September 28, 2020

**Statement on Privacy Rights for Children**

As young adults who are under the age of 18 and currently considered minor, we think privacy is one of the most important concerns for Gen Z. Every day, more people across the globe become connected through technology, and their reliance on electronic devices increase. Many of us keep our lives stored in the hard drives of our computers and in the camera rolls of our phones. This is why many teenagers are so possessive of their electronics. We will welcome more people into our rooms than into our phones, because that's where all our likes, dislikes and vulnerabilities are.

When we talk about privacy and the rights of children in the context of the 21st century we need to understand the cost of a breach in privacy, that is, judgment. The reason we keep things to ourselves is due to the fear of judgment and a breach of privacy materializes our fear into reality.

Technology in the life of Gen Z plays a very important role. It allows us to form our own identity, influenced by all those who dare to make an appearance on our social media feeds. Technology provides us with the platform to band together as a group in shared happiness or sorrow and serves to unify people. Some of our friends who had once struggled to realize their gender identity and sexuality came across content on social media platforms such as Tik Tok and Instagram that struck an internal cord with them and helped them realize their preferences. However, if they were controlled by parents who limited their access to platforms on digital media, then this realization would have taken much longer.

The control over technology and children is not limited to parents. Governments who engage in censorship and try to limit public access to various websites also infiltrate a child's privacy. When our search history is scoured for specific websites and our likes on videos are analyzed for patterns, we are less likely to engage with our technology and display our preferences. For us children, privacy is having a right to yourself and to your thoughts- for long our thoughts and likes remained in our brains, but the hearts and thumbs up on social media have become appendages for our thoughts. Rather than cut them off we need to learn to embrace them to have a generation that is well exposed to various schools of thought and is comfortable with who they are.

We say all of this while also recognizing the need to invade privacy in the interest of national security or personal security. If someone’s behavior towards others or themselves indicates that they have the potential to hurt themselves or others, then a breach of privacy is worth it. However, in all other cases, it is important to remember how privacy and personal autonomy helps forge a sense of inclusivity and identity for children.