

# DAILY BEAST

## Bill Maher, Who Said the N-Word on TV, Decries ‘Cancel Culture’

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Bill Maher, the longtime political satirist and host of HBO’s *Real Time*, harbors an Ahab-like obsession with “cancel culture”—the theory that prominent “politically incorrect” (to borrow his catchphrase) folks are being pushed out of their jobs by bad-faith online mobs.

This likely stems from the time when, six days after the 9/11 attacks, Maher eventually had his show *Politically Incorrect* canceled by Sinclair after calling the terrorists involved “not cowardly” for “staying in the airplane when it hits the building,” a statement that had come on the heels of Maher comparing his dogs to “retarded children.” In a matter of months, however, he was given a brand-new show by HBO, which he’s hosted for the last 17 years.

And, like many of the rich, privileged, highly influential signatories of Harper’s infamous “cancel culture” letter—from Malcolm Gladwell and Fareed Zakaria, who have committed multiples acts of plagiarism yet have not seen their opportunities slip, to J.K. Rowling, an anti-trans billionaire and bestselling author—Maher is a living example that “cancel culture” is overblown.

On his HBO show, Maher has said the N-word; regularly defended powerful men accused of sexual harassment; yucked it up with the alt-right; made discriminatory statements against Muslims; pushed anti-vaxx nonsense; and suggested that everyone should want to get COVID-19. He has yet to be so much as censured by HBO (at least publicly) for his behavior.

And so, on Friday night, Maher welcomed Bari Weiss and Thomas Chatterton Williams, the two people who have dined out the most on the *Harper’s* letter, to discuss “cancel culture.”

“As a guy who did a show called *Politically Incorrect* and another called *Real Time*, thank you, because we need a pushback on cancel culture,” said Maher, adding, “What strikes me about it is the pushback is coming from liberals, and almost anyone who signed this letter is a liberal!” (The bulk of the letter’s signatories are more libertarian than liberal.)

Chatterton Williams, who was not able to provide a single solid example of someone who’s been truly “canceled” during a recent interview with *The New Yorker’s* Isaac Chotiner, spoke of the overall “climate of censoriousness” and applauded the letter’s “international” coverage; meanwhile, Weiss referred to it as a “warning cry from inside these institutions,” this “growing culture of illiberalism, which is different from criticism.” She added, “It is about punishment...it is about taking away their job.”

Let’s unpack this a bit. Chatterton Williams is a prominent author and writer who has for some reason penned two memoirs before the age of 40 and contributes to *The New York Times*

*Magazine*. Weiss recently wrote a book and was an opinion writer at *The New York Times*. These people have massive platforms. Furthermore, Weiss' recent resignation from *The New York Times*, which she's painted as her being "canceled" by a major institution, was by all accounts a coordinated PR effort conducted by Weiss and the writer Andrew Sullivan who had been plotting to launch a new venture for people who presumably won't criticize them as much.

Weiss went on to draw a false equivalence between those on the right who "worship Trump as a deity who can do nothing wrong" and those on the left "where to be anything less than 'defund the police' or 'abolish the police' makes you a heretic"—the latter of course not even being true, since the majority of those on the left, including *Democratic nominee Joe Biden*, don't support defunding or abolishing the police. I'm also not sure how the blind worship of a fascistic ruler is on the same level as believing in "defund the police," or to support the reallocation of *some* police funds elsewhere, though it sounds like Weiss does not understand that "defund the police" does not actually mean taking away all the police's money.

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Maher agreed wholeheartedly with Weiss (whom he called "hip") and Chatterton Williams, opining, "For those who think that this is just, again, celebrities whining or elites or something, there was a survey recently and 62 percent of people...say they're afraid to share what they truly believe."

Here's the thing: this letter *was* mostly "celebrities whining." And that study Maher cited was conducted by the Cato Institute—a right-wing organization founded by Charles Koch.

The reality is that speech has never been more Democratic, and platforms like Twitter, that the Weiss' and Chatterton Williams' of the world decry as unfair, have given voice to countless underrepresented groups, from Black Lives Matter to the Arab Spring. Sure, there are some "cancellations" happening in media and academia but they aren't of these "politically incorrect" writers with gigantic platforms who are paid large sums of money to share their "politically incorrect" opinions and at no risk of "cancellation." They're of people like Norman Finkelstein, who was driven out of academia and denied tenure for criticizing Israel—the very same "crime" that drove Weiss to campaign to get Arab professors fired during her college heyday.

Plus, with all the *real* problems going on in the world—150,000-plus dead from the novel coronavirus, unidentified federal agents kidnapping protesters on the streets, police brutality against Black bodies, Trump threatening to postpone the election—why is Maher dedicating the majority of his program to this crap?