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The Raging of Cancel Culture is a Threat to Us All



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I am afraid it's much worse than we realized. Our nation is terminally divided, and unlike the Civil War, this time it is not but one single issue that separate us. This is a deeper division, one that transcends even politics. It is a foundational fight, a culture war writ large, a disagreement without end.

And that's why this past presidential election solved nothing.

The raging of the cancel culture is becoming a caricature of itself. Ironically, the progressive impulses of the whole woke movement makes almost no distinction between Democrats and Republicans. The Klan is as noxious to the cancellation crowd as is any centrist. Even their natural allies—the moderate members of their own party!— are too sullied for inclusion.

To be woke is to be at war with anyone who doesn't fanatically toe your line.

No one gets a pass. Even Abraham Lincoln, apparently, failed his racial justice test. When the Great Emancipator first ran for president, he didn't oppose slavery or, for that matter, entirely believe that political and civil rights should ever be granted to Negroes. He was a man of his time and shared certain racial prejudices with his white contemporaries. Before he mobilized the North to free the slaves, Lincoln was insufficiently woke.

What to do with such a man in these days of identity politics run amuck? Surely his name must be erased on the facades of school buildings, as just happened in San Francisco. What next: renaming the Lincoln Memorial for some other president, one who more closely approximates the moral standard? Good luck with that. Evidently, the passage of the 13th Amendment entitled our greatest president to no bonus points in the white supremacy/cancel culture sweepstakes.

In this tortured exercise in national-abasement, diversity and equity can be achieved only after a bloodbath of America's moral failings. The intersectional mantra of inclusiveness specializes in *excluding* those who challenge the premises of an oppressor paradigm. Assigning blame is the first order of business in this new national ethic of purging without absolution. Unlike the 1950s, the catchphrase for this era is not "naming names" but deleting them.

Critical Race Theory, set loose from the college campus, has become so widespread and weaponized, armed with its patented moral absolutes, it can probably seek nonprofit status as an organized religion. The Puritans of Plymouth Rock had nothing on the social justice warriors of today. Donald Trump wasn't entirely wrong about "witch hunts"—it's just that they were aimed not at him but at everyone who didn't subscribe to the tyranny of political correctness.

Everything upsets the hard left; everyone is a candidate for cancellation—second chances are always denied, without exception.

The madness of this moment is often surreal to contemplate; the relentless expurgations of American culture, the censorship it foretells and the future it forebodes. Dr. Seuss, Aunt Jemima, Huck Finn, Uncle Ben, Mr. Potato Head—all are now relics of a more acquiescent past. We have become a nation devoid of forgiveness.

[A janitor, security guard and food service worker forced to take anti-bias training](#) for asking an African-America student why she was sitting in the school cafeteria that was closed to students, as they were instructed to do. [A TV star written off her show](#) for making an arguably inappropriate analogy. Others fired or reprimanded for [maintaining a Parler account](#), or questioning gender reassignments, or opposing biological boys competing on female sports teams, or insisting that mathematics requires the solving of right answers, or wondering why our borders are open when states are still in lockdown. Incorrect pronoun usage, forbidden words, bewildering bathroom protocols—all are affronts to this newly draconian movement hiding behind polite words like “justice” and “equity.”

Because they are terrified of being called “racist,” the powers that be—from Hollywood studio chiefs to Ivy League deans to media moguls—fall lamely in line and silence their own dissent. The “privilege” of being white is without mercy.

We are witnessing a cultural sea change where wrong-thinking Americans are rendered castaways. With transgressions aplenty, the guilty are forever unforgiven.

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And the intellectual consistency of the movement is suspect. Where are the calls to ban the books of Voltaire, T.S. Eliot and Ezra Pound—all unabashed anti-Semites? Jews would not seek this remedy, but it raises serious questions about having equal access to intersectional grievances.

One might have hoped that with Donald Trump out of the White House, some of the anti-white bigotry of the woke left would have subsided. Instead, the moral outrage has only gotten worse.

The sources of their fury consist of rejecting American Exceptionalism, melting-pot immersion, and the independence of free thought. But these are the core values of Americana itself. Setting aside the ahistorical teachings of the 1619 Project, this nation’s foundational principles emanate from liberalism, not racism. Without minimizing the moral blight of slavery, the class and caste systems that dominated other nations always mattered less than individual merit and the prospects for human advancement.

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We are facing a crisis point where our liberal traditions are being subverted by a politics of irreversible grievance. The result is a lost appreciation for human complexity, and the refusal to judge people according to the standards of their time. The radical left is playing a dangerous zero sum game. It is a movement all too happy to ban books rather than read them in historical context and under the terms in which they were written.

Human error and moral failing are not the same as depravity. Yes, George Washington owned slaves, but he also opposed slavery. Is he now disqualified from being our Founding Father, even though his slave ownership was never a secret? We must not lose our moral clarity and capacity to distinguish Honest Abe from the Grand Wizard of the KKK.

If everyone is a racist, then no one is a racist.

Just who are the arbiters who create these ever-expanding blacklists? It's not the clergy, theologians, or ethicists. We are being reprimanded and our children brainwashed by self-righteous schoolmarms, social media mobs and millions of anonymous Twitter trolls, all with mischief and malice in their hearts and too much time on their hands.

Not surprisingly, it all comes down to a wall. Not the one imagined for our southern border or that now suddenly surrounds the Capitol. It is a much more unscalable wall, separating Americans from each other and from the founding ideals of their nation.

What's even worse is losing sight of what's on the other side.

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