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Masthead

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Opinion: What We Must Do

Marc Schorin

The 21st century Left is lacking. I will use the first person plural when I describe the international anti-capitalist Left in all of its forms, because this conversation is one that we should be having amongst ourselves as a group. There are a few problems—our obsession with identity or else our complete dismissal of it, our struggle to come to terms with the failures of the 20th century, our totalitarian streak—that are essentially noise around the major issue: we have not presented a viable alternative to capitalism. Of course, the right-wing demand that we supply a kind of virtual reality detailing every aspect of the future is ridiculous and unfair, but it does point on the one hand to a dissatisfaction with our inability to detail our goals beyond criticism of capitalism, and on the other to our own discomfort with the failures of leftist movements in the Soviet Union and China. We are undoubtedly gaining in popularity, but to keep that momentum, we will have to rediscover our substance. And to access that substance, we have to examine our shared narratives and their language.

Our story is simple; within this simplicity lies its power. We claim that class antagonism is the engine of history, and that we have been propelled into an age of extreme disparities. The best of our storytellers, Karl Marx, was writing specifically within the context of the industrial revolution—it was in this context that Europe was convulsed by left-wing revolutions. Since we have long since buried the industrial revolution, many have insisted that Marxism has lost its relevance. But it is only the configuration of the proletariat and the bourgeoisie as the foremost classes that is outmoded, since those classes are no longer useful insofar as they relate purely to industrial societies.

In the era of industrialism, the Euro-American Left had a concrete purpose centered on the plight of the mistreated workers. Critically, the prominence of industry made the proletariat a significant class that was impossible to ignore, while the propaganda of the time glorified the worker as a white figure of masculinity. In other words, when white masculinity, perhaps arising from the suggestive aesthetic of industrialism, was cen-

tral to the Leftist cause, communism was a powerful political force. Many today still believe that the Left should reorient itself towards the white male industrial worker, unwilling to realize that the category of white masculinity does not need any more empowerment, while the industrial worker is no longer a significant force in America (there is a large proletariat—it is just overseas in nominally socialist countries like Bangladesh, Vietnam, and China. Leftist activists there have a much clearer agenda than in the States, where liberal democracy pretends to ensure equal rights to everyone).

As a result of the increasing diversity of the Left in terms of gender and race, white-male-as-worker has ceased to be dogmatically glorified; in addition to the obvious benefits of this decentralization, it has also left a hole in ideology of the Left. Or, it has revealed what has always been a very thin veil between substance and bullshit: that the “hero” of our story is not actually a hero, and our story might not be as neat as we had previously presented it. But rather than recast our story with other oppressed people, we should keep that leading role open. By declaring that there are no heroes, we return the story to its bare features, the foundations. There should be no worship of any kind of archetypal figure—instead, we have to focus on the conditions that produce oppression, and then change them. That is the point of the story.

If we accept the mantle of Marxist revo-

lutionary thought, that is, the challenge of reinventing society to abolish or at least minimize exploitation, then we need not be scared of the question, What comes after capitalism? We cannot pretend anymore that we can read the future; the future depends entirely on what we do now. The real question we should be scared of is, What happens now? Specifically, what are we, writers, editors, and readers of the Prog, supposed to do? Historically, the leftwing press acted as a megaphone for revolutionary parties, spreading propaganda, news relevant to the party, news relevant to workers, and manifestos. At the Prog, we do not represent any party. As such, we have sort of brought a spoon to a knife fight: we are left with the vague task of representing the working class. However, again, if we accept the broader Marxist challenge, then our job is clear: not only form a base around which leftist students can gather, but also to relentlessly criticize ourselves and the world around us. Fundamental to this criticism is a reshaping of our revolutionary vocabulary. We can no longer rely solely on 19th and 20th century thought to confront 21st century problems. While I am a believer in turning to our foundational literature, we must do something with the literature—we must criticize it and ourselves so that the story becomes recognizable to our own lives. The Prog can lead in this task, but it’s one that must be carried by our readers. The effort must be communal and it must extend beyond Princeton, or it will fail.



Constructing a Pipeline to Civic Action at Princeton

M.E. Walker

“There used to be people with clipboards signing students up. They aren’t here anymore.”

Ralph Nader ‘55 made this remark in Princeton’s Whig Hall Senate Chamber on December 11 after discussing the historic importance of college students in the anti-war, Civil Rights, and feminist movements in the United States. At the event, sponsored by the American Whig-Cliosophic Society, Nader spoke about public perceptions of government, political efficacy, and the political engagement of young people. In particular, he stressed the importance of cultivating a sense of public proprietorship over common goods and institutions at a time when many Americans feel little control over their government, saying, “The civic community is the fountainhead for all democracy. That’s why it’s excluded.”

On a campus whose student body is frequently described as politically apathetic, several simple steps exist for Princeton’s progressive organizations to meaningfully engage a greater share of undergraduates. To resign students to apathy is to overlook the concrete measures organizations can take, starting with the recruitment process then continuing through collective action-planning and media strategy, to inspire campus wide engagement. Too many students, particularly first-year students, care deeply about progressive issues yet are not involved in any organized group. Even students who are on email lists and attend group meetings may be shy or struggle to find their entry into greater participation. On the list of institutions that Princeton students should feel a sense of common proprietorship over, their University—its actions, its culture, and its perception in the wider world—should be at the top.

Before first-year students even step onto Princeton’s campus each fall, progressive organizations miss opportunities to engage or inform them online. Since these students, hailing from across the U.S. and the globe, typically lack connections with other progressives at Princeton, groups need to make information and opportunities to get involved as accessible as possible. On its website, Students for Prison Education and Reform (SPEAR) lists when and where it meets and has a short form with steps to join its GroupMe messaging group and email list. The form also asks for times when prospective members would be available to meet and chat with an organizer. Conversely, most groups do not publicly list their meeting times or have minimal social media presence. These barriers to participation compound with the flood of other recruitment at the beginning of the year, so many potential activists fail to get involved. Like SPEAR, other groups should at least post their meeting times.

Given that several inactive activist groups that no longer operate still have some residual level of online presence, it is not unreasonable for first-year students to question whether some groups are even still around. On the Office of the Dean of Undergraduate Studies (ODUS) online student organization directory, several progressive groups that appear to no longer exist, like the Princeton Equality Project and United Left, are listed, while the Princeton Environmental Activism Coalition, Princeton Students for Immigration Empowerment, and SPEAR are all missing. SPEAR is listed on a separate, smaller directory maintained by the Pace Center for Civic Engagement—which lacks ODUS groups like the Alliance for Jewish Progressives, Young Democratic Socialists, and The Princeton Progressive. Even incoming students who actively search for information about political groups on campus are likely to encounter only a small portion of them, scattered among a list of defunct groups and sometimes with only an email address and two-sentence description.

Progressive groups at Princeton primarily rely on the university’s fall activities fair for new members, giving them one shot to stand out among a maze of club tables. However, more visible partnership between groups, including publicizing each other’s events, would increase the ways of entry into different organizations. In addition, organizers could hold their own event for progressive groups in September, giving a second chance for groups to connect to first-year students. Through increased discussion with Princeton’s three student newspapers, members of organizations like the Princeton Environmental Action Coalition and Students for Immigration Empowerment could work to amplify stories, detail successes and setbacks in their activism, and deconstruct issues in a cogent way. There exist meaningful, actionable ways to expand activism on campus, via greater collaboration between groups to occupy space and reclaim their student community.

While the first weeks of each fall semester are the most important for recruiting new members, there are missed opportunities for capacity building throughout the year. Student-organizers should always have a sign-up or sign-in sheet at events, as NJ-CAIC (Campaign for Alternatives to Isolated Confinement) Digital Coordinator and New Jersey community organizer Crystal Mor advised at a recent Community Organizing 101 training workshop held December 7 by several progressive campus groups. She added that having people just show up at an event is not enough for building relationships—always have an ask of them, even if it’s small at first. Sunrise NYC organizer Nicole Karsch encouraged activists not only to advertise before events but also afterwards, providing

the date and location of a next meeting or action to capitalize on a short period of publicity and engagement. This type of recruitment can then be followed up with one-on-one conversations, training and dialogical learning at meetings, and larger actions as part of an act-recruit-train cycle that Karsch discussed at the workshop.

While change is first needed to make organizations more accessible to already-interested students, these organizations can do more to engage a broader population of less informed or involved students and to convince them to contribute time towards civic work. Expecting incoming students to already be passionate and informed about issues or systems of oppression limits organizational potential when students really just need to show up. Then, they can grow more committed and informed through continued dialogue, training, and service. At a discussion hosted by the Carl A. Fields Center this past October titled “The Past Meets the Present: Race, Student Activism, and Higher Education,” American University Professor and author of *The Black Campus Movement* Dr. Ibram Kendi talked about how Black student organizers between 1965 and 1972 were often as pragmatic as they were idealistic, saying a small group of student organizers could often build wider support to make real change, even if not all those supporters were as educated or involved as the core activists. He shared the example of students simply throwing the best parties on campus—then once a crowd was there, taking a minute or two to briefly speak about the injustices facing them.

There is a long tradition of activism on college campuses, and there is certainly meaningful work being done currently at Princeton. This fall, the Young Democratic Socialists engaged in activism beyond the edge of campus, canvassing local, heavily immigrant communities to distribute know-your-rights information, while Students for Prison Education and Reform engaged with currently and formerly incarcerated activists around education projects, service, and a legislative campaign. The Princeton Progressive, reinvigorated as a biweekly publication, has dissected on-campus and off-campus topics, and in September the Princeton Environmental Action Coalition organized a Princeton Climate Strike march in coordination with local community members. Wider participation by the undergraduate population, however, is necessary to building lasting power and requires more innovative, expansive, and collaborative recruitment infrastructure. When threats to freedom and human dignity, to democracy and justice in the U.S. and abroad, and to the world’s environment are so dire, no one should be left on the sidelines.

LGBTQIA+ and Community: Learning from the Nazis’ Persecution of Queer People

K. Stiefel



Queer history should not always be about the fear and the disgust of straight, cisgender societies. It can be inspiring to learn about not only the existence but also the flourishing of queer lives that came before ours. Post-WWI Germany was one of those times, serving as a haven for the queer community as late as 1933. Berlin before the Nazi rise to power was known as the “homosexual capital of Europe,” according to historian Sarah Cushman, with a thriving nightlife. There were so many gay establishments that some clubs even catered to different sects of the community and had nights for gay women to socialize. Magnus Hirschfeld, a personal hero, was able to set up and run the “Institut für Sexualwissenschaft” (alternatively translated as “sexology,” “sex research,” or “science of sexuality”) for over twenty years to try to compile research and advocate for not just gay and trans rights, but also for contraception, sexual education, and women’s emancipation. There were multiple openly queer publications such as *Der Eigene*, for men, and “The Girlfriends” or *Die Freundin*, for women. Despite its complex social networks, it only took four years to erase the progress that LGBTQIA+ Germans made and send them to either hide or die.

Legal persecution built slowly but steadily, primarily by a widening of the legal definition of illicit homosexual acts. It began

with a revision by the Ministry of Justice on the statute criminalizing homosexuality (Paragraph 175) by expanding the category of “criminally indecent activities.” Before the revision, a conviction required that police prove the occurrence of either anal, oral, or intercrural sex between men, as historian Geoffery Giles outlines in his book *Social Outsiders in Nazi Germany*. Once the phrase “An unnatural sex act committed between persons of male sex” was changed to “A male who commits a sex offense with another male,” Giles explains, actions such as kissing, love letter writing, and mutual masturbation became crimes. The courts were given leeway in the prosecution of queer Germans because a “sex offense” was not legally defined. For an understanding of the prevailing attitude of the legal system, however, we know that the other statute that could be applied, “criminal indecency,” was broadly defined as defying “public morality” or “arous[ing] sexual desires in oneself or strangers.” An untoward glance between men in public is punishable by these standards. By 1937, there were no places left in Germany that were legally hospitable to assigned male at birth (amab) queer people. An estimated 50,000 to 64,000 amab prisoners were interned in the camps for being convicted under Paragraph 175, according to the US Holocaust Memorial Museum.

The treatment of amab queer people—both gay or bisexual men and trans women, as

they were convicted under the same laws—is horrifying. The statistics alone would have been bad enough: a study by German LGBT scholar Rüdiger Lautmann found they died in camps at a rate of 60 percent—the highest of any non-Jewish population interned—and were brutally murdered by prisoners as well as guards for sport along with their own planned extermination through hard labor. Unlike many other social groups, however, most “pink triangle” prisoners were not freed when the camps were liberated but instead directly transferred to regular jails; they were freed from the trauma of labor camp and conversion therapy, complete with “medical” experimentation and forced heterosexual encounters, only to be imprisoned once again for the same consensual sexual acts. Nazi homosexuality laws were maintained until 1968 for East Germans and 1969 for West Germans; in other words, no queer Holocaust survivors were decriminalized until over twenty years after the liberation of Auschwitz. Even after 1969, though, there were still Holocaust survivors who had not been decriminalized under the legislative reform since the laws only legalized actions of men over the age of twenty one. Germany did not issue an apology until the 1990s and the “homosexual” prisoners who were still alive did not receive reparations until 2017. Paragraph 175 was not removed from the law until 1994.

It is even more difficult to ascertain the

experience of queer assigned female at birth (afab) people—lesbian or bisexual women and trans men grouped together for the same reasons as above—during that period since “female homosexuality” was not systematically criminalized in the same way as “male homosexuality.” If a queer afab person drew too much attention from the state, they were labelled by the Nazis as “asocial” internees and only sometimes were noted as “lesbians” during the process. This does not mean, however, that afab queer people avoided the Nazi persecution of LGBTQIA+ people or were unburdened by the conservative shift in politics. As is often the case with the history, the persecution of queer people is usually framed by what happened to men, with little interest in understanding history from the perspective of women and non-binary folks. I have come across a single historian that focuses on afab concentration camp prisoners, Sarah Helm, who worked with survivors of the Ravensbrück camp. The stories that are recorded compensate for their scarcity with their tragedy: many were forced to work in camp brothels and birth children who would then die of starvation.

Despite the numerous historical sources that detail the suffering of queer afab people during this time, including memoirs like *The Men With the Pink Triangle* (*Die Männer mit dem rosa Winkel*), written by a male survivor of Sachsenhausen and Flossenbürg forced to have sex with lesbians as “therapy,” these stories are often glossed over. The US Holocaust Memorial Museum, for example, ends their article on “Lesbians and the Third Reich” appearing to blame those who suffered for their identity by saying that the ones who “were willing to be discreet and inconspicuous, marry male friends, or otherwise seem to conform” often “survived.” This presumably means that they avoided internment in concentration camps, but the article ignores the traumatic aspects of losing one’s friends and lovers, entrapping oneself in a heterosexual marriage, and working to avoid being “outed” for fear of death. It does not diminish the other atrocities of the Holocaust to also acknowledge the dangers that LGBTQIA+ afab people navigated as a targeted but simultaneously unrecognized group.

Despite my desire to focus on queer history as a source of joy, I think it is important to remember these events not solely for the human suffering, but also as a warning. The history of LGBTQIA+ people during the Nazi Germany period holds power beyond the tragedy of individual suffering because we do not live in a world incomparable to that of these victims. In the words of George Santayana, “Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.” It is tempting to frame the era in entirety terms of the heroic queer people who opposed the hate of the Nazi regime, such as the half-Jewish lesbian Frieda Belinfante who was a key member of the Amsterdam resistance, but we must also acknowledge that there were prominent gay Nazis.

Some (non-Jewish, non-Roma) gay men held positions of power from the beginning of the Nazi movement up until the end of the war. The most prominent figure of the time, Ernst Röhm, was a close friend of Hitler who had been arrested for his role in the original failed coup d’etat in 1923. He went on to become the leader of the SA, the Nazi party militia, as an openly homosexual man. Perhaps the only positive aspect

of his time in charge of the paramilitary force was that he used it to support worker’s strikes in pursuit of a more equitable, albeit terribly limited in its justice, society. Aside from his class consciousness, Röhm failed to prioritize other axes of privilege and oppression. He complained that “feminine homosexuals” gave the community a bad image and pioneered the theory that gay men were superior to their heterosexual counterparts because they did not rely on women. He obviously was comfortable denouncing non-white homosexuals based on their ethnic identity as viruently as the heterosexuals. He actively supported the imprisonment of “undesirable” disabled, homeless, and non-conformist people. Although Röhm was assassinated during the Night of the Long Knives—a consolidation of power made by Hitler in 1934—with his sexuality used as a justification, he was not the only gay man in the Nazi Party. Many served in the military, including both the SA and the SS, and received leniency based on their proximity to the masculine ideal, according to Giles in an article on the topic. The thought of calling such people who were complicit with the rest of the Nazi social agenda my queer siblings turns my stomach. And yet, they were gay men—some of them proudly open about their sexuality.

The active participation of gay men in the oppression of less privileged social groups, to the extent that it harms other LGBTQIA+ people, asks us to reconsider what it means to be a queer community. Is it only identity, fitting the criteria of L or G or B or T, or can we ask more of our community members? If we believe so much in the concept of chosen families, we should never need to extend unconditional love to someone simply because of their queer identity. Furthermore, a lack of community standards means that members who are marginalized based on other aspects of their identity are being told to share the same spaces as people who do not show them mutual respect. Though it might sound odd, I think that there must be some separation of queer identity (being LGBTQIA+) and queer community (being LGBTQIA+ and committing to uplifting not just the “respectable” people who fall under the queer umbrella). Having a queer community cannot simply meaning have a group of people who are some combination of the letters of LGBTQIA+ and disregarding the intersections of those identities. We cannot measure the success of LGBTQIA+ inclusion based

on the status of the Ernst Röhm of the world.

Ernst Röhm used his gay identity to unabashedly perpetuate sexism, to attempt to become acceptable as a “masculine” homosexual by his denouncing other gay men (and trans women). This lingers in the gay community both subtly (“no femmes” in Grindr profiles) and obviously (cisgender gay people who campaigned for marriage equality being silent on trans issues in the Trump administration). Röhm also dreamed of an elite order of hyper-masculine gay men to fight for Nazi Germany, a confusing mix of LGBT identity and nationalism with an equally funny name: homonationalism. Coined by Jasbir K. Puar, the term homonationalism denotes “the favorable association between a nationalist ideology and LGBT people or their rights.”

Conservative LGBTQIA+ people’s fusion of nationalism and supposed-LGBT advocacy is a deadly combination. It allows more privileged LGBTQIA+ people to ignore their responsibilities to the larger community by instead pursuing nationalist ideology. Homonationalism vividly takes, in my mind, the form of LGBT police officers proclaiming to “Police with Pride,” a slogan that was debuted in San Francisco’s Pride Parade this past year, while black community members face extreme violence from that same institution. Ultimately, it hurts our own community. Whether it takes the form of denouncing the Pulse Night Club shooter as a foreign terrorist to justify the occupation of whichever Middle Eastern country the US army occupies next or the Israeli government using a “gay friendly” image to justify the occupation of Palestine, it disrespects the history of the queer community by endangering our queer siblings.

Homonationalists should never be able to leverage their LGBTQIA+ identity to justify their persecution of others. Furthermore, their inclusion in the LGBTQIA+ community is a direct insult to the tens of thousands of queer people who died not only in Nazi concentration camps, but also closeted under conservative regimes. It is a stain on the memories of the people who that the Reagan and Bush administrations sentenced to death during the HIV/AIDS epidemic. It is an attack on the LGBTQIA+ people still criminalized and harassed around the globe. It has no place in the community that LGBTQIA+ people build.



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Sentenced to Science: A Story of Medical Experiments in American Prisons

Maryam Ibrahim

While the Tuskegee Syphilis experiment received well deserved historical highlight, similarly egregious and even larger experiments done in the name of science have gone largely unmentioned. On December 3rd, researcher and author of *Acres of Skin* Allen Hornblum came to McCormick Hall to discuss medical experiments on prisoners. The event, titled "Sentence to Science: One Man's Story and the Uncovered History of Prison Experimentation," was sponsored by Students for Prison Education and Reform (SPEAR), the PACE Center for Civic Engagement, and the Princeton Progressives (PPro).

Hornblum began by sharing how he first became aware of such chilling stories in 1971 when he ran a literacy program in a Philadelphia prison. There, he was perplexed by the large amount of inmates who had adhesive tape on different parts of their body. When he asked his students, Hornblum found out that the prisoners were participating in experiments for the University of Pennsylvania. These experiments were the only way to make money outside of the 25 cents wage of regular prison jobs and tasks; if prisoners volunteered for an experiment, they could make upwards of \$1-2 a day. When he sought more answers, Hornblum was told by the prison administration to "keep his mouth shut" about the prison experiments, likely because these tests had been going on for almost 20 years: they had become the culture of the institution.

Hornblum encouraged attendees to realize that while Nazis were being tried with war crimes for their medical experiments, in the same breath, the United States was using human beings as test subjects. While the 398 victims of the Tuskegee experiments were being given syphilis, prisoners who chose to partake in scientific experiments for monetary compensation were deliberately made unwell in dozens of prisons around the country between the 1950's to the 1970's. Yusef Anthony, former prisoner and subject of many experiments, gave his account of what he endured and how they physically and mentally impacted every aspect of his life even decades later.

While all of the subjects of the Tuskegee syphilis studies are deceased, there are still dozens of survivors of these prison experiments alive to share their testimony. Also in McCormick Hall, Yusef Anthony shared his story. Incarcerated at 19 years old after nonviolent marijuana charges, Anthony was placed in Holmesburg prison in 1971. From the start, Anthony noticed the oddity that was prisoners who wore cups on their head, bandages on their bodies, and also had tape on their skin. His was confused until he was told by prison adminis-

tration about the experiments shortly after entering the facility. Anthony was wary at first, but a friend convinced him of the necessity of money in prison. From there, he went through three studies that would alter his physical and mental well-being. The first experiment masked itself as a harmless one: it was for a bubble bath product made by Johnson and Johnson. Even before the experiment commenced, Anthony had to sign away off on a form that said he couldn't hold UPenn's responsibility for what happens to him following the experiment. However, the study consisted of Anthony having the top layer of the skin on his back torn off with tape and subsequently covered it in a patch of bubble bath substance as well as sprayed with with an unknown green substance. Directly after the experiment, it was clear that the parameters of the study and the experimental debrief were inadequate and basically nonexistent. Anthony developed large red puss filled bumps on his arms and face. 3 weeks after the study, Anthony still needed to take intense painkillers to fall asleep. The pain was only soothed with hot water. He was examined by the experimenter once more and given a shot that relieved him of all of the pain and itching he suffered for nearly 3 weeks. However painful or traumatizing the initial experiment Anthony went through was, he went on to perform 2 additional experiments as the money he and other prisoners earned while participating in studies were vital to their survival in the prison.

This experience and others like it stuck with Hornblum for years. He hoped and assumed that someone would write an exposé or book on these prison experiments. But once he realized he couldn't wait for someone else to write about what occurred in the prison system, he would have to. And so, when Hornblum was working in a Philadelphia sheriff's office years after he first found out about the tests, he decided to resign and "pursue [his] crusade" to research and write about these secret experiments.

Hornblum published *Acres of Skin* in 1998 to call attention to what resulted from "the criminal justice system being taken over by medical professionals." The book focuses on just one prison the Holmesburg Prison in Philadelphia and one dermatologist, Albert Kligman, who conducted some of the most unethical and controversial experiments inside the prison. While Philadelphia was often praised as being "the Athens of America" for its many great universities, it was also a site for human experimentation. A reference to the dermatologist's reaction to the possibility of having access to hundreds of prisoners, the book's title *Acres of Skin* comes from a quote of Kligman exemplary of the appeal that researchers saw in conducting experiments in the prison system: "All I saw before me were acres of skin. It was like a farmer seeing a

fertile field for the first time," Kligman said to the Philadelphia Inquirer. Scientists and medical personnel needed prisoners to perform tests the average human being wouldn't dare to volunteer to do. The national reputability of Holmesburg and Kligman was illustrated through a story involving one of their research partners, Dow Chemical Company.

Dow wanted to understand the origins of a disease common in their Michigan factory workers whereby laborers fell ill with large black welts and pimples covering their bodies. The experiment, done in 1965-1966, was initially performed on rabbit ears, but moving forward, scientists sought to have the chemical tested on human beings. Because of the location being a renowned testing site, the experiment was moved from Michigan to Philadelphia. Scientists found the origin of this outbreak to be a chemical called dioxin, also found in Agent Orange. The study began with small dosages of dioxin gaining exposure to the prisoners, but as no observable outcomes were found, Kligman decided to increase the dosage by 478 times, causing the subjects to contract the same symptoms as the rabbits did but on a larger scale.

Even decades after the experiments, Anthony, now discharged from the institution, struggles to live a normal, healthy life. He has undergone surgery to relieve his swollen hands, which had swelled to the size of boxing gloves. His feet are seemingly indefinitely warped. Despite the high levels of anguish and pain Anthony had to endure, he is still grateful, since most of his friends who went through similar prison experiments did not survive as long as he has.

In response to a question about institutional compensation and apology, Anthony said that one thing he would want is a diagnosis of the conditions he has to endure. Decades later, doctors are still bewildered. He has been admitted into the hospital 3 times within the past 3 months. Anthony's family even left him, fearing they would contract his unknown illnesses. Hornblum pointed out the fact that today Kligman is still revered by many members of the UPenn medical school; despite his egregious actions, he is often celebrated for his advances in acne medication while his inhumane acts were never prosecuted.

Holmesburg prison, however, was not an isolated incident. Experiments have been conducted on orphans, the mentally impaired, and infant children. While stories such as these may feel soul sucking or too overwhelming to discuss, listening to the testimonies of people like Yusef Anthony is one way to hold exploitative institutions accountable and to ensure that the inhumane will not go unnoticed and justified again even in the name of science.

How the Label of "Urban" Stereotypes Who Black Music and Black Fashion Are For

Maryam Ibrahim

In 2013, the Grammys introduced a new award category called "Best Urban Contemporary Album." That same year, albums by artists Frank Ocean, Chris Brown, and Miguel were nominated under the title. While the Grammys already has categories in Traditional R&B and R&B, The National Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences defined this new award as "albums containing at least 51 percent playing time of newly recorded contemporary vocal tracks derivative of R&B" (June 2012). A few years later the category would face scrutiny for alleged erasure of black artists from more popular categories. On a similar note, the British Fashion Awards received backlash for awarding luxury fashion brand Fenty with the best "Urban Luxe" award, a title that leads many to wonder if labelling artistic expression as "urban" is due to their ties to the black community and, if so, why do these award shows feel that a separate category is necessary?

Concerns such as these can be seen in 2017 when the Grammys was accused of snubbing Beyoncé's *Lemonade*. Although she received widespread recognition for her eclectic and groundbreaking visual album that seamlessly combined almost a dozen genres of music, *Lemonade* left the 2017 Grammys with the Best Urban Contemporary award. While *Lemonade* was also nominated for Album of the Year, she lost to Adele's *25*, another highly praised album but one that did not challenge Adele's traditional sound like Beyoncé's did. Backstage of the 2017 Grammys Adele herself was baffled by Beyoncé's loss; she said, "My Album of the Year is *Lemonade*. So, a piece of me did die inside, as a Beyoncé stan—not going to lie. I was completely rooting for her, I voted for her. I felt like it was her time to win. What the fuck does she have to do to win Album of the Year?" While her nine nominations and three wins that year did translate into clear acknowledgement of Beyoncé's musical achievements, the Album of the Year category is the magnum opus of the Grammys—the part of the night that everyone anticipates and talks about for years to come. For *Lemonade* to get the recognition that it truly deserved from the Grammys, it would have had to win a popular and well-known category instead of the Best Urban Contemporary album, one that most people don't know exists. Her highly acclaimed album was reduced to a category that seems to not only label certain genres as being for exclusively for black people without explicitly stating so but also creating a separation between black genres and genres popular in white communities.

The label Urban Contemporary finds its roots in radio stations that catered to listeners

in cities during the '80s and '90s. The term was first coined in the 1970s by Frankie Crocker, who is often credited for popularizing the Urban Contemporary format through WBLS-FM, which became one of the most listened to stations in New York City during that time. The station primarily played music popular in the inner city black community but as the decade went on, the station appealed to listeners regardless of their race because of the gaining popularity of the disco genre. Stations like these often served as outlets for black artists who were denied radio play because of advertisers' fear that they did not have "universal appeal," or, essentially, the ability to attract a white audience. However, once advertisers took notice that urban contemporary stations received engagement from both black and white communities, they invested in advertisements, largely only appealing to a white audience. The success of the Urban Contemporary format in New York City soon led to a diffusion of the format to cities around the country. Decades later, Urban Contemporary stations continue to exist today, broadcasting music as broad as R&B, soul, gospel, hip-hop, rap, and more. Just like the initial marketing for Urban Contemporary stations, these genres are predominantly occupied by black artists and black listeners. However, just as disco slowly become a popular genre in both black and white communities, genres labeled as Urban Contemporary have widespread popularity outside of the racial category.

A 2017 Forbes report shows that R&B and hip-hop are the most popular music genres in the USA: "R&B/hip-hop is almost as popular on streaming services like Spotify and Apple Music than the next two genres (rock and pop) combined." While Urban Contemporary stations initially served as outlets for artists who were seen as only being able to appeal to the black community, for the Grammys to introduce this category as recently as 2013 raises a few concerns. The category treats black music genres with the assumption that they only do or should appeal to black audiences. While Beyoncé made *Lemonade* primarily for black women, it was widely enjoyed by listeners of different backgrounds. *Lemonade* grabbed the appraisal of almost every demographic, except perhaps the majority of those that voted for Album of the Year, who are largely white or of an older generation. Because they were unable to look past Beyoncé's intended audience, they turned to *25*. By some accounts, Adele's *25* could be in the Urban Contemporary category due to its derivation of soul and R&B. However, it misses one thing—a black artist and primary audience.

For this reason, Urban Contemporary isn't about genre, it is about giving black audiences a separate musical category while album of the year is for the Grammys' majority white voting base and audience.

Using the label "urban" as a more discreet way of labeling something as being created by black artists can also be observed in the world of fashion. During the 2019 British Fashion Awards, Rihanna's Fenty line won the Urban Luxe award. According to Vogue, the category "was created by the British Fashion Council to honor contemporary labels that elevate the concept of casual." Other nominated brands in the category included Martine Rose, which takes its influence from rave and hip-hop culture, and Alyx, a brand popularly sold in outlets such as JCPenny. What is odd about the new category is that, typically, casual attire and clothing meant for everyday use is labeled as streetwear. However, Fenty is by all accounts a luxury brand, as it was launched by LVMH, a luxury goods conglomerate based in France. The label Urban Luxe is even more futile due to the common trend of luxury brands blurring the lines between streetwear and luxury products. Brands such as Gucci and Prada, although they were nominated for Brand of the Year, have increasingly sold casual attire that could fit into what the British Fashion Awards call "Urban Luxe," under their designer name. Once again, what constitutes as urban is unclear, but perhaps it is not a coincidence that the first black head of an LVMH brand has had her brand labeled as "urban."

For the British Fashion Awards, around 2,500 members in the "global fashion community" vote for the winner of each category, who are no doubt come from the traditionally largely white and upper class elite fashion community who may not be used to seeing black women in luxury fashion spaces. Just as the Oscars made dramatic changes to their academy members to give voice to a wider demographic of movie watchers and goes by adding 800 new members, The Recording Academy and the British Fashion Council may benefit from similar changes to accurately represent what music listeners and fashion consumers believe deserve recognition, including what type. Having an Urban Contemporary and Urban Luxe category themselves aren't inherently bad. Whether this be intentional or coincidental, when award ceremonies stereotype artists as only being for certain racial demographics they are downplaying their ability to make art to be appreciated for both their own community and others'.

Taking Back The Means Of Reproduction

Mary Alice Jouve

The fight for reproductive rights is an issue at the forefront of political consciousness as conservatives are in the middle of a legislative push to limit abortion rights on a state level, angling for the Supreme Court to overturn *Roe v. Wade*. With this struggle's origin in anti-capitalist dissent, it is an fascinating exercise to ground analysis of today's discourse around abortion in this historical context. Gaining control over the "means of reproduction," as Marxist-feminist scholar Silvia Federici put it, was vital for capitalism to take hold in Western Europe, with reproductive autonomy not being beneficial to this new economic system. This analysis helps shed light on the larger economic and social systems of inequality that affect reproductive rights, but are left out of abortion discourse in America.

The development of capitalism is intimately tied to decreased reproductive freedom and the wider forcible exile of women from economic life. In her seminal book *Caliban and the Witch*, Silvia Federici details how, in an attempt to save a fledgling capitalism from the ravages of the Black Death in the 1600s, governmental pressure was placed on people to encourage increased reproduction and to prevent obstruction to population growth. Policies in countries like France and England incentivized marriage and helped make traditional families be seen as the fundamental unit of society; women were forced to register their pregnancies, with the crime of infanticide being made a capital offense; all forms of contraception and non-procreative sex were banned; midwives were replaced with male doctors in the birthing process and then forced to spy on other women and report if married women were unfaithful or if someone had a child out of wedlock.

The witch trials were also heavily intertwined with this push to control women economically and socially. Many of the crimes associated with witches concerned killing children and sacrificing them to the devil or being overly independent of men, like a widow who lived alone and had to provide for herself. The Church was influential in maintaining this new social order, providing the moral framework that allowed women to be demonized. Starting as early as the 7th century, local churches increased their grip on towns by enforcing rules against non-procreative sex by coercing people to divulge their sexual activity through the sacrament of confession and excluding women from Catholic rituals and any spiritual leadership. The laws and social norms that were enforced had a profound impact on how society is structured even today.

These policies also had major economic effects that helped jumpstart capitalism. Under the ideology of mercantilism, a precursor to cap-



"We are the granddaughters of the witches patriarchy couldn't burn"
LodiaVDH — Reddit

italism, the wealth of a nation is heavily correlated with its population growth: creating a healthy labor force ensures a favorable balance of trade. This led to a new "sexual division of labor," where, since contraception was criminalized, women were forced to have children to create labor power while being shut out of industries that they used dominate, like midwifery and brewing. The work that they were previously paid to do was relegated to being "housework" and went uncompensated, all playing a part in the capitalist mode of undervaluing workers for their labor. Since women could no longer earn wages in society, they had to be provided for, fostering a dependence dynamic and creating the perfect

conditions for the traditional family structure to emerge.

Understanding the context of how abortion and contraception became banned in medieval Europe is a foundational lens with which to see these issues debated in America, as echos of the same themes are seen to this day. On the most superficial level, it seems that every few months one can find sensationalized stories on Breitbart and other conservative media outlets about witches hexing conservative political figures, being abortionists, or being connected to child abuse. On a more fundamental level, though, Christian doctrine is still used to justify the family being the fundamental unit of society,

with reproductive freedom supposedly harming the traditional family and causing societal ills.

The most notable example of this rhetoric can be seen in Tucker Carlson’s now famous monologue from his show Tucker Carlson Tonight in January 2019, where he seems to criticize neoliberalism and income inequality. However, he says that the answer to America’s problems is the creation of conditions that allow people to form traditional family structures, instead of “big government” policies, which he mistakes for socialism. He further posits that social safety nets and contraception, rather than structural racism and predatory capitalists, created urban poverty.

The natural way people of his opinions have come to solve these problems is to implement idealistic policies that fail to tackle the root causes. In a survey conducted by the Guttmacher Institute in 2004 about why people have abortions, not being able to afford another child and the timing not being right are the two top reasons with 23% and 25% of women selecting them respectively. In 2017, 75% of abortion patients were below the federal poverty level. Republicans run on pro-life platforms but want to cut social programs that may help people out of poverty so that they could choose not to have an abortion in the first place. The sex-negative culture that permeates Christian schools and families can force teens to turn to abortion out of fear of punishment or being kicked out of school. This flies in the face of the pro-life doctrine taught in religion class, the school trips to the national pro-life march, and the school-sponsored prayers in front of abortion clinics. Apt criticism has been made that pro-lifers are actually pro-birth, meaning that they focus all their attention on making sure a child is born while ignoring the systems of inequality that face children and

parents. Since the traditional family structure was created by the suppression of reproductive freedom, it is no surprise that conservatives still fight for this cause.

The modern pro-choice movement has its issues as well since it is beholden to the capitalist system. This cannot be seen more clearly than in the platforms of the many Democrats in the 2020 presidential race. Pete Buttigieg, a neoliberal shill, says he is pro-choice, wants to appeal the Hyde Amendment, etc.; however, he doesn’t support Medicare for All and is in the pockets of multinational corporations that exploit Americans and people abroad. There is a tendency to see the choice that pro-choice activists fight for as very much in a vacuum, similar to how economic choices are seen under capitalism. Providing abortions while supporting the exploitation of poor people is counterproductive and harmful; people who choose to have an abortion because of socioeconomic circumstances are not making a free choice but are pressured to act because of systems of inequality. This is no more free than being pressured by a market to choose between Coke and Pepsi. In order for this movement to be successful it must move away from the “free markets, free people” paradigm.

Backing the right to abortion is effectively a litmus test for the Democratic Party. It is important to examine how candidates’ policies will help people gain more access to reproductive healthcare and be more broadly supported in their decisions, through, for example, paid family leave, reproductive health care covered under insurance, and better child care programs. Presidential candidate Bernie Sanders recognizes the nuance of this issue as he is the only candidate to fully support Medicare for All. Though the reforms proposed by politicians like Sanders would help people, no reform to capitalism will

ever create a system where people are free to make choices without being influenced by market exploitation.

Pro-choice activism must be rooted in anti-capitalism and be in solidarity with the working class struggle around the world to truly address fundamental problems at play. Even while America attempts to reform itself, it still exploits other nations through imperialism, rendering any aid given concerning reproductive services an act of pink imperialism, as the United States actively works abroad to degrade social safety nets to increase profits for multinational corporations. Witch trials continue in places like Nigeria, Kenya, and Cameroon: the IMF’s structural adjustments have wreaked havoc on these areas, creating a modern day state of primitive accumulation.

Basing our analysis of abortion in contemporary America in medieval class struggle and the formation of capitalism shows that reproductive rights are inherently social and economic issues, putting bodily autonomy in the context of the dearth of true agency under capitalism in general. As history shows us, capitalism fundamentally contradicts reproductive freedom, as it undervalues domestic labor and encourages a sexual division of labor to increase productivity. As with most conservative policy, pro-life policymakers create laws that actively hurt the working class to achieve bigoted ideological goals. The liberal pro-choice movement is blind to the market forces that effectively take the right to choose away from a large segment of the population. Although it is important to support legislation that increases access to reproductive healthcare, it must be done with the recognition that the struggle to dismantle capitalism is inextricably linked to reproductive justice.



Dark Sevier — Flickr

Linguistic Liberation

Molly Cutler

Pedantry has always been popular. For most of the history of the English language, trends have favored those with an eye for corrections, whether that's on the level of snarky coffee mugs correcting "their" to "they're" or the level of "Your entire pronunciation system is deviant, let me fix that for you!" (see: *My Fair Lady*). I don't pretend to be a lifelong abstainer from this sort of behavior—in middle school, I ran an (in hindsight deeply embarrassing and irritating) account devoted to catching spelling errors. But I've learned that pedantry folds easily into prescriptivism, a deeply harmful, unscientific, and reactionary linguistic philosophy that ignores basic truths about language and its sociological relation to the modern world.

To define prescriptivism, and its greatly preferable analogue, descriptivism, take the idea of dictionaries. A prescriptivist would write a dictionary intended to tell us how words should be used, include only those the author deemed "proper English," et cetera. In the words of Merriam-Webster lexicographer Kory Stamper, prescriptivists are those who would claim that "the dictionary is some great guardian of the English language, that its job is to set boundaries of decorum around this profligate language." And, to continue with Stamper, this is actually "not how dictionaries work at all." Rather, they are descriptive—they show us language as people use it in reality, not hemmed in according to some obsolete set of arbitrary usage rules. Who cares if originally the word "literally" meant only "in a completely accurate way"? It is now used with incredible frequency to also have the meaning of "in effect, virtually," so the dictionary records both, without judgment or opinion. And many of these commonly cited "rules" are generally irrelevant—nobody bothered to move prepositions away from the ends of their sentences until a seventeenth-century poet decided English ought to look more like Latin; even the literary giant Jane Austen used the word "ain't" in her writings. As Stamper writes, "Standard English as presented by grammarians and pedants is a dialect that is based on a mostly fictional, static, and Platonic ideal of usage... it doesn't preserve English so much as pickle it."

Descriptivism in the field of linguistics has a slightly broader implementation than just lexicography: it also has to do with the "white lab coat mindset." That is, linguistics is a science, and it is seriously harmful to the pursuit of accurate research to impose onto findings our (often incorrect and biased) ideas of what "correct" language use is.

With this in mind, we can analyze the harms of clinging to the archaisms of prescriptivism. Yes, it reflects a poor understanding of the nature of language change and of the purpose of recording linguistic information, but

prescriptivism and related preconceptions about language also harm historically marginalized groups.

Consider the example of gender-neutral pronouns, particularly the singular "they" and neopronouns like *xe/xir/xirs* or *ze/hir/hirs*. Prescriptivists tend to object to their usage with claims about grammatical correctness. But these are all entirely valid forms of reference; a descriptivist would argue that because they have extensively documented meaning and usage, including the use of the singular "they" going back to Shakespeare, they are perfectly acceptable. Neopronouns may not be historical, but they are no different than any other neologism or "artificial" word, many of which entered the language long ago and would never be considered off-limits now (brunch, laser, malware...). Moreover, it is quite revealing when one cares about relatively unimportant and obscure rules of grammar (which most people don't follow in their everyday speech) more than one cares about allowing others to feel comfortable and have basic truths about themselves respected. Here, prescriptivism is a thin veneer for transphobia. Objections made to gender-neutral language on the basis of grammar are no different in effect than those made on the basis of explicit transphobia, so prescriptivism only compounds this form of oppression.

Prescriptivist ideology also serves to bolster classist and racist perceptions. Dialects like African-American Vernacular English (AAVE), Spanglish, Appalachian English, and others, especially those spoken by the working class and/or people of color, have their own internal grammars and patterns, in the same way that more widely recognized dialects like British English do. (In this case, it is important to distinguish between the two senses of "grammar"—here, I refer not to the common interpretation of grammar as little rules about where to put a comma, but rather to the overall structure and functioning of a language, and what speakers of that language construct as meaningful phrases/sentences versus unintelligible ones.) AAVE is not "bad English" for using words like "ain't," structures like double negatives, and other differentiations from "Standard American English." As UPenn linguist Taylor Jones says, AAVE, along with similar in-group dialects, "is entirely rule-bound... If you do not conform to the grammar of AAVE, the result is ungrammatical sentences in AAVE." However, despite this fact, prescriptivists tend to let their opinions about "proper language use" shade their perceptions and treatment of speakers of these dialects. Or perhaps, they use "grammar" as an excuse to allow their already negative biases to come through. Chicken and egg, but the effects are certainly demonstrable. According to Taylor, "We have a long cultural history of assuming that whatever black

people in America do is defective. Couple this with what seems to be a natural predilection toward thinking that however other people talk is wrong, and you've got a recipe for social and linguistic stigma.... There is absolutely nothing wrong with AAVE, but it is stigmatized for social and historical reasons, related to race, socioeconomic class, and prestige." Prescriptivism allows for this perpetuation of racism and classism on a pseudo-scientific basis—when in actuality, the truly scientific attitude fostered by descriptivism would indicate that the opposite attitude is correct.

The same principle often goes for the treatment of endangered languages. Colonialism contributes to a conceit that certain languages with very few speakers are "less advanced" or "less interesting for study" or "less sophisticated," though in truth it would be very challenging to make an objective judgment in this regard without stooping to insidious prejudices about the "value" of different cultures. Anyone who buys into what is essentially the linguistic form of race science is, consciously or not, proliferating the problems with prescriptivist ways of thinking. The inverse is true as well: that anyone who engages in prescriptivism at a level less than full-on colonialism is part of the same beast that contributes to the normalization of larger-scale counterrevolutionary practices. The end result of allowing such treatment of endangered languages to continue is their eventual extinction, a terrible loss for both the communities that used to speak them and for our world's overall cultural diversity. Thankfully, preservation of these languages is a more common topic of study and practice now, but the fact remains that the continued fostering of prescriptivism allows for disdainful attitudes towards minority languages and subsequently towards their speakers.

Linguistics ought to have a focus on societal consciousness, and it is not the only scientific discipline that sometimes lacks this attention. Descriptivism, however, allows us a lens through which to approach language while simultaneously having an awareness of the social forces operating behind the scenes, to be rigorous and therefore to remove both scientific and cultural bias.

This is not a niche issue—we all come into contact with language every day of our lives. We all have a stake in the effects of the restrictiveness of prescriptivism, especially in an environment like Princeton where many of us are encountering people who speak in ways we've never heard before. Language is beautiful and liberatory and powerful when used freely. Let's keep that in mind the next time we hear an unfamiliar dialect—in the words of linguist Gretchen McCulloch, "Not judging your grammar, just analyzing it."

Public Intellectuals in the Digital Age

Noam Miller

Apparently, I'm not too young to feel nostalgia for the early Internet, but I'm also not too old to yearn for a rededication of this technology to its early promises of democracy and widespread education. Anyone with a computer and a connection could plug into a global human conversation, but with the rise of fake news, conspiracy theories, and online extremism turned terrorism, we see how terrifying that "anyone" is. The ad- and data-driven market economy of the Internet has usurped this utopia; the so-called attention economy serves more to distract and agitate than to inform us and help us live productive lives.

Increasingly, it seems that paywalls are being raised, dividing up and regulating passage through the Internet landscape. The original pitch for this article was an analysis of the genre of the academic interview, inspired by an academic interview with literary theorist and legal scholar Professor Stanley Fish in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, but the article, which I had read a couple weeks prior, is now behind a paywall. For all sorts of traditional media, from the arts to journalism, new subscription services are popping up, offering a higher-quality and/or a more extensive collection of media as well as escape from the click-based economy. However, in many ways, this is a regression to an earlier economic stage, and this divide between the subscriber- and free-side of the internet reflects a revolution in the state of public intellectualism, as intellectuals can have more direct and widespread access to the public.

So, what is a public intellectual and what role do they serve? Fish is a useful example. A long-time *New York Times* columnist, he exemplifies the role of a public intellectual fundamentally as a communicator and explicator, and he rebukes academics whose arguments rest more on their academic prestige. In his op-ed "Professors, Stop Opining About Trump" (2016), Fish criticizes historians for invoking their academic credentials in their warnings about the violence and destruction Trump would bring to the nation. In his own writing, his academic prestige is never referenced; instead, his authority comes to play implicitly in the structure of his writing and thoroughness of his thinking.

To this end of public education, the Internet seems to be the ready tool of the public intellectual. Their work, regardless of its form, can be preserved online without decay. Text can be reread and reread many times over worldwide. Audio can be paused and rewound to make sure not a word was missed. Events can be videotaped and distributed to greatly expand the passive audience at an interview or Q&A. A scholar's ability to communicate clearly and publicly is greatly enhanced by the Internet, making it an ideal platform for the diffusion of wisdom outside the academy.

Still, the public intellectual is not wholly a democratic figure. The public intellectual is one who dips in and out of conversation, but their ability to spread their message depends on their academic authority as well as their connections to traditional media companies. Fish has privileged access to *The New York Times* that gives his work priority in review and publishing over anything written by an anonymous member of the public. The public intellectual can surely accrue celebrity status, e.g. Noam Chomsky or Susan Sontag, and develop a following of their own, but one can not feasibly begin a relationship with the public without working through a traditional media company.

However, this vision of public intellectualism is changing with the possibility of free, self-publication on the Internet. Surely, there are still production costs, be it the cost of a computer or the cost of labor, but with the ability to publish widely-accessible work at such a minimal cost with the potential for virality, we reach a new dawn of digital public intellectualism in which intellectuals can build a relationship with the public through their own medium with minimal editorial input, circumventing the traditional authorities of large corporate media networks. These were the democratic and intellectual promises of the Internet.

However, this democratic promise of the Internet relies upon free and unbiased access, and this question of free access has recently been increasingly rolled back in many traditional media formats, such as newspapers. For a while, many popular newspapers offered free access to their websites, but increasingly this content has been put behind paywalls with faltering ad revenue as a reason cited for the decision.

Current subscription or donor-based business models of media are largely a relic of the twentieth century, offering a relative continuation of the relationship between public intellectuals and media companies. Through the Internet, traditional media companies have much larger international reach, but more importantly, subscription services encourage companies to concern themselves less with the minutiae of engagement and instead with the simpler picture of maximizing subscriptions. There is certainly a material difference in the way much of the media today is rented rather than owned, but this relates this business practice more to a library membership, which is concerned with accumulating an impressive collection rather than focusing solely on the acquisition of exciting literature. Altogether, subscription models spare companies the pressure to constantly attract attention measured in seconds but instead concern themselves with building a service worth paying for. This is a regressive leap away from the attention economy, and an interview with a public intellectual on an online subscription newspaper

is received in many ways similar to how it was received before the Internet, albeit with much more geographically diverse readership.

However, not everyone is ready to start paying for that, and those unwilling to pay for access to exclusive content are limited to the click-based economy. Of course, there are researched educational websites that are not profit-driven, run as a public service by foundations or institutions, but those are more often the exception than the rule. For all the talk of a need for unbiased journalism, what we really need is more calls for quality, publically-accessible work. The current threats to democracy and politics internationally--I hope--might finally spur a mass movement to reclaim the Internet for public benefit. By no stretch of the imagination will institutional- or donor-funded media become some bastion of progressive or public thought. Without a doubt, money will be shaping politics at a grand scale, but at least our media might triumph by persuasion and not enthrallment. This threat is actually mitigated with the exciting development is the crowd-funded work of creators who use free click- or watch-driven platforms but are largely supported by direct donation.

If the public intellectual of the twentieth century existed on TV and newspapers, the digital public intellectual of the twenty first lives on the free Internet, unmoored by traditional media companies. This new dawn though is chaotic and uncertain. Lacking the more traditional institutional structures of authority, credentialed public intellectuals struggle to swim to the top in a turbulent pool of scrambling swimmers. It should go without saying that the most thorough, fact-based arguments don't always win.

Beyond that, though the virality of intellectual content on the Internet may rest in part on its academic merit, that merit is circumscribed by its ability to fit within the click-based economy. Ultimately, the fundamental platforms of the Internet are so deeply entrenched in the click-based economy; regardless of how individual content creators are funded, the Silicon Valley giants like Google and Twitter, which form the foundation of our Internet experience, function within this economy. There is a whole separate argument to be made for publicly funded services and platforms, which do not rely on ad or data revenue to run, and are not structurally biased towards the most enthralling, enraging, or simply engaging content. It is a greater sociological project to imagine what constitutes a priority search algorithm in the people's best interest, but at least for now, we can think critically about the nature of content and access on the Internet and work towards a public Internet that serves to educate people--whether that education translates into action is another story.

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