

Abigail Readlinger

July 21th, 2021

“You’re on Mute”

How Mob Rule Embraces a Zoom Expression and Why it Matters

If there’s one lesson Zoom has taught us over this past year, it’s the importance of the mute button. When a speaker’s voice is silenced, comprehension, conversation, and the overarching goal of learning are near impossible. Human beings were created to pursue truth, but in order to do so, they must have the opportunities to learn. They *must* hear the voices of others. And yet, the dominating mob of our society embraces their own “mute button,” using its power to muzzle reasoned discourse and unharness passionate ideologies. It is only by understanding mob rule and its detrimental consequences, that we may become guardians of free dialogue and educated advocates of the truth.

Mob rule, at its core, is the elimination of civil discourse. Jeffery Rosen, author for *The Atlantic*¹ describes the origin of mob rule as a version of Madison’s factions:² through passionate “emotional appeals,” “public opinion forms and spreads quickly.” Opinions that are forged without reason are incapable of supporting themselves *with* reason. So it follows that mobs--groups holding these passionate opinions--are incompetent of reasonable discussion with their opponents. By the very nature of its creation, mob rule may only survive by passion. Its policies exchange reason for emotion, and through this, they eliminate civil discourse for a much more tyrannical “mute button.”

¹ See Jeffery Rosen’s [America is Living James Madison’s Worst Nightmare](#)

² See James Madison’s [Federalist 10, 51](#)

By eradicating civil discourse, mob rule suppresses our pursuit of truth, undermining fundamental American and Christian ideals. Edmund Burke³ explained the correlation between reasoned discussion and truth-seeking by saying that “from the reciprocal struggle of discordant powers” arises “the harmony of the universe.” The free competition of thoughts and ideas has been, and should always remain, a great American value, for it allows us to pursue the truths we as Christians are called to find. However, by silencing the “competition” and promoting a single agenda, mob rule prevents anyone and everyone from discovering the “harmon[ious]” truths “of the universe.”

A revival of reason and civil discourse will result in a well educated citizenry, capable of guarding itself against the mob. Abraham Lincoln once urged Americans to *ensure* that reason was “moulded” into every aspect of their lives, the most important being “general intelligence, sound morality, and reverence for the Constitution and it’s laws.”⁴ Almost two centuries later, Lincoln’s words still ring true. Re-incorporating reason into our society is the first step in preventing mob rule. For, the love of reason can only lead to a love of civil discourse, which, in turn, will bloom into a love of truth. And truth itself will defeat the mob.

Today, America is immersed in a mob mentality. One that seeks to disrupt our freedom by “muting” the voices of it’s adversaries. To combat the passions of the mob, we must be “moulded” in reason. To secure the freedom for our posterity, we must educate in the importance of civil discourse. To seek truth, we must learn to have open ears. After a year of Zoom, we all understand the damaging consequences of the mute button. Let’s make sure that button never finds its way into the real world.

³ See Edmund Burke’s [*Reflections on the Revolution in France*](#)

⁴ See Abraham Lincoln’s [*Lyceum Address*](#)