

Where Is Cancel Culture Headed?

by **Richard T. Ritenbaugh**
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Though “cancel culture” is a recent phrase, the practice has been around for a very long time, as John 9 attests:

They brought him who formerly was blind to the Pharisees. . . . But the Jews did not believe concerning him, that he had been blind and received his sight, until they called [his] parents. . . . His parents answered them and said, “We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind; but by what means he now sees we do not know He is of age; ask him. He will speak for himself.” His parents said these things because they feared the Jews, for the Jews had agreed already that if anyone confessed that He was Christ, he would be put out of the synagogue. . . . The man answered and said to them, . . . “If this Man were not from God, He could do nothing.” They answered and said to him, “You were completely born in sins, and are you teaching us?” And they cast him out.
(John 9:13, 18, 20-22, 30, 33-34)

According to the [New York Post](#), *cancel culture* is “the phenomenon of promoting the ‘canceling’ of people, brands, and even shows and movies due to what some consider to be offensive or problematic remarks or ideologies.” Villanova University professor Dr. Jill McCorkel insists that its roots are found throughout human history. Many societies punished their members with various forms of banishment—exile, excommunication, shunning, blacklisting, boycotting, etc.—for conduct that violated accepted social norms. What we see today, she asserts, is merely another variation.

Many believe that the current American version is a spinoff of one at work in Communist China, where the government and major corporations monitor its citizens’ views on social media. They give each person a social credit score, and depending on where it falls, an individual may not be hired for a job, rent an apartment, attend a school, stay at a hotel, eat at a restaurant, or fly

on an airplane. The system is designed to force citizens to endorse—publicly, at least—the “right” ideas and policies, those of the politically powerful.

A similar, fascistic alliance of the political Left and mega-corporations exists in the United States, and they are likewise trying to force conformity on the citizenry. The giant tech companies—those that own popular social media sites and Internet services (Facebook, Twitter, Google, and Amazon, among others)—have essentially censored non-Leftists by labeling their posts as “false” or “misleading” or terminating their accounts altogether. If they have done this to a sitting President of the United States and other well-known conservatives, they will not be shy about canceling others of a related bent.

It is not just about canceling social media accounts. A corporate publishing house withdrew Republican Senator Josh Hawley’s upcoming book that it had asked him to write, ironically, about political censorship by powerful American corporations. He had sinned by contesting the recent Electoral College results. Subsequently, a major hotel firm canceled his upcoming political events that had been scheduled at its properties.

Whole platforms are at risk, not just individuals. By shutting down the Parler.com servers it hosts, Amazon took down the conservative social media site for what it called the site’s lack of enforcement of rules against content that incites violence. The tech giant accused Parler of allowing the planning, coordination, and execution of the January 6 riot at the Capitol to be done on its site, an accusation that Parler’s executives vehemently deny and statistics confirm. This action serves as an example of what can happen to any website that dares cross the Left’s ideological lines.

In these cases, the Constitutional ramifications of these cancellations are muddled because the first amendment forbids *governmental*, not corporate, censorship. At this point, under Section 230 of the Communications Decency Act (1996), which acts as a liability shield, Big Tech can do whatever it wants. According to Rachel Bovard, senior director of policy at the Conservative Partnership Institute and an editorial contributor to [USA Today](#), tech companies can “restrict access to or availability of material that the provider or user considers to be . . . objectionable, whether or not such material is constitutionally protected” under Section 230.

Cancel culture, then, allows mainstream and social media and the Leftist oligarchs behind them to mandate conformity to progressive ideas—or else. The objective seems to be a state in which public discourse is confined to a narrow band of tolerated opinion, that is, a flat and frictionless zone of “right” thinking (a society-wide “safe space,” if you will). Those who comply will be permitted to continue under the watchful eyes of fact-checkers, but any ideas that dare poke beyond the accepted boundaries will be mercilessly cut off.

Jesus tells His disciples in Matthew 5:14, “You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden.” In today’s idiom, He maintains that true Christians and their beliefs stand tall in stark contrast to the monotone, lifeless ideas of unredeemed humanity. Others will see them as different, and the powers-that-be will try to erase them, just as they did to Jesus and His preaching. While we cannot water down God’s revelation, Christians will need to learn to be “wise as serpents and harmless as doves” (Matthew 10:16) in their communication as the end nears.