

“The powerful must accept that their word is no longer the final word. That final word now belongs to the masses. Cancel culture has kept the conversation going when it used to be cut short by those who once called and controlled the shots.”

—Ernest Owens

THE CASE FOR CANCEL CULTURE: HOW THIS DEMOCRATIC TOOL WORKS TO LIBERATE US ALL DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

How has your opinion of cancel culture changed, or not changed, since reading this book?

Think of some instances where you have seen cancel culture take place, in the news, online, or in your own life. In what ways do they fall under Owens’s definition of modern-day cancel culture?

What does accountability mean to you? Is it important to you? How would you like to see someone being held accountable for their actions? Should we demand accountability from our leaders?

How and what we choose to cancel stems from our sense of right and wrong, which is often influenced by the religious institutions we are raised in and which permeate our society. How has your sense of right and wrong been molded throughout your life?

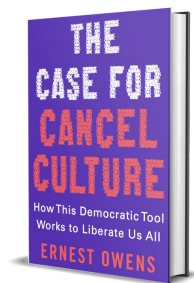
How do identity politics shape your views? Do your values align more with progressive or conservative cancel culture, or somewhere in between?

Discuss Owens’s journey through history in the “Cancel Culture Been Here” chapter. Do you agree that events such as the Boston Tea Party and Montgomery Bus Boycotts should be considered cancel culture? Why or why not?

The most marginalized Americans often originate the nation’s current progressive movements. Think of some current items on the progressive agenda. How do they trace back to marginalized groups?

In the 1800s, calls to cancel slavery in America were considered problematic and divisive. Jokes that used to be popular in the 1900s are considered sexist and unacceptable now. How might public perception of things that are considered acceptable today evolve over the next few decades?

Have you ever, or do you know someone who has ever been in an oppressive situation? What did you/they do? If you had exhausted all other options, would you resort to cancel culture?



“Free speech works two ways. It allows for discourse to take place but grants all voices can be heard.”

—Ernest Owens

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS (CONT.)

Cancel culture is frequently exploited by bad actors. Owens states that “when people call on others to boycott a person or institution, they’re not responsible for those who take more dangerous measures.” Do you agree?

Going green or vegan, and participating in anti-smoking policies are all examples of cancel culture. What are some instances where you may have participated in cancel culture without realizing it?

Where should we draw the line at a “difference in opinion”? Where does a “difference in opinion” end, and oppression begin?

Social media allows people to share their grievances in real time and build consensus around an issue without delay. What are the pros and cons of this? Do you believe that people should partake in self-censorship before posting online?

In “Not All Cancellations Are the Same” Owens displays how cancel culture can be messy, and many factors shape the extent to which someone gets cancelled or uncanceled, but ultimately cancel culture is a force for good. Do you agree that the benefits of cancel culture outweigh the downsides?

What does it mean to value individuals over institutions?

Some comedians today claim that cancel culture is ruining comedy. Is it ever necessary to offend some in order to be funny to others?

Today, there are many educational resources available on the internet and elsewhere that teach people how to be unproblematic. How can those who have been cancelled show that they have changed, and make amends for their actions?

Owens points out that most cancellations of “normal” people are not cancellations at all, but simply the result of a company exercising its code of conduct. Think of your current company or school. What are some actions that could get you kicked out? Are these same actions acceptable outside of work and school?

Is there a cause you care about deeply? How could you utilize modern-day cancel culture to help further your cause?