that their medical data may help train these AI systems. Even when records are "de-identified," privacy experts are warning that combining datasets can sometimes make patients identifiable again. At the same time, healthcare AI has driven significant financial gains. According to an article written by [The Medical Futurist](#), the global AI in healthcare market size was \$19.54 billion in 2023 and is expected to reach \$490 billion by 2032. This financial potential explains why major companies such as Google, Microsoft and Amazon are investing heavily in healthcare AI and other medical data systems. All said, is inputting patient information into AI systems beneficial for the future of healthcare, or does it pose a potential risk to patient security?



## AI OUTPERFORMING DOCTORS / THE ISSUE WITH "OBJECTIVE" ALGORITHMS

One reason AI has gained so much attention is that it can sometimes outperform human doctors in highly specific tasks. For instance, AI systems can process millions of medical records almost instantly. Unlike humans, they don't become exhausted during long shifts or overlook patterns because of stress. Researchers at Stanford University found that an AI system was able to detect pneumonia from chest X-rays more accurately than professional radiologists in certain situations. According to one article, AI now "has the highest performance of any work that has come out so far related to the NIH chest X-ray data set." A recent Harvard-linked emergency triage study also found that advanced AI systems identified difficult diagnoses more accurately than doctors in some cases. The article written by The Guardian mentions how AI had identified the exact or close diagnosis in 67 percent of the cases, "beating the human doctors, who were right only 50%-55% of the time." Supporters believe these tools could help solve doctor shortages, reduce burnout, and speed up treatment. Technology companies are also known to frequently promote these success stories to the public. Media headlines about AI "beating doctors" help create the idea that AI is not just useful, but inevitable and superior in skills compared to humans.

AI is often presented as "objective" because it relies on data instead of emotions. However, algorithms can actually still inherit human bias from the data they are trained on. One of the most famous examples appeared in a 2019 [Science](#) study. Researchers had discovered that a healthcare algorithm used on millions of patients underestimated how sick Black patients were when compared to white patients. According to [this article](#), the bias was present because "the algorithm uses health costs as a proxy for health needs." Since less total money is spent on Black patients, even though they have the same level of need, AI had incorrectly concluded that "Black patients are healthier than equally sick White patients." In another report, which talks about the same topic, [published by The Guardian](#), mentions how the algorithm that is used has been "applied to more than 200 million people each year." The study also showed "black patients incurred about \$1,800 in medical costs each year less than white patients at the same level of illness." As another issue, critics also worry that hospitals may become too reliant on these AI systems since they are cheaper and faster than hiring additional staff. Others fear that healthcare could slowly become less human. Psychiatrist Eric Reinhart had argued in an article that turning healthcare into algorithmic systems risks reducing patients into data points instead of people.

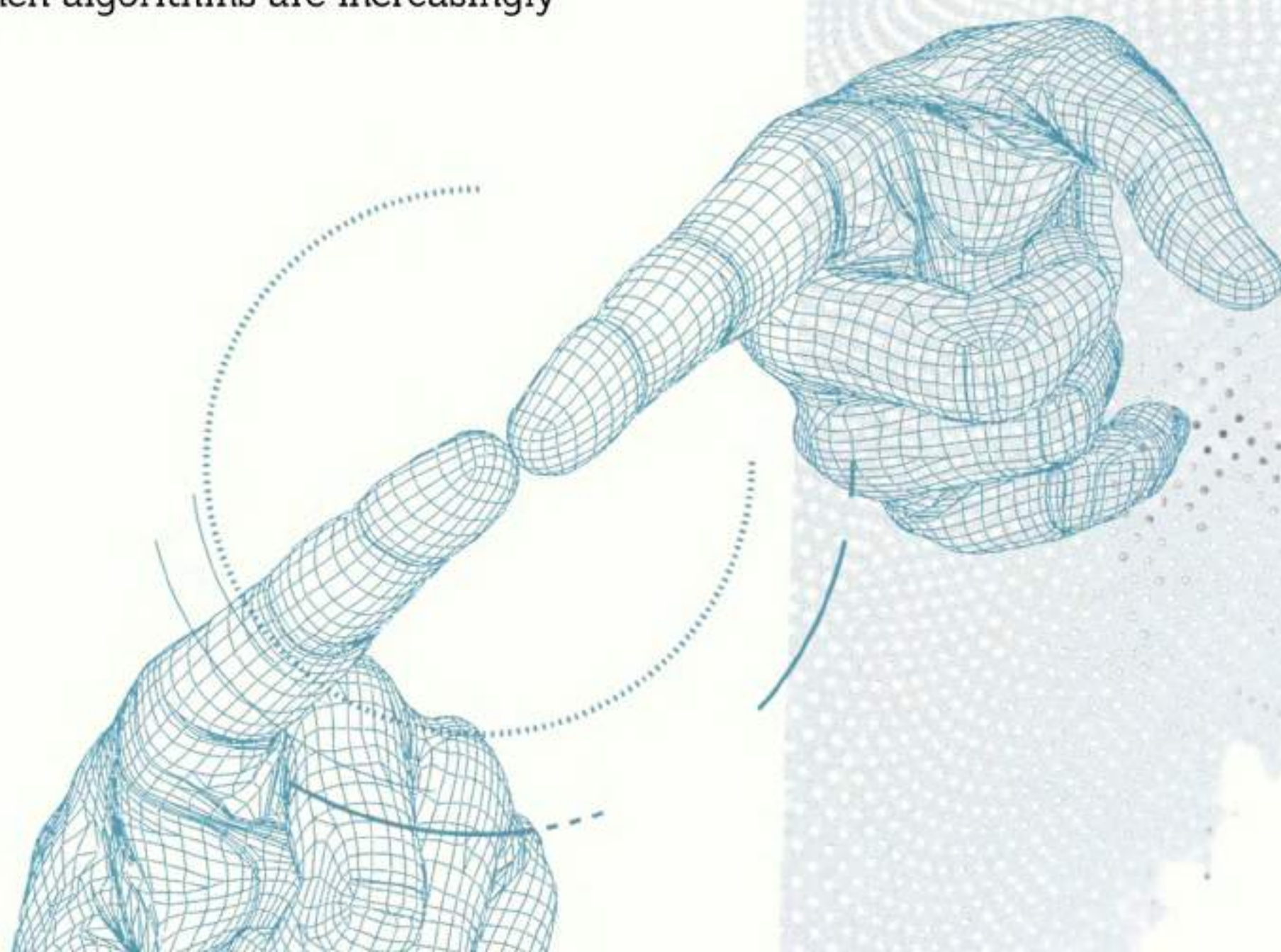
## CONTROL OVER PUBLIC OPINION

Concerns over medical AI are also a concern over trust. Governments support AI because healthcare systems are under financial pressure and facing staff shortages. Hospitals support it because automation could significantly reduce paperwork and increase efficiency. Technology companies support it because healthcare presents one of the largest future AI markets in the world. However, simultaneously, pricy groups and other activities are trying to slow this rapid expansion of AI in healthcare until stronger regulations are created.

Organizations such as the Electronic Frontier Foundation argue that patients deserve more transparency about how their data is collected and used. According to their [section on Medical Privacy](#), it's mentioned how the most sensitive information, like prescriptions, sexual, drug usage histories and others, are "entering the digital world."

The way AI is discussed in the media also shapes public opinion. Supporters often focus on stories where algorithms detect diseases faster than doctors, attracting the majority of the public. Critics focus on privacy violations, corporate profit motives, and cases where the biased algorithm can eventually harm vulnerable communities. Both sides are trying to influence how society understands AI before the technology is fully normalized.

Artificial intelligence is already changing healthcare. While these systems can help doctors a lot more in this field, they also depend on enormous amounts of data and can reproduce the biases that are already present in healthcare systems. The future of medical AI will not only depend on technological progress, but also on who controls the data and whether the public chooses to trust them. The biggest question may be whether healthcare can still remain human when algorithms are increasingly shaping its decisions.



# "AI Has Eyes and Ears Too"



Connor Liao

# BOOTLEGS, BOUNDARIES, AND THE INTERNET: CAN THEATRE STAY LIVE IN A DIGITAL WORLD?

TANSY LAU

In a theatre, the rules are simple but strict: phones stay away, recording is prohibited, and the performance exists only in the moment it is performed. Yet in 2026, that boundary is becoming increasingly difficult to enforce. With smartphones in every pocket and social media platforms built for instant sharing, live theatre is no longer confined to the stage. It is clipped, reposted, and reshaped online within minutes of the curtain rising.

This tension between live performance and digital circulation has become especially visible in recent controversies within online theatre fandoms, including discussions surrounding the musical *Hadestown* and actor Jack Wolfe. While the specific incident involved the circulation of an unauthorized bootleg recording, it reflects a much broader shift in how audiences engage with theatre in the age of algorithm-driven platforms.

## WHY BOOTLEGS ARE STRICTLY PROHIBITED

In professional theatre, bootlegs—unauthorized recordings of live performances—are almost universally banned. Productions enforce these rules for several reasons.

First, there are legal and contractual protections. Actors, musicians, and production teams agree to specific performance conditions, and recording can violate those agreements. Second, there is the artistic intent of live theatre itself. A stage performance is designed to be experienced in real time, with lighting, sound, staging, and audience energy working together in a way that cannot be fully captured on video.

Finally, there is economic impact. Theatre productions rely heavily on ticket sales, and widespread circulation of recordings can reduce the incentive to attend in person.

Despite these rules, bootlegs have not disappeared. Instead, they have moved into digital spaces where enforcement is more difficult and where content spreads rapidly once it is uploaded.

For more on theatre copyright and recording policies, see the Broadway League Audience Guidelines.





## HOW SMARTPHONES CHANGED THE AUDIENCE

The most significant shift in modern theatre etiquette has been the presence of smartphones. Even when audiences do not intentionally record full performances, short clips, photos, and audio snippets can still be captured and shared. Platforms like TikTok have accelerated this trend. A 10-second clip of a powerful vocal moment or dramatic scene can circulate far beyond the theatre community it originated from. Once posted, it is often detached from its original context and reinterpreted through captions, edits, and commentary.

According to [TikTok's official newsroom](#), the platform's recommendation system prioritizes engagement metrics such as watch time, likes, comments, and shares—allowing niche topics to spread rapidly to wider audiences. This is where the boundary between “sharing” and “piracy” becomes blurred for many users. Some fans may not fully understand that even partial recordings can violate theatre policies, especially when they are introduced to productions through social media rather than through traditional theatre spaces.

## WHEN FANDOM MEETS THE ALGORITHM

Online theatre fandoms are highly active and deeply engaged communities. However, they also operate within systems designed to maximize engagement rather than accuracy or context.

When content related to a show begins to trend—whether it is an official clip, a fan edit, or unauthorized footage—algorithms tend to amplify it. This creates a feedback loop: more views lead to more recommendations, which leads to even wider circulation.

In the case of *Hadestown*, discussions around bootleg circulation spread quickly across TikTok, not necessarily because of coordinated intent, but because the platform's recommendation systems prioritize emotionally engaging and highly interacted-with content.

Media researchers have increasingly studied how algorithms reinforce viral discourse online. A report from [Harvard's Berkman Klein Center](#) explains how repeated exposure to online narratives can create the perception of widespread consensus, even when discussions originate within relatively small digital communities.

As a result, some users encountered clips without understanding their origin or the community rules surrounding them. Others, driven by curiosity or fandom enthusiasm, reshared content without realizing it was unauthorized. The distinction between legitimate promotional material and pirated footage became increasingly unclear as it moved through algorithmic feeds.

## THE ILLUSION OF “EVERYONE IS TALKING ABOUT IT”

One of the most important effects of modern platforms is the perception of scale. When a topic appears repeatedly in a feed, it can feel like it is universally significant or widely agreed upon—even if it is actually being amplified within a specific online niche.

This is a key mechanism behind both fandom virality and broader forms of computational propaganda: repetition creates perceived consensus. In theatre spaces, this can lead to narratives spreading faster than context or clarification can keep up.

A small number of highly engaged accounts can therefore shape the perceived “conversation” around a production, especially when content is repeatedly surfaced by recommendation systems.

Research on online echo chambers from MIT Sloan School of Management suggests that social platforms can intensify group identity and reinforce dominant narratives within online communities.



## ACCESSIBILITY VS. PRESERVATION

At the heart of this issue is a genuine contradiction. On one hand, digital platforms have made theatre more accessible than ever before. People who might never have the opportunity to attend a live performance can now discover musicals, actors, and productions through short clips online.

On the other hand, this accessibility often comes at the cost of control. Once a performance enters digital circulation, it can be edited, cropped, and reframed in ways that diverge from its original intent. For theatre-makers, this raises difficult questions about how to preserve the integrity of live art in an environment that prioritizes sharing over containment.

The official [Hadestown website](#) itself heavily incorporates digital marketing and online promotion, demonstrating how modern productions now depend on internet visibility while simultaneously trying to limit unauthorized distribution.

## CAN THEATRE STAY “LIVE”?

The question is not whether theatre will survive in a digital world—it clearly already has. Instead, the challenge is whether it can remain “live” in a meaningful sense when so much of it exists online afterward.

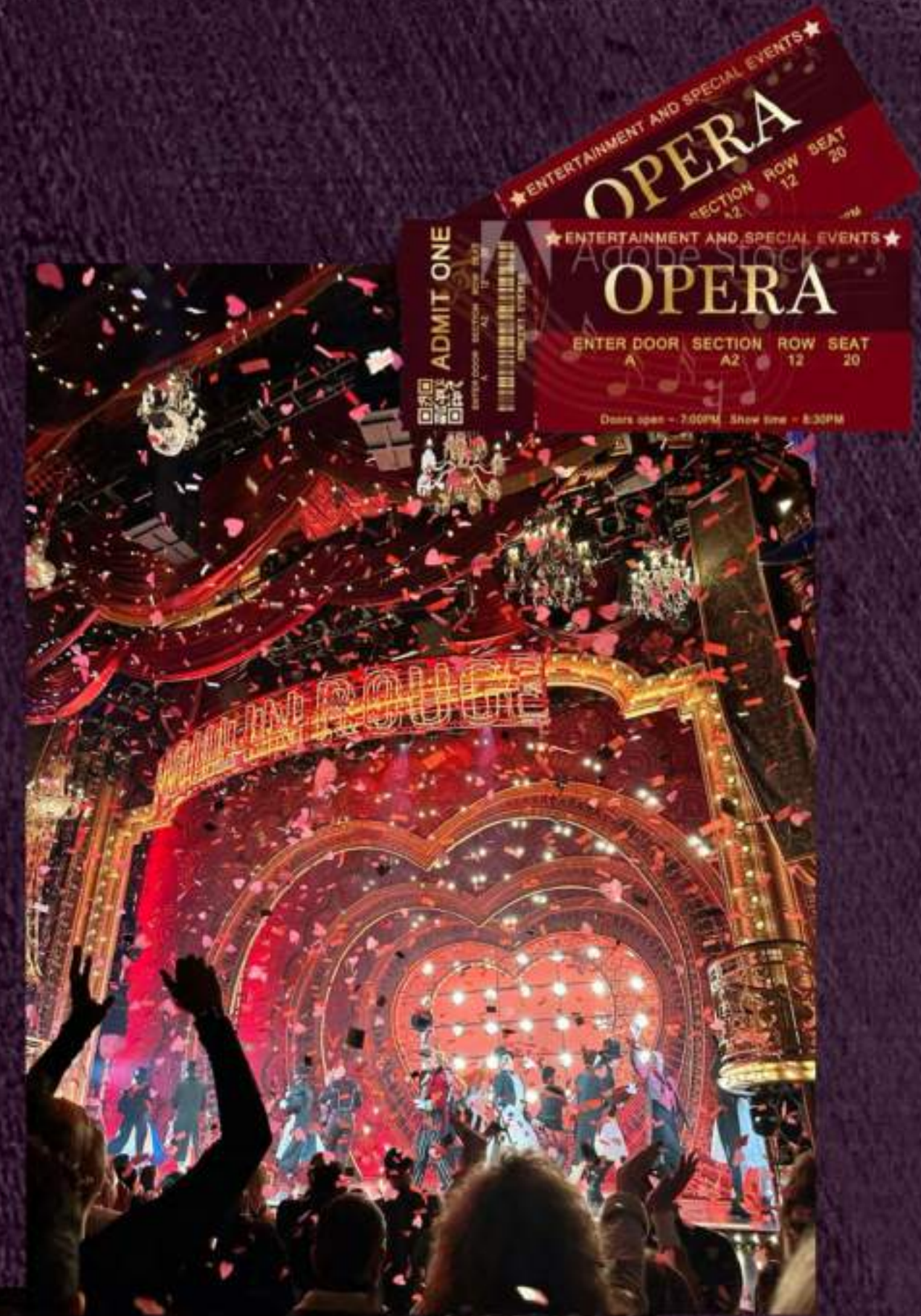
Live performance depends on presence: a shared moment between performers and audience that cannot be replayed exactly the same way twice. But in a world of constant recording and reposting, that moment is increasingly extended, fragmented, and redistributed.

The Hadestown bootleg controversy is not an isolated incident, but a symptom of this broader shift. It illustrates how quickly theatre can move from a controlled artistic space into an uncontrolled digital ecosystem, shaped by algorithms, fandom behaviour, and the speed of online sharing.

## CONCLUSION

As technology continues to evolve, theatre faces a growing challenge: maintaining the boundary between performance and publication. While digital platforms have expanded access to the arts, they have also complicated the meaning of “live” performance.

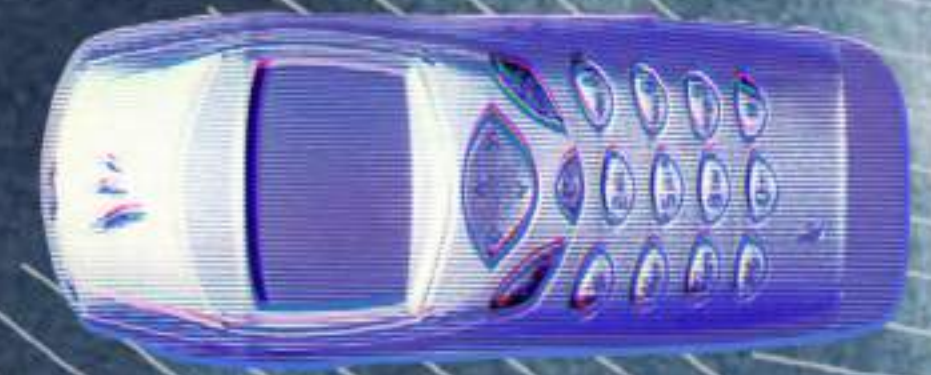
The future of theatre may not depend on eliminating phones or restricting online discussion entirely, but on finding new ways to balance accessibility with respect for artistic boundaries. In a world where every moment can be recorded, reposted, and reinterpreted, the question becomes not whether theatre can resist the internet—but how it can survive within it without losing what makes it unique.



# An Era of Digital Fraud:

## Common Methods, Impacts on Teens, Ways to Recognize

Celina Xue



Cyber-enabled crimes are becoming more and more common with the rise of AI, cryptocurrency, and accessibility of devices in general. As the FBI reports, “cyber-enabled crimes defrauded Americans of nearly \$21 billion” in just the year 2025, a major difference from the \$16.6 billion lost by Americans in 2024. Among the most targeted groups are young adults (like those in Gen Z), due to their high consumption of social media and other similar communication platforms.

### COMMON MODERN SCAMS

Scams have existed for thousands of years, evolving from ancient maritime insurance fraud in 300BC to the AI-driven digital scams of this era. Now, modern scams most commonly involve AI, crypto, and various impersonation techniques. In fact, more than 80% of scams involve some form of impersonation, with the most common being identity theft, fake debt collection, and fake e-commerce marketplaces. Additionally, AI-powered scams use methods like voice cloning and deepfakes to impersonate the sounds, voices, and appearances of family and friends. Another growing scam is those using cryptocurrency (a type of digital currency that generally exists only electronically). Scammers promising large profits to force people into buying and demanding payment using cryptocurrency.

### TRUMP CURRENCY

One of the most unique developments in the current digital landscape is the surge in “political” finance. Throughout 2024 and 2025, the Trump administration and family launched several digital assets, including World Liberty Financial (\$WLFI), meme coins, and various NFT Trading Cards. Additionally, physical gold coins featuring the President’s appearance were marketed as both official keepsakes and investments.



However, these developments have not been free of repercussions for everyday buyers:

- **High Volatility:** Many retail investors, especially younger, first-time crypto buyers, bought into tokens like \$WLFI during high-hype periods. As of early 2026, some of these assets have lost over 90% of their original value, leaving those who held in hopes of growth with significant losses in reality.
- **Additional Price Tag:** Physical coins were often sold at a significant premium over the actual spot price of gold. Although global gold prices in 2026 did rise slightly, those who bought coins purely for the "Trump" brand discovered that resale value depends more on collector interest than raw material worth.
- **FOMO:** Purchasing decisions by Gen Z for Trump's currencies, as well as other crypto/stocks, were heavily impacted by social media driven investing. When a famous figure promotes a currency, it often triggers fear of missing out (FOMO), leading young people to invest blindly without understanding the underlying technology behind crypto.

## HOW AUTHORITIES HAVE REACTED

As digital fraud grows, the government is taking action in response. There have already been several key initiatives:

1. **FBI "Digital Dangers" Outreach:** The FBI has expanded its school-based programs, focusing on "Financial Sextortion", where scammers trick teens into sending explicit photos and then demand payment to keep them private. Schools, like those in New Jersey, are mandating media literacy skills classes for students at every grade level from kindergarten to 12th grade. The FBI also has a similar Safe Online Surfing (SOS) program that teaches kids 3-8 how to navigate the web safely.
2. **INTERPOL's I-GRIP:** INTERPOL, an international criminal police organization, has long been at fighting against financial crime. Their I-GRIP mechanism is a stop-payment mechanism that allows authorities to freeze fraudulent bank transfers and crypto transactions across international borders before the money disappears.

## HOW TO RECOGNIZE A SCAM

In summary, scams are becoming more prevalent and young adults and teens must stay vigilant. Remember to check for the following key warning signs (there are also more but these are just a couple) before sending money or giving sensitive personal information:

## 1 Creating urgency or fear:

"If you don't send the money in 6 hours, your account will be locked" - This calls for immediate action by using fear or threats so there is less time for you to think.



## 2 Too good to be true:

Offers you free money, products, or services - Especially if you didn't win a giveaway, promising rewards is very likely to be a scam.



## 3 Impersonation:

Check the email address, phone number, and website of the person contacting you - Messages may look like they are coming from a trusted organization/person, but in reality they are from an unrelated group.



## 4 Unusual Payments:

Other party is only willing to receive payments through gift cards, wire transferring, or cryptocurrency - Never pay someone who insists that you must pay with only certain methods.



Celina is a current high school junior passionate in finance, business, and uplifting the community. She hopes that through The Insight Exchange, she can provide a student-led perspective on key events happening in the business world. In her free time, she enjoys hanging out with friends, volunteering, and hosting community events.

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- Additional costs/premium on trump's gold coins because they are associated with him -> high gold prices overall

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- Interpol's igrip

<https://www.edweek.org/teaching-learning/a-media-literacy-requirement-that-starts-in-kindergarten-new-jersey-may-start-the-trend/2022/11>

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- Trump currencies

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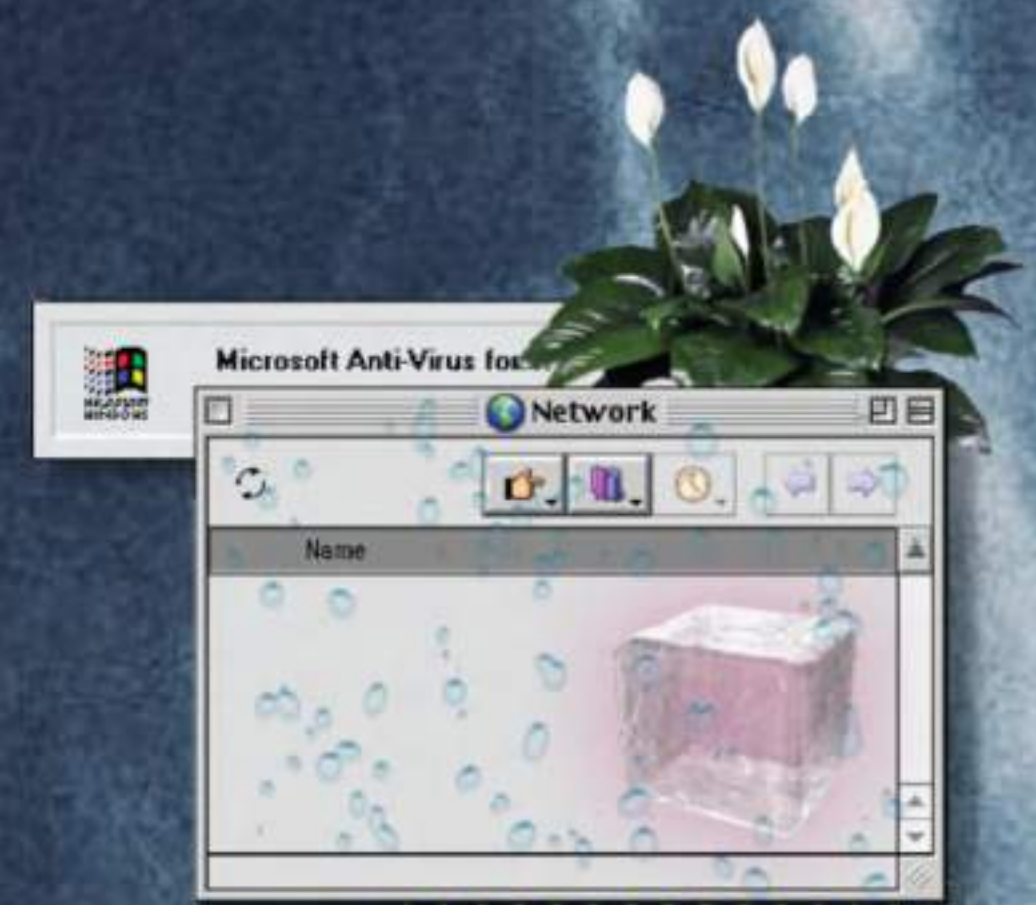
- Evolution of scams

<https://www.operationshamrock.org/library/2025-11-pymnts-younger-adults-targeted>

- Impersonation
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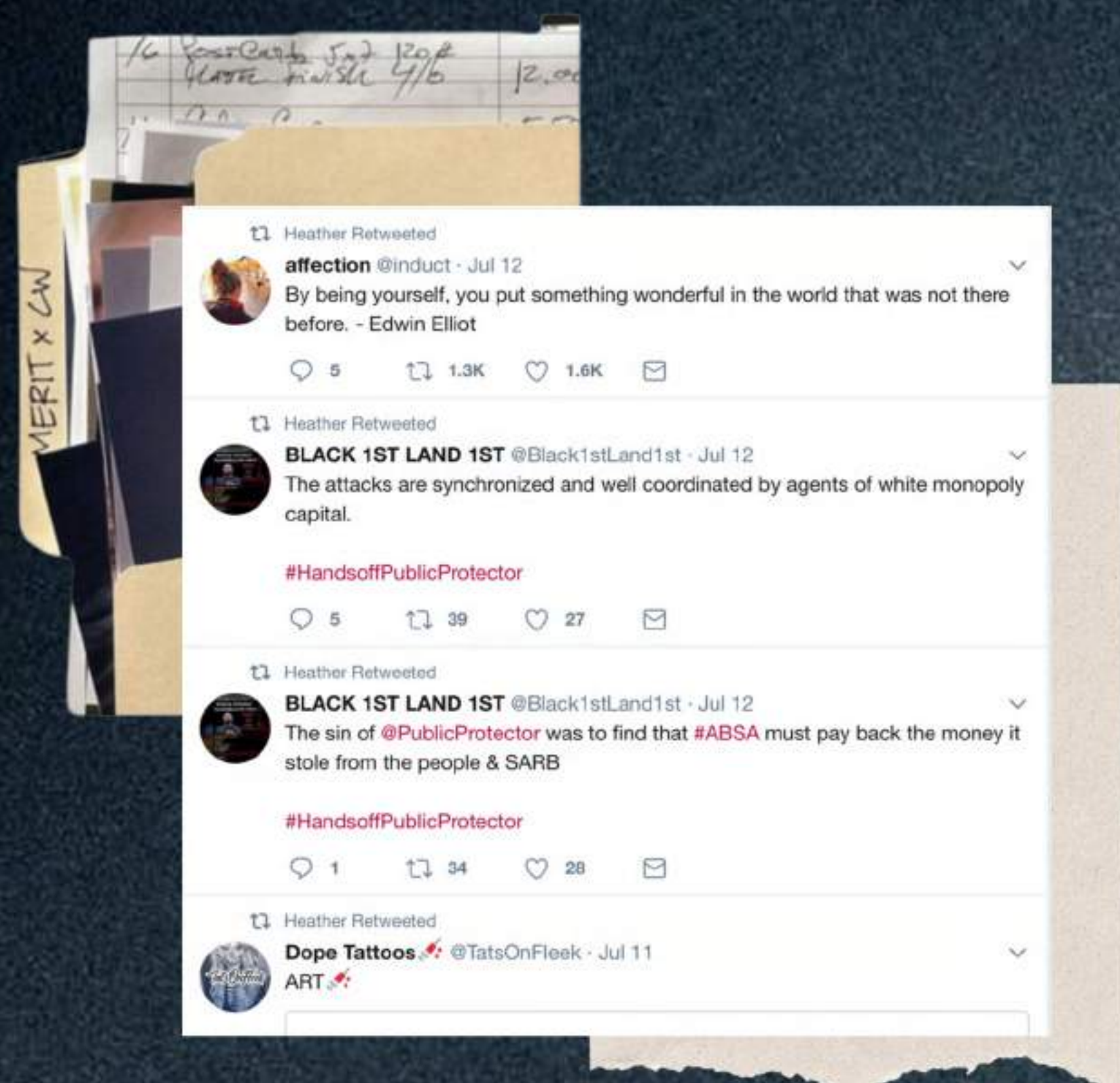
# ASTROTURFING, TWITTERBOTS, AMPLIFICATION - INSIDE THE ONLINE INFLUENCE INDUSTRY

REPRINTED FROM THE BUREAU OF INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALISM

Heather Davis, born April 1991, lives in Jamestown, New York. She joined Twitter in June 2011 but doesn't use it much. In over six years she's tweeted just 331 times, the last time over a year ago when she wrote: "Heading to bed can't wait to watch #ClashofChampions tomorrow night". Her bio mentions her kids – a couple of them peek out of the banner photo at the top of her page – and offers a short vignette of her personality: "I speak the truth I'm a loyal friend I don't like drama I'm honest." Her Twitter handle is @TwIzTeD\_bItCh.

Heather, aka @TwIzTeD\_\_bItCh – call her Heather 2 – joined Twitter in April 2014. She's more of a fan of the site than Heather 1, with quadruple the number of tweets in half the time. Also from Jamestown, her profile image shows the same woman, with a similar banner picture and similar bio – "I speak the truth whether you want to hear it or not". Her last tweet, just before we finished this article, was a retweet of an article about "Healthy Living for your Brain and Body".

The two Heathers exist in parallel, with only an extra underscore in the Twitter user name to separate them. One of them is a real person. The other is fake. Heather 2 isn't just into healthy living. Her interests – indicated by her retweets – span My Little Pony, Republican Congress candidate Omar Navarro, a new novel billing itself as "Casablanca in Washington DC", "Things to do in Jaipur", a guitar and piano instruction book, North Korea and bikini-clad shots of Philippine martial arts "ring girl" and model, Red Dela Cruz.



SCREENSHOT OF THE HEATHER DAVIS BOT PAGE  
SCREENSHOT VIA CROFTON BLACK

Back in July Heather 2 also took a passing interest in South African politics. Retweeting a comment from the pressure group Black Land First, she wrote: "The attacks are synchronized and well coordinated by agents of white monopoly capital. #HandsoffPublicProtector".

The Bureau encountered the two Heathers during an investigation into social media manipulation – a phenomenon which is simultaneously ubiquitous and little understood. Two months after Heather 2's sudden interest in South African "white monopoly capital" a British PR firm, Bell Pottinger, spectacularly imploded. The growing scandal is now threatening to engulf international auditing firm KPMG. In a small way, Heather 2 was responsible.

## ILLUSIONS OF POPULARITY

The phrase tweeted by Heather 2 – "white monopoly capital" – started showing up in South African social media back in October 2016, in the wake of a report by a government watchdog into allegations of corruption between President Zuma and the Guptas, a multi-millionaire family with mining, media and IT businesses (allegations denied by both).

The phrase was thrown at those attacking the Gupta family, the implication being that criticism of the Zuma-Gupta relationship was simply a rearguard action by the old white elite whose vested interests were threatened in the new landscape of post-Apartheid South Africa. Media investigations soon found that coordinated clusters of Twitter accounts were repeating the phrase in a manner giving the impression of a spontaneous grassroots reaction. Bell Pottinger – a controversial PR firm which a Bureau investigation previously showed to have spread fake news during the Iraq war – had been working for the Gupta family since January 2016. A trove of leaked emails revealed that the firm had planned to deflect negative attention from the Guptas via a campaign highlighting the message of "economic emancipation". A growing swell of public opinion in South Africa identified the firm as bearing some responsibility for the racially divisive white monopoly capital tweets. Bell Pottinger denied this, while eventually admitting that its actions on behalf of the Guptas had been "inappropriate and offensive". Following a damning internal report, the company was expelled from the PR industry body and went into administration.

But to this day, the workings of the white monopoly capital campaign remain murky. Despite the leaked emails, months of investigative journalism and industry inquiries, no direct link has been confirmed between Bell Pottinger and the army of Twitter profiles which promoted the white monopoly capital message, and the social media campaign has continued after Bell Pottinger's collapse. The truth is that no one quite knows how it came about.



Fake grassroots activity on social media – also known as "astroturfing" – has become a fact of political life around the globe. In the US, special investigator Robert Mueller is currently probing the role of Russia in a series of [Facebook pages](#) that supported Donald Trump in last year's election. In the UK, [fake Tinder accounts promoted Jeremy Corbyn](#) at the last election and automated Twitter accounts [promoted both sides of the Brexit referendum](#) the year before. Academics and thinktanks in the US, UK and EU have pored over social media feeds and mapped networks designed to spread partisan or inaccurate news.

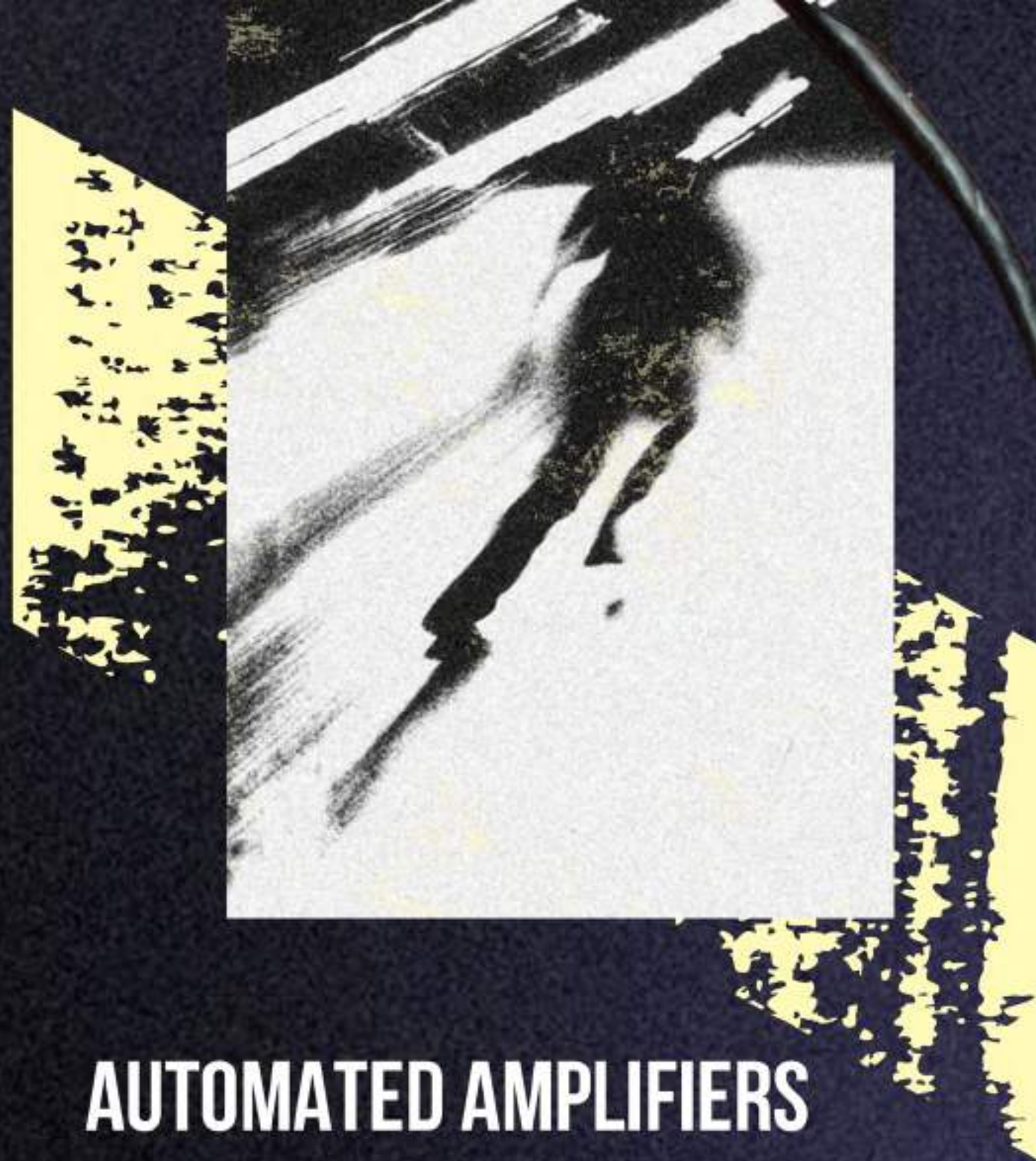
While there is much speculation over the forces presumed to be behind such campaigns, less is known about the mechanisms through which they operate and the network of companies that facilitate them.

The Bureau set out to untangle some of the threads in the Gupta case, and found itself deep in the bizarre, globe-spanning and secretive world of the online influence industry.

It's an industry which, at present, has more or less free rein in public discourse, and it operates at a scale that is hard to imagine. "[We detect and block approximately 450,000 suspicious logins every day](#) that we believe to be generated through automation," Twitter's top lawyer Sean Edgett told the US Senate Committee on the Judiciary at the end of October. But metrics for how many logins Twitter's systems fail to block are harder to come by.

"Oftentimes politically powerful individuals and groups make use of social media bots because they provide an additional layer of disguise," said Samuel Woolley, research director of the Digital Intelligence Lab at Institute for the Future. "A political group will hire a contractor to deploy an army of human seeming accounts that are actually run by automated software, or bots. The goal is for these bots to amplify a particular idea, or even a political candidate – to give it the illusion of popularity."

The issue is starting to attract the attention of lawmakers, particularly in relation to social media operations by state actors. "You have a huge problem on your hands," Senator Dianne Feinstein told general counsels for Twitter and other tech companies at the start of November. "[This is a very big deal.](#)"



## AUTOMATED AMPLIFIERS

The Bureau's investigation began with a dataset of tweets promoting the "white monopoly capital" message. Between 12 July and 22 August we archived almost 18,000 tweets containing this phrase.

Our dataset threw up some immediate patterns. There was a core of ten accounts which pushed the message strongly and consistently, tweeting the phrase over a hundred times in the 40-day period. There were just under 200 accounts with a lesser but still consistent interest, using the phrase between ten and sixty times over the same period. And there were some 6,000 accounts which used the phrase only once.

South African cyber sleuths focused their attention on the most active accounts. [Digital investigator Jean Le Roux](#) identified hundreds of accounts posing as South African citizens, often tweeting 30 times a day, several of which were seemingly run from somewhere in India. These accounts promoted a group of websites with names like [wmcleaks.com](#) (using the acronym for white monopoly capital), [wmcscams.com](#), [whitemonopolyafrica.com](#) and [whitemonopoly.com](#). An investigation by News24 showed that these websites were linked to an Indian consultancy firm, [CNET Infosystems](#). But after this the trail went cold.

The Bureau decided to focus on the other way in which the message was amplified: by hundreds of accounts tweeting it only once, rather than dozens tweeting it hundreds of times. Our dataset showed that, of these one-off accounts, a suspiciously high number were created on certain days. A popular moment was April 2014: 46 of them were created on 15 April 2014, 45 on 11 April, 41 on 13 April, 32 on 12 April and 29 on 14 April. Another 200-odd dated from June 2012.

While many of the most active accounts appear to have had human beings behind them – albeit human beings pretending to be someone else – the Bureau’s data suggested the more infrequent tweeters were automated accounts, or bots.

"All bots for sure," said Jim Vidmar, a social media marketing expert based in Las Vegas, looking over a sample of the accounts that the Bureau provided. "All April 2014 and they have the tell tale signs."

Vidmar knows because he's in the business himself. "Usually when I buy accounts like that ... that is what they look like," he explained, pointing to their shared creation date, the random nature of their interactions and the low ratio of followers to number of accounts followed. "Real accounts don't follow 1500 random people and have such low follow back percentage."

Vidmar referred to a "secret world" of websites selling retweets, followers and other such services. The Bureau looked at several dozen such sites, competing to make their clients appear "important", "more legit" or "loved by all". One company offers 100 retweets for \$1 and 5000 for \$27. Another promises a hefty 500 retweets for \$1 and an astounding 20,000 for \$25. For the more longterm strategists out there, there are monthly plans: one service provider offers a package of 150 retweets and 95 likes per any number of tweets, along with random comments and mentions and a certain number of followers, all for \$299 a month.

So where do these attentive followers, likers and retweeters come from? And how are the low prices they command economically viable?

"The actual truth is that these followers are not real," Elia Miller, who runs buytwitterfollowersfast.com, told the Bureau. "They are just real looking."

In a surreal twist, we found a clue about which firm might have been paid to promote the white monopoly capital message via an organisation preparing for the robot apocalypse.

In the 1990s Eric Klien, a former stock market analyst, established The Atlantis Project. Its aim was to create a "floating city in the Caribbean Sea named Oceania — a city independent of the limitations and bureaucratic failures of present day government."

The Atlantis Project was shortlived but Klien modified his vision and in 2002 set up the Lifeboat Foundation, "dedicated to encouraging scientific advancements while helping humanity survive existential risks". The risks stem from the increasing sophistication of genetic engineering, nanotechnology and artificial intelligence, which Klien and others believe will lead to the "Singularity" – the point at which machines will create their own superintelligence, surpassing that of humans and bringing about the end of the human era.

The Lifeboat Foundation has a blog and a Twitter account, recently posting content related to Elon Musk, cryogenics, nanoparticles and existential hope. This account itself is retweeted regularly by other accounts. One of them was @Jake0Knudsen.

@Jake0Knudsen retweeted the Lifeboat Foundation's content on 16 July: "AI Creates Fake Obama: Artificial intelligence software could generate highly realistic fake videos of former president". Around the same time he got interested in South African politics, retweeting Black Land First's leader: "Mbeki says there is no white monopoly capital. At the rate the agents of WMC are going to deny apartheid existed."

Also around this time, @Jake0Knudsen was retweeting content about advice for writers ("Author coaching or manuscript editing?"), gun control in Washington state, Trump-Russia collusion, dominatrix pornography and clips from Balkan news site Kratke Vijesti. These are just a few of the topics he touched on.

All this activity would have come as a surprise to @Jake3Knudsen – whose banner photo, profile photo, location ("Shelton") and bio ("Jessica Johnson is bae") are all shared by @Jake0Knudsen. But @Jake3Knudsen – whose account was created in November 2013, five months before @Jake0Knudsen – hasn't tweeted since January 2015.

### IMAGE OF THE GENUINE JAKE KNUDSEN TWITTER ACCOUNT VIA CROFTON BLACK



In promoting the Lifeboat Foundation's content, Klien did sometimes use a retweet service, he told the Bureau. He was noncommittal about its efficacy, saying that "it costs some bucks and is of marginal value so we would only do this as long as our endowment fund is flush."

The service he used, he told the Bureau, was called Twitterboost, also trading as Devumi.

Devumi was established in 2011 in Florida. In the words of its lawyers, "it provides digital marketing services that guarantees to increase Twitter followers, Twitter retweets and likes, Youtube views, YouTube subscribers, Youtube likes and comments, Soundcloud plays, Soundcloud followers, Soundcloud likes and reposts, and comments, Vimeo plays, Vimeo followers, Pinterest followers, Pinterest likes and repins, LinkedIn followers, LinkedIn connections, and LinkedIn endorsements."

It seems pretty successful at this, claiming over 200,000 customers. The company's CEO, German Calas, describes himself as "Serial Entrepreneur, Visionary, Philanthropist, Ninja". "I'm one of the few bosses that pay my employee's to tweet," he wrote in 2012. "I think most of you would enjoy that. lol."

Calas might not be laughing quite so loudly about his employees now, because some months ago one of them hacked his company email account and made off with his client list. According to Devumi's complaint, filed in the Southern District of Florida in August, Calas engaged a contractor by name of Ronwaldo Boado to provide "order management and support for Devumi and its sister companies, including but not limited to TwitterBoost.co". Boado, as a contractor within Devumi's "Order Success Team", had access to "confidential information and trade secrets contained therein".



SCREENSHOT FROM THE TWITTER ACCOUNT OF GERMAN CALAS, DEVUMI'S CEO VIA CROFTON BLACK

According to Devumi's court filing, Boado was fired for "inciting conflict" between other team members. He retaliated by taking control of the firm's email account and used it to cancel previous orders and redirect them to a copycat company he himself had set up, combining two of his previous employer's business names into the portmanteau "DevumiBoost" to make customers think they were simply paying the same company.

Devumi, attempting to subpoena Boado, retained Crowe Foreign Services, a specialist legal process server. But Crowe's operatives were unable to locate Boado: his address in the Philippines turned out not to exist.

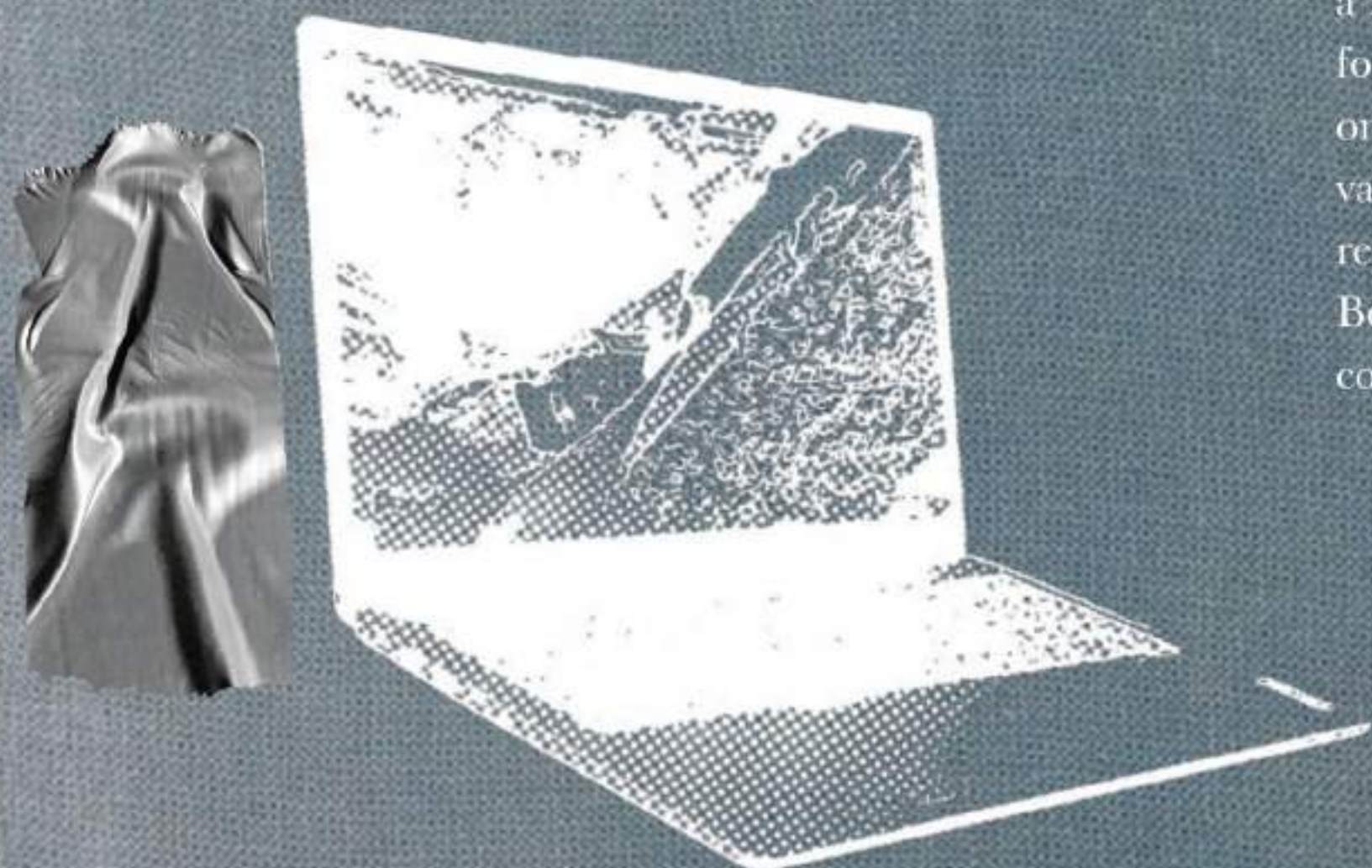
The Bureau called a mobile number associated with Boado in the court documents, and spoke to a man who claimed to have no idea what we were talking about.

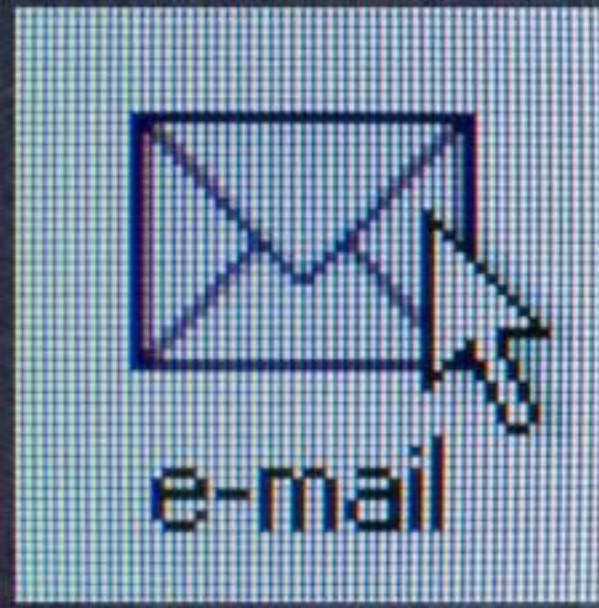
Like one of the ephemeral Twitter accounts that he managed, Boado had disappeared without trace.

The chief executive officer of Devumi has not responded to requests for an interview.

To confirm whether Twitterboost (aka Devumi) ran the bots participating in the white monopoly capital campaign the Bureau purchased 5000 retweets from the company for a specially set up Twitter account. By tracking which accounts repeated our content we saw that two of them had also featured in our white monopoly capital dataset. The two common accounts were Pigs and Pints (@PlgsandPints) and LBDT (@VaicenCaarp).

Pigs and Pints appears to have been cloned from the account of a restaurant on Australia's Gold Coast, with a letter L substituted for the letter I in the user name. @VaicenCaarp appears to be based on an account belonging to Valentin Mesa, known on Facebook as valen.carp.39. (CARP and LBDT – "Los Borrachos del Tablon" – refer to Argentinian football team Club Atlético River Plate.) Both of these accounts are now suspended. We asked Devumi for a comment but none was forthcoming.





## HERDING TWITTER ACCOUNTS

Firms like Devumi have to maintain large herds of accounts in order not to be too badly affected when some of their roster fall foul of Twitter's anti-bot algorithms – the recent fate of @VaieenCaarp and @PlgsandPints. As a result, there is a flourishing market for bulk accounts. Bio (and bio language), profile image, phone verification, number of tweets, account set-up date, regularity of tweets and number of followers are all factors in the cost of an account. Older accounts and those with a more detailed history of interactions are more expensive. Newer accounts – especially those lacking profile pictures, known as "eggs" in Twitter parlance – are cheap.

A glance at one of the foremost account marketplaces gives an idea of the variety of services available. Users of the Black Hat World social media forum ("If you gotta ask – you're in the wrong place") buy and sell email, Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr, Pinterest, Youtube, Instagram and many other accounts on a daily basis. Accounts can be "aged", "phone verified", "with Real followers" or tailored to other specifications. A recent advert has Facebook accounts ranging from 50 cents (new, non-phone-verified) to \$6 (one to two years old, phone verified) each; one to two-year-old phone verified Twitter accounts sell for \$2 each with newer ones at 60 cents. Sellers also offer tools for bulk account creation, remote SMS verification, commenting and upvoting services, "viral content finders" and complete marketing packages like the "Twitter Money Bot" which scrapes tweets, bios and pictures then follows and unfollows, retweets, likes and generates replies.

Miller, the founder of buytwitterfollowersfast.com, was candid about how the industry ticks. "If there's a seller out there who's claiming that his followers are real, he's lying. Think about it, you can't expect to get 500 real Twitter followers for just \$7, that's just not doable."

Some firms take a different line. A representative of Socialsbox – who did not give a name but agreed to a Skype chat – told the Bureau that the company was "using more legitimate way of increasing retweets than just freshly created accounts". "All accounts belong to someone," the representative said, explaining that a sort of exchange system operated whereby people followed and retweeted others "to earn credit which later on can be used to gain same service."



To create a large number of bots, it helps to have a large number of email accounts. Jim Vidmar, the Vegas-based marketing expert, explained that this can be achieved through Russian mailservers like mail.ru or inbox.ru, which are "very liberal" – that is, they don't mind how many email addresses you create. You can then use these addresses to verify your Twitter accounts.

Bulk Twitter accounts are plentiful, and users are picky. "Account quality is not great," complained one Black Hat World user about an order he had placed. "These are obviously fake accounts ... The issue was the username, very similar to @fh34odbh303n."

Vidmar takes care to "brew", as he puts it, the accounts which he buys. "I don't want Russian eggs." Brewing the accounts – setting up a profile picture, a bio, following some people and making a few tweets – can take "weeks and you need to be fluent in multiple bits of software". Nonetheless, when operating on a bulk scale, "you can't make bots totally different from each other. They have to have similarities."



## IMAGE OF 'AGED' TWITTER ACCOUNTS ON SALE VIA CROFTON BLACK

The similarities we observed in the "white monopoly capital" accounts we surveyed indicated that many of them were likely clones of pre-existing accounts belonging to real people. Rather than having garbled, machine generated names like "@fh34odbh303n", they scraped - that is to say, copied - names, user names, bios and profile and background images from real users, simply changing a character in each user name to keep it unique. At first glance these altered characters are easy to miss: two underscores instead of one, l instead of i, a substitution of a different digit.

Other researchers have come across similar uses of cloned Twitter accounts. A recent study by Kate Starbird of the University of Washington uncovered a "very sophisticated botnet" using cloned accounts to amplify a popular conspiracy theory website, therealstrategy.com. Starbird noted that the fake account network "seems to be effectively bringing 'real' accounts into its friend/following networks".

Persuading real people to participate in your network and disseminate your narrative is the ultimate goal of all astroturfing operations. Le Roux, the South African investigator, was ambivalent about the success of the white monopoly capital campaign in this regard. To the extent that it tried to push a more positive portrayal of the Gupta empire, it "failed dismally", he told the Bureau: once fake accounts were exposed, "anyone (even real persons) who tweeted in support of the Guptas would be labelled a 'Guptabot' and ridiculed". On the other hand, and more seriously, the activities of the bot network "robbed South Africans of the opportunity to have a frank and untainted discourse about white monopoly capital and its effects".

Examination of the bot network appearing in the white monopoly capital campaign offers an insight into how diverse and widespread the use of paid social media really is. Twitter accounts involved in it were also promoting Chinese news agency Xinhua, a Kuwaiti video channel, a British betting website, US-focused sports and sports-shoe fanpages and lists of daily shopping bargains to name just a few. (Some account holders contacted by the Bureau denied paying for retweets and suggested that the bots had come across their content randomly or by following trends - "I don't pay any so I guess I'm getting some free love," said one.)

Transforming the raw material of automated followers and retweeters into a real commercial or political effect is a complicated alchemy, however, as the relative failure of the South African campaign shows. As one US-based digital strategist put it, "Anyone can set up a bot that can tweet 'Donald Trump is great' 10 times a day - to do it well is expensive".

Jim Vidmar, though, is thoroughly convinced of the power of automated social media, if done properly. "I can crown people," he told the Bureau. "I can decide who's going to be famous and not famous for this hour. If a guy is 100 tweets down, I can put him up. Boom. That's the dangerous part. I can decide who is good and who's bad."

**THE BUREAU REACHED OUT TO THE TWO PEOPLE MENTIONED IN THE ARTICLE WHOSE TWITTER ACCOUNTS HAD BEEN CLONED BUT NO RESPONSE WAS RECEIVED.**

**ADDITIONAL RESEARCH BY ALICE MILLIKEN.**



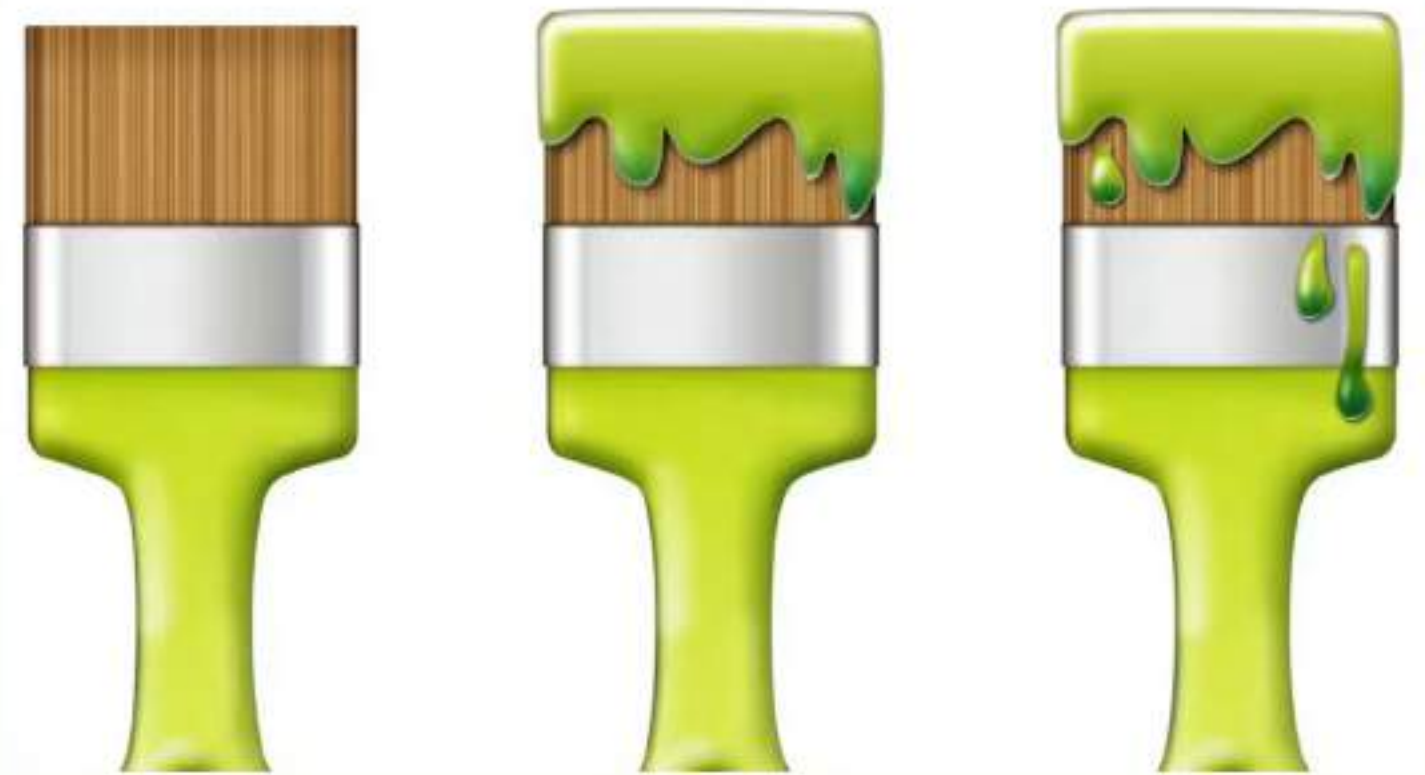
FORMER EPA CHIEF SCOTT PRUITT, SECOND FROM LEFT, CONFERRING WITH AUTO INDUSTRY LEADERS.  
AP PHOTO/ANDREW HARNIK

# When corporations take credit for green deeds their lobbying may tell another story

Today most large companies like Exxon Mobil, Ford and GM issue slick reports extolling their efforts to conserve resources, use renewable energy or fund clean water supplies in developing countries. This emphasis on efforts to curb environmental harm while benefiting society is called corporate sustainability.

Once uncommon but now mainstream, this show of support for a greener and kinder business model might seem like a clear step forward. But many of these same companies are quietly using their political clout, often through industry trade associations, to block or reverse policies that would make the economy more sustainable. And because public policy raises the bar for entire industries, requiring that all businesses meet minimum standards, lobbying to block sound public policies can outweigh the positive impact from internal company initiatives.

This kind of corporate hypocrisy – what we call talking green while lobbying brown – is a form of greenwashing, in which companies trumpet their good deeds while hiding their efforts to block progress. As the past and present presidents of the Alliance for Research on Corporate Sustainability, we are concerned that this greenwashing



may delay by years or even decades steps that might solve sustainability problems, such as slowing the pace of climate change or ending the ocean plastic pollution crisis.

## Sounding good yet lacking impact

We and our colleagues in the alliance have documented many business initiatives that fall short of the impact they claim. One of the best known was the chemical industry's Responsible Care program, created after an explosion at Union Carbide's plant in Bhopal, India, killed thousands of people in 1984. Strategy professors Andy King and Mike Lenox showed that participants actually made less progress in reducing their emissions of toxic chemicals than did nonparticipants. That prompted the industry to overhaul the program.

Or consider the Climate Challenge program. The Energy Department created this now-defunct partnership between business and government to encourage electric utilities to voluntarily reduce their greenhouse gas emissions. When one of us teamed up with Management Professor Maria Montes-Sancho to evaluate its track record, we found that there was no difference overall between participants and non-participants in their emissions reductions.

Both of these voluntary initiatives failed to solve environmental problems, so why were they created?

In the case of Responsible Care, chemical industry documents show that one of the program's main goals was preempting tighter regulations. Likewise, public statements the electric utility industry and the Energy Department made indicate that they formed Climate Challenge to stave off new regulations.

And following the Trump administration's plan to spike the Clean Power Plan, a federal rule that would have limited air pollution from power, utilities have essentially avoided federal climate regulation to date. Even though these and other voluntary initiatives accomplish little of substance, they help call attention to the good steps industries appear to be taking instead of the environmental damage they are causing – which is exactly how greenwashing works.

### **Talking green while lobbying brown**

As we and our colleagues explained in an 2018 article in the business journal California Management Review, it is easy to get away with greenwashing in part because it's hard to detect what companies lobby for in the U.S., as there is no requirement to disclose the positions they espouse. “Despite the statements emitted from oil companies’ executive suites about taking climate change seriously and supporting a price on carbon, their lobbying presence in Congress is 100 percent opposed to any action,” Sen. Sheldon Whitehouse, a Rhode Island Democrat, lamented in Harvard Business Review.

Exxon Mobil has clearly engaged in this doubletalk. The corporation declared in its 2016 Corporate Citizenship Report that “climate change risks warrant action by businesses, governments and consumers, and we support the Paris Agreement as an effective framework for addressing this global challenge.” Yet the nonprofit group InfluenceMap recently found that Exxon was one of the top three global corporations in lobbying against effective climate policy.

Exxon Mobil's hypocrisy may not be surprising given the company's long history of funding climate deniers. However, it is far from alone in talking green while lobbying brown. Indeed, even companies with much stronger records on sustainability than Exxon do this, often through industry trade groups.

For example, Ford said in its 2017 sustainability report that “we know climate change is real, and we remain committed to doing our part to address it by delivering on CO2 reductions consistent with the Paris Climate Accord.” GM's sustainability report stated that “General Motors is the only automaker on the 2017 Dow Jones Sustainability Index for North America, and is also on the World Index.” Yet as Alliance for Automotive Manufacturers members, Ford and GM both lobbied the Trump administration to weaken fuel economy standards – a strong tool for reducing vehicle emissions.

### **More political transparency needed**

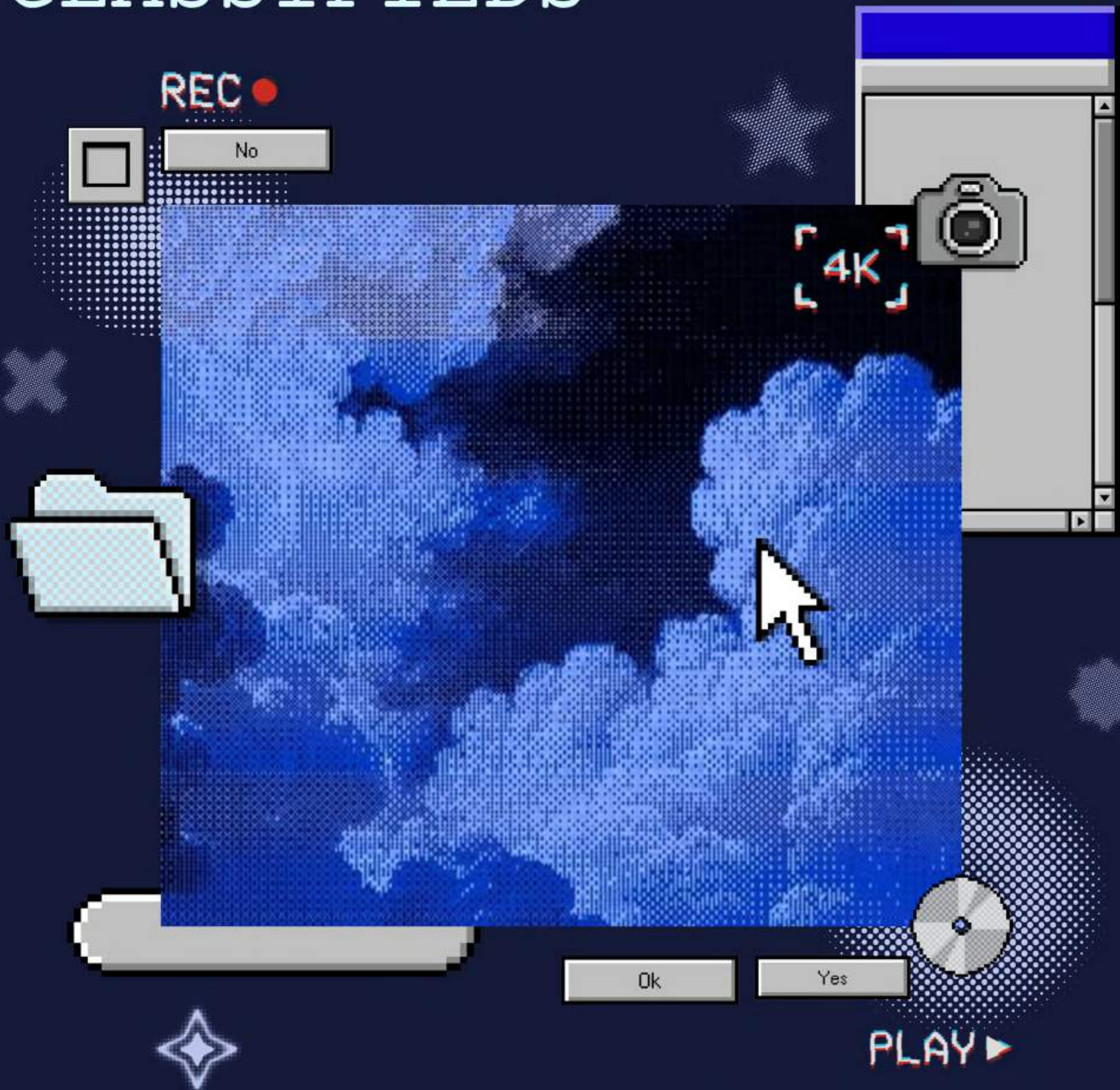
When companies hide their political opposition to sustainability policies, it deprives investors of the right to know how their funds are being used. This obfuscation also denies consumers the right to vote with their wallets for greener products.

We believe the best way to expose this duplicity is by requiring corporations to disclose more details about their political actions. For instance, new laws might demand that companies, both individually and as part of industry associations, make their lobbying stances public, and reveal which politicians they have called on to take a given position.

And companies could be forced to reveal what they spend on so-called “independent” political advertisements, also known as issue ads.

In the U.S., one good option would be to update the Lobbying Disclosure Act to require more detailed reporting, including spending on astroturf lobbying, the practice of using fake grass-roots groups to influence public opinion. The private sector can take action too. In Europe, the Vigeo Eiris rating agency has begun to assess corporate political transparency. Such evaluations would become much more powerful if required by leading investment managers. That is why we see the 2018 call by BlackRock, the world's largest asset manager, for companies to “benefit all their stakeholders” as a step in the right direction.

CLASSIFIEDS



CLASSIFIEDS

**Organization:** Washington College's Cherry Tree One-Day Young Writers Studio

**Information:** The Young Writers' Studio is designed to enrich the creative lives of high school students by providing a window to the dedicated writerly life—lending community, inspiration, and new skills to craft vibrant language. This one-day event includes generative creative writing workshops in fiction, poetry, and creative nonfiction, a literature seminar from English department faculty, and culminates in a celebratory open mic where students can share the amazing work they've crafted throughout the day.

**Deadline:** June 28, 2026

**Contact info:** <https://www.washcoll.edu/learn-by-doing/lit-house/cherry-tree/the-cherry-tree-young-writers-conference/index.php>

**Organization:** Bow Seat 2026 Ocean Awareness Contest

**Information:** The 2026 Ocean Awareness Contest – Your Story, Our Ocean – encourages you to explore the many ways our ocean sustains, protects, and inspires us. We invite you to think about your personal connection to the ocean – whether you're coastal or landlocked – through the value it brings to your life. The benefits of the ocean are widespread and multifaceted, from food production to climate regulation to artistic inspiration. Go through the sub-themes and explore the topics that resonate with you. Share how the ocean has shaped your story through art, writing, performance, film, or multimedia. How does the ocean sustain, protect, and inspire you?

**Deadline:** June 8, 2026

**Contact info:** <https://bowseat.org/programs/ocean-awareness-contest/contest-overview/>

**Organization:** The Fraser Institute's 2026 Canadian Student Essay Contest

**Information:** The Fraser Institute hosts an annual Student Essay Contest to promote student participation in economic discourse on current events and public policy. This contest affords winning students the opportunity to have their work peer-reviewed and published early on in their academic career. In addition, we offer exciting cash prizes for the top five winning submissions!

**Deadline:** June 5, 2026

**Contact info:** <https://www.fraserinstitute.org/education-programs/student-essay-contest>

**Organization:** The All American High School Film Festival

**Information:** The All American High School Film Festival is the largest student film festival in the world. Our festival offers an unparalleled experience designed specifically to promote and empower the future of film. When you submit to AAHSFF, you have the opportunity to become an Official Selection, meaning that your film will screen at the AMC Empire 25 Theaters in Times Square, the busiest movie theater in America, and you have the chance to receive national recognition as a category finalist or winner! Each October, thousands of student filmmakers join us in New York City for an action-packed weekend of resources and entertainment, including our Teen Indie Awards Show, where we hand out over \$600,000 in prizes and scholarships.

**Deadline:** July 3, 2026

**Contact info:** <https://www.hsfilmfest.com/submit>

**Organization:** The New York Academy of Sciences Junior Academy

**Information:** The Junior Academy is a project-based learning program where students form international teams and work with STEM experts through an online community platform. Students participate in Innovation Challenges where they collaborate under the guidance of STEM mentors to design solutions to real-world problems. Students and mentors can participate from anywhere in the world.

**Deadline:** July 2, 2026

**Contact info:** <https://www.nyas.org/learning/high-school-research-programs/the-junior-academy/>

**Organization:** The Foyle Young Poets of the Year Award 2026

**Information:** The Foyle Young Poets of the Year Award 2026 is now open for entries and this year will be judged by the fantastic John McAuliffe and Rachel Long. The competition is open to anyone aged 11-17. The deadline to enter your poem/s is midnight BST 31 July 2026. Entries must be written in English, but you can include phrases in your mother tongue or another language.

**Deadline:** July 31, 2026

**Contact info:** <https://foyleyoungpoets.org/>

**Organization:** National Youth Foundation 'I Matter' Poetry Context

**Information:** Submit a poem or artwork on the topic of equality. Open to grades K-12.

**Deadline:** July 23, 2026

**Contact info:** <https://www.nationalyouthfoundation.org/i-matter/>

**Organization:** New York Film Academy Summer Camps

**Information:** Teens at NYFA don't just study, they create! Dive into hands-on projects with guidance from award-winning industry pros. Choose beginner or advanced classes, or go all out with residential summer camps for the ultimate campus experience. Film, act, and explore the arts while building real skills and unforgettable memories.

**Deadline:** Varies

**Contact info:** <https://www.nyfa.edu/youth-program-finder/>

**Organization:** SFFILM Education's Youth Filmmaker Camp

**Information:** SFFILM Education's Youth Filmmaker Camp is an intensive summer program for teens ages 14-18 to learn from world-class film professionals in a fun, interactive, and collaborative environment. The program is broken up into two experience levels: the Starter Lab, which is for beginner students looking to learn the basics of filmmaking and enhance their storytelling skills; and the Advanced Lab, which is for students who want to build upon their existing skills. All students dive deep into the filmmaking process by learning about screenwriting, storyboarding, production, cinematography, sound, editing, and much more.

**Deadline:** Unknown

**Contact info:** <https://sffilm.org/youth-filmmakers-camp/>

**Organization:** Center for American Archeology High School Field School

**Information:** High School Field School is your opportunity to be an archaeologist. Join our summer field crew and participate in real archaeological research alongside professional archaeologists. You will learn how to do fieldwork, laboratory work, identify artifacts, and more with professional archaeologists as we investigate the German site. The German Site is a Late Woodland / Jersey Bluff Phase habitation site located on a colluvial slope in the Crawford Creek valley. The site was occupied approximately 800-1200 CE. In 2026 we will continue to excavate at the site in order to better understand Late Woodland people of the Lower Illinois Valley.

**Deadline:** ASAP

**Contact info:** <https://www.caa-archeology.org/programs/high-school-field-school/>

**Organization:** Oakland University Philosophy Camp

**Information:** Oakland University Philosophy Camp is a weeklong residential experience for high school students that brings together young people and philosophy professors to talk about important questions in philosophy. Since its inception in July of 2018, the camp has addressed a lack of philosophy or logic instruction in high schools by providing students with a short but rigorous program that will give them skills in the short run and launch them toward further philosophical reading and development. We engage in a variety of activities, such as dynamic discussions, lectures and group activities, as well as time for recreation and socializing. The camp's main goal is to provide students with a hands-on, engaging experience that will help them develop their critical thinking and reasoning skills.

**Deadline:** Unknown

**Contact info:** <https://oakland.edu/phil/camp/>

**Organization:** Parsons Summer Academy

**Information:** Parsons Summer Academy offers a variety of dynamic noncredit in-person art and design courses for students in grades 3 through 12. Join us for two weeks at our Greenwich Village campus to explore art and design through hands-on projects that develop your creative thinking skills, knowledge of technique, and collaborative abilities. Students in grades 9 through 12 can also focus on creating a specialized fine art or design portfolio. Courses for students in grades 9 through 12 will count toward the Parsons Academy Certificate Program.

**Deadline:** July 15, 2026

**Contact info:** <https://www.newschool.edu/parsons/summer-academy/#>

**Organization:** The 2027 Tisch Summer High School Residential Program

**Information:** The Tisch Summer High School Residential Program is an intensive, four-week pre-college program open to high school sophomores and juniors from around the world. The rigorous program is based on the Tisch undergraduate curriculum and the highly structured classes include projects, professional training, and collaboration. The program is tuition-based, culminates in a final grade, and four to six college credits (units). The last day of the program includes presentations, attending open class sessions, or showings of work for family and friends. Students apply to one of these artistic tracks: Animation, Dance, Drama, Production & Design, Dramatic Writing, Filmmaking, Game Design, Photography and Imaging, or Recorded Music.

**Deadline:** TBD

**Contact info:** <https://tisch.nyu.edu/special-programs/high-school-programs/tisch-summer-high-school>

**Organization:** Melodii

**Information:** This project is a student-led initiative focused on making music more accessible and understandable, especially for elders in local communities and younger kids who are just starting to explore music. The goal is to start with small, in-person workshops (like in libraries 📖 or community spaces 🏠), where we introduce music in a really simple and interactive way. At the same time, we're also working toward building a small website 🌐 that helps guide people through learning and creating their own music. This is still at an early stage, so joining means you'll be helping build something from the ground up!!! It's flexible, collaborative, and a good opportunity to take on leadership roles or try something new!!!!!! 🙌 This non-profit organization's name is "Melodii." The name is derived from the word "melody," which refers to a sequence of musical notes that are perceived as a single entity. The addition of the double "i" at the end represents inclusivity and interactivity.

**Deadline:** None

**Contact info:** [melodii.team@gmail.com](mailto:melodii.team@gmail.com)

**Organization:** Momentum

**Information:** Momentum is a student-led nonprofit dedicated to leveling the playing field for low-income athletes. Founded by Emily Liu and Anthony Liu, our organization provides essential training resources for athletes from all sports. Under the leadership of Erin Wang, our Sports Medicine and Injury Recovery branch focuses on improving athlete's longevity and health. Our mission is to improve athletes' health and enhance injury prevention by providing education, resources, and access to sports care for underserved and low-income athletes.

**Deadline:** None

**Contact info:** Instagram: @athletes.momentum // email [emilyliu0723@gmail.com](mailto:emilyliu0723@gmail.com)

**Organization:** Project Pulses

**Information:** Project Pulses is an initiative connecting personal experiences of neurodivergent individuals with the scientific and public health communities. We'll be collecting opinions and personal experience from neurodivergent individuals and their communities, as well as scientific professionals with the goal of investigating how personal experiences can shape approaches in science. The project is seeking an Outreach Coordinator and a Social Media Manager.

**Deadline:** None

**Contact info:** email [olivia.sylu@gmail.com](mailto:olivia.sylu@gmail.com)

**Organization:** YoungArts National Arts Competition

**Information:** The prestigious award gives emerging artists a headstart by demonstrating that they have received national recognition from highly respected artists in their field early on in their artistic journey. All YoungArts award winners receive cash prizes between \$250 and \$10,000.

**Deadline:** Not yet released

**Contact info:** [Website](#)

**Organization:** All American High School Film Festival

**Information:** Our festival offers an unparalleled experience designed specifically to promote and empower the future of film. When you submit to AAHSFF, you have the opportunity to become an Official Selection, meaning that your film will screen at the AMC Empire 25 Theaters in Times Square, the busiest movie theater in America, and you have the chance to receive national recognition as a category finalist or winner!

**Deadline:** 3 July 2026

**Contact info:** [Website](#)

**Organization:** Great Books & Big Ideas Program

**Information:** Academic Directors build the curriculum to include enduring literature superbly suited for deep and rewarding analysis. Each week students explore works from different genres, periods, and backgrounds linked by a common theme or thread. Imagine a week including Plato, Abraham Lincoln, Shakespeare, Charles Dickens, Octavia Butler, John Locke, Jorge Luis Borges, and Ursula K. Le Guin.

**Deadline:** Unclear

**Contact info:** [Website](#)

**Organization:** School of the Art Institute of Chicago Early College Program Summer Institute

**Information:** For each week students attend the Early College Program Summer Institute, they earn a college credit. These credits are accepted by most accredited institutions in the United States and abroad. Guided by our faculty of professional artists, students develop a body of work that will give them a competitive advantage in their applications for higher education programs in art and design.

**Deadline:** Varies

**Contact info:** [Website](#)

**Organization:** Parsons Summer Academy

**Information:** Parsons Summer Academy offers a variety of dynamic noncredit in-person art and design courses for students in grades 3 through 12. Join us for two weeks at our Greenwich Village campus to explore art and design through hands-on projects that develop your creative thinking skills, knowledge of technique, and collaborative abilities. Students in grades 9 through 12 can also focus on creating a specialized fine art or design portfolio.

**Deadline:** 15 July 2026

**Contact info:** [Website](#)

**Organization:** 67th London International Youth Science Forum

**Information:** LIYSF is a 14-day residential STEM summer camp bringing together 500 students aged 16–21 from around the world. Hosted at Imperial College London, participants explore cutting-edge science, attend Nobel Laureate lectures, and engage in hands-on learning.

**Deadline:** Unclear

**Contact info:** [Website](#)

**Organization:** Writopia Lab

**Information:** Our age-based workshops give young writers the opportunity to work on their own pieces alongside a maximum of eight peers. All workshops are guided by a published author or produced playwright who is thoroughly versed in Writopia's student-centric methodology. We run workshops in New York City, Washington, DC, the San Francisco Bay Area, and online.

**Deadline:** Varies

**Contact info:** [Website](#)

**Organization:** Exempli Gratia

**Information:** Through expert panels, interviews, and networking events, members can connect with real lawyers and law students to gain insight into their future careers. Mock trial practice opportunities are also available to help develop advocacy and public speaking skills, with the goal of organizing legal competitions in the future. Additionally, Exempli Gratia's magazine provides a platform for students to publish legal articles.

**Deadline:** None

**Contact info:** [Website](#)

**Organization:** HarmoniEats Initiative

**Information:** Join HarmoniEats Initiative in our community initiatives to raise awareness and support individuals with food allergies and autoimmune diseases. Your participation can make a real difference in the lives of those in need.

**Deadline:** None

**Contact info:** [Website](#)

**Organization:** Quest4Clarity

**Information:** We are dedicated to providing a safe space for your mental wellness. Our platform offers free, high-quality articles, posts, guidance, and webinars tailored to your needs. Join us in advocating for neurological disorders and supporting local services as we work together towards better mental health.

**Deadline:** None

**Contact info:** [Website](#)

**Organization:** Illustrations of Children's Health

**Information:** We specialize in creating beautiful illustrations that promote children's health and wellness. Our vibrant and engaging artwork is perfect for children's books, educational materials, and healthcare campaigns.

**Deadline:** None

**Contact info:** [Website](#)

**Organization:** *Behavioral Blueprint*

**Information:** Are you curious about behavioral science, consumer psychology, or the future of AI? Want to unpack how biases, culture, and AI shape—and manipulate—what we click, choose, and buy? The Behavioral Blueprint podcast is growing and looking for motivated collaborators to bring episodes to life!

**Deadline:** None

**Contact info:** [Website](#)

**Organization:** PassNPlay Project

**Information:** The PassNPlay Project works around the GTA to provide children with the ample resources that they need to play sports. Join us in our mission to promote equal access to sports and encourage physical activity among children.

**Deadline:** None

**Contact info:** [Website](#)

**Organization:** International Youth Forum (IYF) 2026

**Information:** The International Youth Forum is a youth-led interdisciplinary forum for global dialogue and reflection. In 2026, the forum centres on healthy minds, bringing youth worldwide to explore learning, emotion, and social life through cognitive, emotional, and social psychology, and how these processes shape functioning.

**Deadline:** Unclear

**Contact info:** [Website](#)

**Organization:** 30-Day Me

**Information:** 30-Day Me is an app designed to help users build habits and achieve personal growth through structured 30-day challenges. 30-Day Me is looking for partnerships with organizations or clubs that can benefit from customized challenge ideas tailored to members' goals.

**Deadline:** None

**Contact info:** [Website](#)

**Organization:** FluentFront

**Information:** FluentFront is a public speaking practice tool designed to help you speak clearly, confidently, and with purpose — no matter the setting. Choose from categories like interviews, debate, Model UN, casual conversation, or even chaotic “brainrot” prompts, then decide how you want to practice.

**Deadline:** None

**Contact info:** [Website](#)

**Organization:** Vibrant Waves

**Information:** At Vibrant Waves, we believe in the transformative power of creativity, movement, and community to turn mental health challenges into opportunities for growth. Our mission is to empower children, young adults, and seniors through innovative, holistic programs that integrate journaling, visual arts, music, sports as tools for stress relief, emotional resilience, and self-discovery.

**Deadline:** None

**Contact info:** [Website](#)

**Organization:** The Sunflower Project

**Information:** We are a youth-led initiative founded in Vancouver, Canada, passionate about preventing issues like Gender-Based Violence. Our primary audience is younger people who may not have been aware about the severity of such issues. We aim to raise awareness by organizing fundraisers, establishing a social media presence, and collaborating with other organizations to convey our message effectively.

**Deadline:** None

**Contact info:** [Website](#)

**Organization:** *Us and Tomorrow*

**Information:** Us and Tomorrow is a science fiction podcast hosted by Belinda Chen, exploring the intersection of emerging technologies and the human experience. It asks social, ethical, and philosophical questions that arise as science fiction increasingly becomes science reality. It is recruiting student collaborators, all of whom will receive full credit on podcast platforms and social media accounts.

**Deadline:** None

**Contact info:** [Application](#)

**Organization:** GUD Medicine

**Information:** GUD Medicine is a youth initiative tackling complex healthcare issues and fighting for health literacy and justice. It aims to make healthcare more transparent and equitable by breaking down confusing medical insurance systems, comparing drug chemistries, and investigating global healthcare policies.

**Deadline:** None

**Contact info:** [Instagram](#)

**Organization:** modern anthologies

**Information:** modern anthologies is a literary magazine dedicated to finding common ground amongst youths around the world. as founders, writing has been a big part of expressing and coming to terms with who we truly are and where we feel we belong in this world.

**Deadline:** None

**Contact info:** [Website](#)

**Organization:** The OpenMind Project

**Information:** The OpenMind Project is a mental wellness initiative offering resources on mental health to teenagers and young adults, with the goal to break the stigma surrounding mental health and help relieve stress. It is looking for student volunteers passionate about mental health to assist with their mission.

**Deadline:** None

**Contact info:** [Website](#)

**Organization:** Bright Beats

**Information:** Bright Beats offers free, inclusive music sessions to children with developmental disabilities and special needs. To scale the project, Bright Beats is welcoming peers to start and lead a Bright Beats chapter at their schools or communities. Bright Beats provides training, flexible hours, and verified service hours.

**Deadline:** None

**Contact info:** [Website](#)

**Organization:** Night Bloom

**Information:** Night Bloom envisions a community in which people are informed about light pollution and can combat it in their daily lives, allowing for the preservation of dark skies. They are looking to recruit new members to join the project.

**Deadline:** None

**Contact info:** [Website](#)

**Organization:** Chinatown Youth Engagement Society

**Information:** CYES is a non-profit organization made by students who want to help dispel the misconceptions of Chinatown and revitalize its perception as a vibrant part of Vancouver. They are always looking for students interested in joining the project.

**Deadline:** None

**Contact info:** [Website](#)

**Organization:** Feelustrate

**Information:** Feelustrate aims to create an emotional exploration platform that integrates science, art, and philosophy. Through this interdisciplinary approach, we strive to make abstract emotions tangible and explorable, helping young people find both an outlet for their feelings and a path toward self-awareness.

**Deadline:** None

**Contact info:** [Website](#)

**Organization:** SquashBuddy

**Information:** SquashBuddy is also actively looking for squash players interested in helping us launch SquashBuddy Centers. These are local hubs built around a concentrated player base, designed to make the app truly useful for finding matches and practice partners in a specific area. In addition to encouraging active app use, center leads help organize events, beginner clinics, and mini-tournaments.

**Deadline:** None

**Contact info:** [Website](#)

**Organization:** STEAMLabs

**Information:** STEAMLabs is a student-led 501(c)(3) nonprofit that brings hands-on science nights to under-resourced elementary schools. With nearly 100 high school mentors and 500+ students impacted across 11 U.S. cities, the program is now expanding nationwide. STEAMLabs is currently recruiting chapter leaders, national board members, and web designers. All leadership roles are eligible for monthly stipends of up to \$200, and 100% of funds you raise go back to you—STEAMLabs will match any donations or ad revenue you bring in.

**Deadline:** None

**Contact info:** [Website](#)

**Organization:** Youth Promise Collective

**Information:** YPC is a youth-led think tank that aims to gauge the opinions of youth on issues that impact them and magnify their voices. This is done through surveying students at schools across the world on a monthly topic and reporting on their responses and trends observed. Youth Promise Collective is looking for high school students who have an interest in writing and research.

**Deadline:** None

**Contact info:** [Website](#)

**Organization:** FoundationMHE

**Information:** FoundationMHE is a non-profit organization aimed at reducing the stigma around mental health while also providing accessible, pertinent, and innovative resources to educate youth about mental health. FMHE is looking for student authors to write monthly blog posts about topics in mental health (policies, trends, research, etc.) and social media managers.

**Deadline:** None

**Contact info:** [Website](#)

**Organization:** International Youth Neuroscience Association | Hong Kong Chapter

**Information:** We seek to introduce concepts of mental health and psychology through the lens of neuroscience. We aspire to educate and raise awareness of neurological and mental conditions among the Hong Kong public. We also strive to generate interest and facilitate learning about the wonders of the brain and neuroscience generally, connecting the local community with young neuroscientists worldwide.

**Deadline:** None

**Contact info:** [Website](#)

**Organization:** SHEGOLF

**Information:** SHEGOLF: Spotighting Female Golfers is a blog that seeks to empower the voices of female golfers and to share their experiences and perspectives which can often be overlooked in a male dominated sport. Currently, this project is looking for female golfers who would be interested in contributing by writing an article.

**Deadline:** None

**Contact info:** [Website](#)

**Organization:** My Healthcare Buddy

**Information:** Imagine a world where everyone was constantly sick, and the streets were lined with trash. It's sad to say that our own world is currently headed that way. Personal hygiene is often neglected, people are unaware of how they impact public health, and healthcare workers can't keep up. To alleviate this issue, My Healthcare Buddy is stepping in. We are a youth organization that, instead of spreading disease, spreads information and education.

**Deadline:** None

**Contact info:** [Website](#)

**Organization:** Global Financial Literacy Initiative

**Information:** This global financial literacy initiative is dedicated to expanding access to personal finance education for underserved youth worldwide. The program aims to narrow the gap by equipping students with practical tools to build credit, avoid predatory debt, and achieve long-term financial stability. The organization is currently recruiting founding chapter leaders to help drive expansion: chapter president, curriculum lead, outreach lead, and podcast host/media lead.

**Deadline:** None

**Contact info:** Email Jonathan So (yso@taftschool.org)

**Organization:** Athletes for Tots

**Information:** Athletes For Tots is a youth-led program that helps students rediscover the fun in sports. It isn't just about exercise and physical health: we emphasize that it's about building confidence and friendships, feeling cool, and healthy habits that last a lifetime! But what truly sets us apart? Our programs are led by top-performing teen athletes competing at national levels.

**Deadline:** None

**Contact info:** [Website](#)

**Organization:** Lawfully Speaking: Understanding Exploitation Through a Legal Lens

**Information:** Lawfully Speaking is a free, self-paced course that takes a deeper look at sexual exploitation: how it happens, how it's been understood across history, how the law responds, and how both the exploitation and the legal system impact people. You'll explore key terms and concepts, hear stories about landmark legal cases, learn to differentiate and recognize types of exploitation, and examine global and local legal frameworks.

**Deadline:** None

**Contact info:** [Website](#)

**Organization:** EXPOZURE

**Information:** EXPOZURE is a non-profit that provides support to growing businesses in Manhattan by providing free professional photography services. EXPOZURE needs help with outreach. Students who would be a good fit for this may have an interest in business, communications, writing, social justice, and social media marketing.

**Deadline:** None

**Contact info:** Please contact Philip at [philipzheng200929@gmail.com](mailto:philipzheng200929@gmail.com)

**Organization:** Endeavr.ai

**Information:** Endeavr.ai, a fast-growing AI-assisted fintech investing platform for young people, is looking for a Social Media and Outreach Manager. Our machine learning based stock analysis company is quickly expanding its clientele, and needs someone to commit ~5 hours a week to working directly with the founding team to create content, draft marketing copy, and help manage new user acquisition. Must have creative expertise and the ability to work independently/remotely. Unpaid.

**Deadline:** None

**Contact info:** [Website](#)

**Organization:** CaseFile

**Information:** CaseFile is a developing website focused on key topics in criminology, including detailed case studies, analyses of recent research and developments in the field, and forensic science techniques. Founded by Maggie, a sophomore at Kang Chiao International School in Taiwan, the project was created to help students interested in criminology find opportunities to explore the field more deeply. Team members can contribute by researching and writing case studies, analyzing forensic science methods, discussing new developments in criminology, or helping coordinate outreach to experts as the project expands.

**Deadline:** None

**Contact info:** [Website](#) / [Sign-Up](#)

**Organization:** Starlight

**Information:** Starlight raises awareness about light pollution and its health impacts, encourages responsible lighting practices, and engages communities in monitoring night sky quality. You can check out their flagship citizen science initiative SkyQI at [skyqi.in](http://skyqi.in). Starlight is looking for team members who have a knowledge of stargazing and either a knack for design, a passion for writing, an interest in advocacy, a talent for engineering, or the desire to start your own chapter.

**Deadline:** None

**Contact info:** Email [starlight.darks skies@gmail.com](mailto:starlight.darks skies@gmail.com)

**Organization:** Open Lab Initiative

**Information:** The Open Lab Initiative is a student-led effort designed to expand access to academic research opportunities for high school students. Its goal is to connect students with professors and research groups who are willing to mentor, host lab visits, or offer short-term exploratory experiences. The mission is to remove geographic, socioeconomic, and informational barriers so that every student has the opportunity to understand what research truly looks like and make informed decisions about their academic and professional futures. The Initiative is looking to recruit a University Outreach Marketing Lead, responsible for connecting with universities, professors, and research groups that may be interested in participating; and a Student Outreach Marketing Lead, responsible for connecting with high school students who are interested in gaining research exposure.

**Deadline:** None

**Contact info:** Email [openlab.initiative@gmail.com](mailto:openlab.initiative@gmail.com)

**Organization:** Youthnovators

**Information:** Youthnovators is a student-led nonprofit based in Toronto, Canada, dedicated to making business education accessible to young children and inspiring them to explore their passions from an early age. They have hosted workshops with a local Toronto learning centre, launched a chapter at an all-girls elementary school, and are in communication with a partner in Montreal. They also recently introduced a Speaker Series, where business professionals share their experiences with younger students, including a partnership with an expert from Scotiabank. Youthnovators are looking to expand within and beyond Canada by welcoming motivated new team members who are passionate about business and education. Looking for a Program Development Director, Outreach Director and Chapter Leads.

**Deadline:** None

**Contact info:** Send your CV to [youthnovators@gmail.com](mailto:youthnovators@gmail.com)

**Organization:** *Health Without Borders*

**Information:** *Health Without Borders*, a public health podcast, is on a mission to make public health knowledge accessible and understandable by breaking down complex concepts into everyday language and multilingual episodes. *HWB* envisions a world where health information is not restricted by backgrounds, academic barriers, or language; people feel informed and included in conversations about their own health and daily practices.

**Deadline:** None

**Contact info:** Email [avi.heglandfisher@ingeniusprep.com](mailto:avi.heglandfisher@ingeniusprep.com) to be connected to the project founder.

**Organization:** The Mortals

**Information:** The Mortals serves as a platform for burgeoning writers, critical readers, and creative thinkers both within the Basis China Network and beyond, drawn to work that experiments and takes bold risks. We are now accepting submissions for our next issue - whether you like to write fiction, prose, poetry, essays, and anything in between. We're more than excited to hear your voice!

**Deadline:** None

**Contact info:** [Website](#) / [Submit](#)

**Organization:** BrainFacts/the Society for Neuroscience

**Information:** The Brain Awareness Video Contest (BAVC) is an annual competition held by BrainFacts/the Society for Neuroscience (SfN) to showcase videos of entertaining and educational neuroscience concepts and activities.

**Deadline:** 25 June 2026

**Contact info:** [Website](#)

**Organization:** Taiwan Fashion Design Award

**Information:** The design theme is open to the participants. To encourage participants to pay more attention to global environmental and ecological issues, advocate for sustainable fashion, and observe social trends in depth, the judging will focus on "creativity," "sustainability," "function," and "functionality." Participants can address the issues and explain their innovative perspectives from the angles of inspiration, design, fabric, materials, pattern, print, and design details.

**Deadline:** 30 June 2026

**Contact info:** [Website](#)

**Organization:** Berklee College of Music

**Information:** Berklee's Music Business Summer Program in Los Angeles is a five-day, interactive experience designed to teach aspiring artists, managers, and entrepreneurs how to launch a successful career in the music industry. Learn about the structure and key players in the music industry, as well as the primary areas of artist development—understanding music rights, revenue streams, branding, social media strategy, content creation, music marketing, and more—all of which are taught by a diverse array of established music industry professionals and Berklee's world-class faculty.

**Deadline:** 1 July 2026

**Contact info:** [Website](#)

**Organization:** University of Maryland Clark School of Engineering

**Information:** The Fire Protection Engineering Design Challenge (FPEDC) camp is a week-long design and construction camp that ends in a team competition. In teams of 3 or 4, participants will design, test and build a two-room apartment along with the notification, detection and suppression systems in that apartment. The teams will bring their apartments to be fire-tested in a competition at the end of the week in the University of Maryland fire labs.

**Deadline:** 29 June 2026

**Contact info:** [Website](#)

**Organization:** Parsons (The New School)

**Information:** Parsons Summer Academy offers a variety of dynamic noncredit in-person art and design courses for students in grades 3 through 12. Join us for two weeks at our Greenwich Village campus to explore art and design through hands-on projects that develop your creative thinking skills, knowledge of technique, and collaborative abilities. Students in grades 9 through 12 can also focus on creating a specialized fine art or design portfolio. Courses for students in grades 9 through 12 will count toward the Parsons Academy Certificate Program.

**Deadline:** 15 July 2026

**Contact info:** [Website](#)

**Organization:** The Cooper Union

**Information:** The Cooper Union Summer Art Intensive offers high school students (rising sophomores to rising seniors) the opportunity to immerse themselves in art-making in an art college environment with professional instruction alongside classmates who share their passion for art and design. Students in the program choose from the concentration sections with courses in Drawing, Animation, Painting, Graphic Design, Studio Practice (for rising seniors). Students in the Animation and Graphic Design sections also spend half the day drawing. All students participate in special focus workshops each week, social events with refreshments served, field trips to museums, galleries, and artists' studios.

**Deadline:** 5 July 2026

**Contact info:** [Website](#)

# PERIOD UNLIMITED PERIOD UNLIMITED



**WE'RE HIRING!**

**WE WANT A TEAM THAT ISN'T AFRAID TO HOLD BACK: STUDENTS WHO CAN EXPOSE OPPRESSION FROM INSTITUTIONS, CULTURAL NORMS, AND POWERFUL FIGURES, WHICH STIGMATIZE PERIODS AND PREVENT WOMEN FROM OBTAINING THE MEDICAL INFORMATION AND TREATMENT THEY DESERVE.**

# PERIOD UNLIMITED PERIOD UNLIMITED

## **OUR MISSION:**

- TO ERADICATE THE LIE THAT MENSTRUATION IS SHAMEFUL OR EMBARRASSING, REDEFINING MAN-MADE FRAMEWORKS AND SPARKING SOCIAL PUSHBACK

## **WE ENVISION:**

- A WORLD WHERE BLEEDING IS NOT A BARRIER, BUT A SHARED REMINDER OF HUMANITY.

## **WHAT WE OFFER:**

- A CHANCE DO TO LOUD, FIERCE, AND ASSERTIVE GRASSROOTS ADVOCACY
- A DEEPLY COLLABORATIVE WORK ENVIRONMENT WITH OTHER PASSIONATE ACTIVISTS
- A FLEXIBLE SCHEDULE

**EMAIL [PERIOD.UNLIMITED.ORG@GMAIL.COM](mailto:PERIOD.UNLIMITED.ORG@GMAIL.COM) IF YOU'RE INTERESTED!**

# PLATFORM MANAGER

- STUDENT POSITION (VOLUNTEER)
- RESPONSIBLE FOR MANAGING ALL OF PERIOD UNLIMITED'S ONLINE PLATFORMS AND OUR MEDIA PRESENCE
- EXCLUSIVELY DIGITAL DESIGN-RELATED RESPONSIBILITIES
- SCHEDULE REGULAR SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS, DESIGN ATTRACTIVE INSTAGRAM LAYOUTS, AND REPOST PERIOD-RELATED CONTENT FROM OTHER CREATORS
- RUN THE NEWSLETTER
- UPDATE THE WEBSITE

# BLOG WRITERS

- STUDENT POSITION (VOLUNTEER)
- COMPEL, INSPIRE, AND SHOCK AUDIENCE MEMBERS INTO CONFRONTING THE OPPRESSIVE WORLD WE INHABIT
- CHANGE SOCIETAL ATTITUDES SURROUNDING MENSTRUATION
- COMPLETE ARTICLES, PUBLISHED EVERY OTHER SUNDAY, ABOUT ANY PERIOD-RELATED TOPIC OF YOUR CHOOSING
- EDIT BLOG ARTICLES
- PROVIDE FEEDBACK

# OUTREACH HEAD

- STUDENT POSITION (VOLUNTEER)
- RESPONSIBLE FOR DIGGING INTO DIFFERENT WAYS TO GET INVOLVED AND MAKE A TANGIBLE IMPACT
- ON THE LOOKOUT FOR OPPORTUNITIES TO EXPAND OUR VISIBILITY, AUDIENCE BASE, AND PEOPLE AFFECTED
- MUST BE THOROUGH AND EFFECTIVE RESEARCHER AND WRITER WHO CAN STRATEGICALLY IDENTIFY MISSION-ALIGNED CHARITIES, PROMINENT PEOPLE, ORGANIZATIONS, STUDENT GROUPS, AND GRANTS

# ADVOCATE SPEAKERS

- YOUTH OR ADULT (VOLUNTEER)
- ARE YOU AN ACTIVIST OR ACTIVIST-TO-BE? DO YOU HAVE A STORY TO SHARE, WHETHER PERSONAL OR PROFESSIONAL, ABOUT PERIOD STIGMA AND ITS HARMFUL EFFECTS? IF SO, WE'RE TALKING TO YOU AND PRIMED TO LISTEN.



**EMAIL [PERIOD.UNLIMITED.ORG@GMAIL.COM](mailto:PERIOD.UNLIMITED.ORG@GMAIL.COM) IF YOU'RE INTERESTED!**



# YOUTHNOVATORS



## About Us

Youthnovators is a student-led nonprofit organization based in Toronto, Canada. It aims to bridge the gap in business education for students aged 7 to 12, and inspire them to develop their passions from a young age.

## Our Projects:

### Workshops

- Hosted workshops with a local Toronto learning centre
- Established a chapter at an all-girls elementary school in Toronto
- In active communication with an upcoming partner in Montreal, Canada

### Speaker Series

- New program: the Youthnovators Speaker Series
- Connecting business professionals from various organizations to share their experiences with young students (e.g., Scotiabank)

## We are hiring!

As we continue to grow, we are looking to expand **within and beyond Canada** with motivated high school students who are passionate about business and education. Open positions include:

- Chapter Lead
- Program Development Director
- Outreach Director

## Contact

Feel free to connect with us on social media or send any inquiries and application submissions via email:



@youthnovators



youthnovators@gmail.com

# AND ONE SPORTS



WHERE ALL KIDS  
HAVE ACCESS TO  
THE BENEFITS OF  
SPORTS & PLAY

Help us expand

## GET INVOLVED

We're looking for passionate leaders:

- Lead sports equipment drives in your area
- Spread the word about sports equity
- Collaborate with local schools, club teams, and organizations
- Help kids across the country to thrive through play
- Work with teens, coaches, and community leaders to make sports accessible to all

## THE PROBLEM

- 1-in-3 kids stopped playing sports
- Equity gaps among families in affording sports gear, training etc.
- Importance of play is overlooked in our education system. Comes in last for state funding.

## OUR MISSION

Youth-led initiative advocating for sports and play equity, ensuring all kids, regardless of background, have the right to play. We run equipment drives, offer volunteer coaching, and fundraise to reach those with the greatest needs and fewest resources.

[www.andonesports.org](http://www.andonesports.org) / [niam.taylor@gmail.com](mailto:niam.taylor@gmail.com)

Explore the Field of Behavioral Economics!

# BEHAVIORAL BLUEPRINT

Podcast

**ARTIFICIAL  
INTELLIGENCE**

ARE YOU CURIOUS  
ABOUT BEHAVIORAL  
SCIENCE, CONSUMER  
PSYCHOLOGY, OR THE  
FUTURE OF AI?

WANT TO UNPACK HOW  
BIASES, CULTURE, & AI  
SHAPE—AND MANIPULATE—  
WHAT WE CLICK, CHOOSE,  
AND BUY?

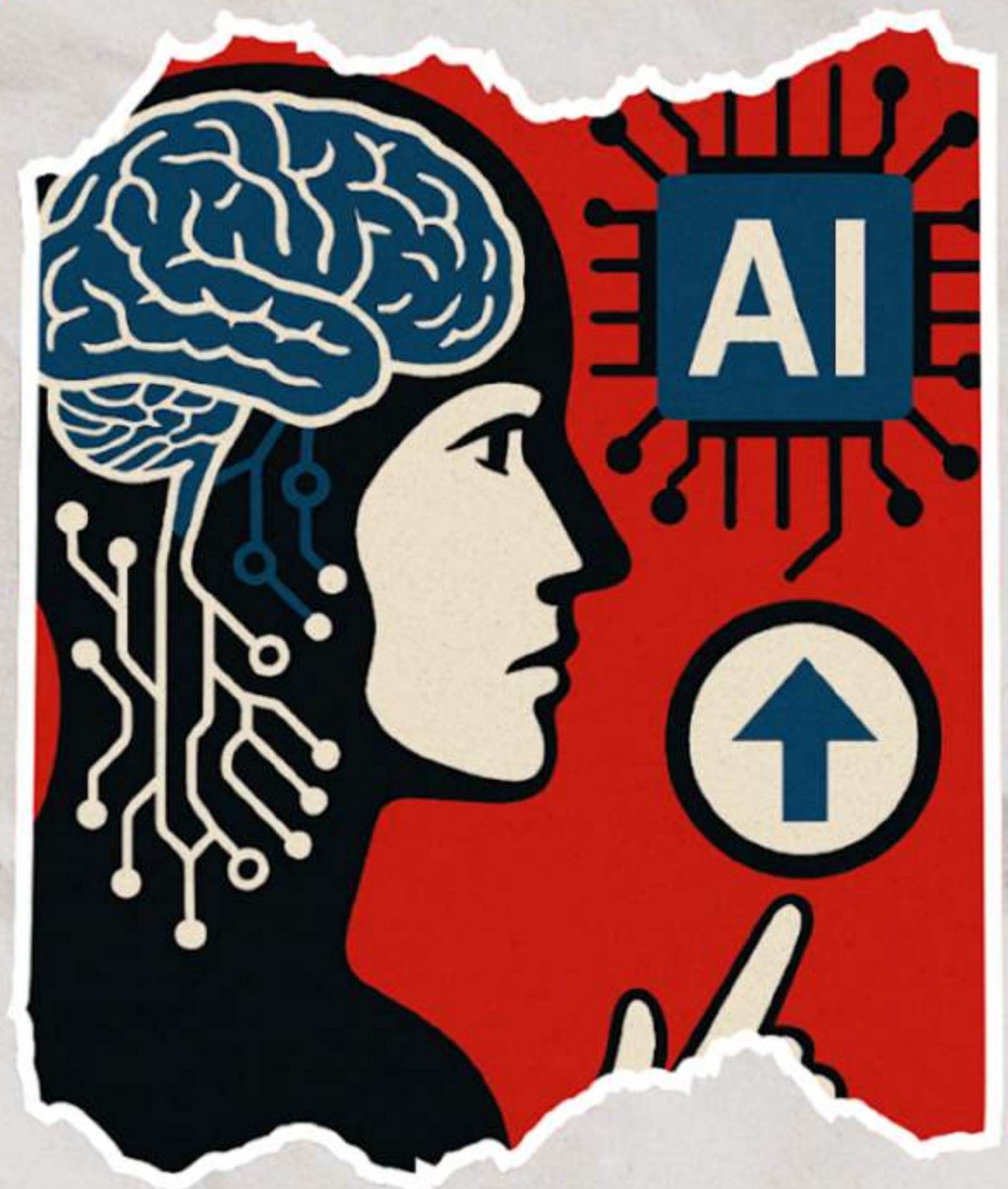
The Behavioral Blueprint  
Podcast is growing and we're  
looking for motivated  
collaborators to bring our  
episodes to life!

## OPEN POSITIONS:

- Audio Editor
  - clean up raw recordings
- Social Media Manager
  - designs promotional posts and clips
- Project Manager
  - coordinates guest outreach, tracks deadlines,  
and manages website/blog

You don't need to be an expert—  
just curious, reliable, and excited  
about what we're building.

IF INTERESTED, PLEASE REACH OUT TO:



**CONSUMER  
BEHAVIOR**

ATW65@GEORGETOWN.EDU

# SquashBuddy

Grow your game, expand your reach — with SquashBuddy, connect and compete.



To Apply Email me at  
[AlbertZhang8148@gmail.com](mailto:AlbertZhang8148@gmail.com)

If you have any questions or  
want to learn more visit  
[squashbuddy.net](http://squashbuddy.net)



Why Download the App?



**1** **Discover squash players near you** – Set your skill level, age, and preferences.

**2** **Match by skill, level, and preference** – Match with players who fit your level.

**3** **Set up a match in minutes** – no back-and-forth texting. Play more wait less.

**Launch a SquashBuddy Chapter in Your City!**

- Access to 1+ squash courts in your area
  - Willingness to coordinate 1+ meetup and event every 2 month
  - A small team or volunteers to spread the word
- Apply to Start a Chapter - be a leader in your community!**

# Framework Design Studio

AMPLIFYING THE VOICES OF MISSION DRIVEN ORGANIZATIONS

## ★ Our Team ★

What our team offers for our clients



### VIDEOS

We film events in the form of videos and photos for organizations to post on their social media.



### FINAL MOVIE

We also create mini movies for non profit events from the footage taken from day of the event.



### TRAINING

Providing marketing mentorship for public school student programs without access to media classes (Horizons program).



We can help create marketing materials for your student-led initiatives.



You can join our organization as a member and help us in our activities and projects.

*What opportunities do we offer?*

## CONTACT US

### Emails:

- [robert.guo27@ucc.on.ca](mailto:robert.guo27@ucc.on.ca)
- [asher.mandel@ucc.on.ca](mailto:asher.mandel@ucc.on.ca)
- [ahabi27@ucc.on.ca](mailto:ahabi27@ucc.on.ca)



**Framework Design**

GO FOLLOW @FRAMEWORK\_DESIGN\_STUDIO ON INSTAGRAM



# International High School Online Certamen

**Saturday, June 13th, 2026**

A celebration of classical knowledge, competition, and community  
for high school students worldwide





# 30 DAY ME

*Small Steps. Big Changes.*

## Sleep Challenge

6/1/2025 - 6/30/2025

Wish: Feel more well rested

Daily Action: Sleep >8 hours everyday

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
1 zzz	2 zzz	3 zzz	4 zzz	5 zzz	6 zzz	7 zzz
8 zzz	9 zzz	10 zzz	11 zzz	12 zzz	13 zzz	14 zzz
15 zzz	16 zzz	17 zzz	18 zzz	19 zzz	20 zzz	21 zzz
22 zzz	23 zzz	24 zzz	25 zzz	26 zzz	27 zzz	28 zzz
29 zzz	30 zzz					

## Build long-lasting habits in 30 days!

### How it works:

1. Create a challenge and define your daily action
2. Complete your daily action each day
3. Check off the day and build your streak!
4. Don't get demotivated by setbacks!



## Available on the iOS App Store


(Also available in Mandarin!)

→ Scan to download!

Or use:

 [30dayme](https://30dayme.com)

THE GREEN SOCIETY  
**EMBRACE GREEN, INSPIRE CHANGE**

 [www.the-green-society.org](http://www.the-green-society.org)

**THIRD ANNUAL  
ENVIRONMENTAL &  
CLIMATE FICTION  
WRITING CONTEST**



Submit short stories, articles, or poems that bring light to environmental issues, paint vivid pictures of worlds grappling with environmental challenges, and more.

**Let your imagination run free!**



**WIN CASH PRIZES**



**GET PUBLISHED IN LEGACY GAZETTE**  
(INT'L MAGAZINE)



**REQUIREMENTS**



**JUNIOR DIVISION**

Students in Grades 6-8  
500-1000 Words



**SENIOR DIVISION**

Students in Grades 9-11  
500-2000 Words

**SUBMISSION DEADLINE  
JULY 15, 2026**

Send your entry to:  
[thegreensociety23@gmail.com](mailto:thegreensociety23@gmail.com)



# START-STEM&ART

Artwork by Ashley Wang  
Poster by Dilan Yang

## ART EXHIBITION



- **Deadline: April 15th, 2026.**
- **All schools, art, science welcome!**
- **Winners will be announced during a community meeting.**
- **Scan the QR Code for more info & SUBMIT!**
- **Link to website:**  
**<https://startgallery.lovable.app>**