**Freedom of Speech**

**There is nothing so fretting and vexatious, nothing so justly terrible to tyrants, and their tools and abettors, as a free press. *(Samuel Adams, in The New York Times)***

**The First Amendment’s guarantee of free speech does not apply to advertisements on the Internet, a federal judge ruled. The decision means that search engines such as those run by Google, Yahoo, and Microsoft did not have to carry advertisements they deem to be false or objectionable. The case centered on ads submitted to the search engines that charged North Carolina officials with corruption and accused the Chinese government of committing atrocities. *(The Week magazine, March 9, 2007)***

**In 2003 President Bush promised unprecedented anti-AIDS funding – with a catch. His five-year $15 billion Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief included a clause requiring that any organization receiving U.S. money “must have a policy explicitly opposing prostitution and sex trafficking.” The clause, which applies to overseas groups (and arguably to domestic organizations working in foreign lands), set off a furious debate on free speech that came to a head this year. In May the Brazilian government, rejecting the controversial clause, turned down $40 million in American AIDS funding. And in August a nonprofit group filed a lawsuit against the government, saying it is “coercing speech” from private organizations. *(Discover magazine, January, 2006)***

**Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances. *(First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution)***

**62% of Americans feel they can’t freely speak what’s on their minds in the current political climate out of a fear of being deemed offensive, including 77% of Republicans. *(Cato Institute/YouGov, as it appeared in The Week magazine, August 14, 2020)***

**I love America more than any other country in this world, and, exactly for this reason, I insist on the right to criticize her perpetually. *(James Baldwin)***

**Banning some speech silences us all: The government is about to strip us of our free speech, said Philip Johnson. The anti-terrorism bill the Conservatives are now drafting has worthy aims, including stopping "radical Islamic preachers influencing a new generation of potential terrorists." But it proposes to do that by outlawing any speech that incites people against "fundamental British values," enumerated as democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and freedom of religion. That's a pretty broad brash. Top Labor MP John McDonnell, for example, has called on followers "to use whatever means to bring this government down" -- which rather sounds like a call to insurrection. Should he be jailed? How about someone who expresses dismay at same-sex marriage? That was once a mainstream religious view and is now akin to hate speech -- is it, too, against British values? Prime Minister David Cameron says we have been too tolerant of Islamists among us by telling them that as long as they obey the law, we will leave them alone. Now we must apparently harass them for what they say, not just what they do. I'm as alarmed by Islamism as anyone, but surely obedience to the law without interference by the state is the basis of British liberty." If we give that up, what are we defending? *(The Week magazine, October 16, 2015)***

**A homeless man in New Rockelle, New York, claimed a victory for “free speech” after being arrested for panhandling. Eric Hoffstead was arrested for loitering after asking a police officer for a dollar. Hoffstead’s lawyer was able to get the loitering charge dismissed on the grounds that his First Amendment rights were being violated – the judge agreed that begging for money falls under the category of free speech. Hoffstead remained incarcerated, however, due to another charge – possession of a crack pipe. *(Kelly Cadieux, in Tidbits)***

**Free speech carries with it some freedom to listen*. (Warren Burger, former chief justice)***

**Back in 1735, newspaper printer Peter Zenger was charged with “seditious libel” for articles that accused the colonial governor of New York of corruption, stupidity, and incompetence. Zenger was acquitted in a jury trial that laid down a crucial foundation for free speech later incorporated into the Constitution. Nearly 300 years later, Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis and his allies want to go back over the same ground and erode this country’s long tradition of press freedom. The Florida legislature is now getting ready to pass two bills that would make filing libel suits easier, especially for public officials – an echo of the seditious-libel laws that made the American colonists indignant. It’s a continuation of the “opening up the libel laws” idea that Donald Trump often mooted but never acted on. The real goal of lowering the bar for libel suits is to silence investigative reporting and critical commentary with ruinous lawsuits that cost a fortune to defend. *(The Week magazine, March 17, 2023)***

**Good week for: Defying Beijing, after China’s Olympics organizing committee warned foreign athletes they may face “punishment” for speech that violates “Chinese laws and regulations” at the 2022 Winter Games. *(The Week magazine, January 28, 2022)***

**Ward Churchill is not the issue. The First Amendment is the issue. And of far greater importance. When we claim to not be persecuting Churchill for his speech, then use his uncomfortable rhetoric as the catalyst for an intensive dissection of his academic work, we are no better than the political pundits who said, "Sure, I support his freedom of speech and his right to express his views, but . . . " In other words they, and we, really don't support that freedom or that right. So it appears that Churchill was guilty of scholarly improprieties. How many professors could pass a similarly microscopic examination of their academic life's work? How many of us are not guilty of something? To punish him for those mistakes at this time would be, in effect, punishing him for the proximate transgression of exercising his First Amendment rights, rights that will cease to exist for us all if they must only be exercised in comfortable, nonthreatening ways. Lest some authority come trolling for pretext. *(Harv Teitelbaum, in Rocky Mountain News, May 19, 2006)***

**Some people's idea of free speech is that they are free to say what they like, but if anyone says anything back, that is an outrage. *(Winston Churchill)***

**At the 49th annual Grammy Awards this week, “the Dixie Chicks got the last laugh,” said J. Freedom du Lac of The Washington Post. Natalie Maines, Emily Robison, and Martie Maguire won all five of the awards they were nominated for, including Album of the Year for Taking the Long Way and Song of the Year for “Not Ready to Make Nice.” The wins vindicated the Texas trio in its battle with the country-music establishment. After Maines made an anti-Bush comment at a concert in 2003, country radio refused to play Chicks songs. But Maines and her band mates didn’t back down – “Not Ready to Make Nice” is a defiant power ballad about freedom of speech. *(The Week magazine, February 23, 2007)***

**Why is questioning and asking about change deemed equal to heresy? It is akin to being against the war in Iraq and being labeled anti-American. This country was formed by a group of dissenters who believed strongly in freedom of speech and religion. Unquestioned, blind followership has had many a bad result historically – the Crusades and Hitler to name a few examples. Jesus Christ Himself was a dissenter. He objected to the behavior of those who observed the minutiae of the law, while ignoring its spirit. Saint Paul too was a dissenter amongst the apostles. Saint Paul made a strong distinction between the letter and the spirit of the law. Were Christ and Paul labeled as insurgents? Absolutely – and ultimately they were put to death for their beliefs. *(Katherine M. Knight, in Liberty magazine)***

**The most stringent protection of free speech would not protect a man from falsely shouting fire in a theater and causing a panic. *(Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr.)***

**People demand freedom of speech as a compensation for the freedom of thought which they seldom use. *(Soren Kierkegaard)***

**Lawyer to client: “In my profession, there’s no such thing as free speech.” *(Harry T. Shafer and Angie Papadakis, in The Howls of Justice)***

**If large numbers of people are interested in freedom of speech, there will be freedom of speech, even if the law forbids it. *(George Orwell)***

**Dennis asks his Mom: “How come we hafta pay a phone bill? What happened to free speech?” *(Hank Ketcham, in Dennis The Menace comic strip)***

**"The Interview" shows the risks of free speech: Americans have missed the fundamental point in the international showdown over The Interview, said A.G. Noorani. They see it as a free speech issue, citing the right of an artist to make whatever "raunchy comedy" he wishes. In fact, the film, which depicts a CIA-ordered hit on North Korean dictator Kim Jong Un, was an unprecedented diplomatic insult. To show and endorse the assassination of a sitting world leader is shockingly provocative. It violates "established norms of conduct that have bound states for centuries ever since international law was accepted." In 19th-century Britain, for instance, courts ruled that mocking the hated Napoleon would constitute libel, because reviling a foreign leader has consequences for foreign relations. Even the U.S. places limits on free speech, with the Supreme Court ruling in 1942, that citizens could be punished for calling a city marshal names like "racketeer" or "fascist," as the insults could spark a riot. Consider this: What if a similar film had been made by the leader of one U.S. political party about the leader of another party? Would Americans see it as a joke or an incitement to murder? Nobody defends the hacking of Sony, but it is obvious that North Korea had every reason to be incensed. *(The Week magazine, January 16, 2015)***

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**One of the problems with defending free speech is you often have to defend people that you find to be outrageous and unpleasant and disgusting. *(Salman Rushdie, in The Washington Post)***

**What is freedom of expression? Without the freedom to offend, it ceases to exist. *(Salman Rushdie)***

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**If you are conducting a search for a good speaker on your Fourth of July program and have no money to work with, here’s what you do: Pick out your quarry, call them up, and ask them if they believe in free speech. When they say “Yes,” you say “Swell, we’ll put you down to give us one at our celebration.” *(Bits & Pieces)***

**Social media was invented as part of a plot to undermine the faith of sensible people in freedom of speech. *(Michael Deacon, journalist)***

**In just one month last year, the University of California, Berkeley spent nearly $4 million on free speech-related security. The money paid for additional police who were brought in to prevent violence between attendees and protesters at an "alt right" rally, a speech by conservative Ben Shapiro, and the ultimately canceled "Free Speech Week." A university official said "security costs of this magnitude are not sustainable." *(The Week magazine, February 16, 2018)***

**I support freedom of speech myself. That's what people died for in World War I and II and in the Korean War and in Vietnam and in Iraq. If people didn't die for freedom, then I don't know where I'm living. *(John Mellencamp, Midwestern rocker rebutting criticism that his remake of Woody Guthrie's To Washington is un-American)***

**Suppressing free speech will backfire: “Free speech is suffering a public relations crisis,” said Greg Lukianoff and Nico Perrino. A bitterly polarized and frightened nation is turning against the First Amendment. Our Constitution’s guarantee of free speech is a radical one, almost unprecedented in human history, and it’s played a critical role in the success of the civil rightsmovement, the woman’s movement, and the gay rights movement. But today many Americans have come to see certain ideas and speech as impermissible, and to believe any expression of racism, sexism, or bigotry should be silenced by any possible means, including violence. Yet history shows that suppressing speech doesn’t work: Laws banning Holocaust denial and anti-Semitic speech in Europe have resulted in higher rates of anti-Semitism there than in the U.S. Back in the 1920s and ‘30s, when Germany jailed Nazis and banned Hitler from staging rallies,” they were celebrated as martyrs,” and their appeal grew. As tempting as censorship may be, it is always better to “understand what people actually think – not ‘even if’ it is troubling, but especially when it is troubling.” Bad ideas die not when they’re suppressed, but when they’re exposed to the disinfecting light of good ideas. *(The Week magazine, September 1, 2017)***

**The medical director of the Orange County, Florida, department of health has been suspended by the state for encouraging, but not requiring, staff to get vaccinated. In an email to employees, Dr. Raul Pino said people in “public health” should follow their own advice on vaccines. The DOH put Pino on “administrative leave,” explaining that “the decision to get vaccinated is a personal choice.” *(The Week magazine, January 28, 2022)***

**Today we should pause and share with one another those special things for which we are thankful. Like say . . . freedom of speech. *(Johnny Hart, in BC comic strip)***

**West loses corporate deals: Numerous brands dumped their partnerships with Kanye West this week after his recent anti-Semitic comments, said Jordan Valinksy in CNN.com. Adidas terminated its nine-year-old business relationship with West, who taunted the sportswear brand on a podcast. “I can say anti-Semitic things, and Adidas can’t drop me. Now what?” West said. West’s Yeezysneakers and clothing line have earned an estimated $2 billion a year since 2015 for Adidas. Talent giant Creative Artists Agency also dumped West as a client; Balenciaga and Vogue cut ties last week; and Gap said it is removing Yeezy Gap merchandise. *(The Week magazine, November 4, 2022)***

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