

# Social media: Selective outrage

*The internet has come to resemble medieval Europe during the time of the Black Death, when Jews were accused of poisoning wells.*

by Matthew Hausman



**Righteous indignation is a legitimate response** to injustice and inequity, but selective outrage is not. Whereas the former is a gut reaction to senseless hatred, incitement, or powerlessness, the latter is a tool for disparaging political opponents and dissenting viewpoints while ignoring the misdeeds and biases of friends and allies. The selectively outraged among us typically have little regard for history and often manipulate facts to fit their resentments. And it was this kind of selective outrage that may well have facilitated the sweeping suspension of Donald Trump from social media

following a chaotic demonstration by a mob of his supporters at the U.S. Capitol.

President Trump was excoriated for urging election fraud protestors “to peacefully and patriotically make your voices heard” on Capitol Hill and for his initial response to the ensuing violence. He was then banned by Twitter “due to risk of further incitement of violence” and subsequently by other social media providers. Though private companies are free to ban users for violating platform rules (and while his messaging was certainly provocative), not everybody believes the rules are enforced uniformly. Nobody seemed to care in 2018, for example, when Sen. Elizabeth Warren stirred up crowds protesting Brett Kavanaugh’s Supreme Court confirmation hearings not long after tweeting a previously altered video portraying him in a negative light. There was no condemnation then, despite reports that 164 rioters were arrested for pummeling the Court’s doors, threatening Kavanaugh supporters, and attempting to occupy the Capitol.

The social media establishment’s grandiloquence in banning Trump contrasts with its lack of outrage regarding Warren in 2018. Furthermore, its stated aversion to inflammatory rhetoric appears selective given its ongoing failure to shut down those who express anti-Jewish hostility but are shielded from criticism by sympathetic politicians and the mainstream press.

This is not to excuse Trump’s behavior but to highlight the inconsistency that permeates a media landscape in which conservative protests are routinely termed violent, anarchic progressive riots are glowingly described as democracy in action, and leftist or minority antisemitism is rationalized as political expression...

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