

# ‘Please believe these days will pass’: The posters of positivity puncturing the gloom of lockdown

Here's how a defiant message of hope spread across the country, says **Helen Coffey**



@LenniCoffey | Friday 17 April 2020 17:38 |



Build Hollywood

**C**ommunity is *Kindness*.” The message stands out, bold and bright, in solid, uncompromising capitals.

The mysterious posters started popping up in cities all over the UK around a month ago, just when the **coronavirus** crisis really started to bite. Everywhere from Brighton to Birmingham, London to Edinburgh, the message rang out loud and clear, sprawled across billboards in millennial pink and cherry red: “Be kind. Let’s look out for one another.”

As guerrilla marketing campaigns go it was pretty damn effective, demanding instant attention. But what, exactly, was it marketing? Kanye’s latest album? An influencer’s new brand of homeware? The next iPhone? What was actually being advertised?

As it turns out, nothing at all.

“Nothing was branded – that was never the intention,” Khaly Nguyen tells *The Independent*. “The design was created out of a desire *not* to talk about ourselves; we just wanted to get the message out there.”

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Coronavirus is taking away the surrogate who was our last hope

She’s the head of marketing for Build Hollywood, a group of three street advertising agencies called Jack, Jack Arts and Diabolical. If it’s strange to hear a head of marketing say they don’t want their brand to be recognisable from a campaign, it’s even stranger to find out that said “campaign” isn’t advertising anything.

Think about it: it’s not often you see a billboard on the street without an agenda. Surrounded by advertising, we’ve almost become immune to the way in which the urban landscape is constantly trying to flog us something.

Spotting a 20ft poster out in the wild, then, that isn’t asking you to part with your hard-earned cash in exchange for some version of a better life, seems to cut through the noise like a hot knife through butter. No wonder it’s created an impact.

“We’ve been so blown away by the heartwarming response,” says Khaly. “It’s been delightful. There’s been so much love on the street for our message, and also on social media, from people from all walks of life. We’ve had actors, shop owners, key workers and people on their daily walks telling us they love it. Even hospitals have been in touch asking if they can have some to put up!”



The posters are being shared on social media (Build Hollywood)

The agency has found itself frantically adapting to life as a temporary delivery service in response, sending out its uplifting posters to medical staff and others who’ve requested them.

The initial idea grew out of chaos, prompted by bleak headlines that, on top of the Covid-19 deaths and oncoming storm, spoke of stockpiling and racist abuse.

“We didn’t really have a plan,” says Khaly. “It all came about really quickly when the virus hit. It was an awful time for society, and we weren’t sure what we could do at first.

“We decided to use our poster space – we specialise in street advertising and own sites up and down the country. We thought we could spread a positive message, especially now.”

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It was a company-wide response, a decision to use resource, not for financial gain, but to share a little bit of much-needed hope within communities. The concept, words and design were all arrived at by a collective process, too. There was no artist; no visionary at the helm.

“The message was something we came up with as a whole company,” says Khaly. “It came from all of us and the feeling we had that we could do our bit to help.”

And so an idea quickly became a reality, with 1,000 posters hastily erected up and down the country. The message has spread even further than our small isle since then, much further than Build Hollywood could ever have anticipated, with agencies across the world, from Australia to LA, getting in touch to ask if they, too, can use the design to spread a message of kindness. They’ve even created a downloadable version so those who have to completely self-isolate can print it off at home to put up in their windows as a show of solidarity.

It’s not the only product-free campaign the agency has launched. Working with Build Hollywood as part of its Your Space Or Mine project, in which artists are given ad space to utilise for free, Turner Prize-nominee Mark Titchner created his own positive message.



The message is being spread around the UK (Build Hollywood)

“PLEASE BELIEVE THESE DAYS WILL PASS” reads the rallying cry of hope, plastered on sites across 10 British cities.

“When the words first came to me in 2012, who could imagine the ‘days’ that we find ourselves in now?” says Titchner. “My thinking at the time was a message to help one endure through difficult times but also a reminder to cherish what is good in the here and now. It is what is good, such as the bravery of those working so hard on our behalf in the NHS, or the safety of our loved ones, that will get us through when the endurance runs low.

“I’m very thankful of the opportunity to share these words.”



‘These Days Will Pass’ (Mark Titchner)

Art may not be able to change the times we find ourselves living through, but it can perhaps bring hope.

“This message has resonated with so many people,” says Khaly. “It’s made art accessible, it’s helped people.

“And that’s what art should be: open for everyone, free for everyone, helping to change everyone’s lives.”

Download your own poster [here](#).

