

TwitterFiles Accountability: Former Twitter Execs Face Congress

Plus: Rogan's "Anti-Semitism"

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Global Research, February 13, 2023

[Glenn Greenwald](#) 10 February 2023

Region: [USA](#)

Theme: [Media Disinformation](#)

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In this episode, we report on the hearings that took place all day today in the House Committee on Oversight and Reform, as three former senior Twitter executives and one low-level pro-censorship "whistleblower" answered questions for more than 8 hours on how that company decided what to censor, whether parts of the government attempted to influence those decisions and whether they succeeded, and why Twitter specifically decided to brute-censor reporting from the New York Post on Joe Biden's business activities in Ukraine and China - and then proceeded to lock the nation's oldest newspaper out of its Twitter account for more than two weeks right as the 2020 presidential election was approaching.

We've covered that censorship decision multiple times on this show because, in our view, that specific act constitutes one of the gravest attempts yet to weaponize censorship to interfere in our presidential elections in decades, if not ever. We'll show you some of the key exchanges from today's hearing, what we learned and what it all means moving forward.

Also: the nation's most popular podcast host, the comedian **Joe Rogan**, is the target of widespread denunciations this week from many on the right and the left due to a joke he told on this program that his critics believe expressed vicious antisemitism, notably very notably, the anti-Rogan denunciations are being led by many people who have built their careers on opposing cancel culture and woke mobs and who, they say, -and we agree - often have hair-trigger sensitivities to lurking bigotry. We'll examine this illuminating controversy and ask whether consistent standards are being applied in general and to Rogan specifically.

For now, welcome to a new episode of System Update starting right now.

Monologue

The House Committee on Oversight and Reform spent the day today grilling four former Twitter employees about the company's censorship policies and especially how those policies were applied in the weeks leading up to the 2020 presidential election. For more than 8 hours today, both Republican and Democratic members of that committee posed questions to former chief legal counsel of Twitter Vijaya Godi; former Twitter deputy counsel James Baker, who before that notably worked as the FBI's chief lawyer; Twitter's former head of Trust and Safety, Yoel Roth, a cultural leftist caricature very familiar to viewers of this program, primarily for his starring role in the Twitter Files reporting, and former Twitter employee Anika Collier Navaroli, whom Democrats were quite amusingly trying to herald as some sort of courageous whistleblower for criticisms of Twitter that perfectly aligned with the standard left-liberal desire for greater Big Tech censorship. In other words, she was there, this brave whistleblower, to keep telling committee Democrats that the problem with Twitter is not that it censors too much, but that it doesn't censor conservatives aggressively or frequently enough.

The context for this hearing, which we're so happy has finally arrived, is vital to understand. Like I said a couple of minutes ago, I regard the decision – and it wasn't only by Twitter, but also by Facebook – to manipulate the ability of Americans to access critical reporting – not about Hunter Biden, but about Joe Biden right before the 2020 election – as probably the single gravest example of weaponizing censorship in order to manipulate the outcome of democratic elections, in at least the last several decades, if not ever.

And there are all sorts of reasons why this ended up being such a serious matter. In part, because it's illustrative of broader trends to attempt to change the Internet, the promise of which early on was that it would liberate all of us from centralized state and corporate control and would enable us to communicate freely with one another without the need to have this arbiter or this mediator being centralized in corporate and state power in between us. Instead, it has become probably the most potent weapon yet for propagandizing a population, because instead of allowing this free and open inquiry that the Internet was supposed to empower, it's now being used to censor any kind of views that are designed to challenge the establishment of orthodoxies. This one-way battering ram of messaging perfectly aligns virtually always with the U.S. government, generally, the U.S. Security State specifically.

And the fact that this is the case of two of the most important social media platforms doing exactly that – censoring reporting right before the presidential election, days before, weeks before a very hotly contested election. Joe Biden was certified as the winner of that election because he won three or four states by a very narrow margin, 70,000 or 80,000 votes going a different way and that election would have been certified differently. We will never know whether or not this impediment was put in place to prevent Americans from learning about what turned out everyone now acknowledges – except for Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez – everyone now acknowledges was true and authentic documents and true and authentic reporting. Whether that would have made the difference, but whether it would have made the difference or not, the obvious attempt on the part of the intelligence community, then corporate media outlets, and then Big Tech to unite and keep this information away from American citizens, or at the very least lead them to believe that it should be seen as discrediting, based on the CIA lie that it was Russian disinformation, was undeniably and a major escalation in the use of censorship in this country, and it deserves, at the very least, a few days of House hearings.

Even though Democrats spent much of the day whining today that this is kind of some kind

of a distraction from the things that really matter – free speech really matters, and a free press really matters. The role that Big Tech is playing in our lives and in our democracy – and it's not just its increasing ability, but its increasing willingness to use that power to manipulate what we're hearing and what we're thinking, on behalf of the political factions that it serves most loyally – cannot be minimized or dismissed, as Democrats spent the day doing, for obvious reasons, namely, that this censorship regime is constructed and is supplied to benefit them. So, of course, they're happy with it.

And one of the things that were real today, if you listen to any part of this hearing, let alone all of it, as we did today, was that these four people who were before the committee to answer questions, three of them senior executives at Twitter, the other a low-level employee who is deemed to be a whistleblower, if you just listen to them at all, they're immediately recognizable. James Baker, who was the second in command to Vijaya Godi, as deputy general counsel of Twitter, who came from the FBI, where he was their chief lawyer, now, suddenly at Twitter, making decisions about our elections. He is very readily identifiable as someone who is from the U.S. Security State and he hated Donald Trump for the reasons they all did, that he brought instability to their orthodoxies; and then Vijaya Godi and Yoel Roth and this fourth person, who was brought in as the whistleblower. They are very standard left-liberals.

We've shown you Yoel Roth at length before, the way he speaks, the things he says, and how he thinks; he comes right out of left-wing academia. Vijaya Godi is a little bit more sophisticated in her presentation, but there's no doubting the fact that she's just an establishment devotee to the Democratic Party. And then this fourth person was kind of a caricature, even more so than Yoel Roth, a pro-censorship block that's looking at free speech as violence, believing that free speech constantly has to be weighed against safety – all of these new liberal doctrines have been invented in order to justify increasing control over the Internet.

Now, I think a timeline to remember what happened here is absolutely vital because what has been done, and this is often the case, is an attempt to tell you this is a really complex series of events that are filled with all kinds of detailed complexities that can't really be discerned and trying to get you basically to look away – they've decided this is past history, there's no point in looking into this, none of it can ever really be resolved. And the truth is exactly the opposite: there's great clarity and simplicity to the timeline of what took place.

So, let's review that. First of all, the context for all the 2020 election – and this isn't me saying this, there was a very lengthy article in [Time Magazine](#) that was remarkably candid in acknowledging that – virtually the entire American establishment was united to ensure Donald Trump's defeat in the 2020 election. They engaged in all kinds of maneuvers and all kinds of tactics that previously would have been unthinkable, the way in which they aligned across political ideologies and political parties to make sure that Donald Trump didn't get a second term was also highly unusual, essentially, all of American power and institutions of power were on the same side in this election, something that normally doesn't happen in American elections.

The Time Magazine article was essentially describing what has now become the Sam Harris mentality. As you recall, Sam Harris, in a now notorious podcast, said that he believes that the censorship of this story of the New York Post reporting and anything that was just done to ensure Donald Trump's defeat was justified: censorship, lying, manipulation. He was honest enough to acknowledge what he thinks, which is that in his mind, Donald Trump is

such a unique threat to the American way of life, such a singular evil that, by definition, anything done for the noble cause of ensuring his defeat was morally justifiable. The classic ends justify the means argument, even if the means in question are things like censorship, CIA interference in our elections, all things that are not supposed to happen in a healthy, normal democracy, to Sam Harris – he was expressing the view quite overtly – all of it was justified as long as it was done to stop Trump. And that was clearly the view of the establishment generally. They've spent all year laying the groundwork for this, and in this specific case was an extension of that rotted mentality.

On October 14, right before the 2020 election, The New York Post published an article that at least was relevant and interesting in assessing Joe Biden's integrity. It described actions that his son, Hunter Biden, attempted to get him to take, and at least some of which Joe Biden did in fact take, to benefit the Burisma, an energy company in Ukraine which was paying Hunter Biden \$50,000 a month to sit on the board of something they were doing quite clearly for only one reason. It was not to tap into Hunter Biden's impressive expertise in the energy industry of Eastern Europe. He had no such expertise. It was because the person running Ukraine since at least 2014 was his father, Joe Biden. He was acting as an imperial overseer or consul of Ukraine.

So, if you were an energy company in Ukraine, like Burisma, facing the possibility of criminal charges and investigations, the person with whom he would want to wield influence most is not a Ukrainian politician, but the one who is actually running Ukraine, which is Joe Biden, when he was the vice president of United States. And then in order to do that, you don't go and hire or pay the son of an Ukrainian politician, you go and hire the son of the U.S. politician, which is what Burisma did. And Joe Biden was heavily involved in decision-making about whether to fire certain Ukrainian prosecutors. The micromanaging of Ukraine by the United States, right on the other side of the Russian border was so extensive that it went down to the level of which particular prosecutor they wanted to replace, and which ones they wanted remaining, something that obviously had a direct effect on Burisma.

The Biden defense is that the [demand that this one particular prosecutor be fired or removed](#), that Biden demanded and threatened Ukraine to withhold \$1 billion in aid unless they did, was the position not just of the U.S. government, but also of the EU. But whatever else is true, when you have an American politician running a country and then an energy company in that country is paying his son \$50,000 a month blatantly for influence peddling, that deserves a lot of investigative scrutiny, especially when Joe Biden becomes the presidential frontrunner, which is what he was on October 14, when the New York Post published emails that they said came from Hunter Biden's laptop – which happens to be true – shedding light on what Joe Biden was doing in Ukraine.

On October 15th, the following day, the New York Post published a second story based on the same set of documents from Hunter Biden's laptop describing what Joe Biden and the Biden family were doing in pursuing profitable business ventures in China, trading on Joe Biden's name as somebody who wielded a great deal of influence as vice president, who may one day be the American president, and whether or not there were elements in China seeking to funnel money to Joe Biden and his son and his family to garner influence. We can go through all the details about the deal memo that was part of that laptop that described how 10% of the profits was reserved for the big guy, which Hunter Biden's business partner, Tony Bobulinski, said referred to Joe Biden.

But leaving that aside for now, there's no question but that these two stories, what Joe

Biden was doing in Ukraine, and what Joe Biden was doing in China, were the utmost for journalistic relevance, that's exactly what you want the media doing. And because those stories were incriminating of the Biden family and of Joe Biden, because they raised doubts about Joe Biden's integrity and they played into a storyline that had already been emerging, which was that Joe Biden was trying to enrich his son by using his influence to benefit his family, it was an alarming story to people who are desperate to ensure Donald Trump's defeat, which is basically most of the political establishment. They were petrified by these stories for obvious reasons. It's very high stakes. Two weeks out from a presidential election, anything and everything is taken very seriously, let alone an explosive archive that comes from Joe Biden's son shedding all new light on what this family was doing.

Clearly, this posed a danger to the number one priority goal of the American establishment and the U.S. Security State, which was Donald Trump's defeat, and so when these two articles were published, the establishment immediately sprang into action. There were instant claims that this is a repeat of the 2016 election in which Russia was trying to interfere in the outcome of the election to help Donald Trump get elected. But remember what happened in 2016, regardless of what you think of Russia's role, was that similarly relevant and authentic documents were released about Hillary Clinton and the Clinton campaign, something that undoubtedly was a public interest.

This was the frontrunner of the 2016 presidential election. All of these documents that were published by WikiLeaks that came from the email inbox of the Democratic National Committee and John Podesta, the Clinton campaign chairman, shed obvious light on what Hillary Clinton was thinking and doing, which is something you'd want to know as a journalist and as a citizen. And the publication of that, those authentic documents by WikiLeaks obviously played a role in the outcome of the election. That's what journalism is for: to reveal to the American public secrets about the candidates. And oftentimes that's how it's done, through huge archives.

So, the establishment was petrified they were going to do that again. And when they saw this reporting, they instantly blamed Russia, even though they had no evidence to do so. Immediately, on October 14 and then 15, the day the stories emerged, first Twitter announced that they were banning any attempt to link to The New York Post stories. If you tried on Twitter to link to the New York Post stories, you got a message from Twitter before the tweet was posted saying this is an unhealthy or prohibited link. If you even tried to post it in your direct messages and your private conversation on Twitter, the same thing happened. The link was just banned. You could not use any link to The New York Post reporting for either of those first two stories on the Twitter site.

People have forgotten that it wasn't just Twitter, but also Facebook who censored that story. They announced that decision through their director of communications, who coincidentally happened to be somebody who had spent his entire life working for the Democratic Party on Capitol Hill – Andy Stone. He worked for the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee and the House Majority PAC, these entities that are designed to ensure that the Democratic Party remains in power. He worked for Democratic Senator Barbara Boxer. He worked for a member of the House who was a Democrat. He was a Democrat through and through.

That was what his whole life was before he got to Facebook. And that's why Facebook had announced to the public that they were going to tinker with their algorithms to block the spread of that New York Post story to ensure that many people, millions of Americans, would not get exposed to it on Facebook until he said they could conduct a third-party fact check

to determine whether the materials were not authentic. And to this day, that fact check has never been provided and the reason is obvious, Facebook, It turns out, banned or algorithmically suppressed a story that turned out to be totally true. So, either that fact check didn't happen and Facebook lied that it would or it did happen and it concluded that the documents were real and Facebook ended up suppressing the story anyway. But that is a major interference in our American elections.

And then on October 19, just five days after The New York Post began its reporting, 51 former members of the intelligence community, the CIA, Homeland Security, all the same people who are constantly interfering – James Clapper and John Brennan, that whole gang – issued a letter that asserted that the publication of these documents in The New York Post had “all of the trade hallmarks of Russian disinformation”. These 51 intelligence agents admitted they had no evidence to support that claim. They said that explicitly in that letter. And yet the very first reporter to trumpet it was Natasha Bertrand, then at Politico – she's since been promoted to CNN for her role in spreading disinformation. That's how you get hired in CNN – was the first to publish the screaming headline that the Hunter Biden laptop and the documents used by the New York Post to do that reporting were “Russian disinformation” and from there, virtually every major media outlet in the country, not all but most, ratified that lie over and over and over and over again.

And then that was what Big Tech used as well to justify the censorship decisions that Twitter executives said at the time that they were justifying this because it violated Twitter's policy against citing hacked materials. They had no idea that these materials whether they were hacked. The Twitter Files reporting that Elon Musk enabled that, Matt Taibbi and Bari Weiss and other people, reporters that we've had on our show, Lee Fang and Michael Shellenberger and others, demonstrated that even at the time that James Baker, the former FBI general counsel, was urging that Twitter blocked this story, based on – they had to invent some rule, they couldn't just censor it because they wanted Joe Biden to win they had to pretend they had some rule that was violated by this story – they pointed to the ban on pointing to linking to hacked materials, even though inside Twitter, they were admitting they had no evidence to make that conclusion that these materials were hacked. And as it turned out, that was a falsehood. That was a lie. These stories, these materials, we're not hacked.

So, Twitter had no basis for censoring. Facebook to this day has never acknowledged it made a mistake in what it did. Facebook's Mark Zuckerberg did go on Joe Rogan's program, and when asked about that by Joe Rogan, said the reason Facebook did that was because the FBI spent months warning them that something like this was probably going to happen. It was going to come from Russia, which is why they ended up believing the claim that this was a “Russian disinformation campaign” because the FBI was telling them for months, were priming them for months to get ready to censor any information that could have helped Donald Trump win the election by shedding a negative light on Joe Biden.

Twitter, though, has acknowledged it through Jack Dorsey, the CEO and founder, who apologized. And even today at these hearings, these senior Twitter executives repeatedly acknowledged that they made a mistake not only in banning the link to The New York Post stories but also locking The New York Post out of their Twitter account for two weeks. So, all that reporting in The New York Post is based on this archive. The New York Post was not able to post on Twitter and get maximum circulation for it because Twitter was demanding that they delete their original tweet that promoted their first story in the New York Post, justifiably was refusing to do so, saying, Why should we delete our authentic reporting in

order to get back onto Twitter? We're not going to do that.

So, Twitter's position, though, is that they made a mistake. It's a pretty huge mistake given that they ended up censoring genuine, authentic reporting about the person who would, just two weeks later, go on to become the president of the United States.

So that's why the House Republicans – the Democrats, obviously had zero interest in finding out what happened here and investigating any of it – convened today their first Oversight hearing where they subpoenaed the three senior executives who were responsible for that decision and many other censorship decisions, suppressing anti-establishment voices, particularly on the right, though also on the left. And then, the Democrats called this whistleblower who was just there to voice her critique of Twitter that aligns perfectly with the left wing of the Democratic Party: that Twitter should be censoring more, not less. Especially, it should have been censoring Trump more, should have been protecting AOC better. That's what she was there for.

The big question that we didn't know for sure before this hearing was how much information we were we going to learn about the role that the U.S. government played in those decisions to censor. We have a lot of information that the FBI was trying to censor to influence Twitter's decision-making when it came to censorship and Big Tech in multiple ways.

Before the Twitter Files, [The Intercept, at the end of October, in a story by Ken Bernstein and Lee Fang](#), obtained secret documents from Homeland Security that revealed the very extensive plan Homeland Security has to ensure they can play a vital role in telling these companies what they should and shouldn't censor or allow. That was what that whole disinformation czar was supposed to do inside Homeland Security, to formalize the government's pronouncements about what is true and what is false, with the expectation that Big Tech would almost be obligated to censor anything the government labels false. There was a lot of evidence of Big Tech's involvement. Mark Zuckerberg's admission on Joe Rogan was also serious evidence, as was the fact that the Twitter Files revealed all new evidence showing how deeply involved the FBI was with Twitter. There is one example, from Michael Shellenberger, on December 19, 2022, that came from his installment of the Twitter Files. And what he shows here is that pressure had been growing inside the intelligence community for Twitter to censor in anticipation of the election:

We have seen a sustained (if uncoordinated) effort by the intelligence community to push us to share more information and change our API policies. They are probing and pushing everywhere they can (including by whispering to convey to congressional staff).

This was Twitter internally lamenting the fact that there was so much pressure coming from the FBI and the CIA and Homeland Security, trying to get them to censor in a way that would favor the Democratic Party. And we can't reveal all the Twitter file revelations. We devoted [many shows](#) to those revelations. We interviewed [many of the reporters](#). Go back and look at those, what they established. Above all, the most important thing was that these were not autonomous decisions by Twitter to censor the Hunter Biden story, to ban Donald Trump from Twitter, even though he was the sitting president of the United States, to ban Marjorie Taylor Greene, despite being an elected representative. Instead, this is constantly a tidal wave of attempted coercion and influence from obviously very powerful forces inside the government, that if you're Big Tech and you have big contracts opportunities with the Pentagon, as Amazon does, or the CIA as Amazon does and Microsoft does and Google does, you're going to take seriously their insistence on what you should censor. And if they tell

you that they need you to censor it in the name of national security, you're going to listen even more closely. So, we know there were all kinds of ties between Facebook and Twitter, and that's what these executives set out, most of all, to deny today.

So, let's begin with a statement by Vijaya Godi, the general counsel of Twitter, who has become identified as one of the key players in causing Twitter to censor right-wing voices. And here's a taste of the kinds of things she had to say today.

(Video 34:52)

Vijaya Gadde: At no point did Twitter otherwise prevent tweeting, reporting, discussing or describing the contents of Mr. Biden's laptop. People could and did talk about the contents of the laptop on Twitter or anywhere else, including other much larger platforms. But they were prevented from sharing the primary documents on Twitter. Still, over the course of that day, it became clear that Twitter had not fully appreciated the impact of that policy on Free Press and others. As Mr. Dorsey testified before Congress on multiple occasions, Twitter changed its policy within 24 hours and admitted its initial action was wrong. This policy revision immediately allowed people to tweet the original articles with the embedded source materials. Relying on its longstanding practice not to retroactively apply new policies, Twitter informed the New York Post that it could immediately begin tweeting when it deleted the original tweets, which would have freed them to retweet the same content again. The New York Post chose not to delete its original tweets, so Twitter made an exception after two weeks to retroactively apply the new policy to the Post's tweets. In hindsight, Twitter should have reinstated The Post account immediately.

So, they had to own up to those mistakes, Jack Dorsey did. They can't sit there and justify what they did. It's impossible, particularly because the claim that they invoked to justify the censorship turned out to be completely false. It was a CIA lie. But just note how significant that admission is. First of all, even though it's true that Twitter's ban on those links lasted only 24 hours, it completely maligned the story in the eyes of the American voter since Twitter found it to be so fraudulent and that it came from Russia. This is Twitter putting its institutional support behind these lies, and it shaped how the American public views these stories. Joe Biden himself, every time he was asked about it by reporters or it was raised in the presidential debate with President Trump, immediately accused whoever asked him of spreading Russian disinformation.

These lies were weaponized over and over and Twitter's support for it institutionally played a vital role in that. Secondly, none of these accounts for the role Facebook played, a much, much larger platform, and we don't know to this day how long Facebook's algorithmic suppression lasted, what effect that had, how many people ended up being manipulated as a result of Facebook's doing that. But also, again, Facebook joining Twitter for however long and endorsing this outright lie, that this is Russian disinformation, also manipulated the American public and how they thought about it. Beyond that, this is what gave the media the opening that they took eagerly to ratify this lie over and over. We showed you many times before on every news network from NBC and CBS to CNN. They were bringing [one member of the U.S. Security State on after the next](#) to repeat the lie that this was Russian disinformation, which not only minimized the importance of the story but played into the Democrat's narrative, the number one narrative of the Democrats in the media for four years that somehow Trump was a tool of the Kremlin. That's what this was really designed to do as well. Twitter jumping on board with that just demonstrated how these people who

were called before Congress today, who ran Twitter for all those years, were clearly operatives of the Democratic Party and were using censorship, brute censorship in order to do it.

And then that game playing that she noted at the end where it was kind of a game of chicken. Twitter was saying to The New York Post, "Well, you can come back on to the platform as long as you delete your tweet that we've decreed to be in violation of a rule" and the New York Post said, "We're not going to accept that condition." I respect the New York Post for doing that. I would do that, too, if I were a journalist, and I knew I had reported the story accurately, and the only way I could use a platform is if I deleted my own reporting, an acknowledgment that I had done something wrong as a condition to being able to get back online.

It took Twitter two weeks to relent and tell The New York Post you can come back to our platform even without deleting that tweet. And of course, that was two weeks of reporting The New York Post is doing at the critical moment with exclusive access to this laptop to report on the Biden family and Joe Biden that Twitter users and therefore millions of people, especially journalists who use Twitter all the time, could not see and were not impacted by. These were mistakes that they made and it's nice they're acknowledging that. But what's critical to remember is how inconsequential this was. And anyone who tells you that it had no effect on the election is not telling the truth. They have no way of knowing that, especially with such a close election.

Now, here is Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, and she said several things during this hearing. One of the things she did was try to commandeer the hearing to make it about herself. She, out of nowhere - really, out of nowhere - began complaining and screaming and whining about how Twitter didn't censor enough tweets about her. I know you'll be shocked to learn that she tried to turn it into a hearing about herself and her own victimhood, claiming that Donald Trump's tweets inspired hatred against her and demanding to know why Twitter didn't do more to delete them. In other words, she wanted more censorship from Twitter, that was her anger, which was that they allowed the sitting president of the United States to speak too freely and they should have protected AOC more from the president's comments.

She was also the only one on either side of the aisle in this committee hearing who kept asserting that the authenticity of these materials remains in doubt. Nobody thinks that. The New York Times, The Washington Post, CNN and CBS have all acknowledged, now that the election is safely over, that they could fully authenticate these materials. It takes a level of audacity, or maybe it's just ignorance to think that. She has no idea what she's talking about. She shows up for these hearings looking for dramatic moments that will go viral on social media. I don't think she knows that every major media outlet has authenticated these materials. The reality is, I authenticated them. Many media outlets authenticated them before the election. But the one she trusts has now come out and said there's no question not only are they authentic, but the story about how they made their way first to the FBI and then to Rudy Giuliani and The New York Post was entirely true, which is that Hunter Biden took the laptop in to have it repaired and never came back to pick it up and after 90 days, under his store policy, it becomes his. He gave it to the FBI and then Rudy Giuliani once he realized it was Hunter Biden's. That's actually what happened. Russia had no involvement in it. And she spent the day either out of ignorance or malice, continuously insinuating that the whole thing is still in doubt. And that's why Twitter did the right thing. But what she's really angry about is any of this is even being looked into at all. Watch what she said.

(Video 41:51)

AOC: For The Washington Post article now warning about Hunter Biden laptop disinformation. The guy who leaked it. Here's the deal. Before you even get into my questions, I think that the story here with The Washington Post reporting is that they're saying right here, when New York Post first reported in October 2020 that it had obtained contents of a laptop computer allegedly owned by Joe Biden's son, Hunter, there was an immediate roadblock faced by other news outlets that hope to corroborate reporting as many did. The newspaper wasn't sharing what it obtained.

Okay. Let me just stop there and say she's trying to act like this is something that justifies suspicion about the authenticity of this archive. This is how journalism works all the time. When we got the Snowden reporting and we began reporting on its contents, we didn't run around handing it to any media outlet that asked. That would be a violation of our source obligations to keep the materials under the framework that we had agreed upon with our sources, and how it would be reported. You don't just give away the exclusive material that a source entrusted to you, just because they ask. Do you think the New York Times, when they get an exclusive story, will give it away to Fox News?

Just because Fox News asked and said, "We want to verify that what you're saying is actually true." The New York Times is going to say, "This is our story." There was nothing suspicious about that. That's how newspapers generally behave. Beyond that, there were all kinds of additions to know right away that the material was authentic. There were all kinds of ways to authenticate it. And I've talked about those before, about how I was able to and that's why I was willing to put my name on the story and let The Intercept over their refusal to do so. And Fox News and the New York Post and The Daily Caller, many of them produce concrete evidence verifying and authenticating the material. It's just that they didn't want to hear that. So, this argument that she's making, that because The New York Post wasn't willing to make it available to Ben Collins of NBC News justifies the suspicion of their authenticity, is moronic. That's what she's doing though and the whole day was spent trying to justify Twitter censorship. What's the rest?

(Video 44:04)

AOC: The New York Post had this alleged information and was trying to publish it without any corroboration, without any back up information. They were trying to publish it to Twitter. And now they were upset. I believe that political operatives who sought to inject explosive disinformation with The Washington Post couldn't get away with it. And now they're livid.

Do you see? She continues to call this authentic archive disinformation. I mean, she's just a blatant liar. I'm really asking that. Even a lot of the Democrats on the Committee were willing to acknowledge that the materials are authentic. And they'll say, well, at the time it was unclear and Twitter was grappling with – no one to this day calls that disinformation anymore except her. She's essentially lying and saying that these materials that [we all know are true](#) were disinformation.

(Video 45:01)

AOC: Not the ability to do it again, they want the ability to inject this again. So, they've dragged a social media platform here in Congress. They're weaponizing the use of this

committee so that they can do it again. A whole hearing.

Hearing to do what? Again? What are they trying to do? Get accurate information about the most powerful politicians in the country and then inform the American people about what they revealed. I hope they're trying to do that again. That's what journalists are supposed to be doing. But instead, the journalists, most of them in the United States, had a different mission in mind before the election. They weren't interested in reporting on Joe Biden, just like in 2016, so many of them remain angry that a few of us reported on those WikiLeaks documents and what they reflected. They don't want accurate information about Democratic Party leaders being disclosed to the American people. They want them hidden. That's exactly what she's saying. She's angry. She considers to this day what The New York Post did to be immoral, even though it was accurate reporting, because the only moral metric they recognize, as Sam Harris said, is whether or not it helps defeat Donald Trump.

(Video 46:09)

AOC: About a 24 hour hiccup in a right-wing political operation. That is why we are here right now. And it is just an abuse of public resources and abuse of public time. We could be talking about health care. We could be talking about bringing down the cost of prescription drugs. We could be talking about abortion rights, civil rights, voting rights. But instead, we're talking about Hunter Biden's half fake laptop story. I mean, this is an embarrassment, but I'll go into it.

What does that mean? Half fake. How is it half fake? What does that even mean? The whole thing is real. There are other committees that are talking about prescription drug costs and inflation and abortion and whatever else she thinks is more important. But again, there's it's hard to think of things more important than whether Americans have the ability to speak freely on the Internet or whether a union of Security State agencies is an intel or the intelligence community will unite with the largest media corporations and Big Tech to manipulate what Americans can and can't hear based on lies, outright lies, that came from the CIA in order to manipulate an election. If that isn't relevant for Congress to do, I don't know what is.

Now, many of the Democrats on the Committee actually did spend the day justifying their pro-censorship views. There were at least three new members of the Democratic Party who were on this committee, and all three of them rose in defense of censorship, arguing that censorship of political views is justifiable. I keep saying this. I feel like sometimes people think I'm being hyperbolic deliberately when I do, but I'm not. I'm just being literal. A major plank of the Democratic Party is to increase the amount of censorship Big Tech does in order to prevent voices the Democratic Party dislikes or viewpoints the Democratic Party dislikes from being heard. That is a major tactic of theirs. It should be surprising to hear members of Congress explicitly defend censorship. But it's not anymore. They really don't believe in the First Amendment. They don't believe in the value of free speech. They're not bothered to hear that the government is trying to intervene with Big Tech's censorship decision. And again, this is based on total ignorance. This is what you heard over and over as they did it, which is this: the only thing that censorship advocates know you win them up and they say it. They'll say, you can't yell fire in a crowded theater. Listen to watch them say that. Here is this whistleblower at Twitter. This is how she said it to defend censorship.

(Video 48:46)

Anika Navaroli: It was sent to my team's desk every day. We had to decide whether a particular piece of content equated to yelling fire in a crowded theater. My work at Twitter and subsequently at Twitch put me in the middle of key events in history.

Would put her in the middle of key events in history, like whether to censor or not by determining whether or not someone was yelling fire in a crowded movie theater!

Here is one of the new members of the Democratic Party, Summer Lee. She's a little bit Squadish. I don't think she's joining this Squad officially, but she's expressed support for them. She was supported by that same kind of Democratic Party liberal-left infrastructure like DSA and Justice Democrats as this new, exciting progressive. Here's what she had to say in defense of censorship.

(Video 49:38)

Rep. Summer Lee: I'm not the only lawyer in the room, so you all know that while the Constitution does provide us the right to free speech, there are, of course, limitations. As Ms. Navaroli pointed out, we cannot yell fire in a crowded theater compromising freedom of speech.

This is 102 years old now, the yelling fire in a crowded movie theater thing. And it's how the people who are least informed about constitutional law and the First Amendment and free speech try to justify censorship and it's all over the world. I'm constantly involved in debates and controversies in Brazil about free speech. I've done reporting on this show about the escalating regime of censorship in Brazil through the Judiciary, and you hear this over here as well, to justify censorship, yell fire in a crowded movie theater. So let me just take a minute to explain why this is such a worthless and ignorant invocation. And it's very ironic as well. This "you can't yell fire in a crowded movie theater" justification for censorship came from a 1919 Supreme Court case by Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes, and it was part of a trilogy of cases where people in the United States, American citizens, were being prosecuted under the Espionage Act of 1917, one of the most repressive laws in the history of United States - the law that they used to prosecute Julian Assange and Daniel Ellsberg and Edward Snowden and whoever else decides to blow the whistle on the government.

The purpose of the Espionage Act of 1917 - 1917 was an important year in U.S. history because that was when Woodrow Wilson was trying to involve the country in World War I and there were many people, especially on the left, opposed to that involvement - and it was really designed to criminalize left-wing dissent to America's involvement in World War I. There are people on the right also on isolationist grounds, opposed to involvement in that war. And they used that Espionage Act to prosecute several leftist leaders, including Eugene Debs - And that's what this case is, the Schenck case. Mr. Schenck was an American citizen who had published a petition arguing for the repeal of the draft of conscription. And the state charged him with felonies just for advocating that the draft should be reversed. And their theory was in this case that by arguing against conscription, he was, in fact, obstructing it, that his words weren't just words, but actions. Does that sound familiar?

That's the standard left-wing attempt to criminalize speech. Ironically, it was first used to criminalize and prosecute leftists who were opposed to the U.S. war role in World War I. And the opinion by Justice Holmes, in which he said, well, you can't scream fire in a crowded movie theater to justify this prosecution that the court upheld, was in that context. Ultimately, Holmes himself recanted it throughout the rest of his life. He was writing the

dissent, saying free speech is too valuable to sacrifice it at the altar of an emergency. Even that Schenck case said that the only reason we're allowing the speech to be criminalized is because the war makes it justified and necessary to do so, in peacetime this would be perfectly acceptable speech but just because of the war, we think the government needs more powers to censor.

And then ultimately, it was effectively overruled by the Ohio v Brandenburg decision, in 1967, which said that all speech, all political opinions are constitutionally protected, even advocating violence explicitly, as long as you're not doing something to imminently create violence (direct incitement of imminent lawless action). And so, the entire context of this case, the fact that it was recanted by the person who wrote it, the fact that it's not even good law anymore, and the fact that no one is talking about people yelling fire in a crowded theater, they're talking about people who are expressing political opinions. That's the nature of the First Amendment. There's no political content to yelling fire in a crowded theater.

That's why it was such a good example to justify censorship with. What we're talking about here is political opinions – Joe Biden being corrupt because he is attempting to benefit and profit with his son in Ukraine or in China. That has nothing to do with screaming fire in a crowded movie theater. It's the simple minded way that they've given people like we just showed you to justify censorship. So, whenever you hear anyone using that example, that is a hallmark of somebody who doesn't know what they're talking about. The entire hearing today revealed not just that the Security State attempted to influence Twitter's decisions, that Twitter had a systematic regime of censoring conservative voices because the people running Twitter under Jack Dorsey were all left-liberal caricatures. But it also revealed, most importantly, I think, that this version of the Democratic Party believes in censorship, wants more of it, and intends on an ongoing basis to use their union with the corporate media and with the U.S. Security State to demand greater and greater levels of Internet censorship. That's what they want, they're saying all day: we don't think Twitter's problem was that it centered too much. Twitter's problem is that it didn't censor enough.

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