

An Open Letter to the Brony Community

written by mbulsht

Wednesday, April 27th, 2011

Fellow Bronies,

I don't pretend to be any sort of expert on fandoms or fans. I fully realize that this note will likely fade into oblivion with only a few views and fewer responses. I'm not such an egotist that I believe my opinions are really important, but somehow I'm compelled to write this out. And I'll be satisfied if at least one brony out there reads this. And for those of you who find WALLS OF TEXT a little daunting, then I'll put in a nice little TL;DR in **bolded text** at the end. Just for you.

Let me first say that I absolutely love the community that you've built here. The amount of time and effort put into everything, from fanart and fanfiction, to the blogs and -chans, is nothing short of amazing. As a massive fan of the new My Little Pony show, there was something incredible (or, dare I say, *magical*) about discovering the online community of the bronies, a community as devoted to the show as I am. And what devotion! We have Sethisto over at Equestria Daily, running an awesome blog with news, fan creations, and everything else in between. We've got Ponychan, our very own message board away from /b/ and /co/, where we can discuss our favorite show amongst ourselves. We have Derpy Mail, taking a hilarious fan joke to the extreme and creating a web service out of it. We even have our own social network now down at Rainbowdash.net.

But even more amazing than the fansites are the fans themselves. Taking the show's morals to heart, fans across the world welcome new members to the fandom with internet hugs, words of friendship, and a bombardment of pictures about love, peace, and rainbows. I recall the first day of my life as a brony. I discovered synchtube, and the awesome /filly and /yaridovich channels. I'll never forget it. I logged on, and messaged everyone with a formal greeting. "Hello!" I said. "I'm new to this fandom, and my name's mbulsht!"

And what a wave of warmth I experienced. The chat exploded with words of welcome. "Welcome to the Herd!" "OMG welcome!" "How are you? Do you like the show?" So many gestures of happiness, so many questions, I couldn't even keep up with them. I was literally *overwhelmed by friendship*. I very nearly teared up right then and there. This was the fandom for me, I thought. I had found it. I was home.

A fandom where I could enjoy a kids television show and not be ridiculed for it. A fandom where I could discuss my feelings, my life experiences, and people would listen

and share their own stories. A fandom where I could be me; my whole, pure, unadulterated self.

But now I feel a small thrill of fear for our community. A dark cloud lies on the horizon, and even now I fight to find the silver lining.

I am speaking, of course, of Hate.

Hate has no place here. Not in a community devoted to a show which explicitly teaches us that the ideals of “friendship” are synonymous with “magic.” I, as a fan of this show, refuse to accept hate in our community. I’ll accept hate in 4chan, where one can post behind the dubious anonymity of the internet, where there is no word filter and users can freely question each other’s intelligence with offensive language. I’ll accept hate on Xbox Live, where headshots abound and five-year-olds can call me a “faggot.” Hell, I’ll accept hate on Facebook, where people know my name and can easily find, post, and tag me in horrendously embarrassing pictures.

But not here. Not with my little ponies.

This little letter I’m writing comes from my response to the comments that have stemmed from a few blog posts I’ve frequented on Equestria Daily.

The first was a fanfiction that went up back in March. I won’t name it, and if you’re really curious, Sethisto put up a post later retracting the story and apologizing for posting it. The story was basically about two MLP characters murdering fanfiction authors who wrote poor shipping fics. The story was clearly homophobic and reflected the author’s aversion to the lesbian pairings often found in shipping fics for MLP.

The posting of this fic sparked an outrage among shipping fans, and the later blog post retracting the story had a long string of comments that repeatedly boiled down to arguments about shipping, posts that resorted to needless name-calling, and some less-than-nice discussion about homosexuality.

And while I condemn the writing of this fic (I am a fan of some shipping, I admit), what I am more disappointed in is the number of fans who posted on the two posts, arguing back at the author. What is it that people always say on the message boards? What is that ideal that is touted mercilessly among fans? Has everybody forgotten? Do I really have to say it?

I suppose I do.

Don’t feed the parasprites.

Don’t encourage trolls. It only serves to feed their need to troll us. And by no means am I saying that the author of that fic was a troll. For all I know, he believed he was writing a legitimate satire piece, and I mean no offense to him (please forgive me, if you are reading this, mister author). But the comments that were made about his story, the ones that either argued in defense of it or condemned it, only served to divide us further.

There will always be trolls. There will always be /b/tards who post on our fansites,

telling us we are manchildren and questioning our sexuality. But we must do what we have always done. We love and tolerate them. And if we find that we personally cannot do that, then we ignore them. Eventually they go away. If a troll decides to post something about his or her perceived notion of faggotry, then let it be autosaged by the mods and let it slowly die without any response.

I recall an instance a few months ago: I was sitting on one of the synchtube channels when someone logged in and called us all faggots. I sat there, watching the chat, waiting for somebody to type something back. Nobody did. In fact, the conversations that had been going on simply continued as though he hadn't said anything at all. A few minutes later, he tried again with the same results. Every single person on the channel completely ignored him. After about fifteen minutes, he realized he wasn't getting anywhere and logged off. To this day, I have never seen his username pop up in the chat ever again.

The second post on Equestria Daily which I am referring too is a post that went up yesterday (Tuesday, April 26th) regarding the synchtube channel /yaridovich. Sethisto posted about the channel in the hopes of getting newcomers to join in on the fun over at synchtube. It was a nice little post, and I'm sure it got synchtube alot more hits. But what I'm more concerned with are the comments. Almost immediately the comments section devolved into a small flame war about which synchtube channel was the best. There was also conversation regarding new users, and many veteran synchtubers expressed a dislike for the influx of new bronies to the site.

Now maybe I'm a little out of line when I say this, but are we really this silly? Are we really going to argue heatedly about *which synchtube channel is better*? How does something like that even matter? And furthermore, does there really need to be this much name-calling over something so trivial? And you synchtubers who've been around for a while, shouldn't you be happy to welcome new users? I realize that perhaps this recent migration may have filled the channels a little sooner than usual, but is it really that hard to make another channel? Do we really need to complain about this to such an extent?

Perhaps I'm being a little extreme, but when I saw these comments, I lost a little faith in this wonderful community. Where was that warm welcome that I got when I joined? Were these newfoals not going to be able to experience that warmth that I did? What made them so different? Forgive me, but I simply don't understand.

And the last post I wish to talk about happened this morning. It was a post about some brony over on ponychan who was drawing out cool designs for hypothetical pony hoodies. I thought they were pretty cool, and alot of other fellow bronies thought so as well. But the comments that really caught my eye were the ones referring to "furries."

There were actually bronies spouting hatred towards furry fans on a comments thread in a MLP blog.

You know what, I'm even going to quote one. I'm sorry if this offends anyone, but I think people need to see this one. It was posted anonymously. It read:

"You furry lovers are the cancer killing MLP. gb2 furaffinity"

I stopped right there and read the comment a few times. Here was a fan of a show that teaches us about love and acceptance, sitting at his computer and telling a portion of the fanbase that they didn't deserve to be a part of the community.

And this is nothing new, there are plenty of users who post on Ponychan loudly proclaiming their aversion to furies and furry fans.

I simply refuse to believe that this is the same community I fell in love with. I did not join a community that bases itself around love and tolerance to read comments that push hate and intolerance. We have a word for that. You know what we call that?

Hypocrisy.

But don't misunderstand me. I don't mean to take shots at people in the fandom. I'm just trying to make a point. I'm trying to warn you. This fanbase has always upheld itself as being welcoming to everyone. Love and tolerance, guys. Let's not throw that away. We've got a good thing going here and I don't think anyone wants to flush it down the toilet. Let us not revert to the ways of 4chan, or any other major social sites like that. Let us no longer hide behind the anonymity of the internet so we can take shots at other people. That's not what we are about, right? Let's tear down the hate.

This is a warning. If we continue down this path, you can be sure that our fanbase will crumble. People will be afraid to join, children will leave us, and many users fed up with the politics will leave as well. We will become a niche community, and the Herd will cease to grow. And we all know what happens when the Herd halts its growth.

The Herd dies.

I think I speak for everyone when I say I don't want that.

"But Mbulsht," you are probably saying. "You're just a guy like them too! You're just hiding behind a username and blaming others for the shortcomings of the fanbase!"

And you know what, you're absolutely right. So here's what I'm going to do. This is an "open" letter, and I'm going to be very "open." You want to know just what kind of person is writing this? Fine. I'll tell you.

Here goes.

My name is Ben Sims (yup, that's my real name). I'm 21 years old and I live in San Jose, California. I'm a guy just like you. I love My Little Pony, I go to school, and I play video games. You know what else? I like furies. That's right. I enjoy looking at pictures of anthropomorphised animals. I also love MLP shipping. I'm a fan of Dash/AJ. And guess what, I also read clopfics. And I enjoy them.

So there you are. I'm that "furfag" you hate. I'm that shipping fan you want to kill

in your fanfics. I'm that freak who reads the stuff on Equestria After Dark. That's right. I'm *that* guy.

But you know what, I don't believe that makes me any less of a person. And if you have such a big problem with that that you feel the need to put me down for it, then maybe you should lean back from your keyboard, close your eyes, and wonder if you really know the meaning of the word "tolerance." Please, at least do it for the children who frequent our fansites.

Alright, that's it. I'm done ranting. I really hope you'll forgive me if I've offended you.

There's just one more group of people I'd like to address. I'm looking at you, trolls. I know you're there, lurking. I know that you're poised, ready to post a three letter comment on whatever site I've posted this on. I know you want to say it.

But before you call me a fag in the comments section, I'd like you to stop. You can still comment if you want, but I'm going to do you one better. I'm going to make this easier for you. How, you ask? Well....

bandgeek@goowy.com

BAM. There it is. That's my email. If you feel the need to resort to your offensive name-calling, then here, take this. You can go straight to the source. Pour out all your hate on me if you really want. Don't think I can take it? Try me. I'm giving you a nice fat target here. But don't ruin it for others by posting it in the comments section. There are children here.

You know what else? That email isn't just some throwaway spam account. That's my email I use for college. That means if you send something, I actually have to read it. And I will. That's my promise from me to you. I'll read every troll post you throw at me. Hell, I might even reply to some of them. I'm serious. Go ahead. Give me your best shot. Come at me, bro. I'll show you how a real Brony takes a serious trolling.

I'm going to love and tolerate the shit out of you.

TL;DR: Yeah I know it was really long, but here's the recap for those who don't want to read alot:

The MLP Fanbase is no place for hate and name-calling. It is a place for love and tolerance. Just because somebody likes something you don't doesn't make it wrong. We as a community need to learn to be accepting of other fans, from the furies to the shippers, the clopfic writers to just plain old MLP fans. Because at the end of the day, we all share a love for My Little Pony: Friendship is

Magic.

Deep down inside, we are all Bronies.

And believe me when I say, that even though I don't know all of you, and even though I may never meet most of you, I love you.

I love you guys.

Sincerely yours,

-Ben Sims

(mbulsht)