It Is What It Is: A fake app hyped on Twitter turned into a fundraiser for racial justice causes

An inside joke about a TikTok meme among a group of friends on Twitter grew into a minor social media mystery before morphing into a fundraiser for anti-racism causes. Yes, that might be the most 2020 sentence I've written to date.

On Thursday, the eye-mouth-eye emoji meme started appearing in people's Twitter handles and almost immediately, the buzz started about what it all meant, *Gizmodo* reported. On TikTok, the meme is usually used to express cringe or embarrassment. Soon an itiseyemoutheye Twitter handle appeared, then its website was featured on Product Hunt (even though there's no actual product), prompting discussion on Reddit, and receiving some media coverage before the group revealed themselves in a post late Friday.

"A group of us changed our Twitter names to include "[the emoji]" because we thought it was a funny trend from TikTok. People started noticing the change on their timelines, noting the creepiness of the emojis in particular," the post states. "For a brief period of time, everyone who added the emojis to their name was added to a giant Twitter group conversation."

The group describes itself as a "diverse, ragtag group of young technologists tired of the status quo tech industry," which it says is "obsessed with exclusive social apps that regularly ignore — or even silence — real needs faced by marginalized people all over the world, and exclude these

folks from the building process.”

> *all you people know is “monetized” “seed round” “growth hack” like relax haven’t you ever just had fun online while vibing with your friends and donating to The Okra Project*
>
> *— it is what it is (@itiseyemoutheye)* *June 27, 2020*

When the group realized it had some momentum, it decided to turn its hype into a fundraising vehicle for groups working toward racial justice, which included the Loveland Foundation Therapy Fund, The Okra Project, and The Innocence Project among others. Regynald Augustin, one of the organizers of It Is What It Is, says as of Saturday evening they’ve raised more than $60,000 from assorted donors, $135,000 from two anonymous donors (one gave $60,000 and the other gave $75,000), and about $10,000 in merchandise sales. An initial matching donation of $50,000 was upped to $60,000. As the group said in its statement, “it is what it is: a meme that leveraged the relentless hype of exclusive apps and redirected it towards a critical social need.”

UPDATE June 27th 7:18PM ET: *Added new details about the amount of money raised.*

https://www.theverge.com/2020/6/27/21305646/it-is-what-it-is-fake-app-twitter-tiktok-meme