



STUDY GUIDE

HOW TO BECOME A DANGEROUS PERSON

KEY TERMS: dangerous opinion #MeToo offended merits righteous tolerance

NOTE-TAKING COLUMN: Complete this section <u>during</u> the video. Include definitions and key terms.	CUE COLUMN: Complete this section <u>after</u> the video.
<p>What is the purpose of the #MeNeither YouTube podcast?</p> <p>How many of the people claiming to be offended had actually listened to the podcast, and why is the answer to this question important?</p> <p>When Ms. Rommelmann invited her critics to come speak with her, how many took her up on her offer?</p>	<p>What happened when Ms. Rommelmann created her #MeNeither platform?</p> <p>What is the main point that Ms. Rommelmann is attempting to convey in both her #MeNeither platform and this video?</p>

DISCUSSION & REVIEW QUESTIONS:

- Towards the beginning of the video, Ms. Rommelmann contends that, “Sexual assault and harassment are real, but the idea that any charge [brought by] any woman, or man... must be believed without question? Where’s the logic in that? I believe we are better off judging any claim of harassment, like any other claim, on its own merits.” Why do you think that some people automatically equate a charge or claim of sexual assault or harassment with guilt- without any evidence or proof? What, exactly, does it mean to judge a claim ‘on its own merit?’ Explain. Do you think that sexual harassment and sexual assault claims should be judged on merit? Why or why not?
- Later in the video Ms. Rommelmann points out that, “I can’t help but think that those who engage in this kind of behavior are steering themselves into perpetually unhappy waters, that they live in fear that everyone and everything is out to get them, so therefore they must strike first. Or are they addicted to the feeling that what they are doing is righteous, not considering intolerance in the name of tolerance is a frightening contradiction, and solves nothing. Or maybe they think they are making progress. But if this is progress, one might reasonably ask, for whom, and to what end?” Do you agree with Ms. Rommelmann that some people’s behavior is driven by the mindset of paranoia and/or unfounded righteousness? Why or why not? Do you agree that not tolerating opposing views in the name of ‘tolerance’ is hypocritical? Why or why not? How would you answer Ms. Rommelmann’s question about progress? Explain.
- Ms. Rommelmann shares with us in the video that, “She [a former worker at her husband’s business] claimed my views were ‘vile, dangerous, and extremely misguided’ and, in an email to the press, claimed my opinions created a ‘demoralizing and hostile environment for employees.’ Why would the opinions of the wife of the boss demoralize an employee? No one bothered to ask that question. That I appeared to be on the wrong side of the #MeToo debate was all people needed to know.” How would you answer Ms. Rommelmann’s question? Why do you think that no one bothered to ask it? Why do you think that the press didn’t bother to question or to challenge the former employee? Should the press have done so? Why or why not?
- Later in the video, Ms. Rommelmann warns that, “My story is one of many, another cautionary tale for those who get pulled into the culture wars. I understand why most people want to stay out of it. It’s scary to fight for liberty and against a mob. The whole thing is exhausting.” What, exactly, are the culture wars that Ms. Rommelmann is referring to? Explain. Why do you think that Ms. Rommelmann is having to fight for liberty in the U.S.- the ‘Land Of The Free?’
- At the end of the video, Ms. Rommelmann further shares with us, “I have repeatedly been asked, usually in ‘you should have known better...’ tones, if I am going to stop having nuanced conversations about sensitive subjects. The answer is absolutely not. And if that makes you feel unsafe? Too bad.” Why do you think that Ms. Rommelmann is fighting for liberty, especially free speech, in the U.S.? Do you support her efforts? Why or why not?

EXTEND THE LEARNING:

CASE STUDY: Illiberals

INSTRUCTIONS: Read the article “How the Left Became So Intolerant,” then answer the questions that follow.

- What comes in all political shapes and sizes? What mentality does the term ‘illiberal’ describe? What term has been associated with ‘open-mindedness’ for centuries? Traditionally, whom have liberals cared for? What are illiberals like, especially in terms of others’ behavior? What about in extreme cases? What do people who self-identify as progressive liberals often do, especially in terms of free speech, the Constitution, and Christians? What are the ‘hard’ forms of illiberalism? How do Leftists judge liberal democracies? Why? How does illiberalism manifest in America today? Historically, what was a progressive liberal like, in terms of ideology? What influenced Progressives to gradually move Leftward and to hold classic liberalism in contempt? What do progressive social democrats think of individual liberties? What is a postmodernist? What is the agenda of the radical cultural left, and what produces it? From where have illiberal values been imported?
- How do the values of illiberals differ from those of true Americans? Would you consider Camila Coddou, the person who sent the email to former employees or Ristretto Roasters and to the press, and the ensuing mob to be illiberals? Why or why not? Would you consider illiberals to be haters, especially of America and American values? Why or why not?
- Do you consider Ms. Rommelmann’s characterization of the illiberals that continue to attack her and to attack her husband’s business to that of a petulant child who doesn’t get his or her way as a valid comparison? Why or why not? Ms. Rommelmann publicly presented her opinions in a manner and on a platform that had nothing to do with her husband’s business, yet Camila Coddou and the rest of the ‘locusts’ directly tied Ms. Rommelmann’s opinions with the business and claimed that the business was directly impacted negatively and must be guilty of similar transgressions merely by being associated with Ms. Rommelmann in some way. Do you think that this was an irrational and fraudulent stretch? Why or why not? Would you support Ristretto Roasters by purchasing food or beverages from there? Why or why not?



QUIZ

HOW TO BECOME A DANGEROUS PERSON

1. Ms. Rommelmann currently lives in _____.
 - a. Eugene, Oregon
 - b. Portland, Oregon
 - c. Portland, Maine
 - d. Seattle, Washington

2. When did Ms. Rommelmann start her #MeNeither YouTube podcast?
 - a. September, 2018
 - b. October, 2018
 - c. November, 2018
 - d. December, 2018

3. Ms. Rommelmann believes that we are better off judging any claim of harassment, like any other claim, on its own merits.
 - a. True
 - b. False

4. When Ms. Rommelmann offered to speak to her critics, how many of them took her up on her offer?
 - a. 3
 - b. 28
 - c. Around 100
 - d. None

5. In the U.S., every citizen has the equal right to _____.
 - a. vandalize a business that is dangerous to its employees
 - b. slander and to make fraudulent claims against a business that they don't like
 - c. voice his or her opinion, and to express these opinions in a public forum
 - d. All of the above.



QUIZ - ANSWER KEY

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<https://www.heritage.org/civil-society/commentary/how-the-left-became-so-intolerant>

How the Left Became So Intolerant

Dec 12th, 2017

COMMENTARY BY

Kim R. Holmes, Ph.D. @kimsmithholmes

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Pro-LGBT protesters participate in a demonstration in New York City on June 25, 2017. iStock

When most people think of intolerance, they imagine a racist taunting a black person. Or they think of the white supremacist who killed a demonstrator in Charlottesville, Virginia.

It seldom occurs to them that intolerance comes in all political shapes and sizes.

A protester storming a stage and refusing to let someone speak is intolerant. So, too, are campus speech codes that restrict freedom of expression. A city official threatening to fine a pastor for declining to marry a gay couple is every bit as intolerant as a right-winger wanting to punish gays with sodomy laws.

There is a word that describes this mentality. It is “illiberal.” For centuries, we have associated the word “liberal” with open-mindedness. Liberals were people who were supposed to be tolerant and fair and who wanted to give all sides a hearing. They cared about everyone, not just their own kind.

By contrast, illiberal people were hardheaded in their opinions and judgmental about others’ behaviors, hoping to control what other people thought and said and to cut off debate. In extreme cases, they would even use violence to maintain political power and exclude certain kinds of people from having a say in their government.

Sadly, the kind of liberalism we used to know is fast disappearing from America. While the intolerance of the far right is well known, its manifestations on the far left are less known and often not fully acknowledged.

All too often, people who call themselves progressive liberals are at the forefront of movements to shut down debates on college campuses and to restrict freedom of speech. They are eager to cut corners, bend the Constitution, make up laws through questionable court rulings, and generally abuse the rules and the Constitution in order to get their way.

They establish “zero tolerance” regimes in schools where young boys are suspended for nibbling breakfast pastries into the shape of a gun. They are supposedly great haters of bigotry but sometimes speak of Christians in the most bigoted manner imaginable, as if Christians were no better than fascists.

American liberals are, in short, becoming increasingly illiberal. They are surrendering to the temptations of the closed mind.

We must be careful about what this means. There are hard (sometimes very hard) and soft forms of illiberalism that exist regardless of their ideological (left-right) variations.

The hard forms are totalitarian or authoritarian. They rely on the threat of force in some measure to maintain power, and they are invariably anti-democratic and anti-liberal. Think of communism, fascism, and all the various hybrids of authoritarian regimes, from Putin’s Russia to Islamist states that support terrorism.

Soft forms of illiberalism, on the other hand, are not totalitarian or violent. Outwardly they may observe the limits constitutional democracies place on the arbitrary use of power, but there is a suspicion that liberal democracies are not fully legitimate.

On the other side of the political spectrum, leftists often judge liberal democracies as economically and socially unjust because they are capitalist. Since most liberal democracies still allow conservatives to have a voice in the democratic process, leftists find them wanting, and in some cases condemn them outright as inherently oppressive (of racial and sexual minorities, for example), precisely because conservatives still have a voice.

Hard forms of illiberalism certainly exist in America today. On the right they are manifest in the form of hard-core racists and white supremacists, and on the left as communists, anarchists, or any leftist radical who openly threatens violence.

But soft illiberalism is present as well, and in America today it is pervasive.

Historically, a progressive liberal was someone who imbibed the intellectual nectars of both progressivism and classical liberalism.

The progressive tradition is easily recognizable. It is the legacy of prominent progressives from the turn of the 20th century such as Herbert Croly, John Dewey, Theodore Roosevelt, Woodrow Wilson, and others.

The classical liberal tradition is less well known, and as a result our understanding of it is murkier.

Classical liberalism is a set of ideas about individual liberty and constitutional government inherited from the moderate Enlightenment.

In America those ideas influenced the Revolution and the founding of the Republic. In Europe they were taken up in the 19th century by such liberals as Benjamin Constant, David Ricardo, Alexis de Tocqueville, François Guizot, and John Stuart Mill.

Although originally swimming in the same intellectual stream, American progressives and classical liberals started parting company in the late 19th century.

Progressives initially clung to freedom of expression and the right to dissent from the original liberalism, but under the influence of socialism and social democracy they gradually moved leftward. Today they largely hold classic liberalism—especially as manifested in small-government conservatism and libertarianism—in contempt.

Thus, what we call a “liberal” today is not historically a liberal at all but a progressive social democrat, someone who clings to the old liberal notion of individual liberty when it is convenient (as in supporting abortion or decrying the “national security” state), but who more often finds individual liberties and freedom of conscience to be barriers to building the progressive welfare state.

To untangle this confusing web of intellectual history, we need a more accurate historical rendering of what “progressive liberals” actually are. If they are not really liberals, then what are they?

As this volume will explore in more depth, they are postmodern leftists. A postmodernist is someone who believes that ethics are completely and utterly relative, and that human knowledge is, quite simply, whatever the individual, society, or political powers say it is.

When mixed with radical egalitarianism, postmodernism produces the agenda of the radical cultural left—namely, sexual and identity politics and radical multiculturalism. These causes have largely taken over the progressive liberal agenda and given the Democratic Party most of its energy and ideas.

The illiberal values inherent in these causes have been imported from neo-Marxism, radical feminism, critical race theory, sexual revolutionary politics, and other theories and movements imbued with the postmodern critique.

Combined with the dreams of the old social democratic-socialist left, of either dismantling or radically containing capitalism, the culture of the postmodern left today is a very potent force in politics.

This excerpt was taken with permission from Kim Holmes' book, "The Closing of the Liberal Mind: How Groupthink and Intolerance Define the Left" (Encounter Books, 2017).

This piece originally appeared in The Daily Signal