https://mobile.nytimes.com/blogs/opinionator/2014/02/16/in-praise-of-disregard/

(edited for space)

**In Praise of Disregard**

By CHRISTY WAMPOLE (Feb 16, 2014)

Perhaps this experience sounds familiar to you: Sometimes, particularly during elections or other politically feverish moments, I spend many hours reading about the issues; but I have a tendency to dwell on stories I find truly distressing, such as tales of leaked videos showing the blunt discrepancy between a politician’s on- and off-screen selves. I am drawn to the most hopeless headlines, the reports that make humans seem like wolves, the kind that make it impossible to stifle my expletives. I feel it physiologically: My adrenaline surges, my breaths get quick and short, and I pace and fume around the apartment trying to get rid of this nervous energy.

It doesn’t matter what your political position is; reading or watching things that aggressively dispute all that you believe can produce this effect. Often, my whole afternoon is wrecked by reading one article or watching one debate. And that lost afternoon is irretrievable. Those hours I could have spent pursuing my research, or engaging creatively in something, or writing an article like this one, which demonstrates some faith in humanity, are lost because of a morbid attraction to provocative rhetoric and lost causes.

“Don’t protest against what you disapprove. Do without it.” The Italian philosopher and mystic Lanza del Vasto gave this compelling advice in his 1945 book “Principles and Precepts of the Return to the Obvious.” His counsel, offered at the dusk of the Second World War in response to its barbarity, could be of service to us now, in our politically contentious culture where the realities of the information age bring us into contact each day with opinions that displease us.

In the past, it was easier to avoid what you didn’t need to hear. Today, it requires a concerted effort to do so, and it still isn’t possible to sidestep troubling views altogether. In addition, most public speech can now be commented on, and often is, thanks to the web. Recent years have confirmed that when things can be commented on, especially anonymously, people often become the worst versions of themselves.

But it is possible to subdue those ideas that do violence to us. Ideas are given credence only when they are entertained. By disregarding them, we can erode much of their influence. I [am not] advocating willful ignorance; putting on blinders to avoid what annoys us is not a solution, just an evasion tactic. I argue, rather, for a careful selection of what is injurious to you and an excision of it from your life and thought.

What I propose involves three steps: (1) a taking into account all positions, a kind of survey of possible ways to look at things, even those ways we find irritating; (2) identifying those ideas that degrade us and sap our energies; and (3) denying these ideas an existence in our personal spheres.

It is important to be sure that the ideas you want to eliminate from existence aren’t those that would have spurred you to action in your actual life. For example, if getting angry about the retrogression of women’s rights or about the increasing margin between rich and poor could impel you to get involved in your community to change these things, then, by all means, let the negative feelings fuel you. But many of the ideas we encounter, especially when rehashed in ever more amplified ways, serve only to distract us from the real issues. In a gesture of good faith and honesty with yourself, identify what you know you will never actually do anything about and eliminate it from your field of thought.

Imagine, for example, that you receive an angry email from someone and there is nothing you can do about the person’s grievances. You read it. You accept your inability to change the situation. Then you delete it. Instead of leaving it in your inbox to pull your thoughts toward an irrevocable past, the symbolic act of throwing it away frees your mental energies for more worthwhile pursuits.

The spirit of disregard I describe resembles the early Greek notions of apatheia and ataraxia, as well as the Serenity Prayer, invoked by groups such as Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous: “God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and wisdom to know the difference.”

So redirect time and efforts wasted on adversaries toward friends. Accrue your energies for better things. Dismiss what damages you.

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**Opinion: The importance of staying informed**

by JARED SMITH (Feb 6, 2017)

“The news is too depressing and too sad to read,” is a phrase that seems to be thrown around often these days. Yet without the news we would be lost.

In fact, when the news is most depressing is when it’s most important to read and watch. We need to pay attention to the bad news. This way we know about what’s going on in the world and how we can make it better. As college students, keeping up with current events is very important. We need to know what’s going on in the world, and with that knowledge we can make decisions towards our future.

Without the news we would also have no record of history. People make mistakes, but we learn from them; history logs these mistakes, and without them how can we improve as a society?

It’s also important to read and watch different sources of news, or do some of your own investigating into different news sources. It’s important to know the difference between “fake news” and actual credible sources. The more you are able to know the difference, the less chance you’ll spread misinformation.

Some of the greatest changes that have been made for the betterment of people have been made because of the power of the media and the news. A great example of change brought about by the media, is what happened after Upton Sinclair’s “The Jungle” was published in 1906. “The Jungle” is a book about how meat was processed in the early 1900s. It not only exposed how gross, and unsafe America’s meatpacking industry was, it was also responsible for the creation of the U.S Food and Drug Administration, and changes that were made to the way America produces food.

Another example is Edward Snowden, an ex CIA employee who leaked documents that revealed how much information the U.S government was collecting on its citizens. Without the media, those documents would’ve never seen the light of day.

This is an example of media doing its job as a government watchdog. Whether you think Snowden is a hero or a traitor, his leaks led to massive reforms in government via the USA Freedom Act. This act is an amendment to the Patriot Act, which stopped the collection and surveillance of civilian phone data. Now instead of the government collecting all of the data, the phone companies keep it, and the National Security Agency accesses it with permission through federal court.

Without the media, our country would be in a very different state. You don’t have to watch or read the news hourly, just try to keep up with world events instead of turning a blind eye. Without the news, who will keep watch on society and make sure everyone is doing their part?