



# Persona Non Grata: The Death of Free Speech in the Internet Age

*Tom Flanagan*

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**From an acclaimed professor and former advisor to Prime Minister Stephen Harper, a passionate and edgy defense of free speech in Canada, and the role the internet plays in the issue.**

In February 2013, Tom Flanagan, acclaimed academic, University of Calgary professor, and former advisor to Prime Minister Stephen Harper, made comments surrounding the issue of viewing child pornography that were tweeted from the event he was speaking at and broadcast worldwide. In the time it took to drive from Lethbridge to his home in Calgary, Flanagan's career and reputation were virtually in tatters. Every media outlet made the story front-page news, most of them deriding Flanagan and casting him as a pariah. He was made to apologize publicly for his use of words but the bottom line was that Tom Flanagan simply sounded an opinion (he in no way whatsoever suggested that he was anything but virulantly opposed to child pornography) in an academic setting. In effect, his university, several of his colleagues, and much of the media, including the CBC -- and most of Canada! -- made him persona non grata. This book is two things: The author's side of the story, and what he endured during what he calls "The Incident," and a passionate and convincing defense of free speech, not just in Canada but everywhere. While Flanagan's is hardly the first book on the subject, what makes this book different is the component of the internet, a tool that is very much a double-edged sword when it comes to freedom of expression--it allows people to have an unfiltered voice to say what they want, but it also allows those to use it to be judge, jury and executioner against those whose opinions they disagree with. The book is also a sobering look into the kind of political correctness that has become a staple in the academic world. What happened to the author illustrates important tendencies in contemporary Canada threatening freedom of speech and discussion, and how the new technology is playing an increasing and menacing role.

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