This afternoon, we heard the proposition argue that the “activist-influencer” is essentially the feminist movement's grim reaper. They’ve attempted to explain that if your form of activism involves a tripod, ring light, or a “swipe up” link to “smash the patriarchy,” it can be nothing more than palatable neoliberal fuss.

As mentioned, the motion wants us to feel that self-branding is the poison depoliticizing the entire movement. However, if we look into what Sarah J. Jackson is showing, we can understand that activists use digital tools strategically. Social media platforms allow those in minority communities to create environments that amplify and accept their voices when they are too often faced with oppression.

We see this through hashtag activism movements and how they sweep across the media, reaching all different kinds of people. We can see how figures engage with Black Lives Matter (#BLM) and women’s movements such as #MeToo. During Black History Month, professional athletes will wear BLM warm-up shirts, which are broadcast all across the country. That kind of visibility shows athletes not only promoting themselves and what they stand for, but also forcing a conversation about racial justice into mainstream culture, where millions of fans are watching. The same can be said about black artists whose platforms give space to reach audiences that want someone to be able to properly speak to their experience. With the #MeToo movement, celebrities and everyday women alike were sharing their stories. This did not take away from the issue; it made it impossible to ignore, showing how telling your personal story can add so much in the process of revealing the fundamental problem at hand.

The proposition wants us to fear the “activist-influence” as the reason for neoliberalism’s decay. But my question for you is, why give them that much power? Feminism will not be defined by what these activist-influencers share or don’t share on social media unless we let it be. Isn’t this really just a question of whether we’ve let the movement be reduced to performance? Don’t get me wrong, I understand how annoyingly performative online platforms and celebrity visibility can be, but they are not inherently incompatible with feminist politics. To reject digital media as a tool is to force feminism to return to the “living rooms and union halls” of the past. Places that were all too often closed to Black, queer, and trans

voices. Anything that is even remotely politicized is in the media, and we must take accountability in learning how to adapt and properly react to this. Personally, I have no problem with some people choosing to celebrate a feminism that is loud, accessible, and fiercely intersectional. Or one that uses every platform possible to demand that they will never be silenced again. To reject the “activist-influencer” is to censor and silence the very people—influencers of color, queer youth, and grassroots organizers—who have finally found environments and communities that make them feel less alone. We cannot build a strong future by throwing away the very platforms that helped us to find each other in the first place. For these reasons, I urge you to reject the motion. Thank you