

Leading design and content, leading change

Sara Wachter-Boettcher





Anti-Black racism
Police violence
White supremacy







How we lead now





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We stand with #BlackLivesMatter. We are donating a total of \$500,000 to the @NAACP and the @Blklivesmatter Foundation in support of their fight for equality and justice, and we'll be matching employee donations to both groups. Because a world where we all belong takes all of us.

We stand with
#BlackLivesMatter

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We stand with our colleagues and the Black community. We stand with those fighting racism every day. We stand for justice, fairness, and level playing fields. And as a company we WILL NOT stand for another day of anything that... [...see more](#)

In it together.

10,754 · 462 Comments

We are horrified and sickened not only by George Floyd's murder and the larger context of police brutality against Black people, but also by the pattern of violent response to largely peaceful protests. We stand in solidarity with our Black employees, customers, and community.



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slackhq We are horrified and sickened not only by George Floyd's murder and the larger context of police brutality against Black people, but also by the pattern of violent response to largely peaceful protests. We stand in solidarity with our Black employees, customers, and community.

Last week, our CEO posted an internal message to all Slack employees. At the time we decided not to publish it externally because we were worried it would appear as grandstanding or empty virtue signaling.

Was our own house in order? How would Black employees who felt that their own experience at Slack didn't live up to our ideals or commitments feel?

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#BlackLivesMatter



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#BlackLivesMatter Brand Responses deck

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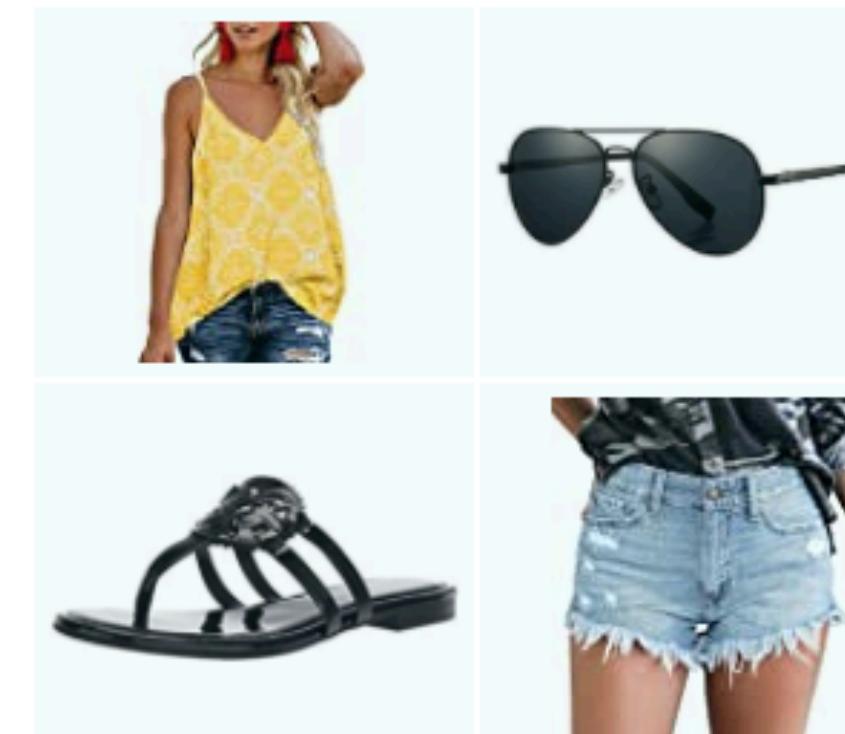


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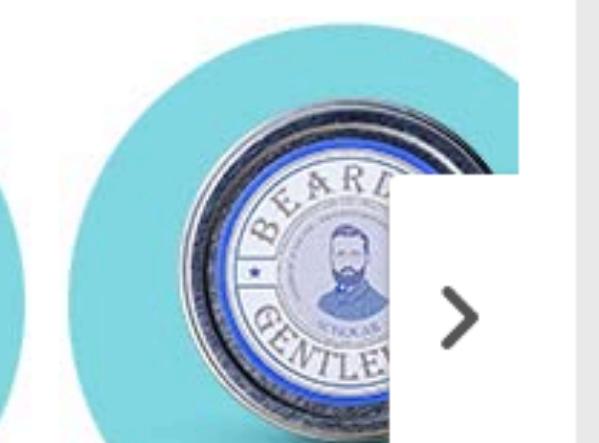
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Amazon Fired the Warehouse Worker Who Organized a Walkout Over Coronavirus

“It’s not gonna stop me,” Chris Smalls said. “I’m gonna continue to fight.”

By [Paul Blest](#)

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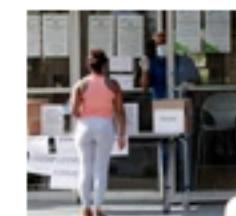
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Amazon's Home Security Company Is Turning Everyone Into Cops

Neighbors, a social media crime-reporting app owned by Amazon, creates a digital ecosystem in which you are encouraged to assume the worst about your neighbors – and people of color are once again being harmed.

By [Caroline Haskins](#)

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“MY PACKAGE THIEF HAS BEEN ARRESTED!!!,” reads a post on Neighbors, a “neighborhood watch” social network run by Ring, which is a home security systems company owned by Amazon.

Motherboard

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Amazon Told Police It Has Partnered With 200 Law Enforcement Agencies

Ring's partnerships with law enforcement could be far more widespread than previously reported.

By [Caroline Haskins](#)

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IMAGE: MAP FROM PXHERE. RING DOORBELL AND AMAZON LOGO FROM WIKIMEDIA COMMONS.

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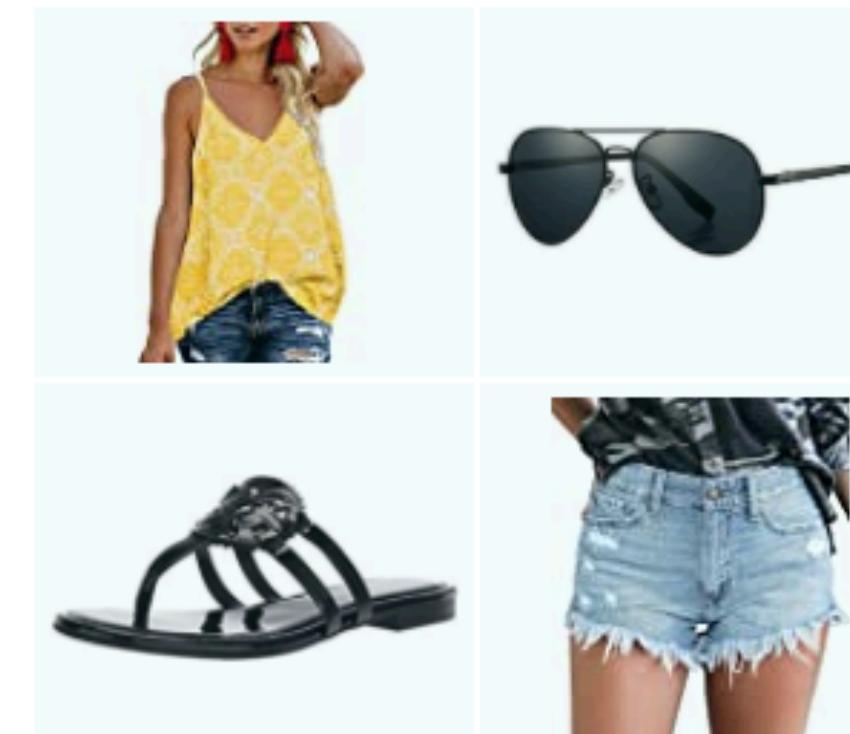


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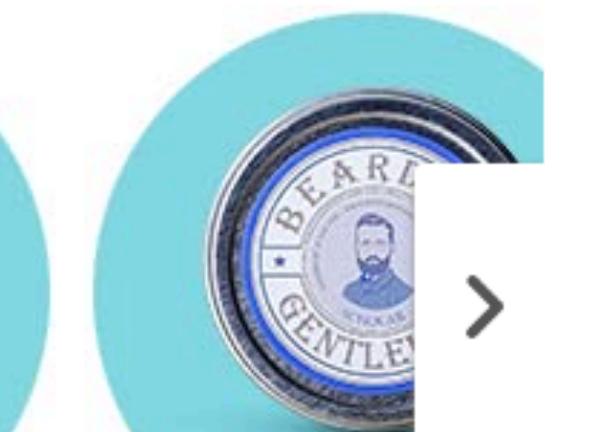
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IBM @IBM

As IBMers, we stand with the Black Community and want to empower and ensure racial equality.

Emb(race)



AH→

POLITICS

IBM gets out of facial recognition business, calls on Congress to advance policies tackling racial injustice

PUBLISHED MON, JUN 8 2020 7:02 PM EDT | UPDATED TUE, JUN 9 2020 8:13 AM EDT



Lauren Hirsch
@LAURENSHIRSCH

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KEY POINTS

- IBM CEO Arvind Krishna called on Congress Monday to enact reforms to advance racial justice and combat systemic racism, while announcing the company was getting out of the facial recognition business.
- The decision for IBM to get out of the facial recognition business comes amid criticism of the technology, employed by multiple companies, for exhibiting racial and gender bias.
- The company decided to announce its decision as the death of George Floyd brought the topic of police reform and racial inequity into the forefront of the national conversation.



How digital strategies are becoming the lifeblood of many small businesses

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IBM firmly opposes and will not condone uses of any technology, including facial recognition technology offered by other vendors, for mass surveillance, racial profiling, violations of basic human rights and freedoms... We believe now is the time to begin a national dialogue on whether and how facial recognition technology should be employed by domestic law enforcement agencies.

—Arvind Krishna, IBM CEO





Leadership is
making choices,
not statements.





Being an anti-racist is not
convenient... If it doesn't cost
you anything, it's not enough.

—Rachel Rodgers
CEO of Hello Seven



A large yellow triangle is positioned in the top-left corner of the slide, extending from the top edge towards the center.

A seat at the table





What are the most
important issues
facing design?

www.designcensus.org

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- 
1. Lack of awareness of design's impact
 2. Designers not having a “seat at the table”

www.designcensus.org





In the past five years,
40 of the world's top 100
companies have hired
a chief design officer.

McKinsey Design Index







I think of this image every time I hear a designer say “we finally have a seat at the table!” or “everyone understands the value of design!” We designers think we have accomplished something meaningful—when all of the serious work is ahead of us.

—Daniel Burka





So do we have a
seat at the table,
or not?



Are we the victims,
or the heroes?





The narrative is, whiteness is
always the hero or victim, and
everyone else is the villain.

—Kim Crayton,
“Introduction to being an Antiracist”





Hero/victim

Either/or

Right/wrong

Good/bad





Either/or thinking is a habit of white supremacy because it often preserves the status quo and stops us from imagining new ways of being and doing. It creates dynamics of gridlock and stalemate. It forces us to take one of two sides and pushes us into team dynamics of “us versus them.”

—Kad Smith, Director, CompassPoint





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—Kad Smith, Director, CompassPoint





Binary thinking
keeps us stuck.



A large, solid yellow triangle is positioned in the top-left corner of the slide, extending from the top edge towards the center.

Stuck and unstuck





Stuck is miserable.
Stuck is comfortable.





Stuck

*I don't have a seat at the table.
I'll never change my organization.*

Possible

What can I do to make change from wherever I'm sitting today?

The screenshot shows a news article from ZDNet. At the top, there's a navigation bar with 'EDITION: US ▾', the ZDNet logo, a search icon, and links for 'VIDEOS', 'WINDOWS 10', '5G', 'IOT', 'CLOUD', 'AI', 'SECURITY', 'MORE ▾', and 'NEWSLETTERS'. Below the navigation, a red banner reads 'MUST READ: Phishing attacks: This sophisticated new group has been operating undiscovered for at least a year'. The main headline is 'GitHub to replace "master" with alternative term to avoid slavery references'. A subtitle below it says 'GitHub getting on board legitimizes movement aimed at removing racially-charged language from software.' In the bottom right corner of the image, there is a stylized handwritten signature.

GitHub to replace "master" with alternative term to avoid slavery references

GitHub getting on board legitimizes movement aimed at removing racially-charged language from software.



Stuck

We're a centralized team within a centralized team within a 25k-person company. We don't have the power to make all teams change their content.

Possible

Our team:

- *Is primed to look holistically across products*
- *Can add a more nuanced POV*
- *Has clout in the content/UX community*

Internal work so far

- Language audit that goes far beyond master/slave
- Broad POV and guidance to work into design system documentation
- Starting and stewarding ongoing convo, including with C-level



External work so far

- Sharing work publicly and bringing together peers across companies for a collaborative effort
- Ongoing convo across companies to share resources and help teams avoid being overwhelmed and establish a starting point



Anti-racist language terms list

File Edit View Insert Format Data Tools Add-ons Help

Share

Old term

	A	B	C	D	
1	Old term	Suggested replacement(s)	Broad tech definition	Discussion: Why is this problematic? How could the suggested replacement be more useful?	Screenshot(action for co
2					
3	blacklist	Block list, block Blocked (noun) (Blocked accounts, blocked domains, etc.) Not allowed, disallowed Untrusted, Not safe, Unsafe, Unaccepted, Not accepted			
4	whitelist	Allow list, Allowed, Word List, Trusted, Permitted, Safe, Include, Cleared, Unblocked, Accepted, Approved		- Any thoughts on "allow list" over "allowlist", etc?	
5	Grandfather policy/clause	Legacy	a provision in which an old rule continues to apply to some existing situations while a new rule will apply to all future cases	A discriminatory voter law allowing illiterate white men to vote, but keeping illiterate Black men from voting: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grandfather_clause	
6	Master (noun)	Main Primary			
7	Master (noun)	Expert			
8	Master (verb)				

AH →



Each tiny shift
creates space for
more change.





Each tiny shift
creates space for
more changemakers.





What's possible
in your practice
right now?





What's stopping
you from moving
toward that?



- 
1. Old stories
 2. Fear of loss
 3. Shame

AH →

- 
1. Old stories
 2. Fear of loss
 3. Shame

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An old story is
something you tell
yourself that's *true*,
but not helpful.





Old stories can keep
us from growth,
while perpetuating
inequity.



GF

I was shy, awkward, and
bullied a lot growing up. I
was a nerd without friends!
I was powerless.

AH



I grew up poor and worked for
every single thing I have. No one
gave me anything—I pulled
myself up by my bootstraps.





I've been harassed, underpaid,
talked down to, objectified, and
assumed to be the secretary
even when I was running the
meeting.





Each of these stories
moves us back to
the binary.





Ask yourself

- Which parts of this story aren't true anymore?
- Which other truths does this story leave out?
- How would I see this situation differently if I let go of this story now?



- 
1. Old stories
 2. Fear of loss
 3. Shame

AH →



*If it doesn't cost
you anything, it's
not enough.*





Humans have a
strong aversion
to loss.





All workers worry about their future, but the ambitious people drawn to tech are almost pathologically reticent about foreclosing future opportunities they don't even know about yet.

—Ian Bogost, The Atlantic





What's really at stake?

- Your job, or your **feelings**?
- Your financial stability, or your **pride**?
- Your safety, or your **sense of status**?
- Your community, or your **elite access**?





When we stop
catastrophizing, we
can explore likely
scenarios instead.





What are you
afraid of losing?

What would you
do if you weren't?



- 
1. Old stories
 2. Fear of loss
 3. Shame

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When we're
ashamed, we hide.





(This is where
sh*t gets real.)





Your words cut to the core! You didn't realize you completely diminished me, a Black woman... I was so incensed, angry that you felt that I, a Black woman, cannot have the space to talk about this issue...

Deep down you believe you own a space as a white woman and I don't.





All I want in the
world is to explain
what happened.

I won't.





Hero/victim

Either/or

Right/wrong

Good/bad





I don't need to be
absolved.

I need to be
accountable.





What will hold you
accountable when
you screw up?





White supremacy knows that when
we're exhausted we remain obedient.
And when we're overworked, we tend to
stay quiet. It rewards us for our silence,
for not pushing back, for not
questioning.

—Desiree Adaway, The Adaway Group





The smallest scale





Nothing will seem
like enough.

Do it anyway.





Small actions and connections create complex systems, patterns that become ecosystems and societies...

How we are at the small scale is how we are at the large scale.

*—adrienne maree brown,
Emergent Strategy*





Hero/victim

Either/or

Right/wrong

Good/bad





What's possible
from where I am
right now?



Thank you

@sara_ann_marie

activevoicehq.com

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