

A.Z. Chance Martinez
Pima Community College
Tucson, Arizona

Press against Oppression: The need for Free Speech

In today's world, particularly in the United States, it is easy to take for granted we, as citizens, can freely say, write, or post whatever. This has not always been the case in the Western world, and certainly not across the globe in today's modern world. Across the planet there are countries that suppress information or alter said information, a recent noteworthy example would be China with their suppression and altering of information regarding the novel CoronaVirus. Though our everyday freedoms in the states are easy to take for granted, they are important. Our rights to speech and press: to our voices, are doubly so, especially in a world where we are surrounded by falsehood.

Living in a world where Fake News, and tragedy run rampant on our screens, it is easy to think this is somehow different than a time before. In truth the information we have received has always been somewhat closeted: a not-so-distant reminder would be the Vietnam War. Near the war's start, the United States

Government gave the media the information to report back. It was not until journalists began to report first-hand what was being experienced on the battlefield that things began to change. It was this freedom, that allowed the public opinion on the conflict to shift, to one against the war, rather than favor a pointless conflict.

“The pen is mightier than the sword.” An old proverb that many argue makes little sense, but maybe the words of a familiar French General turned dictator could help in appreciating this quote. “Four hostile newspapers are more to be feared than a thousand bayonets..”— Napoleon Bonaparte. Even Napoleon understood the power press has, all it takes is one rallying cry for many to arm and rally themselves. This is the power given to us by our constitution.

It is here that while we may not appreciate the vast amount of news that surrounds us amid the COVID-19 global pandemic, we must appreciate those brave enough to report. With so many understating this virus, comparing it to the flu, or with government officials suppressing so much information, it is the right to free press that allows us to see the light: to be privileged to this knowledge. Just as every citizen back home was privileged to the atrocities occurring in Vietnam.

Almost sixty-five years later, and journalists are still fighting with their lives to get information to those who deserve it.

Many could argue that in today's world free speech does very little with so much falsehood existing— with fake news culture running rampant. Yes, but pushing against that misleading information are those seeking to give us truth and honesty— security. Thomas Jefferson once said, “the only security of all is in a free press.” Words just as meaningful now amid a crisis where information is key as they were near the birth of our nation. The only security we have amid such a crisis is within the right to free press itself: to speak.