



There is Only Culture:

The rebranding of “political correctness” as a new moral panic
by Lora Burnett - Abridged from Arc Digital

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I have a message for my detractors:

If you publicly object to my writing and encourage others not to read it, you are trying to cancel me.

If you publicly object to my politics and encourage others to condemn me, you are trying to cancel me.

If you write to the Arc Digital editors urging them to no longer publish my writing, you are trying to cancel me.

You are obligated to allow my writing to find its way to your inbox, or you are trying to cancel me.

Substack is obligated to allow me to write on its platform, or Substack is trying to cancel me.

Any editor or platform who refuses to run one of my essays is trying to cancel me.

Anyone who opts out of their Arc Digital subscription, or encourages others to do so, because of my writing is trying to cancel me AND Arc Digital.

None of these statements are true.

There is [no such thing as “cancel culture”](#); there is only culture, the collective formation of preferences and tastes within the broad framework of free speech, a free press, and freedom of association, as established by the First and 14th Amendments of the United States Constitution.

Free speech, a free press, and freedom of association include an editor’s right to refuse to publish a writer, a private corporation’s right to refuse to advertise on a particular program, a social media platform’s right to refuse to host content inconsistent with the public image the platform is trying to maintain.

Those refusals don’t amount to “cancel culture.”

Threats to boycott a company, or a platform, or a publication don’t amount to “cancel culture.”

The attempt to organize some kind of collective objection to speech is simply plain old American culture at work, contesting the values at stake in the public square. As long as this contestation is constitutional—as long as it is not an effort of the government to suppress certain forms of expression and favor other forms of expression, but is instead the free effort of private citizens to influence the public discourse—it is as lofty an expression of liberty and the classical liberal value of freedom of speech as it is possible to imagine.

[See full article on the Arc Digital website](#)