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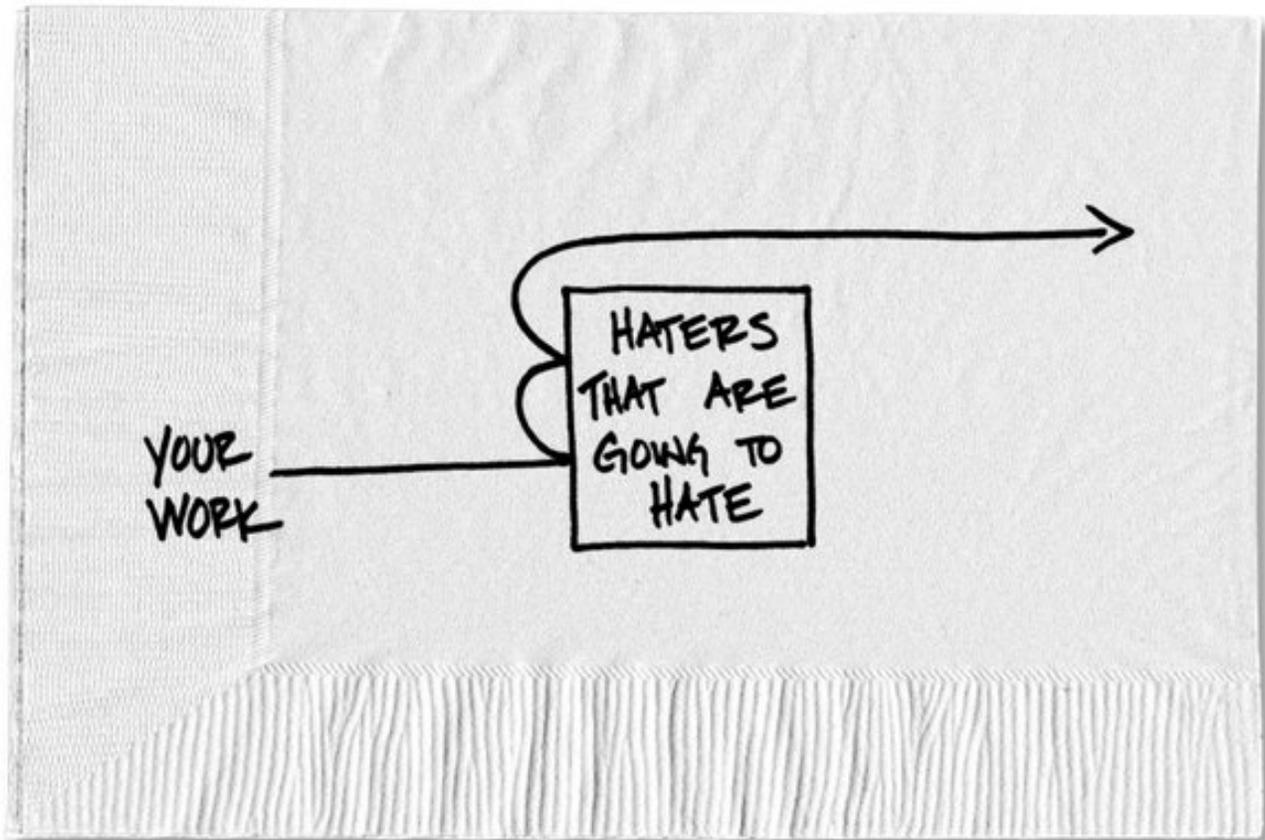


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SKETCH GUY

# Learning How to Deal With the Haters



CARL RICHARDS

By CARL RICHARDS

MARCH 21, 2016

We all like to act as if we're immune to the vitriol of haters. It's almost cool to pretend that it doesn't affect us, like we're all bulletproof and have some kind of armor against it.

And while that might be a helpful coping mechanism, it's not really true for most of

us. The truth is that this stuff really hurts. What's more, if you don't deal with it in the proper way, it can have a major impact on your ability to do work that matters in the world.

I was displaying some of my sketches recently at a fantastic community art center, the [Center of Creative Arts](#) in St. Louis. There were a couple of events, and [Once Films](#) was there to help capture the show.

While the film crew set up, I wandered over to a table near the gallery entrance and noticed a guest book. It was set up so people could comment on the work. I remember thinking, "Oh, this will be great. I can't wait to see what people think of my work," and I opened the book.

Most people would just write their names, where they were from and a friendly or positive comment. But what stuck out most were three not-so-nice reviews. Chris Ryan, a principal and producer/director at Once Films, came over to me as I sat there reading and rereading these three comments. I said, "Can you believe this?" and started reading them out loud.

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I expected him to say something supportive, or to tell me not to worry about it. But instead he said, "Oh man, why don't we catch some video of you reading this, like Jimmy Kimmel's mean tweets?" You may have seen these videos, in which the Mr. Kimmel, the talk-show host, has people read mean tweets about themselves on the air. [One of my favorites is President Obama's](#), but Jimmy has had a lot of people do it, and they're all excellent and funny.

So I said "O.K.," and I read those mean comments. Here's the result.

Carl Richards Reads Mean Comments



Carl Richards Reads Mean Comments  
VIDEO BY BEHAVIORGAP

I might look like I'm unaffected by the whole thing. You may see some of that armor I was talking about. But I wasn't taking it lightly at all. Inside, I was really upset.

I've dealt with a lot of public criticism, because I do a lot of public work. So you would think that I would be immune to the "hate" by now. I'm not talking about the "hate" that you find in the Merriam-Webster dictionary. I'm talking about "hate" as defined by Urban Dictionary: "A special kind of love given to people who suck."

And while that definition is crass, that's what makes it perfect. This hate is the stuff of haters. It's mean, unconstructive and intended to cause the subject anger or pain. I didn't want it to inhibit my ability to do difficult, meaningful, creative work. Anyone who does let it get to them runs the risk of it affecting their career and income.

Consider the following possible responses:

**Ignore it.** Simply try your best not to see the hate. I should have known what I was going to see in that book, but I went and looked anyway. Don't do that. As much as you can, just turn a blind eye to the hate that you know will be there when you do something creative or controversial.

**Analyze it.** O.K., so you'll probably catch wind of the hate somehow, either through social media, blog posts or somewhere else. But when you do find yourself confronted with it, take a moment to evaluate it for any sign of constructive criticism. Usually there's not much there, but sometimes there is. So read it once, take a break, then read it again. Glean whatever you can from it to help improve your work.

**Shake it off.** This is where you might start reciting those [Taylor Swift lyrics](#). You've tried to ignore it, you've gotten what you could from the arguments you've read, so now you can just dismiss the rest of it. What's left really doesn't matter. Haters gonna hate. So shake it off.

**Deal with it.** After you've done your best to simply brush the hate aside, the painful truth is that you'll probably still find yourself bothered by the comments.

When you find yourself at this “Level 4” pain, don’t be surprised that it still hurts. If you aren’t surprised, then you won’t be shocked. And if you’re not shocked, there’s a good chance you won’t be *stopped* from doing your really important work. It’s not going to make the hate less painful, but it will help you move forward.

And that’s the important thing — move forward. I know too many people who have gone out on a limb and said to the world, “Here, I made this thing” and then gotten really negative feedback and just quit. Or maybe they toned it down, changed their rhetoric, backed off a little or capitulated. Whatever you want to call it, they gave in to the haters, and their work suffered as a result. The important thing is to avoid letting that happen. Period.

It’s impossible for you to do anything that matters on any scale and not have somebody say they don’t like it. It’s just not going to happen. The world is too big, too connected, and there are too many opinions available at a moment’s notice for meaningful work to never raise somebody else’s eyebrow. Part of dealing with this is simply reminding yourself that it’s simply part of the deal. When you sign up to do work that matters, understand that you’re also signing up to have somebody hate on it.

When it does come, don’t take it as a sign that something is wrong. Take it as a sign that something is right. It is fuel to continue your work, not a giant stop sign.

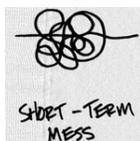
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FEB 1, 2016