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Writing 121

1 April 2019

Reflective Writing 1

As I sit here considering the reading and Margaret Mead’s words I find myself thinking about an interesting political division. In class, the examples of potential topics were #metoo and the kneeling controversy in the NFL. These are both predominantly politically left-wing examples of rhetoric towards a specific end. The reading also focused primarily on “left wing” examples citing the Black Lives Matter movement and “right to a living wage” protests. Being politically conservative, I don’t really identify with these topics and I’ve always found that my writing is exponentially better the more interest I have in the topic.

So, because my mind was stuck on the “politics track”, I sat and tried to think about “right wing” examples of this same behavior and found myself having a hard time thinking of any. This isn’t meant to imply that they don’t exist, just that I couldn’t think of any off the top of my head. It made me wonder if it was because collectivist thinking is so much more predominant on the political left or if there’s just an inherent bias that translates collectivism into “truth” when it’s your own “side”. I settled on “a little of both” and found my mind was much readier to point out some rhetorical examples.

The one I decided to cover is the (somewhat) recent banning of youtuber Sargon of Akkad (Carl Benjamin) from the crowd funding site Patreon. As a quick frame of reference, Sargon is a British citizen who makes political/philosophical content. Patreon is a crowdfunding website that allows people to make monthly pledges (for a small percent fee) to “Patron’s” which tends to be the creators primary source of income. Carl was banned for using racial charged language when confronting a group of white nationalists about six months prior. This content was not on his channel but uploaded on someone else’s channel and as such did not violate Patreon’s terms and conditions.

Sargon’s banning was seen by a large majority of the online community to be without merit and a politically motivated “hit”. Naturally, as you might expect in such a charged political environment, the unjustified banning had its supporters. To the supporters, aka those who already did not like Sargon, this was Patreon ridding their platform of “hate speech”. Amongst those who opposed the ban it was a chilling reminder of the unaccountability of large internet companies (Did not violate terms of service, no recourse, primary income source vanished overnight) and a major violation of the principles of freedom of speech/expression. Personally, I lean much more toward individual liberty and away from this sort censorship.

In this case many in the YouTube community dropped the service in protest. This is significant because most of the income for many content creators was/is through Patreon, therefore this action came at great financial cost to those who protested. Virtually all of them made video’s explaining their reasoning. These arguments included things like:

1. How can I continue to support a company that strips someone’s income overnight without warning and for a cause that doesn’t violate terms of service?
2. If I don’t stand against injustice towards the innocent, who will?
3. If Patreon won’t follow its own rules, what happens when the mob comes for me?

Ultimately, dozens of creators dropped Patreon and found alternative means for “patronage”. Two people in the top 10 monthly contributions: Sam Harris (Neuroscientist) and SwordAndScale (Non-Political YouTube channel), deleted their Patreon accounts. A few other notable departures were Matt Christiansen (Left leaning political channel), Jordan Peterson (Liberal, Psychiatrist/Author) and Dave Rubin (Liberal, Interview channel).

As for me (I’ll try to keep this brief!), something I’ve done recently has to do with my Aunt’s dog. He’s her best friend by far and a few months ago was diagnosed with cancer. The cancer is in his leg, but he’s only being treated for pain and inflammation. The pain treatments clearly aren’t enough as he limps around even while medicated and, as we know, cancer’s growth is exponential.

As I stated the diagnosis was a month or so ago (maybe longer!) and it really doesn’t appear that the information has really “sunk in” for my aunt. In response to hearing that she was having to spoon feed her 120+ rottweiler mix dog I decided to take rhetorical action. I wrote a half page message to my mother (her sister) who’s recently had to “say goodbye” to a beloved companion. The message contained a plea for her to communicate a few important concerns to my aunt who doesn’t tend to listen to me. These concerns included things like “Gibb’s needing to be put down is no longer a matter of if, but when. You need to decide how bad you are willing to let Gibb’s quality of life get. Don’t let it get so bad he’s throwing up blood, won’t eat/drink, and won’t move. Coming to terms with him being gone before he’s actually gone will help with the grieving process.” Additionally, what can we do as a family to help her with the time/location/ceremony for Gibb’s passing? We should make a plan for this and if/when she wants another pet...how can we make it happen?”

This was very recent, and the subject matter is inherently private and personal. As such, I’m unaware at the moment of any actual “change” that has been caused or “action” that has been spurred. However, the idea was received positively by all the family members I took it to. I don’t really have space to write a conclusion, so maybe consider this a cliffhanger?

Alright so I wrote quite a bit more than I needed to. Sorry about that. Most of the first page could be deleted, and I did consider it, but the assignment is about “reflection” and I felt that it was a strong segway into the meat of the assignment. But yeah, I didn’t realize how quickly 2 pages goes double spaced and, you know, sunk costs fallacy and all that.

Works Cited

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