

2017 in review: The public mistakes you smashed on social this year

 By [Julia Breakey](#)

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This year has been a whirlwind of racist exposé after sexist exposé after: "How have they been running a business? Holy sh!t" exposé.

So if you think you made poor choices in 2017, grab yourself a bottle of red, slap on a face mask, and let's indulge in the unhealthiest form of self care there is: relishing in the relief of not having made that mistake.

This is Memeburn's list of the perpetrators of the dumbest public mistakes in 2017, starting with the people who may have made a dumb mistake, but at least they didn't directly hurt anyone.

Two additional lists covering the heinous and downright disgusting are coming later this week, so stay tuned below.

The instigator of the Oscars' fiasco

On 26 February, PricewaterhouseCoopers accountant Brian Cullinan, distracted by Twitter, handed Warren Beatty a Best Actress envelope instead of Best Picture.

Beatty and fellow presenter Faye Dunaway walked onstage. He opened the envelope and sputtered bemusedly until Dunaway grabbed it and announced: “*La La Land!*” The team stormed the stage, producers began their speeches. But, there in the back, was a worried man in a headset running around to check envelopes.

Audiences online echoed their confusion. Nothing felt right — not *La La Land* winning, not Beatty’s confusion, not the huddled masses scouring envelopes behind producers thanking their moms and dads.

Finally, as the final speech came to a close: “We lost, by the way.” Chaos. “There’s a mistake. *Moonlight*, you guys won Best Picture. This is not a joke. Come up. This is not a joke. *Moonlight* has won Best Picture.” Close-up of the envelope. “*Moonlight*: Best Picture.”

If there was a single moment a film enthusiast wanted to be on Twitter in 2017, this was it. But within the enjoyable drama came a sad truth: director Barry Jenkins and his team were not allowed the simple joy of winning film’s top honour. What should have been their proudest moment was marred by confusion, disbelief, and a severely shortened speech time.

PricewaterhouseCoopers was not fired for its misstep, and neither was Brian Cullinan. But his name now suffers the punishment of embarrassing Google search results. So at least there’s that.

“South Africa’s dumbest criminals”

In March this year, a Johannesburg resident filmed three apparent burglars trying to break into his house.

The men, oblivious to the fact they were being filmed, continued to work at opening the gate until the homeowner eventually cleared his throat. Confused and unsure how to act, the attempted burglars shared nervous glances and casually walked away.

The ridiculous video went viral, and has since racked up over 345,000 views. And sure, maybe they’re criminals who *tried* to hurt some people by taking their stuff — but they didn’t succeed. So here they are on part one. Sue me.

Kendall Jenner

Imagine — after years of Black Lives Matter protests in the US — receiving a script for an ad about a generic protest, filled with parties and peace signs, that ends with you happily handing a police officer a Pepsi.

Imagine reading that and, rather than thinking about how unethical it would be to commodify others' struggles, or how the script was reductive to the strained relationship many US citizens have with their police — imagine thinking instead “this is something I will endorse”.

[Kendall Jenner did just that](#). And instead of apologising for being out of touch with reality, the model waited five months to discuss the issue on her family's reality show *Keeping Up with the Kardashians*.

“I would never purposely hurt someone, ever,” she said tearfully. “I just felt so f*cking stupid.”

Stupid or blissfully ignorant? Either way, the debacle places her on the list of this year's dumbest mistakes.

Dove



Mke Mzart via Flickr (CC BY 2.0, resized)

Here's another example of a marketing team that didn't spend enough time in the conception stage of their ad.

[On 8 October](#), a GIF of an ad that showed a black woman removing her shirt to reveal a white woman went viral — but it failed to include the shot of the white woman removing her shirt to reveal a third (not white) woman. Without the inclusion of the last reveal, the ad looked like it was showing a black woman become “clean” after turning into a white one — a notion many online rightfully found insulting.

And even though this wasn't the intention, it does reiterate for major brands that the optics of the way they deal with race is

important — and that intentions are worthless if the work can be so easily misconstrued.

South African sports



Warrenski via Flickr (CC BY-SA 2.0, resized)

I'll be honest: I don't keep up with South African sports anymore. Rooting for losing teams is exhausting. It robs you of a good evening. It sours the taste of your beer. And there was a lot of soured beer this year.

In 2017, [Bafana Bafana](#) failed to qualify for the 2018 World Cup. The Springboks [lost 57-0 to New Zealand](#). Wayne van Niekerk [injured himself](#) playing touch rugby. Athletics South Africa set [qualifying standards](#) higher than the International Association of Athletics Federations' — meaning many local athletes were blocked from being selected for international competitions they qualified for.

The only shining light was tennis player Kevin Anderson, who got to the US Open finals. He lost, but we'll take what we can get.

See parts 2 and 3 below:



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ABOUT JULIA BREAKEY

Julia is a junior writer at Memeburn; a UCT film graduate with a passion for dogs, media, and dog-centric media. If she's not gushing about the new television show that you need to watch, she's rewatching *The Good Place* (which you need to watch).

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