



Episode 1,739: The Meme Policeman on How to Smash Low-IQ Propaganda

Guest: The Meme Policeman

WOODS: Tell me about the origins of Meme Policeman: when it happened, how you got the idea, all that stuff.

MEME POLICEMAN: Yeah, sure. Well, it happened about five years ago. I was seeing lots of friends in my feed sharing various memes. And I'd start doing research, and I'd kind of correct them and get into the typical Facebook arguments, but at that same time, you had that the promotion to start your own website through your link —

WOODS: You wanted to basically take the work you were doing smashing these people, and have it benefit more than just you and your small circle of friends, is the impression that I got. Because I'll tell you, if I were doing the kind of work you were putting in, I would want there to be an audience for the thing. And by the way, just so that everybody understands, I assume the longtime listeners know all too well what we're talking about because they've heard it 500 times. But I have this offer that if you're thinking of starting some kind of a blog or a website, as long as you click through my link to get your web hosting, which you have to get anyway and you get a pretty good deal through me, I'll help promote you on the podcast. So I'll tell people about it. I'll get you a link over there and stuff like that. And obviously, you put in a huge amount of elbow grease here, and I'm not going to take that away from you, obviously. But just so people get a sense of how this does help them, can you say a little something about well, frankly, how that helped?

MEME POLICEMAN: Yeah, exactly. So your idea was kind of the impetus for me starting the site. I was trying to think of an idea because prior to that, I had a blog. It just happened to be at that same time, I was noticing all these memes were making an appearance and kind of make me mad. And I had the idea, I went in, the first idea I typed in was MemePolice.com, and that was already taken. So I kept looking and MemePoliceman.com hadn't been taken yet, so I grabbed the site and the rest was history.

And so when I first started this site, I think I just had about 30 or so friends, 30 followers. It was very small. And then once you promoted it, it immediately jumped. All of sudden, I had 100 or 200 or so. One of the first recipients of the Tom Woods bump, I would say. And then from there, I just stuck at it, kept coming up with new meme busts. And over the years, it's grown. Now it's doing pretty well. I have over 40,000 likes on Facebook, and I'm finally starting to kind of make a difference. So each time I do a bust now, it gets significant views, which is great to have.

WOODS: Can I assume that probably most of your, I don't know, let's say energy – I'm not sure what the word is I'm looking for – is coming from Facebook rather than from the website?

MEME POLICEMAN: Yeah, when I first started out, it was more I'd do all the posts on the website. But over time, at least the busts that are shorter in nature, I just do it on a Facebook post. I break it down into bullet points and kind of do it that way. Just the nature of social media today, it's hard to even get people to click on a link. So I think I just do it with the bullet points, I get more views, more shares, and I think that has definitely happened. Occasionally, there'll be a bust that has just too much to fit on a social media post, so in those cases, I will do a website post, but yes most of the current posts are just on Facebook or Twitter threads.

WOODS: Well, it's just so much more easily shareable because it's already there. And as you say, they don't have to click through to a website. Believe me, the old man here knows how hard it is to get people on social media to click through to a website. So you're also on Twitter?

MEME POLICEMAN: Yes, I was kind of a latecomer into Twitter. Obviously, I'm a little bit long-winded for Twitter. But every post that I do or every bust I do now on the Facebook page, I will turn that into a Twitter thread as well. So if you're on Twitter, give me a follow. I'd love to have more love on Twitter. I think if I could reach the same level of audience on Twitter, we can really make some waves and get noticed.

WOODS: Well, what is your Twitter handle, though? It's not @MemePoliceman. What is it?

MEME POLICEMAN: Right, it's @PolicemanMeme.

WOODS: @PolicemanMeme. Okay, because some jerk took @MemePoliceman.

MEME POLICEMAN: Yeah, some jerk took me @PolicemanMem. I could have had @Meme_Policeman, but I decided to do @PolicemanMeme.

WOODS: Yeah, no, I think I think that's good. All right, so I just followed you. We've got to really bump you up there on Twitter, so we'll do that. Anyway, well, one other thing before we get into the real specifics of ones that you've done, what I've noticed is that here's something that probably about – I don't know if it was three or four years ago now. It's been a while, where – and I guess only Facebook people will know what we're talking about here – but Pages suddenly started in the Facebook algorithm getting a much, much smaller reach than posts on your regular Facebook timeline. So a page like yours, the Meme Policeman, or a page like my so-called fan page or a page that a rock band might have, they were just not showing up in the newsfeed for a lot of people, and now they really wanted you to pay to boost those posts or to run an ad to get your stuff in front of your people. And the thing is, we had all laboriously built up Facebook audiences, following the rules, doing what they wanted us to do. And we finally get it built up, and then they basically take the visibility away.

So for a while, I just quit on my page. I just thought this is not worth my time, so I tapped out. I had been going up and up and up all the time. I had 80,000 people on Facebook, and then for like the past three years, it's hovered around that number because I haven't bothered

to build it up. And then with the virus, I tried something. You would think that short, pithy things on Facebook are the way to go, but you've got to crack through an overwhelming algorithm that's overwhelmingly against you. So I did an extremely long post. I took one of my emails, and I posted the whole thing on Facebook, my entire email newsletter. But it was really good. I mean, it was the best antivirus thing I had ever done. It was really good. It might have been 1,500 words, and you had to click Read More to see it. And this thing got so much engagement, it was off the charts, like it blew up Facebook. And so then I tried that again, and I realized that's the secret to crack through for Pages. It's not to restrain yourself and think you have to be like Twitter when you're on Facebook. The long-form post can actually really, really draw people in. So that's my secret, and that's what I'm going to be doing in the future. So you found the same thing.

MEME POLICEMAN: Yeah, I mean, I didn't do it necessarily to beat the algorithm. I have no idea exactly how the algorithm works.

WOODS: Right, but it worked out for you, though, because when I look at your page, you're always getting good engagement.

MEME POLICEMAN: Yeah, exactly. I think also when you write a lengthy thing, as long as it's coherent and well thought-out, I think that attracts people, because so much things are just one sentence or a quick blurb, I think there's a desire out there to read something that's well thought-out and longer. Sort of like you have Joe Rogan, which is a three-hour podcast. Who would have ever thought people would tune into a three-hour-long YouTube video? But it turns out millions do, and I think in the same way, that having long Facebook posts will definitely attract a certain audience.

WOODS: Now, let's talk about some specific ones. Now, you sent me a list of some of your recent ones, but I've been following you for a while, and sometimes I'll see some meme, and I kind of know the answer but I don't really want to go to the trouble of answering every error in the universe. That was young Tom. Young, naive, Tom used to try to do that. And I don't feel like doing that anymore. So now we have young, naive Meme Policemen over here doing the work for me.

And I look at some of your responses, and I say that is clearly better than I would have done. And so it's not just I'm glad somebody is doing it. I'm glad somebody's doing it well. I'm glad somebody's doing it better than I would do. I'm not saying that — I mean, I have no particular need to flatter you. I'm just telling you that that's how I feel about it. So anyway, you sent me a list of some of the recent ones that you've done. But how about you tell me, let's start with let's say a recent one that you're particularly proud of?

MEME POLICEMAN: Yeah, sure. Well, the most recent one I would say is that the *93% peaceful protest* memes, which was everywhere probably two or three weeks ago now. I guess I'd be proud of that one because I actually had to do my own research on that. Normally, I'll just aggregate other news sources and studies and that's what I'll use, but every once in a while, I'll come across a meme that nobody else has done the research. So in this case, that was that.

So I'm sure everybody's heard and seen the *93% of protests this summer were peaceful* that was plastered everywhere. Almost every media had a source that had a line on that. And so when you dig into it, it turns out that it comes from the US Crisis Monitor, which is a joint

project at Princeton University. And essentially, it's just a database that compiles all the demonstrations since May 24th, so right around when the George Floyd incident happened.

So the first thing I noticed when I clicked through, because they have an Excel file that you can click through, which I assume basically nobody else did, because what I found — I haven't read anywhere else, but when you click on that Excel file, you'll notice that it's just a gigantic spreadsheet, and there is over 11,500 events which they are counting in those protests. So that's over 116 a day is the amount of protests. So just given that, you can see that if 7% of a giant number is not peaceful, that could be quite significant. But even on its own terms, if you look through the database, you see that 645 of the demonstrations were clearly violent. So at the time that I looked at this, that's over six per day, which if any other group had six violent demonstrations per day, that would probably be covered and not be insignificant.

WOODS: Yeah. And if there were flames, literal flames in the background, they wouldn't be making excuses for that. They'd be saying, *Hey, look at the blankety-blank flames.*

MEME POLICEMAN: And also, so 645 of the demonstrations were clearly violent, and another 400 were either protests with intervention or what they call excessive force against protesters. So another 400 were a demonstration that had to be met with police resistance for whatever reason, and that kind of got me started thinking. I'm like, what are these events? Are they actually peaceful, or are they just not directly engaging in violent activities? Because it's kind of an equivocation that I noticed many people are making there between outright violence versus peaceful. So if you're going to be occupying streets, like blocking streets off, or taking over a park so that nobody else can use the park, vandalizing, things like that, that's not peaceful, but it may not be outright definition of violence.

So that got me interested in looking into the file further, but it is overwhelming, because there's over 11,000 of these incidents, so it's just not feasible to go and look at every event and check it out. So what I did first is I went to just the Seattle CHOP Zone protests, if you remember the —

WOODS: Yeah.

MEME POLICEMAN: Yeah, the Seattle CHOP Zone was when those demonstrators essentially took over a pretty good-sized portion of downtown Seattle, where they basically stopped the police from entering, the graffiti was everywhere by the time it was over, several murders happened. It was a pretty big debacle. And when I looked through their list of the CHOP Zone protests, they had 24 events and 20 of them were classified as peaceful protest, and just one of the 24 was listed as a violent protest. It was categorized as an attack on civilians. And even with that, the one that was classified as violent wasn't associated with Black Lives Matters. So technically, you could say, if you believe this study, that 100% of the CHOP Zone protests were peaceful via Black Lives Matter protests. So that would be a truthful statement if you were taking this study and the media being — it would be a factual statement, but not truthful, of course.

WOODS: Well, then it might be interesting to ask what percentage of, let's say — I'm no cheerleader for the Republican Party, but what percentage of Republican Party protests turned violent? And I would bet it's zero. I'd be willing to bet it's zero. But if the situation were reversed and we had a society where there's one side that if it doesn't get its way it burns cities down — whether the wrong person gets voted for or this or that, or this half-truth

annoys them so they burn this or that down, they terrorize these people – we'd never hear the end of it. *Oh, my gosh, we're on the verge of fascism.* Whereas this case, they use all these excuses and they try to explain it away. Michael Malice – do you know Michael Malice? Does that name ring a bell?

MEME POLICEMAN: Yes.

WOODS: Okay, well, you know that he's pretty provocative on Twitter. So just in reference to your 93% thing, he said – I mean, he doesn't wait. If somebody dies, he doesn't feel like he has to wait more than five seconds to start saying things that would be abrasive to most people. And so he said, "Ruth Bader Ginsburg's body was 93% cancer-free." [laughing] Oh, Michael Malice, come on.

MEME POLICEMAN: Exactly. I mean, in any other arena, if you killed 1% of the people you associate with, you'd be considered a murder, not 99% non-murderer.

WOODS: Right, exactly.

MEME POLICEMAN: If you steal 5% of the stores you walk into, you're a thief; you're not mostly a law-abiding –

WOODS: Yeah, 95% a great guy, right [laughing].

MEME POLICEMAN: So 7% is not insignificant thing, even on its own terms. But what I was trying to show that I found nobody else really looked into is that, even in the ones that were considered peaceful, it's dubious at best, particularly the ones –

WOODS: Yeah.

MEME POLICEMAN: And there were other – so they have several different categories that they broke this thing into, and one was called "Change to Group," which is kind of confusing. It doesn't sound like much, but the definition for that that they give is "activities of violent groups that is not itself recorded as political violence." So I also looked through the weekend of May 29th to May 31st, which is the first weekend after the George Floyd incident, and that was when the protests were at its height, I would say, all over the country. And that weekend alone, there were 67 instances that were classified as Change to Group, and those were considered peaceful. So the bulk of those were where the National Guard was called out or a curfew was issued, generally because the night or the prior nights had resulted in mass violence and looting and things like that. So they'd issue a curfew or bring the National Guard in, but those were considered to be peaceful protests. So that kind of shows you just one area where it kind of renders the whole list in doubt.

But the problem is, again, with over 11,000 events, it's just too hard to dig into every one, so I could only do small sections here and there, but I think I've kind of poked enough holes that I don't think anybody should take even the 93% thing at face value.

WOODS: All right, so I think that gives people a good example of how much depth you go into, the work you put in, the detail, because you weren't just aggregating – which would have been enough, by the way – things other people have been saying and then just making them

conveniently available. You were doing your own hard work on that, and that's really tremendous.

But pick, let's say – now again, normally I would look through and I'd say, "Well, how about this one?" But I don't know, you're the one who's putting all this work in, man. You know what you're most proud of. Let's talk about a different topic where you did some smash, and tell us what it was and how you addressed it.

MEME POLICEMAN: Well, if we go back to say, August, there was a flurry of these post office memes, you might remember. It's almost funny, because things move so fast, it seems like ancient news. But for probably a week, maybe two weeks, they were everywhere. I mean, it was full-on conspiracy theory, essentially, from many on the left about how the post office was – there was memes about 671 machines removed from postal facilities. You had memes that showed post office boxes with red locks on it. And it was just they were everywhere and creating this hysteria that the post office was involved in some scheme with the election.

So first, let's take the ones about the reduction in all the machines and the mail processing machines. So a lot of people don't exactly understand how much mail the post office processes and that relating to elections. So if all 140 million people, which is how many voted last election, voted by mail, that would just be 30% of the mail volume for one day. So that's if everybody sent their ballot in on one day, it would only be 30% of the mail volume for one day. So already, you can kind of see that it's a relatively small burden for the post office to process.

So regarding the machines being removed, it turns out that those plans were already in place. So I linked to a study – or not a study, it was called a five-year plan, which was issued under the previous postmaster, Megan Brennan – because most of the conspiracies kind of involved the new postmaster, but it turns out that these things happened under the previous one. And if you read through that document, essentially, they list the reasons for this, which in the last couple decades, mail volume has consistently declined. You know, a lot less letters are being sent, and with that, they just don't need as many machines to process it. They don't need as many employees. And with that, they had this plan to cut back, and it was perfectly reasonable given that the post office was losing billions of dollars a year and they're trying to transition to a system where they were doing more package delivery to keep up with Amazon. Last Mile Delivery is what they call it. So this had a perfectly reasonable explanation, and did not support the hysteria that these memes had. So I broke that down in one bust.

Another one, as far as those lockboxes, probably the most popular meme was one that showed a mailbox in Burbank that had a red cover on it. And from the meme, it was like they had put this cover on to prevent people from dropping things in the mail or something. But it turns out that those covers date back to 2016 before Trump, and they were security measures to prevent what's called phishing, which is where people would go in and steal mail from these mailboxes. So they'd been there for years. They would normally be put on after the last pickup of the day, and then they'd be removed the following morning. And it so happened that this picture was taken and posted on Twitter, I believe on Sunday, so that would probably explain why it had the lockbox on. So from that, I mean, again, a perfectly innocent explanation, but by that time, the memes had already gone crazy and everybody had this narrative that the post office had had some conspiracy.

And it's not insignificant either, because with the HEROES Act, which is the precursor after the CARE stimulus act, actually includes \$25 billion in post office funding, which was probably going to be fought by Republicans. But after this whole hoopla with the post office, it actually caused Trump to say that he wouldn't actually veto anything just because it included post office funding. So these memes actually do have much more impact than some people might think in the political arena, just by creating this hysteria. I mean, it could literally translate into \$25 billion in funding for the post office. So that was interesting.

And then along with that – Again, this was like a two-week period of just all these crazy post office memes. But then the other one was they were comparing the post office to FedEx sending letters. You'd have a meme saying, "Hey, I can send a letter for 55 cents, but if I sent a letter by FedEx, it would cost me \$25."

WOODS: [laughing] Yeah, why do you think that is? Why? So what's the answer?

MEME POLICEMAN: Yeah, well, I'm not sure some people even think that through. I think a lot of people just assume FedEx is expensive and the post office is great at delivering mail, but they don't realize that it's illegal for competitors to send letters or use mailboxes. And so what I did for that bust was I didn't use some right-wing or even libertarian source that went into the post office. I used the 2007 report from the Federal Trade Commission, where the government itself put together a report that was called Accounting for Laws That Apply Differently to the United States Postal Service and Its Private Competitors. So this was essentially a document where the government itself laid out that the post office had a monopoly.

So what they say here, I'm going to quote, it says, "Congress has granted the US Postal Service two monopolies. First, the USPS enjoys a monopoly over the delivery of letters, which includes personal correspondence, bills, postcards, and advertising. Second, the USPS also enjoys the exclusive right to access citizens' mailbox. In addition to the monopolies by virtue of its status as a federal government entity, the USPS is exempt from certain state, local, and legal requirements, such as taxes and licensing."

So I mean, the government itself admits that they have a monopoly, and then that document goes on to list the exemptions where the competitors can compete. So, for instance, private entities can send a letter if it's more than 12.5 ounces, which is a really big letter. And also, if they charge six times or more the cost of first class mail or if it's labeled Extremely Urgent. So just given that, I mean, it's obviously not a level playing field when you cannot charge less than six times the cost of your competitor. Of course, FedEx can't come in and deliver mail for the same price.

But in that report, they also – again, this is quoting the government – "If competition was allowed, it is feared that entrants would undercut the US Postal Service prices to low-cost customers, leaving USPS to serve only high-cost customers." So they actually admit that if companies were allowed to compete, particularly in urban areas, there would be entrants that would likely undercut what the post office was charging, and the only business they would be able to keep is in the rural and high-cost areas.

WOODS: Well, it sounds to me like you put in a lot of work and time into this, so this is, to some degree, a labor of love. But on the other hand, something's got to give at some point. Do you have a Patreon or some kind of way for people to support you in this?

MEME POLICEMAN: Yeah, I do have a Patreon, as well as I take donations on PayPal as well. So yeah, I always appreciate support with that, as well as I get messages almost daily from people just telling me that it's one of their favorite sites on Facebook or things along that line. So that along with the Patreon support keeps me going, because as you can imagine, it is sort of a thankless task at times. It seems like no matter how much you combat it, there's just a never-ending flood of insanity in the meme world.

WOODS: Well, let me say something. There's a quotation that was attributed to Mark Twain over 100 years ago, but nobody can actually track it down. Either it's "A lie travels around the globe while the truth is putting on its shoes," or "A lie can travel halfway around the world before the truth can get its boots on." But you get the idea. And really, you are the truth putting on its shoes, really, like you're the one doing this for us. Well, these lies are trying to get going. Ordinarily, we would just be sitting there, running around, individually trying to answer, but now you've got something in many cases of falsehood where people can just easily share it. And it's attractive looking. It's graphic. It's got the word *False* stamped on it. It's really, really effective, and it's just what we need. So I hope people will support you. I'll put the information for that also at TomWoods.com/1739. And obviously, I'll put your website, MemePoliceman.com and how people can get over there and like that Facebook page and start sharing your material. That's the top thing. Share that material.

MEME POLICEMAN: If I could say one thing about when I labeled things false or misleading?

WOODS: Yeah.

MEME POLICEMAN: Because that's kind of one of my things. So when I put *False* or *Misleading* over a meme, it's not like a dictate from heaven saying like I'm the arbiter of truth declaring this false. And that's not what any fact checker should be. It should not be like a dictate saying, *Hey, this is false. This is misleading.* What I am doing is laying out what I have found in researching that topic, so if I say false, it means everything I've looked at I've determined that this is false, and here's why and here are the sources that I list. But it doesn't mean that somebody could show me something that could prove me wrong, and in that case, I'll be happy to retract it or update the post.

So I think that's important with any of the fact-checking sites, which unfortunately it's kind of, with Facebook now attaching fact checks, to memes now, you need to do your own research. And what I do is I help you and bring you down that path. But ultimately, the truth is what the facts of reality are, and it's the fact checker's job to get you closer to the truth. But we're not the arbiter of truth.

WOODS: Well, very good. Again, I appreciate the work you're doing, and I'm glad that I was able to give you a little boost early on with the publicity thing. So I remind people, if you want to get a little boost from me and you're thinking of starting a website, just click on my link to get your web hosting and get a good price on it. And I'll help promote you, which is the big fear when you start a website, as I've said, is that you start it and then tumbleweeds go by. There's nobody there to go see it. So I'm going to solve that major problem for you. And I'm glad to have been there at the beginning of Meme Policeman because it's done so much good. TomWoods.com/publicity is where you can go to find out the details of how I can help you, but this one I'm really particularly proud of, and I'm glad we had a chance to talk today. Continued good luck to you.

MEME POLICEMAN: Thanks for having me on. It's been an honor.