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Twitter Permanently Bans Former NYT Journalist Alex Berenson (/archives/featured-articles/2021/august/30/twitter-permanently-bans-former-nyt-journalist-alex-berenson/)

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We previously discussed (<https://jonathanturley.org/2021/07/31/twitter-suspends-science-writer-after-he-posts-results-of-pfizer-clinical-test/>) how Twitter's growing censorship program has targeted former New York Times (<https://www.foxnews.com/media>) journalist and author Alex Berenson who is an outspoken critic of the government's science and response to the pandemic. Berenson was previously suspended for merely expressing an opinion over the need for a "pause" on any federal mandates on Covid-19 as new research is studied. Twitter also suspended a journalist (<https://jonathanturley.org/2021/08/04/twitter-suspends-journalist-who-repeated-cdc-fact-on-vaccines/>) for posting CDC information that was deemed as critical of its own official line on vaccines. Now he is permanently suspended after his criticism the vaccine and possible side effects. Twitter has again showed that it will silence those who dare to disagree or even question its approved narrative and that of government.

On his Substack (<https://alexberenson.substack.com/p/goodbye-twitter>) page, Berenson (<https://www.foxnews.com/politics/cpac-speaker-alex-berenson-former-ny-times-reporter-covid-19-lockdown-critic>) posted a brief message titled, "Goodbye Twitter." He then posted the following as the tweet that was the final straw with Twitter.

'Don't think of it as a vaccine,' he continued. 'Think of it - at best - as a therapeutic with a limited window of efficacy and terrible side effect profile that must be dosed IN ADVANCE OF ILLNESS.'

That is an opinion that many share and one that can be debated. I do not agree with Berenson on the vaccine but I would like to hear his views and see the response to them. Like many, I do not want to simply reach corporate or government approved viewpoints. Rather than respond to Berenson with reasoned debate, people demand that he be removed from platforms to prevent others from making up their own minds.

The most chilling aspect of this story is how many on left applaud such censorship. A new poll shows roughly half of the public supporting not just corporate censorship but government censorship (<https://jonathanturley.org/2021/08/20/the-new-censors-polls-shows-almost-half-of-americans-favor-the-government-censoring-misinformation/>) of anything deemed "misinformation."

As previously discussed (<https://jonathanturley.org/2020/11/02/the-case-for-internet-originalism/>), the poll reflects the move among Democratic politicians for years in calling for censorship. Twitter CEO Jack Dorsey appeared at a key hearing in which he followed up his apology for censoring the Hunter Biden story by pledging more censorship. One of the most chilling moments came from

Delaware Senator Chris Coons who demonstrated the very essence of the “slippery slope” danger.

Dorsey: Well, misleading information, as you are aware, is a large problem. It’s hard to define it completely and cohesively. We wanted to scope our approach to start to focus on the highest severity of harm. We focused on three areas, manipulated media, which you mentioned, civic integrity around the election, specifically in public health, specifically around COVID. We wanted to make sure that our resources that we have the greatest impact on where we believe the greatest severity of harm is going to be. Our policies are living documents. They will evolve. We will add to them, but we thought it important that we focus our energies and prioritize the work as much as we could.

Coons: Well, Mr. Dorsey, I’ll close with this. I cannot think of a greater harm than climate change, which is transforming literally our planet and causing harm to our entire world. I think we’re experiencing significant harm as we speak. I recognize the pandemic and misinformation about COVID-19, manipulated media also cause harm, but I’d urge you to reconsider that because helping to disseminate climate denialism, in my view, further facilitates and accelerates one of the greatest existential threats to our world. So thank you to both of our witnesses.

Instead of then raising concerns over censoring views and comments on the basis for such an amorphous category, Coons pressed for an expansion of the categories of censored material to prevent people from sharing any views that he considers “climate denialism”

There is, of course, a wide array of views that different people or different groups would declare “harmful.” Indeed, Connecticut Senator Richard Blumenthal seemed to take the opposite meaning from Twitter admitting that it was wrong to censor the Biden story. Blumenthal said that he was “concerned that both of your companies are, in fact, backsliding or retrenching, that you are failing to take action against dangerous disinformation.” Accordingly, he demanded an answer to this question:

‘Will you commit to the same kind of robust content modification playbook in this coming election, including fact checking, labeling, reducing the spread of misinformation, and other steps, even for politicians in the runoff elections ahead?’

“Robust content modification” has a certain Orwellian feel to it. It is not content modification. It is censorship.

This call has now been picked up by academics and members of the media. Faculty and editors are actively supporting modern versions of book-burning (<https://jonathanturley.org/2021/01/22/why-burn-books-when-you-can-ban-them-writers-and-publishers-embrace-blacklisting-in-an-expanding-american-anti-free-speech-movement/>) with blacklists and bans for those with opposing political views. Columbia Journalism School Dean Steve Coll has denounced the “weaponization” of free speech (<https://jonathanturley.org/2020/12/09/free-speech-is-being-weaponized-columbia-dean-and-new-yorker-writer-calls-for-more-censorship/>), which appears to be the use of free speech by those on the right. So the dean of one of the premier journalism schools now supports censorship.

The rise of corporate censors has combined with a heavily pro-Biden media to create the fear of a de facto state media that controls information due to a shared ideology rather than state coercion.

Once again, I resolved these questions in favor of taking the vaccine at the earliest possible date, as did my family. However, voices like Berenson’s are important to our having an informed and vigorous debate. Most importantly, Berenson has never tried to silence others. These advocates of private and government censorship are only undermining faith in vaccines with their aggressive pursuit of anyone expressing doubts or challenging policies.

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