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'HE'S A RACIST!'

BLAKE TRIES – AND FAILS – TO COVER UP HIS PAST

- Gwen told to dump him, but she won't
- Court battle looming between Gwen, Blake and her ex



AUGUST 29, 2016 \$2.99



**TURNING
AGAINST HIM**

"You can delete a tweet, but the internet will never forget," one former Blake fan tweeted after the fallout.

**FANS
BLAST
BLAKE:**

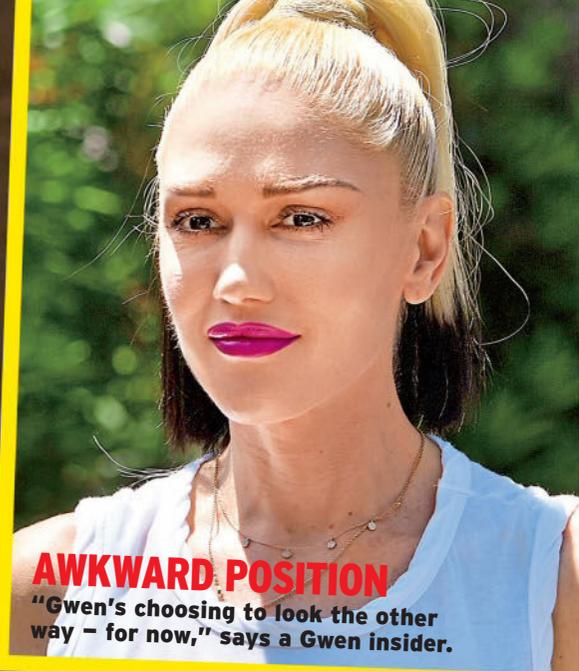
**'YOU'RE
A RACIST!'**

Blake Shelton sparks outrage on the internet with a series of disturbing tweets. Inside the scandal — and the cover-up

It was a night full of surprises. Blake Shelton shocked and delighted fans when he joined girlfriend Gwen Stefani onstage during her concert on Aug. 13 in Dallas to perform their duet "Go Ahead and Break My Heart." But that same evening, fans saw a very different side of the *Voice* coach on social media. A series of disturbing posts from the country star surfaced on Twitter — then mysteriously began disappearing. "Wish the d---head in the next room would either shut up or learn some English so I would at least know what he's planning to bomb," read one, which was deleted from Blake's account. Another stated, "Grown men who wear Chuck Taylor's may as well write on their forehead 'Cucumbers turn me on!'"

The public's outrage was immediate. The offensive tweets had been retweeted by some and others created screen grabs of them. They were mainly from 2010 and 2011. Fans accused the country star, 40, of

covering up the brewing scandal by deleting the tweets, and indeed the inflammatory posts were disappearing — but not before they had been indexed by Google, meaning some of the text appeared in search results, even though the result led to a dead link. "I can't believe you would say something so racist. I will never buy your music again," one user tweeted at Blake. Others branded him "a huge, disgusting racist" and "a racist piece of s---." One even urged Gwen, 47, not to marry him, calling Blake "homophobic" and "racist." "Assuming someone is a terrorist because they speak a different language is racist," former Blake fan Pierce Hare, a 16-year-old from Michigan, told *In Touch* after tweeting his dismay. Another former Blake fan, 21-year-old Katie Matthews of Georgia, told *In Touch* after tweeting her disappointment, "He has said questionable



AWKWARD POSITION
"Gwen's choosing to look the other way — for now," says a Gwen insider.

things before. However, I am pretty surprised at how blatantly racist and disturbing some of his tweets were."

Fans are angry, but they aren't the only ones. "Gwen has been told by friends that this is a huge red flag as she prepares to marry Blake," says a Gwen insider. "Her inner circle has

SOME OF HIS CONTROVERSIAL TWEETS

SOME OF THE ANGRY RESPONSES

#Cristofófica @Carolyna · Aug 13
So Blake Shelton is sexist And homophobic.

CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: SPLASH (2); TWITTER (4)


 inTOUCH
EXCLUSIVE
PHOTOS


 APOLLO'S
NEW
FRIEND!

INSIDE THEIR TRIP TO THE ZOO



On Aug. 8, just days before Blake's past tweets blew up online, he enjoyed a tranquil day out with Gwen and her sons when the gang were given a private tour of Ohio's Cincinnati Zoo. "Blake was holding Apollo as they admired the giraffe exhibit. It was adorable," says a witness. "At one point I overheard one of Gwen's older sons ask, 'Can we get room service, Blake?' and he said, 'Yes, we sure can!' Blake really seemed like a great father, and it made Gwen happy."

told her to just take a step back from the flurry of activity and take a break from Blake." But she won't listen. "Gwen hates that Blake is caught up in this and is adamant that he isn't racist or homophobic. But rather than asking Blake the really tough questions right now, Gwen is choosing to bury her head in the sand, much to the dismay of her close friends. They want her to dump him."

There is also proof of a cover-

up. "Hey @blakeshelton deleting the tweets doesn't make you any less of a racist. How about making a statement, rather than covering you're [sic] ass?" one Twitter user demanded. The website SavingCountryMusic.com discovered that at some point after the scandal broke, "Around 10,000 tweets were deleted from Shelton's account." The site compared the number of tweets in Blake's feed now to the number he

was known to have posted earlier this year. And while the authenticity of the tweets at the center of the scandal was questioned by some, the fact that they were previously indexed by Google and also retweeted directly from Blake's account makes it highly unlikely they aren't real.

Multiple popular media outlets posted, then deleted entire stories about the scandal. Other mainstream websites that routinely cover even the most insignificant Blake news curiously ignored the story altogether. (Hello, *People* and *Us Weekly*.) "Gwen went into damage-control mode," says the Gwen insider. "She and her publicist were calling in favors to numerous media outlets promising juicy exclusives if nothing negative was written about Blake's social media posts." One site posted a story and then took it down, leading to a dead Google link. *In Touch* has exclusively learned that the site removed its post about Blake after representatives from *The Voice* asked it to, because the show gives that site access to stories.

Blake's immediate reaction — or lack of one — also raised eyebrows. Even as the scandal grew bigger and bigger and fans demanded answers, he failed to address the issue at all. Instead, on Aug. 15, he was busy tweeting about missing his old mullet hairstyle and how his latest album, *If I'm Honest*, was back at No. 1 and had gone gold. "This calls for a drink!" he added. "I love y'all seriously." Blake's representative did not return numerous messages from *In Touch* about the tweets.

Blake's biggest headache may be yet to come. Gwen's ex-husband, Gavin Rossdale, is extremely concerned, according to the Gwen insider. "He's demanding answers and is determined to get them," says the Gwen insider. "Gavin and Gwen raise their sons [Kingston, 10, Zuma, 8, and Apollo, 2] to be very respectful of minorities, women and the LGBT community. The boys go to school with [kids with] parents in same-sex relationships. This is an issue that directly impacts their children."

Gavin, 50, wants to know the context and circumstances of how and why Blake made those comments on social media. “Gwen is choosing to look the other way for now and is just hoping this blows over, but Gavin wants to make sure the kids aren’t being subjected to any inappropriate language [when Blake’s around],” says the Gwen insider. “If he doesn’t get answers or feels that the kids are being harmed by being around someone that says those things, Gwen can expect a trip to court for a custody battle.”

Anti-hate advocates are demanding answers too. Ibrahim Hooper, the national communications director for the Council on American-Islamic Relations — the nation’s largest Muslim civil rights and advocacy organization — thinks Blake owes the world an explanation after tweeting about a non-English-speaking bomber. “Anybody in the public eye who has the ability and the responsibility of influencing millions of people needs to be more responsible in what they choose to put on social media,” he tells *In Touch*, adding that Blake “really has a responsibility to act in a decent way and to promote mutual understanding and tolerance and not promote divisive stereotypes. Any time you have somebody associating people who speak another

language with violence, I think you have a problem.”

Blake has previously repeatedly claimed he’s just joking around in

“**Gwen’s friends want her to be careful because of what’s happening with Blake”**

— A GWEN INSIDER

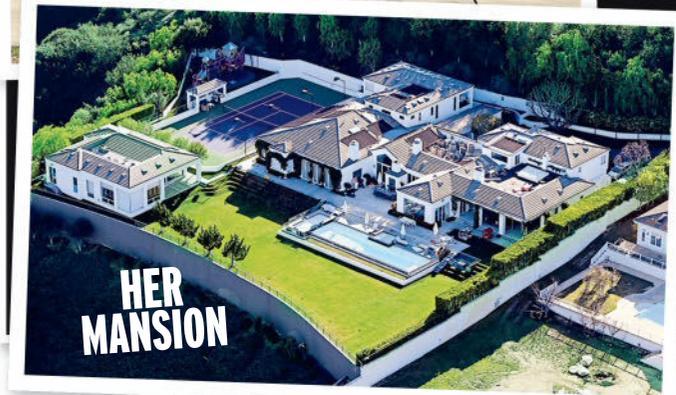
his tweets, but that explanation is wearing thin. “These are hateful, bitter tweets,” explains psychologist Julie Armstrong, who hasn’t counseled Blake. “He needs to own them, apologize for them, let his fan base know that he understands they were inappropriate. I think his fans are willing to forgive him if he’s willing to own them and come clean and kind of cop to it.”

Blake’s apologized before for making homophobic comments. In May 2011, LGBT advocacy group GLAAD demanded — and got — a public mea culpa after Blake tweeted his own anti-gay spin on the lyrics to Shania Twain’s song “Any Man of Mine,” writing, “Any man that tries touching my behind, he’s gonna be a beaten, bleedin’, heaving kind of guy.”

Just weeks into his first season as a coach on *The Voice*, Blake called it a “misunderstanding” and posted on Twitter that he wanted “my fans and @nbcethevoice fans to know that anti-gay and lesbian violence is unacceptable!!!!” Blake also made headlines in June 2016 for insulting the mentally disabled when he attacked a former fan, telling her, “I’m starting to realize that maybe you’re a little slow.”

Will Blake own his actions? “Even the biggest of names go down very quickly, and particularly now [when] people have no tolerance for making fun of people because of their sexual orientation or ethnicity status,” explains Glenn Selig, chief strategist and founder of The Publicity Agency, a firm with expertise in crisis management. “You need to take ownership of it and apologize for it. People drop you like a hot potato if you’re not careful, and he needs to take it seriously.”

The scandal comes as Blake’s personal life is better than ever. He and Gwen are getting ready to announce their engagement and are planning a winter wedding. “This should be a huge wake-up call for Gwen, but she’s determined to stick by her man,” says the Gwen insider. “She will be Blake’s biggest defender. But her friends are asking at what cost.” ■



Blake & Gwen’s \$225M Prenup

The wedding is on! “Gwen and Blake are getting married this December,” says an insider. “They’re hoping to announce their engagement in September around their one-year anniversary.” But there’s some business to take care of first: The pair are having their lawyers hash out a prenup. (Blake is worth \$150 million and Gwen \$75 million.) “Blake said he didn’t want a prenup,” adds the insider. “He feels like it’s the wrong tone to start off the marriage. But Gwen feels they should both be protected.” The prenup with Blake will dictate that her Beverly Hills mansion will stay in her name, and Blake’s Oklahoma ranch and other properties will stay in his name. “The prenup will also dictate that neither one of them will seek spousal support if the marriage ends,” adds the insider. Blake — who did have a prenup with ex-wife Miranda Lambert, 32 — “was reluctant at first, but he’s come around.”

CLOCKWISE FROM BOTTOM LEFT: R/R (3); COLEMAN-RAYNER; SPLASH/R/R; COVER CREDITS: CLOCKWISE FROM MAIN: SPLASH; REX; AP (2); STARTRAKS; SPLASH; WIREIMAGE; STARTRAKS

What Her Whimsical

Hollywood's elite are trading their statement bags for playful arm



"I'M AN OVERACHIEVER"

Actress, designer, model ... Chloë's talents run the gamut, and her camera-shaped Chanel bag shines a spotlight on her latest gig: director. With the addition of a Chanel jacket and tie, maybe she's aiming to add Chanel spokesperson to her résumé, too.

Chloë Sevigny



Gwen Stefani

"I CAN DO DEMURE ... SORT OF"

Vintage yellow and blue Chanel shearling flap bag: \$8,500. Multi-hued floral Bernie Dexter skirt: \$82. Hot pink Kurt Geiger pumps: \$400. The way Gwen toned down her rocker-glam style for Sunday church service: Priceless.



Kate Moss