

When Censorship's the Game, Despotism Is the Goal

We're only a few months beyond the turn of the calendar and already I have a candidate for the word of the year: Censorship.

Examples are proliferating at such a fast rate that it seems like a game of whac-a-mole just to keep up with all of them. A few of the most recent include:

1. [Censorship of *Created Equal*](#)

A popular documentary on the life of Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas, viewers have been able to watch *Created Equal* on Amazon since last October, until it was removed by the Big Tech company in February. The director of the documentary, Michael Pack, told *The Wall Street Journal* that they were never given a reason for the removal. "[M]any people have complained," he told the *Journal*, "and they haven't put it back up."

2. [Censorship of *When Harry Became Sally*](#)

Released several years ago, Ryan T. Anderson's book on transgenderism suddenly went missing from Amazon's virtual shelves the other week. According to Anderson, leftist media like *The New York Times* weren't a fan of *When Harry Became Sally* from the beginning, despite it being "an accurate and accessible presentation of the scientific, medical, philosophical, and legal debates surrounding the trans phenomenon." Such facts, however, seem to not matter to the censors. "It's not about how you say it, or how rigorously you argue it, or how charitably you present it," writes Anderson. "It's about whether you affirm or dissent from the new orthodoxy of gender ideology."

3. [Censorship of Trump's CPAC Speech](#)

Last Sunday President Donald Trump gave a popular speech to individuals gathered together at CPAC. News organizations across the country streamed the event and posted it on YouTube for later viewing and now some are paying the price. The [speech has been removed](#) from YouTube channels of networks such as Fox and ABC, while other news organizations—such as Right Side Broadcasting and [Alpha News](#)—have been temporarily suspended from YouTube for daring to post the speech.

As such examples continue to mount, one has to wonder what censors are so scared of that they would want to make such content disappear. One also wonders if said censors are thinking very clearly, for the more one censors, the more that censored message will spread and gain favorability.

Alexis de Tocqueville noted this principle in his famous work [Democracy in America](#). “If you establish a censorship of the press,” Tocqueville wrote, “the tongue of the public speaker will still make itself heard, and you have only increased the mischief.” He goes on to say:

The powers of thought do not rely, like the powers of physical strength, upon the number of their mechanical agents, nor can a host of authors be reckoned like the troops which compose an army; on the contrary, the authority of a principle is often increased by the smallness of the number of men by whom it is expressed.

In other words, those who feel their writings, opinions, and other published works are like David against the Goliath of mainstream media and Big Tech can actually take heart in such a dire situation, for the more their views are stamped out, the more their ideas spread.

Yet Tocqueville concedes that there is a way to kill the liberty of the press. The “liberty of discourse” must be

destroyed as well, but those who would do so do it at the risk of bringing the population under the risk of a cruel and authoritarian leader:

The liberty of discourse must therefore be destroyed as well as the liberty of the press; this is the necessary term of your efforts; but if your object was to repress the abuses of liberty, they have brought you to the feet of a despot. You have been led from the extreme of independence to the extreme of subjection without meeting with a single tenable position for shelter or repose.

“But destroying the liberty of discourse and setting up a despot is exactly what the goal seems to be in our current state!” I can almost hear you exclaim.

Very true. That seeming to be the case, our mission then must be to encourage the liberty of discourse at every turn.

That can be a challenge, especially when it seems like one is a lone voice amidst the cacophony of “wokeness” that pops out from around every corner. But can you raise questions? Can you engage in discussion with your friend, neighbor, or relative, discussing ideas that may be uncomfortable or politically incorrect? Can you do so not in a mean or demeaning way, but in an eager and interested fashion? Can you share information on social media, through email, and via other venues not with the goal of engaging in ad hominem arguments, but in a way which encourages others to think and grow?

The fact is that many of us are afraid of even raising sensitive issues because we’re worried such discussions will devolve into heated arguments or even get us canceled.

We must get beyond that fear. If we don’t, then we will most certainly continue down the path of a suppressed press and suppressed discourse, eventually finding ourselves at “the feet of a despot.”

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