

Banks can arbitrarily unperson you : The story of Patreon censorship reveals Banks and Credit Card companies exerting direct control over social media platforms

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Source: [the post millennial](#)

In a [video](#) released on January 1st, 2019, Dr. Jordan Peterson and Dave Rubin announced that they would both be walking away from Patreon, following the lead of Sam Harris and other high profile creators who have lost faith in the crowdfunding platform.

As we [first reported](#) on December 12th, Patreon began to lose the trust of its users when it deplatformed popular YouTuber Carl Benjamin (Sargon of Akkad) in a completely arbitrary decision that had nothing to do with its own terms of service.

Censorship based on political bias

Many in the Patreon community viewed this as an act of censorship based entirely on political bias. The deplatforming had a cascading effect, with creators and users walking away from the platform. Many smaller creators had their income wiped out entirely. The entire debacle made for a bleak Christmas for the anti-censorship corner of the internet.

The future for this community is still uncertain. Peterson and Rubin have pledged to launch a Patreon alternative as soon as they possibly can. Meanwhile, SubscribeStar, the Patreon alternative that many heterodox creators had migrated to, was [quickly cut off](#) by its payment processors (Stripe and PayPal) once it started to grow and become significant competition to Patreon.

Here are the reasons why the problem is so complex.

PayPal and Stripe can apparently just shut off payments to people, organizations, and businesses that they don't like. That's scary enough. But consider this: PayPal and Stripe represent just one layer of the problem. They are both payment processors. There is a layer underneath that: the banking system.

Banks can arbitrarily unperson you

Most people don't realize that banks can and have acted in similar ways to Patreon. In 2014, JP Morgan Chase arbitrarily [shut down the bank accounts of hundreds of porn stars](#). Why?

Because they were porn stars. That's it.

Then there was this thing called [Operation Choke Point](#). It was a 2014 effort of the US Justice Department to target "unsavoury" businesses by cutting off their access to banks and credit cards without due process. It was completely politically motivated and the scope of the witch hunt is just being revealed now.

According to the *Washington Examiner*, "some of these businesses included gun stores, ammunition shops, fireworks stores, small dollar lenders, and home-based charities." Many businesses and lives were ruined. Payday lenders are [currently suing](#) federal banking regulators to recoup their losses.

Operation Choke Point serves as a frightening example of what can happen when regulatory agencies have too much power.

Julian Assange was famously cut off from the banking system in 2010 as payback for his whistleblowing activities. [Bank of America](#) stated at the time "Bank of America joins in the actions previously announced by MasterCard, PayPal, Visa Europe and others and will not process transactions of any type that we have reason to believe are intended for WikiLeaks."

Conservative author Robert Spencer was [booted from Patreon](#) last year at the behest of Mastercard. Independent journalist Nick Monroe recently [went down the rabbit hole](#) of evidence that Mastercard is engaging in censorship.

All that really seems to matter is power and control. If they don't like what you are doing, they will find a way to get you.

Controlling the flow of money and ideas

In December, the [New York Times](#) ran an investigative piece about the link between credit card companies and mass shootings. It seemed like an explosive expose. Until you stopped to think about it for a moment. The story was basically this: “People used credit cards to purchase things.”

So to most rational, critical thinkers, this was a non-story. But the implications of trying to run a non-story like this are huge. There seems to be a collective will to control who has access to the banking system.

And then there’s the activists. The Southern Poverty Law Center has spearheaded a campaign called “[Change the Terms.](#)” Under the guise of combating hate speech and extremism, the SPLC and its partner organizations are actively signing up tech companies to abide by new terms of service.

Of course, the problem is that SPLC is not a trusted source. They recently had to pay out \$3.4 million to [Maajid Nawaz](#) for defaming him as an extremist. In fact, the SPLC has smeared many reasonable centrist thinkers in similar ways. It’s chilling to think that tech companies are relying on such malicious actors as the SPLC for advice about what constitutes “hate speech.”

Many people are urging that the solution to the Patreon problem can be found in cryptocurrency. Others are advising sticking it out and launching legal challenges against the major players in payment processing.

Whatever happens, this much is clear: It turns out that in 2019, the most dangerous regulatory agencies are the big tech and media companies themselves.

Their primary target? Ideas.

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