

Let's Combat Cancel Culture!

With a [2018 MIT study](#) revealing that rumours spread quicker than factual news on Twitter due to being 70% more likely to be retweeted than true information, there is rampant concern about America's cancel culture among influencers, which according to Aja Romano, Internet Culture Reporter at Vox Media, occurs when a public figure does or says something offensive, igniting the collective boycott of the person, leading to terminating careers and/or social influence. Although Betsy Kunstel, Director of Advising and Retention at Ohio University believes [cancel culture is a trend](#), cancelled [individuals' reputation can be permanently tarnished](#) like when an SNL episode from 2000 where Jimmy Fallon impersonates Chris Rock in blackface resurfaced and led to Twitter users accusing Fallon of racism. Shawn Domgaard, Ph.D. candidate at Washington State University, [argues](#) "If somebody says something in 2008 but doesn't say anything until now, then that's different than if I said something multiple times every year, on the same subject, with the same opinion until now." If public figures continue to act discriminatory they should face repercussions, but cancellation is also counterproductive as it inhibits real shame since celebrities often never concede in order to maintain high-level status, [explains B.D. McClay](#), senior editor of The University of Virginia's Hedgehog Review. Additionally, [cancel culture is ineffective](#) due to punishments that do not align with the severity of the original action since people irrationally choose whom to focus on. Although creators are oftentimes considered exempt from morally acceptable standards due to the amusement gained from audiences despising them they [should be held more accountable](#) for their actions as inherent role models. Cancel culture unjustly treats all celebrities the same, regardless of action taken to remedy the situation, like a heartfelt apology or withdrawal from the public eye to reflect and learn. We must draw a line between awareness and humiliation and explore potential methods of "canceling" social media cancel culture by discussing what our nation refuses to tolerate rather than attacking a single individual for their actions.

Cancel culture empowers people to make an informed decision regarding the continuation of their support for an influencer based on their actions, but cancelling public figures can pose negative mental health consequences including desolation, self-harm, depression, and suicide. When cancellation inevitably transitions into cyberbullying, both sides can have lasting mental health damage, as a [UK study reported](#) 9% of cyberbullying victims and 29% of cyberbullies showed signs of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. Although cancel culture can prevent influencers who have repeatedly committed illegal acts from having a platform and career, like when Robert Sylvester Kelly was canceled and arrested for federal sex crimes, it is unjust when one's name or career is maliciously slandered over a belief, or when individuals are accused without context, like when comedian Kevin Hart was canceled for years-old tweets joking about homophobia when they had been deemed acceptable years ago.

Cancel culture [has presented an opportunity](#) for women and minorities to speak up on social justice issues, like sexual harassment and black rights. Olivia Goldhill, Quartz science reporter, [explained](#), "Where inept courts and HR departments have failed, a new tactic has succeeded:

Women talking about harassment on social media, fueling public condemnation that's forced men from their jobs and destroyed their reputations." By October 2018, the end of the first year of #MeToo, [429 people faced](#) 1,700 allegations of sexual misconduct with 201 losing their jobs due to allegations spread via social media. Without cancel culture, predators like film producer Harvey Weinstein, who was convicted of third-degree rape and a first-degree criminal sexual act, would persist undiscovered. Albeit social media allows people to demand justice, "People don't understand that [social activist] organizing isn't cussing people out," Patrisse Khan-Cullors, Co-Founder of Black Lives Matter [notes](#), and former President [Barack Obama agrees](#), affirming cancel culture is "not activism" at the 2019 Obama Foundation Summit. Author and Digital Strategist Maisha Johnson offers "Addressing harmful behavior is important, but so is understanding that everyone is on a different step of their journey, so we all make mistakes. And we all have different strengths — so if someone's lacking in one area, like knowing vocabulary words, we can help them grow in that area, and hope others would help us in the areas we need to grow, too."

Collectively, the toxicity of cancel culture can be eliminated through small acts like posting a positive comment or reporting a bullying situation. [Public figures can learn](#) and expand their thinking through comprehending both sides of an issue before taking a position, rather than adhering to cancel culture's cultivation of one-sided opinions. Cancel culture [unjustly punishes](#) individuals without fair trial, and violates the right to free speech without fearing retribution, and discounts influencers' ability to learn, change, and grow. Media attention should be given to discrimination impacting communities, rather than petty incidents affecting a few. Instead of dwelling on past mistakes, influencers' past mistakes should be forgiven and forgotten, and punishments equated with the severity of the action.