

Censorship by Social Sanction is Douche-y

What do you call it when someone reacts negatively to something you said or wrote in a way intended to make you feel ashamed? I call it douche-y.

Reacting this way to expression is a form of censorship, I think. It's an attempt get you to shut up by pushing an undesirable consequence your way, that being the inspired feelings of either being frustratingly misunderstood or hated for what you said.

If they can make you think twice before opening your mouth or putting pen to paper, they have succeeded to some degree in censoring you.

Which begs the question: should any expression be censored by social sanction? We lovers of liberty overwhelmingly give an emphatic NO to the idea of political, ie. violent, reaction to speech. Political censorship is a grave injustice, in every case, no exceptions, in my opinion. But what about this other kind of censorship, by social sanction?

One part of me wants to say, "it depends." If the expression is promoting aggression in some way, shouldn't it be met with, at minimum, social sanctions, ie. shaming and ostracism?

The other part of me wants to say, "never!" Expression, no matter how outrageous, should always be allowed its full due.

This second part of me is growing. Aaron White is to thank for that. He recorded a video in a private group on Facebook arguing against the idea of apologizing for or self-censoring what you have said or written in the past. I had expressed regret that my post on the "Me, too" campaign led to severe backlash due to misunderstanding. I expressed regret and took responsibility for not being clearer.

His main thesis was the danger in promoting censorship in any degree. Expression should always be free, no matter its content. I don't know what he would say about expression on someone else's property, but aside from that, I am finding myself closer and closer in agreement to that idea.

Thinking about the times this has happened to me, the feeling of being attacked really sucked. I would have much preferred to be questioned for clarification, and in the event that there was still disagreement, been politely dismissed.

Being attacked because of something I wrote or said, no matter how right or wrong I was, feels really shitty. And it ruins my day because I've felt the need to defend myself. I don't want people to hold a misrepresentation of me in their minds; I care much less about

people simply disagreeing with me.

Which brings us back to the beginning: censorship by social sanction is douchey. It's a prick move, I think. There's no reason why a person can't simply dig in with questions, peacefully and politely. If the expression is promoting aggression, we can point that out and make it clear how we feel about it. But why be a prick about it in attempt to censor an expression you disagree with? The Golden Rule comes to mind. This isn't to say that I'm innocent of behaving this way; I'm not.

My biggest concern here: What important truths are not being expressed because people are afraid of social sanction? That's the unfortunate outcome of allowing censorship in any degree, methinks.