

Grand Theft Potato: Cancel culture has to stop

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OK, who really has a problem with Mr. Potato Head?

Do you know someone? Does your neighbor? Maybe your child's teacher?

I have some questions.

I find it hard to believe there was a drumbeat beneath the surface calling for the axing of America's favorite spud. Yet, here we are, in 2021, in the middle of a pandemic, and we're collectively worried about a plastic potato.

Welcome to cancel culture, ladies and gentlemen.

Sorry. Let me try that again.

Welcome to cancel culture, amorphous genderless readers.

If you've been following any of the insanity in recent weeks, you might have heard that our mustachioed tuber friend has fallen victim to the pitchfork mob. Apparently "Mr." Potato Head isn't inclusive enough — and for that capital sin, he's lost his ... ahem ... manhood. (I wonder how Mrs. Potato Head feels about this, but I digress.)

Already smoldering on the pile of the Unfit Past are other childhood favorites: the Muppets, Dr. Seuss, and the Looney Tunes, all of which have been deemed too dangerous for today's impressionable youth.

Off with their heads, so we can get back to playing Grand Theft Auto and listening to Cardi B's "WAP" (which stands for something grossly obscene).

If you don't laugh, you'll cry.

We aren't really concerned with decency in society. Nudity and violence on television are at all-time highs. The music industry and Hollywood make their living off selling inappropriate content to children. Pornography is everywhere, including on Facebook and Twitter.

It isn't about decency. It's about control. Particularly, who has it.

It's the reason Pepe Le Pew can be considered dangerous because of his unwanted advances toward cartoon cats, but Andrew Cuomo's real alleged unwanted advances toward women on his staff go uncovered by the media for years.

It's why we have Super Bowl commercials preaching to us about respecting women, while promoting artists who do nothing of the sort during halftime.

As Christians, we have a responsibility to be measured in our approach to these things. As ridiculous as it might seem to “cancel” poor Pepe, I understand the reasoning behind it. Should we be showing our kids a cartoon that makes kissing a woman without her permission funny?

Maybe not.

But until we can apply that standard consistently, it’s laughable that “cancel culture” is anything but an attempt by a powerful few to pat themselves on the back — so long as we don’t look in their closets.

None of this is to make mention of the real harm that’s being done to individuals who run afoul of the online mob. Canceling a cartoon is one thing. Canceling a person simply for professing the “wrong” opinion is another.

According to a Cato Institute poll last July, 62 percent of Americans fear what might happen to them if they express their true opinions in online or social settings. When people have lost jobs for far less, it’s no wonder Christians hesitate to share their faith about such things as marriage, contraception or gender identity.

Ultimately, this Great Muzzling will serve to make us less capable — not more — of confronting the challenges of our society. If we’re reluctant to share our opinions or hear others’, how can we expect to influence and change minds? What happens if we do say something inartfully?

We’re dropped like a hot potato.