

## **Talking Points for a Discussion on Cancel Culture**

### **1. Decreasing Freedom of Expression:**

- Did you know that from the 1950s to today, the percentage of Americans who feel they can't freely express their views has tripled? It's alarming that people feel less free to speak their minds now than they did almost seventy-five years ago.
- Question: What do you think might be contributing to this trend of feeling less free to express ourselves? Is it societal pressure, fear of backlash, or something else?

### **2. Fear of Retaliation:**

- According to recent studies, more than half of Americans admit to holding back their opinions over the past year because they were afraid of retaliation or harsh criticism. Eighty-four percent consider this fear of retaliation a serious problem.
- Question: Have you ever felt hesitant to share your thoughts or opinions online or in person due to fear of backlash or criticism? How do you navigate balancing free expression with the potential consequences?

### **3. Impact of Online Culture:**

- With the rise of the internet, particularly social media, expressing opinions has become increasingly risky. The ability to be 'called out' and attacked by a multitude of people instantaneously has created a culture of fear and self-censorship.
- Question: "Do you think the rise of social media and online platforms has intensified the fear of speaking out? How do you view the role of anonymity and accessibility in fueling cancel culture?"

### **4. Chilling Effect on Diversity of Thought:**

- Cancel culture often silences dissenting voices and discourages diverse perspectives. When people fear the consequences of expressing unpopular opinions, it stifles healthy debate and intellectual exchange.

- Question: Do you believe that cancel culture poses a threat to the diversity of thought and open dialogue? How can we encourage a more inclusive environment where all perspectives are valued?

#### **5. Protecting Free Speech:**

- While holding individuals accountable for harmful behavior is important, it's crucial to distinguish between genuine accountability and the suppression of free speech. We must defend the right to express opinions, even those we disagree with, without fear of retribution.
- How do you think we can strike a balance between holding people accountable for harmful actions and protecting the fundamental right to free speech? What steps can individuals and society take to foster a more respectful and constructive discourse?