

Going, going, gone... to Africa!

Travel and lifestyle company uses tech-driven campaign to reframe racial slur

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Black & Abroad, a travel brand dedicated to the modern Black traveller, has hijacked the derogatory statement 'go back to Africa' to change the narrative around its use and help increase tourism in the continent's 54 countries.



The campaign, by **FCB/SIX**, Toronto works by initially selecting abusive posts online containing the statement 'go back to Africa' and overlaying them against beautiful images of the continent's diverse landscapes and thriving cities.

A custom-created AI platform uses Google Vision to crowd-source images from people who already live in or have visited an African country. The platform filters

the images based location, subject, quality and relevancy.

It also acts as a real-time content marketing engine, aggregating relevant imagery before adding it to a dedicated campaign website and distributing it through Black & Abroad's social media channels. This activity also encourages African Americans to post their own images and interact via the hashtag #GoBackToAfrica.



INSIGHT /

'Backlash' and discrimination / This campaign addresses the key issues of discrimination and representation that African Americans, including Black & Abroad's founders **Eric Martin** and **Kent Johnson**, routinely encounter as part of their travel experiences. Despite these problems, travelling is something this community does in abundance, according to the latest report by Mandala Research on African American Travel. The report found that African Americans contributed \$63 billion towards the travel and tourism economy in the United States.

'But you don't see billions of dollars represented in advertising and media', Johnson pointed out to Contagious. When it comes to travel-related searches, what you see is the perspective of one race. With this campaign, Johnson says, Black & Abroad is working to 'give another tone, another shade and another perspective on what it means to travel in this world.'

This comes at a time where there is high racial tension in America just over 2 years into Trump's administration as president. Johnson said: 'As African Americans we're already very triggered by interactions with police and based on our history here, we have a different approach to certain spaces in the world.' By showing it understands this tension, Black & Abroad is clearly differentiating itself from its competitors and positioning itself as an ally to an underserved market.

Creating a movement through diversity / By taking something that is routinely used as a disparaging term and using it to empower those who are being oppressed, this campaign sets the tone for important discussions about diversity.

It does this in a very literal way, taking a derogatory message from the internet and contrasting the ugliness of that statement with the beauty of countries many people seldom see. As Black & Abroad's Eric Martin told us, 'In the US we're fed a toxic narrative about the continent' and people in the US are typically only exposed to Africa through news stories of disasters or poverty relief campaigns.

#GoBackToAfrica aims to change people's outlook about all 54 countries by sourcing beautiful images that, over time, will help create a new perspective for African American travellers.

Strategy via technology / Ian Mackenzie, Creative Executive Director for FBC/SIX told Contagious that the technology has two basic strategic functions.

1, Displace the hate: 'We are interested in creating content that starts to displace some of the negative commentary, so when you search 'go back to Africa' you're going to see a more positive representation of Africa and specifically members of the black community.'

2, Reframing the narrative: As the discussion progresses, and people play a bigger part in this campaign they will be able to contribute their own images. Mackenzie told Contagious that eventually this campaign aims to get to a place where 'if you search travel on Google Images, there won't be displacement and you will see more representation and inspirational images of people travelling to Africa.'

Mackenzie also emphasised that in the face of any possible backlash from a campaign it is important to trust yourself as an agency to ask the tough questions, try your best to get it right and be brave. Easier said than done: for more on brand bravery, watch the Contagious talk [here](#).