

WSDC Bali 2017 GF Oral Adjudication

OA Link: <https://youtu.be/eCxb5yzqO1o?si=mxvX12-tmdAMPCs2>

Full debate: <https://youtu.be/4HUFM3JZaLQ?si=XYcTBtCZsJR471d->

Opening Remarks

"This was one of the better finals we've had in several years. The strategies employed were strong across the board, so I'll go through them one by one.

This was one of the rare debates where **style** actually mattered. In many debates, people say 'style over substance' doesn't count—but in this particular case, one team clearly had stronger **delivery**, which influenced how persuasive the debate felt. Particularly, the use of **emotive language** was a strategic advantage.

In terms of argument strategy, we thought teams **focused on addressing the main themes**, and while they may not have had enough time to fully develop every argument, both sides **adapted dynamically**. That's not a major issue.

So, the key issues for today's debate boil down to a few core areas. Let's take a look."

Issue 1: Legitimacy & Free Speech

"The first issue is the question of **legitimacy and free speech**. Both sides accepted that limitations on speech may be warranted where that speech is potentially harmful.

The **Proposition** offered compelling examples—some panelists found particularly persuasive—the idea that malicious actors can weaponize speech, as seen in the role of public authorities in Europe.

One memorable moment was when the Proposition argued that, yes, harmful speech exists, but **staff shouldn't suppress it simply because it's uncomfortable**. They emphasized that 'correlation is not causation,' and that difficult speech is not always inherently dangerous.

Still, we felt this point leaned slightly in favor of the Proposition—though not decisively. Let's move on to the next issue."

¹ Transcripts by [Debate Institute Africa](#)

Issue 2: Minorities & Marginalized Groups

"Next was the question of how speech impacts **minorities and marginalized communities**. This was a crucial area, and while I won't announce the results just yet, it's safe to say it played a major role.

The Proposition made **compelling arguments** about what could happen to **religious groups, women**, and others when speech is allowed to **promote hatred or even incite violence**. They specifically mentioned threats of torture or death targeting vulnerable communities. This, they argued, amounts to a **license for abuse**.

They also stressed that **many marginalized groups—especially those left behind by globalization and capitalism—have already been disenfranchised**, and should be protected in democratic spaces."

Opposition's Counterarguments

"The **Opposition** pushed back by saying that marginalization also affects **working-class voices**. If political discourse is only shaped by what's considered 'acceptable' by the dominant class, **the least powerful may be left out**.

They argued that censorship or chilling effects will **discourage dissenting voices**, and cited examples from **Singapore**, where emotional or exaggerated speech—such as expressions of hunger or desperation—is seen not as violent, but as **symbolic resistance**.

Opposition claimed that **centrist politics** often fail to reflect these realities, and excluding emotionally charged speech could erase the very people who most need representation.

They raised **concerns about selective prosecution**, warning that institutions (like courts or moderators) could be biased. While the Proposition responded by saying courts are best placed to adjudicate such matters, **some judges felt this wasn't a sufficient counter to the problem of bias**.

Opposition also argued that **what is considered obscene or unacceptable varies across audiences**, and that speech must be judged within the context of **who is speaking and why**.

In their view, Proposition's stance risked creating a **fear-driven environment**, where marginalized people self-censor in order to avoid punishment—even if their speech is nonviolent."

Final Judgment

"Ultimately, most judges were persuaded that **working-class communities can be just as marginalized and silenced** as other minority groups.

As a result, in a **close but clear decision**, the panel ruled in favor of the team that best highlighted this dynamic." *[Applause]*

Notes on Transcription & Interpretation

- **Verbatim quirks:** Phrases like “spinal today,” “slight antenna,” and “centered a sphere” were difficult to interpret directly and have been smoothed out or marked as [sic] where retained.
- **Ambiguities retained where meaning unclear.**
- **Balanced restructuring:** Sections were re-paragraphed for clarity, but original flow and argumentative structure was preserved.