

**Demetri Kofinas:** 00:00:00 Today's episode of Hidden Forces is made possible by listeners like you. For more information about this week's episode or for easy access to related programming, visit our website at [hiddenforces.io](http://hiddenforces.io) and subscribe to our free email list.

**Demetri Kofinas:** 00:00:16 If you listen to the show on your Apple Podcast app, remember you can give us a review. Each review helps more people find the show and join our amazing community. With that, please enjoy this week's episode.

**Demetri Kofinas:** 00:00:48 What's up, everybody? My guests on this week's episode of Hidden Forces are philosophers, Brandon Warmke and Justin Tosi. They are the authors of a new book titled, "Grandstanding," which they define as, "the use and abuse of moral talk for the purposes of self-promotion."

**Demetri Kofinas:** 00:01:09 The book describes a spectacle that has become increasingly prevalent in and destructive to public discourse. Though it's most commonly associated with those on the political left, the practice of grandstanding is an entirely bipartisan phenomenon.

**Demetri Kofinas:** 00:01:26 For moral grandstanders, it isn't the pursuit of virtue that motivates them. They're not concerned with doing good; they're concerned with looking good. They want others to think that they are morally superior, and they're willing to go to great lengths in order to do it. Including using moral talk as a tactic for punishment and intimidation.

**Demetri Kofinas:** 00:01:49 The irony is that grandstanders accomplish all of this by free-riding on the moral behavior and good intentions of others. They turn civil discourse into an arms race, weaponizing language and silencing their enemies with threats of doxing and humiliation.

**Demetri Kofinas:** 00:02:06 In this sense, the marketplace of ideas suffers today from a tragedy of the commons. Grandstanding pollutes the information landscape by incentivizing bad moral behavior at the expense of the common good.

**Demetri Kofinas:** 00:02:20 If you believe that civil discourse is important and that we need to be able to propose new ideas, challenge existing beliefs, and come to common resolutions about moral questions, then you have to be concerned about this issue. Our society is currently going through a seismic transition. Norms are being radically upended and Americans are experiencing levels of political polarization arguably unseen since at least the 1970s.

**Demetri Kofinas:** 00:02:50 If we want to make it through this period in one piece, as one nation, undivided, we need to reclaim the moral high ground in our discourse. Otherwise, I'm afraid we're in danger of losing control of our country to the darker forces of our nature, and this would not bode well for the future of the Republic.

**Demetri Kofinas:** 00:03:11 With that, please enjoy this timely and thoughtful conversation with my guests, Brandon Warmke and Justin Tosi.

**Demetri Kofinas:** 00:03:25 Brandon Warmke and Justin Tosi, welcome to Hidden Forces.

**Brandon Warmke:** 00:03:30 Demetri, thanks for having us.

**Justin Tosi:** 00:03:32 Yeah, great to be here.

**Demetri Kofinas:** 00:03:33 Just so our listeners don't get mixed up guys, who is who? Brandon, why don't you just say hi for a second, so our listeners know who is Brandon and who is Justin.

**Brandon Warmke:** 00:03:42 This is Brandon calling in from Ohio. Justin, I probably have, if you hear a little bit of a Southern drawl, I probably have it. It's probably not Justin's.

**Demetri Kofinas:** 00:03:54 We don't usually get an opportunity to have two guests on at the same time. It's always fun for me. I think in every prior instance that I've done this, I've done it in person in our studio, which makes it a bit easier.

**Demetri Kofinas:** 00:04:07 Before we get into this conversation, which I'm really looking forward to doing, maybe you can give our listeners a sense of your backgrounds each. Brandon, why don't we start with you?

**Brandon Warmke:** 00:04:20 Sure, I grew up in Indiana, and I never really had any intention of being a philosopher. I think like a lot of philosophers, you catch the bug somehow. You take a college class, and you end up loving philosophy. I didn't study philosophy in undergrad, I actually studied religion. Went to grad school, got a Master's Degree in Illinois. I started a PHD at Florida State, and then transferred to the University of Arizona. That's actually where I met Justin, we overlapped during our PHD.

**Demetri Kofinas:** 00:04:53 I heard you guys bonded over nachos.

**Brandon Warmke:** 00:04:57 It's funny, we did a previous podcast, it was one of the earlier ones in promo for the book. After we got done, Justin said, "You talked about nachos too much."

**Demetri Kofinas:** 00:05:09 I was going to ask if that was a prerequisite for doing philosophy or just moral philosophy.

**Brandon Warmke:** 00:05:16 It's a prerequisite for doing philosophy in Tucson, Arizona. I think that's just what happens down there.

**Demetri Kofinas:** 00:05:21 Justin, what about you?

**Justin Tosi:** 00:05:23 At the end of that podcast, you're promoting a book, so you sometimes want to make sure people got ... I mean Brandon's takeaway message was really, "Did you get that about the nachos?"

**Justin Tosi:** 00:05:35 I grew up in Yorktown, Virginia. It's in the Williamsburg area. I did politics, really political theory and philosophy at the University of Virginia. That's sort of a weird program there. They do political theory, like philosophers do political philosophy.

**Justin Tosi:** 00:05:53 I ended up mistakenly in a political science PHD program, until I figured out that was not really a good fit for me. Then I moved to Arizona, to just normal philosophy with Brandon. Then we both discovered that we had, had enough, I guess, of weird, performative moral talk from people on Facebook back then. We got to complaining about that, and all these years later, here we are.

**Demetri Kofinas:** 00:06:22 Performative moral talk, what is that?

**Justin Tosi:** 00:06:27 That was how we were talking about it back then. It was just a thing where you'd go online, and you'd see normal people, some of them academic, some of them just people we knew, talking in the form of almost like a corporate press release when they've done something wrong. Where they've got to make a really clear demonstration of what their values are and assure everyone that their heart's in the right place, and they feel really strongly about this.

**Justin Tosi:** 00:06:53 We saw so much of this, we're like, "What are these people doing? Do they think they're accumulating points somehow?" Over a couple years of every once in a while, getting together and complaining about this, we started to think maybe there's a fun philosophy paper to write here.

**Justin Tosi:** 00:07:13 We see this stuff and we take these people less seriously. We think, "Is this what everybody's doing when they talk about morality? Do they actually care about morality?" This performative aspect of what we were seeing really rubbed us the wrong way. We came to find out it rubs a lot of other people the wrong way too.

**Justin Tosi:** 00:07:31 Brandon, is that how you remember feeling about this?

**Brandon Warmke:** 00:07:35 Yeah, we started talking, about this was 2014, we started talking about the way ... At the time, a lot of it was academics, but I think it started seeping into larger public discourse too.

**Brandon Warmke:** 00:07:49 It seemed to us anyway, we're using a lot of public discourse to make themselves look good. They didn't seem primarily interested in talking about the real issues or trying to figure out the truth. Although, a lot of times it's cloaked in those kinds of sheep skins. A lot of times, it seemed like what they were doing was trying to impress other people and seek status.

**Brandon Warmke:** 00:08:11 This is six years ago, it's almost quaint now, what we were seeing then, compared to what we see now. We decided over the next few years, we wrote a paper called, Moral Grandstanding, that got published. Then we're writing this book for Oxford.

**Brandon Warmke:** 00:08:28 In the meanwhile, we did a lot of psychological research. What we found out, this is not going to be a surprise for a lot of people, your podcast is named Hidden Forces. As it turns out, one of these really quiet poisons or hidden forces in public discourse is our desire to impress others, our desire to seek status. One easy way to do that when you're on Twitter or when you're on Facebook, when you have a platform of hundreds or thousands of people, is to try and morally impress people.

**Brandon Warmke:** 00:09:00 Most of us think we're better than average morally. We give ourselves pretty high moral grades. It's really easy to fall into the trap of wanting feedback and affirmation for how good we think we are from like-minded people in our tribe. There's this really strong temptation, this quiet poison in our public discourse that's driving a lot of what we see.

**Demetri Kofinas:** 00:09:25 There are different types of grandstanding. I'm just thinking one, for example, that isn't contingent on being moral or pointing to some type of virtue is if you're trying to sound smart. I sort of imagine in my head, techno babble or something like that.

**Demetri Kofinas:** 00:09:41 How do you guys define grandstanding? Am I correct to differentiate between types of grandstanding, as in categorical differences, moral grandstanding, intellectual grandstanding, etc.?

**Brandon Warmke:** 00:09:54 Attempts to impress other people are pretty common. As you rightly point out, you can try to impress people with how smart you are, or maybe how well educated you are, maybe your athletic prowess.

**Brandon Warmke:** 00:10:07 Grandstanding, you can think of it as a kind of broad term. Spiritual grandstanding, for people who grew up in spiritual backgrounds, there's a kind of one-upmanship that can occur in religious contexts. You're right, there's different domains, as it were, of grandstanding.

**Brandon Warmke:** 00:10:24 We're interested in the moral domain, where what people are doing is they're saying something in the public discourse because they have a strong desire to impress other people. Typically, these contributions happen in conversations about morality and politics.

**Brandon Warmke:** 00:10:41 Lots of bragging and grandstanding is fairly innocent. If you're bragging about your income over dinner or something, or you're trying to impress people with your education. A lot of times, that's fairly benign. In our view, when we switch over to the context of discussing morality and politics, these really important issues, talking about public shaming and public policy, these things can really affect hundreds or millions of lives. The stakes are raised.

**Brandon Warmke:** 00:11:11 How we treat public discourse really matters, it's a really valuable resource. It can be protected. It can be sustained. We can treat it well, or we can destroy it.

**Justin Tosi:** 00:11:23 It's worth pointing out too, this is not a rare thing, of course. Not only is it not rare to have people trying to manage the impressions that others have of them in these various domains of life, like you point out, Demetri, but all of this springs from pretty normal human psychology.

**Justin Tosi:** 00:11:44 Psychologists have figured out, done a lot of studies, people are self-enhancers. For any trait that is positive and vague enough that they can maybe talk themselves into thinking they're exceptional in that way, people think that they're above average. Even when there's some objective measure of this thing, it turns out they are not above average. We all engage in self enhancement.

**Justin Tosi:** 00:12:07 We engage in self enhancement in particular when it comes to morality. We all want to think that we are morally better than average. We also engage in social comparison. In fact, that's where a lot of this self enhancement comes from. We understand ourselves partly in terms of how we measure up relative to other people. We measure our worth by where we stand compared to them.

**Justin Tosi:** 00:12:34 You might think I am the most liberal or conservative of my friends, and then you might hear your friends sounding actually very liberal or conservative. You

might still maintain the self-impression of where you stand, "I'm still more liberal or conservative than them." It works that way across lots of traits.

- Demetri Kofinas:** 00:12:56 I think you guys describe that as a moral arms race, a phenomenon that we see in public. Another question I have, actually two questions maybe, and then I really want to get into a strict definition of grandstanding. One of the things that ...
- Demetri Kofinas:** 00:13:08 Someone that might read your book might think at the outset, "This seems unnecessarily pedantic or overly analytical."
- Brandon Warmke:** 00:13:15 We're great for that.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 00:13:17 Exactly. You guys are philosophers. I think actually the exercise of taking such a fine tooth comb to the subject, it helps I think illuminate the nature of the problem in a way that wouldn't be possible otherwise. In other words, taking such an epistemic perspective.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 00:13:35 I think actually, even though this is a conversation about morality or where we stand in terms of morals, it highlights the epistemic crisis that we have in society. I think it's difficult for a society to transition its values. Values are constantly changing, clearly, right? It's difficult to make that transition if you don't have a clear definition of how to arrive at objective truth, and how to analyze things, and how to reason through.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 00:14:02 Two of the things that came to mind, and then take them as you will. One has to do with narcissism. I think we live in a much more narcissistic society today, and I think the two of you have talked at length about this. I wonder to what extent does the fact that our society is so narcissistic contribute to this? Of course, the saying is offense is taken, it's not given. Our society seems more likely to take offense.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 00:14:27 Also, with respect to grandstanding, and this could also lead us into the definition, because you guys gave an etymology for the word grandstanding, which was interesting and I wasn't aware of it. Does grandstanding on some level depend on having a large enough audience, or can you grandstand to your spouse, or to your friend, or to a small group of dinner guests? Those are my two questions, and then we'll get into the definition.
- Brandon Warmke:** 00:14:54 Yeah, that's a good question. The term grandstanding dates back to the 1880s. It's a term, it was used to refer to baseball players. You'd have these baseball players out in the outfield, and what they would do is they would make these really purposeful showy circus like catches, and these baseball reporters described these players as the grandstand player. They were playing to the grandstands. The idea is that they're trying to impress the watchful audience.
- Brandon Warmke:** 00:15:26 We use this term grandstanding that dates back to the 1800s, and we think it captures this idea of playing to the crowd. It's an interesting question, could you grandstand to your spouse? For some reason, at least to our ear, that sounds a bit forced, like linguistically forced. We often use the term high-horsing to describe smaller context events.

**Brandon Warmke:** 00:15:51 The basic idea is that grandstanding occurs when someone is making or trying to make a contribution to public discourse. Where public discourse, there's no bright line to draw about what counts as public and private. Does it take 10 people? Five people? We don't really have any idea.

**Brandon Warmke:** 00:16:09 But we do think that the mechanisms that are at play in grandstanding, such as the desire to impress other people, the fear of being cast out as a black sheep by your own tribe, these very strong social motives, those are most in play when you have a large context. When you're on Twitter, when you're on Facebook, when you're a politician giving a stump speech, when you're a cable news host at night. I mean these huge audiences. This is where the pressure really to try to seek prestige and try to impress other people, that's where those incentives really take hold. We think those are the clearest cases of grandstanding. We try to fixate on those cases.

**Brandon Warmke:** 00:16:55 Could you grandstand with five people? Yeah, maybe you could, but maybe a better term might latch onto those cases better.

**Demetri Kofinas:** 00:17:01 The audience is an important component. The availability and size of an audience is integral to the concept of grandstanding?

**Brandon Warmke:** 00:17:10 That's right, the grandstander ... We can just jump right in to the basic account very quickly. Our very simple account of grandstanding is grandstanding occurs when you say something in public discourse, in order to get your audience to believe something about you. Namely that you are morally impressive. You have this desire for recognition. You want to be seen as on the side of angels. Grandstanders treat public discourse as a vanity project.

**Brandon Warmke:** 00:17:44 Sometimes the audience is also myself. I'm also trying to convince myself that I'm a good person. But a lot of the time, it's this desire to be seen by others.

**Brandon Warmke:** 00:17:55 One interesting thought experiment is what people would say if hundreds of people wouldn't hear them. If there were no feedback ... If on Twitter you couldn't get a like or a retweet, would people behave in the same way. I think that thought experiment maybe reveals the extent to which, maybe we aren't even aware of it, but that we really do care to get the approval of others, at least some others, not everyone.

**Justin Tosi:** 00:18:22 If you remember, Brandon ... Actually, you might not have been on Twitter for this, but Twitter floated the idea at one point of taking away-

**Brandon Warmke:** 00:18:29 Oh yeah, what's the point?

**Justin Tosi:** 00:18:30 Of advertising the number of likes, and people went ballistic.

**Brandon Warmke:** 00:18:33 What's the point? Yeah.

**Justin Tosi:** 00:18:34 Yeah, the common refrain was, "It's like they don't even understand why this is fun."

**Brandon Warmke:** 00:18:42 Yeah, yeah.

**Demetri Kofinas:** 00:18:44 In the book, you guys actually say, and I'm taking out a direct quote, "The use of moral talk for the purposes of self-promotion," this is how you define grandstanding, "It's the use of moral talk for the purposes of self-promotion." Then you say, "To grandstand is to turn your moral talk into a vanity project," which you had just said there, Brandon.

**Demetri Kofinas:** 00:19:03 Justin, to that point, is a more vain society, a more narcissistic society, is such a society more prone to grandstanding, in your estimation?

**Justin Tosi:** 00:19:14 Well, yeah. Great question. One of the things that I think has been most satisfying about this project for us is that we for years had a lot of conjecture, supported conjecture but still conjecture, about the relationship between grandstanding and narcissism, and other things like this.

**Justin Tosi:** 00:19:32 We've now actually been able to do some social science of our own, with Brandon's colleague at Bowling Green, Joshua Grubbs, a psychologist there. We've done I think seven studies now with over 6,000 participants, big random samples. One of the things that we found most clearly is that people who rate higher on a narcissism scale are more likely to engage in grandstanding, or at least to report motivations to engage in grandstanding.

**Justin Tosi:** 00:20:03 Now, I'm not aware of trends in narcissism, so is society becoming more narcissistic? I'm not sure about that.

**Demetri Kofinas:** 00:20:11 In your own experience subjectively, do you experience that?

**Justin Tosi:** 00:20:13 Subjectively? Well, here's what I will say, I think that narcissistic traits are fostered more now than they might have been in the past. It's easier than ever for a narcissist to find an audience of like-minded people to tell them how great they are, to agree with them, and lavish likes, and retweets, and whatever else on them. You just go on social media, and it's a narcissist's playground.

**Justin Tosi:** 00:20:39 If you ask just about the hard wiring, are people more narcissistic today? I don't know, and I guess that would be sort of surprising. What I think is pretty clear, and I am comfortable just coming out and saying, is that we foster narcissism. We reward narcissism now in a way and on a scale that I think it's fair to say we haven't in the past. It shouldn't be any surprise then that narcissism might seem more prominent.

**Demetri Kofinas:** 00:21:07 In an episode that I did with Jonathan Haidt, having read his book ... Well, I read, The Righteous Mind also, which is an amazing book. I don't know if he talked about this in that book, but I've conflated his work, everything together now, whatever I've read. In, The Coddling Of The American Mind, he does talk about this. Perhaps he doesn't use the word narcissistic, but certainly in terms of the focus that we put on the individual, and how the individual feels.

**Demetri Kofinas:** 00:21:33 I think one of the phenomenons he covers on college campuses is that students are encouraged to interpret events according to how those events or how those words make them feel, that's what matters.

**Demetri Kofinas:** 00:21:48 Actually, that kind of raises a separate question, which I'd love to talk about at some point, maybe not now, but maybe in the Overtime, which is what is it like

to be philosophers, to practice philosophy, which is literally thinking for a living, and being professors in this environment today? I would be curious about that.

**Demetri Kofinas:** 00:22:05 But I have a question, this is something that really kind of gnawed at me as I was reading your book. I actually make it a point not to spend too much time ... First of all, I really avoid mainstream news, certainly cable. I don't watch MSNBC, CNN, Fox, I think those things are poison, it's like eating poison. Why would you do that? Why would you do that to yourself? Then I try not to spend too much time on social media, although Twitter is promotionally, it is good as a promotional vehicle.

**Demetri Kofinas:** 00:22:37 But just reading your book and trying to find ... This morning was when I was trying to find examples on Twitter of grandstanding, and I felt myself getting enraged. I spent an hour trying to come up with a thread to write, to put my thoughts out there. I kept deleting and deleting. Eventually, I was like, "I can't tweet this shit. I'm terrified of what I'm going to say. I'm terrified of what's going to come out of my mouth."

**Demetri Kofinas:** 00:23:03 Here's my first question related to this, which is what is it that bothers us so much about people who grandstand? Why does that bother us so much? Is it the hypocrisy that we can't stand about it?

**Brandon Warmke:** 00:23:22 There's lots of potential explanations. I think a lot of them sort of get pushed together. Here are a few. Justin might want to toss a few in.

**Brandon Warmke:** 00:23:29 I do think, and studies do show, that people really have a low tolerance for hypocrites. If you think that you identify a grandstander, it's actually very hard for various reasons to be certain that someone's grandstanding, which we can talk about. If you think you spot someone grandstanding, and you actually think that they're not as good as they think they are, like they think they're God's gift to the poor, or God's gift to the American factory worker. You know this person is a morally mediocre person. I think the hypocrisy really does drive us crazy.

**Brandon Warmke:** 00:24:06 Now, of course people in your own tribe may not see you as a hypocrite, because they agree with your moral stance. They might cheer on your grandstanding. They think you're really doing the Lord's work.

**Brandon Warmke:** 00:24:18 One reason grandstanding bothers us is because we see it in people who we sometimes believe aren't as good as they present themselves to be.

**Brandon Warmke:** 00:24:26 Another reason that grandstanding is I think annoying, is that it can feel like people are free riding on public discourse. They're kind of cheating. They're kind of taking advantage of the rest of us. We hate that. Humans hate being taken advantage of.

**Brandon Warmke:** 00:24:43 Here's the idea. Look, public discourse is this really valuable resource. It's like a public comment, and we all have access to it. It's a really valuable tool for making the world better, but it's only a valuable tool, it's only effective when we take care of it, when we tend to it, when we decide to contribute. We don't poison it, we don't trash it, we don't destroy it.

**Brandon Warmke:** 00:25:09 When we all follow some basic norms about how to treat public discourse, it can be a more or less valuable resource, an effective way to improve the world, and identify problems, and make changes, and so on.

**Brandon Warmke:** 00:25:22 Justin and I are totally into public discourse. We're totally into moral talk. We think it's super valuable. When we condemn grandstanding, we're not saying moral talk is bad. What we're trying to do is preserve it. I think when people engage in public discourse to sincerely identify wrongs, or help other people, that's great.

**Brandon Warmke:** 00:25:42 But what grandstanders do is they exploit the fact that other people are all following these rules. Also, they're trying to get these selfish motivations, they're trying to get credit for themselves. They're kind of exploiting, using other people in their sincere following of the social moral norms for discourse.

**Brandon Warmke:** 00:26:06 But what grandstanders do is, and they're very sneaky about it, is they use, they cloak their vain, self-seeking, dominating moral talk, they cloak it in these high minded moral terms, and these clichés, and platitudes. What they're really doing is trying to get themselves status, make themselves look good.

**Brandon Warmke:** 00:26:26 I think a lot of people who recognize that grandstanders do this, just find this disgusting. They can see that they're not playing fair. They're being disrespectful, and they're free riding on the rest of us. They're not doing their bit to restrain themselves in public discourse for the betterment of everybody else.

**Demetri Kofinas:** 00:26:44 Justin, I want to have you chime in here. Absolutely, I think the selfish component is so essential. There are a few things that this raises. You said something about is moral discourse important or moral talk important? I absolutely do want to delineate between moral talk and grandstanding. I think that's actually one of the most important points of your work and of the book.

**Demetri Kofinas:** 00:27:06 Yes, there are these wolves in sheep's clothing, that walk around and free ride on moral discourse. They do it for personal, selfish reasons, which we despise. Which I also would like to get into, because you have a great conversation about virtue in the book, and what is a virtuous way to do moral talk.

**Demetri Kofinas:** 00:27:24 There is something sort of disgusting about people that do that, and I think it's important to be able to identify them. I think right now one of the things that's happened is these individuals, in many instances, have hijacked the conversation. They have caused the moral arms race escalation to the point where the entire landscape is littered, and it's replete with minefields.

**Demetri Kofinas:** 00:27:48 People that are moderates or well-intentioned people that want to have moral conversations in order to move society forward, which I think is an important part of social cohesion. As I mentioned earlier on, values constantly change. This is important, this idea of how to do moral talk.

**Demetri Kofinas:** 00:28:05 But before we actually do any of that, I want to differentiate one more thing. People are not familiar ... Well, they're familiar with the word grandstanding, in that we've all heard that word, but it doesn't have contemporary relevance, the way the phrase virtue signaling does.

**Demetri Kofinas:** 00:28:23 What is grandstanding? Maybe Justin, you want to take this, I don't know.

**Justin Tosi:** 00:28:26 Sure, yeah.

**Demetri Kofinas:** 00:28:27 How does grandstanding relate to virtue signaling? For people that are listening.

**Justin Tosi:** 00:28:31 Good. Let me start, this will be an answer full of distinctions. Let me start with moral talk, and then we'll get to virtue signaling.

**Justin Tosi:** 00:28:40 Brandon said in the last answer, we really need moral talk, it's really important. When we in this book talk about moral talk, what we mean is people talking about figuring out what the right thing is together. Talking about it. What does justice demand? If you really love your country, what should you do?

**Justin Tosi:** 00:29:00 When we engage in moral talk in public, we're very often talking about really important issues. It's important that we be able to communicate clearly with each other, take each other seriously, and all be in it for the right goal, that is figuring out what the right thing to do is, and maybe even getting people to do it.

**Justin Tosi:** 00:29:25 Grandstanding is moral talk in this way, but it's an abuse of moral talk. When people grandstand, they're pitching in, chipping in, throwing in their own two cents in these conversations, but they're not just using the terms, they are using them with the goal of getting other people to think that they are morally impressive or at least morally passable, decent people in some way.

**Justin Tosi:** 00:29:56 What's the difference between grandstanding and virtue signaling? Virtue signaling is maybe a more popular term right now, among people who are familiar with these sorts of issues and talk about them in public. We think that virtue signaling is not the right term for the behavior that we have in mind, and that I think most people have in mind when they talk about showy moral talk.

**Justin Tosi:** 00:30:24 Here are two problems. One is that a lot of this moral talk, made with the intention of impressing other people, isn't actually about virtue at all. Virtue is typically thought to be an excellence of character. To be virtuous, to be extreme in some way, to be extremely honest, extremely kind.

**Justin Tosi:** 00:30:45 But a lot of the time when people are grandstanding, they aren't trying to stand out exactly. Sometimes they're just trying, and maybe even this is the more common thing, they're just trying to keep up. They want to say, "Look, I respect women. Look, I've made mistakes in my life. I have disrespected the women around me, but even I know this guy's behavior is out of line." That's grandstanding, it has nothing to do with virtue. That person's not claiming to be virtuous.

**Demetri Kofinas:** 00:31:13 It's more fear induced, grandstanding?

**Justin Tosi:** 00:31:16 Often, yeah. Grandstanding for self-protection is not plausibly about virtue.

**Justin Tosi:** 00:31:21 The signaling thing is actually the bigger problem, I think. If you complain about virtue signaling, you're kind of throwing the baby out with the bathwater. Signaling is just anything that communicates. Signaling can be an Instagram

influencer taking a staged photo, trying to show that they were involved in protests, when they weren't. Signaling can also just be someone writing a dry as dust philosophy paper about what's right and wrong, or someone just trying to figure out amongst their friends what's the right thing to do here.

- Justin Tosi:** 00:31:59 We don't object to either of those things, because even though they communicate something about the person and what they believe, they're not driven by that person wanting other person to be impressed by them.
- Justin Tosi:** 00:32:14 The point then in saying virtue signaling isn't the right idea here, is again, it's an over broad charge. We're not worried about signaling, we're worried about people manipulating their moral talk and others with this one goal in mind, which is really just inappropriate.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 00:32:31 There actually you guys differentiate between two types of grandstanding. One, I think you call it grandstanding to dominate others. The other one is grandstanding to gain prestige. It's a little bit different than what we're talking about here, right? Neither one of those is generated by fear, they're both opportunistic types of grandstanding.
- Brandon Warmke:** 00:32:49 Yeah, there's lots of different ways of thinking about the specific kinds of motives that grandstanders have. I just want to dovetail on Justin's last point about virtue signaling. Then I'll bring this back around to the other kinds of motives that one could have.
- Brandon Warmke:** 00:33:07 One thing we've noticed, the virtue signaling conversation has been one of the most frustrating things in talking about our work. When we started writing the paper, the term virtue signaling hadn't even really made its way onto the public scene. This was like 2014. It's hard to imagine a world in which virtue signaling wasn't a term, but it wasn't. It showed up in 2015 and '16.
- Brandon Warmke:** 00:33:29 We were kind of taken aback that there was this new term. We do think it's ... A lot of people, when they use the term virtue signaling, they are trying to talk about what we call grandstanding. I think that's certainly true. But the term itself is misleading for ways that Justin mentions.
- Brandon Warmke:** 00:33:45 Here's often what happens, people will say something like, "Tosi and Warmke, these guys they're accusing people of grandstanding and virtue signaling, but what's wrong with virtue signaling? If I help a little old lady across the street, I'm showing my virtue. What could possibly be wrong with that?" There's this kind of slide between what we care about, which is people intentionally trying to impress others with their moral talk. There's this natural, inevitable slide to, "What's wrong with doing virtuous things in public?"
- Brandon Warmke:** 00:34:19 Our complaint is not with doing actually virtuous things in public. That's not what we ... Do all the virtuous things you want in public. The thing that we are worried about is people treating public discourse as a way to impress other people with how good they think they are, and all the problems that it causes.
- Brandon Warmke:** 00:34:36 Now, you mentioned prestige and dominance. It turns out if you look at the social psychology, we draw on this work of this psychologist at Stanford, Joey Chang. What she shows is that there's two basic ways that humans try to seek

social status. I've just got to say seeking social status is like maybe sex and eating, seeking social status is one of the most basic fundamental human desires there are.

- Brandon Warmke:** 00:35:05 What Joey Chang argues is that there's really two different ways that humans try to get status. One of them is trying to get status through prestige, and prestige is basically you want people to think well of you. You want people to think that you're knowledgeable, that you have skills, that you're maybe important. In many ways, there's perfectly innocent ways of gaining prestige. I mean a world class tennis player has social prestige because they have this expertise and everyone knows who they are.
- Brandon Warmke:** 00:35:36 The other way to get status is through what Chang calls dominance. Dominance is a bit darker. A person striving for prestige wants people to think well of them. A lot of in our work what we found is that people who seek prestige in public discourse, they tend to be narcissistic extroverts. People look up to them, and think of them as exemplars, and that sort of thing.
- Brandon Warmke:** 00:36:00 People who grandstand for dominance, this is a much darker suite of psychological traits and activities. People who grandstand for dominance, they want to, instead of be lifted up, they want to push other people down. These are the people, often you see a lot of social media pile on's, where people are trying to get others fired. They're trying to get them canceled. They call them names. This is a much darker behavior.
- Brandon Warmke:** 00:36:28 A lot of it is geared at seeking status and being thought of as morally important and morally great, it's just a different way of getting there, and it involves destroying people, destroying your opponents. It turns out a lot of people who grandstand for dominance are doing it ... There's a high correlation between narcissistic antagonism, which is a very dark suite of psychological traits. It's also much rarer.
- Brandon Warmke:** 00:36:52 In what we found in the studies Justin mentioned with Josh Grubbs, grandstanding for prestige is very common. If you're scrolling through Twitter or Facebook, you're probably seeing dozens of instances in an hour.
- Brandon Warmke:** 00:37:08 Grandstanding for dominance is a little less common, although the moment we're in right now, this is the end of June 2020, this moment, it seems to be ripe for a lot of dominance grandstanding, a lot of cancellations, a lot of really nasty moral talk, for whatever reason.
- Brandon Warmke:** 00:37:26 Those are the two main ways that you can think about what people are doing, these very natural desires, in many contexts very morally innocent desires for status. One way to think about grandstanding is just the way that these desires work themselves out in public discourse. I think it's a really helpful way to think about what you're seeing. It gives you a way to categorize and classify some of this behavior. Some of this self-serving behavior is very preening, very, "Look at me. Look how great I am." A lot of I talk. Then a lot of grandstanding that's like, "You are the worst person ever. Do not ever show your face in public again."
- Demetri Kofinas:** 00:38:07 That's the one that's so scary, and I think the one that a lot of people are concerned about. It's intimidating. You guys have referred to this

metaphorically, that these sorts of folks use morality as a weapon. They use it as a weapon in order to ...

- Demetri Kofinas:** 00:38:25 I found this compelling as an explanation. It's something I thought about as well. You used Nietzsche's concept of will to power, and this idea that people seek power, and that many of the sorts of people that engage in the kinds of behavior that we're talking about here, this moral grandstanding to dominate others, do it as a hack, a workaround, because they can't obtain power through normal means. They subversively seek it by trying to dominate others in this type of a way. That, to me, made a lot of sense.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 00:39:01 I'm curious, can you speak to that a bit more? For example, are you familiar, you must be familiar with the case of Evergreen State College, with the students?
- Brandon Warmke:** 00:39:09 Oh yeah.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 00:39:11 You can that one and run with it. That was a really scary situation. I also wonder, and now we're kind of going everywhere, I'm taking us everywhere.
- Brandon Warmke:** 00:39:20 It's okay.
- Justin Tosi:** 00:39:20 That's all right.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 00:39:23 I'm curious about what kind of mental hack, what kind of virus has invaded our brains, that has disempowered us from being able to fight back against individuals who are clearly behaving in an amoral and aggressive manor?
- Justin Tosi:** 00:39:41 That's great. I want to talk about Nietzsche, and then Brandon, you can talk about the virus.
- Brandon Warmke:** 00:39:46 I will diagnose humanity.
- Justin Tosi:** 00:39:48 I'll give you a little time. For the Nietzsche uninitiated, this guy has a bad reputation, or at least did maybe 15 years ago, when I first started reading him. Was it that long ago? Oh my God.
- Justin Tosi:** 00:40:02 Anyway, he's actually an extremely interesting thinker. People have tried to associate him with some really nasty historical movements, like National Socialism. This is in fact his sister. He had nothing to do with this. He thought that anti-Semites were really pathetic people. Anyway, that's all just to make you a little softer on all Friedrich Nietzsche.
- Justin Tosi:** 00:40:26 Demetri, you referred to this idea of the will to power. The will to power is Nietzsche's idea that people really like to feel effective, like they're accomplishing something. They're encountering obstacles, and they overcome them, and it makes them feel alive. It makes them feel invigorated.
- Justin Tosi:** 00:40:48 We have a sort of love/hate relationship with these obstacles, that let us feel powerful. On the one hand, we need them. If we don't have any obstacles, there's nothing for us to overcome. But we also hate them, because they frustrate our desires. They make it difficult for us to get that feeling of having accomplished something.

**Justin Tosi:** 00:41:12 A lot of people go ahead and find a way to overcome their obstacles, and they do fine, but some people struggle, like me. What do those people do? Sometimes they just feel frustrated, but Nietzsche says another thing you can do is get creative. Find some other way of declaring yourself victorious, without actually accomplishing anything.

**Justin Tosi:** 00:41:38 This is, in his work, the most prominent example of this is the slave revolt and morality. Nietzsche's telling a bunch of weak people making their weakness into a virtue and making strength into a vice that they can shame. There was a transvaluation of values, or sometimes translated, a revaluation of values. As a result of this, weak people were able to feel strong by going after these powerful nobles.

**Justin Tosi:** 00:42:10 Anyway, all this is a long setup to say this is kind of, you might think, what's going on with a lot of grandstanding. People are using these tools of moral talk to take down powerful people through specious means. They invent creative trumped up charges and get enough other weak people to believe them and act like it's a big deal. Then all of a sudden, they've got 50 years of recent history of people violating this new made up moral rule, and they can go after all of those people. They don't even have to make up a moral rule, they can just tighten the standards. Anything that even hints at bad behavior is now grounds for cancellation.

**Justin Tosi:** 00:43:00 What people are doing, you might think, when they engage in dominance grandstanding, is they're using moral talk as a weapon. Like you said, Demetri, they are turning these tools on targets they really shouldn't be aimed at and taking them down. As a result, they're getting this rush of feeling like they've accomplished something, but it's an empty accomplishment.

**Demetri Kofinas:** 00:43:23 It's interesting, your earlier comments about Nietzsche. I had a positive experience learning about him early on. I guess he also kind of depressed me.

**Justin Tosi:** 00:43:33 He'll do that, yeah.

**Demetri Kofinas:** 00:43:35 I think I didn't read him properly in the beginning. I studied remotely, I actually went to NYU, but I studied Nietzsche under Robert Solomon, the late Robert Solomon and Kathleen Higgins remotely, through the Great Courses. It was a wonderful course. Robert was so passionate about Nietzsche, he really loved him.

**Demetri Kofinas:** 00:43:55 Nietzsche was very concerned about virtue. I think this is also something that comes up in reading your book, and it's so important. It just kind of brings us back to a point that you guys raised earlier, and something that I really want to focus on, which is distinguishing between moral talk that is altruistic, or for the purpose of actually coming to some deeper more profound meaningful sense of morality, and grandstanding.

**Demetri Kofinas:** 00:44:21 Maybe the next appropriate place to go here is to really understand, I mean we talked about it a little bit, but how do we know if someone is grandstanding? You guys make another great point in the book, which is this is a theory of mind conversation.

**Demetri Kofinas:** 00:44:35 By the way, plug for people who haven't heard our episode with Patrick Grimm on mind/body philosophy. If you're interested in mind/body theory, you can go listen to that episode. If you're not convinced by the proposition that we can't know what's in other people's heads, but people seem to think today that they can intuit what's going on in everyone's head, but of course they can't. This is sort of a problem.

**Demetri Kofinas:** 00:44:57 How do we know if someone is morally grandstanding? How do we identify it in the wild? Is context important? How important is it, for example, that I know the person? I know, "I know Susie's full of shit. I know that she actually doesn't care about this and she's just grandstanding." What does it take to know if someone's grandstanding?

**Brandon Warmke:** 00:45:18 It's very difficult to know. We compare grandstanding to other phenomena. Think about lying, grandstanding is like lying in this very limited respect. You can't tell whether someone is lying just by looking at what they say. Why? Because to lie requires something like a desire, an intention. You're wanting to mislead or deceive someone. That is, as you rightly note, that's hidden to the outside world. Sometimes it's even hidden to ourselves. We definitely don't have access to that.

**Brandon Warmke:** 00:45:55 This is why in controlled studies, humans are barely better than the flip of a coin at telling whether someone is lying. That's when the person is standing in front of you, and you get to look at their body language and stuff. Imagine just looking on Twitter or something and trying to figure out what's in someone's head.

**Brandon Warmke:** 00:46:17 Lying is very difficult ... Think about bragging, demagoguery, philosophers talk about bullshit. These are all different phenomena that require something to go a certain way in your head. We just don't have easy access to those things.

**Brandon Warmke:** 00:46:33 Then the question is how do you know someone's grandstanding? Sometimes you just don't. In the book, we give some sort of contextual clues that help you at least see the kinds of forms that grandstanding can take.

**Brandon Warmke:** 00:46:49 For example, grandstanders are often making their moral talk about themselves.

**Demetri Kofinas:** 00:46:54 Hugely important.

**Brandon Warmke:** 00:46:55 We might be discussing trans rights or we might be discussing immigration, but somehow the conversation always keeps coming back to themselves. That's a kind of tell.

**Brandon Warmke:** 00:47:05 For example, a lot of grandstanders begin their grandstanding with an introduction that involves mentioning a credential. Like, "As someone who has long fought for the poor," or, "As someone who loves this country ..."

**Brandon Warmke:** 00:47:20 There's a Demetri Martin joke about 10 years ago, he had a Comedy Central special and he said, "When someone introduces themselves as a taxpayer, you know they're about to be an asshole."

**Brandon Warmke:** 00:47:31 Why are they an asshole? They're an asshole because it's pretty obvious what they're doing is drawing some sort of attention to themselves as some sort of unique oracle or something about whatever they're about to say after being a taxpayer. Those are a couple of tells.

**Brandon Warmke:** 00:47:46 In the book, we say a lot of grandstanding involves piling on, joining in on a social pile on. Maybe even attaching your views to the moment, trying to look like you're one of the gang. Some grandstanding takes the form of what we call ramping up, which you nicely mentioned earlier about ... It looks like a moral arms race, where you might say, "We need to reform the police," and I say, "This guy doesn't care about the police." "Everyone needs to know how much I care about fixing this." I say, "We need to defund the police." Then Justin shows up 24 hours later on Twitter and says, "Screw all of you. We need to totally abolish police, the entire country."

**Brandon Warmke:** 00:48:31 Some people might actually believe that, but one way we might have gotten to that point is by a certain kind of ramping up, where in order to look morally impressive and stand out, you have to outdo other people. Grandstanding often takes that form. Grandstanding often looks like-

**Demetri Kofinas:** 00:48:45 Sure.

**Brandon Warmke:** 00:48:45 Yeah, go ahead.

**Demetri Kofinas:** 00:48:46 I was going to say, and to prove your commitment to the cause.

**Brandon Warmke:** 00:48:50 That's right, that's right.

**Justin Tosi:** 00:48:52 Yeah, exactly.

**Brandon Warmke:** 00:48:52 Yeah, it's pretty hardcore. It's one way to send a signal that you're not messing around, that you really are serious about this.

**Demetri Kofinas:** 00:49:00 It incentivizes radicalization, right? This is another question, is one of the macro phenomena or implications of this that society becomes radicalized?

**Justin Tosi:** 00:49:13 This is one of, and perhaps the most serious of the social consequences of grandstanding that we talk about. This is also something that is born out in our social science study. We found that there's really no partisan divide about grandstanding. If we know someone is a liberal or conservative, Republican or Democrat, we don't know that they're more or less likely to grandstand. But people who are on the partisan extremes are more likely to grandstand.

**Justin Tosi:** 00:49:47 What we take from that is that we think it's support for the story that people who are out to gain prestige within their in group, will try to outmaneuver one another and engage in this moral arms race of just trying to find the most extreme position they possibly can, that will gain them approval of the group.

**Justin Tosi:** 00:50:11 An old Louis C.K. joke, the meal doesn't stop when I'm full, it stops when I hate myself. For grandstanders, this is how moral talk works. You don't stop adopting more extreme positions when you've arrived at the truth. You stop adopting more extreme positions when the group is not going to give you any credit any

longer for going even further. It's not a truth sensitive process, it's a prestige seeking process. This is a disaster, if the point of moral talk is to arrive at the truth.

- Justin Tosi:** 00:50:45 Now, to anticipate the most obvious objection, a lot of people hear this and say, "You guys just don't like the far left." We hear this a lot from academics of course. But the thing to keep in mind is it's not as if it's just your side doing this. It's both sides. Both sides are engaged in this moral arms race. They're both becoming polarized and more extreme. Not only are they adopting more extreme ideological views about what we ought to do, they're also becoming more and more opposed to each other, in the sense that they hate each other.
- Justin Tosi:** 00:51:21 We cite some figures in the book that something like 40% of people on each side think that the other side politically is downright evil. Something like 20% of people think that the country would be better, these are numbers in America, the country would be better if a bunch of people on the other side just died.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 00:51:42 Jesus Christ.
- Justin Tosi:** 00:51:43 Yeah, whatever you think of the truth actually being extreme or not, this is not good.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 00:51:50 Yeah.
- Brandon Warmke:** 00:51:51 There's so many examples of this phenomena that Justin talks ... I'll just mention a few, just very recently. In about 48 hours, we went from reform the police to totally eliminate the police.
- Justin Tosi:** 00:52:05 Not only that, it was all along.
- Brandon Warmke:** 00:52:10 "All along. Oh, of course, that's what we meant all along. Years ago, we were arguing this."
- Demetri Kofinas:** 00:52:16 I mean Bill de Blasio, I think he's pushing now to defund the New York City Police Department by a billion dollars.
- Brandon Warmke:** 00:52:24 A billion dollars, that's right.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 00:52:24 From six to five. It's so asinine. If you want to fix the problem, then just reallocate that money towards police training or something. It's so asinine.
- Brandon Warmke:** 00:52:36 Also, I don't think it's sensitive to the data.
- Justin Tosi:** 00:52:39 Demetri, everything in the '70s is going to be cool again.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 00:52:43 Exactly. What were you saying Brandon, about the data?
- Brandon Warmke:** 00:52:49 It's not even sensitive to the data. I mean as far as what I understand about the data about policing and funding, is that increased funding is actually what makes police departments healthier, because they can hire better trained

people, they can provide more training, they can provide more cops. It's like the exact opposite thing. If you really wanted to help ...

- Brandon Warmke:** 00:53:11 This is something we talk about in the book, is sometimes there are policies that look like they satisfy your moral values. They express your moral values. But oftentimes, they totally run contrary to what would actually help.
- Brandon Warmke:** 00:53:22 There's another great case about ramping up recently. We went from, again in a matter of a few days, we went from let's take down Confederate statues in the South. Then three days later, there's an activist named Shaun King on Twitter, he said, "We need to take down every image of Jesus that is white."
- Justin Tosi:** 00:53:48 They were leaving room for growth. It was only statues and stained glass windows.
- Brandon Warmke:** 00:53:55 Statues and murals.
- Justin Tosi:** 00:53:55 Murals are next.
- Brandon Warmke:** 00:53:56 Yeah, we're going to paint over the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel, we're taking down the Pieta.
- Brandon Warmke:** 00:54:04 This happens on the right too. We went from, "Masks don't really help," and then some people on the right on talk radio and cable news are saying, "If you wear a mask, you're part of the conspiracy to take down the state. You're part of the Deep State. You've been cowed into fear." That happened in a matter of a week or two, that we went from masks don't work to, "If you wear a mask, you're trying to take down the country."
- Brandon Warmke:** 00:54:32 It's hard to understand these behaviors, if you're just looking at them and thinking, "These people are ..." The only mechanism at play is they're trying to figure out the truth. If that's your only tool in your toolbox, this behavior will be totally mysterious and puzzling.
- Brandon Warmke:** 00:54:50 If you have this tool in your toolbox, it's like, "Well, people really want status, and we really care what people think. We want to outdo each other with how impressive we look." A lot of these behaviors made much more ... In one sense, they're not easy to understand, but at least there's a mechanism for understanding how people end up saying these kinds of things.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 00:55:08 To the point about, and also I agree with everything you said, and we're in a lot of trouble. I don't think people really appreciate how serious this problem is. It's part of a much larger problem dealing with our information landscape. I don't really know how we're supposed to address any of our problems, if we can't actually have a forum for rational conversation, where people are afraid for their lives, or their careers, so to speak.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 00:55:35 To your point about the fact that both parties do it. One of the striking observations is that today what we experience as being primarily a phenomenon driven by the left, this cancel culture, call out culture, this disingenuous attempt to trip up or find ways to hurt people through social shaming, and canceling, and everything else, was something that we saw

practiced very much from the right during the Bush years. Specifically, around support for the troops.

- Justin Tosi:** 00:56:12 Soft on terror.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 00:56:13 Soft on terror, not loving America. There was really no clear way to navigate it. If someone said, "Don't you love our troops? Don't you support our troops?" What are you supposed to say? "Yes, I support the troops, but ..." "There's no but, you either support the troops or you don't. You love America or you leave it." It's a way of stifling debate, and it's a dishonest tactic used by malicious actors.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 00:56:37 These people are malicious. They're malicious, whether they're coming from the left spectrum or whether they have rightish flavor, they're still malicious. They're bad, they're bad actors, and their motivations and intentions are not good. I think that, again, brings us back to this delineation between grandstanding and moral talk. Your intentions matter, they matter fundamentally.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 00:57:03 Why is moral talk or the capacity to have moral conversations in public important? Guys, let's begin to answer that, and then I want to move us into the Overtime for the second half, the second hour. I wouldn't be surprised if we actually go longer than that, because you guys are philosophers. We could probably go for another 10 hours.
- Justin Tosi:** 00:57:20 Hey, we're here for it, man.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 00:57:23 Why don't we start that, and then we'll move into the second hour and the Overtime, and we can continue.
- Brandon Warmke:** 00:57:28 Why is moral talk so important?
- Demetri Kofinas:** 00:57:30 Why is it important to be able to have conversations from a place of good intention, with an objective to actually come to some determination about what we believe, what is good, what is bad? Things like this, traditional moral philosophy.
- Brandon Warmke:** 00:57:43 I'll just say one thing real quick, and then I think Justin probably has a lot more to say. One thing that grandstanding does, and we don't talk about this in the book, is that it makes it really hard for people to express heterodox views, or to change their mind. Come out and just say, "Look, here's the problem with my side." There's just certain kinds of conversations that are absolutely vital if you want to have a vibrant public discourse, where people can feel free to speak their mind and provide evidence.
- Brandon Warmke:** 00:58:18 When the incentives are almost entirely motivating people to do things out of fear, to be silent, or to even modify their views because they're afraid. One thing we know from various studies is that people will actually say things and enforce norms, punish people, things that they don't even believe are wrong, but because they're afraid to be seen as being a black sheep.

**Brandon Warmke:** 00:58:43 When there's this context where so much of what people are saying is motivated by, "What's going to get me canceled? What's going to get me blocked? What's going to get me praise and kudos?" People are not interested in challenging the views of their own tribe. It's really difficult to in front of your team say, "Hey guys, I think we went too far." That's not something that's often safe to say.

**Brandon Warmke:** 00:59:10 It's often not safe to say things like, "Hey, I think maybe this other side has a point here," or, "Let's think about this heterodox view? Is there some merit to this?" That's just not allowed. Even worse, to even come out and just change your mind about something.

**Brandon Warmke:** 00:59:26 So much of what's vital about public discourse is coming to mutual understanding. Each of us bringing the little knowledge or the little evidence that we have, doing our part to bring it to the commons to share it. So much of that is just not happening, because people are either afraid to speak their minds, or they only say things that they believe will get them moral credit in the social square.

**Demetri Kofinas:** 00:59:50 Yeah, they're very aggressive. I don't know if you guys saw today, Terry Crews is trending because he broke with the party line.

**Brandon Warmke:** 00:59:58 Yeah, he broke it-

**Demetri Kofinas:** 01:00:00 I'm not saying he actually broke it. I'm not even saying ... Who even knows what the party line is? This is also part of the problem. It's constantly shifting. Definitions are shifting. Every single day, there's something else I found out that I shouldn't have said.

**Brandon Warmke:** 01:00:17 Terry Crews said something like, "We need to be careful to not turn Black Lives Matter into Black Lives Are Better," something like that.

**Demetri Kofinas:** 01:00:25 Yeah, I think that's correct.

**Brandon Warmke:** 01:00:28 He just got pummeled. He's getting dragged, because ... I'm not exactly sure. The tweets that I saw were sort of like, "Hey, you're not helping the cause." What's the story there? I'm not exactly sure.

**Demetri Kofinas:** 01:00:41 "You're off message, Terry. You're off message, Terry. Get on message."

**Brandon Warmke:** 01:00:43 Yeah, yeah.

**Justin Tosi:** 01:00:44 The things Brandon's talking are all right, and actually I should say, if you're interested in those issues, we have a kind of sequel paper, which you'll really only get the most out of if you've read the book. We have a paper called "Moral Grandstanding As A Threat To Free Expression," where we talk about how grandstanding interferes with a lot of the things that are just the point of free expression.

**Justin Tosi:** 01:01:07 Let me stress one more thing. It's that when grandstanding comes to dominate public discourse, you sort of take the brakes off of whatever direction the bus is headed in. There's no way to stop it, because you can't criticize your own side.

The other side's evil, so you can't listen to them. The only direction that people can gain any status, or at least not risk being ostracized from it, is to go even more extreme.

- Justin Tosi:** 01:01:39 You'll hear people say things to someone like Terry Crews like, "You're not helping the cause," because people only see straight ahead.
- Justin Tosi:** 01:01:48 Yeah, well they see both of those things, which sort of defeats the message there.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 01:01:54 They also probably hate Terry because he's successful. So much of this has nothing to do with the causes, it just has to do with miserable people being angry.
- Justin Tosi:** 01:02:03 "We need new leadership. Who could that be?"
- Demetri Kofinas:** 01:02:09 Although that is interesting, and we'll actually keep that for the Overtime, to have a conversation about that, about leadership.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 01:02:16 I do think another kind of issue across the board, regardless of what we're debating, is the lack of leadership in society. It almost reminds me of Ithaca, when Odysseus had left, or all of the city-states after the Greeks left for the Trojan War, where it was all just the suitors running rampant. There's no one there to lay down the law and it's total disarray.
- Justin Tosi:** 01:02:41 Yup, the grownups are gone, and if they were here, we wouldn't listen to them.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 01:02:45 Yeah, exactly. Guys, listen. I'm going to move the second half of this conversation into the Overtime.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 01:02:51 For regular listeners, you know the drill. If you're new to the program, Hidden Forces is listener supported. We don't accept advertisers or commercial sponsors. The entire show is funded from top to bottom by listeners like you.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 01:03:06 If you want access to our premium content, which includes transcripts of every conversation we've ever had on the program, including this one, copies of my rundown, which are elaborate show documents created by me ahead of every episode, or if you just can't get enough of the podcast and you want to hear more from my guests, head over to [Patreon.com/hiddenforces](https://patreon.com/hiddenforces), and subscribe.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 01:03:30 Not only is the content worth it, but it's a way of showing your support for the show and the work we do.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 01:03:36 Guys, stick around. We're going to move the second half of our conversation into the Overtime, where we're really going to get loose. We're going to roll up our sleeves and whip out the nachos. I've got nachos here for myself, I don't know if you guys-
- Brandon Warmke:** 01:03:49 Support Demetri's podcast.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 01:03:52 Stick around.

- Demetri Kofinas:** 01:03:54 Today's episode of Hidden Forces was recorded in New York City. For more information about this week's episode, or if you want easy access to related programming, visit our website at [Hiddenforces.io](https://hiddenforces.io), and subscribe to our free email list. If you want access to Overtime segments, episode transcripts, and show rundowns full of links and detailed information related to each and every episode, check out our premium subscription, available through the Hidden Forces website or through our Patreon page at [Patreon.com/hiddenforces](https://Patreon.com/hiddenforces).
- Demetri Kofinas:** 01:04:32 Today's episode was produced by me and edited by Stylianos Nicolaou For more episodes, you can check out our website at [Hiddenforces.io](https://Hiddenforces.io). Join the conversation at Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram at Hidden Forces Pod, or send me an email. As always, thanks for listening. We'll see you next week.