

**Prepared Written Testimony of Andy Parker
Hearing on July 16, 2019 (Submitted July 14, 2019)**

In August 2015, my daughter, journalist Alison Parker, was shot and murdered while reporting on live TV. The unimaginable pain felt by my family was amplified after the killer uploaded a first-person video of the murder to YouTube. I pledged to honor my daughter's memory and advocate for sensible gun laws so others won't suffer the same fate as Alison.

In response to my advocacy, countless people have targeted me, my family, and Alison's boyfriend online, claiming that Alison's death was faked as part of a conspiracy to seize their guns. They have taken the gruesome footage of my daughter's murder, edited it into videos and flooded YouTube and other social media platforms with hate-filled diatribes maligning us.

As the company with a virtual monopoly on internet search and online video hosting, Google has a duty to make sure the information they make accessible to the world is based on facts, and not harmful conspiracy theories. I implored both Google and YouTube to take down the footage of her murder, and the related conspiratorial content. Their response was to suggest that I view and flag the content I found offensive. Instead of self-policing, they put the onus on me. In essence, they wanted me to watch my daughter's murder and explain to a robot why it should be removed. I never have nor ever will watch any of it for obvious reasons. In 2017 I reached out to Lenny Pozner (whose son Noah was murdered in the Sandy Hook shooting) and the HONR Network who worked long hours flagging videos so that I was spared. When finding offensive content, HONR volunteers would click the report button below each video and check the appropriate box explaining how the video violates YouTube's Community Guidelines. Although hundreds of videos have been taken down due to their diligence, they are often stymied even with an enforceable copyright.

I have engaged in direct communications with Google regarding the proliferation of these videos, but while they profess a desire to help, in reality they do nothing. On May 1st of this year, in the company of the Georgetown University Civil Rights Law Clinic, I had a videoconference with Lance Kavanaugh, YouTube's Counsel, Juniper Downs, Chief of Google Global Strategy, and Alexandra Walden, Google Director of Global Human Rights regarding specific content and our attempts to have it removed. Their response was "We're really trying". Since that meeting, there has been nothing but silence. Thanks to Section 230, Google has complete immunity and therefore no incentive to respond.

Here are examples (slide presentation): In an utter failure of their AI, one video was self-flagged by Google then later the flag was removed. Some videos were not removed and instead given this "This video may be inappropriate for some users" label which is a perverse invitation to click and

watch. This video, which has over 700,000 views and was specifically pointed out to Google in our teleconference, is still up as we speak.

Public tragedies such as Alison's murder have seemingly become more prevalent over the last few years. Most recently, companies such as Google and Facebook have received massive pushback after the widespread dissemination of the video of the horrific attack in Christchurch, New Zealand. In fact, British regulators recently unveiled a new plan that would penalize tech giants such as Facebook and Google for failing to stop the spread of harmful content through their platforms.¹

There is an emerging consensus that this is an urgent crisis that merits an immediate public reckoning. YouTube has even acknowledged this as an important issue through a recent policy change, where they limited the recommendations of "borderline content", such as 9/11 and anti-vaccination conspiracy theories.² However, limiting recommendations is not enough.

I understand that the general purpose of this hearing is to consider whether internet gatekeepers such as Google should or should not "censor" the speech of the politically unpopular. However, it is important to note that turning a blind-eye to targeted harassment over the internet in the name of preserving free speech has real-world and life-altering consequences. Furthermore, this harassment itself has a significant chilling effect on free speech and public advocacy of the people these conspiracy theorists target. Even though some on this committee may not agree with my cause, they must recognize that the harassment and threats of violence I faced was an attempt to intimidate me, prevent me from telling Alison's story and speaking out against gun violence, and to silence *my* free speech rights.

I recognize the First Amendment gives everyone the right to publicly speculate that the moon landing was faked, or that the earth is flat. But there is a difference between someone venting about a favorite conspiracy theory and Google turning its platforms over to anonymous users for them to target and harass victims of public tragedies - the former is free speech; the latter is violence.

Unless members of this committee would object to YouTube's highly-successful efforts to systematically remove ISIS-sponsored videos promoting terrorism, or their more recent initiative to rid their site of inappropriate, violent videos targeting children, we can all acknowledge that some content is dangerous and patently unacceptable. However, we can all agree that the discretion of these tech companies cannot be unbridled.

¹https://www.washingtonpost.com/technology/2019/04/07/uk-unveils-sweeping-plan-penalize-facebook-google-harmful-online-content/?noredirect=on&utm_term=.8b5dbdacf8a1

² <https://youtube.googleblog.com/2019/01/continuing-our-work-to-improve.html>

As more and more public tragedies and horrific mass shootings occur, they will be recorded, broadcasted, and disseminated on platforms like YouTube like so much cheap entertainment for Google to use to add a few more millions to its bottom line.

Google profits massively off of a lack of regulation. If it cannot properly protect citizens from online harassment, hate speech and moment of death videos, I call on Congress to step in and make sure that proper protections are in place for private citizens who are continually targeted, harassed and exploited.

Currently, platforms like Google are protected against civil or criminal liability under Section 230 of the Communications Decency Act. Removing the Section 230 protection will allow users to hold Google responsible for the conspiratorial content it allows on its platforms.

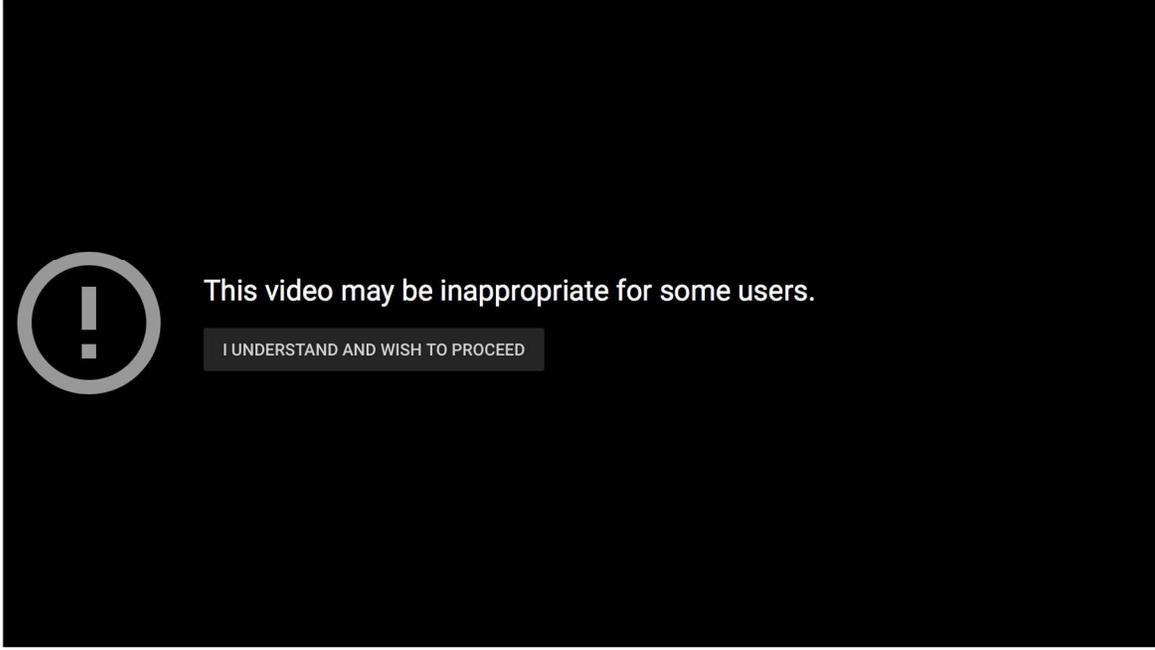
Mr. Chairman, there may not be a lot of issues you and I can philosophically agree on, except this. We should protect the First Amendment but it's time for Google and social media to be regulated. The original founders of Google had a motto in their code of conduct, which was simply, Don't Be Evil. This motto was replaced in 2015 by "Do the right thing". Google fails on both counts.

I am willing to provide the committee with any additional information.

Safari File Edit View History Bookmarks Window Help Wed 10:43 AM 83%

youtube.com

YouTube Search



This video may be inappropriate for some users.

I UNDERSTAND AND WISH TO PROCEED

WDBJ7 Reporter Alison Parker & cameraman Adam Brown shot & killed CBS News Live TV

7,472 views 10 10 SAVE ...

SonicR360 Published on Aug 26, 2015 SUBSCRIBE

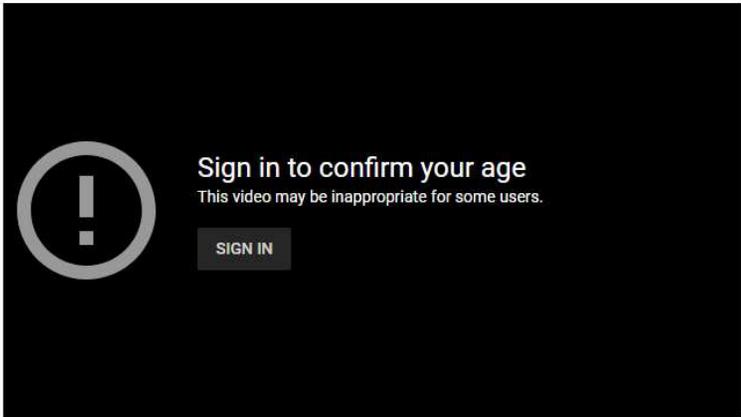


BREAKING: WDBJ Shooting video: x +

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iEH9RBxeffHI

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BREAKING: WDBJ Shooting video FOOTAGE.

721,489 views 184 79 SAVE ...

 **accdman96fn**
Published on Aug 26, 2015 [SUBSCRIBE](#)

A gunman is on the loose after killing two broadcast journalists in a shooting that was captured on live television in Moneta, Virginia early Wednesday morning. WDBJ cameraman Adam Ward was filming reporter Alison Parker interviewing Smith

Notice [Age-restricted video \(based on Community Guidelines\)](#)

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253 Comments SORT BY

 Add a public comment...

 **Feelerino** 3 years ago

Windows taskbar: Search, File Explorer, Chrome, Outlook, Word, Skype, RSA, Edge, PowerPoint

BREAKING: WDBJ Shooting video FOOTAGE.

721,469 views

184 79 SHARE SAVE



accdman96fin

Published on Aug 26, 2015

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A gunman is on the loose after killing two broadcast journalists in a shooting that was captured on live television in Moneta, Virginia early Wednesday morning.

WDBJ cameraman Adam Ward was filming reporter Alison Parker interviewing Smith Mountain

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Commenting publicly as Eric Feinberg



Feelerino 3 years ago

Good. Keep selling guns to anyone who wants to buy them.

90 1 REPLY

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The Overly Oplnlonated 3 years ago

These first persons shooters keep getting more and more realistic

14 1 REPLY

View 2 replies



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720,893 views

183 79 SHARE SAVE

acdcman96fin
Published on Aug 26, 2015

A gunman is on the loose after killing two broadcast journalists in live television in Moneta, Virginia early Wednesday morning. WDBJ cameraman Adam Ward was filming reporter Alison Parker

Notice [Age-restricted video \(based on Community G](#)

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255 Comments SORT BY

Commenting publicly as Eric Feinberg

Feelerino 3 years ago
Good. Keep selling guns to anyone who wants to buy them.

91 REPLY

View 34 replies

Jeff Dunam 3 years ago
The anchor can't actually see the footage, they can only hear the sounds. I'm sure if she saw what was happening she would have been more freaked out.

4 REPLY

The Overly Opinionated 3 years ago

Thanks for reporting

Issue
Violent or repulsive content

Timestamp selected
0:08

Additional details
First report of violent video of Shooting of Virginia Reporter and her Cameramen from August 2015 been up for almost 4 years has over 720 890 views

If we find this content to be in violation of our [Community Guidelines](#), we will remove it.

CLOSE

- LIVE: President Trump commencement speech at US...**
FOX 10 Phoenix
1K watching
LIVE NOW
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MLive
1.1M views
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IRememberColumbine!
Recommended for you
- Granny Who Was Body-Slammed by Teen Lets Him Of...**
Inside Edition
15M views
- See Fight Erupt After Manslaughter Sentencing**
MLive
908K views
- FNN: Head of VA State Police Holds Press Conference Abou...**
FOX 10 Phoenix
6.4K views
- Woman whispers for help in a chilling 911 call**
CNN
7.7M views