

Beer, Bad Tweets & Integrity

Is Integrity Possible in the Age of Tech & Cancel Culture?

On September 14, 24-year-old Carson King from Iowa appeared on ESPN's College GameDay holding up a sign asking for beer money. King's posterboard and Sharpie request went viral, and donations started pouring in through his Venmo. When he reached a whopping \$11,000, he decided to keep enough to buy one case of beer and give the rest to a local children's hospital. Venmo and Anheuser-Busch publicly pledged matching donations. When the dust settled, King and his joke sign were responsible for \$3 million going to charity.

Then the tides turned when a trending news reporter for the Des Moines Register wrote a profile on King. The reporter's research turned up racially insensitive jokes King had tweeted when he was 16 years old. King publicly apologized for the tweets, and Anheuser-Busch reacted by ending its partnership with him.

The tides turned *again* when the public rallied against the Des Moines Register for their role in King's fall from grace, and specifically the reporter responsible for the piece, 27-year-old Aaron Calvin. When readers dug up Calvin's *own* old, offensive tweets and took screenshots, the Register fired him. Now, Calvin is telling his side of the story, one in which he was scapegoated for a company's bottom line.

It's a layered story with plenty of twists and turns, and nobody comes out on top. And there are plenty just like it in today's world. Technology is a bright spotlight. It shines on us as we live our best lives—and exposes every dumb thing we've ever done. Call-out culture holds people accountable for their mistakes, and cancel culture punishes offenders by shunning them.

Write a 2–4 page essay about this topic, answering this question: In today's world of technology and call-out/cancel culture, is it easier to be an individual/society with integrity? Or harder? Why?

Make your case using Carson King and Aaron Calvin as examples. Some guided questions to help you in your reflection: In this situation, where was the breakdown in integrity, and who was responsible? Was it King for his high school tweets, or Calvin for digging up dirt and publishing it? Was it Busch for cutting ties with King, or the Register for firing Calvin?