

NEWS CENSORSHIP

THE NATIONAL COALITION AGAINST CENSORSHIP NEWSLETTER

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FALL 2013
NUMBER 119

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STATE OF CENSORSHIP



For this special issue of *Censorship News*, we asked coalition partners to describe briefly the most pressing free speech challenges facing their organizations and members. Their responses, which are excerpted here, demonstrate not only the range and variety of the threats to freedom of expression, but also the reasons for the existence of a National Coalition Against Censorship. In a nutshell, it is because the First Amendment protects the expression of divergent, often conflicting ideas, meaning that we don't have to agree on any particular idea to appreciate the right to our own opinions, free from government

pressure to ascribe to any given orthodoxy or conventional wisdom.

Thus, nearly 40 years ago, a diverse group of non-profit organizations formed NCAC to protect their shared interest in freedom of speech. NCAC includes religious, labor, educational, literary, arts, professional, and sexuality groups, along with those that focus on civil rights and civil liberties. The existence of this coalition demonstrates that freedom of speech is critical to each of us individually; as well as to a community in which individuals with different opinions, experience, and traditions co-exist. The right to free speech is not about any particular speech or idea—it's about the right to express, receive, and believe ideas of all kinds. It's about the free mind as a precondition to a free society.

In the comments that follow, you will get a kaleidoscopic picture of censorship in the US today. You will see concerns about academic freedom and tenure, student speech, private and economically motivated censorship, online freedom, reader privacy, net neutrality, media consolidation, school curricula, whistleblowers, bullying, government surveillance, and more. In addition to the contributions these organizations make in their own fields, they are critical allies in defense of free expression, and they complement and often contribute to NCAC's in-house advocacy efforts and special projects opposing individual acts of censorship around the country, and in advocating for laws and policies that respect freedom of expression. Our collective voice is critical to our collective mission.

aaup
AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF
UNIVERSITY PROFESSORS

American Association of University Professors (aaup.org) Since its founding in 1915, the AAUP has understood academic freedom to comprise three interlinked elements: the freedom to teach without external interference, the freedom to conduct research without ideological constraint, and the freedom to speak openly and without sanction on matters of institutional policy and on issues of public concern. Nevertheless, these principles are challenged almost daily. In Florida this year it was a faculty member's decision to conduct a controversial in-class communications exercise; in New York an invitation to controversial speakers; and in San Diego the withdrawal of a visiting fellowship for a theological dissident. But the gravest challenge to academic freedom in the twenty-first

NCAC PARTICIPATING ORGANIZATIONS

Actors' Equity Association
American Association of School Administrators
American Association of University Professors
American Association of University Women
American Booksellers Foundation for Free Expression
American Civil Liberties Union
American Ethical Union
American Federation of Teachers
American Jewish Committee
American Library Association
American Literary Translators Association
American Orthopsychiatric Association
American Society of Journalists & Authors
Americans United for Separation of Church & State
Association of American Publishers
Authors Guild
Catholics for Choice
Children's Literature Association
College Art Association
Comic Book Legal Defense Fund
The Creative Coalition
Directors Guild of America
Dramatist Legal Defense Fund
The Dramatists Guild of America
Educational Book & Media Association
First Amendment Lawyers Association
International Reading Association
Lambda Legal
Modern Language Association
National Center for Science Education
National Communication Association
National Council for the Social Studies
National Council of the Churches
National Council of Jewish Women
National Council of Teachers of English
National Education Association
National Youth Rights Association
The Newspaper Guild/CWA
PEN American Center
People For the American Way
Planned Parenthood Federation of America
Project Censored
SAG-AFTRA
Sexuality Information & Education Council of the U.S.
Society of Children's Book Writers & Illustrators
Speech Communication Association
Student Press Law Center
Union for Reform Judaism
Union of Democratic Intellectuals
Unitarian Universalist Association
United Church of Christ, Office of Communication
United Methodist Church, United Methodist Communications
Women's American ORT
Woodhull Sexual Freedom Alliance
Writers Guild of America, East
Writers Guild of America, West

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NCAC is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization

century is the now-decades-long erosion of the tenure system and the widespread exploitation and abuse of contingent, especially part-time, faculty. Hired mostly on annual or even class-by-class contracts, and usually paid at rates more similar to casual than professional labor, these faculty members—now constituting over three-quarters of the profession—enjoy little job security and hence often minimal academic freedom, at least where they are not protected by collective-bargaining agreements, now probably the strongest means available to defend freedom in the classroom. Subject to intimidation by supervisors, many contingent faculty members engage in self-censorship, fearful that unconventional views, dissenting opinions, or innovative pedagogies might endanger their livelihoods. It thus falls to the AAUP and to all members of the higher-education community to expand the defense of academic freedom to include fully all who are engaged in teaching and research, whether full-time or part-time, tenured or contingent.



American Booksellers Foundation for Free Expression (abffe.org) The American Booksellers Foundation for Free Expression, the bookseller's voice in the fight against censorship, has been fighting for reader privacy since the day in 1998 when Independent Counsel Kenneth Starr subpoenaed the records of Monica Lewinsky's book purchases from two Washington bookstores. In 2001, Congress approved the Patriot Act, giving the FBI the power to search the records, including library records, of people who are not suspected of criminal conduct. ABFFE is working with the American Library Association, the Association of American Publishers and PEN American Center to restore protections for reader privacy undermined by the Patriot Act. Edward Snowden's revelations of government abuses have given new impetus to efforts to reform the Patriot Act.

ABFFE has also enlisted in the fight against the hundreds of challenges to books that occur in schools and libraries every year. It joined the National Coalition Against Censorship in founding the Kids' Right to Read Project, which helps students, parents, teachers and librarians who are confronting censorship efforts in their communities. We are working to expand Banned Books Week, the only national celebration of the freedom to read. It now features a virtual read-out from banned and challenged works on YouTube.



American Civil Liberties Union (aclu.org) It's tough to pick, but two free speech issues in particular are jockeying for the title of "most pressing." The first is the administration's aggressive pursuit of national security leaks and the corrosive effect it has had on our free press, and the second is the increasing power wielded by private online speech platforms.

Recently, the administration commendably sought to narrow the circumstances in which it can investigate members of the press. These concessions, however, follow intense public concern over the unprecedented number of leaks prosecutions pursued by the current administration and the revelations of extremely invasive (and unnecessary) investigations into reporters and news organizations. As 2013 turns into 2014, and especially with the Snowden leak, there is no doubt that the tug-of-war between the two dray horses of the national security community and the Fourth Estate will continue in earnest.

Free speech advocates are increasingly concerned with the power of "platforms" like Facebook, Twitter and Google. These "gatekeepers" have, perhaps, even more impact on free expression than federal, state or local governments. They have more direct power over what Americans can say, read, see and hear than the Federal Communications Commission, the Department of Justice or any member of state law enforcement combined. These companies also possess their own First Amendment rights, leaving free speech advocates in something of a quandary. Fortunately, many of these companies should be applauded for adopting as permissive a speech policy as possible—and many have faced intense and unfortunate public criticism for doing so. As we continue to move from physical to virtual speech forums, this thorny problem will only gain more prominence.



American Library Association (ala.org) U.S. censorship is spreading in such insidious and complex manifestations. We have our work cut out for us! Library challenge reports to the Office of Intellectual Freedom (OIF) grew in 2012-13 to 460, probably 1/5 of the national total. This year's #1 banned book, *Captain Underpants*

by Dav Pilkey, is the gift that keeps on giving. Why? Because these popular, silly books are read by parents, with their children, all over the country. The potty humor makes parents roll their eyes and kids giggle. The absurdity of banning books in order to attack perceived moral problems is exemplified by this year's winner.

A far more complex problem lies in libraries filtering the Internet. Google and ALA recently marked the 10th anniversary of the Children's Internet Protection Act (CIPA) with a symposium of experts and a consensus of what we have all suspected: over or under-filtering happens 20% of the time; students can easily hack filters; poor people are more likely to have their information filtered; and filters can make it impossible to teach Advanced Placement (AP) courses. Filters are a very insidious barrier because sometimes library users don't know what web sites they are missing! This blockage of constitutionally protected information is a real barrier to teaching young people how to think critically.

OIF is following the revelations of NSA surveillance with deep concern for the invasion of reader privacy. We are actively working with UK colleagues and elsewhere on an international library response.



American Society of Journalists & Authors (asja.org)

The biggest threats to free speech these days are economic rather than legislative. Pay for writers is dropping, while thousands of online and paper publications are demanding that writers work for no pay (Huffington Post); absurd pay of \$10 per article or less (The Content Authority, Demand Media); or simply using writers' work without paying them at all (Google). In the face of these economic realities, the best journalists are abandoning traditional journalism and choosing instead to write for corporations which tightly control the messaging in every word they publish.

Meantime, newspapers are folding daily, or staying in print but depending on pre-packaged or "citizen journalist" content. Few outlets now pay for in-depth reporting. In fact, investigative journalism—once a valued part of every respected news organization—is now seen as a luxury by most media outlets. New nonprofit groups such as ProPublica are promoting journalism-by-charitable-donation, trying to keep it from vanishing altogether.

Are governments and businesses happier in a world where there are no investigative journalists asking tough questions? Undoubtedly yes. But is the public better off?



Association of American Publishers

(publishers.org) The business of publishing is profoundly affected by threats to freedom

of speech, including government efforts to curb media violence and "indecentcy," attempts to hold publishers liable for illegal acts "inspired" by their works, domestic and foreign libel suits aimed at silencing publishers and authors, the threat to reader privacy from intrusive government surveillance, the weakening of fundamental protections for investigative journalists, and efforts to remove books with "objectionable" content from public and school libraries and classroom reading lists.

In the "Coda" to *Fahrenheit 451* Ray Bradbury said: "There is more than one way to burn a book. And the world is full of people running about with lit matches." Fully one-third of the books selected by the

Modern Library as the 100 best novels of the 20th Century, including six of the top ten, have at one time or another been removed or threatened with removal from bookstores, libraries and schools.

Publishers are also deeply troubled by the government's intensifying war against investigative journalists. The Association of American Publishers is one of the organizations supporting passage of a federal "shield" law to help protect confidentiality of sources, with the caveat that such a law must be broad enough to cover book authors, including first-time authors, under its umbrella. Without such protection it will become increasingly difficult to produce the important books that hold government to account.



Catholics for Choice (catholicsforchoice.org)

From our perspective, the most pressing challenge to free speech is the willingness to permit some ultraconservative extremist religious people to speak for all, instead of embracing a positive, healthy respect for a variety of religious views.

One high-profile example occurred in 2010, when the Smithsonian removed a video by the late David Wojnarowicz, from the exhibit "Hide/Seek: Difference and Desire in American Portraiture." Through vivid and surreal images, including one of a crucifix crawling with ants, the video examined the "agony and suffering" of the artist's partner, who was dying of AIDS at the time.

The marginal (but easily and loudly offended) Catholic League pounced immediately, falsely claiming the video was "anti-Catholic" and represented "hate speech." The League demanded that the federal government reconsider future funding for the Smithsonian. Smithsonian Secretary Wayne Clough swiftly pulled the video. Happily, free speech advocates made the artwork available in a trailer outside the museum. It was a small victory to hear a tourist or museum visitor exclaim for the millionth time after seeing the art in question: "Really I can't see what all the fuss is about."

Of course, we need to respect religious voices, but not at the risk of censoring personal expression. The majority of people who use their faith to understand the world—rather than close themselves off from it—would prefer to make their own decisions about art. We need to fight together to keep it that way.



College Art Association (collegeart.org)

When it witnesses acts of censorship, CAA approaches the source of such actions to remind them of ethical and practical approaches to resolving issues. Censorship of art can take many forms. We have recently addressed the removal of art from exhibitions at museum and university galleries or from university campuses, such as the removal of a video from the National Portrait Gallery's "Hide/Seek" exhibition in 2010 and the removal of two sculptures by George Ettel and Robert Sestok at Michigan's Macomb County Community College this spring. We have protested the destruction of individual works of art such as this past year's destruction of Mali's cultural heritage through military action which included the defacement and destruction of mausoleums and mosques. We have opposed withholding photographic licenses for scholarly publications by artists' heirs, such as those of Clifford Still, who are not in agreement with new scholarly interpretations. We join the increasing global concern about censorship in other countries, including the political repression and incarceration of artists such

as Ai Weiwei. Perhaps the most difficult issue to address is self-censorship by artists, scholars and curators who choose to avoid controversial topics to create, study and exhibit for fear of being criticized and ostracized by colleagues or cut off from resources. CAA recently initiated a Mellon Foundation and Kress Foundation research project to develop fair use best practices to assist the visual arts field in understanding and applying fair use approaches to creative work and scholarly publishing in the visual arts.



Comic Book Legal Defense Fund (cbldf.org) As comics and graphic novels become a more significant part of the cultural landscape, attacks on their content are plaguing individuals and institutions alike. In recent years readers of Japanese comics have been targeted by police and customs officials with false accusations of possessing obscene material or even child pornography. At the same time, challenges to graphic novels in libraries and schools occur on a near monthly basis. CBLDF provides legal aid, writes letters of support, and produces education tools so as to create better understanding of comics and their role in the current culture.



Dramatists Guild of America (dramatistsguild.com) At a high school in Deerfield, IL, parents tried to stop other people's children from reading Tony Kushner's *Angels in America*. At a school in Wilton, CT, students were stopped from presenting their own play about the Iraq War. At universities across America shows like Sondheim & Weidman's *Assassins* and Chris Durang's *Sister Mary Ignatius* have been challenged over issues of politics, sexuality, religion or language, and administrators have imposed their own limited views on people who are there, ironically, to expand their worlds.

The censor's arm is reaching beyond the schoolroom. In Carrollton, GA, the mayor shut down his town's production of *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*. *Ragtime* and *To Kill A Mockingbird* were challenged by civil rights groups in Illinois and Florida because they use the "N-word," despite that these are two works that plead against racism. A play about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict was cancelled by a NY non-profit because of pressure from its own board. In Colorado and Chicago, theaters presenting works that required smoking on stage were prohibited from staging them under local anti-smoking statutes that have no exception for theatrical productions, as they do in NY and other cities.

"Fair use", too, is being diminished as playwrights who dare write about powerful public figures or who parody works owned by wealthy companies are threatened with lawsuits.

Playwrights only have their words. And to defend those words, the Dramatists Guild has formed the Dramatists Legal Defense Fund. Because words matter.



Lambda Legal

making the case for equality

Lambda Legal (lambdalegal.org) is committed to achieving full recognition of the civil rights of LGBT people and those with HIV through impact litigation, education and public policy work. Fundamental to that mission is attaining respect and acceptance of LGBT youth in schools and preventing bullying. The First Amendment is a key tool in addressing bullying because free speech fosters an environment that seeks, welcomes, and values LGBT people. Simply put, a vital way to combat hateful speech is through

powerful, affirming speech.

Lambda Legal has secured federal court rulings that schools must protect gay students from violence and harassment and that gay-straight alliances must be allowed to meet under the same rules as other student groups. These cases defend what should be undisputed propositions—namely, that students attending public schools have a constitutional right to express themselves, to feel safe and respected, and to live without fear.

By giving young members of our community a voice, we can move closer to creating school environments where all students are respected equally for who they are.

Modern
Language
Association

MLA

Modern Language Association
(mla.org) The MLA upholds
the right of scholars, teachers,

and artists to freedom from censorship not only in their statements as citizens but also in their teaching and scholarly work. Tenure was designed to ensure the freedom of university faculty members to express their views openly in the classroom and in the public sphere. In a university climate in which over seventy percent of instructors hold positions off the tenure track, however, this fundamental academic freedom is severely threatened.

The dangerous political uses of censorship have been analyzed in scholarly articles published by the association and in a special issue of the MLA's premier journal, *PMLA*. The association has spoken out against attempts to dismantle ethnic studies programs in the United States—a form of curricular censorship. In the spirit of a free exchange of ideas, it has lobbied Congress for the right of scholars and artists to travel across national borders and to be admitted to the United States. The MLA has supported the freedom of instructors at colleges and universities to construct course syllabi without legislative interference. It has also spoken out against the inclusion of unsolicited opinions from outside the university in faculty appointments and promotion reviews. In advocating working conditions and regularized appointments for contingent faculty members, the MLA is also fighting for the free exchange of ideas that is at the core of a democratic education.



National
Center for
Science
Education

National Center for Science Education (ncse.com) The mission of the NCSE is to defend the teaching of science against ideological attack. Evolution is the traditional target of such attacks, with climate change joining it in recent years.

Eighty-eight years after the Scopes trial, censorship aimed at evolution still persists, with teachers pressured not to teach evolution or to teach creationism (whether "creation science" or "intelligent design") to promote "balance," and with libraries urged not to shelve books on the topic. Since the motives for such pressures are religious, the First Amendment's ban on the governmental establishment of religion is invaluable in countering them.

Equally important to NCSE's work is countering misunderstandings of the First Amendment, which science deniers have spuriously invoked to claim that they have the right to have their views included in the curriculum. Of course, the First Amendment guarantees their right to hold and express their beliefs publicly—but not the right to teach their beliefs in public schools, where the curriculum

is supposed to reflect the best available knowledge in the relevant field. Anything less would compromise the integrity of science education and impair the ability of students to participate in society as scientifically literate citizens.

Science education needs freedom of thought, inquiry, and expression, and it also needs for those worthy ideals not to be twisted in the service of pseudoscience.



National Council of Teachers of English (ncte.org) It's crucial now when new standards are being introduced in schools and the selection of texts deemed suitable for students is undergoing renewed scrutiny that educators at all levels and community members keep in mind the tenets of NCTE's *The Students' Right to Read* (<http://ncte.org/positions/statements/righttoreadguideline>). This guideline emphasizes both:

- “the right of any individual not just to read but to read whatever he or she wants to read [as] basic to a democratic society” and
- the value of teachers’ professional knowledge and judgment in selecting and using materials appropriate for their students to meet the educational objectives of courses, curricula, and state standards.

NCTE respects the right of individuals to be selective in their own reading. But for the same reason, we oppose efforts of individuals or groups to limit the freedom of choice of others or to impose their own standards or tastes upon the community at large. If America is to have a democratic citizenry, educators must introduce students to a broad spectrum of ideas and then guide them through reading, writing, and discussion to think critically, act responsibly, and be productive in our diverse and ever-changing world.



National Youth Rights Association (youthrights.org) Students in K-12 schools have long had to fight for freedoms adults take for granted. Dress codes, mandatory reciting of the Pledge of Allegiance, and day-to-day decisions by school employees have long challenged students’ right to free speech.

What is new in recent years has been the belief by school officials that they now have a right to govern students’ use of social media, even in the students’ private lives. Last year, a high school senior in Indiana was expelled for tweeting a message to his followers—from his home late at night—that included the F-word. In cities across America, students are being called into principals’ offices to explain things they wrote on Facebook or other online forums.

In the Vietnam era, the Supreme Court, responding to a dress code used to muzzle students opposing the war, told schools, “It can hardly be argued that either students or teachers shed their constitutional rights to freedom of speech or expression at the schoolhouse gate.” But many schools have continued to disregard those rights. And in the Internet era, some schools are taking it even further, not only insisting students surrender their free speech rights at the gate, but also prohibiting students from retrieving those rights when they go home again.

Read unabridged State of Censorship responses from these organizations online at nca.org/stateofcensorship



PEN American Center (pen.org) For more than a decade, civil liberties and freedom of expression organizations have sounded alarms over the rapid expansion of surveillance in the United States. For much of that time, efforts to challenge new surveillance powers have been hampered because those powers have been shrouded in secrecy; a lawsuit brought by PEN American Center and others challenging the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act Amendments Act, for example, that might have revealed important information, was dismissed by the U.S. Supreme Court on technical grounds.

Now, thanks to recent, dramatic leaks about the nature and scope of NSA telephone and Internet monitoring, the public knows that these activities, which PEN went to court to expose, are in fact happening, and on an even broader scale than previously thought. Yet many Americans have met even these revelations with a shrug, arguing that if they have nothing to hide, they have nothing to fear, and many policy makers continue to herald the programs’ benefits in preventing terrorist attacks. It is now clear that challenging ever-expanding surveillance powers and technologies will require more than merely penetrating official secrecy around the nature and scope of the programs. In fact, we must begin to answer some critical questions: How do we know, and how can we demonstrate, that pervasive surveillance—especially the subtle, complex cocktail of governmental and commercial surveillance that is taking shape in the United States, is actually harming freedom of expression and creative freedom? This is one of the most urgent challenges facing free expression advocates in the United States. Only by defining the actual and potential harms of our new surveillance powers can we be sure these powers won’t define us in the future.



Project Censored monitors and analyzes censorship in the US press while promoting media literacy and critical thinking skills. Our new annual report on the most underreported and censored stories is *Censored 2014: Fearless Speech in Fateful Times* (October 2013).

Among the most significant challenges we face today is the ever-growing war on whistleblowers and journalists. From Chelsea Manning (formerly Bradley Manning) and John Kiriakou to Thomas Drake and Edward Snowden, the US government, now even more so under the Obama Administration, has escalated its attack on those who try to bring to light unpopular truths. Whether about our foreign policy or the state of our diminishing rights of privacy, speech, and the press, President Obama’s actions toward those who tell these unpopular truths has been in direct contradiction to his campaign promises and many public pronouncements purportedly lauding transparency and accountability in government.

In an age where the very plutocrats that govern our society are the same people who claim jurisdiction in determining who is a journalist, and what narratives are acceptable for debate and discussion, we need “a clarion call for truth telling” as Daniel Ellsberg has put it—a call for civil courage in defense and support of a truly free press. Our future as a free and open society, as a democratic republic, depends on free expression and freedom of the press. The time to act and protect these rights, to fight against forces of censorship where reporting what is going on in our society is becoming increasingly criminalized, is now. (www.projectcensored.org)

news

CENSORSHIP



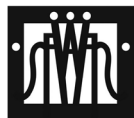
The **Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators** (scbwi.org) is comprised of approximately 23,000 authors, illustrators, publishers, editors and agents from America and around the globe. We believe in and support a child's right to read from the wide-ranging canon of books that have been created lovingly, responsibly and expressly for them.

There are many adults who, under the umbrella of protecting children, feel they know what is best for children to read. Award-winning books and authors have been banned or challenged on a regular basis. Children have been deprived access to some of our best writers, some of our best minds, and ironically, some of the most responsible voices in support of moral choices. The censorship our industry has been subjected to raises the fundamental question of our rights in a free society. Who will be the censors? What person or community will decide what is appropriate material for children? What role does this leave for individual families, parents and religious institutions?

In light of the realities of war, economic struggle, racial strife and a wildly spinning moral compass, we cannot deprive children of books that provide them the very tools to understand and navigate these difficult realities.



Student Press Law Center (splc.org) Nearly half a century ago, the Supreme Court told us that neither teachers nor students “shed their constitutional rights to freedom of speech or expression at the schoolhouse gate.” But today, the gate that once safely confined school censorship authority is swinging both ways, hitting students on the way out. Censorship follows students home in the form of drastically overbroad statutes and regulations that, while enacted under the guise of “bullying prevention,” in fact expose students to punishment—and even criminal prosecution—for harmless jokes and editorial commentary. Not long ago, student journalists censored in their on-campus publications could safely start “underground” media using their own time and money and be assured of freedom from school content control. Those days are over. The federal courts have largely abdicated their role of protecting vulnerable young speakers, affording schools nearly unreviewable deference even for the most irrational overreaction. The Fifth Circuit U.S. Court of Appeals spoke for many in the judiciary in rejecting as “frivolous” the First Amendment claims of a high school cheerleader punished for a silent, non-disruptive protest after being raped by a classmate: Children, wrote the judges, are nothing more than “mouthpieces” for their schools’ messages. SPLC’s “Cure Hazelwood” campaign, online at curehazelwood.org, is heightening awareness of the cancerous toll of a generation under the U.S. Supreme Court’s erroneous ruling in *Hazelwood School District v. Kuhlmeier*—a ruling that, while nominally about the censorship of a high school newspaper, has become an open-ended license to discipline even 50-year-old graduate students for speech that challenges their colleges’ authority.



Woodhull Sexual Freedom Alliance (woodhullalliance.org) is one of the few organizations wholly devoted to preserving sexual freedom as one of society’s foremost fundamental human rights. With controversial topics like sexual equality and autonomy comprising the core of Woodhull’s mission, the organization’s most pressing challenge to free speech is opposing those whose goal is to silence sexual expression. We advocate for personal autonomy and the basic right to express and enjoy sexual freedom with integrity and free from governmental interference, but we routinely encounter obstacles from those opposing open sexual discussion—both governmental and private.

Woodhull is constantly working to advance the recognition of sexual, gender and familial diversity. Diversity by its very definition signifies something different; something unconventional. Human nature is to fear change. Fully recognizing this uphill battle, Woodhull nonetheless continues to call for cultural transformation in the name of tolerance and social acceptance. Without the constitutional right to freedom of speech provided by the First Amendment, Woodhull’s pioneering civil rights efforts would essentially be nonexistent. Acting as a driving force behind a sexual movement inviting individuals to challenge mainstream notions of societal norms often requires broaching sensitive subjects or vocalizing unpopular thoughts. But it’s that kind of exchange of controversial ideas that makes Woodhull-driven discourse even more crucial to the evolution of public policy and ultimately, social change.



WRITERS GUILD OF AMERICA EAST

Writers Guild of America, East (wgaeast.org)

There are two freedoms at the very core of the Writers Guild of America, East. One is the freedom to collectively bargain as a labor union, protecting the livelihoods of each and every member, working for fair treatment and security for themselves and their families. That freedom could not exist without the other, and that is freedom of speech.

Freedom of expression allows our members to write the stories that need telling without fear of suppression, and to have access to the vast communications highway that conveys both our stories and the information that inspires creativity and truth, whether in a screenplay, episodic TV script or hourly newscast.

Preservation of Internet freedom—net neutrality—is a fundamental freedom of speech issue for the Writers Guild, East. Equal access to the Internet for individuals, no matter their status, income, race, gender or nationality is essential to liberty and creativity. While fighting on behalf of Internet freedom we also fight against Internet piracy, recognizing it as a real and pernicious threat for our members. The two are not mutually exclusive propositions.

Finally, we oppose the media consolidation that has given power to a handful of international mega-corporations, monoliths that threaten to quell independent, local voices and diversity. That is why we have been so supportive of public media and have opposed efforts to censor it or to slash its funding.

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