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Freedom of the press (noun): the right to report news without being controlled by the government. The freedom of the press is pivotal to democracy and informing the public, but before we can protect our rights, we must understand them. The founding fathers knew that a free press was crucial to revolutionizing democracy in government. The First Amendment to the United States Constitution reads, "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 peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances." These freedoms allow citizens to question authority. Of these many freedoms, the amendment ensures the right for people to publish their opinions and information without the government stopping them. That freedom is the difference between democracy and dictatorship.

Democracy is a form of government in which the common people hold political power. The press has informally been named the fourth

estate because it observes the political process. Journalists expose fraud and unethical behavior in our leaders. They play a key role in keeping the government in check. For example, the Watergate scandal. While the federal government was covering up the break-in of the Watergate complex, reporters for the Washington Post, Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein, were investigating the burglary and exposing President Nixon's crimes. This is just one example of how the press has uncovered corruption.

The press is under attack. Threats against journalists have escalated to a severe level. President Donald Trump has often so kindly called the press "fake news" and "the enemy of the people". As for the journalists, he has called them "scum", "liars", and "the lowest form of life." To call these remarks ignorant would be an insult to ignorant people. Trump once joked to Russian dictator Vladimir Putin about "getting rid" of journalists. When the leaders of our country make vicious comments and denounce journalism without cause, there is a very real risk of arousing violence, putting the lives of journalists at risk, from small-town reporters to national broadcasters. A restricted press is the first step to totalitarianism, and

Donald Trump doesn't even seem to care. Every president has had some sort of a problem with the press, but these remarks cross the line. Attacks on journalism are attacks on democracy.

This assault on the press must stop. Especially amidst a crisis like the current COVID-19 pandemic, a free press is so important to update the public on how to prevent yourself from getting sick. The free press stands against Trump's attacks on the press, so we must too. We must stand with journalists as they fight for the public's right to know. As Thomas Jefferson once wrote, "Were it left to me to decide whether we should have a government without newspapers, or newspapers without a government, I should not hesitate a moment to prefer the latter."