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Why I wouldn't sign the petition to cancel Kanye

Cancel culture never stops at “legitimate” targets and often overlooks inconvenient ones.

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The Change.org petition calling on Adidas to cancel its partnership with Kanye West (aka “Ye”) flooded my inbox and social media feeds a few days ago. Many of my Jewish friends, outraged by Ye’s recent anti-Semitic comments, were rightly upset and wanted to do something.

But they shouldn't have done this.

Summoning corporate America to punish those with disfavored views is a dangerous idea, especially for Jews. It leads to bans on ice cream sales on the “bad” side of Israel’s “Green Line” and the cancellation of Zionist and conservative speakers who say the “wrong” things. Jews should trust CEOs and international corporations to adjudicate socially acceptable discourse and mete out consequences only slightly more than they trust the media, humanities departments and the United Nations to do the same.

Over-investing in Jewish celebrities and their “allies” who have selective anti-Semitism antennae and have made this cancellation campaign their passion project is also ill-advised. Welcoming their support is one thing. Harnessing their power to influence companies to penalize those we find reprehensible is another. Once we give them that power, we can't control how they use it or to what ideological ends.

Ultimately, we have to accept that Ye has a right to say absurd things about the Jews. And we have the right to point out how absurd he is in doing so. He isn't even creative enough to come up with an original scapegoat for his frustrations. Ilhan Omar, Bella Hadid, Louis Farrakhan and a long list of others have walked the same tired Jew-bashing path before him. If his creative juices are that diminished, perhaps his Adidas line wasn't worth buying anyway.

That is how free speech and free markets are supposed to work. The people refuse to buy the bigot's narrative and his \$300 shoes, thus diminishing the power of his toxic message. Companies respond to people's spending habits, not their personal sentiments. The job of those "fighting anti-Semitism" is to persuade people with a flood of rational speech that counters the irrational rant of a guy with a gripe.

Ye has surely been silenced and attacked for his past political views by media executives, some of whom were Jews. But that kind of corrupt manipulation is motivated by profit, fear, ideological fervor and partisan commitment, not Judaism.

The hope is that if enough people reinforce the idea that stereotyping Jews is a technique utilized by the aggrieved, the majority will reject it. It may not be as gratifying as getting a contract canceled, but legitimizing the corporate cancellation tactic simply because we feel we have a legitimate target is short-sighted at best. It never stops at "legitimate" targets and it often overlooks inconvenient ones. That is never good for the Jews.