

SUMMARY

TRIGGERED

DONALD TRUMP JR.



Summary of “Triggered” by Donald Trump Jr.

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Donald Trump Jr. shares his beliefs on free speech
and the status of left-wing politics in the United
States.

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Introduction

No matter how you define your political beliefs, one thing we can all agree on is the fact that the political climate in the United States is supercharged with hostility. This rising tension often makes it difficult to interact with others as party lines are being drawn between friends and family alike. As such, the pressure to intuit someone else's political stance through the course of conversation and thus determine how to avoid offending them can induce a great deal of anxiety in social situations. Trump Jr. argues that this can be especially stressful for conservatives and that many feel uncomfortable in the workplace or on college campuses as a result. Similarly, he believes that the left has a unique power to define what's considered "hate speech" and that many conservatives are afraid of getting accused of this.

This summary will examine his concerns in greater detail and evaluate his proposed antidote to these feelings by exploring:

- How to start an online crusade
- Why standing up for your beliefs is important and
- How much financial damage protesters can create

Diversity or Diversion?

While most people understand that celebrating the diversity of the world's population is a great thing to do, some people interpret this as "forcing diversity on others" or unnecessarily creating division. Trump Jr. is one of those people and he argues that an emphasis on diversity is not only unnecessary, but fallacious. Arguing that the left has misconstrued Martin Luther King Jr.'s dream of a world where people are judged not by the color of their skin, but by their character, Trump Jr. suggests that valuing equity-- which acknowledges people's differences-- over equality, which assumes that we're all on a level playing field, is wrong.

Building on this principle, he contends that the left uses personal experiences with inequality and discrimination-- like those of black, gay, or genderqueer people-- as a form of social capital. And because of this, he claims that the left romanticizes these experiences and acts as though they form a social shield, criminalizing anyone who dares to disagree with the viewpoint of an oppressed group. But if some identity labels come with valuable social capital, Trump Jr. argues that other groups are unprivileged-- like those comprised of people who are male, white, or upper class. The opinions of these groups, he asserts, are unwanted and those within them often fear that expressing their views may lead to severe social or even legal repercussions.

For this reason, Trump Jr. argues that this social climate is unfair and that we ought not be expected to unquestioningly accept someone's viewpoint, no matter who they are. To support this point, he provides the example of actor Jussie Smollett, who stated that he was attacked by two white men shouting racist slurs and wearing Make America Great Again hats. Those who attempted to question this story were immediately branded as racist online, even though it was later revealed that Smollett made the whole thing up. Because of examples like these, Trump Jr. argues that we should have the freedom to question someone's story or experience without being vilified.

Can Language be Violent?

Do you think speech can be considered violent? Many people do, although Trump Jr. disagrees. In this chapter, he defends the position that microaggressions-- small comments which have racist, sexist, or otherwise discriminatory overtones-- are “misperceptions” on the part of the left and that what many people construe as sexist, racist, or generally hurtful is actually innocuous. To prove this point, he cites the example of asking the question, “Where are you from?”

Although this is certainly a normal question to ask when you’re meeting someone for the first time, pressing this point with people of different ethnicities might be offensive as it implies that they might not originate from the country they’re living in. This could easily be construed as an assumption that they’re not “real Americans” because they’re not white, but Trump Jr. insists that this shouldn’t be the case. Instead, he argues, this should be read as an innocent question and people should simply intuit what conservatives mean. And rather than putting responsibility on the speaker to be considerate in their choice of words, Trump Jr. posits that the doctrine of microaggression operates by turning everything into an offense, limiting the free speech of conservatives.

He further argues that policing speech in this manner intensifies the hostility of race relations, making white people afraid to speak to a black person for fear that anything they say is going to be labeled racist. Conversely, he adds that black people will be less likely to engage in conversation with their white neighbors if they assume white people are out to provoke them through deliberately racist statements. Therefore, he argues that being aware of microaggressions and holding people accountable for their words is unfair because it removes the assumption that people who say sexist or racist things are actually very well-intentioned. For this reason, Trump Jr. posits that hate speech is actually a construct created by the left.

A Question of Strength

Building on his previously mentioned theory of hate speech, the author asserts that the standard for what is considered hate speech is getting lower and lower. Simple things like someone saying they believe America is the greatest country in the world is upsetting to the left because it's considered to be demeaning to people from other countries. The author resists this idea and affirms that what many people consider hate speech is actually just a conservative opinion that the left doesn't want to hear. As such, he argues that liberals are simply fragile and trying to push their fragility on the culture at large.

Trigger warnings are a good example of this, in his opinion, because he believes they denote a weakness of spirit. Asking for trigger warnings before reviewing media which contains instances of graphic violence or rape is ridiculous according to Trump Jr. and demeans historical works which are full of rape and violence but which apparently had no affect on the emotional state of previous generations. Because of this, he argues that labeling things offensive is simply a sign of weakness and the liberals of today simply need to toughen up. In support of this point, he offers the theory of anti-fragility coined by the economist Nassim Nicholas Taleb.

This principle posits that if something is fragile, it's likely to break under pressure. Similarly, something that is not fragile can tolerate a higher level of pressure before it gives in. But if something is anti-fragile, that means that its ability to resist damage only increases-- or makes it stronger-- as you apply pressure to it. And because human beings have the ability to evolve and grow stronger with pressure, Trump Jr. argues that we should not be shielded from stress. Instead, we should be challenged by confrontation with new or difficult things and allow them to shape us into stronger and more resilient people. And according to his worldview, the removal of trigger warnings for things which are offensive is one of the best ways to strengthen people.

Hypocrisy in Politics

Targeting the left's ideology of tolerance, the author addresses a few specific instances which prove that leftists are also capable of using direct action to stand up for their beliefs. Remarking that the left seems to have cast themselves permanently on the side of the underdog and appointed themselves as crusaders for everyone who's oppressed. And while both of these are good values, Trump Jr. is correct when he asserts that being an advocate for victims does not excuse or legitimize all forms of behavior. However, he argues that the left does exactly this and calls on examples from the 2016 presidential election to support his point.

During a point when the media seemed certain that Trump was going to lose, many news sources issued warnings about the violence that was likely to ensue because Trump's "bigoted" and "uneducated" followers wouldn't accept that they had lost. In fact, the media even predicted riots in the streets, violent protests, and potential threats of harm. But because Trump won and the left didn't accept the result, Trump Jr. argues that the protests which followed serve as an example of the left's hypocrisy. Although he doesn't attempt to argue that conservatives would not have protested or incited violence themselves, he does believe that the left's attempt to cast doubt on the legitimacy of the election results and the subsequent attacks on the president via social media contradicts their gospel of tolerance.

As such, he argues that liberals have made their conservative counterparts feel afraid and uncomfortable in most public spaces, particularly on college campuses where conservative students feel isolated and unwelcome because of their political views. He is similarly scornful of the content published by many college magazines, including an opinion piece which ran in the Yale Daily News, claiming that all Republicans are racist, bigoted homophobes. In analyzing this example, he asks how this lines up with the left's view of tolerance and the importance of giving everyone a platform to share their experience. For this reason, despite the irony of his aforementioned views which hold that speech cannot be violent and that we

should not be protected from offensive material, he argues that conservatives are a minority and that they are now under threat.

However, that violence is not just limited to speech. Citing an example of the 2017 protest which followed right-wing commentator Milo Yiannopolous' appearance on the UC Berkeley campus, Trump Jr. remarks on the fact that protestors attending were clad in protective hockey pads and came carrying weapons, as though they were prepared for a fight. They later proceeded to set fires all over the campus and assault Republican students with mace, racking up a total of 100,000 worth of damage by the end of the day. Because of this, the author argues that the left are no longer the defenders of free speech and that protests are unnecessarily costly and detrimental.

Social Media as a Weapon

But if public appearances are dangerous, the author affirms that speaking out on social media is even more dangerous. Arguing that the left has weaponized social media, Trump Jr. opines that many public figures are in danger of having their careers cancelled because of a poorly constructed tweet or a remark that someone took the wrong way and uses the example of comedian Roseanne Barr to prove his point. This prompts the author to question how the left has successfully commandeered social media as a tool for generating outrage and he provides his conclusions in the form of a guide for how to engineer a social media crusade.

The first step, he suggests, is to use a person's words against them. If you've decided you don't like someone, then by these standards, it's fully acceptable to dredge their social media for anything you can use against them, even if that means resurrecting objectionable comments from high-school. What you should do with them then, according to Trump Jr., is remove them from their original context and present these statements as if they are the speaker's current opinion. He suggests that this is what happened to comedian Kevin Hart, who was required to step down from hosting the Oscars in 2019, due to public outrage over some homophobic statements he had made ten years prior.

However, if you're not able to find anything objectionable in someone's public life, the author suggests that the next step is doxing (which, for the record, is illegal). Doxing occurs when you hack into someone's private correspondence and post them online, revealing identifying private information about that person for the purpose of shaming or exposing them. Trump Jr. suggests that conservative professors and public figures are often victims of doxing because they are being actively targeted by the left. As an example, he presents the case of Yale professor Erika Christakis, who argued in favor of cultural appropriation in a private email to students, saying they should be able to wear whatever they like on Halloween, even if that degrades or belittles another culture.

A student posted screenshots of this email to Facebook and Twitter, and as a result, a mob of more than two hundred people gathered outside her home, calling for her resignation. The author therefore suggests that this is a hate crime spearheaded by the left.

Social Media is Biased

However, according to the author, social media users aren't the only ones who are biased-- the companies themselves also have a left-wing agenda and they use it to target conservatives. Arguing that companies like Facebook and Twitter are lying when they claim to be neutral parties, Trump Jr. provides evidence which proves that social media giants are invested in tilting social discourse. For example, Jack Dorsey, the CEO of Twitter, stated in court that Twitter actively blocked users from accessing over 600,000 accounts, the majority of which were conservative. This means that social media platforms are not simply neutral spaces for individual users to post their views as they see fit. Likewise, the author argues that Dorsey's admission is an example of unlawful censoring of public discourse.

To further this point, he presents additional evidence which demonstrates that social platforms often hide certain posts or accounts without notifying their users. The complex algorithms employed by social media might also mean that certain accounts are unfollowed for you or that you're unable to like posts geared toward a specific audience-- both of which can happen without your consent. This constitutes what is known as "shadow banning"-- the quiet removal of certain voices from the cultural conversation. And by the author's standards, this also counts as the suppression of free speech.

Final Summary

In this summary, Trump Jr. argues that left-wing politics pose the most substantial threat to free speech in the United States today. He contends that this occurs through social discourse which criminalizes conservatives, white people, men, and the wealthy, and asserts that social media is complicit in shaping our nation's discourse towards a leftist agenda. Because of the prevalence of this ongoing threat, he believes that people should be aware and stand up for their beliefs.



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