

Actress dies after being ‘cancelled’

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Vulnerable: South Korean celebrities such as Kim Sae-ron (above) face immense pressure to be perfect. They are subjected to the demands of obsessive 'super fans' who can make or break careers.

Has shame culture gone too far? A South Korean star has died by suicide after losing her career over a drink driving incident. Some think we should cool off cancel culture.

What's happening?

South Korea is in **mourning**. Last Sunday afternoon the actress Kim Sae-ron was found dead in her **Seoul** home, aged 24. The cause of death has been reported as **suicide**.

Kim was a huge celebrity, but in May 2022 she crashed her car while **drink driving**.

She apologised. But it was not enough. Planned roles were cancelled. Netflix edited her out of its drama *Bloodhounds*. Kim vanished from the public eye.

Find out more

South Korea has a harsh celebrity culture, but this is not just a Korean problem.

Shame is one of our most powerful social tools. It forces us to act carefully. It polices people into changing their behaviour.

Shame has leaked into every aspect of our lives. People are not just shamed for what they say and do. They can be age-shamed, **class**-shamed and body-shamed. And thanks to the internet, our shame can sit online for ever.

Yet some people defend shaming, saying it is the only way the public can express their anger or upset.

Has shame culture gone too far?

Some say

Yes! Online shaming has become a form of bullying, sometimes with tragic results. And it often keeps us distracted from the outrages that really matter.

Others think

No! Shame culture is the most powerful weapon ordinary people have to hold the rich and powerful to account.

Six steps to discovery

Some people say

1. Connect

"The only shame is to have none."

Blaise Pascal (1623 – 1662), French philosopher

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What do you think?

How do you feel about this story? - Have you ever been shamed? Did it encourage you to change your behaviour?

2. Wonder

What questions do you have? - For example: What is the earliest known example of a society using shame? When did cancel culture begin?

3. Investigate

What are the facts? - Why is drink driving against the law? How do drink driving laws vary from country to country?

4. Construct

What is your point of view? - Would you rather be publicly shamed or sent to prison?

5. Express

What do others believe? - In groups, discuss who, if anyone, you believe deserves to be shamed.

6. Reflect

What might happen next? - Write a letter to someone who has been publicly shamed.

Glossary

Mourning - The expression of sorrow for someone's death.

Seoul - The capital of South Korea, with a population of nearly 10 million.

Suicide - When a person deliberately takes their own life. Links to mental health support contacts in the UK are available on this page from mental health charity Mind: <https://www.mind.org.uk/for-young-people/how-to-get-help-and-support/useful-contacts/>.

Drink Driving - The offence of driving when having drunk over a certain amount of alcohol.

Class - A system of ordering society in which people are grouped into "classes" depending on their social or economic status.