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Statement on Censorship of San Francisco State University's Panel Discussion

[Centre for Free Expression Working Group on Intellectual Freedom](#)

(Toronto: September 28, 2020) When Zoom and YouTube [blocked](#) a San Francisco State University academic panel discussion on September 23, 2020, they forced to the public eye the dangers of placing content regulation in the hands of tech companies. While the issues presented for discussion in the panel were controversial and many would consider them extreme, we believe that ideas and people must be heard before we can understand them and decide whether we agree or disagree with them. Only by protecting the free exchange of ideas and engaging in critical discussion and debate is social change made possible.

Over the past six months, educators and librarians, among many others, have relied on online technology providers to make the rapid transition to distance education and virtual programming possible, given the limited mobility, budgets, and infrastructure resulting from the pandemic. However, we recognize that the decision to rely on corporate services places control over the distribution of information in the hands of those who do not share the same interests in open dialogue about controversial ideas.

We applaud San Francisco State University for remaining [steadfast in its support](#) of academic freedom and freedom of expression. We call on online technology providers to acknowledge civil liberties and human rights; to leave decisions about what content should be discussed in the hands of the universities, schools, and libraries that use their services; and to recognize that censoring events based on the identity and history of individuals runs the risk of impeding movements for social change at a time when society is calling out for transformation.

For more information:

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