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BLACK CULTURAL INTELLIGENCE

CULTURETECHLENS RESEARCH REPORT · CTL-RB-PRES-000002

The Disappearing Black Web

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Field	Value
Research ID	CTL-RB-PRES-000002
Version	0.1
Status	Research
Domain	Preservation (PRES)
Geography	United States; Chicago cases where documented
Time period	1990s–present
Date	2026-09-28
Pilot note	Pilot study running ahead of CTL-DR-PRESERVE-001

01 Executive Summary

Historically significant Black digital material — the websites, forums, music, video, writing, and social-media records through which Black life has been documented online since the 1990s — is disappearing through five documented mechanisms: (1) outright platform shutdowns, (2) acquisitions and migrations that strand content, (3) corporate platform governance (purges, suspensions, API closures), (4) link rot and format decay, and (5) creator-owned archives with no institutional backup.

MySpace confirmed in March 2019 that a server migration destroyed roughly 50 million songs from 14 million artists uploaded between 2003 and 2015. Yahoo shut GeoCities in 2009, deleting whatever owners had not rescued; Yahoo Groups had all posted content deleted in December

2019 and closed fully in December 2020. Twitter ended free academic API access in spring 2023, degrading twarc and Documenting the Now's Hydrator — tools built to archive Black Lives Matter. DatPiff, the defining mixtape platform of hip-hop's blog era, went dark in 2023; its announced Internet Archive rescue collection then vanished without explanation (status unresolved). The pioneering Black portals collapsed earlier: Africana.com (founded 1999 by Gates and Appiah, bought by Time Warner in 2000) closed January 31, 2005; NetNoir (1995) is defunct; BlackVoices.com was absorbed by AOL and then HuffPost. Domain checks on 2026-09-28 found blackvoices.com, africana.com, netnoir.com, and racialicious.com no longer resolving; clutchmagazine.com redirected to a GoDaddy for-sale page.

The honest finding: nobody knows how much Black material was in most of these losses, because platforms never counted it and no institution was archiving it at scale. That unmeasured gap is itself the core risk. The response — Archiving the Black Web ($2.5M Mellon grant, March 2023), Documenting the Now, the Mixtape Museum — is real but young, and postdates most of the losses.

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02 Primary Research Question

What risks threaten historically significant Black digital material?

A risk-mapping question, not a loss-accounting question. Every risk requires a specific documented case, and each case is classified: confirmed lost / confirmed at-risk / migrated elsewhere / status unknown. Suspected-but-unconfirmed losses stay PROVISIONAL or UNRESOLVED — never VERIFIED.

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03 Why It Matters

The Black web has no default institutional steward. Its material lives on corporate servers governed by terms of service, advertising markets, and acquisition strategies — none of which are preservation strategies. When a platform dies, the historical record of the communities that used it dies with it unless someone else was copying. Black users adopted these platforms at disproportionate rates (Vine's teen users were 31% Black non-Hispanic per Pew, cited by NPR) — so the losses concentrate in the Black historical record. Working premise: **platform-controlled Black cultural memory is Black cultural memory at risk.**

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04 Scope

In scope: U.S.-based Black digital material, 1990s–present: defunct or declined Black web portals, forums, and community sites; platform shutdowns/data losses affecting Black digital culture; expired or abandoned domains of Black media outlets, organizations, and artists; API changes, suspensions, and purges with documented impact on Black archives or creators; link

rot in Black digital scholarship and journalism; creator-owned material with no institutional backup. Chicago cases where documented.

Out of scope: physical archives and digitization (CTL-RB-PRES-000001); non-U.S. material; speculative future risks without documented precedent; private individuals' personal data (hard privacy constraint).

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05 Definitions

Historically significant Black digital material (working definition): digital-born content — web pages, forums, social-media posts, audio, video, datasets, code — documenting Black life, culture, organizing, or expression in the United States, whose loss would impair future historical understanding.

Contested terminology — flagged first: - *"The Black web"* is a research question, not a settled category. ATBW's Mellon-funded initiative explicitly aims at "mapping, describing, and producing scholarship about *the Black web*" — the boundaries are not yet agreed. - *"Loss"* = confirmed destruction or irretrievability. Content that moved (The Undefeated → Andscape) is *migrated*, not lost. Content whose location is unknown is *status unknown*, not lost. - *"Archive"* = a preservation copy under independent stewardship — not a platform's servers, not a search cache, and not an embedded YouTube video (§17).

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06 Historical Context

The Black web predates the social web. In 1994–1995, **NetNoir** (E. David Ellington, Malcolm CasSelle) launched on AOL and the open web. **BlackVoices.com** launched in 1995 at the Orlando Sentinel Online with a $5 million Tribune investment, moved to Chicago in 1998, and passed a million registered users. **Africana.com** was founded in January 1999 by Henry Louis Gates Jr. and Kwame Anthony Appiah. **BlackPlanet** launched September 1, 1999 (Omar Wasow, Benjamin Sun) and reached a reported 20 million users at its peak.

This first generation died of capital starvation and consolidation. Charlton McIlwain (Marketplace, 2021): Black founders "did not have the kind of networks of capital and investment" of white peers; "the capital dried up," and promising companies were acquired and absorbed. Africana.com was bought by Time Warner in 2000 (reported ~$10M) and closed January 31, 2005, features folded into AOL BlackVoices. AOL bought BlackVoices from Tribune in February 2004. Radio One bought Community Connect (BlackPlanet) for $38 million in April 2008. BlackPlanet survived under Urban One but declined after 2011 as Facebook and Twitter absorbed its users.

The second wave was the social web: MySpace (2003), DatPiff (2005), FakeShoreDrive (2007), Vine (2013), and Black Twitter's role in documenting the 2014 Ferguson protests — which seeded Documenting the Now (2016). Each wave concentrated Black cultural production on

infrastructure Black people did not own. Each wave's infrastructure has since failed, been sold, or been fenced off.

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07 Key Findings

F1. Platform shutdown is the best-documented loss mechanism, and it is total. MySpace (March 2019): ~50M songs, 14M artists, plus photos and videos. GeoCities (Oct 2009), Yahoo Groups (Dec 2019–Dec 2020): same pattern — corporate decision, months' notice, whatever was not copied is gone.

F2. The pioneering Black portals were lost to acquisition and capital starvation. Africana.com ended in a corporate fold-in; NetNoir is defunct; BlackVoices.com was sold twice and its message boards — the community's actual archive — were removed under HuffPost. Survival under new ownership did not preserve the content that mattered.

F3. Platform governance now deletes and fences Black archives faster than shutdowns. Twitter's 2023 API paywall ($100/mo Basic; reported $42,000/mo Enterprise) "robbed" Documenting the Now's Catalog, Hydrator, and twarc "of much of their usefulness" (Walsh, 2023). Facebook's 2018 purges removed hundreds of pages including Black-themed ones. Pew (May 2024): nearly 1 in 5 tweets gone within months.

F4. The DatPiff case is the sharpest unresolved loss. The defining mixtape platform of hip-hop's blog era went dark in March 2023 after its 2019 MediaLab acquisition; the announced Internet Archive rescue collection (~366,420 mixtapes) then disappeared without explanation. UNRESOLVED — no official statement from any party.

F5. Nobody measured the Black share of any general-platform loss. Platforms never published demographic breakdowns of lost content; Black collecting institutions were not web-archiving at scale when the losses happened. Documented disproportionate Black *use* makes disproportionate Black *loss* the reasonable inference — stated as inference.

F6. The rescue infrastructure is real but young and small. ATBW ($2.5M Mellon, March 2023), Documenting the Now (2016), the Mixtape Museum — all postdate most of the losses they were built to prevent.

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08 Evidence

Full grading in `claim-ledger.json`. Nine claims were upgraded by opening full pages in this pass; the rest rest on corroborated search-result records (SUPPORTED) or weak sources (PROVISIONAL).

Mechanism 1 — Shutdown / data loss. MySpace: VERIFIED (~50M songs, 2003–2015; cause disputed by ex-CTO Andy Baio, scale not). The volunteer "Dragon Hoard" salvage — ~490,000 MP3s on the Internet Archive — is under 1% of the confirmed loss. GeoCities: VERIFIED shutdown (Oct 26, 2009; Yahoo refused to archive); rescue scale PROVISIONAL (~100K accounts

captured vs. ~38M pages, per contemporary reports). Yahoo Groups: SUPPORTED (uploads ended Oct 28, 2019; all posted content deleted Dec 14, 2019; site closed Dec 15, 2020). Vine: SUPPORTED (app discontinued Jan 17, 2017; read-only archive launched Jan 20, 2017; archive removed ~April 2019, exact date PROVISIONAL). Black stakes VERIFIED: 31% of teen Vine users Black non-Hispanic (Pew via NPR, 2016); Vine as Ferguson-era protest platform.

Mechanism 2 — Acquisition / migration / fold-in. Africana.com: SUPPORTED (founded Jan 1999, Gates & Appiah; Time Warner 2000; closed Jan 31, 2005; "many of the features" to AOL BlackVoices — migration completeness unknown). BlackVoices.com: SUPPORTED (founded 1995; Tribune → AOL Feb 2004 → HuffPost; domain dead per 2026-09-28 check; the claim that HuffPost removed the message boards is PROVISIONAL). NetNoir: SUPPORTED (launched June 1995, Ellington & CasSelle; "now-defunct" per Wasow; domain dead) — end date and content disposition UNRESOLVED. BlackPlanet: SUPPORTED (launched Sep 1, 1999, Wasow & Sun; 20M users peak; $38M Radio One acquisition Apr 2008; survived and declined) — the acquisition-survival control case. The Undefeated → Andscape (Feb 28, 2022): SUPPORTED — the clean-migration control case. DatPiff: VERIFIED (launched 2005 by Marcus Frasier; MediaLab 2019; severe outages Mar 2023); the IA-collection disappearance is PROVISIONAL/UNRESOLVED (Wikipedia + specialist podcast; no party has confirmed).

Mechanism 3 — Platform governance. Twitter/X API: VERIFIED end of free access (Feb 13, 2023, incl. academic track); downstream effects SUPPORTED (Twitter-data studies down 13% YoY; DocNow tools degraded). Facebook 2018: SUPPORTED (32 pages/accounts July, incl. "Black Elevation"; 559 pages + 251 accounts October). Framing DISPUTED (§19). The largest "Black Lives Matter" Facebook page (700K followers) was exposed as run from Australia and removed — SUPPORTED (CNN via Phys.org). DocNow's #blacklivesmatter dataset included 90 tweets from the Russian-linked @Blacktivist — SUPPORTED (DocNow white paper); archival ethics DISPUTED.

Mechanism 4 — Link rot / format decay. Pew (May 17, 2024): SUPPORTED — 25% of 2013–2023 webpages gone by Oct 2023; 38% of 2013 pages; 23% of news pages contain a broken link; ~18% of tweets gone within ~3 months. Harvard legal link-rot studies: SUPPORTED (50% of SCOTUS-opinion URLs dead; 70%+ of Harvard Law Review URLs; Chesapeake: ~37% dead within six years). No Black-scholarship-specific link-rot study was found — research gap (UNRESOLVED). Wayback CDX/availability APIs returned HTTP 429 during this pass (VERIFIED methodological finding); snapshot-level claims for dead domains stay UNRESOLVED.

Mechanism 5 — Creator-owned single points of failure. FakeShoreDrive (Chicago): SUPPORTED — founded Oct 2007 by Andrew Barber; two full-time staff; live in 2026; structural single point of failure, no institutional backup identified. Racialicious: SUPPORTED — Latoya Peterson's award-winning race-and-pop-culture blog (Data & Society, Feminist Wire, ONA bios); domain dead 2026-09-28; archive status UNRESOLVED. Clutch Magazine web edition: SUPPORTED (domain status only) — clutchmagazine.com redirected to a GoDaddy for-sale page 2026-09-28; content disposition UNRESOLVED. The Mixtape Museum (Regan Sommer McCoy): SUPPORTED — community mixtape archive, hip-hop priority.

The archive itself is at risk. Internet Archive, Oct 2024: SUPPORTED — DDoS plus breach of 31M user records; Wayback down ~6 days; read-only restoration Oct 14; full service early November. No *content* loss evidenced — service and trust were the casualties. The near-miss matters: nearly every case in this brief depends on the Wayback Machine as the archive of last resort.

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09 Analysis

The pattern. Losses cluster at corporate transitions — acquisition (Africana, BlackVoices, BlackPlanet, DatPiff), business-model failure (GeoCities, Yahoo Groups), governance shifts (Twitter API, Facebook purges, Vine's managed decline). Black digital material is rarely the target; it is *collateral*. That is worse for preservation planning: collateral damage generates no villain, no lawsuit, no press cycle demanding restoration.

The measurement problem. Platforms never published demographic breakdowns of lost content, and the web-archiving practice "developed mostly within… well-resourced, primarily white, academic institutions" (ATBW's premise). The Black share of every general-platform loss is therefore unknowable — a finding, not a research failure: it is the direct consequence of who was (not) archiving.

The migration trap. "The content moved" is the most common false comfort. Africana.com's features "moved to AOL BlackVoices" — but AOL BlackVoices itself dissolved into HuffPost, whose message boards were removed. Migration ≠ preservation.

The governance turn. The newest risk is enclosure, not shutdown: APIs repriced, archives made read-only then deleted (Vine), accounts purged under contested "inauthentic behavior" rules, archivists' accounts suspended for trying to preserve (Yahoo Groups). Preservation that depends on a platform's permission is not preservation.

The single-point-of-failure economy. The most significant current Black digital material — independent music blogs, mixtape archives, critic sites — is held by individuals or two-person teams. When the founder stops paying the hosting bill, the archive ends.

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10 Timeline

Date	Event	Status
1994–95	NetNoir conceived and launched (Jun 1995, AOL + web)	Defunct (date unresolved)
1995	BlackVoices.com launches; moves to Chicago 1998	Later migrated/dissolved
Jan 1999	Africana.com founded (Gates & Appiah)	Closed 2005
Sep 1, 1999	BlackPlanet launches (Wasow & Sun)	Survived, declined
Feb 2004	AOL acquires BlackVoices from Tribune	Message boards later removed (provisional)

Date	Event	Status
Jan 31, 2005	Africana.com closes; features to AOL BlackVoices	Confirmed closed
2005	DatPiff launches (Marcus Frasier)	Dark 2023
Apr 2008	Radio One buys Community Connect/BlackPlanet ($38M)	—
Oct 26, 2009	GeoCities shut; unrescued content deleted	Confirmed lost (partially salvaged)
Oct 2016–Jan 2017	Twitter kills Vine; read-only archive launches Jan 20, 2017	Archive later removed
Mar 18, 2019	MySpace confirms 2003–2015 music loss (~50M songs)	Confirmed lost
~Apr 2019	Vine archive removed	Supported; exact date provisional
Oct–Dec 2019	Yahoo Groups uploads end; all content deleted Dec 14	Confirmed lost
Dec 15, 2020	Yahoo Groups fully closes	Confirmed closed
2021–23	ATBW launches; $2.5M Mellon grant (Mar 2023)	Response
Feb 13, 2023	Twitter ends free API access	Confirmed governance loss
Mar–Apr 2023	DatPiff outages; IA partnership announced	Loss + response
2024	DatPiff IA collection (~366K mixtapes) disappears	UNRESOLVED
May 17, 2024	Pew: 25% of 2013–2023 webpages gone	Measurement
Oct 8–14, 2024	Internet Archive breach + DDoS; 31M records; Wayback down	Archive attacked
2026-09-28	blackvoices.com, africana.com, netnoir.com, racialicious.com dead; clutchmagazine.com for sale	Confirmed at-risk

11 People

Public professional identities only; no private personal data (see §17 audit).

- **Omar Wasow** — BlackPlanet co-founder; cited NetNoir as defunct; claimed MySpace's founders looked to BlackPlanet as a model (PROVISIONAL).
- **Benjamin Sun** — Community Connect co-founder/CEO.
- **E. David Ellington & Malcolm CasSelle** — NetNoir founders.
- **Barry Cooper** — BlackVoices.com founder (1995).
- **Henry Louis Gates Jr. & Kwame Anthony Appiah** — Africana.com founders.
- **Marcus Frasier** — DatPiff founder.
- **Andrew Barber** — FakeShoreDrive founder (Chicago, 2007).
- **Makiba J. Foster** — ATBW co-developer; led Documenting Ferguson.

- **Bergis Jules** — ATBW co-developer; Documenting the Now co-founder.
- **Zakiya Collier** — ATBW WARC School Program Director.
- **Ed Summers** — Documenting the Now co-founder; twarc developer.
- **Tonia Sutherland** — scholar, *Resurrecting the Black Body* (2023); Black digital sovereignty.
- **Charlton McIlwain** — documented capital starvation of early Black web entrepreneurs.
- **Brewster Kahle** — Internet Archive founder.
- **Jason Scott** — led 2009 Archive Team GeoCities rescue; MySpace "Dragon Hoard" salvage.
- **Regan Sommer McCoy** — The Mixtape Museum founder.
- **Latoya Peterson** — Owner/Editor of Racialicious.

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12 Organizations

NetNoir; BlackVoices.com; Africana.com; BlackPlanet; Community Connect Inc.; Radio One/Urban One; AOL/Time Warner; MySpace; GeoCities; Yahoo!/Verizon; Yahoo Groups; Twitter/X; Vine; DatPiff; MediaLab AI Inc.; Meta (Facebook); Internet Archive; Archive Team; Archiving the Black Web/Shift Collective; Documenting the Now; The Mixtape Museum; Pew Research Center; ESPN; FakeShoreDrive; Racialicious; Clutch Magazine (web edition); Mellon Foundation.

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13 Places

- **New York, NY** — Community Connect HQ; BlackPlanet's home.
- **Chicago, IL** — BlackVoices (from 1998); FakeShoreDrive; Chicago drill-era hip-hop.
- **Cambridge, MA** — Africana.com HQ.
- **San Francisco, CA** — NetNoir's base; Internet Archive HQ (300 Funston Ave.).
- **Ferguson, MO** — 2014 protests; seeded Documenting the Now.
- **Broward County, FL** — African American Research Library and Cultural Center (Foster's base at ATBW launch).

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14 Events

NetNoir launch (Jun 1995); BlackVoices launch (1995), Chicago move (1998), AOL acquisition (Feb 2004); Africana.com founding (Jan 1999), Time Warner acquisition (2000), closure (Jan 31, 2005); BlackPlanet launch (Sep 1, 1999), Radio One acquisition (Apr 2008); DatPiff launch (2005), MediaLab acquisition (2019), outages (Mar 2023), IA partnership (Apr 2023), collection disappearance (2024, unresolved); GeoCities shutdown (Oct 26, 2009); Ferguson protests (2014); Vine shutdown (Oct 2016–Jan 2017), archive removal (~Apr 2019); MySpace loss confirmation (Mar 18, 2019); Yahoo Groups deletion (Dec 14, 2019), closure (Dec 15, 2020); The Undefeated → Andscape (Feb 28, 2022); Twitter API paywall (Feb 13, 2023); ATBW Mellon grant (Mar 2023); Pew digital-decay report (May 17, 2024); Internet Archive attacks (Oct 8–14, 2024).

15 Objects / Technologies

- **Wayback Machine** — archive of last resort; attacked but not content-breached in Oct 2024.
- **twarc / DocNow Hydrator / DocNow Catalog** — Twitter archiving tools; degraded by the 2023 paywall.
- **Browsertrix (Webrecorder)** — web-archiving tool ATBW demonstrated to Black-collections archivists (Oct 2024).
- **WARC** — web-archive standard ATBW's WARC School teaches.
- **Perma.cc** — library-consortium link-preservation network; a model Black scholarship lacks.
- **Vine Camera** — Twitter's stripped-down Vine successor; no social graph, no archive.

16 Data

Figure	Source	Grade
~50M songs, 14M artists (2003–2015), lost by MySpace	FADER/NPR/NME, Mar 2019	VERIFIED
~490K MP3s salvaged ("Dragon Hoard") vs. 50M lost (<1%)	The Outline, Apr 2019	SUPPORTED
GeoCities rescue ~100K accounts vs. ~38M pages / ~10TB estimated	Computerworld; TechSpot; Neowin	PROVISIONAL
BlackPlanet 20M users peak; Radio One $38M acquisition (Apr 2008)	Black Enterprise	SUPPORTED
Twitter API: $100/mo–$42K/mo; Twitter-data studies −13% YoY	computing.co.uk; arXiv	SUPPORTED
Facebook purges: 32 pages/accounts (Jul 2018); 559+251 (Oct 2018)	SOFREP; MarTech	SUPPORTED
Pew 2024: 25% of 2013–2023 pages gone; 38% of 2013 pages; 18% tweets gone in ~3 months	pewresearch.org	SUPPORTED
Legal link rot: 50% SCOTUS URLs dead; 70%+ Harvard Law Review; ~37% in 6 yrs (Chesapeake)	NPR; Slaw	SUPPORTED
IA Oct 2024: 31M records breached; Wayback down ~6 days	Infosecurity Mag.; Wikinews	SUPPORTED
ATBW: $150K IMLS (2021); $2.5M Mellon (Mar 2023)	Library Journal; infoDOCKET	VERIFIED
Vine: 31% of teen users Black non-Hispanic (Pew via NPR, 2016)	NPR Illinois	VERIFIED
DocNow #blacklivesmatter dataset: 13,732,829 tweets incl. 90 from @Blacktivist	DocNow white paper	SUPPORTED

17 Visual Evidence

Full plan in `visuals.md` — Part A: one sourced-photo candidate (unavailable-with-reason); Part B: five build-at-publish data graphics; Part C: four video candidates.

- **The honest irony (required):** YouTube is itself an at-risk platform for Black digital material. The four linked videos are *access points, not preservation* — do not present them as archival evidence.
- **Sourced photo:** Internet Archive HQ exterior (`visuals/ia-hq-300funston.jpg`) is held **unavailable-with-reason** — its per-file license could not be verified from a source page in this pass. Not cleared for publication.
- **Data graphics** carry no third-party rights and no privacy risk — the recommended visual class.
- **Privacy audit (visuals): PASS.** No identifiable private individuals in any selected or candidate visual; the photo candidate is a public building exterior; no archived-page screenshots were used. Full audit in red-team.md.

18 Knowledge-Graph Connections

Full extraction in `entities.json` (71 entities) and `relationships.json` (27 edges). Each edge carries a grade (VERIFIED or SUPPORTED) and claim-ID provenance; SUPPORTED edges were included rather than mislabeled VERIFIED. Core edges:

- Africana.com → `closed_on` → 2005-01-31 → `features_migrated_to` → AOL BlackVoices
- Time Warner → `acquired` → Africana.com (2000); AOL → `acquired` → BlackVoices.com (2004); Radio One → `acquired` → Community Connect ($38M, 2008)
- Wasow + Sun → `co_founded` → BlackPlanet (1999-09-01); Ellington + CasSelle → `co_founded` → NetNoir (1995)
- MySpace → `lost_in_migration` → ~50M songs (2019); Yahoo → `shutdown` → GeoCities (2009) and `deleted_content_of` → Yahoo Groups (2019)
- Twitter → `discontinued` → Vine (2017); Twitter → `ended_free_access` → twarc tooling (2023)
- MediaLab → `acquired` → DatPiff (2019); DatPiff's IA-collection fate UNRESOLVED — excluded from the graph
- Foster + Jules → `co_developed` → ATBW → `funded_by` → Mellon Foundation ($2.5M, 2023)
- DocNow → `formed_in_response_to` → Ferguson (2014); IA → `attacked_in` → Oct 2024
- Excluded (PROVISIONAL): HuffPost messageboard removal; GeoCities rescue completeness; DatPiff archive disappearance.

19 Competing Interpretations

1. **Wasow's BlackPlanet→MySpace claim.** Plausible, widely repeated, self-interested; carried by Wikipedia. PROVISIONAL.
2. **The DatPiff disappearance.** Copyright takedown? Technical removal? Write-down abandonment? No official statement; all live. UNRESOLVED.
3. **Facebook's 2018 purges.** Frame A: protective moderation (incl. removing the fake 700K-follower "Black Lives Matter" page). Frame B: a private company deleting Black political organizing spaces under opaque rules. Same events; framing DISPUTED.
4. **@Blacktivist in the DocNow archive.** Include (documents the information environment) or exclude (purifies the movement record)? DocNow's own white paper treats this as an open ethical problem. DISPUTED.
5. **"The content moved, so nothing was lost."** Fails on inspection: each migration (Africana→BlackVoices→HuffPost) shed the community layer that was the actual archive. Migration ≠ preservation.

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20 What We Do Not Know

- The Black-specific share of content lost on MySpace, GeoCities, Yahoo Groups, or Vine.
- Whether racialicious.com, blackvoices.com, africana.com, or netnoir.com survive in web archives (Wayback API rate-limited; not retried per policy).
- The status and recoverability of the DatPiff Internet Archive collection.
- When NetNoir actually ceased and what happened to its content and user data.
- Whether the Oct 2024 Internet Archive attack compromised stored-content integrity.
- Whether chicagodefender.com's 403 reflects an active site or a failing one.
- The scale of link rot in Black digital scholarship and journalism (no study found).

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21 Limitations

- **Snippet ceiling.** Several claims rest on search-result records from reputable outlets (SUPPORTED, not VERIFIED).
- **Wayback blocked.** HTTP 429 prevented snapshot verification of dead domains; those claims stay UNRESOLVED.
- **Selection bias.** Documented cases only; undocumented losses are invisible. General-platform losses are better documented than Black-specific ones — the evidence base reflects who had resources to write the history.
- **Survivorship bias.** BlackPlanet survived and is therefore over-represented relative to portals that vanished without a trace.
- **No Black-specific link-rot measurement exists** in the sources found.

- **Time-boxed.** Domain statuses and platform states as of 2026-09-28.

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22 Further Research

1. **Snapshot recovery pass:** Wayback CDX queries (rate-limited) for racialicious.com, blackvoices.com, africana.com, netnoir.com, clutchmagazine.com.
2. **DatPiff status check:** contact MediaLab and the Internet Archive re: the ~366,420-item collection.
3. **Black link-rot study:** replicate Chesapeake/Harvard methodology on Black studies journals and Black digital journalism (2010–2025).
4. **Chicago drill-era mixtape census:** cross-reference FakeShoreDrive's archive with DatPiff/ LiveMixtapes holdings.
5. **Oral histories:** former NetNoir, Africana.com, BlackVoices, BlackPlanet staff on content disposition at closure/acquisition.
6. **API-paywall impact measurement:** quantify post-2023 degradation of Black social-media research datasets.
7. **Creator-archive census:** survey Black music/culture blogs and YouTube archivists for backup practices — map single points of failure *before* the next loss.

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23 Sources

Full annotated list in `sources.md` (primary vs. secondary labeled). Principal: The FADER, NPR (MySpace); DataCenterKnowledge, Computerworld (GeoCities); BetaNews, Engadget, The Register (Yahoo Groups); Fast Company, TechCrunch, NPR (Vine); Exclaim!, Wikipedia (DatPiff); EDU Ledger, WritersWrite (Africana); internetnews.com, Journal-isms (BlackVoices); Adweek, Marketplace (NetNoir/capital starvation); Black Enterprise (BlackPlanet); ESPN Press Room (Andscape); computing.co.uk, arXiv, Melanie Walsh (Twitter API); SOFREP, MarTech, Phys.org (Facebook); Pew Research Center (digital decay); NPR, Slaw (link rot); ExpressVPN, Infosecurity Magazine (IA attacks); Library Journal, infoDOCKET (ATBW); Library Journal, UC News (DocNow); UCLA SEIS (Sutherland); Columbia News (Mixtape Museum); Data & Society, Feminist Wire (Racialicious); direct domain-resolution checks by the researcher (2026-09-28).

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24 Citation Information

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25 Version History

Version	Date	Status	Notes
0.1	2026-09-28	Research	Initial pilot brief: full 25-section draft; claim ledger, entities, relationships, merged visuals (prior worker's video section preserved), sources, red-team report. Wayback snapshot verification deferred (API rate-limited). DatPiff IA collection status unresolved.

References

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Every source below is labeled **primary** (original document, dataset, official statement, or the researcher's own direct observation) or **secondary** (journalism, scholarship, or tertiary aggregation reporting on the primary). Grades in brackets refer to the claim-ledger entries the source supports.

Primary sources

- **Researcher's direct domain-resolution checks (2026-09-28).** HTTP/DNS probes via curl of jetmag.com, ebony.com, blackplanet.com, datpiff.com, blackvoices.com, africana.com, netnoir.com, racialicious.com, chicagodefender.com, clutchmagazine.com. [VERIFIED; C024]
- **Researcher's direct Wayback API queries (2026-09-28).** CDX and availability API calls returned HTTP 429 (rate-limited). [VERIFIED; C025]
- **Internet Archive, "Announcing a New School for Web Archiving" (2022).** Official announcement of the Community Webs program; names ATBW, WARC School, and partners. [SUPPORTED; C021]
- **Internet Archive, "Archiving the Black Diaspora" collection page.** Official collection record. [SUPPORTED; C021]
- **Zakiya Collier portfolio (zakiyacollier.com).** ATBW WARC School Program Director; documents cost/resource barriers for Black collecting institutions. [SUPPORTED; C021]
- **American Libraries Magazine, "Archiving the Black Web" (2024).** Foster: Black institutions "may have had the idea but not necessarily the resources." [SUPPORTED; C021]
- **Documenting the Now white paper (via are.na record).** #blacklivesmatter dataset 13,732,829 tweets; includes 90 @Blacktivist tweets. [SUPPORTED; C023]
- **DocNow "Thank you DocNow 2016-2024" (2024).** Documents Ferguson origins and Catalog/Hydrator/twarc. [SUPPORTED; C031]
- **DocNow "Social Humans" paper (JOCMS, 2020).** Ethical framework: dignity, safety, visibility. [SUPPORTED; C031]
- **ESPN Press Room, "Launch of Andscape" (Feb 28, 2022).** Official rebrand announcement. [SUPPORTED; C029]

- **FakeShoreDrive, "About" page.** Founded Oct 2007 by Andrew Barber; Chicago hip-hop/R&B documentation. [SUPPORTED; C028]
- **Pew Research Center, "When Online Content Disappears" (May 17, 2024).** 25% of 2013–2023 pages gone; 18% of tweets gone within ~3 months. [SUPPORTED; C018]

Secondary sources — opened and read in full

- **The FADER, "MySpace Lost 50 Million Songs" (Mar 18, 2019).** ~50M songs, 14M artists, 2003–2015; server-migration cause; photos/videos lost. [VERIFIED; C005]
- **NPR Illinois, "A Moment of Silence for the Black and Brown Talent That Grew on Vine" (Oct 28, 2016).** 31% of teen Vine users Black non-Hispanic (Pew); Vine as Ferguson protest platform. [VERIFIED; C012]
- **Exclaim!, "DatPiff Assures Listeners 'We're Still Here'" (Mar 2023).** Launched 2005; MediaLab acquisition 2019; severe outages. [VERIFIED; C013]
- **computing.co.uk, "Twitter Confirms Free API Access Ending" (Feb 2023).** Free incl. academic track ends; $100/mo Basic; $42K/mo enterprise reported. [VERIFIED; C015]
- **infoDOCKET, "ATBW Receives $2.5 Million Grant from the Mellon Foundation" (Mar 10, 2023).** Co-developers Foster & Jules; training + research initiative on "the Black web." [VERIFIED; C021]
- **DataCenterKnowledge, "GeoCities Shutting Down, Deleting User Data" (Jul 30, 2009).** Shutdown announced; files "will not be recoverable"; Yahoo not archiving. [VERIFIED; C007]
- **Marketplace, "How the History of Blackness on the Internet Was Erased" (Feb 10, 2021).** McIlwain on capital starvation of Black web entrepreneurs. [SUPPORTED; C034]
- **Melanie Walsh, "Twitter's API Is Dead" (Dec 12, 2023).** Catalog, Hydrator, twarc "robbed... of much of their usefulness." [SUPPORTED; C016]
- **NPR, "Supreme Court Records Get Lost in the Digital Shuffle" (Sep 27, 2014).** 50% of SCOTUS-opinion URLs dead; 70%+ of Harvard Law Review URLs. [SUPPORTED; C019]
- **Slaw, "The Web Needs Memory: Link Rot and Legal Memory" (Jun 2016).** Chesapeake Project: ~37% dead within six years; Perma.cc founded. [SUPPORTED; C019]
- **SOFREP, "Facebook Clears House... 32 More Bad Actors" (Jul 2018).** 32 pages/accounts removed; "Black Elevation" included. [SUPPORTED; C017]
- **MarTech, "Facebook Has Purged 559 Pages and 251 Accounts" (Oct 2018).** Political-spam purge. [SUPPORTED; C017]
- **ExpressVPN blog, "What Happened to the Internet Archive?" (timeline).** Oct 8 DDoS; 31M records breached; defacement; read-only Oct 14; full service early Nov. [SUPPORTED; C020]
- **EDU Ledger/DiverseEducation, "Africana.com Web Site Announces Its Closure" (Jan 2005).** Closes Jan 31, 2005; features to AOL BlackVoices. [SUPPORTED; C026]

- **WritersWrite, "Time Warner Acquires Africana.com" (Sep 2000).** ~$10M reported; 500K monthly uniques. [SUPPORTED; C026]

Secondary sources — search-record level (SUPPORTED, not VERIFIED)

- NME, NPR, CNN (MySpace loss corroboration). [C005]
- Macworld, Computerworld, TechSpot, Neowin, NYT (GeoCities shutdown and rescue scale). [C007, C008]
- BetaNews, Engadget, The Register (Yahoo Groups timeline). [C009]
- Fast Company, TechCrunch (Vine shutdown and archive launch). [C011]
- arXiv 2404.07340 (Twitter-data studies down 13% YoY). [C015]
- Library Journal "Bearing Witness"; MITH; UC News (Documenting the Now formation). [C016, C031]
- Phys.org/USA Today via CNN (fake "Black Lives Matter" Facebook page removed). [C022]
- internetnews.com; The Quill via FreeLibrary; Journal-isms (BlackVoices history and AOL acquisition). [C003]
- Adweek; Omnicom/Advertising Age (NetNoir launch, 1995). [C001]
- Black Enterprise (BlackPlanet 20M users; $38M Radio One acquisition). [C027]
- HipHopWired (BlackPlanet reboot). [C027]
- UCLA SEIS; UC Press (Tonia Sutherland, Resurrecting the Black Body, 2023). [C032]
- Columbia News; Reviews in Digital Humanities (Mixtape Museum). [C033]
- Infosecurity Magazine; Wikinews (Internet Archive attack corroboration). [C020]
- Data & Society; The Feminist Wire (2012); ONA speaker bios (Latoya Peterson / Racialicious). [C036]
- Muck Rack (FakeShoreDrive two-person staff). [C028]

Tertiary / weak sources (PROVISIONAL claims only — never VERIFIED)

- Wikipedia: DatPiff (2019 acquisition; 2023 IA partnership; 2024 collection disappearance); Black Voices (HuffPost messageboard removal). [C004, C014]
- netart-extinction GitHub project (Vine archive removal ~April 2019). [C011]
- UNBOX PH (Yahoo suspending archivists' accounts). [C010]
- Hip-Hop Can Save America! podcast (Aug 16, 2024); Reddit threads (DatPiff IA collection disappearance). [C014]
- Famuse (Vine archive gone as of 2019). [C011]

Source-quality notes

- Wikipedia is used only for leads and is never the sole support for a grade above PROVISIONAL.

- The ~$10M Africana.com acquisition price rests on snippet-level reporting; keep it provisional.
- The DatPiff Internet Archive disappearance has no official confirmation from MediaLab or the Internet Archive; it remains PROVISIONAL/UNRESOLVED.
- No Black-scholarship-specific link-rot study was located; the brief imports general link-rot science and says so.