

LET'S CANCEL RACIALLY SUPERIOR WHITE LEFTIST MALES!

In interviews such as the one hosted by Project Censored's Mickey Huff for a KPFA, Berkeley, CA, Zoom event, Dan Kovalik, a labor rights lawyer who also teaches at a law school, has been flogging his new book, and literally whining on and on, about what he calls the crisis of so-called "cancel culture," which he claims is contaminating, especially, leftist public discourse. Very prominent and highly respected progressives, like Mickey Huff and Chris Hedges (on Hedges' RT interview program), have very disappointingly welcomed Kovalik's views and provided a veneer of left-wing legitimacy to Kovalik's claims.

However, this hysterical moral panic campaign by a cadre of primarily older white males against "cancel culture" is in truth a disguised attack on the BLM movement and similar efforts by today's younger grassroots progressive activists to call out instances of institutional and elite racism and other forms of bigotry. Kovalik's crusade is based on conveniently vague assertions and cherry-picked evidence, and in the end, his attack on BLM and other progressive activists serves to help right-wing forces and institutions by silencing and de-legitimizing younger progressive criticisms.

In the guise of criticizing the bogeyman of "cancel culture," Kovalik uses bad faith arguments to attack BLM and other activists challenging racism. Like right-wingers who employ similar tactics, Kovalik of course never specifically defines his terms or specifically identifies his target, allowing him to conflate dissimilar examples and blur important distinctions.

For instance, Kovalik argues that the term "cancel culture," which actually has no specific definition, and is therefore all-too-conveniently vague, was invented by the right-wing. He cites examples like McCarthyism and the Israel Lobby attacking progressives and activists. Kovalik actually asserts that criticisms of racism made by BLM activists and other progressives are somehow indeed equivalent to McCarthyist red-baiting or to the Zionist attacks on anyone who supports BDS.

However, Kovalik of course ignores a critical difference: McCarthyism and Zionist attacks on those who support Palestinians are examples of people with *institutional* power using that power to silence and punish those without such power. In contrast, the supposed "cancel culture" coming from progressives is in fact an effort by people *without* institutional power trying to hold those *with* power or great influence (whether on the right or the left) accountable for what they do and say.

In other words, anti-racist activists and other progressives are indeed "speaking truth to power" -- an essential tool necessary to identify and challenge systems of structural inequality.

As Kovalik, who teaches law, is in fact someone embedded in such a system, it's no surprise that he's rather uncomfortable with the idea that, from his view, 'upstart nobodies' on social media might dare talk back to and criticize people like *him* or one of the leftist icons in his generation.

As a result, he engages in typical bad faith tactics of cherry-picking what he "claims" are "examples", purposely omitting necessary details and context -- in a word, unsubstantiated -- or even flat-out misrepresenting the facts about the activists that he disdains. Curiously, BLM being at the very top of his list!

Kovalik repeatedly states that those -- again, especially, BLM -- oh he really doesn't like BLM -- who he says *constantly* engage in "cancel culture" indeed, he claims, "*have no actual policy demands*" other than for white people to (Kovalik's word) "purify" themselves. He might as well use the typical right-wing dismissal of any progressive movement, "*they don't even know what they want except to tear down anything good.*" Of course, in making this sweeping claim, Kovalik is quite coy in avoiding any specific identifications of supposed perpetrators other than an entire movement.

However, progressive groups who seem to be Kovalik's target -- curiously, persistently, BLM -- have, of course, consistently made specific policy demands from the beginning of their movement -- and even to Congress, as well as state legislatures and city governments -- while Kovalik incredibly rants on that they haven't.

Kovalik implies that many innocent or well-meaning people have lost their jobs exactly because of ridiculous targeting by "cancel culture" fanatics, but he only provides a few (suspect) examples, none substantiated. He of course always fails to provide enough specific facts for others to objectively make an informed judgement about what actually happened. But, even if those examples were true -- and I'm sure more happened in those incidents than Kovalik ever admits in his bare handful of one- or two-sentence allusions -- anecdotes do not prove a trend or mass persecution.

If Kovalik were correct about his "cancel culture" panic, we could expect to see professors, business executives and media figures losing their jobs in wholesale numbers, and this simply isn't the case. In fact, the most recent and notorious example of "cancel culture" in academia involved the *right-wing* attacks on Nikole Hannah-Jones (a MacArthur and Pulitzer Prize winning Black journalist) -- and the right-wing movement to cancel anyone engaged in the critical examination of American history and institutions.

But the very sign of Kovalik's bad faith is that he refuses to specifically define cancel culture in a way that makes it clear exactly what he's criticizing. When the term is used to describe everything from the Israel Lobby's silencing of pro-Palestinian voices, to the actions of Black activists creating a hashtag, to criticizing a prominent figure who makes a stunningly racist comment, then that term ceases to have any useful meaning--if it ever did at all.

Whatever its origins, the term "cancel culture" has become yet another example of right-wing dog-whistling used to smear anyone who engages in social critique against people in positions of power or great influence. It's only called "cancel culture" when someone of high-status position is socially criticized and made uncomfortable by having a mirror held up to reveal the true nature and institutional weight of their statements or actions. Thus, it's really, if anything,

call-out, consequence, and, ultimately, accountability culture that those with high status don't like.

Kovalik uses the term "cancel culture" in an amorphous way, disguising the fact that the term is a weapon used by the right-wing to undermine progressive activists. This is witting or unwitting on his part, but it is obviously driven by his desire for him and his high-status friends and the leftist icons of his generation, no matter how esteemed, to avoid ever being incisively, when due, criticized by any grassroots progressives. (This includes 'God of the white left' Chomsky's sly "left"-Zionism, the elite leftist gatekeeper Chomsky who's attempted considerable cancelling on the left himself in defense of national Zionism itself.)

But "cancel culture" (like the term "identity politics") is often an imposed false frame that even many Black media figures unthinkingly adopt, as one of those right-wing re-defined terms that are foisted upon Black media people, as though these terms indeed have some universal meaning. As Huey Newton said, "[White] Power is the ability to define 'reality' and make other people respond accordingly [in the same frame]."

It's hilarious but all-too-predictable that Kovalik has welcomed a gushing blurb on the front cover of his book from *Alan Dershowitz* -- at the very top, even above the title of Kovalik's own book, as well as above Kovalik's own name at the very bottom. That should tell you all you need to know.

Dershowitz is a fire-breathing Zionist, a major proponent of an ideology whose goal is to cancel an entire indigenous people, the Palestinians, and who's way of cancelling people is to falsely slur them as being "anti-Semitic."

Dershowitz also worked to defend Jeffrey Epstein and Harvey Weinstein against what Dershowitz, too, would no doubt have labeled "cancel culture." In addition, he was an impeachment defense attorney for the essentially fascist Donald Trump. Dershowitz even sought the disbarment -- in other words, cancellation -- of the lawyers representing at least one of the female victims of Epstein because the victim's accusations also included Dershowitz himself.

Kovalik also uses rhetoric very similar to the bad faith arguments of Mark Lilla (an older white male Columbia University professor), who has railed in his years-long nationwide campaign against, so-called, "identity politics", directed especially against POC. One could call Lilla indeed a white alt-*left* racist. Likewise, Kovalik seems to think that POC challenging racism too directly (gettin' too uppity) upsets white people and is therefore "divisive" -- ironically doing what right-wingers do by also blaming minorities for America's troubles.

Kovalik argued in his interview with Chris Hedges that in the early stages of the protests over George Floyd's murder by police, whites of every political kind in "red states" were among the protesters, and Kovalik used that "example" to show that even white Trump diehards can be

won over by progressives as long as progressives avoid upsetting those whites with "cancel culture."

However, Kovalik, of course, again ignored the facts: many progressive whites also live in "red states," which are often closely politically divided by just 5-10% (hardly always overwhelmingly "red"). The white BLM supporters who went out to protest in "red states" were *already* anti-racists -- not Trumpsters.

Kovalik (like Lilla) and certain other older white leftist males are just mad that the darker/swarthy masses and younger activists aren't worshipping at his and his leftist white class colleagues' feet, and not letting the latter call the shots as the "superior" white people (on the right or the left) who demand to be in charge of everything.

Instead, the younger generation would even hold the likes of Kovalik accountable, something that enrages older leftists like him. Whites like Kovalik just use their moral panic terminology to cover that up. Kovalik essentially acknowledges that this is the true source of his outrage when he whines, "Younger progressive activists are cancelling their elders!"

What's also probably motivating Kovalik and others like him is that a market has developed for books, articles and speeches on the lecture and interview circuit for a left-wing version of the anti-"cancel culture" crusade. Publishers seem to be more than happy to offer book deals and publicity for this faux left-wing version of what is in essence a right-wing propaganda movement.

It's sad to see anyone else on the left -- especially sad to see Mickey Huff and Chris Hedges -- fall for this ruse. Where's the critical thinking in that? Do they think that Kovalik's arguments are intellectually critical arguments? Rather than just demagoguery. In effect, Kovalik is actually helping Fox News and other right-wingers carry out this new form of red-baiting. It's probably just a matter of time before Kovalik shows up welcomed on Fox TV.