

Students, workers, and artists denounce censorship

# Pink Floyd co-founder Roger Waters condemns Twitter's suspension of IYSSE account

Gabriel Black  
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Last week Twitter suspended the account of the US International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE), the youth and student group associated with the Socialist Equality Party. After a week, the account remains blocked with its posts and masthead invisible to its readers.

The censoring of the IYSSE, at a time of growing interest in a genuine socialist perspective among young people has been met with an outcry and statements of protest across the United States and internationally.

Roger Waters, the famed musician and co-founder of Pink Floyd, posted on his social media accounts Sunday, "Twitter has banned the International Youth and Students for Social Equality [IYSSE]. It is critical that people are informed of this effort to censor them."

In a reference to Jack Dorsey, the billionaire CEO of Twitter and Square, Waters concluded, "WHAT ARE YOU AFRAID of @JACK?" The text accompanied a photo of himself with tape over his mouth reading "Twitter." His combined posts on Twitter and Instagram have received over 75,000 likes at the time of writing.

Andrea Peji?, a leading international model, posted on her Twitter account, "Dear Twitter restore @IYSSE\_US, @TwitterSupport. Stop censoring the world web. Stop censoring reputable left publications/organizations. Especially those that have been the most vocal opponents of fascism."

Dozens of students and young people have contacted the *World Socialist Web Site* to express their opposition to Twitter's censorship.

Lachlan, a student at Appalachian State University in

North Carolina, told the WSWs that the "information that workers and students receive from following the IYSSE Twitter account as a source for understanding the world around us is vitally needed right now."

"Students and workers are thirsting for a serious analysis," he stated, pointing to the "election crisis, the COVID-19 pandemic... the prospect of losing our jobs to pay for school" as well as the "lasting impacts of the economic crisis that has greatly benefited the rich." He concluded, "no other political page on social media comes close to that of the program broadcasted by the IYSSE and that is why Twitter wants to censor it."

Jaylah, a freshman at the University of Florida, called Twitter's censorship "unexpected, but not surprising." She remarked that the "blatant restriction of socialism" is a response to "growing interest in socialism [in] today's youth."

A professor at the University of California, San Diego, Charles Thorpe, told the WSWs that the censoring of the IYSSE was "evidence of the growing anti-democratic arrogance and illegitimate power of the tech corporations. It illustrates precisely why these online platforms need to be taken out of private capitalist control and socialized as public utilities." He called the suspension an "attack on democracy."

Sebastian, a student at the University of California, Berkeley, said that Twitter's suspension of the IYSSE account "should not be taken lightly." He continued, "The IYSSE has clearly followed the rules and the actions taken by Twitter amounts to nothing more than political censorship. In the age of the internet we have seen big tech companies such as Twitter and Google

become the gatekeepers of speech and the violators of the First Amendment. This action, and actions like it, are not aimed at ‘protecting’ users from misinformation or “spam” accounts, but instead aimed at protecting the hegemony of corporate interests and the silencing of dissenting voices.”

The “Class Unity” caucus of the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA) also posted a principled defense of the IYSSE on Twitter, stating, “The disturbing rise of online censorship and deplatforming should alarm anyone dedicated to the principle of free speech. We condemn the measures taken by Twitter against the World Socialist Web Site, and the Socialist Equality Party.”

Genevieve Leigh, national secretary of the IYSSE (US), has written to the YDSA, the youth movement of the DSA, and Joseph Kishore, National Secretary of the Socialist Equality Party, to the DSA, asking the organizations to denounce the measures, but neither have received a response.

The censoring of the IYSSE’s Twitter page is not a stand-alone act, it comes following Google Chief Executive Officer Sundar Pichai admitting on the congressional record on October 28 that the search giant had been censoring the WWS. Google, in April of 2017, following the defeat of Hillary Clinton, instituted new search algorithms which de-ranked less “authoritative” content. This dropped the search traffic of 13 leading left-wing, progressive and anti-war web sites, by 55 percent between April and September of 2017.

Several sub-reddits on the popular aggregation site Reddit have banned the WWS, including r/Socialism. As far back as August 2018, Facebook has removed the accounts of left-wing publishers, including deleting the accounts of *World Socialist Web Site* reporters on the basis of unsubstantiated claims of “inauthentic behavior.”

We call on all readers of the *World Socialist Web Site* to widely share our articles exposing Twitter’s censorship of the IYSSE and to write-in and circulate statements opposing this action. Below, we publish several other comments and remarks from supporters of the IYSSE:

Eric, a young worker in the Pacific Northwest: “The suspension of the IYSSE (US) account by Twitter appears to be an act of blatant political censorship. As a

supporter of the IYSSE (US), I demand that Twitter restore their account immediately.”

Mike, a student at Northern Virginia Community College: It “was wrong that Twitter and Facebook are shutting people.” Condemning Twitter’s removal of the IYSSE page he stated, “That is all messed up. Twitter just wants to distract people from the truth.” The capitalist class “wants to get the situation stabilized. It’s clear that they don’t like you, they didn’t even give you a response to your questions about why they banned you.”

Thushara, a worker from Washington state, stated that: “[The] IYSSE is an important source of information for young people, especially during a time when their whole world has been upended by the criminal policy of a ruling class that values profits over lives. Just today, I read an article by Kate Randall on just this issue. These articles require the widest readership, especially by young people so they can be politically equipped to take command of their lives which lie ahead of them.”



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