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### **The Importance of Freedom of the Press**

This past July, I was playing Mario Kart in the living room when suddenly I saw my mom rush to my older sister's room. "Did you see the news?" she asked my sister with a panicked voice. My mom and sister spoke in hushed and worried tones as they came back down to the living room. I did not understand what was happening.

Confused, I stopped my video game and asked my mom what the matter was. She said that the breaking news story on ABC was about international students studying in the U.S. According to the news, the US government was suddenly requiring international students like my sister to take in person college classes in the fall, despite the worsening COVID-19 pandemic. If they did not take mostly in-person classes, they would be deported from this country. When I heard this I was shocked, angry, and sad! My sister has been with me ever since I was born in Utah eleven years ago and I could not bear the thought of her being separated from my family.

Hardworking journalists and the free press in our country helped inform my family of this new and scary government rule. If the press was restricted, it may have taken weeks before my sister even learned about these changes in her life. My sister would not have had the time to prepare and secure her future education in the U.S. I believe this is why Thomas Jefferson said that, "the only security of all is in a free press". Information provided by the press helped my sister and family feel safe and secure! Although the news was scary, the information it provided helped us prepare. If the press was limited, my sister may have never been able to change her college classes and even worse, I may have lost my sister. The freedom of the press in our country not only informs us during dark and difficult times but also empowers us to act and do something about issues that affect our families, friends, and communities.

A free press is like a bright flashlight, bringing light through information to those lost in the dark. This flashlight of information has the power to keep families like mine together, shine light on issues that no one knows about around the world, and help people in our country make good decisions and laws. Countries without a free press have a dimmed flashlight and their citizens live in darkness and are afraid to voice their concerns and views. In our democracy, the freedom of the press is important! Since we the people get to decide who our elected officials are and the laws of our democracy, we depend on the press to educate us, and give us accurate information. Thomas Jefferson and our founding fathers wanted citizens to make informed decisions about our democracy. Today, we can only do this if we have a free and accurate press.

Word Count: 493 words