

Why I Left Facebook --And Why You Should Too

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Like millions of Americans, I have in recent days grown sick of Facebook. Like hundreds of thousands, I've abandoned it for Parler.

When I said goodbye to my friends on Facebook, they were all kind. Many said they'd miss me, and others offered advice. One told me she had glanced into Parler and had found it horrifying. But, she said, she was sure I had done my due diligence before signing on.

Indeed I had. Parler allows you to choose whose words you read and whose memes you chuckle at. I'm not a fan of outlandish conspiracy theories so I don't keep up with the Joneses -- Alex or Mother. I enjoy reading intelligent articles from all sides, so I follow the *American Thinker* and *National Review* on Parler. I'm a libertarian, so on Parler I also follow *Reason* and the Cato Institute. Because they haven't yet signed on to Parler, I subscribed to the *New Republic* and *Harpers*. I don't want to be trapped in a bubble of anyone's making.

Problem solved.

Another pointed out that according to Wikipedia, "Parler has a significant user base of Trump supporters, conservatives, and Saudi nationalists, and posts often contain far-right content, antisemitism, and conspiracy theories."

That sounds to me a great deal like conversations in the real world, yet so far I've avoided falling prey to the emotional disorders that underlie many of the worst excesses of the left and the right. I still believe most people are good and kind, and I never call people fascists or communists, racists or baby-killers. The evidence I find on Facebook indicates strongly to me that doing so is emblematic of a larger unhinged hatred within, no matter which side you're on. And I happen to like people. I think some are dumb, because some are, and some are misguided, because many are, but that's okay. Sometimes I'm dumb and misguided. But at least I like people.

That fact -- the fact that I like people -- is what separates me from Facebook. It isn't the people I follow and engage with who are at issue. Not even the dumb or misguided ones. It's the children in San Francisco who are now determining what I should hear, read, and think.

Another friend wrote, "Oh, Mark, we will miss you. But that Zucker's failure to censure Bannon for calling for Fauci's beheading on FB may drive me off too." My friend is a dyed-in-the-wool lefty and an academic. And a lovely, lovely woman. We just see this issue from a different perspective.

I don't want some Zucker like Zuckerberg determining for me that I shouldn't hear what Steve Bannon has to say regarding the appropriate proximity of Dr. Fauci's cranium and clavicles. I think allowing him to post this comment has the beneficial effect of reminding those who need

reminding (yes, there are some) that Bannon is a particularly nasty carbuncle on the wrinkled bottom of American politics. Let it run.

One friend of mine recently commented that “Biden voters are idiots,” which earned her a month-long stay in Facebook jail. At most points in time this is nothing more than a comical anecdote, but my friend is deadly ill with advanced cancer and was using her Facebook account to communicate with her family and her several hundred friends. Among her missives was a series of requests for prayers.

Nevertheless, the children in San Francisco who decide these things determined calling Biden supporters idiots was simply too much. Those words could not be borne by others, some of whom may have been Biden supporters and others of whom may in fact be Biden-supporting idiots.

Ergo, she had to go.

The *argumentum ad nauseum*, of course, is that Facebook is a privately owned entity and as such is free to choose what it will publish and what it won't. That's not entirely true. Facebook, Twitter, Parler, MeWe, and everyone who posts unmonitored comments from the public enjoy special privileges not enjoyed by others on the web. A specific federal law, Section 230, provides immunity for platforms on the web that post comments and articles submitted by the public as long as they don't pick and choose. The only exceptions are those that are *prima facie* illegal (for example, promoting violence), though there is also a long history of judicial support for suppressing obscenity.

Facebook and Twitter are abusing this privilege by acting as publishers -- that is, they decide what will be published on their platform and what won't. That should negate the Section 230 protections, leaving them open to the same legal liabilities incurred by other publishers. If they allow stories to be published describing high-school graduate and recent multi-millionaire Nicholas Sandmann as a racist -- and a confrontational one at that -- they should be as liable to lawsuits as the *Washington Post*.

Parler promises to be hands-off, which has led many in the clueless media to declare it a hazard to American democracy, saying it will increase the likelihood of “bubbles” and “echo chambers.” Yes, this is very amusing given the now well-documented bubble in which virtually all of American's news organizations function. But it is also telling of exactly what is said and believed within that bubble: The people must be protected from certain thoughts. And that's our job.

This wouldn't be true even if they weren't delusional regarding their own intelligence and mental reach. (“What is a reporter? Someone who can become an expert in any field in an afternoon.”) But unfortunately, they are delusional, and they do regard themselves as gatekeepers. They are just like the children in California who decide what you must not hear and see on Facebook. After all, it's for your own good.

So Zuckerberg and his minions, the children of California, are not only making money from your private information, they are also putting you into a bubble of their making.

Let me say this: I've been on Facebook for more than a decade. I credit it with renewing old friendships I thought were lost to diverging lives, and for making many new friends. But this

combination -- selling me to the highest bidder and treating me like a rat in a maze -- is simply too much. I will miss Facebook and the ready possibility of conversations with friends and family, but I'm gone.