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Free Speech Groups, Authors, Journalists Address Student Radio's Effort to Censor Author

New York, NY, November 2 2016- The National Coalition Against Censorship (NCAC) has responded to a Columbia University independent student-run radio station's censorship of an invited author because her reading did not match the university's "values."

Studio A, a program of Columbia Radio WKCR, had invited author Laurie Stone to read from her new book *My Life as an Animal, Stories*. However, shortly before she was due on air, Stone received a call from the show's producer asking her to censor a passage that criticized female religious dress codes because it was "incompatible with the university's and station's values." Stone refused and cancelled her appearance.

Although the radio station subsequently apologized and affirmed its commitment to free expression, NCAC's letter urges it to prove this commitment in practice by re-inviting the author to read, uncensored. It also recommends the station use the incident as an opportunity to host a public discussion on the role of student journalism at a time when free speech arguments can appear at odds with the push for social justice at the university and in wider society.

The letter is co-signed by PEN America, the American Association of University Professors, Authors Guild, Melville House Publishing and a number of prominent academics and journalists.

NCAC's proposed discussion would be especially pertinent given the reputation of the Columbia Journalism School and in light of the recent publication of PEN America's report on campus free speech.

"Our concern is that this incident is a symptom of a larger issue, where students may be losing the sense of the value presented by a press open to vigorous debate on a wide range of subjects" said NCAC Director of Programs Svetlana Mintcheva. "So we hope WKCR turns the incident into opportunity to hold a much needed discussion on what it means for the press to uphold freedom of speech principles."

[READ THE LETTER](#)

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The National Coalition Against Censorship (NCAC) is an alliance of 50 national non-profit organizations dedicated to defending freedom of thought, inquiry and expression.

PEN.org

PEN America unites writers and their allies to celebrate creative expression and defend the freedoms that make it possible.