

How Ben Shapiro Rose to Prominence

Ben Shapiro has made a name for himself in conservative circles, appearing daily on radio, TV and at events around the nation. His off-the-cuff and rapid retorts have solidified him as a favorite commentator among politicians—but what's Shapiro's backstory? He recently sat down with "The Billy Hallowell Podcast" to talk about free speech, culture and the roots of his career.

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Shapiro, whose signature line is, "Facts don't care about your feelings," decried the crisis of truth that seems to be plaguing the American conscience, explaining his worries that people seem more motivated today by emotion than facts.

"I think that folks now treasure the subjective over the objective," Shapiro said, adding that this dynamic is the biggest cultural problem of the day. "I think that there are a lot of folks who, the facts don't make them feel good about themselves—they don't make them feel good about the narrative that they tell about their own lives."

As a result, he believes people tend to disown the facts and then avoid viable debate, turning what should be factual arguments into character arguments. This naturally results in the demonization of ideological opponents—something that has plagued culture of late.

Listen to Shapiro discuss abortion, free speech, civility and more:

"Right now, people are getting a lot of pleasure, particularly in the social media era, from just smacking people, and it's

easy to do that from behind a screen,” Shapiro said. “It’s hard to do that when you’re actually in person, and this is one of the problems with having an online society – it’s easier to be mean and nasty when you don’t actually have to look in the face of the person you’re being mean and nasty to.”

Meanwhile, civility and healthy debate aren’t the only casualties, as Shapiro argues that people continue to exchange truth for their own opinions.

“People [are] deciding that that facts are significantly less important than self-interpretation,” he said. “People using phrases like ‘my truth’ as opposed to ‘the truth’ and me saying, ‘Well there’s no such thing as ‘your truth.’ There’s just facts and then there’s your opinion and it’s fine, you’re allowed to have opinions, but let’s not pretend that your opinions are sacrosanct.’”

Shapiro also explained the unlikely path he took into media, noting that his journey started when he was in college and planning to double major in music and genetic science. He initially planned to perform on stage and aim for a job at Amgen, a biopharmaceutical company, but an op-ed in the UCLA student newspaper, *Daily Bruin*, changed everything.

“There was an editorial in there or an op-ed by somebody comparing Ariel Sharon, then prime minister of Israel, to Adolf Eichmann, the Nazi—and I walked into [the newspaper’s] offices and I said, ‘I’d like to write a counter to that.’ And they said, ‘Sure.’”

Shapiro was soon writing a bi-weekly point-counterpoint column, which turned into a regular column. Not long after that, he sent his resume and columns to Creators Syndicate, a company that distributes columns to newspapers nationwide, and he was soon being published in outlets across America.

Years later, he’s at the top of his game as a political and

cultural commentator.

"I've been in this field for a very long time," he said. "I'm 34 years old and I have literally spent half my life in this field."

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Considering how high Shapiro's star has risen, it's no surprise that he faces intense pushback—something that can be tiring at moments. Still, he said he's truly enjoying his work.

"The truth is, I really enjoy what I'm doing. I love the fact that I get to speak about issues that I think are important," he said. "But on days when everything is headline-driven as opposed to values-driven or on days when ... I feel like everybody else does in the space, that you're being unfairly attacked and you think to yourself, 'Man I wish I had gone and played in string quartets.'"

In the end, though, Shapiro has no plans of stopping, and if the past is any indicator, his success is sure to only increase. {eo}

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