



**GirlTalk Magazine**  
**Feburary 2021**

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**Cover art by Nomi Kuntz**



# Girl Talk Year in Review

by Olivia Weiner

Looking back, 2020 feels like nothing short of a hot mess. A year filled with global loss, fear, anger, and polarization. From the COVID-19 pandemic to BLM protests to a nation divided across political lines, everything from mask-wearing to election results seemed to pull us further apart and down deeper, darker holes of political rhetoric.

Perpetual quarantine hasn't helped matters either. Simple human contact is infrequent. Even guilty pleasures like travel and parties and dinners out are all held in suspended animation. Each month that passes feels like a reflection of the one before it. Time has stood still, memories put on hold. And while it might seem counterintuitive to look back at 2020 in more detail, a quick glimpse at all that we've endured (the good, the bad, the tragic, and the trivial) might offer you a little reassurance that we can survive anything.

## Jan 8th

Meghan Markle and Prince Harry quit the royal family and escape to... Canada?

## Jan 9th

W.H.O. announces that a deadly coronavirus

has emerged in Wuhan, China.

## Jan 26th

Legendary basketball great Kobe Bryant is killed in a helicopter crash along with his daughter and seven others

## Feb 5th

Senate acquits President Trump in his first impeachment trial.

## Feb 24th

Harvey Weinstein is convicted of rape and sexual abuse, a watershed moment for the #MeToo movement.

## Feb/March

Raging Australian bush fires take lives, destroy homes and burn 46 millions acres.

## March 9th

Stock Market Crash. Dow suffers worst single-day point drop ever.

## March 11th

W.H.O declares Covid 19 a pandemic, Trump declares a national emergency in the U.S.

**May/June**

BLM protests sweep the nation after the police-involved murders of George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, Jacob Blake and Breonna Taylor.

**May**

Murder hornets arrive in the US... because, of course.

**June 10th**

U.S. Covid-19 cases reach 2 million. President Trump says masks a “personal choice.”

**June**

Joseph Biden clinches the Democratic nomination for President.

**July 17th**

Civil rights icon and political leader John Lewis passes away.

**August 4th**

A massive explosion at a Beirut port kills at least 190 people.

**August 11th**

Biden announces Kamala Harris as his running mate, the first black woman and the first Asian woman on a major party's presidential ticket.

**August 17th**

Covid-19 is now the third leading cause of death in U.S. Trump still won't wear a mask.

**August 28th**

Black Panther actor Chadwick Boseman dies of cancer at 43.

**August/September**

Deadly wildfires in California and Washington burn millions of acres and displace hundreds of thousands of people.

**Sept 18**

Supreme Court Justice and trailblazer Ruth Bader Ginsburg dies at age of 87.

**Sept 23rd**

New, more contagious strain of Covid-19 is discovered as Covid fatigue also surges.

**Sept 28th**

Global Covid-19 deaths surpass 1 million, which exceed the deaths caused by HIV, dysentery, malaria, influenza, cholera and measles combined in 2020.

**Oct 2**

President Trump and First Lady test positive for Covid-19. Trump is soon hospitalized.

**Oct 19th**

Global cases of Covid-19 top 40 million. The Fall surge has become a reality.

**Nov 7th**

Joseph Biden is elected the 46th President of the United States.

**Nov/December**

Donald Trump refuses to concede or accept the results of the 2020 election.

**Dec 14th**

First Americans are vaccinated against the coronavirus. Vaccine roll out slowly begins.

**Dec 31st**

The death toll from Covid-19 reaches a grim 400,000 in U.S. 20 million vaccinations to Americans by end of the year, as promised by Trump Admin, fails to materialize.

**Jan 6th**

A deadly assault on the United States Capitol rocks the country after weeks of disinformation about the validity of the 2020 election from the Trump administration.

**Jan 7th**

Congress certifies the election of President-Elect Joe Biden in the early morning hours following the assault.

**Jan 14th**

Trump is impeached. Again. This time for inciting the insurrection on January 6th.

**Jan 20th**

Joseph Biden is sworn in as 46th President of the United States.

# Double Standards Galore

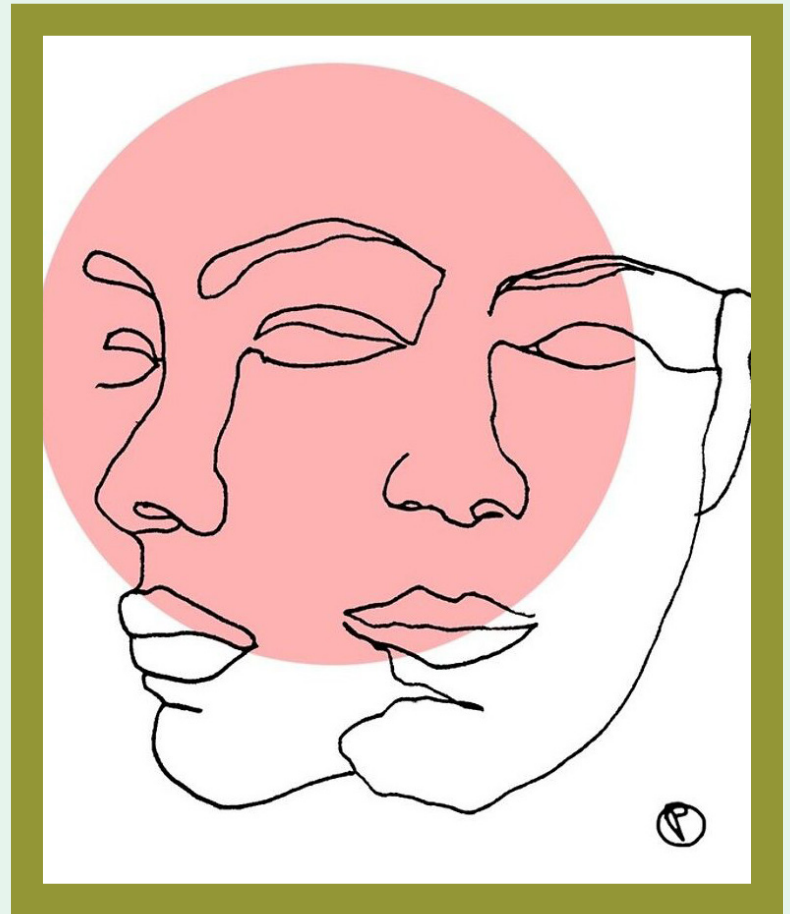
by Monie Choi

January 6, 2021 was the monumental day that troves of Americans sporting “Make America Great Again” hats stormed the Capitol building in an effort to prevent Congress from counting the Electoral College’s votes that would confirm Joe Biden as President of the United States. These rioters, who were mostly White, entered the Capitol with surprising ease, stampeding freely through the chambers, defacing statues, and stealing Capitol property. Even more seriously, hundreds surrounded the officers whom they heavily outnumbered, severely beating them and later killing some.

Notably, on June 1, 2020, when Black Lives Matter protestors congregated outside the White House to protest the murder of George Floyd, crowds were met with a very different response. Trump, who was sheltered in a secure bunker within the depths of the White House, determined to show “total domination” by ordering for armies of police and National Guardsmen to meet peaceful protesters with brutal fires of rubber bullets and tear gas.

Comparatively, the rioters at D.C. incited terror for hours, at times getting as close as 100 feet of Congresspeople, before 1,100 D.C. National Guard troops arrived. Flocking in the tens of thousands, the January 6th rioters were by no means a surprise, as Trump had urged his supporters weeks in advance to “be wild” on his (now banned) Twitter account. Although his desperate cries for support were very much public and police and FBI intelligence had privately warned of an insurrection occurring, law enforcement agencies failed to take action in anticipation of January 6th.

Although the FBI and local police are now pounding the pavement on viewing



security footage to make arrests of the January 6th rioters, we must ask: where were they when we needed them?” It would be remiss of me to add, though, that this lack of action by authorities is not a complete fault police and guardsmen, as Trump had deliberately refused to deploy the National Guard for hours until then Vice President Pence took control of the situation and facilitated their mobilization himself. Unfortunately, the seize on the Capitol weighed down in the hearts of Americans watching nationwide that this country is still very much plagued with the disease of racism and white-nationalist terrorism that has and continues to go unchecked.



# Why We Can Leave “Aesthetics” In 2020

by Sophie Saxl

In 2020, Generation Z had a massive obsession with “aesthetics”, specifically those based in fashion. Aesthetics like indie, cottagecore, soft girl, dark academia, and e girl just to name a few are all examples of these distinctly specified groups. Though they may seem harmless, these dictated styles put us in boxes that make it impossible to be one’s true self, bringing with them a fleet of other problems including but not limited to exclusivity based on race and wealth norming, as well as a loss of your true identity.

As a 13-year-old girl, myself and others near my age don’t truly know who we are yet. We are constantly judged by society in a time that is already so uncertain, and having these perfect little guides for a personality and look that people will like seems to be exactly what we need right now. Little do we know, though these aesthetics seem perfectly appealing, they may really harm the makings of the people we will grow up to be.

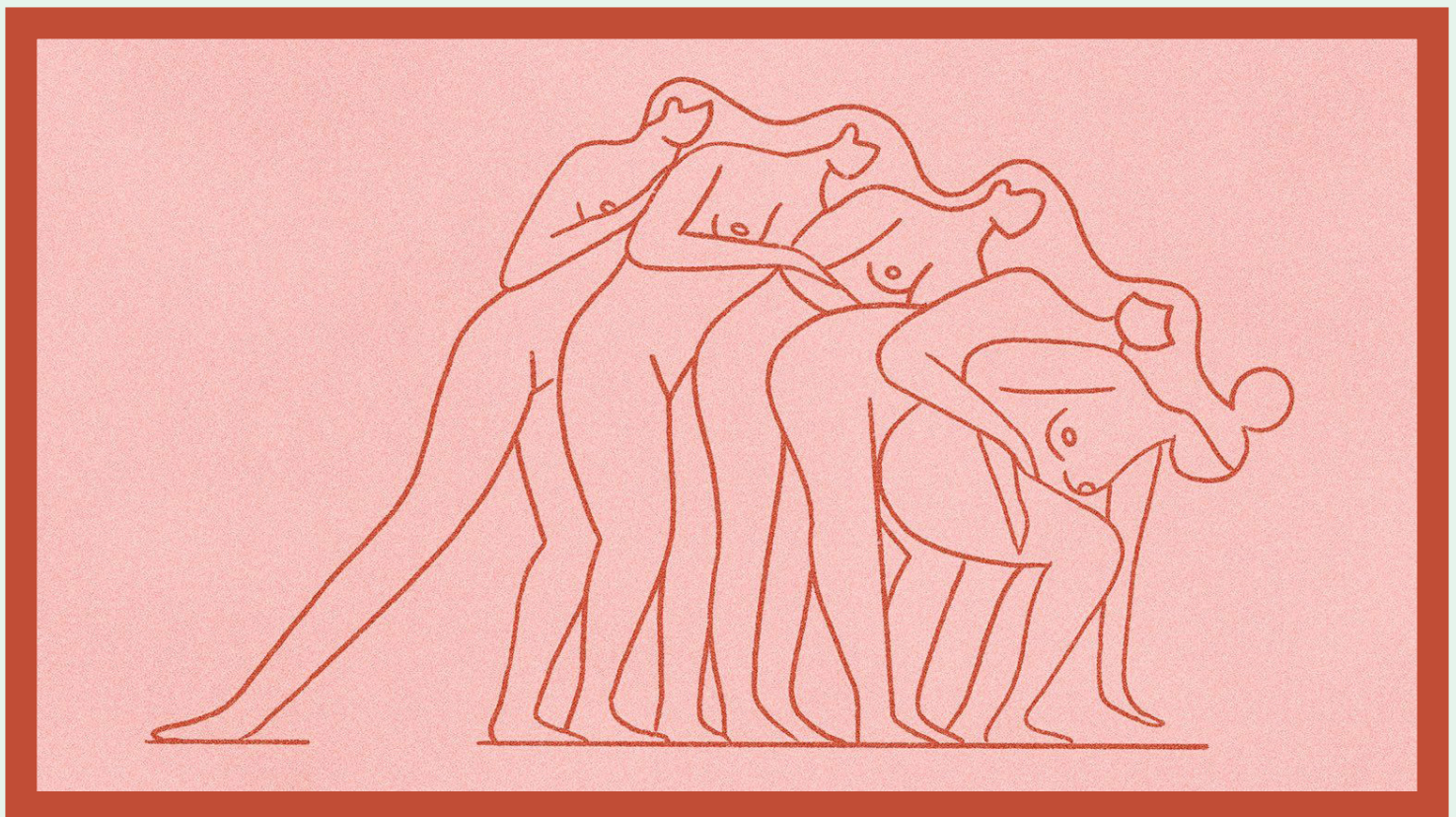
For starters, these aesthetics are based on a couple of things. Sometimes music, sometimes how you decorate your room, sometimes what pictures you post, but one thing is a constant. Clothing is one of the only ways we can express ourselves during the pandemic, and

each aesthetic is tied to specific clothing. These aesthetics assume an ability to purchase. Not only does buying clothing like this cost a lot, but it contributes to the growing issue of fast fashion. Oftentimes these outfits consist of much of the exact same clothing, specifically from brands like Brandy Melville and Urban Outfitters. If you go to Pinterest, Instagram, or any kind of social media where you can source images, you search up “soft girl” or “indie girl” or anything like that, I bet you will be able to count 3 of the exact same articles of clothing on one page. Clearly, putting yourself in these limits makes it difficult to be unique in a group full of girls dressed just like you.

More importantly, these aesthetics straightjacket style with their utter lack of racial inclusivity. BIPOC are rarely associated with cutesy or retro aesthetics, and the lack of black and brown girls included in soft and skater aesthetics makes these boundaries even tighter- not only do they become exclusive based on money but on race as well. The cottagecore aesthetic is based on blonde/light ginger hair and cute button noses, something many people of color, as well as many other groups, don’t have. Another problematic aesthetic is “dark academia”. Dark academia is based around “dressing like a liberal arts college student” as well as discussing

and romanticizing art and literature. It requires the idea of a “higher education: something that not everyone can afford or has access to. This becomes very eurocentric when we see that all the books discussed and romanticized are by white authors. There is a huge lack of BIPOC literature, especially Islamic and black literature when it comes to the dark academia aesthetic. The same goes for the art discussion, the art periods and artists presented are almost always white. But many of these groups truly don’t realize the issues here. This comes to light especially specifically in a recently popularized song (that actually came out in 2013) called Strawberry Blond by the artist Mitsiki. Mitsiki is a queer Asian-American woman and the song is actually about not fitting into eurocentric beauty standards, and being in love with someone who does fit them. The song has been taken into the cottagecore aesthetic and labeled as “a cottagecore song” simply because of the beautiful and happy sound of it. The problems with the exclusivity of many aesthetics, cottagecore being one of the main ones, is a main point in the song, and it’s totally overlooked by the very groups who create the problems.

The most obvious of all the problems that come along with these aesthetics are the feeling bound to certain aesthetics/personalities and the inability to be unique and special. When you base your life around these pre-decided aesthetics, you risk losing yourself and your unique voice. Though aesthetics can be fun, they can mess up self-esteem and make people feel like they’re not good enough to be who they really are. Young people’s self-confidence especially during the pandemic has already been depleted, and having these already decided patterns we must fit in makes it even harder to be proud of our identities. While they are marketed as something for everyone to have more fun being themselves, they have completely eliminated that for so many. So what’s my take? They have to go. Their labels, their issues, and their subconscious connections and disconnections cause no more good than everyone just acting and dressing like they wanted to could. Anyone should be able to dress any way they like without it having to be associated with all of these complicated problems. People could still dress in the typical “indie” style, but if we lose the “Indie” label, everyone can put their own spin on things, and we can all be our incredible unique selves again. So in 2021, this new chaotic, confusing, and hopeful year, let’s ditch the tags and really be ourselves.



# The Debate to Regulate

by Alex Wexler



The freedom of expression is one of the most fiercely protected, highly debated, and well known amendments in our Constitution. Perhaps you first heard about the First Amendment in a classroom, on the news, or from one of your parents. For most people, their explanations as to what the First Amendment is goes as far as explaining that we have free speech and can say whatever we want because of the constitution. However, it's so much more complicated than that. Constitutional rights are only protected when they don't infringe upon someone else's rights. So, free speech isn't really protected if your speaking somehow harms or endangers someone else. That's why you can't run into a movie theater and yell, "fire!", if there isn't actually a fire, because you potentially endanger people in that movie theater.

But who draws the line as to what causes harm? And can sharing an opinion really cause harm? Isn't this a form of governmental suppression? These are questions many people are asking themselves in the midst of former president Donald Trump's ban from Twitter. While it's difficult and frankly a disservice to boil down this issue into conservative and liberal issue, it's

the best generalization that can be made for the sake of this argument. Of course, some liberals would side with Trump on this issue, and some conservatives would side with Twitter, but again this is a generalization. So with that said, there's one major issue with the conservative's case that Trump's ban is unconstitutional. Twitter is a privately owned company. Co-founder and CEO Jack Dorsey is not a government official, and Twitter is by no means a government program, though it served as a political tool for this past administration. That means that Twitter isn't actually held to the same standards to uphold the constitution the way a government organization may be. The Bill of Rights actually specifies that private actors are not limited by constitutional amendments, and we've seen examples of this. Perhaps you've walked into a store and seen a sign that reads "We reserve the right to refuse service," that's just an example of private companies not being limited by the constitution. A government service doesn't have that same ability to refuse service as the private company does.

However, this sparks a more interesting discussion about the First Amendment's role in our society and it begs the question we've asked for so long, is the spread of misinformation or violent



ideology protected by the First Amendment? Is hate speech? Are conspiracies? After all, this country was founded on this right and it's safe to say that this right is crucial to our democracy, because what would the U.S. be if we didn't have the right to protest? Or the right to speak our minds? We've seen the negative effects of free speech being unprotected by the government or even being discouraged by the government. Look at where we are right now, many of us are in our homes, socially-distancing and quarantining because of the pandemic. This is of course due to decisions we made as a country, but there were also failures on the part of China, who actually censored Dr. Li Wenliang when he recognized the COVID virus. The spread of the virus within China was rampant and this was partially due to the fact that Dr. Li Wenliang couldn't tell others about the virus, and the Chinese government prevented him from doing so. So it's pretty safe to say that at the end of the day, the right to free speech is pretty important. But what happens when information being spread is false, or inaccurate, unlike Dr. Wenliang's reports. What happens when your own president calls the national pandemic that's taken the lives of two million a flu? Maybe, lack of regulation is perhaps equally as bad as no free speech at all in some scenarios. Trump's underplaying of the pandemic has taken lives and has caused unquantifiable impacts. Americans believed that they shouldn't have to fear COVID and other actors even convinced them it was a conspiracy. The lack of action taken to stop QAnon accounts also aided in the spread of the virus as many believed COVID was a hoax and took actions accordingly.

That being said, Trump's account wasn't even removed on the grounds that he was spreading misinformation, Twitter sited that Trump was inciting and glorifying violence. Trump tweeted that the election was stolen and followed these claims by asking his supporters to storm the capitol and demand change. Anyone who was watching the news January 6th knows that this is exactly what happened. Protestors and angry Trump supporters fueled by misinformation broke through police barricades, assaulted officers and ransacked the capitol in the name of Donald Trump and Trump actually spoke at the riots.

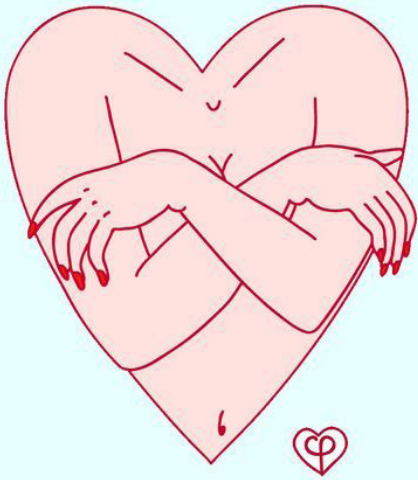


He later went to twitter denouncing the violence and asked people to go home, but the damage had already been done. Now, many of the people present at the riots are being charged on accounts of sedition and conspiracy. So the argument becomes, did the rioters take Trump's words and twist them, or is this the inevitable result of Trump's cult of personality and his encouragement of storming the capitol? Arguably, it's both, hence why Twitter specified that Trump continuously incited violence.

At the end of the day, many people would argue that we're safer with Trump being banned from Twitter because it circumvents events such as January 6th. Others would say that January 6th was a success because they believe the election really was stolen and they made a change. Either way, whether it's the government's job to regulate content because of its potentially harmful nature is still up for debate, but Twitter still has the right to because it's a private company.

# New Year, New Goal, New Found Self Love

by **Eve Kaplan**



The most common New Year's goal in America is losing weight. This goal never works when it's for the wrong reasons and can result in disordered eating or a damaged relationship with food. If your goal isn't going to improve you as a person and is based on your insecurities, then it probably isn't the right goal to be making.

We all know the feeling of mindlessly making a goal like to “stop stressing” or “get better mental health.” But those aren't going to work because they aren't addressing the real issues behind them. Your goal needs to be directed at the issue, not the symptom.

Big habits need to be slowly built up starting with smaller adjustments. So, if your goal is going to drastically affect your life like “getting a new intense fitness regime,” then it's probably not going to work out. If it's something that's going to totally change your life you shouldn't be making it as a New Year's goal.

Some of us find comfort in numbers; comfort in schedules, plans and consistency. That often results in quantifying your New Year's goal with a specific number, for example “drawing two hours every week.” This is a terrible goal. Although this action is seemingly doable because it's so small, it's toxic because there is a number attached to it. Putting a number on a goal leads to obsessions with the number, which creates an unhealthy relationship with the goal and the new habit you're trying to implement.

Now that we've gone over all the goals you should not be making, it's time to start talking about the

**E**very new year starts the same: a new resolution—a new goal for the year. 74% of American adults committed to a New Year's goal for 2021. These goals are one of the most toxic traditions. Although so many of these goals are unproductive, some are extremely positive. Let's make this year the one with New Year's resolutions rooted in self love.

About 12.23% of Americans with resolutions don't even believe their resolution is within reach, but you can't make a New Year's goal to achieve something that is out of your control. For example, getting promoted may be something you want, but it isn't something you have the power to make happen without outside factors.

Sometimes we find ourselves falling down the rabbit hole of making broad unspecific goals like “meeting the one.” You can make a New Year's goal to put yourself out there more, but meeting the one is not something you can incorporate into your life as a positive habit.

ones you should be. A perfect goal could be getting a new plant and watering it every day. This goal is achievable and small. It will better your mental health, and it's especially good for those living in small apartments. This goal will make the space you live in a more positive and bright place. Another great goal to set for the New Year is to learn something new. Whether you've always wanted to learn how to bake or sew, these are achievable skills you will stick to if you enjoy them. If you learn how to bake and hate it, don't worry, drop the whisk and try something else

you've always wanted to do like starting to journal.

Although there are so many substantial goals to make for the New Year, you also don't have to make one. There is nothing wrong with throwing the towel in and making your goal to simply get through the global pandemic we're currently in. No one knows what you need for the New Year more than you. Reflect, brainstorm, and make a more educated decision on your plan (or lack of plan) for this upcoming year.

# Inclusive Rom-Coms To Watch this Valentine's Day!

by **Carter Mitchell**

In the past decade, the movie industry has been making notable efforts to diversify its casting, writing, and directing. This is going to be crucial in these upcoming years as we see people trying to rectify the history of white-washing and exclusivity that Hollywood is known for. It is important that we, as a generation, push ourselves to write and direct diverse movies. Below you will find some of the most inclusive rom-coms of the twenty first century. These movies are just the start of the progression that needs to be made in the industry.

that black women can't be the love interest only the best friend or second choice. This movie also shows the diversity of Los Angeles, based in the neighborhood of Crenshaw we see how people in different neighborhoods in LA live. Overall this movie is a great addition for your Valentine's Day movie list and I would definitely rate this movie a 9/10 and would recommend it for ages 13 and up.

## 1. Love and Basketball

Starring notable actors Sanaa Lathan and Omar Epps, Love and Basketball details the lives of two basketball players, a classic tale of best friends to love interests. Viewers learn about two talented basketball players, seeing how their careers fluctuate when going to high school, college, and thru their adult lives, we also get insight about the sexism that comes with the Basketball world. With a cast mainly built up with people of color, this movie allows for African American girls everywhere to see themselves on screen, as the love interest instead of the best friend to the, usually white, love interest or as another background character. Movies like "10 Things I Hate About You" and "Tall Girl" perpetuate these stereotypes



## 2. Always Be My Maybe

Detailing a Story about two estranged childhood friends, they run into each other again after years of no communication. The audience sees how with the reconnection their love sparks again. Starring Ali Wong and Randall Park this movie shows the culture and love that come from immigrant households and how different expectations and experience form our adult life. This movie gives Asian men and women time to shine in a mostly white genre of romantic comedies. Historically, Asians are never cast as love interests, so this movie gives Asian Americans a chance to see themselves in a romantic movie. This movie is just too great of a rom-com to not watch on your Valentine's Day! I give this movie a 8/10 and would recommend for ages 13 and up.

## 3. Lovebirds

This movie is a thrilling murder mystery mixed with romance. We see this couple, played by Issa Rae and Kumail Nanjiani, unravel the murder they somehow got involved with and their love for each other. With a diverse cast this interracial coupling shows the media that in order to have mix raced couple one of the



people in the relationship doesn't have to be white. Once again showing Black girls that they can be love interests even though they aren't the European beauty standard that is praised in Hollywood. This movie shows that not all romance movies need to be about prospering couples, because that is unrealistic instead, it shines a realistic light on dating. Famous rom-coms like "The Notebook" and "13 on 30" don't accurately represent this, so seeing this is refreshing. All in all this movie is a great add to your Valentine's Day list of movies to watch! I give this movie a 7/10 and recommend this movie for ages 13 and up.

## 4. All the Bright Places

When making romance movies with diverse casts many writers and directors fail to highlight one important part in diversity. That portrays the different neurological behaviors of the characters, we mainly see too perfectly stable characters who fall in love, but it is also important to highlight those with different mental illnesses and that is exactly what this movie does. "All the Bright Places" details a couple with different mental illnesses due to abuse and death in their families. We see how crucial mental health is to the generation we are in today. This movie shows those with different mental and emotional disorders that they can be in a relationship and that it is important to share with others what you are going through. This movie is a great add to your collection, you will get incite into the different psychological disorders! I would rate this movie a 9/10 and would recommend for ages 14 and up because of the mental issues it discusses are mature.





# The Impact a TikTok Influencer has in this Pandemic

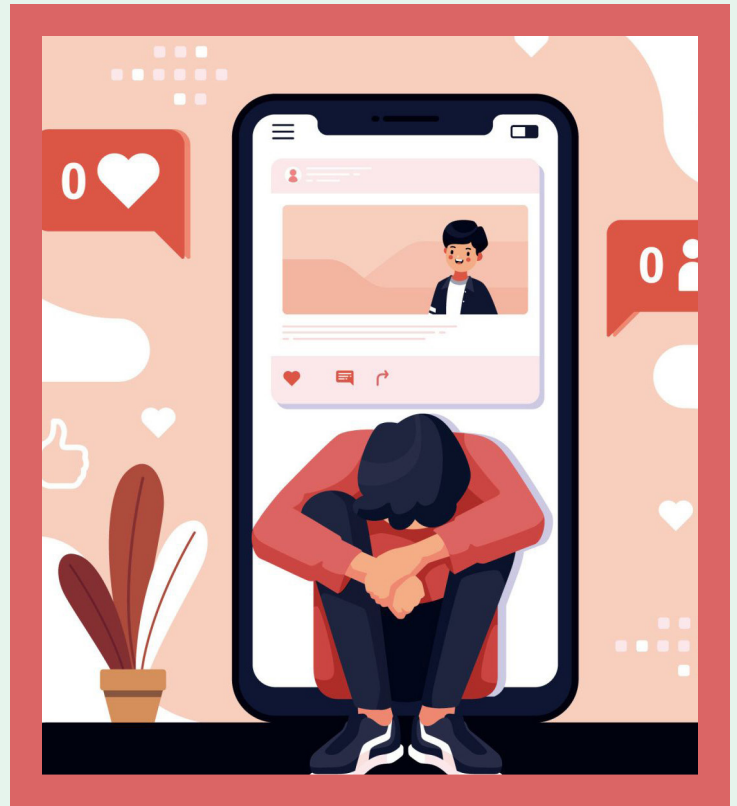
by Lily Kramon

Since the holidays, the United States has seen a resurgence in covid cases and deaths. The global epicenter is in Los Angeles. Interestingly, Los Angeles is home to most influencers on Instagram and Tik Tok, who have openly disregarded the Pandemic and put everyone around them at risk. Since June of 2020, groups of influencers self-named as the 'Sway House', 'Hype House', and 'Clubhouse' have had huge house parties with hundreds of people, and have made no effort to even attempt to hide it from the public. For months we have seen the same routine: Influencers throw a party, the public is outraged, and then the influencers apologize on camera. A couple weeks ago, the public found out that a group of Tik Tok Influencers from Los Angeles traveled to the Bahamas despite the surge in Covid Cases and lack of ICU Beds in Los Angeles. These influencers included Charli and Dixie Damelio, Noah Beck, Chase Hudson, Avani Gregg, Madi Monroe, Bryant Eslava, and

Anthony Reeves each with millions of followers on their respective social media accounts. Not only were there pictures of these people traveling and disregarding covid guidelines, there were also pictures of them taking pictures with fans with no masks on. What kind of message does this send to all of the students and fans who have spent 10 months in quarantine unable to go to parties, attend school, and hug their friends? The majority of these influencers' fans range from about 7-13 years old. Young fans are now receiving the wrong message about Covid, and could begin to follow in the footsteps of their favorite influencers who seem like they could care less about Covid and the immense amount of people at risk. In an interview with influencer Noah Beck, who traveled to the Bahamas, he said, "Especially in the business that we're in, it's like you need some time to kind of disconnect for a little you know? That's what it was meant for, just a little trip to get away."

He talked about “The Business that we’re in.” Does he mean the business of getting paid to live in a mansion while gathering with friends to make 15 second dance videos? He said this while there is another ‘business’, one in which frontline workers are putting their lives at risk to hold covid patients’ hands during their last moments. We would all love to take a luxurious trip to the beach right now, or hug our best friends. However, decent and aware people are staying in as painful as it is, because they know that it can save lives and bring us out of this pandemic.

As a 16 year old myself, it brings up lots of feelings when I scroll through social media and see many influencers not being safe. When I see them having massive sleepovers and going on luxurious trips, I begin to feel angry, upset, and sometimes jealous. I am doing my part in this pandemic which means that I haven’t been able to hug my best friends for almost a year, but I continue to stay safe because



I care about the people around me. At times it feels as if these influencers haven't really been impacted by the pandemic. Many of their fans are younger and have most likely been hit hard by not being able to see their friends or go to school, so imagine what it is like for them to see the people they look up to completely disregard the pandemic that has taken more than 400,000 American lives. Ultimately, these social media influencers who have ignored and disregarded the global pandemic need to be held accountable for their actions. They have the power and the platform to help in this pandemic by setting an example for the people who look up to them, and they are throwing that opportunity away. Being famous and working as an influencer on social media platforms doesn't make you immune to this virus, and it certainly shouldn't excuse you from taking the precautions that many others are taking. To every single instagram influencer and tik toker who has yet to stay home and stay safe in this pandemic, it is time for you to do your part.