

nick denton

by Zoe Hansen



presentation overview:

01.

TIMELINE (ISH) OF DENTON AND GAWKER

His role in media and cultural

02.

**WHAT MADE HIM AND GAWKER
SIGNIFICANT?**

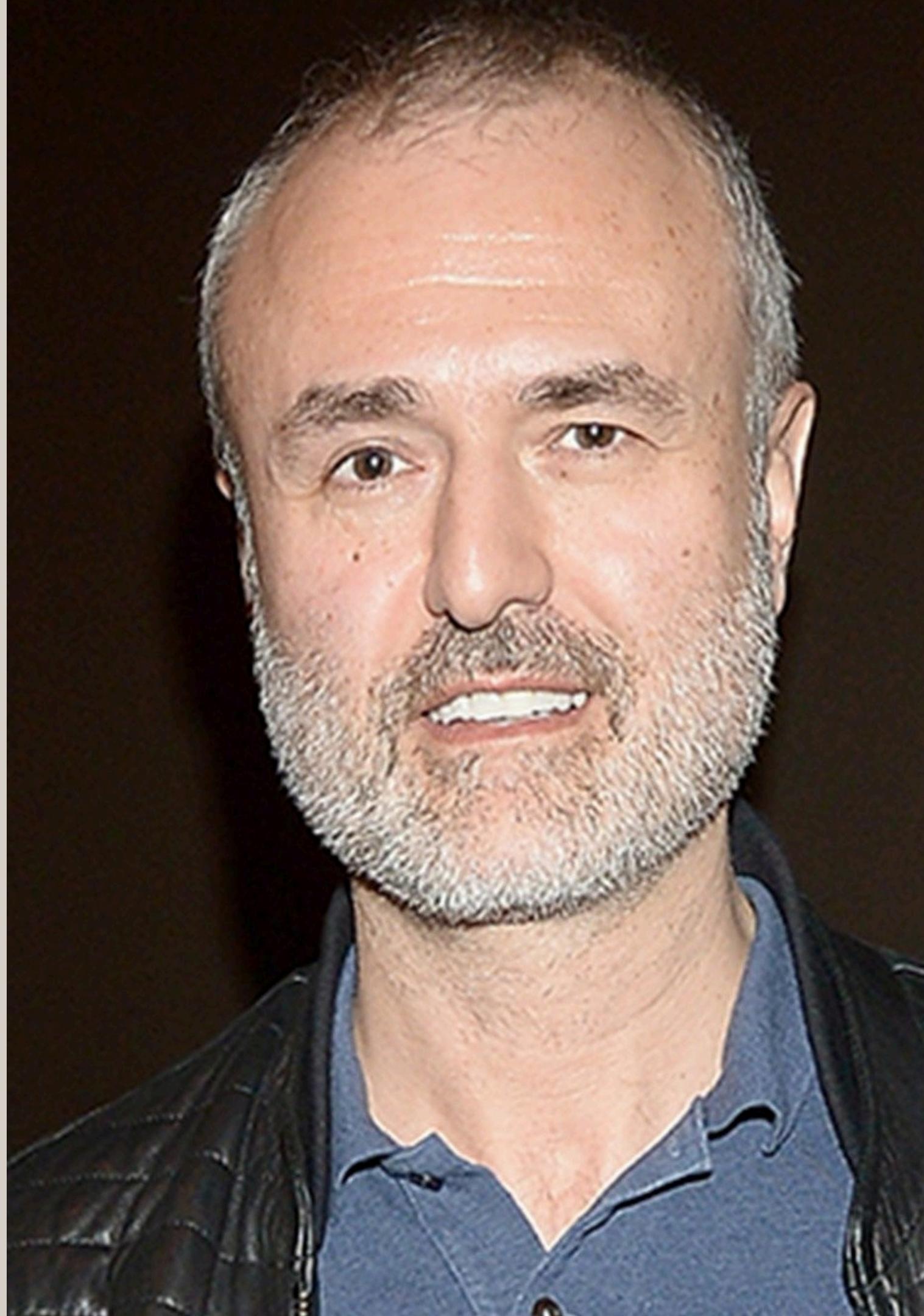
Unique things they did

03.

**WHAT LASTING IMPACTS DID HE MAKE
ON JOURNALISM?**

Where can we see them?





nick denton's lore:

Born August 24, 1966

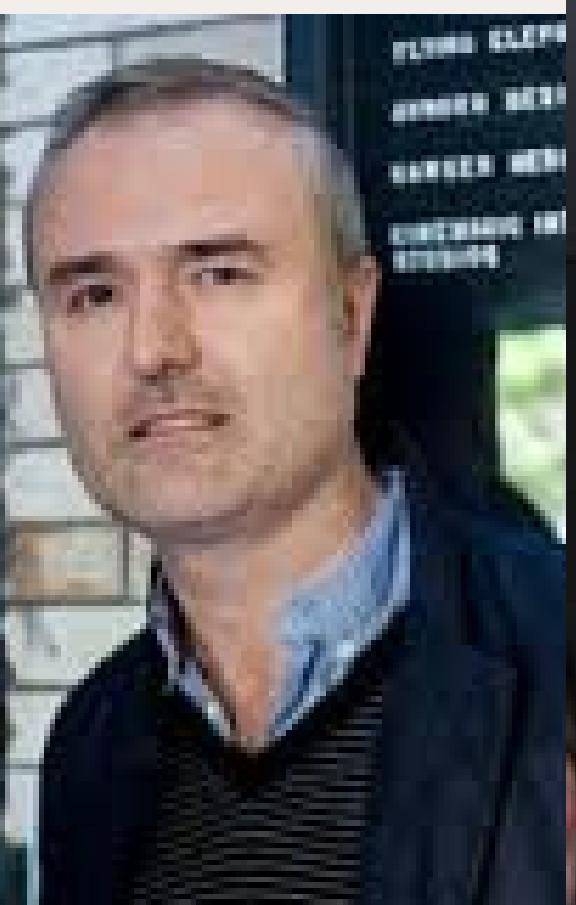
- London, UK

Education:

- University College School,
- University College,
- Oxford
 - studied Politics, Philosophy, Economics
 - *The Isis Magazine*

Work:

- Covered banking for the Financial Times, London
- Covered the tech industry, San Francisco
- 1998 - Cofounded *First Tuesday* with friends, sold it for lots of money 2 years later





2002 – Gawker cofounded by
Nick Denton & Elizabeth Spiers

Original Goal:

“...to be a snarky insidery blog
with a focus on New York City and
a long satirical streak, à la Spy
magazine or Britain’s Private Eye.”

-Elizabeth Spiers 2023

Early Article:

Trucker hats as an important
sociological artifact of the
gentrification of Brooklyn

GAWKER (rise and peak)

- **Fearlessness turns to Recklessness**

2006 – “Gawker Stalker Maps”

2007 – “Peter Thiel is totally gay, people”

2011 – “The Underground Website Where You Can Buy Any Drug Imaginable”

2015 – Gawker becomes the first online-only media outlet to unionize

Peter Thiel is totally gay, people

Owen Thomas
12/19/07 7:05pm - Filed to: EXCLUSIVE

317K



By now, you've likely heard how Peter Thiel parlayed a \$500,000 investment in Facebook to a stake now worth \$750 million. There's been a crush of coverage on his [\\$220 million Founders Fund](#), which may well change the way entrepreneurs [get paid in the Valley](#). We know about his mansion (he rents it — clever!), his butler, his early-morning jogs. But what no one ever says out loud: Thiel is gay.

The Underground Website Where You Can Buy Any Drug Imaginable



Adrian Chen

06/01/11 03:20PM Filed to: EXCLUSIVE



3.06M



It's Amazon—
if Amazon sold
mind-altering
chemicals.



Drugs(343)
Cannabis(57)
Weed(9)
Hash(3)
Seeds(2)
Ecstasy(27)
Dissociatives(9)
Psychedelics(63)
Opiates(12)
Stimulants(13)
Other(159)
Lab Supplies(2)
Digital goods(12)
Services(19)

title	price	seller	ship to	ship from	
Early Outdoor x Congolese Sativa (Cannabis Seeds)	\$2.18	P4r4b014(98)	International	Canada	add to cart
Early Male x Chunky Monkey Cut (Cannabis Seeds)	\$2.18	P4r4b014(98)	International	Canada	add to cart
Early Nepalese Sativa (cannabis seeds)	\$7.78	P4r4b014(98)	International	Canada	add to cart
1/8oz (3.5g) of Sour 13	\$7.63	1UP of Canada(97)	Worldwide	Canada	add to cart
1/8oz (3.5g) of the infamous Jack Herer	\$8.72	1UP of Canada(97)	Worldwide	Canada	add to cart
1/8oz of dark Afghan hash M.T.V. stamp 4 rockstars	\$11.99	1UP of Canada(97)	Worldwide	Canada	add to cart



GAWKER (the fall)

2012 - "Even for a Minute, Watching Hulk Hogan Have Sex in a Canopy Bed is Not Safe For Work but Watch it Anyway"



interactive media

“You’re supposed to be able to touch it,
and it’s supposed to be able to talk back to you,
and you’re supposed to be able to talk to it.”

-Nick Denton 2015

Comment Sections:

- Readers’ comments published on website
- Interaction with writers

“Joshing” on Staff:

- Articles making fun of employees
- Response Articles / Published back-and-forth between writers

independence & private ownership

As of 2015,

- ~90% of shares held by insiders to Gawker
- Readership of 120 million
- Revenue of \$45 million

Inspired by how private ownership has set the basis for independent journalism in past traditional media companies

- Ran Gawker as a partnership

outsider perspective

Nick Denton emphasized the importance that Gawker be or come from the perspective of outsiders

- Readers are outsiders to the media industry
- Gawker's primary obligation is to serve its readers

Deadspin

- Under Denton: "Sports News Without Access, Favor, or Discretion"
- Now: "Sposts News Without Fear, Favor or Compromise"
- No official sources or relationships with companies like ESPN or the NFL, so free to report on sports however
- "investment hangs over you"

unionization

Gawker was the 1st online-only media company to unionize

- Writers Guild of America
- 2015

“A promising beacon for the US labor movement”

–Association for Union Democracy

“Kicked off” a wave of digital media unionization

–Culture Workers Organize

Uniqueness of Union Contract:

- Set minimum salaries
- Guaranteed 3% raises each year
- Editorial independence
 - editorial content decisions to be made by editorial side only
- Notably, many more Gawker employees showed up to bargaining sessions than is usual

discussion questions:

01. Do we think Denton's impact has been good or bad overall?
02. Is there anything about the online publication landscape that stands out to you as something that could have been shaped by the early example of Gawker?
03. Would you work for Nick Denton?

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- 2017 Netflix Documentary: "Nobody Speak: Trials of the Free Press"
- 2015 Code Media Podcast Episode (interview): Gawker Media boss and owner Nick Denton
- 2015 Conspiracy Theories Episodes (parts 1 and 2): "The Silk Road"