

Re: [GameChangerSalon] Getting back to you re: our business model

Inbox x

Gamechangers salon

x



Melissa Byrne

12/
20/
13

to gamechangersal.

Well, just to keep the community up to date- looks like what a lot of people feared came to fruition today. Looks like a change.org is featuring and providing assistance to a petition supporting the homophobic wealthy businessman from Louisiana who has a side gig as a tv personality.

Here's the petition: <http://www.change.org/petitions/a-e-network-bring-phil-robertson-back>

Just wondering how it's a good business model to give voice and power to people who are defending a man who spews hatred, racism, and homophobia?

I have a ton of respect for the folks at change and I understand that SV thinks differently about justice than in the weeds grassroots activists. I'm not raising this bash anyone at change but to continue the discussion of what it means to build capacity that ends up empowering hate.

(Especially thinking about all the progressive orgs that invested early in change and now, well-hate organizing is happening).



Dave Karpf

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to Melissa, gamechangersal.

I just wrote a post on this topic, fwiw: <http://www.shoutingloudly.com/2013/12/20/change-org-and-the-duck-dynasty-thing/>

I have a lot of respect for a lot of organizers who work at Change. I was honestly surprised that the org selected this petition for the front page. I get the business logic behind the decision (new names, wheeee!), but it grinds hard against the public image they want to project.

-Dave



Stephen Miles

12/
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to davekarpf, Melissa, gamechangersal.

So who's going to start the petition to go after [change.org](http://www.change.org) on this...

Sent from my iPad



Brad Johnson

12/
20/
13

to Stephen, davekarpf, Melissa, gamechangersal.

Funny: <http://www.change.org/about/community-guidelines>

"But we do not allow hate speech -- advocacy of beliefs or practices that attack or malign an entire class of people has no place on Change.org. This typically includes, but is not limited to, speech which attacks or maligns a person or group based on their class, veteran status, gender identity, or immutable characteristics (race, ethnic origin, color, national origin, religion, disability, sex, age, sexual orientation)."



Noland Chambliss

12/
20/
13

to Brad, Stephen, davekarpf, Melissa, gamechangersal.

Hi everyone,

I have gotten a few emails offline about this as well, and thought I should clarify a few things here.

Dave, the petitions on the homepage are determined by traffic and signature data. If you see a petition on our homepage its because it was one of the most popular on the site in the last 24 hours.

There were over 170 petitions started on this topic, with over 250,000 signatures on them. It's actually the most organic activity on a single issue in the US we have seen since Sandy Hook. The petition Melissa flagged is the one getting the most traffic right now.

Melissa, I know you aren't bashing anyone that works here. I have appreciated our conversations about our policies and your willingness to hear me explain our thinking, even when you disagree.

Dave, happy to connect with you offline as well.



Brad Johnson

12/
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to Noland, Stephen, davekarpf, Melissa, gamechangersal.

<http://lightnercrew.com/2010/05/02/get-your-facts-straight-homosexuality/>

Homosexuality is wickedness and must be recognized as such else there is no hope for the homosexual who is asking for help to be extricated from his perverted way of life.

The whole idea of two persons of the same sex marrying is absurd, unsound, and ridiculously unreasonable. A clergyman might bless a homosexual marriage but God won't.

However, religious sex perverts are plentiful among protestants.

But the two terms, "gay" and "Christian" are mutually exclusive, incompatible, incongruous.

Practicing homosexuals are engaged in a divinely forbidden evil.

The clever adaptation of the word "gay" by homosexuals has robbed it of its pure meaning, thereby corrupting a once perfectly good word. I never use the word "gay" when referring to homosexuals. There are many bright, exuberant, merry people in this world who are not sexual perverts.

There are certain words in every language that can be used in a good or bad sense. In the context of this verse the use of "effeminate" is obviously in a bad sense. It is listed among other evils which are condemned. It describes feminine qualities inappropriate to a man. It is normal and natural for a woman to be sexually attracted to a man; it is abnormal and unnatural for a man to be sexually attracted to another man.

Homosexuality must be accepted for what God says it is- sin. Some homosexuals will attempt to contradict the plain teaching of the Bible with the reply that they are the way God made them. There is not the slightest bit of evidence in Scripture to support this false concept. God never created man with a so-called "homosexual need." No baby is born a homosexual.

For example, clinical cases show that some homosexuals have not had a normal or natural relationship with the parent of the same sex.

Every Jew knew that homosexuality was an abomination, a disgusting practice to be loathed, hated. This was God's attitude toward that evil practice. He hated it to the extent that He considered it worthy of punishment by death.



Stephen Miles

12/
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to Noland, Brad, davekarpf, Melissa, gamechangersal.

So just to be clear, you're defending this petition and that it somehow is not supporting anti-gay hate speech? Just making sure I understand this. Don't mean this as an attack. Honestly, just a bit shocked...

Sent from my iPad



Jordan Krueger

12/
20/
13

to noland.chambli., Brad, Stephen, davekarpf, Melissa, gamechangersal.

Dave, the petitions on the homepage are determined by traffic and signature data. If you see a petition on our homepage its because it was one of the most popular on the site in the last 24 hours.

Noland, surely you have a mechanism for suppressing offensive petitions, and petitions that run afoul of your platform's policies?



Kate Oh

12/
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13

to melissachristi., gamechangersal.

If change.org allows the pro-Phil Robertson petitions to stand, one might ask about beating them at the same pressure game against A&E & "the public is on our side" PR battle.

There appear to be no petitions on change.org demanding that A&E keep Robertson off. The main one that Melissa sent around has 109,000 signers; it also makes a clear threat against A&E's financial bottom line (boycott).

There is a counter petition on signon.org by Gamechanger Michael Sherrard, and it has 3,400 signers. <http://petitions.moveon.org/sign/bigotry-isnt-christian>

Our friends at GLAAD are also facing hostilities and apparently little encouragement:

<http://tv.yahoo.com/news/duck-dynasty-fallout-glaad-reeling-biggest-backlash-years-010050637.html>

“In the five-and-a-half years I’ve worked at GLAAD, I’ve never received so many violently angry phone calls and social media posts attacking GLAAD for us speaking out against these comments,” the media watchdog organization’s vice president of communications Rich Ferraro told [TheWrap](#).



Michael Sherrard

12/
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13

to ohkatherine, Melissa, gamechangersal.

Thanks for the shoutout, Kate. The MoveOn petition is now up over 25,000 signatures, and the one on our own site is at approaching the same figure. To my knowledge those 50,000 signatures are the largest number of folks supporting A&E, in the face of what is now a very large right-wing backlash.

I generally try to stay out of arguments about Change.org, but I agree with others that their decision to promote this particular petition is unconscionable, even for a for-profit company that purports to remain ideologically neutral.

Suppose there was a sudden surge of views for a racist or homophobic YouTube video, sufficient to make the front page listings of feature videos. Does anyone have any doubt that Google staff would exercise editorial discretion and refrain from promoting the video, regardless of the #s? Why should we expect any less from Change.org?

-- M



Jodi Jacobson

12/
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to Kate, Melissa, gamechangersal.

Stigmatization, intimidation and threats of violence are central to the right's tactics. I also heard bashing of GLAAD on the Sunday talk shows today (shocking, I know). And you had Mike Huckabee out there defending ol' Phil. His abhorrent remarks extend beyond attacking GLBT persons (though the worst of those remarks were in other places, like his sermons, and not in the GQ interview per se), but also include African Americans and others. So the guy is a racist and a homophobe, among other things. Though as was pointed out today, while A & E says they have suspended him, they are still running shows with him on it, and they also are having a Duck Dynasty marathon either today or Christmas Day, I can't remember which.

I unfortunately can not say I am at all surprised about Change.org's decision on this petition. I think it was pretty much the writing on the wall.

I will happily help promote any counter petitions and/or messages, strategies, efforts.

Jodi



Kate Oh

12/
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to Michael, Melissa, gamechangersal.

I'm glad to see this side's numbers jump that high so quickly, Michael.

The Duck Dynasty controversy seems to be becoming a larger proxy fight, and the right-wingers are beating progressives on our supposed own turf - online organizing. They're kicking our asses & taking our lunch money. The [change.org](http://www.change.org) petition is actually dwarfed by the one at <http://www.istandwithphil.com/>, which has 186,000 signers. (Plus 112,000 signers = 298,000 "consumers" with money to spend telling A&E to reinstate Phil, though de-duping would probably lower that sum total considerably.) Also, GLAAD is getting hammered on their social media accounts.

I'm sure promotion like this is helping to boost the pro-Phil numbers: <http://crossmap.christianpost.com/news/istandwithphil-com-petition-drive-calls-for-phil-robertsons-immediate-return-to-duck-dynasty-7779>

Of course, **the ultimate measure of progressives' success here isn't solely whether [change.org](http://www.change.org) stops promoting the pro-Phil petition or not. The bigger battle is which side gets its way on A&E's decision** -- and presumably, the amount of political cover available for each side's preferred option (as reflected by, for example, the # of petition signers) will matter.

So maybe we should want more talk about how to boost our side's numbers, even at the expense of diverting attention away from the [change.org](http://www.change.org) controversy? (Thanks for your note, Jodi.)

Given the importance of getting more supporters as quickly as possible from within the community of possible signers (i.e., liberals, not the public at large), I have to wonder if the petition's appeal could be (or should be) broadened by talking about the stuff that really riles up liberals, like bigots claiming the righteous stance just because they couch their bigotry in religious terms and them misusing religion & giving people of faith a bad name in order to promote their divisive, hurtful views. Sure, we respect Phil's freedom of speech to hold thoughts as vile as he wants, but we also respect GLAAD's right to call it out for what it is and A&E's right to decide to keep it off its shows and the public airwaves. (But could this last point backfire on us if/when A&E permanently reinstates Phil...?)

The other side is framing the controversy as a speech/thought police vs. people of faith + freedom of speech issue, and it seems to be resonating with a lot of average people.



Melissa Byrne

12/
22/

to Kate, Michael, gamechangersal.

I think here on this list the change.org portion is important for folks who may considering list acquisition and other dealings with them. They've let hate onto their site and that's bad for everyone working to get less hate in the world.

Outwardly, it's horrible that culture wars keep getting pushed and pushed.

Sent from my iPhone



Dave Karpf

12/
23/
13

to Melissa, Kate, Michael, gamechangersal.

A couple further thoughts:

-First, credit where credit is due: The petition was only promoted on change.org's frontpage for 24 hours. Whether this was because of their algorithms or because of progressive pushback (I'm guessing mostly the latter), I was glad to see them change course.

-Agreed, really exciting to see Michael's petition at MoveOn do so well.

-While I think Kate is right that this serves as a culture war proxy fight, I also think this wasn't *really* "our turf." This wasn't centrally an online organizing battle between the left and right. It was, first and foremost, an active fan community supporting their favorite show. It was secondarily a proxy battle between the left and the right.

In a fight between people who watch and love a television program against people who don't watch/had never heard of the television program, the raw numbers really ought to swing in the fan community's favor.

Best,
Dave

--

Dave Karpf, PhD

Assistant Professor
George Washington University
School of Media and Public Affairs

www.davidkarpf.com

Author of [*The MoveOn Effect: The Unexpected Transformation of American Political Advocacy*](#) (Oxford University Press)

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Laura Dawn Murphy

12/
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to msherrard, ohkatherine, Melissa, gamechangersal.

Thank you, michael, for saying what needs to be said

I'm not really clear on why we're all supposed to stand for equality
Fight for equality
And supposedly represent a set of shared progressive values

Except for when that interferes with Change.org making money.

Apologies to anyone that works there-- but it actually DOES matter HOW you make your money. And when you're making it off the propagation of hate --- then I have to question your values. Publicly.

Sent from my iPhone



Kate Oh

12/
23/
13

to Dave, Melissa, Michael, gamechangersal.

The other side threw down a challenge, whether it intended to do so or not and whether it's a central battle or not: whose online community members will show up to sign each side's respective online petition, each having greater significance than just the controversy at hand.

Online organizing is still one of our side's most valuable strengths & calling cards, i.e., "our turf." Or at least a turf that we haven't ceded to the right-wing, yes?

In terms of winning, the other side is definitely broadening its reach. It's not just about a fan favorite TV show. We could do more of the same.

Something like: We're fighting for an America where our children are hearing about respect for people no matter who they love or the color of their skin.

They're fighting for their right to a reality show.



Melissa Byrne

12/
23/
13

to Laura, msherrard, ohkatherine, gamechangersal.

One of the main orgs pushing this hate uses nationbuilder. Check out faithdrivenconsumer.com.

Imagine sharing server space and tech support with the folks trying to roll back human rights.

For the life of me, like Laura, I don't get why we have values when we can ignore them when someone gets VC money to start a new company.

The infrastructure of nationbuilder just got this org a list of over 200K activists they can now use as a base to begin online organizing and reinvigorate the culture wars. This is especially sad since there are evangelicals in the trenches working day to day to move us beyond the culture wars.

I know I push on this a lot but building and growing capacity for people who fight against equality, against justice, and against love is problematic as best, and destructive at worst. Oh, and btw, folks organizing against A&E are calling in death threats- so it's giving capacity to folks who don't share our commitment to nonviolence. (Stormfront is one of the groups promoting the change petition and pushing the pro duck dynasty messaging. But hey, everyone should be empowered in this Silicon Valley driven world).

On another thread- it would be good to have an in depth convo on ending the culture wars.

Sent from my iPhone



Ryan Clayton

12/
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13

to Melissa, Laura, msherrard, ohkatherine, gamechangersal.

Can someone from Change.org answer this question: how many organizers on the campaign side do you have dedicated to promoting this campaign which is "empowering" hundreds of thousands of new potential activist to "create the change they want to see in the world"? Gee, I bet they'll swoop up the ladder of engagement and start new organizations to "make the world a better place".

<http://www.change.org/petitions/a-e-network-bring-phil-robertson-back>

This petition seems so successful and media-worthy, why not promote it (with your new set of neutral values)? It's such a great opportunity for the Change.org brand to demonstrate it's neutrality - look, we "empower" both sides which you can see both adding up signatures on the site. Even better, you could dedicate campaign organizers to both sides and it could be like an internal game at Change.org to see whether Team Justice or Team Bigotry wins. Exciting empowerment!

Not to restate what has already been said over and over (and apparently fallen on deaf ears with your management), power is relative. When you empower our adversaries, you disempower people who they are actively oppressing. Especially since this technology was incubated inside the Progressive movement and you've siphoned off tons of our best trained organizers, selling their talents and our institutional knowledge to venture capitalists for profit, who then turn around and sell it to our enemies (thus neutralizing our previously asymmetrical advantage on this front), is particularly shameful.

"If you are neutral in situations of injustice, you have chosen the side of the oppressor. If

an elephant has its foot on the tail of a mouse and you say that you are neutral, the mouse will not appreciate your neutrality." - Desmond Tutu

Suffice it to say, we do not appreciate your neutrality.

To unsubscribe from Change.org emails, click here: <http://help.change.org/entries/197505-How-do-I-stop-receiving-email-from-Change-org->

To delete your Change.org account permanently, click here:

<http://help.change.org/entries/20309746-How-do-I-delete-my-Change-org-account->

Happy Holidays!

PS. I hope this comment does not get a response on this list, as everyone who works for that organization should no longer be on it.

PPS. How about we have a conversation about *winning* the culture wars?



Aaron Black

12/
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to claytonryan, Melissa, Laura, msherrard, ohkatherine, gamechangersal.

I have to agree with everything Ryan is saying here. I think we should seriously think about boycotting Change.org, and maybe do a demo in front of their offices... Fuck this shit!

--



Stephen Miles

12/
23/
13

to elchanonblack, claytonryan, Melissa, Laura, msherrard, ohkatherine, gamechangersal.

Count me in for a boycott. I haven't used them since they started down this path to darkness. Especially with MoveOn, credo, and other's platforms, there's no reason to support this kind of behavior.

In the simplest terms, if they won't support us (and are actually empowering our opponents) why should we support them.

Sent from my iPhone



Noland Chambliss

12/
23/
13

to Stephen, elchanonblack, claytonryan, Melissa, Laura, msherrard, ohkatherine, gamechangersal.

Hi everyone,

Just catching up on this thread. I spent yesterday evening packing and most of today traveling back to Kentucky to spend time with my family so I'm not able to be very connected to email right now.

I want to further clarify a few things here --

There is no campaigner strategizing with the petition starter to get this guy put back on his reality TV show. This is also not a sponsored petition.

For what it's worth, only a very small percentage of our site traffic comes to the homepage. Petitions don't win or have dramatic spikes in growth because they briefly are featured in the trending petitions section of the homepage.

I have also heard a few folks make the case that this petition counts as hate speech. Some I have spoken with think advocating for a balanced budget amendment or for less progressive tax structures should count as hate speech, because it would result in substantive, negative outcomes for marginalized communities. To clarify our approach, we look at the content of the petition itself, and only the text of the petition, when making these kinds of determinations. In this case, the petition is calling for a guy to get put back on a reality TV program.

It may also be worth repeating that we are not a progressive company. Just like Facebook or Twitter, we have advertisers from all political perspectives and users from every country in the world that hold an incredibly wide range of beliefs. Our orientation is to err on the side of keeping something up on the site, not taking it down.

Again sorry for being slow to respond (and sorry, Ryan, for responding at all...). I am going to try and not check email too often while I'm home. I'm happy to connect with folks about this in the New Year.



Laura Dawn

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to noland.chambli., Stephen, elchanonblack, claytonryan, Melissa, msherrard, ohkatherine, gar

but unlike Facebook or Twitter, which by name serve as a roadway for chatter/ sharing, etc--

[CHANGE.ORG](#) represents itself as a platform for making POSITIVE change happen in the world. And started as a progressive company, or at least sure as hell represented as one at first.

If you call yourself CHANGE.org--it does now beg the question: Exactly what kind of change are you promoting? Because if the answer is "ANY kind that keeps our platform growing and making money", then I think, to state the obvious, the answer is: The kind that lines our pockets.

Call me an idiot, but I *thought* you meant Social Change, as in Changing the World for the

Better.

And I'm honestly not sure why you're included in this list serve of progressives.



Stephen Miles

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to Laura, noland.chambli., elchanonblack, claytonryan, Melissa, msherrard, ohkatherine, gamec

The distinction between a petition literally having hate speech in it and one which merely supports someone specifically because of his hate speech seems patently absurd. This isn't anything like the example given in which the argument is that a tax policy is inherently hateful. In this case what we are saying is that hate speech is hate speech and defending the person making the speech, and specifically his 'right' to remain on tv to share his hate speech, is tantamount to endorsing his hateful speech.

Sent from my iPhone



Gaius Publius

12/
23/
13

to Stephen, Laura, noland.chambli., elchanonblack, claytonryan, Melissa, msherrard, ohkatherir

Right on, Stephen.

Stephen Miles wrote:

The distinction between a petition literally having hate speech in it and one which merely supports someone specifically because of his hate speech seems patently absurd. This isn't anything like the example given in which the argument is that a tax policy is inherently hateful. In this case what we are saying is that hate speech is hate speech and defending the person making the speech, and specifically his 'right' to remain on tv to share his hate speech, is tantamount to endorsing his hateful speech.

Let's broaden this out. Isn't this really about what it means to be part of the progressive community, our community (intended as an actual question)?

There are bright lines, right? Is this not one of them? If so, should we not declare that and be proud of what we stand for?

(BTW, there are other bright lines, but that's for later.)



Billy Wimsatt

12/
23/
13

to Stephen, Laura, noland.chambli., elchanonblack, claytonryan, Melissa, msherrard, ohkatherine, gamechange

Moderator: Happy holidays, everyone. I'm not versed on the substance of this issue. This is a heated discussion that has gone near the line of our ground rules. But from my quick reading, it's not over the line at this time because Change, as a company serving non-progressive clients, is not protected from the no-dissing rule. To clarify our policy for including people on the list-serve, we do include people who are committed to progressive values and the progressive movement as individuals (such as Noland) even if their day jobs are working for non-progressive companies or entities, as long as we trust them to keep this space confidential. We actually want to have progressive folks working everywhere, including for non-progressive corporations.

Carry on, everyone, and thank you for respecting the ground rules.

billy



Aaron Black <elchanonblack@gmail.com>

12/
23/
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to billywimsatt, Stephen, Laura, noland.chambli., claytonryan, Melissa, msherrard, ohkatherine,

Perhaps we should draft up a petition of our own that calls Change.org out on their bullshit?

On Monday, December 23, 2013, Billy Wimsatt wrote:

Moderator: Happy holidays, everyone. I'm not versed on the substance of this issue. This is a heated discussion that has gone near the line of our ground rules. But from my quick reading, it's not over the line at this time because Change, as a company serving non-progressive clients, is not protected from the no-dissing rule. To clarify our policy for including people on the list-serve, we do include people who are committed to progressive values and the progressive movement as individuals (such as Noland) even if their day jobs are working for non-progressive companies or entities, as long as we trust them to keep this space confidential. We actually want to have progressive folks working everywhere, including for non-progressive corporations.

Carry on, everyone, and thank you for respecting the ground rules.

billy

On Mon, Dec 23, 2013 at 8:16 PM, Stephen Miles wrote:

The distinction between a petition literally having hate speech in it and one which merely supports someone specifically because of his hate speech seems patently absurd. This isn't anything like the example given in which the argument is that a tax policy is inherently hateful. In this case what we are saying is that hate speech is hate speech and defending the person making the speech, and specifically his 'right' to remain on tv to share his hate speech, is tantamount to endorsing his hateful speech.

Sent from my iPhone

On Dec 23, 2013, at 8:00 PM, Laura Dawn wrote:

but unlike Facebook or Twitter, which by name serve as a roadway for chatter/ sharing, etc--

[CHANGE.ORG](#) represents itself as a platform for making POSITIVE change happen in the world. And started as a progressive company, or at least sure as hell represented as one at first.

If you call yourself [CHANGE.org](#)--it does now beg the question: Exactly what kind of change are you promoting? Because if the answer is "ANY kind that keeps our platform growing and making money", then I think, to state the obvious, the answer is: The kind that lines our pockets.

Call me an idiot, but I *thought* you meant Social Change, as in Changing the World for the Better.

And I'm honestly not sure why you're included in this list serve of progressives.

On Mon, Dec 23, 2013 at 7:06 PM, Noland Chambliss wrote:
Hi everyone,

Just catching up on this thread. I spent yesterday evening packing and most of today traveling back to Kentucky to spend time with my family so I'm not able to be very connected to email right now.

I want to further clarify a few things here --

There is no campaigner strategizing with the petition starter to get this guy put back on his reality TV show. This is also not a sponsored petition.

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Billy Wimsatt

Gamechanger Labs

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Melissa Byrne

12/
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13

to Aaron, billywimsatt, Stephen, Laura, noland.chambli., claytonryan, msherrard, ohkatherine, g

Really, nationbuilder is the worse player here since they are actively providing capacity to the

right wing orgs. And unfortunately, several progressive groups still use nationbuilder out of loyalty to their founder.

What's more important than running campaigns against change or even against nationbuilder- is making sure progressive money goes into progressive tech. Why are groups that are doing anti racist, anti capitalist work using nationbuilder when action network exist?

It's annoying that change sells names to republicans but they are also a portal to engagement for lots of random people. Again, that's different than nationbuilder that calls their sales team "organizers" and is actively building infrastructure for the right wing.

I think this is less about publicly bashing change (which is why this space is good to exist) than it is about making sure going forward we keep money in the progressive community as much as possible.

It's also about encouraging ethical business development and channel progressive angel investors to fun progressive businesses.

Melissa

PS: As for hate speech, the act of defending a man like Robertson is a form of hate. If this doesn't rise to hate speech, then the policy is meaningless.

Sent from my iPhone



Dave Karpf

12/
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13

to Kate, Melissa, Michael, gamechangersal.

Not to dive *too* far down this rabbit hole, but I think our real goal is more modest:

The other side *does* have a right to their reality show. Particularly in 2013, you don't win cultural fights by banishing opponents' voices.

Our goal is to reframe that program, to turn Duck Dynasty into "that show about the bigots."

A&E will still air the show about the bigots so long as there's a market for it. And that's fine. If people want to watch television about overprivileged homophobes, then they should be able to. But I'm going to judge them for that decision, because they're displaying a taste for awful ideas.

Cancel the show when it has a large audience and you make it a cause célèbre. Reframe the show in the broader culture and you (eventually) whittle down the audience.

Best,
Dave

Sent from my iPhone



Stephen Miles

12/
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to davekarpf, Kate, Melissa, Michael, gamechangersal.

Let's not forget that it wasn't just homophobic remarks. He also said that Jim Crow wasn't that bad. No, he saw it first hand. All the black folk he knew were happy and singing while they picked cotton.

As likely one of the only people on this list who has actually spent any time in northeast louisiana, it's even more shocking than you can imagine that someone would say this. East Carroll parish, near where duck dynasty is from, is the poorest county in America fwiw.

Sent from my iPhone



Kate Oh

12/
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13

to Dave, Melissa, Michael, gamechangersal.

I am intrigued and very interested to hear ideas on how turning mass public opinion against the most popular nonfiction series in cable history can be a more feasible goal than boosting the number of signatures on Michael's signon.org petition in an attempt to influence the A&E execs' decision & to boost our side's ability to counter the other side's political attacks. I am genuinely asking, because the former does not strike me as more modest than the latter. (Corporate pressure tactics & accountability, divestment campaigns etc are also on my mind right now.) The latter seems more like a subgoal of or a step towards the former.

I do think Phil ultimately will be reinstated on the show, but will the context be that the Right flexed its muscle, crushed GLAAD & its allies when the other side didn't give much of a fight, and A&E caved? Or A&E really is going to pay some kind of a price for reinstating Phil as well? (Otherwise, it'll just be as Stephen Colbert deadpanned: A&E is going to be reeling from losing Duck Dynasty's LGBT & black audiences.)

Also, as Phil Robertson's views on LGBT & race issues haven't exactly been secret, it's not clear that it would go over so well for liberal elites (who, let's face it, will be the initial messengers) to those viewers that they're popularizing bigots by watching a favorite show.

The wisdom of reinforcing the idea that anybody has a right to a reality show also isn't clear. Even conservative commentators are conceding that being on TV comes with contractual obligations and violating them comes with consequences; to my knowledge, there has not been a time when anybody could say whatever they wanted on TV with impunity. What that message does, however, is counter their attempt to elevate the importance of their cause to the level of 1st Amendment freedoms.

Phil has a right to whatever opinions he wants; GLAAD has a right to challenge those opinions and make A&E look bad for giving Phil a mass platform for airing those views.

I stand with GLAAD.



Anat Shenker

12/
24/
13

to Stephen, davekarpf, Kate, Melissa, Michael, gamechangersal.

This may not be the right thread in which to voice this so, please let me know if that's the case.

Change aside for a moment, what do folks make of the idea -- espoused by Chris Hayes and his Nation colleague Richard Kim that having the hateful spew on air is actually useful? The clip Dave Karpf has upon on his very useful analysis of the issue. In brief, if the dudes of DD have these views better to have a forthright airing - ala "47%" and "legitimate rape" - than couch them in the veiled notions previously offered.

Granted, these were remarks by would-be office holders and so I don't pretend they're analogous. But, I do see a value in making or having our opponents speak their unvarnished truths.

Not sure how/if this applies in the DD case. Reviled by what was said -- thanks Stephen for adding in the "Jim Crow" piece, strangely lost in the initial heat.

Truly putting this out as a question -- if reality trash is here to stay (and it is), is it better to actually have people saying what they really think in the hopes it'll help us expose/educate/convince, etc?



Laura Dawn

12/
24/
13

to Kate, Dave, Melissa, Michael, gamechangersal.

it's good for us all to remember how popular Palin was--and how quickly her downfall. Paris Hilton--same kind of thing. The Duck Dynasty clan are actually conservative yuppies who were restyled as white hillbillies to appeal to an audience of genuine enthusiasts and those who like to laugh at what they think is a real life version of the old Beverly Hillbillies show. They are already a one note joke, and this show of bigotry will eventually hurt them, even if that's not apparent now. An audience may embrace buffoons for a time, but they tire of them eventually (Kate and what's his name plus 8, anyone?) and I'd bet money the general public tires of the Ducky Dynasty fake hillbillies fairly soon.

In terms of the free speech issue, it's very worth pushing back --conservatives continually muddy this issue when they are punished for saying bigotry on the air. They forget that they have a RIGHT to say it, but not any RIGHT to make money from it--and if what they say as public figures angers the audience or the corporation that pays them, they may be fired, or lose income, and that has nothing to do with their right to free speech. Once you frame this argument correctly, very few have a problem with the show ending or being cancelled or the "Patriarch" being suspended. (Even my conservative father in law couldn't argue against that once we'd sussed out that his right to free speech wasn't actually impeded).

To me, the bigger issue here in the long term is actually Change.org. I expect corporations to make bad, offensive, lowest common denominator media in an effort to appeal to the masses

and make money. I also am not surprised that a rich white southern family harbors racism and bigotry.

But Change.org promoting that bigotry? That's more than disappointing--it's dangerous. I really hope we are all chewing on what their involvement in this means to the progressive movement in a long term sense.



Jess Morales

12/
24/
13

to lauradawnmurph., Kate, Dave, Melissa, Michael, gamechangersal.

One thing I want to raise here, which isn't [Change.org](https://www.change.org/) specifically, is Duck Dynasty as a cultural entity (which is relevant in so far as the right/left divide referenced in other posts).

DD is THE most popular show on television, network or cable and I believe has been for several seasons. In the show, they glorify a sort of uber country, hyper outdoorsy, intensely religious lifestyle. At the end of every single show, the family prays together. It is the centerpiece of every episode. The family has never pretended they see this as anything but a conversion/ministry tactic. And these people are absolutely the 1% masquerading as the 99%. They couldn't be less the sort of "back to the earth, poor backwoods" schtick they have going.

Whether or not we embrace this, we've already lost on some front because these people and their faux lifestyle are being glorified on TV and are intensely popular. Figuring out, learning from, and fighting back against these folks is critical. I was happy to see Michael and his folks fight back against this because we must figure out a way to be resonant to the folks who watch this show. But we're barely even attempting to engage with these folks, which is a shame because clearly they can be organized, are ready to take action on things they care about, and are a force to be reckoned with.



Dan Petegorsky

12/
24/
13

to activistjess, lauradawnmurph., Kate, Dave, Melissa, Michael, gamechangersal.

Jess - by what measure is it "the most popular show on television"? Maybe the top "reality" show, but it doesn't show on the weekly top 25 I'm looking at - not even cable. Football is still #1. Maybe for certain weekdays other than Monday (where Monday Night Football still rules)? Can you point to the actual comparative ratings? Thx

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Dave Karpf, PhD

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George Washington University
School of Media and Public Affairs

www.davidkarpf.com

Author of *[The MoveOn Effect: The Unexpected Transformation of American Political Advocacy](#)* (Oxford University Press)

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Jess Morales

12/
24/
13

to Dan, lauradawnmurph., Kate, Dave, Melissa, Michael, gamechangersal.

It's definitely the most popular show on cable: <http://m.today.com/entertainment/duck-nation-has-spoken-duck-dynasty-poised-be-biggest-cable-6C10963174>

It regularly squares off with "Walking Dead" for the top spot (WD may have overtaken it since its out of season). And I believe, overall, it is the most popular show on cable ever, reality or otherwise. Certain episodes of the show have pulled in comparable to primetime numbers. If I'm mistaken that it is the most popular show, it's reach extends far beyond the tv. The DD franchise includes merchandise at big box stores (tshirts, costumes, etc), their own original duck call business (which also includes DVDs and cookbooks and such), the daughter of one of them has a prom dress line, the whole family speaks at churches, etc. Folks dressed up in the family's signature Americana and long beards for Halloween. These people are firmly in pop culture.

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Dan Petegorsky

12/
24/
13

to Jess, lauradawnmurph., Kate, Dave, Melissa, Michael, gamechangersal.

Definitely high, but highest "non scripted" nonfiction cable series. So still below football. Sunday football tops broadcast, Monday tops cable.



Melissa Byrne

12/
24/
13

to Dan, Jess, lauradawnmurph., Kate, Dave, Michael, gamechangersal.

True but Jess brings up a critical point.

Why are we leaving all these folks on the table to be organized by awful bigoted people?

Is anyone organizing the lower to moderate income white Christian population?

Why are aren't we getting warm and fuzzy reality shows that bring up and affirm progressive values?



Melissa Byrne

12/
27/
13

to Laura, Kate, Dave, Michael, gamechangersal.

Looks like both Nationbuilder and Change got a huge win for bigotry.

Amazing to see how swiftly the right wing used technology tested and perfected from progressive campaigns to turn back the clock on progress. And now they have nearly 500K emails across different platforms to continue fighting progress one petition at a time.

@Mediaite: BREAKING: A&E Reverses Decision to 'Suspend' Phil Robertson <http://t.co/IBYif3z1oi> via @Mediaite

Sent from my iPhone



Dan Petegorsky

12/
27/
13

to melissachristi., Laura, Kate, Dave, Michael, gamechangersal.

Ugh. Headline should've been "Bigotry: Back by Popular Demand"

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Brad Johnson

12/
28/
13

to Dan, Melissa, Laura, Kate, Dave, Michael, gamechangersal.

Here's coverage of the Change.org petition:

<http://www.nbc-2.com/story/24299001/naples-woman-petitions-to-reinstate-duck-dynasty-star>

Robertson, the popular "Duck Dynasty" star, made headlines last week after equating homosexuality to bestiality during a magazine interview.

Lightner says she supports those comments.

"He was just quoting the bible, so it wasn't really hateful for him to say," she said.

<http://www.winknews.com/Local-Florida/2013-12-23/Collier-County-woman-behind-AE-petition>

"Believe it or not there's actually homosexuals that have signed the petition!"



Laura Dawn

12/
29/
13

to Melissa, Dan, Jess, Kate, Dave, Michael, gamechangersal.

because they're not being "organized"
they're being entertained

we infiltrate culture via entertainment
not by organizing.

the organizing comes after you've already moved the cultural dial.

Will & Grace (and every groundbreaking gay character on TV all the way back to "Soap" in the 70s) came BEFORE the campaign for marriage equality.



Kate Oh

12/
31/
13

to gamechangersal.

More on the sexism angle that's been overshadowed, not just the backwater racism: Phil Robertson advises men to marry girls when they're at the docile age of 15 or 16. If she's 20, it's too late because she'll just be after your money!

http://www.mercurynews.com/celebrities/ci_24818693/duck-dynasty-star-says-men-should-marry-teenage

"You got to marry these girls when they are about 15 or 16. They'll pick your ducks," Robertson says in the 2009 video. Relax, "pick your ducks" is not a "euphemism." It literally means cleaning your game. He adds, **"Look, you wait till they get to be 20 years old -- the only picking that's gonna take place is your pocket."**

So when Duck Dynasty fans watch the show, they apparently feel they're getting down-home family entertainment & humor based on a positive reflection of the South. This is a family that gathers around the dinner table each episode to hold hands and give thanks. The show's fans might be sensing caricatured personalities (it is a reality show, after all), but not characters set up to be mocked (e.g., as w/ Honey Boo Boo) or explosive hate speech.

But this stuff about marrying high school girls could rub a broader swath of women the wrong way. I'm not sure it'd get Phil fired when the other comments couldn't, but it does erode more good will toward the family.

Also, since Phil's back, I wonder if it'd be a good idea to push A&E to stage confrontations between the family and African-Americans, LGBT people, independent young women leaders, etc. If the Robertsons behave, it could reinforce norms about how people should treat each other in the 21st century. If they don't, their ugly behavior is enshrined in video, exposing them to ridicule, condemnation, etc. (Either way, A&E could get higher ratings.)

The risk especially with the latter though is that beyond a certain point, keeping the Robertsons on air in the current context - a well-liked reality show of a well-liked family - would just give them a bigger platform to broadcast and popularize their views. I think that's a concern with the theory set forth earlier in the thread. What progressives consider hateful speech might not be what the public at large considers hateful speech.

From: Laura Dawn

Sent: Saturday, December 28, 2013 9:28 PM

To: Melissa Byrne

Cc: Dan Petegorsky; Jess Morales; Kate Oh; Dave Karpf; Michael Sherrard;

Subject: Re: Re[4]: [GameChangerSalon] Getting back to you re: our business model

because they're not being "organized"

they're being entertained

we infiltrate culture via entertainment

not by organizing.

the organizing comes after you've already moved the cultural dial.

Will & Grace (and every groundbreaking gay character on TV all the way back to "Soap" in the 70s) came BEFORE the campaign for marriage equality.

Laura Dawn, Chief Creative Director
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