



Melissa >



# Black Luminosity in the age of Social media

A zine about violence &  
representation in a digital era.

Content warning for:

- anti-Black racism
- police violence
- discussion of graphic imagery

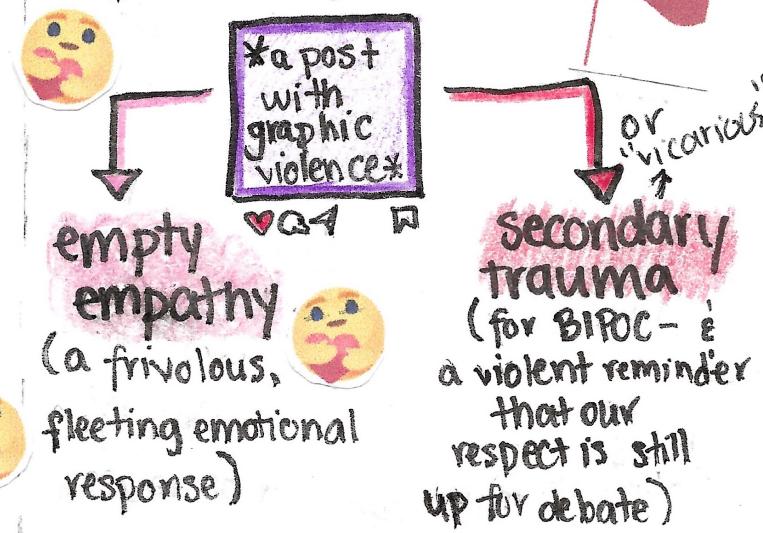


Are you thinking about sharing graphic imagery (photos / videos) of police brutality against Black, Indigenous, or other people of colour (BIPOC)\* for the purpose of "spreading awareness"? Hopefully this zine will give you some more to think about before posting.

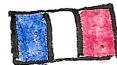
At the end of the day, even if you have good intentions, those feelings don't necessarily translate to helpful actions.

 **Melissa Phisic**  
The term "BIPOC" is West/  
"North America"-centric  
    

The thing about posting images of instances of structural violence on social media is that it frag~~z~~ments and obscures long-standing histories of anti-Black violence, surveillance, & technology.



Let's talk about photography, archives, & surveillance. Photography is an indexical medium (as in it indexes /catalogues things), & it informs racial boundaries in "North America". The photographic past (archives) influences the photographic present. So this is pretty fucked up, but there's a HOODED archive of lynching photography (as in KKK lynching) that made a show out of anti-Black violence, packaged it, & commodified it \$\$\$.



Now, sousveillance ("surveillance from below") documents people in positions of power, often abusing it. Bystander videos of police brutality fall into this category. These videos may be vital evidence in the courts... but your timeline is not the courts. Considering that new videos of anti-Black violence don't exist in a cultural vacuum, but exist on the same historical-photographic continuum as the hooded archive,

Do bystander videos induce the gaze of the lynch mob?

Simone Browne argues that Black bodies have been made hypervisible by surveillance tech. She calls this **BLACK LUMINOSITY:**

... a form of boundary maintenance occurring at the site of the racial body, whether by candle-light, flaming torch, or the camera flashbulb that documents the ritualized terror of the lynch mob.



She also asks:

By accounting for violence do [our] reading practices act to re-inscribe violence and a re-making of blackness and black skin, as objectified?

I don't have a straight answer for this topic. I think we ought to post mindfully & be critically aware on social media. If:

- you've seriously reflected on posting something
  - you can't find a less visually violent way of posting
- then maybe the best thing to do is to share. Public outrage can be a productive force. But PLEASE do your due diligence to your BIPOC friends & use a content warning on your post:



Melissa Plisic

The content warning at the top of this post is meant so that people on social media have a warning and time to chose not to engage with this post if they might find it distressing, triggering, or are plain tired of seeing more Asian death. Content warnings are about protecting each other from encountering unexpected violence on social media.

this example pertains to anti-Asian violence

Let's end on a positive note!

Counter-archives are collections of images that aren't merely sousveillance, but hold the creative agency of BIPOC that could oppose the hooded archive.

"What separates hope from despair is a different way of telling the same story."

- de Batton

Two of my favourite counter-archivists are (on Instagram):  
@theunapolageticstreetseries  
@thefakepan