

Awareness of censorship moment



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My Experience with Censorship What comes to my mind when the word 'censorship' is used is the curtailment of freedom—whether it be the press or any type of organization or even an individual that is being restricted from expressing him or herself. I think that censorship is just how powerful entities, like governments, exert their power by controlling the information that is being disseminated to the public. For instance, one way of eradicating the source of discontent among the public is to limit their hold over people—and they do that by disallowing the publication or broadcast of materials being put out by the detractors of the government. It is as if they are treating the people as horses by putting blinders so that they can only look one way. They think that by doing this they are exposing the people to just the positive views on the state or government, when in fact, they are inciting anger within the community because they are taking away the people's freedom to decide for themselves what they want to believe in and support. This is what I think censorship means, although I was still very young when the government was still applying censorship tactics on television. I grew up with unrestricting parents and so I was able to watch whatever I wanted, provided of course, that there was no nudity or portrayals of sex. And so, I did not really experience what it was like to encounter censored materials. However, I experienced censorship firsthand just a few years back. In the summer of 2006, like any other teenager, I was always on the internet—just surfing and downloading games and songs. Nicholas Cage is one of my favorite actors and the movie he did then that was to be released in the next couple of months was " World Trade Center," which depicted what happened during the September 11 Terrorist attacks and how the last men that were pulled out alive from the rubble of the building survived. Of course, I know

about September 11 and how it caused a negative view on Islam.

Nevertheless, I still tried to research further so that I will be able to better understand what happened because I was just 12 years old on that tragic day. So, I entered ‘September 11 attacks’ on Google and it gave me thousands of hits. I was able to surf and open websites until it came to a particular one about Islam and how extreme its followers’ views are. When I clicked on the link to open the page, preparing myself to be shocked at how our religion was being portrayed just because some extremists decided to go on a suicide mission and kill thousands of Americans at the same time, I was disappointed to see the page that said “The web page you are trying to access has been blocked by Internet Qatar as it contains materials which are prohibited in the State of Qatar.” I was surprised to see this message in place of “Page cannot be displayed.”

It seems that the government are putting blinders on me—making me see only the positive press on Islam. I felt angry and frustrated because the internet is one of my major sources of information and I want to know that I have the freedom to access whatever I want, since I am also paying for the service. This incident made me aware of how censorship really works. I really cannot do anything about it unless I find some way of circumventing their firewall, which I know is illegal. It made me feel helpless because I could not access the information I wanted to have. I believed Qatar to be a forward country and then this. I was disillusioned. Do they think that we cannot think for ourselves? That one negative view about Islam can change our views in an instant? Do they think that we are stupid and easily corruptible? I guess this is what censors really believe for them to think that they needed to limit the information that the public are being given—that we are stupid and

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cannot think for ourselves what is right and wrong. It is all right to limit the information that children are being exposed to—that is the job of the parents and parental control software. But to censor the internet, especially when it is a paid service, is a form of disservice.

I believe now that censorship is something that should not be condoned. We all should have the freedom to choose and decide for ourselves what information we want to be exposed to.