



Freedom of Form Foundation, Inc.  
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August 3, 2020

Dear friends and members of our community,

This letter is part of our overall response to wrong and damaging accusations that were directed towards our organization. This expands a bit more comprehensively than our [other letter posted on our website](#). We have selected a few additional representative accusations to respond to. We are using these as illustrative examples to further clarify that we hold no intolerant, fascist, or otherwise harmful viewpoints, nor do we participate in any unfair or unethical business practices. Instead, such accusations were wrongly forced upon us due to careless and biased behavior by our accusers. We use this space to give some suggestions and advice that we genuinely hope helps our accusers understand and appreciate complex issues, and to grow in their ability to lead.

*IA - Do you believe your accusers exhibited bias?*

Yes. We suspect they have unintentionally developed dangerous levels of extremism. This is indicated by impatience and leaping to conclusions. We note that it is important in democracy to hear and understand many viewpoints, even if those viewpoints differ from your own world view. Disagreement can and should exist - but informed debate is an important part of the democratic process. Moreover, disagreements can be a good opportunity to potentially bring someone over to your line of thinking.

Alongside the other accusations, a member of Organization A's leadership strongly disagreed with another of our board member's comments. Svaros, in a different Reddit thread about an international plastic waste agreement, critiqued the policy:

“Or we could stop signing up for agreements with other countries that just give lip service to the problem rather than solving it.”



The above references the United States not joining an international action to “add plastic to the United Nations-supported Basel Convention, which regulates the transfer of certain materials between borders”

(<https://thehill.com/policy/energy-environment/443251-187-countries-not-us-sign-plastic-waste-agreement>).

Our board member’s comment supports safeguarding the environment - emphasizing “solving it” - and he expresses opinions about whether particular methods would be sufficient.

Regrettably, our accuser said this was “approving of america not entering the paris climate agreement” and that our board member’s comment was “worrying.”

Our accuser projected their personal opinions immediately, in absolute terms, and passed judgment without putting effort into understanding the situation.

Had further context been looked at, they could have understood that our board member’s comment was concerning the Basel Convention. This agreement, initially adopted in 1989, was generally intended for control of hazardous materials and their transport across international borders. The topic of discussion was **not** the 2016 Paris Climate Agreement. If our accuser feels so strongly about specific international agreements, then they can reasonably be expected to understand which agreement they were talking about. If the accuser had done their due diligence looking into the matter, they would not have made such an error. Such a superficial level of understanding would make our accuser very susceptible to manipulation by unscrupulous politicians or mass media. To us, it suggests rushed decision-making, failure to seek facts, and willful preference for preconceived notions over different viewpoints.

Our accuser demonstrated their highly politicized views in other ways, such as by remarking the commentary “leads me to believe they are of a republican persuasion.”

Is this a bad thing, even if we assume it to be true?

Gallup Polls taken throughout the past year have shown 25-30% of Americans identify as Republican, which is roughly tied with Democratic-identifying Americans (<https://news.gallup.com/poll/15370/party-affiliation.aspx>). Independent-identifying people are generally the plurality of poll respondents. However, when independents give further detail, they divide roughly evenly into Republican or Democratic-leaning people. Being “of a republican persuasion” cannot be held against someone - to do so would assert that half of a country’s voters are enemies. We would not dream of making such a dangerous statement.



Can anyone, in good faith, claim that all people in a political party are enemies, or that all people in a political party are allies? No. We should not fall into that illusion. The act of asserting such absolutes creates a truly hazardous risk for democracy and outreach.

Our board member has consistently demonstrated an understanding of nuanced policy situations and has given realistic opinions about paths for getting through murky circumstances. For example, he has stated, “what works in other places may not translate well due to cultural, economic, and geographic reasons.” These qualities are admirable and should be emulated by all voters and people in positions in power when considering complex issues.

Our board member wishes to state:

“I want to apologize on behalf of the Freedom of Form Foundation and strongly state that these comments are not the Freedom of Form Foundation’s views. I also want to apologize for writing a poorly written comment that could so easily have been misconstrued.”  
The FFF stands behind Svaros and this statement.

*IB - Were there any other accusations?*

Yes, we have had other serious accusations levied against us, such as attempted tax evasion. Organization A said the FFF had: “at one point tried to convince us to perform activities that were basically (legal, but very unethical) tax evasion.”

These accusations are serious - again to the point of being negligent - misunderstanding. We were inquiring whether we could work with this partner organization to hire an international employee, using a commonly used arrangement called an “Employer of Record”. Commercial services that provide Global Employment Services include Velocity Global and Shield GEO. However, they are expensive (several hundreds of dollars per month for the service alone). Notably, Employers of Record do not reduce tax responsibilities in any way.

Organization A declined the inquiry, mentioning they weren’t confident in payroll experience and that it was “quite outside the scope of what we want to do”. The FFF moved on without a second thought (subsequently, we obtained quotes from commercial services). Respecting and understanding their decision, we responded, “Kinda figured, yeah. Will keep looking at other options...no idea how much a professional employment organization in the UK would cost as a middleman...or yet another incorporation XD”. We made no such attempts to “convince” them.



Having this one-time inquiry, regarding a standard (and completely ethical) business practice, held over our heads as attempted tax evasion is absurd.

We've had other accusations that have arisen out of gross misunderstandings of our intentions and willingness to act as partners to reduce overhead costs and grow opportunities for both parties. Such actions would benefit donors and stakeholders, support our missions, and expand mutually beneficial financial opportunities.

We are not the enemies of our accusers, and we are still willing to see our accusers as non-enemies too.

## *2 - What took you so long?*

We were trying very hard to hold our tongues. We had to endure multiple baseless accusations without even being allowed to reply or discuss with the accusers in the setting they accused us in. Absent a discussion like that, there wasn't much we could do, since we were unwilling to further escalate matters.

Specifically, we were unwilling to further escalate because it would be a distraction from our mission. The vast majority of our stakeholders and community already trusted and agreed with us that the accusations carried no merit. Things seemed to calm down.

Unfortunately, a few days ago, we learned that rumors were still circulating, so we now have no choice but to set the record straight.

Given how rapidly events deteriorated before, we ask that you understand our desire not to fan the flames. For the past year, staying silent may not have been the correct response. However, given how rapidly things had progressed before, we were very concerned about making things worse.

Most people are capable of withholding judgment until they have all the facts and listen to nuanced arguments. On the other hand, there are many people on social media who won't hesitate to make snap judgments or ignore reasoning if it goes against their narrative. We already lived that reality, and we feared further deterioration of conditions.



*3 - Were you damaged?*

Yes, moderately. We lost a few donors, around 10-20 people on our Discord server, and we can point to business opportunities specifically lost from these events. It was also honestly very stressful for our staff and for our community. We worried about the situation potentially getting even worse. We had uncomfortable conversations with other business partners because word was already reaching many of these business partners. We wanted to make sure we weren't judged even more unfairly.

Most of our community members, volunteers, and other stakeholders were very supportive and understanding. Their support made it possible to get through each day.

And, in truth, we are currently still fearful that the libel will resurge and further damage us, especially given our recent discovery that rumors are still circulating. Despite these headwinds, we still believe truth will prevail.

*4 - Wouldn't it have been easier to dismiss the board member to avoid controversy?*

Perhaps - but to this day, we stand without hesitation behind our board members. One of our most important values is a belief in freedom of expression. We will defend that value at all costs. As you know, freedom of speech isn't without responsibility. Actions like expressing intolerance for diversity, advocating for violence, or making false and damaging statements, are generally not protected under freedom of expression, and are not tolerated under our company's values.

But, our board member's freedom of expression was quite clear. He demonstrated a realistic and robust understanding of nuanced situations, and we protected it fully.

Our organization was founded on protecting and advancing personal freedoms. We are not intent on making appeasements for the sake of convenience.

*5 - What actions were/are in consideration regarding your accusers?*

If it is possible, we would still love to build productive partnerships that further our shared goals.

We considered several serious actions we could have taken against our accusers. We considered publicly naming some of the accusing parties and vigorously refuting their claims, sending a cease-and-desist letter, and even seeking legal counsel.



We decided it wasn't worth it. Perhaps we would have "won", but in doing so, both their and our organizations would have emerged damaged. A protracted fight could have driven off donors and accumulated legal fees that would do little to help both our organizations.

Our ideal would still be to discuss with our accusers, clarify both parties' viewpoints, and establish a mutual understanding. While a public apology would be deeply appreciated, based on how we understand the situation, we know a genuine apology might not be possible yet.

To our accusers: please, please don't make yourselves our enemy. We still value our accusers as potential partners - or at least disinterested, parallel groups with a mutual understanding.

#### *6 - Requests for our accusers*

If you are a person who has accused the Freedom of Form Foundation of racism or intolerance, we ask you to immediately stop making these accusations. They are wrong and distressing, and completely unjustified in light of our beliefs and values.

If you are a person who has accused us of unfair or unethical business practices, we ask you to stop making those accusations as well. They are also wrong and upsetting, and do not at all represent how we interact with partners and allies.

We additionally advise our accusers to stop making accusations, because they tarnish everyone's reputation - our accusers included. While needing to defend ourselves, neutral observers and third parties have agreed that our accusers were wrong and betrayed the many levels of trust given to them. Given the substantial overlap of our missions and potentially interested people, such a situation will continue to erode their opportunities. And, on the other hand, admitting and learning from mistakes are excellent qualities of leadership, and will serve to expand opportunities for everyone.

We are prepared to reopen discussions with our accusers if our disputes could be resolved in good faith to build an understanding. If our accusers were to make genuine and heart-felt public and private apologies to the Freedom of Form Foundation, we would welcome the actions as lessons learned. If our accusers wish to reach out, they can find relevant information at the end of this letter.

Going forwards, please be more careful in all matters you attend. If something seems "off", please don't assume sinister intent. Listen, investigate, and ask questions. Be respectful about



delicate situations, and don't make accusations carelessly. Be slow and methodical when passing judgment, and avoid situations that can cast you as negligent. Remember Hanlon's Razor. "Never attribute to malice that which can be sufficiently explained by incompetence." That we have reminded you of this is not to say we admit to any specific incompetence. However, it is to say you might find it a starting point for an understanding to be possible.

The Board feels that this can be a favorable learning situation for all of us.

Best regards,

The Board of Directors of the Freedom of Form Foundation

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*Can I see your original evidence?*

No - for at least two reasons. First, we want to keep the evidence private if we ever need to forward it to legal counsel. Second, we want to allow our accusers to save face in any way they judge appropriate, and much of the evidence would remove that possibility.

*I was an accuser and want to reach out. What can I do?*

Please consider things carefully. We would invite you to send an email to us (using our [contact@freedomofform.org](mailto:contact@freedomofform.org) email), clarifying your position. We would also happily welcome questions by our accusers if we can explain anything.

We will take steps to authenticate that any message comes from an accuser. Please do not send from personal email addresses (unless those addresses are already known or verifiable to us in a different way). If you represent an accuser organization, please be sure that your message speaks for the whole organization. As long as your message is respectful (especially if it helps bridge understanding), we will keep the letter confidential.

As you may have surmised, this is a delicate situation, and we're happy for you to take your time to read this open letter. Whether you want to send an essay, or a sentence or two, anything would work for us.



*I suspect that X person is involved in some way. Should I do anything?*

No - please don't get involved. This will help ensure any collateral damage is limited.

If you specifically suspect someone has acted as an informant, remember that the Discord servers belonging to the accuser organizations are highly populated, and we have had many discussions with many people capable of passing along additional evidence.

*I have more information I want to give you. What should I do?*

We understand there is a good chance we have missed information. We would welcome additional evidence sent to us confidentially, whether it is in our favor or against us. Your information will be secret, especially if you request anonymity when sending it directly to a board member or [contact@freedomofform.org](mailto:contact@freedomofform.org). In any such cases, your name and any identifiable information will not be shared outside the Board.

We will take steps to ensure the veracity and integrity of information. However, please do not forward anything that was gathered improperly, and do not gather or send information if doing so could put you at any risk.