

ELMO AND THE URGE TO PURGE [UPDATE-3]

[NB: check the byline, thanks. Updates at the bottom of post. /~Rayne]

Elmo has had a bug up his ass for at least a couple days.

It seems Twitter added a warning note to all tweets which included the word "mastodon"; it made for some laughs from the archaeo-bioscience sector when it resulted in a warning attached to a tweet about ancient mastodon DNA.

It's not the first time Twitter has been hinky about "mastodon"; Twitter users had difficulty last month during a wave of users leaving Twitter for the open social media platform Mastodon.

Then Elmo lashed out yesterday punitively removing @elonjet from Twitter, the account which tracked his personal jet.

Never mind the flight data is public record and @elonjet merely reposted that data.

Elmo also removed all accounts associated with Jack Sweeney, the teen who launched @elonjet. There was no advance notice.

There was some back and forth with reinstatement but some whining on Elmo's part blaming Sweeney and @elonjet for some possible road rage event. No proof was offered showing a link between anything tweeted by Sweeney or his accounts and whatever transpired on the road.

Elmo did manage to dox the person he claimed threatened him in a car, violating his own Terms of Service.

But that was yesterday.

This evening Elmo purged a bunch of journalists. At least one was banned permanently with the rest receiving a suspension of their accounts.

Aaron Rugar, Substack (@atrupar) –
permanent suspension

Donie O’Sullivan, CNN (@donie) – suspended

Micah Lee, The Intercept (@micahflee) –
suspended **[on the list]**

Drew Harwell, WaPo (@drewharwell) –
suspended **[on the list]**

Ryan Mac, NYTimes (@rmacl8@twitter.com) –
suspended **[on the list]**

Matt Binder, Mashable (@mattbinder) –
suspended **[on the list]**

Tony Webster, independent
(@webster@twitter.com) – suspended

Keith Olbermann, retired (@KeithOlbermann)
– suspended

Here’s what’s particularly interesting about half of these eight known accounts: they were on a list circulated via Telegram on/around November 25 labeled “Antifa accounts and antifa follower accounts.” The intent appeared to have been brigading and purging 5000 accounts on that list from Twitter; the same list was purportedly supplied by an entity called “Right Side News” and shared with Elmo.

The list is out there somewhere; it had been shared at Pastebin. It’s not going to be shared here because the site doesn’t need the hassle.

No matter the reason Elmo’s panties were in a bunch, there’s no such formal organization called antifa. As noted several times here at this site, antifa is an ideology – anti-fascism – and yes, journalists who benefit from the First Amendment and its free speech press protections might well identify with antifascist ideology.

But every journalist has a different take on what constitutes fascism which makes it gross overreach to claim any and all journalists are members of an imaginary group called antifa let alone claim their ideological bent is

antifascist. You can certainly think of a few folks who claim to be journalists whose work appears very fascist or in the service of fascists.

One might also assume that a business targeting those earmarked as antifa or sharing antifascist ideology is itself fascist.

Ken White (@Popehat) shared on Mastodon:

Remember: Twitter is Elon's company, he has the free speech and free association right to run it pretty much however he wants and to ban people for petty narcissistic reasons.

And we have the right to laugh and point at his ridiculousness and at the free-speech pretenses of his gullible fans.

Yup. I have the right to call Elmo a hypocritical spoiled asshat.

And the third largest shareholder at Tesla has the right to say some blunt things about Elmo's performance:

Investors and executives at Tesla have raised concerns regarding Musk's shifted focus to Twitter. On Wednesday, Tesla's third-largest shareholder, investor Leo KoGuan, tweeted that Musk had "abandoned Tesla" and that the company "has no working CEO." Other prominent investors have echoed the concerns. Future Fund Managing Partner Gary Black tweeted that the market was indicating that "the \$TSLA brand has been negatively impacted by the Twitter drama. Where before EV buyers were proud to drive their Teslas to their friends or show off Teslas in their driveways, now the Twitter controversy is hurting Tesla's brand equity."

That excerpt was from RollingStone magazine; it included this tweet by Matt Binder:



Huh. I wonder if this tweet in particular is what caused Matt's suspension?

The RollingStone article was written by Nikki McCann Ramirez. I wonder if she had a Twitter account and if it was suspended or not, and if so was she also on the so-called "antifa list"?

Place your bets now on which journalist(s) will feel the emerald mine heir's bitchy boot.

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UPDATE-1 – 10:10 P.M. ET –

Well that didn't take very long. Steve Herman of the Voice of America was given the boot after he tweeted about the @elonjet account. Herman is a straight news guy, can't imagine a journalist less likely to provoke anyone.

At least this heave-ho revealed Elmo's Achilles heel.

Oh, and if you're at Mastodon, follow Steve Herman at

<https://mstdn.social/@w7voa@journa.host>

UPDATE-2 – 11:30 P.M. ET –

HELLO JOURNALISTS EXITING TWITTER – *please* do NOT attempt to join the largest Mastodon servers/instances if you are looking to create an account for the first time.

The sites are extremely busy now and performance is degraded for everyone. It will make you feel even more frustrated than you may already be, having seen fellow journalists booted off Twitter this evening.

Check this list of servers/instances for one that fits your needs. It doesn't have to be permanent – you can switch to a different server in the future if you find one you prefer.

These three servers are more lightly loaded and dedicated to serving journalists:

<https://journa.host>
<https://newsie.social>
<https://federated.press>

Check each server's About page.

Look for their moderation policy which may vary by server – what content is permitted/not permitted, how moderation works, so on.

Some servers require approval of applications, some are instant.

Note whether the server has defederated from/blocked other large or critical servers.

The three listed here for journalists are not likely to be an issue with regard to moderation, application speed, federation, but it doesn't hurt to check up front.

Once you've wrapped your head around which server you want to call home for now, read this introduction-and-how-to by Electronic Frontier Foundation:

[How to Make a Mastodon Account and Join the Fediverse](#)

It's straightforward, plenty of graphics, and will surely get your back with regard to security.

Next, find yourself a Mastodon mobile app you prefer. I don't have a recommendation for Apple iOS but I am happy with Tusky on Android. It has a Twitter-ish feel which makes adoption easier.

I use the Mastodon native app in the browser on my desktop, don't have any other recommendations yet for you. It'll get you started.

Once you've launched an account, you need to begin changing your thinking and your work habits because Mastodon is not like Twitter.

- Set up a profile carefully, then an introductory post to pin to your page. Add 5-7 hashtags to the introduction about subjects of importance to you.
- There are no algorithms, nothing comes to you that you don't first seek and pull.
- There is no search inside the applications which operates across the federated Mastodon universe (the Fediverse); this is intended to prevent harassment by trolls brigading. You can use Google, however, if you plot out your search terms carefully.
- Hashtags are searchable across the Fediverse, however. Use them often. However don't sprinkle them inside text as they interfere with e-readers; append hashtags to bottom of your posts.
- They're not tweets but posts; they used to be called "toots" but that recently changed because it annoyed too many people and it was based on a joke anyhow.
- Follow many people; boost (comparable to retweeting) anything of interest; likes are compliments to the poster.
- Quote tweets were seen as causing negative engagement by Mastodon's progenitor and are therefore difficult to do.

This should be enough to get you started in Mastodon; it's more than I had and I am doing pretty well. Bring friends!

UPDATE-3 – 11:00 A.M. 16-DEC-2022 –

For folks still looking to open a Mastodon

account here's a site which helps identify servers with best fit by a handful of criteria:

<https://instances.social/list>

I would have shared this last night but it was crashing. LOL

Do note that Mastodon servers offer many more criteria by which to sort for a new home. Some of this may be a reflection of local laws where the instance operates – pornography-free servers, for instance – or it may be a reflection of the values of the persons using that server.

Mastodon leans hard into anti-abuse and anti-discrimination policies though some servers are less firm about them. Those that stray too far and allow too much offensive material and even more offensive users may find their server defederated after other muting and blocking methods have been exhausted. In this respect Mastodon has better moderation than Twitter since users are the frontline of moderation, blocking and reporting content and abusers.