

From: David H. Freedman dhfreedman@gmail.com
Subject: Re: Advice for a young writer?
Date: March 14, 2017 at 11:29
To: Danny Bugingo dbugingo@hotmail.com



It's only part of the price. Persuasion is a black art. With great power comes great responsibility.

On Tue, Mar 14, 2017 at 2:20 PM, Danny Bugingo <dbugingo@hotmail.com> wrote:

Dave,

Thank you for the plain and honest advice. I've begun loading my columns with government skepticism and Christian value language, and it's worked — a fierce conservative told me she was reconsidering her support of the death penalty.

I do have one concern.

While couching progressive arguments in conservative terms seems to be effective, I worry it leads to issues when one leaves the context of one particular issue or another. Martin Luther King was so good at this sort of messaging I've heard people refer to him (a socialist) as "conservative." He swayed opinions on civil rights issues perhaps at the cost of his anti-war, anti-poverty ideals.

Is this the price of effective persuasion?

Best,
Danny

Le 3 janv. 2017 à 11:59, David H. Freedman <dhfreedman@gmail.com> a écrit :

Hi Danny,

I fear you're being way too kind in attributing any sort of success to my efforts to get across my points of view--my impression is that I tend to turn out articles that readers love to hate. I think it's typical that anyone who tries to find a workable solution between two clashing points of view only manages to piss everyone off. And to be perfectly honest, I never actually set out to produce something that any particular group of people are likely to be receptive to, I simply speak my mind. I hesitate to offer that advice to you, though, because speaking one's mind, without adjustments for how people are likely to receive it, tends (with interesting exceptions) not to be a path to any sort of success, especially in journalism. I have no idea why the Atlantic or anyone else publishes my articles, I never seem to win these magazines any new fans.

Having said all that, I do often offer advice on how to get people to shift their thinking when they're locked into a wrongheaded worldview, based on research I did for my last book. The gist of the advice is to abandon any hope of getting anywhere via logic or evidence--people with wrongheaded worldviews didn't get there through logic and evidence, and they won't get out it that way. The two things that do sometimes succeed in shifting people's opinions are, first, finding ways to demonstrate that you are largely aligned with many aspects of their worldview; and, second, to have a compelling story to tell that carries with it a nudge in the right direction. People are suckers for good stories, where good stories can be defined as offering simple, appealing, novel and universal solutions. Such solutions are pretty much always a mirage, but they make for good stories that draw people in. People who don't fall for these stories tend to find themselves stuck seeing multiple sides of a complex picture, but they're a tiny minority.

I don't follow that advice myself, because a few magazines have given me the luxury of getting to make my case without regard for who's actually going to buy it. I simply stick to logic and evidence, in the full knowledge that logic and evidence rarely win hearts and minds. (I should note that by "evidence," I specifically mean broad evidence that has held up to longstanding scientific consensus, but that's another story.)

Anyway, I'm glad you wrote. I get the feeling you're on the track to something important, and though I'm probably the wrong person to help you pick up momentum, I suspect you'll do fine. Good luck!

Best,
Dave

On Tue, Jan 3, 2017 at 2:55 AM, Danny Bugingo <dbugingo@hotmail.com> wrote:

Hi David,

Your articles "The War on Stupid People" and "How Junk Food Can End Obesity" discuss inequality while avoiding privilege rhetoric, identity politics, etc.

I'm a sucker for bipartisanship, pragmatism and technocracy, and I know that our politics are more subtle and compassionate than the recent election indicated.

So, being a black college student in a blood red state writing for the school newspaper, my challenge is to frame social justice

issues in ways conservatives might be receptive to, something I've seen you find some success in doing.

Any tips?

Best,
Danny Buggingo