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The Debates Are Too Big

By CARTER BRIGLIA
STAFF WRITER

If you've been following the Democratic presidential debates, you have seen many different faces on the stage. In the first debate in June, twenty candidates made their cases to voters. This made sense, since it was so early in the primary process and they needed the opportunity to get their messages out to

candidates' right to continue their campaigns and hold on to a last glimmer of hope, the Democratic National Committee should absolutely put an end to these crowded debate stages. Twelve candidates took part in the October debates, all on one stage, and it was an absolute mess. Klobuchar,

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the public. But now, months later and with voters heading to the primary or caucus polls in less than 100 days in some states, there are still far too many candidates qualifying for the debates. At a crucial stage in the campaign, when voters should be given the chance to distinguish between the front-runners and the other presidential hopefuls, we still see candidates with no path to victory taking up valuable speaking time.

Currently, there are three main groups of Democratic candidates. First, there are the main front-runners, I would say those polling above fifteen percent: former Vice President Joe Biden, Senator Elizabeth Warren, and Senator Bernie Sanders. Then, three candidates who may have a path to victory, but only a slim one. In this category are Senator Kamala Harris, Mayor Pete Buttigieg, and Andrew Yang. The third group, who may as well drop out now and save their reputations and money, includes candidates such as Congresswoman Tulsi Gabbard, Senator Amy Klobuchar, Tom Steyer, former Housing and Urban Development Secretary Julian Castro, Senator Cory Booker, and Senator Michael Bennet.

While I respect the struggling

polling at 1 to 2 percent in most polls, was third in speaking time, speaking for a total of thirteen minutes and eighteen seconds. She was given more time than Sanders, Buttigieg, or Harris. Similarly, Beto O'Rourke spoke for thirteen minutes and nine seconds, coming in fourth in speaking time, time which should have been allowed to front-runners who are not on the edge of dropping out (as O'Rourke now has). These candidates cannot crack the top five in a single state's polling, but the debate moderators ask them questions as if they were front-runners. They have been campaigning for almost a year now, and their messages still have not swayed voters in their favor. Yet for some reason, the DNC allows these candidates to claim speaking time, which clogs up the debates and prevents the meaningful discussion that the vast majority of voters care about. While I appreciate the fact that the DNC has raised the threshold requirements for the December debate, the November debate will still include Klobuchar and billionaire Steyer, who is only able to make the stage because he spent \$47 million of his own money

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The Internet and Cultural Rot

By CASIMIR ZABLOTSKI
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During the early hours of July 14 of this year, 17-year-old Bianca Devins was killed in Utica after attending a concert. The man accused of killing her is 21-year-old Brandon Clark, who allegedly slit her throat and uploaded photos of her bloodied corpse to social media sites. (He has pleaded not guilty to the second-degree murder charge.) While the relationship between Bianca and Brandon was initially unclear, the two had met each other on the internet before entering into a relationship. Bianca's family described Brandon as having been a "close family friend," but alleged screenshots of conversations between the two revealed a disturbing tension.

Judging from her social media presence, Bianca seems to have been what is colloquially known as an "e-girl": a woman who extensively documents her daily life online for attention, and consequently has a dedicated online following of men. These followers are often "incels," men who see themselves as involuntarily celibate and thus orbit around these online personalities out of desperation. Power dynamics between the two groups are multifaceted. Often, e-girls take pleasure in manipulating hordes of men, while incels may become frustrated by their relative unimportance and lash back at women. These men often frame their anger as a righteous rejection of the bad hand they think they've been dealt by society. The manipulation was evident when Bianca seemingly boasted about her sexual promiscuity to Brandon, and the frustration was present in the social media posts that Brandon allegedly made before and after her death, asking first if he would be redeemed and then apologizing to Bianca's corpse. After allegedly killing Bianca, Brandon tried to stab his own throat, taking a photo of himself

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in early states to meet the requirements.

The debates could easily offer great insight into the differences between candidates. For example, a long discussion of the different health care plans offered by the Biden, Warren, and Sanders campaigns would be very valuable. Given that health care is the “top issue” for 36 percent of American voters, you would think the DNC would consider it necessary to allow these candidates to go into detail about their health care proposals, rather than forcing them to make quick statements in 60 seconds or less. With the one opportunity, the debates, that the Democrats have to showcase their front-runners together, it would make sense to get them to prove that their proposals

are the best for the future of America. Instead, we are forced to sift through sets of thirteen minutes in which desperate, long-shot candidates say whatever must be said in order to pick up traction.

If these struggling candidates offered new ideas and proposals that could spark a conversation and move the direction of the party, I believe I would be more receptive to their continued participation in the debates. But aside from O’Rourke’s mandatory gun buyback proposal, I’ve yet to notice anything that is unique from the 0-to-2 percent candidates. They simply regurgitate the same talking points that we’ve heard for months, and go for “kill shot” segments in a desperate attempt to draw attention and raise their numbers in the polls. This does nothing productive for the party in terms of

finding the right candidate to challenge President Trump, and simply takes time from what could be valuable discussions.

The DNC needs to wake up and allow America to see a true discussion between the front-runners in this field. Rather than forcing us to watch a dozen candidates trying to make their cases, it should offer Americans what they deserve: a real debate of ideas between the ones who actually have a shot at facing Trump. With some of the states voting so soon, it is increasingly crucial to allow the main candidates to differentiate their campaigns from the others. If we reduce the number of voices on stage and give the front-runners a fair amount of time to explain their stances and proposals, it will give voters a much clearer picture as they decide who should be the Democratic nominee in 2020.

THE INTERNET AND CULTURAL . . . *cont.*

covered in blood for the world to see. He survived his possible suicide attempt and was detained by local authorities.

Publications have attempted to frame the slaying as born out of male frustration. There is surely a kernel of truth to this, but it is an insufficient explanation for why a man would murder a woman he claims to have loved. Contrary to the beliefs expressed on genuinely misogynistic forums on the internet, no one, including Bianca, deserves to be slain for supposedly treading down an inane and dangerous path with her digital footprint. So while taking the half-truth of Brandon’s frustration as a cause of the killing into account, it would be beneficial to recognize the root of internet-inspired violence.

I increasingly find myself pondering the philosophy of the internet, and especially how it alters human relationships. I am not a neo-Luddite – I recognize all the good that the internet has brought to society. The level of connectedness an average American possesses is historically unprecedented, and the amount of information available to a student like me grows every single day. Going down a rabbit

hole on Wikipedia is one of my favorite pastimes, for one can learn so much by chance and with relative ease. It is a great time to be an ambitious youth, for the world is changing before our very eyes.

Yet the internet has also caused a sinister darkness to take hold in our daily lives: cultural rot. The internet has, perhaps due to its ease of access and seeming anonymity, enabled many to act on their crudest desires as if there are no real-world consequences. Belle

Interpersonal relationships should be recognized as more than just a streak on Snapchat.

Delphine, the quintessential e-girl, has sold water in which she bathed for outrageous profit. Pornography, with its degradation of women, has proliferated to the point where its social consequences are blatant. Most shockingly, photos and videos of genuine killings and deaths have become so common that many of us are only momentarily taken aback by such violent images. We have become desensitized – numbed by a hedonistic outlook and slaves to ephemeral desires. Too many people accept the Bianca/Brandon dynamic as normal while only condemning its boiling over. We

have forgotten how to question the internet because we have allowed it to take such a great hold over our lives.

It is difficult, but not impossible, to reject the internet and live an “analog” or non-digital life. Increasingly, however, that way of life is construed as being for antiquarian professors and out-of-touch lawyers. What, then, can we do as a society to counter the looming force of the internet’s cultural rot? The answer is simple: we must inculcate a sense of virtue within the digital paradigm. While any definition of virtue might suffice in pushing back against societal degradation, the Aristotelian notion of moderation as the ideal is most serviceable here. While a curriculum may not yet be well defined, proper digital citizenship should be thoroughly taught to the next generation of internet users, so that the internet is a tool and not a danger. Without constraining free will, heavy, unhealthy social media should be disincentivized. In particular, we should aim to curb real-life validation which is dependent on social media. Interpersonal relationships should be recognized as more than just a streak on Snapchat. Most importantly, however, everyone who uses the internet must recognize its destructive potential, so that Bianca’s death may be a lesson to us all.

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CONTINUE THE CONVERSATION

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#TheBigDebates

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#InternetCulturalRot