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PDB CURATOR



IMMODEST PROPOSAL ([HTTP://WWW.OZY.COM/IMMODEST-PROPOSAL](http://www.ozy.com/immodest-proposal))

## CAFE OWNERS SHOULD BUILD A WALL — AGAINST LAPTOPS

### WHY YOU SHOULD CARE

Enjoying a public cuppa used to be about good taste and conversation. Keyboard clacking has got to go.

By Tracy Moran (<http://www.ozy.com/ozy-tribe/tracy-moran/30417>)

THE DAILY DOSE FEB 12 2017

“Cafes used to be a place where you could go and talk to people about literature, art and even score a date,” New York–based marketer Shahzeb Shahzeb complains. But these days? All you hear is typing, he says. Which is why he no longer bothers going.

Having first fallen in love with coffee (<http://www.ozy.com/good-sht/the-mecca-for-coffee-in-the-coffee-mecca/2815>) in a Parisian cafe, I tend to agree that the perfect coffee shop experience (<http://www.ozy.com/immodest-proposal/how-i-learned-to-stop-worrying-and-love-the-bucks/1592>) should entail finely brewed grounds, lively chats, people-watching and maybe even scoring dates. Sure, free Wi-Fi is handy for occasionally checking email or catching news alerts about World War III. But I say it’s time we build a wall ... between today’s era of coffee shops doubling as laptop havens and the good ol’ days. Let’s send home all those screen-lit faces who park all day, nursing a lousy coffee in return. Get the hell out of our cafes, rent office space or go to the library — but leave coffee shops to those of us who want to be loud, drink, flirt and gawk.

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# WE ARE COMMITTED TO CREATING A TRUE PARISIAN EXPERIENCE FOR ALL THE SENSES.

And if the clientele’s experience doesn’t faze you, what about the poor staffers? Those waiters and waitresses aren’t constantly asking whether you need anything to be nice; they’re fed up with you using their tip-worthy tables for a measly three bucks all day. When Laurent Vrignaud first opened Moulin Bistro venues in Laguna Beach and Newport Beach, his French-style cafes were flooded with laptop-laden guests working for hours on end. “In the U.S., cafes are about social media; in France, cafes are about the social experience,” he says. And he didn’t like how typists would order something small and sit for hours, leaving new guests with nowhere to sit. Committed to creating a true Parisian experience for all the senses, Vrignaud made changes to provide an environment where people would want to stay and socialize.

Now, “when you step into Moulin, you step into Paris,” he says. Instead of being bombarded by laptops, “you’ll find a young couple’s romance budding over a shared artisan patisserie, old men telling stories between sips of espresso and friends from all walks of life gathering to connect.” The ace up his sleeve? A weak Wi-Fi signal.

Sure, not everyone agrees that kicking out laptopppers is a good plan. Alison Blackman, a New York-based lifestyle editor, for example, sympathizes with cafe owners but points out that unemployed patrons count on the free public Wi-Fi in a warm, inviting environment. “I know a lot of people who are out of work, and literally homeless, who have to use internet cafes and free Wi-Fi at the local coffee shop to apply for jobs or send résumés,” she says, noting that libraries are not always as readily available. She also says that we shouldn’t pooh-pooh the internet-based social interaction taking place in cafes. “It might not be verbal, but it connects people” worldwide, many of whom would have no access any other way, she explains.

So perhaps an outright ban is a bit premature. But I’m happy to adjust: This being an era of non-PC, outdated political solutions (http://www.ozy.com/fast-forward/how-to-teach-history-in-a-world-of-alternate-facts/74929), we can go for segregation instead — in this case isolating the laptop-wielding masses. Indeed, some coffee shop owners already fight back with degrees of separation. Quantum Coffee in Toronto, for example, adorns half of its tables with “No Laptop” signs, and while this means that three or four people often get crammed into the laptop-friendly tables, there’s always plenty of room for nontyping patrons who want to sit with friends and chat.

IT'S THE SMART DAILY BRIEF HEAD OZY BECAUSE...

143 SHARES Or perhaps we could have laptop-friendly coffee shops, and those where you check your devices at the door — a bit like throwing your keys in a basket at parties in the 1970s. Oh, wait, that may have been less about getting a few drinks and more about scoring dates.

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Behind the wheel, the Aloha State doesn't look all that sunny anymore.

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