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Dave Chappelle and Free Speech: A Trans Woman's View



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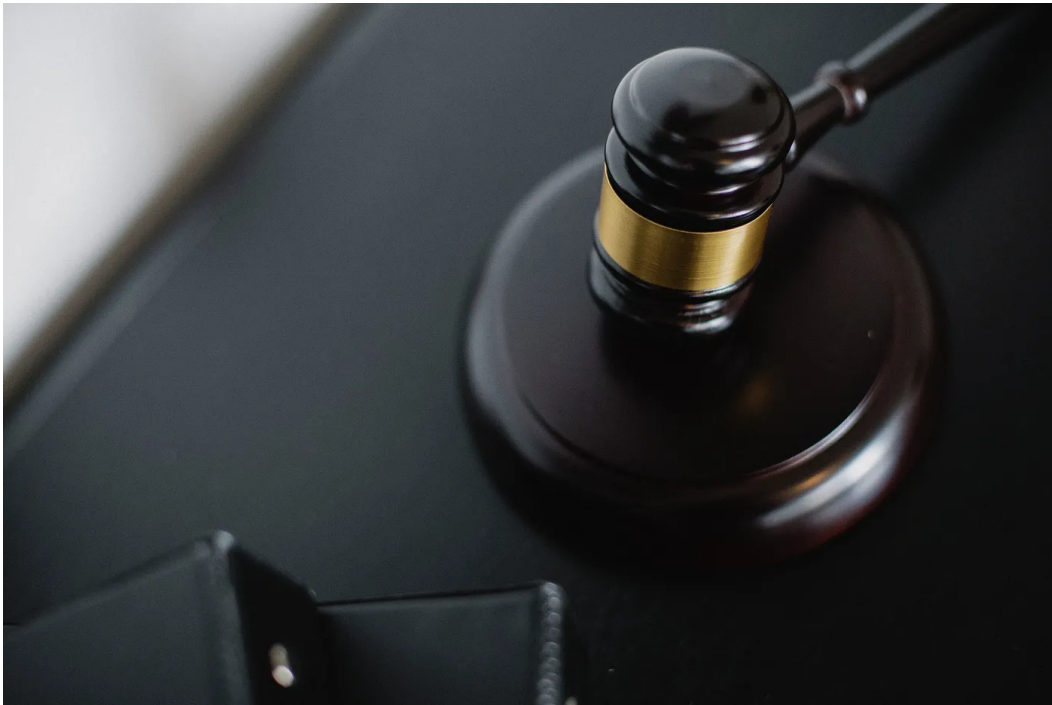
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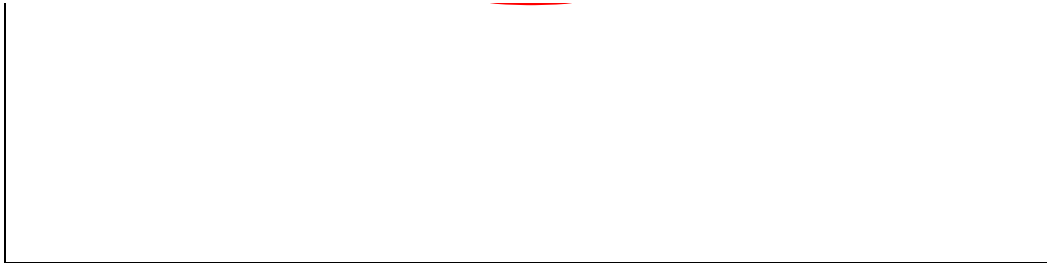


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Today, I want to talk about the recent uproar over the new Dave Chappelle Netflix special that some people have described as transphobic. I then want to expand the discussion into the wider issue of trans issues and free speech, something that is close to my heart.

I actually don't want to go into the content of the Dave Chappelle special. I personally find most of Dave Chappelle's stuff to be in bad taste, and I'm definitely not a fan. However, I think, as a society, we have been overly focused on finding racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia and so on in what people say. The problem is, this has not only not been effective in reducing discrimination and bigotry in society in general, it probably contributed to a substantial backlash towards the concept of social justice. Given that I believe the practice could be harmful, I'm not going to engage in it.

Top highlight

Having said that, I'm going to make just one comment: I believe we shouldn't throw the term 'TERF' around carelessly. Of course, it probably began with activists who like to inappropriately describe people like JK Rowling as 'TERFs'. Anyway, we should all stop doing it. TERF refers to gender critical feminism, a very specific left-wing ideology with a very specific form of anti-trans politics, and its meaning shouldn't be diluted. There is already enough misunderstanding as it is.

Anyway, what I found most important about this episode is that, once again, some people are out to pit free speech and trans people against each other. It really feels like last year's Harper's Free Speech letter drama is being replayed all over again. It appears that, the people behind the cause of 'cancel culture' are finding trans people to be good fuel for their cause. And I am indeed describing 'cancel culture' as a political cause: its roots go all the way back to the logic found in Herbert Marcuse's infamous 1965 essay Repressive Tolerance. Its objective is to change the way we think about free speech, free debate and freedom of conscience. Indeed, I believe that cancel culture is ultimately about cancelling liberalism itself, something in line with the objectives of radical critical theory.

Most people are passionately opposed to cancel culture, and with very good reason. My concern here is, if trans people are seen as supporters of cancel culture, we will bear the brunt of the backlash. While I am certain that the majority of trans people don't support cancel culture, I am concerned that we are being portrayed that way by the actions of certain activists. I don't think it's fair to us that this is being done to us.

As a trans person, I believe that free speech is the key to resolving issues and improving society in general. I also believe that free speech has been instrumental to the advancement of LGBT acceptance in particular, you just need to look at the gay marriage experience to see that. Free speech and the LGBT community have always been great friends, and they should remain great friends. It really pains me to see the inability of some trans activists to deal with speech they don't agree with. The point is, debate happens by people alternately agreeing and disagreeing with each other, and ultimately finding common ground where they can. We should all participate in this process in good faith. We should meet people where they are, and work out our disagreements. When we encounter ideas we disagree with, we raise our alternative viewpoint. What we should never do is to go around and demand that people be de-platformed, because that would disable the debate entirely, and lock everything in a permanent stalemate.

***TaraElla** is a singer-songwriter and author, who recently published her autobiography **The TaraElla Story**, in which she described the events that inspired her writing.*

Dave Chappelle

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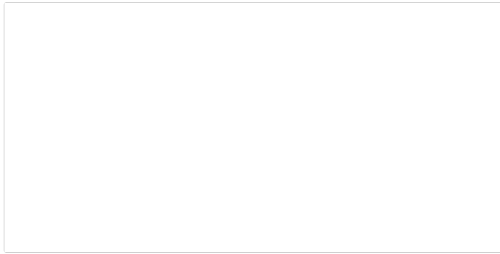
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Author & musician. Moral Libertarian. Opposing both the cultural systemist left and the authoritarian right in the 21st century West. <https://www.taraella.com>

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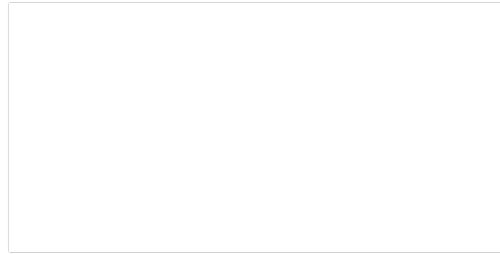
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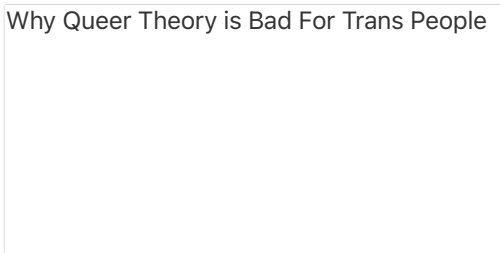
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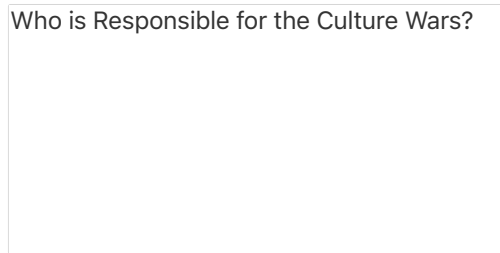
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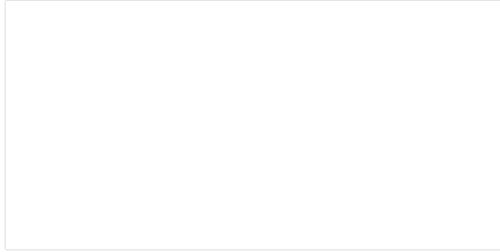
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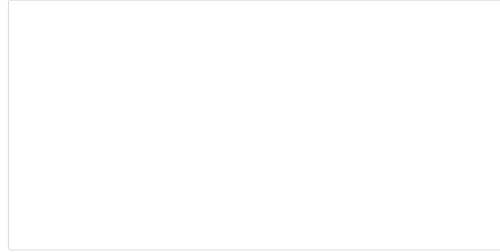
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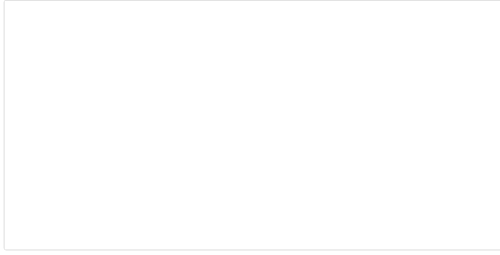
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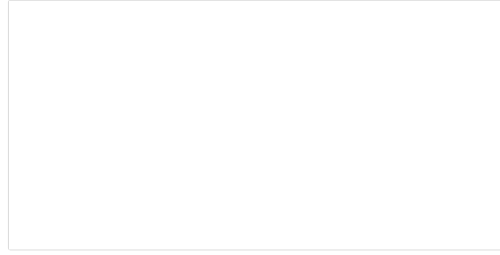
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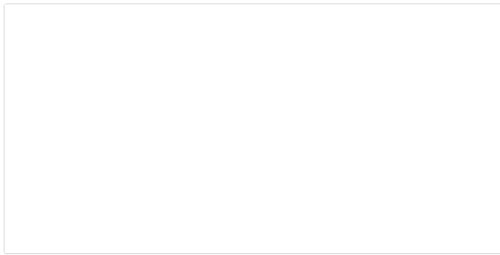
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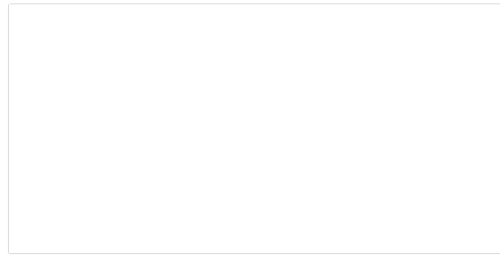
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