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The Promise—and Risk—of a Career in TikTok

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KEONDRA IS 20 years old, lives in St. Paul, Minnesota, and until the coronavirus pandemic hit, worked as a cashier at the Midwestern hardware chain Menards. She also has more than 770,000 followers on TikTok as [@Keondra.K.](#)

In the fall of 2018, after graduating from high school, Keondra downloaded TikTok on her iPhone and started filming short videos of herself dancing, lip-syncing, and cosplaying alone in her bedroom, which is covered in posters, one of the Japanese woodblock print *The Wave* and others of the K-pop band BTS.

For months, her videos received little attention. Then one day, Keondra uploaded a video of herself dancing in a short black wig. When she woke up the next morning, the video had gone viral. Fans said she looked just like Edna Mode—the fashion designer from *The Incredibles*. Eventually, other videos of hers began appearing on TikTok’s “for you” page, sending them viral too. On some, she has received more than [600,000 likes](#) and more than a million views. And that’s not just on the videos of her dancing (although those often receive the most views), but also on instructional videos about [makeup](#) and hair and photo editing, and rants about her favorite anime characters and racism in America....

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