Social media in my opinion is the bomb-dot-com-backslash-awesome. It allows us to share our most personal thoughts, brilliant moments, and loving memories in an instant. Social media records these precious thoughts, moments, and memories as an eternal keepsake for us to look back at over the years. For instance, in the image above, I am drinking coffee in a bird cage just outside Katalina’s Café Corner because, why wouldn’t I be? Lol.

I am a sharer by nature and I love to capture the best moments in life, small and large. I have captured a few examples like this note a Starbucks barista wrote me on my morning breakfast sandwich and here I have a button with my mother standing with a cardboard cut-out of President Obama. I also have this three generation family photo where I seem to have forgotten where the camera was. ;-)

These memories make me smile. Every time they make me smile I believe that it’s the good memories that get you through the worst times. That’s why when I hear about people using social media to hate on other people, to make them feel bad, or to express hurtful or negative opinions, I think, Isn’t life hard enough? Isn’t there already enough pain inherent in the process of living? Why would we try and make it more difficult for someone to live their life? And yet, it happens.

As I mull over all those questions, my mind immediately goes to, Tyler Clementi, a Rutgers Freshman whose roommate, Dharun Ravi, used a webcam to host a viewing party. Ravi broadcasted Tyler’s and his partner’s intimate moments. Ultimately, Tyler took his own life by jumping off the Brooklyn Bridge because of this bullying and violation of privacy.

I also remember recent films like Bully and the Bully Chronicles that document the ways in which social media has been used to degrade and diminish a person’s self-confidence and desire to live.
These stories are heart wrenching and difficult to watch. Yet, they underscore a point that I believe must be illustrated: bias and hate speech are forms of bullying. They are acts of intimidation wrapped in hateful words about a person’s race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, age, veteran’s status, weight, socio-economic status, disability, and the list goes on. Two examples that I have seen recently are:

1.) Comments by two high school girls from a school in Gainesville, Florida.

2.) Shirley Phelps Roper’s (of the Westboro Baptist Church) Facebook page.

**So what do we do? What can I do? What can you do** to address bias and hate when it happens online? On Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, Google+, etc., where a comment or image can be shared and housed for everyone
to see, where simply turning on your computer screen or looking at your cellphone means you can experience a bias remark or incident at any moment of your day, how do we address the unique nature of online bias?

Here’s a short list:

1.) **Delete it.** This can be the most effective way to combat online bias. If someone posts to your Facebook page or other social media account, don’t give the remark or image room to breathe in the online environment. Just get rid of it and let that be your statement, that in your online space that kind of remark will not be tolerated.

2.) **Have an off-line conversation.** Have you ever gotten into one of those 22-comment posts where someone posted something, you said something back, then someone else responded, and said something you didn’t agree with. Then the person who originally posted said something else and all of a sudden the initial response you made has gotten completely lost in a heap of online hostility and rage? I know I’ve been there. One way to get around the confusion and misread subtexts of online messages is to talk about the online remark in person. This allows you to have face to face, real time feedback on what the remark was, and how it made you feel. It also prevents the person who made the online comment from backing out or ignoring the conversation.

3.) **Tag it with a phrase or an image.** If you can’t delete the biased remark or have an off-line conversation, make a statement by tagging the comment with something like #NOHATEATOHIOSTATE, #MICROAGGRESSION, #HATESPEECH, #BIAS, or whatever you like to express your sentiment. You can also post your own image, I just found the following on Google image search:

![No Hate Campaign, Human Rights Campaign Symbol, and an image of the Million Man March](image)

4.) **Flood it.** This has to do with the number of times you choose to respond. If you want to make a stronger point that hate will not be tolerated, ask your close friends to post an image or a hashtag against that biased or hate filled comment. Make a point that this has been seen and judged by that person’s community of friends to be unacceptable.

5.) **Reflect back.** If you want to have an online discussion about a person’s biased comments, one of the most effective tools to combat bias is to reflect back the person’s comments or feelings by asking questions. This is often times more effective than arguing because you aren’t trying to win by being more persuasive or being “right.” Often when we do this, our comments go from being about the bias incident to a protracted argument that eventually tapers off into nothing. Some simple questions to ask when you see a biased remark are:

   a. “What are you doing here?”
b. “I am sorry I don’t understand what you are saying, what do you want me to know in posting this?”

c. “Is your intent to hurt me in posting this?”

d. “Are you saying it is okay to hate someone because they are x, y, or z? If so, I can’t get behind that.”

These questions help focus everyone’s attention on the biased comment or image. This reduces the amount of judgment that a person might have read into your reaction which helps to keep them from arguing with you and makes them focus on their own statement.

6.) **Report it.** If you come across something that you find hateful or biased, report it to the website you found it on. Almost all major social networking sites have their own bylaws that forbid the posting of certain content. Facebook for example states:

a. You will not bully, intimidate, or harass any user.

b. You will not post content that: is hateful, threatening, or pornographic; incites violence; or contains nudity or graphic or gratuitous violence

If you encounter bias online, I hope that these tips help you better respond to incidents of bias. These are of course not the only ways that you can interrupt online bias, but if you are at a loss, they can be useful in a pinch.

As always, if this is something that happens at Ohio State I encourage you to document and report bias at http://studentlife.osu.edu/bias. If you watched the Bully Chronicles Trailer they mention that, “evidence changes everything.” Sometimes we have to show people how they look to others to help them understand the impact of their words and statements.

Let’s keep social media a space that helps us remember the joy in life! #NoHATE@OHIOSTATE