HORIZON FORUM

PHILANTHROPY | EQUITY | DIALOGUE

WHAT DO THE EXPERTS SAY:

Sector Responses to Hate Speech

Annotated Bibliography #2
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HORIZON FORUM

Horizon Forum is a fiscally sponsored project of the Proteus Fund, a 501(c)(3). The initiative aims to strategically engage with sector leaders in philanthropy to ensure their charitable missions are insulated from extremism, bigotry, and hate activity.

Horizon Forum's primary activity consists of hosting semi-annual dialogues with stakeholders and researchers familiar with the institutional landscape of philanthropy and unique challenges of self-regulation therein. It also partners with peer institutions and university-based research centers to provide public facing thought leadership and data-based recommendations for stakeholders. Finally, the program also provides direct services for foundations, assisting them in establishing processes and policies for vetting grantees and ensuring they protect their mission to nurture the public good and "do no harm" with their philanthropy.

WHAT DO THE EXPERTS SAY

"What Do the Experts Say" is an ongoing series that reviews recent discussions affecting the philanthropic sector by thought leaders and experts from a variety of sources in the form of an annotated bibliography. It captures the state of the debate today, helping readers navigate an otherwise complex and multidimensional field.

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INTRODUCTION

As the problems of political polarization, extremism, and hate speech increasingly impact public life in the United States, various sectors have responded in ways unique to their own circumstances and institutions. Social media companies, in particular, have become contentious sites of debate over what constitutes the line between hate speech and free speech. Likewise, university campuses — long heralded as a pristine marketplace of ideas — are now facing increasing pressure from stakeholders on all sides to regulate faculty speech and guest speaker activity. Experiences from these sectors may help leaders in philanthropy and grantmaking as they navigate these debates in their own spaces.

Over the last five years, the technology industry has been propelled to the center of the hotly contested public debate over free speech, hate speech, and public safety. Operating in a largely self-regulated environment, tech companies dedicate extensive resources to this issue while continuously developing their own policies to address the problem. Likewise, government agencies both in the United States and abroad have explored legislative and regulatory interventions as a solution. Social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter have taken various steps in formulating and updating policies and procedures to moderate content and increase user literacy, while also providing various levels of transparency to outside observers and advocates. Meanwhile, multi-stakeholder coalitions such as the Global Internet Forum to Counter Terrorism and the Christchurch Call have brought actors from multiple sectors together to help manage the problems of violent extremism and hate speech online.

The university has long been considered the bastion of free speech and open debate. However, cultural politics and public safety concerns have tested this presumption in recent years. Observers point to attempts by fringe and extremist groups to provide a 'scholarly' veneer to otherwise hateful ideologies to normalize and mainstream them. As such there are increasing calls on academics to hold accountable their peers, publishers, and universities in order to protect academic integrity and scholarship in an era when free speech is misused to silence the pursuit of scholarly rigor and ethical engagement. At the same time, another set of critics are sounding the alarm of what they call "cancel culture" — the purported attempt to silence voices from the right as form of draconian censorship antithetical to democratic values.

How university officials and social media executives navigate these debates through actionable policies and practices may be illustrative for leaders in philanthropy and the grantmaking community.

TECH RESPONSES

In the News:

Ganesh, Bharath. "[How Biden Plans on Countering Online Extremism.](#)" *Foreign Policy*. January 28, 2021.

In response to the January 6 Capitol attacks, Bharath Ganesh contextualizes the incoming Biden administration position in the fight against online extremist ideology. Ganesh highlights the vital role of the Global Internet Forum to Counter Terrorism (GIFCT), a joint effort by Facebook, Microsoft, Twitter, and YouTube to counter extremist messaging on their platforms. The author also points to the collaborative efforts that have taken place between governments and the private sector such as the Christchurch Call, a global network of stakeholders dedicated to combatting online extremism, formed in the wake of the 2019 massacres of Muslims in New Zealand. He urges the incoming administration to build on the momentum of these new initiatives to take aggressive action against online extremism.

Ghosh, Dipayan. "[For Facebook, It's All About the Bottom Line.](#)" *Foreign Policy.* January 8, 2021.

Dipayan Ghosh, former Obama technology and economic policy advisor, dispels common myths about free speech used by tech companies such as Facebook. Rather than discussing content moderation policies and related user guidelines, the article points to the financial incentives and commercial goals of dominating the social media market as Facebook's main priority. The author positions Zuckerberg's engagement in public conversations on these issues as a calculated business strategy to keep Facebook at the center of the conversation while policy changes make very slow progress.

Paul, Katie. "[Twitter Expands Hate Speech Rules to Include Race, Ethnicity.](#)" *Reuters*. December 3, 2020.

This article reports on the latest expansion in Twitter's policy barring hateful speech to include "language that dehumanizes people on the basis of race, ethnicity and national origin." This update comes as a further definition to its previous rule on speech that generally dehumanizes others. The addition of these subcategories allows Twitter to advance their action against online hate speech, and ultimately creates a

safer environment on their platform. Advocacy organization like Color of Change commended Twitter for this expansion.

Wang, Amy. "[Spotify Is Officially Policing the Music It Hosts.](#)" *Rolling Stone.* June 25, 2018.

> This article reports on Spotify, an online music streaming platform, codifying new policy against content that "expressly and principally promotes, advocates or incites hatred or violence." To better manage content on its platform and move past its previous hit and miss attempts of removing white nationalist music, the tech company partnered with rights advocacy groups like the Southern Poverty Law Center to identify hateful bands. Additionally, the policy allows Spotify to exercise editorial power over who demonstrate hateful conduct without extending that into their content.

Nonprofit and NGO Reports:

Facebook. "[Facebook Civil Right Audit.](#)" July 8, 2020.

> This audit on internal civil rights practices was commissioned by Facebook in response to public scrutiny around organizational hate speech policies along with encouragement of the civil rights community and some members of Congress. Recognized by various actors as a benchmark document, the report is intended to help the company identify, prioritize, and implement sustained and comprehensive improvements to the way it impacts civil rights.

Muslim Advocates & Global Project Against Hate and Extremism. "[Complicit: The Human Cost of Facebook's Disregard for Muslim Life.](#)" October 21, 2020.

> This is a report by Muslim Advocates and the Global Project Against Hate and Extremism argues that Facebook has played an instrumental role in enabling anti-Muslim violence across the globe. The publication tracks cases of the platform's support of anti-Muslim authoritarian regimes and its anti-Muslim senior staff. Additionally, it points to Facebook's continued disregard of these issues regardless of various campaigns and compelling advocacy efforts.

Hankes, Keegan. "[Move Slow and Break Everything.](#)" *Southern Poverty Law Center*. February 20, 2019.

> Pointing to countless instances of hate speech leading to violence, this piece by the Southern Poverty Law Center highlights the divide between tech company leaders,

and the toxicity the users on their platforms have to endure. The advocacy group specifically points to numerous cases of inconsistent enforcement by social media platforms. Here, SPLC frames the matter as a public health issue requiring multi-sector and community-based solutions.

Academic Sources:

Badiei, Farzaneh. "Govern Fast and Break Things — A Commentary by Farzaneh Badiei." *Yale Law School*. December 3, 2020.

In this commentary piece, law scholar and activist Farzaneh Badiei outlines solutions for the tech sector's governance crisis. To combat hate on their platforms, the Director of the Social Media Governance Initiative encourages platforms to establish governance mechanisms, informed by various governance strategies, such as procedural justice. Her plan of action includes outcome-oriented solutions, a reform of previously recommended top-down approaches, along with an overall proactive method that avoids current tech reactionary trends.

Alkiviadou, Natalie. "Hate Speech on Social Media Networks: Towards a Regulatory Framework?." *Information & Communications Technology Law.* 2019. 28-1.

Law professor Natalie Alkiviadou looks at the issue of tackling hate speech on social media networks. In this article, she notes the weakness of internal policies regulating illegal hate speech on platforms such as YouTube, Facebook and Twitter. Although these companies have signed a Code of Conduct on illegal hate speech with the European Commission, Alkiviadou explains that due to issues such as multiple jurisdictions, mirror sites, and other technical and legal complications, the actual task of regulating online speech is difficult to implement.

Schieb, Carla, and Mike Preuss. "Governing Hate Speech by Means of Counter Speech on Facebook." *66th International Communication Association.* 2016.

This article by communication scholars Carla Schieb and Mike Preuss explores questions around the efficiency of counter speech, understood broadly as the use of strategic and targeting messaging to refute, contradict, or otherwise diffuse the power of unwanted speech. To do so, the authors set up a computational simulation model that is used to answer general questions concerning the effects that hinder or support the impact of counter speech. Based on their findings, Schieb and Preuss argue that the defining factors for the success of counter speech are the proportion of the hate speech faction and the type of influence the counter speakers can exert on the undecided.

ON COLLEGE CAMPUSES

In the News:

Leland, John. "[What Zoom Does to Campus Conflicts Over Israel and Free Speech](#)." *The New York Times*. January 22, 2021.

> In this article, NYTimes journalist John Leland reports on an interesting incident of free speech censorship on NYU campus. Rather than being banned by the host university due to her controversial status, PLO member Laila Khaled virtual presence on NYU campus was censored by Zoom. The platform, which has become essential to education during the pandemic, deleted the link to the webinar without notice, unilaterally deciding what speech is acceptable in an academic forum.

McWhorter, John. "[Academics Are Really, Really Worried About Their Freedom.](#)" *The Atlantic*. September 1, 2020.

> While recognizing the current need for in depth conversations around race in the American context, Columbia linguistics professor John McWhorter highlights the ways in which this affects conservative academic voices. Mainly, his concern is around a standard of cancel culture in academia, and the chilling effects it presents to academic self-censorship.

Nonprofit and NGO Reports:

American Civil Liberties Union. "[Speech on Campus.](#)" 2021.

> This piece is an overview of the history of free speech on campuses by the American Civil Liberties Union. From important court decisions, to noteworthy campus controversies, the ACLU's exposé positions the current debate within larger and continuing conversations on the issue.

The Knight Foundation. "[Free Speech on College Campuses.](#)" May 2019.

> Catapulted by the latest controversies on American college campuses, this study by the Knight Foundation focuses on current student attitudes on freedom of expression and diversity inclusion. The study finds college students generally supportive of speech protections and relatively skeptical about actions taken to disrupt speakers from engaging with the campus community. The findings also highlight that students

belonging to historically marginalized groups are more sensitive to unrestrictive free speech, particularly hate speech.

Academic Sources:

Ceci, Stephen J., and Wendy M. Williams. "[Who Decides What is Acceptable Speech on Campus? Why Restricting Free Speech is Not the Answer.](#)" *Perspectives on Psychological Science.* 2018. 13-3.

In this article, psychologists Stephen Ceci and Wendy Williams study the issue of speech on campus. By framing opposing sides' arguments, the authors focus on justifications for protestor violence, in opposition to infringements on the students' right to hear controversial speakers. They conclude with a set of principles, most supported by empirical research, to inform university policies and help ensure vigorous freedom of expression within the context of an inclusive, diverse community.

Sultana, Farhana. "[The False Equivalence of Academic Freedom and Free Speech.](#)" *ACME: An International Journal for Critical Geographies*. 2018. 17-2.

In her article, geography professor Farhana Sultana links current free speech controversies to larger threats in higher education. Specifically, she highlights increasing attempts to provide a 'scholarly' veneer to what are otherwise hateful ideologies. The author calls on academics to hold accountable fellow academics, academic publishers, and universities in order to protect academic integrity and scholarship in an era when free speech is misused to silence the pursuit of scholarly rigor and ethical engagement.

Stern, Kenneth. "[The Conflict Over the Conflict.](#)" *New Jewish Press*. 2021.

In this book, law scholar Kenneth Stern reviews the current status of Israel/Palestine discussions on American university campuses. Although the author views college environments as the best place to mine this conflict, he also points to them as a primary site for the hate vs free speech debate. The book presents various cases of university responses to complicated speech ranging from blacklisted faculty, to censorship by administrators.