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Popular Discourse Report
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The discursive moment that I am reporting on is a TED talk given by Tim Berners-Lee, entitled *A Magna Carta for the Web*. This TED talk was given with the 25th anniversary of the creation of the World Wide Web in mind. It discusses some of the issues with the current web of today, such as widespread surveillance, the restrictions that are placed on free speech over the web, the uncomfortable transitions on the part of certain older companies, and the struggle to allow the less privileged nations of the world to have viable methods of accessing the web. It also attempts to tie it all together with a message that the general public should fight for these causes and design the titular “Magna Carta for the Web.”

One of the biggest strengths that this presentation has is that it’s given by Tim Berners-Lee, who is one of the few individuals who was both formative to the field of Computer Science and who is speaking out in the modern era regarding the field. As such, it’s clear that Tim has a lot of authority in that he’s seen what has happened in the past 25 years on the web, and has managed to adapt rather well to the changing times in comparison to some other major computer scientists of that era. He’s not alone; heads of major tech corporations and the like are among the group who have managed to adapt. There are other foundational figures such as Richard Stallman, one of the creators of the GNU/Linux project, who have not adapted as well and whose voices are far less heard, especially outside of the field of Computer Science.

However, the main problem with this presentation is that the style of it is just ineffective for delivering the message that Tim wants to deliver. It's not really clear that he has a message whatsoever, as the presentation consists of him basically standing on a stage for about seven minutes and talking about topics that are vaguely connected to the Web and barely connected to each other. There's no major takeaway, there's no rhetorical structure to the presentation, there's no consistency. It's also clear that the presentation wasn't particularly well-prepared on Berners-Lee's part, as he is constantly stuttering, saying "um", and generally acting lost for words. This is potentially also attributable to Berners-Lee not being the best of public speakers, or potentially that it's not really his presentation that he's giving. It may instead be someone else's presentation that he's been handed and told to give, rather than something designed by him. Either way, it's clear that despite the importance of the topics, it simply doesn't work rhetorically.