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Challenge: Stop Being Ableist When Criticising Horrible People

Nerd Teacher

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This isn't the first time that I'll have written something in defense of *something* about a conservative trash-fire masquerading as a politician, and it probably won't be the last because a bunch of liberals and leftists think it's fun to be ableist (at minimum). Instead of focusing on how absolutely grotesque these people are, how they're happy to hurt as many people as possible, how they're fine with letting us all die, they're happier to mock either their status as a GED holder or having penmanship that they think is "bad."

And it's the latter that I'm about to address in this piece.

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There has been a tradition among progressives to occasionally champion horrible causes for the sake of "social betterment." This doesn't mean that *every* cause they championed was horrible (or even intended to be harmful, despite the harm it may have caused), but a lot of people across the political spectrum supported eugenicist policies, and this honestly bled into loads of policies from the

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Progressive Era, with many supporting both exclusionary labour and immigration legislation because the labour force "should be rid of unfit workers."

Even after World War II, when many people stopped *specifically mentioning* eugenics, they still engaged in developing policies that were obviously eugenicist. This ranged from how programs within schools were developed to maintain policies excluding people based on class, race and ethnicity. Across the United States and Europe, people were segregated into schools based on their perceived ability. (Not to mention all the Indigenous kids forced into residential schools, the racist and segregationist policies that separated kids by race, and Roma and Sinti kids who are *still* pushed into segregated schools.)

It seems that there are *many* self-proclaimed progressives who really need to deal with the history of their movement, as well as the figures they celebrate.

Currently, there are disabled children across the globe who are placed into segregated schools for disabled children because many schools are not outfitted with *obvious* disability-friendly architecture that *should* be standard by now. Many public schools, unless the community pays for it, do not have elevators for students with mobility or medical issues; many of them do not have ramps that enable physically disabled people to even enter the building, ensuring that *all* disabled community members stay out. They largely do not have any form of accessible entrances or exits, forcing disabled people to rely entirely on others and leaving them at a distinct disadvantage within the "public" system.

Instead of creating spaces that *include* disabled students and enable them to be autonomous learners, they are required to go to spaces "built for them" so they are out of sight and out of mind for the non-disabled population. Despite how common disability is, these disabled children will remain *unseen* by their non-disabled peers who will later use their lack of interaction as a way to explain that they "do not understand" or "could not possibly know" about

The guy is *objectively* a bad person and appears to be *completely* fine with harming people, even those who were close to him at one point or try to help him. There are *so many* things to criticise him for that it should be *much easier* than making fun of his handwriting.

So why can't liberals and leftists alike *actually* focus on those?

Perhaps it's because they still have a *very long way* to go in reflecting how eugenics has influenced and built the society they live in and many refuse to do that at all.

Note: It doesn't matter if *he* has a disability that impacts his handwriting or not. The fact that *he* and his allies want to do as much damage to disabled people *does not make it acceptable to be ableist*; criticise him for continuing to allow disabled people to be harmed. It doesn't matter if you are a disabled person who writes like he does because you can make fun of your own handwriting in a self-deprecating manner and leave others be; there are other people to consider. What does matter is *who* is seeing it and *who else* is impacted by those beliefs that you're espousing by mocking his handwriting. That is why we keep having these "stop using bigotry toward bigoted people" conversations. It's not about *them* specifically. It's about the fact that *you are still perpetuating those bigotries*.

He's a proven liar. He's lied about the car accident that left him disabled, using the exaggerated story to bolster his status among his base. He claimed that his friend "left him to die" on a national stage, which was contradicted by that *exact* friend who said he "pulled him from the wreckage" while "a bystander came in and helped." Cawthorn claimed that he was "declared dead," though the reports that news organisations and watchdogs received have stated that he was "incapacitated." Oh, and he also lied about having "an opportunity for the Paralympics" despite doing nothing that would have even helped him get there.

He's a sexual harasser. A number of women have alleged that he sexually harassed them during the time he spent in college. He tried to forcibly kiss a woman who said that, in an attempt to get away, she had to "yank out" some of her own hair to escape. He also harassed women by taking them out on car rides where he'd ask invasive questions and, if they refused to answer his questioning, he'd scare them by driving aggressively and recklessly. (It should be noted that this was *after* the car accident that left his lower body paralysed.) Over 160 alumni of Patrick Henry College signed a letter that accused him of "gross misconduct towards [their] female peers."

He frequently spouts overt racism, thinly-veiled bigotries, and dog-whistles. He has proudly posted images of a time when he visited Eagle's Nest (Kuhlsteinhaus) in which he said "the vacation house of the Führer" was *on his bucket list*. When combined with the fact he has claimed to have converted "several Muslims" and "culturally Jewish people" to Christianity, his admiration for such a site (despite his inability to know much about it) is highly questionable.

He's repeated a number of conspiracy theories, pushing them as part of his platform. He's encouraged people to "lightly threaten" members of Congress, he's had tenuous support from members of his own party for supporting the events of January 6, and he's created a racist attack website targeting journalist Tom Fielder.

the needs of disabled people when they are inevitably called out for perpetuating harmful practices.

It creates an excuse by the non-disabled population to "forget" that we even exist, despite the fact that they often go to lengths to ensure that we cannot be seen. Instead of reckoning with their history of eugenics and exclusion, they continue it "for our benefit." It's merely one form of cyclical abuse and neglect, and this is part of what allows liberals and leftists to persist in maintaining ableism as part of their movements despite the claim that they support the liberation of all.

Because they "just don't know any better," or so the story goes.

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Specifically, the ability to write by hand is often seen as "necessary for learning" and is believed to be a core element of a person's ability to be literate. According to Gunther Kress's book *Before Writing: Rethinking the Paths to Literacy*:

"Writing demands a range of skills to do with display, spatial design, spatial orientation, and so on, nearly all of which go unrecognized in discussions of the learning of writing. The significance of the page as a (visual) unit in written texts as much as in overtly visual texts is hardly discussed, but it is of fundamental importance for full control of writing. Consequently, the knowledge gained in the making of images of this kind cannot be overestimated."

This skill, though it is useful and important, is also rather difficult for people to learn; this is particularly true as many people may not have full understanding of *how* children learn such skills, often making assumptions based on how *they* learned to write (regardless of whether or not it actually helped). What this means is that there is a significant number of people whose ability to write "well" hinges specifically on whether or not they received instruc-

tion (formal or informal) that enabled them to understand the development of the letters or characters in the writing systems they use.

It also requires that they were given time to *improve*, which is something that is gradually decreasing within the context of the classroom. This time given to improve upon skills is diminishing in many public schools and is being replaced with either a ridiculous amount of curriculum-enforced content *or* an excessive amount of nonsensical exams that measure little more than a person's abilities to *take a test*. Not only are we losing time for fostering skills, many schools located in poorer neighbourhoods simply can't give much time because their communities have access to way fewer resources than their wealthier peers.

But what about people who either struggle with or simply can't write and whose handwriting "looks bad," if they're able to physically write at all, despite all the effort they may put into it?

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There are a lot of disabled people who simply *struggle* with writing by hand. Some people may not be able to write *at all*, while others simply don't want to do it too much because it can cause *physical pain* for them. For others, they may have learning disabilities that make it difficult to legibly write something by hand. And for many people across the disability spectrum, it can be excruciatingly exhausting and take up what little energy they already don't have.

Despite my love for stationery, pens, and art supplies, I have two disabilities that impact my ability to write "correctly." For me, these two things are ADHD and dyslexia. My notebooks are frequently full of scribbles because I'm either writing too quickly for my own thoughts (leaving out letters and words that are necessary for *me* to understand my own notes) or misspelling words repeatedly (usually because I've confused the order of the letters). There are whole passages where, while they *look* like cursive script, I hon-

estly have *no idea* what I was writing or what I even intended to remind myself of.

But I'm not alone in this.

There are a number of disabilities that impact a person's ability to hand-write. The most obvious are physical disabilities that may impact mobility and joint movement. These sorts of disabilities can impact both dexterity and fine motor skills, which both are necessary to write by hand. A repetitive motion like hand-writing can literally get on a person's nerves, causing pain or tingling throughout their arms, shoulders, and neck.

This skill that we think is "so simple" that "everyone can do it" is actually quite physically intensive for people who have things like carpal tunnel syndrome, Ehlers-Danlos syndrome (EDS), or cerebral palsy, among others.

Meanwhile, many people like myself are impacted by the ways in which some learning disorders interact with their abilities to produce "proper" handwriting. Though I've already mentioned ADHD and dyslexia, they are not the only neurodevelopmental disorders that can interfere with a person's ability to write by hand. A number of people with dysgraphia, dyscalculia, and autism have all had their own struggles with hand-writing and have most certainly been made fun of for it.

Not to mention that, as we age or if we injure ourselves, our mobility and ability to do certain fine motor skills can change. It's a simple fact of life.

So it's really awful to consistently mock people for not being able to "properly" perform a skill that requires very specific knowledge and very specific abilities.

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I left Madison Cawthorn for the end because he sucks, and I didn't want to focus on him. He doesn't deserve the attention. Seriously, the guy is abhorrent, but it's *not* because his handwriting is supposedly "bad." It's because he's garbage, and there are a lot of reasons you could choose for why he's horrible: