



Edward Snowden says he takes exception to those who say privacy isn't important because they have nothing to hide.

"Privacy is the fountainhead of all rights," Snowden said Friday as part of a panel discussion, "A Conversation on Privacy," at a packed Centennial Hall on the University of Arizona campus. The event was sponsored by the UA's College of Social and Behavioral Sciences.

"Privacy is the right to a free mind," Snowden said. "Without privacy, you can't have anything for yourself. Saying you don't care about privacy because you have nothing to hide is like saying you don't care about free speech because you have nothing to say."

Snowden, the controversial former National Security Agency subcontractor, appeared via live streaming from an undisclosed location in Russia, which granted him asylum in 2013 after he revealed classified NSA documents to journalists and was charged with violating the Espionage Act by the U.S. Department of Justice.

Journalist Glenn Greenwald, who published Snowden's revelations in the newspaper The Guardian, and renowned linguist and intellectual Noam Chomsky also were on the panel and appeared in person at Centennial Hall. Nuala O'Connor, president and CEO of the Center for Democracy and Technology, served as moderator of the discussion, which lasted nearly two hours.

Chomsky launched the wide-ranging conversation with some perspective on privacy and how technology has taken the issue to unforeseen places. The Internet, he noted, was developed largely in the state sector.

"The Internet was intended by early design to be a free and open means of communication," Chomsky said, "in the hope that it would widen horizons and contribute to a healthy society."

"Technology is basically neutral. You can use it to oppress or to liberate. It's up to us."

Greenwald said his responsibility as a journalist involves "making things a lot more difficult for those who wield the greatest power," and Snowden added that this role is central to a healthy democracy.

"We must know what the government is doing in our name and against us," Snowden said, "or else we are no longer directed by the public, we are ruled from above." → *Gettysburg: Of the people by the people FOR the people*

Evidence of the impact of the NSA story can be found everywhere we turn, Greenwald said, and the current battle between Apple and the FBI provides but one example.

"The best evidence is the behavioral change of Silicon Valley companies," he said. "What changed is their fear that if they were perceived as collaborators of the NSA, they would lose the next generation (of consumers). They know their own self-interest. They're not suddenly privacy activists."

Greenwald said there is no disagreement over the need for targeted surveillance, but added that mass surveillance is a different animal.

"The tradeoff between security and privacy is a false dichotomy," he said.

Snowden said that when the government's goal is to "collect everything," it loses the sharp focus required in matters of legitimate national security. He said the price has been steep for citizens.

"We know less and less about our government than we have before," he said.

Asked by O'Connor if he would do it all over again and expose classified material, Snowden's reply was firm.

"Absolutely," he said, "and I wouldn't wait as long as I did."