



After the Election, Conservatives Brace For an Emboldened 'Cancel Culture' Movement

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Paul Bond

In the front of a house in a neighborhood 30 miles north of Los Angeles, a family had no problem displaying a yard sign for Mike Garcia, a Republican running for Congress. They supported Donald Trump, too, but they refused to plant his sign on their lawn even after another neighbor supplied them with one.

"I didn't want my car to be vandalized," the man of the house said.

Down the street; same thing.

"A sign for a generic Republican is safe, a 'keep America great' sign for Trump is not," said the homeowner.

So-called "cancel culture," it seems, isn't only about censoring conservative speech at places like Twitter, Facebook and Google—as Republicans say happens routinely—but also in real life. With Trump and Joe Biden so far battling it out to a draw, an argument could be made that the practice of canceling the right has had some success and will be in the left's playbook for years to come.

Prior to the election in Ohio, nurse Mary Jo Schuette also feared repercussions should she display a Trump sign in her family's yard.

"My younger son told me we should, so we did. I was shamed into it by my 12-year-old," she said. "Shortly after we put it up, someone took it down and threw it into the street."

"Free speech is under assault in our country and everyday Americans are suffocating under the weight of the PC cancel culture," said Jonathan Jakubowski, author of *Bellwether Blues: A Conservative Awakening of the Millennial Soul*, published this year by Ballast Books.

Should Biden win, it will be "a victory for cancel culture. There is a sincere and legitimate fear of how the left will use its power to crush any voices of opposition," Jakubowski told *Newsweek*.

If Americans didn't think about cancel culture when casting their ballots, they should have, said radio host Dennis Prager, who made a documentary film on the subject last year called *No Safe Spaces*.

"Given that we are in the midst of the most serious threat to free speech in all of American history, I cannot think of a more important consideration when voting," Prager told *Newsweek*.

"A great many people have come to realize that the Democratic Party is not a liberal party but a left-wing party," said Prager. If Biden wins, it will be "such a major victory for the cancel culture that, for all intents and purposes, America will enter a neo-totalitarian age with regard to free speech, the most important of all freedoms. ... We should return the Statue of Liberty to France and allow left-wing mobs to destroy the Liberty Bell."

Garcia, who is waiting to see if he'll retain his congressional seat after Tuesday's close election, told *Newsweek* there were "folks who had damage to their property for showing pride in the president," noting that at one dual Trump-Garcia rally in Lancaster, California, an 82-year-old Republican was assaulted.

"Some kid ripped off his mask that had 'Trump' on it and the two got into a scuffle that ended up in a full-fledged fight, with the kid being arrested for elder abuse, all because of a Trump mask," he said.

David Tootle, a Black man in Georgia, said his Trump flag was burned on his lawn and when he hung a second one, it, too, was set ablaze, though neighbors who advertised their support of Joe Biden had no such problems.

"We're teaching our kids right now that you can't be intimidated in this cancel culture," Tootle said Monday on Fox News. "So we've got about five flags. I've got two of them hanging over my house right now."

Anecdotes about flags, yard signs and Trump coronavirus masks are one thing, but there's empirical evidence of the existence of cancel culture, digitally and otherwise, as a Cato Institute National survey in July found that 62 percent of Americans self-censor themselves lest they say something others deem offensive.

While more than half of both parties agreed, tellingly, the number was higher among Republicans (77 percent) than among Democrats (52 percent). A majority of only one group, "strong liberals," (58 percent of them) said they feel free to express their true beliefs.

And a Rasmussen poll in September indicated that 17 percent of voters who strongly approved of Trump weren't likely to tell pollsters, or anyone else, of their approval of the president, perhaps explaining why most polls showed Biden would win easily.

On October 22, actors James Woods and Scott Baio, both among the minority of conservatives in the entertainment industry, each tweeted a screenshot of a letter many Republicans had allegedly received: "Dear Neighbor; you have been identified by our group as being a Trump supporter. Your address has been added into our database as a target for when we attack should Trump not concede the election. We recommend that you check your home insurance policy and make sure that it is current and that it has adequate coverage for fire damage. You have been given Fair Warning."

As of Thursday, Trump has showed no signs of conceding the election.

One reason Schuette, the nurse from Ohio, was nervous about displaying her Trump sign was that she heard progressive commentator (and former ESPN sportscaster) Keith Olbermann on his October 8 podcast call for Trump's "enablers" and "supporters" to be "prosecuted and convicted and removed from our society," she told *Newsweek*.

If Trump pulls off an unlikely victory (still possible amid recounts and lawsuits in swing states), Olbermann and his ilk "will be even more ticked off. I don't know how to turn off cancel culture. Hopefully people realized it's not a good thing and pushed against it with their vote," she said.

I'm still the same person I was six months ago before I was campaigning for Trump. I just have the courage to support freedom. Basically what has happened is the Constitution was canceled. I see it so vividly. It's control of every aspect of your life.

Stephanie Locricchio, yoga instructor in New Jersey

Stephanie Locricchio, a yoga instructor in New Jersey whose primary issue in the election was freedom—including to mingle in public during coronavirus shutdowns, said she had no desire to wear a MAGA hat or plant a yard sign for Trump even though she actively supported him on Facebook.

The former registered Democrat switched to Republican this year, and the wife and mother of a 13-year-old son said she fears for her livelihood due to her views.

"People complained; I feel the eyeballs and the cold conversations. They send me messages asking how I can support a misogynist and a hateful man and still claim to be a yogi, " she said.

"I'm still the same person I was six months ago before I was campaigning for Trump. I just have the courage to support freedom," she said. "Basically what has happened is the Constitution was canceled. I see it so vividly. It's control of every aspect of your life."

"The anxiety of a Biden-Harris administration is almost crippling," she added. "Life will be canceled. I'd go off the grid, stay off the radar. It's so scary to think about."

In the Cato poll, 50 percent of strong liberals, compared to 36 percent of strong conservatives, support the idea that a company can fire employees based on their political donations. There have been cases similar, if not exact, to that scenario already, like when a political scientist was fired from his Democratic consulting gig after tweeting research suggesting that violent protests may not be an effective means of changing policy.

There also was the case of a government contractor reportedly being fired after the *Washington Post* reported (in a 3,000-word article, no less), that she had attended a Halloween party dressed in blackface a few years ago. Also, a San Diego utilities worker reportedly was canned after a stranger snapped a photo of him displaying an "OK" sign with his fingers, which nowadays can also be interpreted as a symbol promoting white supremacy (the man who was fired is Hispanic).

Most famously, the *New York Times* opinion editor James Bennet resigned after journalists there revolted over his decision to publish a piece by Senator Tom Cotton that advocated the military

be used to squash Black Lives Matter protests when they turn violent, just as it was used "to disperse mobs that prevented school desegregation."

Such examples are why 153 writers, entertainers and academics, including many on the left, like Noam Chomsky, Harry Potter author J.K. Rowling and feminist Gloria Steinem, penned a joint letter decrying cancel culture.

"It is now all too common to hear calls for swift and severe retribution in response to perceived transgressions of speech and thought," they wrote. "More troubling still, institutional leaders, in a spirit of panicked damage control, are delivering hasty and disproportionate punishments instead of considered reforms."

Greg Knox of Knox Machinery in Ohio said he has tens of thousands of followers on LinkedIn, where he was posting his positive opinion about Trump's economic policies.

"We live in a cancel culture, but I own my own company so I can say things that 90 percent of the Trump supporters I know could lose their jobs for saying—for voicing their support of the sitting president they could literally be fired," said Knox, who also is a member of a manufacturing-technology economic forecasting committee in Washington.

Trump made cancel culture a campaign issue on multiple occasions, such as at Mount Rushmore on July 4 when he said there are "evil people" on the left and that "one of their political weapons is cancel culture—driving people from their jobs, shaming dissenters and demanding total submission."

Prior to that, Trump invited Nick Sandmann—the teen who wore a pro-Trump hat and stared at a native American activist beating a drum in his face two years ago, thus becoming the poster boy for cancel culture—to speak at the Republican National Convention.

"I'm the teenager who was defamed by the media," Sandmann, now 18, said in his speech. "How could I possibly imagine that the simple act of putting on that red hat would unleash hate from the left?"

Liberals, meanwhile, are accusing Trump of engaging in the same behavior that he condemns, calling for media companies to fire talent that has been critical of him, such as Joy Reid of MSNBC, [Chris Cuomo](#) at CNN and Jennifer Griffin of the *Atlantic*, who reported that Trump slandered U.S. military veterans.

On the digital front, Senator [Ted Cruz](#) is engaging in a full-court press against Facebook, Google and Twitter. On October 28, for example, he grilled Twitter CEO Jack Dorsey for the company's decision to prevent users from tweeting links to a *New York Post* story that insinuated that Joe Biden was involved in his son Hunter's allegedly shady business dealings in the Ukraine. Twitter reversed course, but the *Post's* Twitter account was locked for weeks.

"Mr. Dorsey, who the hell elected you and put you in charge of what the media are allowed to report and what the American people are allowed to hear, and why do you persist in behaving as a Democratic super PAC silencing views to the contrary of your political beliefs?" Cruz asked Dorsey at the hearing last week.

Dorsey responded that Twitter "realized that more accountability is needed to show our intentions and to show the outcomes. So I hear the concerns and acknowledge them."

Conservative author and filmmaker Dinesh D'Souza told *Newsweek* that he was a victim of cancel culture on two fronts—Amazon and Facebook—just prior to the election. When he posted on Facebook that Joe Biden said at the first presidential debate that "Antifa is an idea, not an organization," the giant social-media firm flagged the remark for being out of context, then it demonetized the account and lessened its reach.

"What context? Does Biden have other views about Antifa that I excluded?" D'Souza asked. "What's most frustrating is that you can't call anyone at Facebook to argue with. Literally, you're dealing with Big Brother—this faceless entity that doesn't respond or give explanations. They have this Sword of Damocles over your head and they drop it when they feel like it."

Facebook did not respond to *Newsweek's* request for comment.

"Social media companies used to say they can't be a forum for hate speech," D'Souza said. "But, clearly, very little of their censorship has anything to do with hate speech. They're actually censoring accurate content."

On Thursday, *The Federalist* complained that an "accurate" retweet from co-founder Sean Davis was being "censored" by Twitter. "Pennsylvania's top court said that all ballots received after election day — even those without a postmark — must be assumed to have been cast by election day," reads the retweet.

D'Souza has been selling his most recent film, *Trump Card*, a criticism of Democrats and socialism, but a note at Amazon.com said the DVD and Blu-ray disc will ship one to two months after it is ordered, meaning no one could have received it prior to voting (though it was available to stream at Amazon a week before the election).

"They have plenty of stock, they are just not shipping it," D'Souza said of the discs. "Amazon is one of the best-run companies in the country. It's not for nothing that they've become a behemoth. So it doesn't make sense to say they're unbelievably incompetent. We have no good explanation from Amazon and I can't help but suspect there's an ideological component to it."

After Tuesday's election, Amazon removed the notice that the DVD would be delayed and boasted that it could be delivered in one day, and it marked the disc a "best seller." Amazon declined *Newsweek's* request for comment.

"If part of your goal was pissing off cancel culture then, yes, you should have considered it (when voting)," said podcaster Adam Carolla, author of the book, *I'm Your Emotional Support Animal: Navigating Our All-Woke, No Joke Culture*.

Should Biden win, "The forces of cancel culture will feel vindicated," said Carolla, who stars alongside Prager in *No Safe Spaces*. "But the good news is they're cannibalistic. They'll quickly turn on Biden for being old and white and the reasonable people will sit back and watch the Democrats implode like a post-Trump Republican Party will."

Some say it's already happening, as Antifa and Black Lives Matters activists set their sights on Democrats who are not sufficiently left, as was the case after the election in Denver when hundreds chanted "No borders; no walls; no USA at all" while marching behind a giant sign reading: "Death to fascism and the liberalism that enables it."