

The Myth of Cancel Culture By Rebecca Robinson

It seems as though the term 'cancel culture' is being thrown around an awful lot in this day and age; whether it's a celebrity's old tweets resurfacing, or an out of touch comment on the pandemic, the act of cancelling a person seems rife. I would like to argue, however, that this is merely a case of mob mentality that actually provides a highly interesting case study on the 24 hour news cycle and the whole 'no publicity is bad publicity' ideology. The term 'cancel culture' itself has its roots in the MeToo movement, where it started out as being called 'call-out culture'. It is interesting to note that one of the only celebrities that has truly been cancelled, and clearly rightfully so, was a direct result of this movement; Harvey Weinstein. It appears that, since then, the phrase has lost almost all meaning as the cause becomes diverted from taking away the power of truly abhorrent individuals and holding them accountable, to finding pleasure in digging up problematic social media posts from a decade ago to discredit D-list influencers and stop people from buying whatever supplements they're promoting this month.

If you'll allow me to digress, I'd like to take a moment to discuss a recent incident that I think is fair to say fell under the umbrella of cancel culture, and that is the comments of former Love Island contestant Molly Mae Hague. Recently, she has come under fire for some incredibly out of touch remarks about everyone having "the same twenty-four hours in a day as Beyonce". She goes on to say "I understand that we all have different backgrounds and we're all raised in different ways and we do have different financial situations, but I do think if you want something enough, you can achieve it." ... And I'm sure the people who get paid £3.50 an hour to work for the same company as you would agree, Molly! These clearly tone-deaf comments, which she made on a podcast appearance, have quite rightly landed her in hot water. Whilst we can all have a laugh at her being branded a Thatcherite and being nicknamed Molly Mae-garet Thatcher, I would like to ask why people expected anything else from her? And why has the world suddenly decided to care about her political beliefs (which she probably doesn't even recognise as being a political statement)? If you are looking to this woman for a refreshing, contemporary take on Marx and Engels then you are the idiot here, not her. She was never going to have an in touch with reality commentary on capitalism and income inequality because, news flash, she is a former Love Island contestant who became the creative director of a billion-pound fast fashion company with no experience. What has she possibly done that could lead people to believe she would have any other opinion and be any less ignorant? This woman is a walking case study on the myth of meritocracy. My point here is that the army of people trying to cancel her are putting their time into a futile effort because in the grand scheme of things, this is a relatively harmless offence ... Remember when cancel culture was reserved for literal sex offenders?

This leads me on to my more general point about looking for answers in the wrong places online. Specifically, turning to celebrities for insightful political commentary, which is something that seems to happen every time there is an election in this country and the USA. This will then spark campaigns to cancel those celebrities for not speaking up, and whilst I recognise that if you have a platform, you should use it to instil the importance of exercising your democratic right to vote, but that is where it should start and end. People should not look to celebrities in the spotlight for political beliefs and core values, and then try to cancel them when they don't speak up, which is something that happened to The 1975 frontman Matty Healy during the last general election, and Youtuber Tana Mongeau during the last US election. To put it simply, you're not asking Joe Biden for acting tips, so why are you asking Scarlett Johansson for a nuanced take on the lasting effects of systematic oppression in American society?

This article has been filled with a lot of questions that unfortunately do not have a simple answer. However, it is my opinion that cancel culture has become an allusive myth in today's

hyper-online society. All meaning has been drained and diluted from the term in favour of people dragging celebrities from pedestals they themselves put them on. Stop looking to the wrong people to answer society's problems, stop deliberately digging up old tweets that were sent by literal children, and stop detracting from the actual predators and criminals who still have positions of power by focussing your energy on D-list influencers whose followers are children and have no actual influence over important issues. And from there, if we take it on a case-by-case basis, hopefully cancel culture can once again be reserved for the Harvey Weinsteins and Kevin Spaceys of the world.