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## How to Really End Online Censorship and Control

In just one minute on the Internet, 659,000 stories are shared on Instagram and 150,000 messages are shared on Facebook. As a graduating senior and future leader, in just one minute, I can start a conversation with someone, I can listen and learn from one of my peers, I can create goals for myself or my team, in just one minute, I can advocate for what I believe in.

I believe that social media and the internet have a negative effect on the lives of many, myself included. While some make the argument that social media and the internet can bring people together and allow information to reach those masses, I argue it is more beneficial to participate in society, not sit and watch it from a screen. I am going to dive even deeper into this prompt and declare that the movement to control and censor ideas and opinions through social media and the internet simply cannot be restricted. As the saying goes, you can't fight fire with fire, and in the same way you can't fight censorship with more censorship. Accordingly, restricting information is a slippery slope I would rather not journey down. Instead, I am going to insist that we attack censorship and control from its core, the cellphone. There is an obsession in this modern world to consume information like a suction glued to a screen and that's where the control starts. Algorithms on social media apps feed you content at rapid speed, always prompting you with more entertainment or information. If you fill your brain with all that "stuff" you will not be able to think critically to form your own ideas and thoughts, to combat this I propose putting the phone down and actually living. Information is best absorbed through real life experiences, relationships, failure, learning, and connecting with people in person. Influencers shouldn't be random people with an online platform, they should be role models in one's life, leaders in one's community, respected members of one's family and so much more.

By spending more time participating in life you will form plentiful unique opinions and thoughts that are crafted like a beautiful kaleidoscope, each shard of colored glass a different experience or occurrence.

Signing off the very things designed to control and censor us is the only way we can end the cycle. Two summers ago I signed off and completely deleted apps like Tik Tok and Facebook after coming home from a mission trip with my church where I unplugged for a week and focused on helping others. Prior to the trip I was worried about missing my phone but I quickly came to the realization that the more time you spend actually living, the less you miss mindless scrolling. My daily life has greatly changed for the better when I vastly limited my social media and internet use and as a future leader, I intend to advocate for others to understand the benefits of doing the same.