

OPINION

Social Media: A Politician's Double-Edged Sword

BY VICTORIA TURCIOS

AS THE GAP WIDENS BETWEEN younger and older generations in a variety of topics and ideologies, the big elephant in the room is the conversation about politics. According to the PEW Research Center, this is not only dividing Millennials and Generation X, but even the older groups of Baby Boomers and the Silent Generation. While young voters access media and news in a much different manner than their counterparts, Forbes stated in 2016 that this generation has continued to gain interest in politics and social issues. This has continued to be proven true, restating the question as to whether politicians should be expected to connect with these voters through social media.

ThoughtCo expressed an interesting take on how social media has made politicians more accountable and accessible. In ten phrases, they stated how this was changing the political game. A few of my biggest takeaways were the following:

- 1) Direct Contact With Voters
- 2) Advertising Without Paying For Advertising
- 3) Controversy
- 4) The Power of Many.

This comes as no surprise to the researchers behind the Millennial Impact Project, who focused on this generation's approach to fearlessly contribute to causes they care about. Although their research focused on cause marketing, politics have become a game of both politics and causes. They stated that the involvement by the generation "could mean the success or failure of social movements into the near future."

In 2016, AdWeek shared an interview with Nicole Stavola of The Pita Group. During which, she stated that if brands didn't reflect the perception or experiences of their consumers, then their authenticity would suffer. A relationship nurtured in trust and transparency has become a key component when trying to obtain the attention and support of Millennials. This results in a positive outlook for politicians looking to amp up their social media game for 2020 and future elections. No matter what side of the aisle you support, the impact of social media used by politicians is clearer than ever. The Twitter habits of Donald Trump have shaped his political career since the day he started campaigning, and this has become a double-edged sword for the 45th president of the United States.

The NY Times reported that the attention his social media posts brought on helped propel him to victory in 2016. In addition, democratic candidates thrived in the 2018 midterm elections, and this seems to have been connected to their use of social media as well. The NYT's research showed that by using Facebook and Instagram to stay in tune with their target audience of voters resulted in democrats having the upper hand during the midterm elections.

At the end of the day, whether it's votes or engagement statistics, gaining the attention of voters of any age is a game of numbers, and if politicians are looking to make it to the White House or judicial branches in the coming years, they'll need to have as much support on their side as possible, virtually or in person. †



Covington Catholic: A Reminder of our Role in Media-Consumption

BY ETHAN LANGEMO



Photography provided by Andrew Caballero-Reynolds/Agence France-Presse – Getty Images

ON JANUARY 18TH, 2019, a group of boys from Covington Catholic High School in Kentucky attended the March for Life in Washington D.C., and later a video exploded across the internet which showed those same boys allegedly harassing Nathan Phillips, a Native American protester.

Phillips, the recipient of the hate caught on video, is an ex-United States marine. He claims the boys stood in his way and were yelling things such as "Trump 2020," and "Build a wall." Neither of those cheers could be heard in any part of the viral one-minute video, nor in the longer two-hour video which completely shifted the story of what happened that day.

Nick Sandmann, the main figure in the video wearing the iconic MAGA hat, rejected any accusation of his actions being racist. In the full video, the boys were first confronted by an extremist group known as the Black Hebrew Israelites, who share and express hate for everyone from Whites, to Jews, to homosexuals. They were calling the boys indecent names such as "cracker" and "faggot," and the boys asked their chaperone if they could do school chants, which are positive in nature, to try to reverse the effects of the hate speech coming from the eccentric protestors. This is where Phillips comes in. He put himself in between two groups to try to "lighten the tension," which contradicts what he said about the boys getting in his way.

Twitter user @roflinds tweeted a video of what she claimed was the Covington Catholic boys yelling at her and a friend before the Phillips incident. However, it's not clear if it's them or simply another group of boys wearing MAGA hats, and the video is only a few seconds long so it is unknown what happened prior to the video.

The problem with this situation is how the media handled it. It was hot to jump on this story about a white boy in a MAGA hat "harassing" an elderly Native American man. When the full video came out, many scorned the media for spreading false information, and not waiting until more information was available.

Why wasn't there mass media coverage of the Black Hebrew Israelite protestors shouting obscene profanities at the boys? Or how Phillip lied about being confronted when he was the one doing the confronting, and then complaining that he felt unsafe? The media will cover what will make money, and right now, it is taking the actions of any White, MAGA-hat-wearing Republicans, and making them look like the enemy. We can't let the media make up our minds for us; we must be responsible and educate ourselves so we know the full story. There is no one to blame but ourselves if we let the media consume us and make decisions for us. †