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Please consult www.austincc.edu/ah/cd for more information or call 512-223-3352.
stitution of Civil Society and that Religion is wholly exempt from its cognizance.” (Jefferson, sec. 1) In other words, it is up to the individual to worship the way they want.

Two, “Because Religion be exempt from the authority of the Society at large, still less can it be subject to that of the Legislative Body. The latter are but the creatures and vicegerents of the former… The Rulers who are guilty of such an encroachment, exceed the commission from which they derive their authority, and are Tyrants. The People who submit to it are governed by laws made neither by themselves nor by an authority derived from them, and are slaves.” (sec. 2) It is saying that religion should not be subject to government and that those Ruler(s) that run such a government are tyrant(s) and the people are no more than slaves owned by that government. They have to believe in what they are told to believe or else face the wrath of the “God-given” government.

Why did the writer take alarm at religious assessments? “Because it is proper to take alarm at the first experiment on our liberties… Who does not see that the same authority which can establish Christianity, in exclusion of all other Religions, may establish with the same ease any particular sect of Christians, in exclusion of all other Sects? that the same authority which can force a citizen to contribute three pence only of his property for the support of any one establishment, may force him to conform to any other establishment in all cases whatsoever?” (sec. 3) Jefferson obviously knew from history that if religion gets a “foothold” in government then that same religion can overcome the state and enact its’ own laws. That is, to hold everyone accountable for their morals only and not from an ethical standpoint, ethics meaning to do the right thing even it does not meet a moral standpoint. This document is worth reading on your own, as it has a great deal more to say. In fact, all three are worthy of your time!

There is so much more I would like to write about this topic, but I have already written twice as much as I probably should. Hey, you, the reader, please keep an open mind and remember that you owe what liberties we have left to men, yes men, who had the forethought to see down the road, even if only a little ways. Enjoy!

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“Whereas the general diffusion of Christian knowledge hath a natural tendency to correct the morals of men, restrain their vices, and preserve the peace of society; which cannot be effected without a competent provision for learned teachers, who may be thereby enabled to devote their time and attention to the duty of instructing such citizens, as from their circumstances and want of education, cannot otherwise attain such knowledge; and it is judged that such provision may be made by the Legislature, without counteracting the liberal principle heretofore adopted and intended to be preserved by abolishing all distinctions of preeminence amongst the different societies or communities of Christians.”(Henry, par. 1)

It was intended to pay for teachers to instruct the public on the Christian faith, according to their beliefs. This bill was never accepted nor enacted by the state of Virginia, where it was proposed.

Lastly, is Thomas Jefferson’s The Virginia Act For Establishing Religious Freedom. It is pretty long so I will not be able to cover it all, but I will try to get across its’ main thoughts. It was written as a response to Patrick Henry’s bill proposal, as is obvious in the opening lines,

“We the subscribers, citizens of the said Commonwealth, having taken into serious consideration, a Bill printed by order of the last Session of General Assembly, entitled “A Bill establishing a provision for Teachers of the Christian Religion,” and conceiving that the same if finally armed with the sanctions of a law, will be a dangerous abuse of power, are bound as faithful members of a free State to monstrate against it, and to declare the reasons by which we are determined.” (Jefferson, par. 1)

It is evident that Jefferson, amongst others, thought a religious assessment by the government was a minefield waiting to explode, for all concerned. Jefferson, himself, was a Deist. He did read the Bible, but he was not exceptionally keen on all that the Christian faiths believed in as truths. He also did not want to see a repeat of the Roman Catholic Church’s power in all things governmental and spiritual.

Here’s what Jefferson thought about the whole church and state unification thing. He was convinced, as shown in section 1:

“The Religion then of every man must be left to the conviction and conscience of every man; and it is the right of every man to exercise it as these may dictate. This right is in its nature an unalienable right.” And “We maintain therefore that in matters of Religion, no man’s right is abridged by the in-
The men who wrote the *Bill of Rights* aimed for making our states secular and separate from religion. They wanted to insure against fighting each other for their beliefs and to make certain that no one faith would overrule the others. They also did not believe that people should be taxed for a religious faith that they did not believe was true.

There were three main papers that involved the issues of religious freedom and non-governmental involvement in regards to religion that influenced the 1st Amendment. Patrick Henry’s *Bill Establishing a Provision for Teachers of Christian Religion* was written as a response to Thomas Jefferson’s *The Virginia Act for Establishing Religious Freedom* (1779), and James Madison’s *Memorial and Remonstrance against Religious Assessments* was, in turn, a response to Patrick Henry’s proposed bill. These all had effects on that small, but significant, section of the 1st Amendment.

First, let us take a look at *The Virginia Act for Establishing Religious Freedom*. It asked for freedom of religion and freedom from religion, that their beliefs should not “affect their civil capacities”. So right from the start, with this paper, was the plea that religion not be mixed with our government. It also says that the people have the choice not to worship at all. There was one part that summarized what the paper was intended to accomplish:

> “That no man shall be compelled to frequent or support any religious worship, place, or ministry whatsoever, nor shall be enforced, restrained, molested, or burdened in his body or goods, nor shall otherwise suffer on account of his religious opinions or belief; but that all men shall be free to profess, and by argument to maintain, their opinions in matters of religion, and that the same shall in no wise diminish, enlarge, or affect their civil capacities.” (Madison, par. 2)

Patrick Henry, and some others who agreed with him, wanted a plural government, ruled by both church and state. With his idea of religious assessments or taxes, he would have seen to it that our states would have been an exclusively Christian government ruled by the priests and not by the reign of the rulers. Although it allowed for different sects to practice their religion, it was argues that, in time, one belief would overrule any other. It would be tyranny such as practiced by the Roman Catholic Church in earlier times. I can certainly see that it would have led to torture, massacres, wars, and heretical accusations by the main faith. I believe that Patrick Henry and his followers were afraid of the newcomers and their individual beliefs, and wanted to insure that no one faith would take precedence over another. He wanted to believe that a person could still have their natural liberty while paying for Christian beliefs that they did not believe in. Please do not forget that there were Deists, who trusted not in organized religion, but in nature showing that there was a great Creator who made everything, but left it, human beings included, to its’ own devices. Here’s what Mr. Henry had to say about it:
**Enduring Night**  
*(Ode to Waco)*  
*Jamie Scott*

We huddled under the windowsill as the light flooded in and blades chopped the air overhead, waiting for our moment to strike.

Loud voices carried commands and the remnants of our lives littered the floor, fallen at the first siege. The second wave was winding up to take the first one's place. Arms at the ready, we held them steady and prayed our silent prayers.

As battering boots kicked down the door, rapid fire filled the air. A cacophony of bullets ushered in daybreak, unveiling debris and the dead.

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**How Did We Get Freedom of Religion?**  
*Argie E. Subocz*

>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." *(U.S. Const., am. 1)*

There has been a lot of talk about what the First Amendment means. I want to talk about the religious part of the U.S. Constitution. Why did the writers of the Bill of Rights not want laws respecting an establishment of religion? Why free exercise of religion? There were quite a few good reasons for this amendment. I’m not going into any great detail on the “…respecting an establishment of religion…” *(U.S. Constit., am. 1)* part except to say that I believe it means what it says, that the government will not respect ANY establishment of religion. I want to look at how this bill was made to create a secular government separate from religion. I also want to take a look at three papers; *Memorial and Remonstrance against Religious Assessments, A Bill Establishing a Provision for Teachers of the Christian Religion,* and the *Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom.* All three of these governmental papers played an important part in the creation and wording of the beginning part of the 1st Amendment of the Bill of Rights.

What are religious assessments? In this case it is a tax set up to pay for teachers of Christianity, but it could also include missionary and charity work. Why wouldn’t post-colonial Americans want that? They were all Christians, right? Most were Protestant Christians. There were Quakers, Puritans, Pilgrims, German Baptists, Mennonites, Anglicans, and so on, as well as a number of Jews, Roman Catholics, Deists, etc. Religious persecution was not as bad as in England and other countries, but it certainly happened. The early United States may have Christian, but they did not agree with each other. There was absolutely no tolerance for Native American spiritual beliefs!

So you can see that people did not share the same religious beliefs, even back then. Persecution hasn’t stopped either, with relatively new faiths like Islam, Sikh, Hindu, etc; being singled out for fear that America being taken over by non-Christian faiths. Even some Christian faiths are misunderstood, such as Mormon and Jehovah’s Witness groups. In my humble opinion, there is always something to be learned from others, including their religion. Look at Protestants. They broke away from Roman Catholicism to make their own beliefs, and they had learned something that was different from the original. How soon they forgot that they made something different than the original. That’s why it is so important to understand others’ belief systems. Maybe not as your own, but certainly some tolerance towards others is needed. There is more alike than you might think if you do not investigate and simply find out.
sides, that we are able to recognize the importance of all people’s opinions. Abortion is a morally questionable practice, but I do not believe that the government has the right to tell a woman what she can do with her body.

Works Cited


The Community Center
Janie Wang

I will not take your hand--
I cannot take your hand,
He smiled ivory and bright as mother of pearl
Adorning midnight colored eyes that winked
As he bowed his head with a supple sigh
And apologized,
But you must know I am so pleased you are
Here, He spoke with a graceful gesture from
His long arms that held steady as I spread
My gaze across the unfolding classroom:
Desks gathered like lilies on a turquoise carpet lake,
A woman swathed in silk sang sweetly in the corner
As she brushed a fold of color from her oval face
And returned to rubbing white labels onto the books
Cascading from cardboard boxes collected that day.

Many of us lost our family to the war,
And we must now remake our families here.
So in this building,
Which we purchased with our own money, he beamed,
His slender hand waving at the painted walls,
We teach each other how to write our names,
Sign for our children on lined school paper,
Spell each letter to work in the city,
So we can live in freedom from
The war that devoured fathers and mothers,
Consumed our children and beloved friends.

He was a tall man,
And he bowed deep again to meet my eyes.
We are grateful to be here, even when
People do not understand why I must
Not shake the outstretched hands of your women,
But it is because of what I believe,
That this is how I respect you, dear Sister.

He taught me how to say Hello in his language,
And I practiced rolling the words Peace Be With You
Alone in my car, the winter air veiling the
Syllables from my breath,
As-sa-lam a-lai-kum.
I see my generation in need of identification. We are pioneers directionless, and without destination. Our world is a snow-globe: Unnaturally compact. We look in, are cozily detached.

Our frontier is mental. We take our love inside, where we take our meds. There’s an App for this, there’s a pill for that.

I am too new to feel so old. I want to know a world without excess.

Diagnosis: Blindness. our eyes trained to screens instead of to each other, our faces illuminated by laptops instead of by the brilliance of compassion.

The First Amendment contains two clauses relating to religious freedom. The free exercise clause guarantees the free exercise of religion. The establishment clause prohibits the government from endorsing or establishing a state of religion. While it is clear that these clauses were intended to avoid a religious government, as time has shown, the boundaries of the freedom of religion outlined in the first amendment are not always clear.

Recently, the inclusion of contraception in medical coverage plans has been a highly debated topic. Those who are against the inclusion of contraception argue that it violates the free exercise clause outlined in the First Amendment. Many argue that forcing insurance plans to cover the cost of contraceptives infringes on rights to free practice of religion, as there are religions, namely Catholicism, that do not believe in the use of contraceptives. It is argued that the inclusion of contraceptives prohibits certain religiously endorsed institutions from practicing their beliefs. It is also argued that the inclusion of contraceptives contradicts the establishment clause of the first amendment. By forcing hospitals affiliated with religions that do not endorse the use of contraceptives to provide medical coverage for contraceptives, many argue that the government would be crossing the line, violating the “wall of separation” Thomas Jefferson spoke of that lies between church and state. However, by the same token, those in favor of the inclusion of contraceptives in medical coverage could argue that not including contraceptives in medical coverage violates the freedom of establishment, as it would be an obvious provision made for religious groups who do not believe in contraception. Public insurance, as mandated by the constitution, is to have no religious affiliations. Excluding contraception from medical coverage supports certain religious beliefs. Another argument made by those in favor of the inclusion of contraceptives deals with the right to privacy. Cases such as Roe v Wade, have established rulings that would support the inclusion of contraceptives. In Roe v Wade, provisions aside, the court upheld a ruling providing for women’s right to privacy, as a right of equal protection outlined in the 14th amendment—giving women have the right to decide for themselves whether or not to use contraceptives. I believe that it follows that it is the government’s role, as an impartial institution—outlined by the establishment clause—to provide coverage for the optional use contraceptives in public insurance policies. The exercise clause is fulfilled by women’s freedom to choose whether or not to utilize contraceptives offered by the government.

The first amendment addresses religious freedoms directly, reading: Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof. It should stand to reason, then, that to base a governmental law on the beliefs of certain religious groups is unconstitutional. Like most issues, however, it is not that simple. Abortion is a sensitive topic, for people on both sides of the issue. People who support the legalization of abortion do not necessarily support abortion. Supporters of both Pro-Life and Pro-Choice organizations have the right, granted to them by the first amendment, to voice their opinions to government. I believe it is important that the government hears both
Freedom of Religion and Privacy

Hannah Guernsey

The United States Constitution provides for no explicit right to privacy. The fourteenth amendment does, however, allow for the interpretation of substantive rights of citizens to act outside the government’s preferences. *Stare decisis*, a system of precedent under which this country has come to operate, has allowed for the assumption of privacy rights to take hold in US laws under the due process clause of the 14th amendment. This has served as the legal basis of a widely debated topic today, abortion. Privacy rights did not, however, begin as a matter of abortion—they came to that point by way of *stare decisis*.

In 1887, with *Allgeyer v. Louisiana*, the US Supreme Court ruled that individual economic liberty could not be limited by a state’s police power to prohibit or place conditions on contracts that can be entered into by its citizens. By instigating/upholding the idea of an individual’s freedom of contract, based its interpretation of the due process clause of the 14th amendment, the Supreme Court asserted an individual’s rights to substantive protection from the law. It set the precedent that individuals have the liberty to choose what economic and social acts they enter into. Though this ruling did not take immediate effect (state laws continued to vary indecisively towards abortion for the coming decades), it set the foundation for a claim of privacy rights in determining abortion laws.

Eighty years later, in 1967, Colorado enacted the first liberalized abortion law in the US, permitting abortion in cases of rape, incest, and mental or physical disability in either the mother or the child. Three other states, California, Oregon and North Carolina followed suite. A few years later, New York, Alaska, Hawaii and Washington passed laws legalizing abortion on demand up to the 24th week of pregnancy.

It wasn’t until 1971 that the US Supreme Court tried a case specifically pertaining to abortion specifically. In *United States v. Vuitch*, the Court upheld a DC law that allowed for abortion to preserve a woman’s health, both physical and mental. Two years later, the Supreme Court tried a case that would come to be a major turning point in American policy regarding abortion: *Roe v. Wade*. The Court ruled that the concept of an individual’s right of privacy established in previous court cases extended to include the right to an abortion; it determined the role of the government at each trimester in a woman’s pregnancy. This ruling sparked a national uprising of people both in favor of and against the legalizing of abortion. The debate among differing concerns in regards to an individual’s right to control abortion encompasses not only the question of a woman’s right to terminate her pregnancy, but also pertains to the use of contraceptives.

Ratification of the Bill of Rights in the late 18th century evidences Americans’ concern for the protection of individual freedoms. One key reason colonists ventured to the new world was for religious freedom. It is no surprise, then, that freedom of religion was addressed in the First Amendment to the Constitution.

With Fleece as White as Snow

Ron Beach

I sat pondering on a park bench to which I had wandered, past the park fence, with nothing to find and nowhere to go.

Finding aimlessness limiting, I set off to search out a purpose and turned, surprised to find purposefulness itself marching toward me – all banners and flags and chanting.

What I couldn’t make out in words, shone clear in tone – anger and despair, hurt and hunger – an animal gnawing its way out of the steel teeth of a trap gone rusty with time and weather and wear.

But, for all the pain and the passion, I couldn’t get past the stench of fad and elitism of high fashion.

To what end do we chew at our chains when flesh is more forgiving than the links that hold us here?

To what end do we call for change and plea for peace, all the while wearing like wolves the slaughtered lambs’ white fleece?
I have the freedom

Chris Davis

I have the freedom to watch you kill my dog
I have the freedom to be maced when I am kissing my girlfriend
I have the freedom to speak after high school but before I get a job
I have the freedom to explore my mind with alcohol and pharmaceuticals
I have the freedom to assemble as long as the neighbors don’t complain
I have the freedom to take a six-hour class for turning right on red
I have the freedom to be bullied when driving
I have the freedom to be in debt for work
I have the freedom to be taxed for toys
I have the freedom to be called to war
I have the freedom to wait in line
I have the freedom to wait
I have the freedom to
the NAACP. In 1956 the state requested personal information about the members of the NAACP, hoping to hinder their efforts. If the identities of NAACP members were revealed, those people would face loss of property, injury, or even death. As a result the NAACP refused to reveal some of the information, and the court fined the group $100,000. When the NAACP appealed this decision, the organization won the case. The Supreme Court ruled that the Due Process Clause of the fourteenth amendment prohibits states from violating the first amendment of the United States Constitution. Alabama had wrongly violated its citizen’s freedom of association. This landmark decision showcased the power of the first amendment to grant political and social equality to all United States citizens. This case is an excellent example of American freedoms being utilized for the benefit of the people.

The first amendment of the United States Constitution is one of the most important components of the United States democracy. However, citizens must be careful not to abuse the rights that it secures. In order to protect one’s freedoms one must be educated about the political system. A crucial component of democracy is citizen’s participation and understanding of the political system. Studies have shown that college graduates vote more often than high school graduates. In fact 76% of 18-44 year olds with a bachelor’s degree vote, whereas only 49% of 18-44 year olds with a high school diploma vote. Being active in the political system is essential if the government’s policies are to reflect the wishes of the people. An understanding of the government system is crucial to voters if they are to make educated decisions. An advanced education that includes government and political science courses is vital to the health of our nation.

The knowledge that students gain from a college education allows them to be educated citizens who will protect their freedoms, especially their first amendment rights. College gives citizens the tools necessary to understand and protect their rights. Knowledge of the political system is vital to creating a beneficial government.

Bibliography

Shall We Bear Arms?
Susan Comer

Freedom to believe,
Freedom to bear arms.
Freedom must be guarded,
not with weapons,
with respect.

Is it as simple
as our forefathers said?
It surely was not conceivable
the things we now do with arms:
The fourteen year old boy
robs an old lady of her purse--
murders her by the Taco Bell.
Thugs rape the young girl
for initiation into Bloods.
The lost woman ambushes her coworker
in the parking garage,
playing out her psychosis.
Outcast teens run rampant
massacring kids in math class.
The Muslim storekeeper is gunned down
going home to his family,
by the brother of a 9-11 victim.

Revolution, defense against injustice?
Understandable motives.
Where is that meaning now?
Where is the enemy
against whom we bear arms?
Next door?
Across the ocean?
In the mosque or church or school
at the corner store?
No, it's not that simple now.
**In My Country**  
*Katherine Holm*

In my country you remember the gasps  
as the second plane hit.  
Diane Sawyer reported  
New York City all aflame,  
a scene from a child’s war video game.

In my country you remember watching  
the ten o’clock shadow  
grow on the chin of Peter Jennings.  
Oh, but, America, if only you knew  
It was just the beginning.

As chaos reigned beneath Lady Liberty’s eyes,  
we waited for seven minutes  
and the world watched them all die.  
Jumping from tall buildings, skin set to fire.  
Yes, seven minutes later, up stood a liar.  
He said, “Make no mistake”,  
and the seven minutes were forgotten  
as the followers cheered with hoarse voice.  
In that moment,  
that moment,  
we were all full of courage

And when he said…  
Iraq, Iraq, Iraq!!  
They were behind the attack,  
no wait, it’s the WMD’s.  
Okay, I’ve got it now-  
it’s those Iraqi’s.  
The American people  
want to see them all freed.  
We believed-we did believe.

Yet we all later learned  
the attacks were made by a group of Afghani’s  
and the WMD’s were a Bush administration fantasy.  
And the Iraqi’s?  
Well, those Iraqi’s now surrounded by military,  
I wish they could tell me if the cost of their brothers  
Has made them feel free.

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**Education and the Freedom of Speech**  
*Alexandra Bello*

Protection of the first amendment arising from a formal education prevents  
the abuse of American liberties. The first amendment is sometimes used correctly  
to protect the rights of United States citizens, but sometimes it is misused. Educa-

tion is the key factor that prevents the abuse of American freedoms.

The first amendment is often exploited for financial gain. In an effort to pro-

tect its youth, St. Louis County passed an ordinance that banned children from  
playing, purchasing, or renting violent video games, without parental consent.  
In 2003, the Interactive Digital Software Association sued to overturn the ordi-

nance. The Court of Appeals declared the ordinance “unconstitutional” and not-

ed “that a government cannot silence protected speech for children by wrapping  

itself in the cloak of parental authority.” However, the Interactive Digital Software  
Association’s motivation to overturn the law was not merely to protect children’s  
rights, but to protect its own financial interests. According to the Entertainment  
Software Association, the video game industry raked in “$10.5 billion in revenue”  
in 2009. Though the government is protecting the “free speech” of the software  
makers, it is not protecting children from the harmful effects of video games. Ac-

cording to the American Psychological Association, “High levels of violent video  


game exposure have been linked to delinquency, fighting at school ... and violent  
criminal behavior” by students. Protecting children from the harmful effects of  
violent video games should be priority over protecting the software creators’ fi-

nancial interests. The negative effects of video games are widespread. According  
to the American Psychological Association, “meta-analyses reveal that violent  
video game effect sizes are larger than the effect of second hand tobacco smoke  
on lung cancer,” and not limited to a small part of the population. According to  
CNN, “about 90 percent of U.S. kids ages 8 to 16 play video games,” so a ban that  
limits children’s access to violent games would significantly decrease the negative  
effects that come along with their use. The video game industry is preying off the  
naiveté of the youth for financial gain in the name of “free speech.” This abuse of  
the Constitution is appalling. Minors are already restricted from smoking and  
drinking. Why should they not be protected from the perilous effects of violent  
video games as well?

Though it is sometimes misused, the First Amendment of the United States  

C o n s t i t u t i o n  D a y  2 0 1 2  2 9
But at the time, we bought all the bullshit
they shoveled in droves
The worst case of Stockholm Syndrome ever been told.

They said “For seven years we’ve been safe”,
same seven years lived in fear.
But seven years ago we were all snug
in freedoms and principles
two hundred years once revered.

I am unAmerican because I cried
watching Saddam swinging
and looked on in horror
as the Christians were singing.
A song without words
But with faces so distorted-
Jesus first teachings of compassion and empathy
so quickly aborted.

I am unAmerican because I scream
I want this war ended
when I see my brother and sister beheaded
for reasons that even reason can’t see.
I wonder what else they expected of me.

And I think to myself
was it worth,
worth the cost of all the many lives lost?

And I say to myself...yes.
Yes, it has to have been.
Because to think any other way
would be to have it happen again.
Come Home, Soldier

Meagan Patton

Across the ocean
a helicopter streaks across the sky;
a black dot in a sea of blue,
casting a bird-like shadow in the sand

Across the ocean
a girl lays in her room,
gazing at the picture next to her bed:
a boy, a soldier in uniform
"Come home, soldier," she says

Across the ocean
a boy reads his letters from home;
his shift begins in an hour or two,
and he has one last chance to call his girl

Across the ocean
a girl presses the phone to her ear
crying at the sound of his voice;
he says goodbye, his time is up
"Come home, soldier," she cries

Across the ocean
bullets fly through the air
missiles stream into the sky;
in a sea of dirt and blood
a boy gives up his life

Across the ocean
a girl sits by the television
as the evening news reports to its listeners:
fifteen dead or missing, a black hawk down
"Come home, soldier," she whispers

Across the ocean
a helicopter streaks across the sky

those who did advocate equality had to so in secrecy, which obviously demonstrates a lack of freedom. Many refused to support the movement to protect their families. So what about today? The Civil Rights movement was replaced by the Gay Rights movement. Ask a class room of southern high school students if they think gays should have equal rights and then ask each student in private. Almost with certainty there will be more students that support gay rights privately than publicly. This isn’t because they were shy, but because those students were scared that their peers would harm them in one way or another. How can it be said that there is freedom of speech when you hear about people attacked or mentally tormented for supporting Gay Rights? People in America fear to assert their opinions because of the lack protection from their peers. This will just cause many who support the cause to hold their tongues and live with the status quo.

Maybe the government is not blatantly attacking people for their views today, but what’s the point of saying the government prosecute you from speaking when the government won’t stop the community from assailing you for speaking out? Freedom of speech is hardly a civil liberty, as no one can truly speak freely unless they are willing to subject themselves to brutality and humiliation from their peers. Unless protection is established on every level for those who have a different opinion, then freedom of speech as a right is unattainable. In this essay I only mentioned extreme cases in which freedom of speech is involved. On a more basic level, people will always adhere to a certain guidelines of how to communicate, such as manners, and some will argue this means there will never true freedom of speech. Freedom of speech is interpreted as the freedom to express one’s opinion without oppression. This definition of freedom of speech will never be attained because fear of oppression will shape what we believe and what we stand for.
Free Speech and Fear of Oppression
Bonham Duncan

The most well-known civil liberty amongst American’s is likely to be the right to free speech. However, this is one of the most unprotected rights. It is foolish to believe that the American public truly has the ability to publicly say what they believe. Freedom of speech implies that people can say what they believe without a negative backlash. The government, while it is legally not allowed to censor, silence, or harm the public’s voice, will still sometimes assault those who speak freely. To further diminish the right to freedom of speech, the government will not protect its citizen’s right to freedom of speech from other citizens. Freedom of speech is unattained in the United States because its citizens cannot take a controversial stance without worrying about persecution from the government and the population.

From my personal experiences I can say with certainty, I do not have the right to free speech and that it is not protected. My junior year in high school I was intrigued by the music of the United States’ war enemies. To be more precise I was fascinated by the national anthems of the states that the US warred with. I thought it would be a neat idea to share the anthems with the rest of the school. A little explanation of how I went about this is necessary. My high school had a fundraiser in which you could pay five dollars to play a CD over the school-wide PA system during the 5-minute passing periods between classes. The CD would play until the next person pays five dollars for their own CD. I created a CD which included God Save the Queen, the Nazi German Anthem, the National Anthem of the USSR, and many others. About a week after my CD started playing I was called into the dean of students office and was “invited to withdraw,” AKA expelled, from my high school a few days later. The school’s decision was based on the accusation that I was a Nazi and was attempting to spread my beliefs. The fact I that I am not a Nazi has no relevance in this essay. But suppose I were a Nazi. Shouldn’t I be able to speak freely about my beliefs in an entirely non-threatening manner such as playing music? According to my school, I should only be able to share beliefs that they approve of. Schools, places where people go to learn, debate, innovate, and THINK, are forcing the students to silence themselves in accordance to a certain set of beliefs. This is just one example from my personal life that demonstrates that persons are not able to truly express their beliefs in the US without coming under fire from the community and the government.

The Civil Rights movement gives an abundance amount of insight to how the US citizen’s right to freedom of speech is almost nonexistent. Concerning the Civil Rights movement, there is an abundance of images and stories of policemen and white men brutalizing, squelching, and sometimes murdering men and women speaking out for equality. Frequently citizens of the South did not speak out for equality even if they truly believed in civil equality, simply because they feared the police would hunt them down. The fear of punishment directly caused many to never enact their right in order to remain safe. Additionally, many of
Night Vision
Amanda Sible

The alarm sounds
for an incoming battle
nights turns to day
as the bombs light up the sky

we return the attack
bullets wiz by
as we see our fallen comrades
laying wounded and hurt

with a strong hand
they are dragged to safety
their gaping wounds
bleed freely
the line of the wounded growing
by the minute

as dawn breaks
across the dunes
the battle fields quiet
the destruction is seen
so horrible
my eyes can’t endure
so I open them.

Charles Wilbert White
Dedra Grona

In 1918, Charles Wilbert White was born in the ghetto of Chicago, Illinois, to a father who worked in the steel mills in South Chicago as well as the railroad and construction occupations, and to a mother was a domestic worker for the upper class. His background of African American had placed him among his “kind,” and he, therefore, knew his place in life, it seemed. Despite this pre-determined knowledge, Mr. White was destined to be more than his skin color.

As a youngster, he was taken to the homes his mother would clean and interacted with the white children living there. His father died when Charles reached eight years of age and by that time began to spend great amounts of time in the local neighborhood library where self-taught reading would come to his advantage. On the bookshelves, he found new important histories of his people and their influence on America. African Americans performed hard work for no recognition by the public to say the least. Reading presented Charles with new found confidence that he carried with him throughout middle and high school, where the only joy he found was in the art room. His teachers of remaining subjects disregarded his questions and opinions during lessons when he primarily wanted to have a voice in the matter, essentially a Constitutional right entitled to him. Negros were labeled inferior by newspapers, comic strips and more public areas and only intensified Charles’ passion to rise above. When he was granted a full scholarship to the Chicago Art Institute after winning an art contest, this purpose of his was made clear.

Charles White’s work primarily showed scenes depicting human relationships, portraits, socio-economic hardships, and African American history in the United States. One of Franklin D. Roosevelt’s New Deal program, the Works Progress Administration, particularly gave White a vision and inspiration for his drawings, paintings, and lithograph pieces. He used very little color by representing the “dark side” of his subjects with a black and white scale, and thus adding perspective to his works. Portfolios were assembled after he created several illustrations, one of which was featured in the “Masses and Mainstream” magazine, and another to a South African Scholar (Dr. Matthews) returning home, but was put on hold on account African officials found the portfolio to be filled with propaganda with reference to the drawings of blacks. Only when one of White’s portraits of Abraham Lincoln was viewed was the portfolio considered “art.”

Facing scrutiny throughout his career and let alone life, Charles persisted to be considered a “spokesman for my people” through his art. Based on his travels and own personal occurrences, he knew the hardships faced by any and every working class that were brought to life to his audience on paper. Every now and then people need to look at something in order to understand the feelings and emotions of events throughout our history. The African American society was brought to a form of justice, along with recognition, by Charles White’s art work and his need to literally make a statement for his culture.
Our hubris has led to our downfall. We’ve become so preoccupied with words like “freedom” and “justice” that we’ve failed to realize how corrupt our society truly is. Our rights have been trampled on. We’ve allowed our congressmen to pass legislature explicitly counterintuitive to our Constitution, our police to publicly oppress us, and they’ve continued to do so simply because we allow them to. I think it’s time America stopped choosing to remain ignorant and fought for the rights our Founding Fathers so desperately fought to secure.

Zuccotti Park
Dana Tucker

Mid September, 2011
New York, New York

Home of Arturo De Modica’s Charging Bull, symbol of financial optimism and prosperity, head lowered, back on its haunches, ready to charge, guarding Wall Street.

And I, a virgin New York tourist, joined other sightseers wanting to witness the flaring nostrils on that angry, dangerous beast, not realizing an iconic image of New York was about to be castrated by protesters in Zuccotti Park, only steps away.

Hundreds of clamoring dissenters assembled that day, called together, Facebooked, YouTubed, Twittered. Occupying Wall Street in makeshift tents and sleeping bags, they scrawled their message with fat markers on scraps of boxes and bent cardboard for all the world and the six o’clock news reporters

“*We are the 99%*”
Against the power of the moneved class, bankers and brokers in Armani suits wearing wing-tip shoes glossed to high shine.

Against gigantic corporations, too big to fail, polluting and plundering, leaving nothing for the common man but lies and deception.

Against government, the most treacherous traitor, luring young men and women to a war with no purpose.

That day, Zuccotti Park welcomed them, open-armed. Free speech, peaceful protest.

And I, climbed back on the tour bus and wondered if I was part of the 99%.

How “We the People” Gave Up Our First Amendment

Kayla Cartwright

As all Americans well know, our Founding Fathers laid the groundwork to protect our rights and did their best to ensure us safety from a tyrannical government. However, they failed to protect us from ourselves. Perhaps the most well-known amendment, the First encompasses one’s freedom from established religion, for speech and press, the right to exercise religion, to assemble, and to petition. As Americans, we beat our chests and proclaim our supposed greatness with no evidence to back it up other than our supposed “democracy” which has quickly begun deteriorating. However, paradoxically, we have also turned a cheek to the real issues plaguing our country and failed to utilize our First Amendment to its fullest.

We claim to be a democracy as opposed to a theocracy yet we have a party whose members are quick to use their faith to shape their agenda and we have a Congress passing legislation based solely upon biblical teachings. We’ve had 44 presidents and somehow every single one of them has been Protestant with the exception of one who was ill fated. When confronted about religion dominating our government, many Americans bury their heads in the sand and blindly quote the First Amendment whilst refusing to realize that if the public lets an injustice slide, it is okay in the eyes of a politician. As the war continues to wage on between bible thumpers and their more intelligent, non-religious foes we lose sight of the issues. Instead of confronting the fact that an entire generation has been stuck in an era of war time or that we’re in a depression, we continue to argue over a woman’s right to her own body, whether homosexuals are truly second class citizens, and whether or not climate change is real. We’ve allowed religion to pollute our political atmosphere and, if not contained, it threatens to derail our democratic system through gridlock.

2011 marked the year of the riots. What began in the Middle East soon set fire to the world and ignited disgruntled youth in Europe and at home in America. While the Occupy Wall Street movements did have violent moments prompted by the protestors, the police did not hesitate to brandish their brutal side. Citizens were pepper sprayed, beaten, and silenced all while the country watched and let it happen. The First Amendment clearly states that we reserve the right to peaceably assemble; so why is it that when that right is stolen we remain more quiet than ever? Unfortunately, the Occupy Wall Street protests weren’t the only time citizens were oppressed, although it was one of the most public. As we come into an age of economic and social turmoil I feel our ability to come together on issues and hold our government accountable will be the key to addressing the real issues.

Over 200 years ago our Founding Fathers did their best to protect us from the dangers of government. They explicitly listed our rights and, for a while, we were content. As our country got older and we achieved more we grew proud.
but many of us would have made our decision based upon media output or hearsay. Majority of us never took the time to research candidates or statistics. Lecture by lecture it became clear how dramatically steered the media could be, but also how little we all knew in general. It has made me not only more more contemplative and careful about what I say, but it pushes me to question what others have to say as well. I don’t feel the need to speak to be involved, because I acknowledge my lack of education on particular subjects. It isn’t that I am being pushed to silence, nor am I considering myself too ignorant to know better. I am choosing to educate myself before speaking, so that I may effectively articulate my own position, and define myself.

Now although Francois-Marie Arouet, nor my Professor had the US Constitution Amendment in mind when they rendered their words, it certainly adequately defines my feelings towards freedom of speech. We can think for ourselves and let others do the same, and if we don’t know something, we don’t have to “pick one,” we can learn more or take a step back. Instead of adding to the controversy, we should be questioning and inquiring. Instead of falling in line like sheep, we should be resisting the temptation to defend or explain ourselves. The rest of our lives won’t be ruined if we change our mind and seek personal truth. We can change our minds as many times as we like. I’ve learned a new respect for the freedom of speech. We can’t plan the moment when everything will get back on track just like we can’t plan the moment we miss a beat, but what we can do is make our own choices and allow all those who surround us the same privilege.
The Westboro Baptist Church is best known for its noisy protests at the funerals of fallen soldiers. The Westboro church is a Church that does not believe in homosexuality, Jews or Catholics. They protest because they are upset that the government allows homosexuals in the military. The religious belief of the Westboro Baptist church is one that “fallen soldiers have died because they were part of an organization that is tolerant of homosexuals,” said Steve Drain to ABC News.

The Baptists have full rights to be at the funerals protesting because it is a right stated in the first amendment: the right to assemble and the freedom of speech. However the problem with the Baptists doing this is it interrupts the families that are trying to have a peaceful ceremony for their loved ones. The protestors are impeding on the families first amendment rights when they protest. The families have the right to freedom of religion which is being interrupted with protestors during the ceremony.

The Patriot Guard Riders is a motorcycle club put together of United States Veterans who don’t believe in what the church is doing. During the funerals the Patriot Guard Riders form lines to make a wall of peace between the protestors and the mourning families of the fallen soldiers to block the protestors. The riders have all the right to be there, exercising their first amendment right to assemble and definitely should be to help the mourning families.

To solve this problem president Obama signed the Honoring America’s Veterans and Caring for Camp Lejeune Families Act of 2012. “We have a moral sacred duty to our men and women in uniform,” Obama said before signing the bill. “The graves of our veterans are hallowed grounds.” This act forced the protestors to stay back 300 feet from the funeral ceremony so that the families of the fallen soldiers can have a peaceful ceremony. This causes problems with the protestors because they have the right to be there but they feel that they are being denied the right to assemble and the right to freedom of speech. If you look at the situation from both sides there is no right way to fix this ongoing problem because one side will always feel cheated of their first amendment rights in the end.

If I was attending a funeral of a friend or family member who was killed in the line of duty, I would expect to be able to peacefully participate in a religious ceremony without interruption from any external group. It is my first amendment right to participate in any religious ceremony I choose and no one should have the right to disturb me doing so.

If I were a member of westboro Baptist church and believed in their beliefs then I expect to be able to exercise my first amendment right to assemble and protest. Although I should not be allowed to directly interrupt or interfere

It is a commonality that when people implement the freedom of speech, they often confuse advocating or supporting personal beliefs with enforcing others to conform. It is all too frequently forgotten that the first amendment was created for civil liberties. The freedom of speech was included in the first amendment to provide people with equal opportunities to advocate for the sake of personal preference without interruption by the government, yet people are no longer satisfied with simply defending or supporting those beliefs, they often feel compelled to thrust their opinions on anyone who is opposed. Although it is natural to want to form unity based upon common interest, it is my personal opinion that if you can’t form your own judgement based upon what you consider to be honorable, if you can’t respect thy neighbors choices as you expect in return, then maybe you should become familiar with silence being a virtue.

Francois-Marie Arouet, a well known French philosopher, prolific writer, poet, and a man described as a preeminent figure of the eighteenth-century French Enlightenment, once said, “Think for yourselves and let others enjoy the privilege to do so too.” The freedom of speech provides us with endless possibilities to create our individual worlds in any which way we prefer. It is often misused and highly underappreciated. Those rights were never intended to provoke animosity or controversy and yet people confuse it with the right to judge or persecute. For example, recently Dan Cathy, the President of fast food restaurants “Chick-fil-A’s,” took freedom of speech to a new level. Cathy publicly announced that the company as a whole were “guilty as charged” on their stance against gay marriage. It strikes me as contradicting that a man who is supposedly godly, would raise his voice in such a manner and publicly speak through a radio program stating, “I think we are inviting God’s judgment on our nation when we shake our fist at Him and say, ‘We know better than you as to what constitutes a marriage.’” Cathy seems to have confused his position as restaurant president with a church pastor, and has not only abused his position by speaking on behalf of his company as an entirety, but has forgotten God’s purpose altogether. May we walk in love, that is God’s true desire for he who walks the earth. It is people like Dan Cathy that contribute to the hate in the world by misdirecting their focus, misusing their purpose, and not allowing others to live for themselves.

The worst misuse of the freedom of speech would be the media. My Texas Government Professor once said, “Don’t vote!” When he initially made the statement on the first day of class, I thought him crazy for making such a statement considering his position. I accepted him as an eccentric character and moved on. Throughout the course I came to realize the purpose behind his bold statement. As hands went up and questions were asked it became clear that not only were students ignorant to the way the government actually works,
out of proportion by the media and the homosexual community. I support the homosexual community for defending their beliefs, but I still don’t understand why this has just now become such a prominent issue to them. Even so, no one is forcing them to consume Chick-fil-A products, so simply abstaining from eating there would be sufficient for them to defend their opinions. On the other hand, I do not believe it is the place of a fast food restaurant to have political opinions, or to contribute money to any kind of political organization—they are there to make and sell delicious food. Both sides have effectively expressed their opinions, and it should be left at that. Chicken should simply be eaten and not used as a tool to express politically charged opinions. In addition, an activist group such as the homosexual community that so fervently encourages having an open mind should not persecute a corporation for holding a different set of beliefs than they do—isn’t that the opposite of being open-minded? A society that criticizes groups of citizens for believing different things is in no way tolerant, and is as developmentally behind as any other discriminatory society.

All in all, both groups are correct in defending their beliefs, and neither group is at risk of violating the First Amendment. The Chick-fil-A corporation has the right to verbally express its beliefs and to openly practice whatever religion it so desires, and any limits to that could be certainly fought with the First Amendment on its side. In addition, the homosexual community is permitted to peacefully assemble and express its opinions in opposition to Chick-fil-A’s recent declaration. I do believe, however, that it is important for both sides to demonstrate tolerance towards the other, so as to promote a more equal and socially competent society. But really, my most basic opinion in regards to this controversy is that chicken should really just be treated like chicken and enjoyed, rather than be used as a political tool.

with someone else quietly exercising their first amendment rights. I agree with Obama’s Honoring America’s Veterans and Caring for Camp Lejeune Families Act of 2012 in creating a buffer space between the mourners and the protestors because it still allows both groups to exercise the first amendment rights and provides for a more peaceful exercise. Although they are entitled to exercise their first amendment rights the events they have chosen to exercise them are extremely inappropriate. I feel it is disrespectful to the fallen soldier and their family to protest at a funeral.

I applaud the patriot guard riders in trying to protect the mourning families by exercising their first amendment right to assemble.

What is amazing to me is that a right that has so much meaning to people is one that is not stated in the United States original constitution. It is a right that was later added to the constitution as an amendment. These rights make America what it is today and without them the United States would be a very different place. Everyone is entitled to an opinion however it is not fair to hurt anyone in the process.
Why Can’t a Chicken Just Be a Chicken?

Kristen Garner

The current controversy with the Chick-fil-A restaurant corporation is directly related to several facets of the first amendment to the United States of America’s Constitution. The first amendment guarantees all citizens the rights of freedom of speech, to peacefully assemble, and to freely exercise the religion of their choice. Both sides of this controversy are currently under fire for their statements and actions in regards to the situation. In my opinion, the matter at hand here is not on the moral correctness of either side, but simply on evaluating the Constitutionality of each side’s actions. In addition, I believe the entire matter has been blown completely out of proportion and should not be so heavily debated or emphasized.

The core of this controversy centers around a recent interview with Chick-fil-A’s president Dan Cathy and Baptist Press, in which Cathy states that Chick-fil-A supports the classic Biblical-style family with a male and female as the parental figures. This statement was interpreted to mean that Cathy and the Chick-fil-A corporation as a whole are anti-gay, which sparked outrage in the homosexual community. In addition, it is said that Chick-fil-A contributes millions of dollars every year to Christian organizations, which has been assumed to fund various anti-gay functions and efforts. In effect, the homosexual community has staged a boycott on Chick-fil-A, and pro-Chick-A citizens (notice they are not referred to as “anti-gay”) have declared Chick-fil-A support days to help them maintain revenue. Several homosexual communities have enacted what they call “kiss-ins”, and some city mayors have even gone so far as to express interest in banning Chick-fil-A from opening restaurants within their city limits, including Boston, Chicago, and, not surprisingly, San Francisco. Despite Chick-fil-A’s recent statement that they will leave such political issues to the government, this debate over a small, slightly misconstrued statement continues.

The primary constitutional element in this controversy is that of freedom of speech. Any person, whether they be the founder and President of a corporation or a nobody living on the streets has the right to express their views, provided that they don’t cause immediate panic or danger, or are considered slander. Since Chick-fil-A is a privately-owned company, Cathy has the right to make statements on the company’s behalf, including the company’s mission statement and set of beliefs. I have heard people talking and seen comments on Facebook saying that the homosexual community should sue the Chick-fil-A corporation for its comments and that they “can’t legally say things like that”, among other seemingly ignorant statements. My question is: What would they sue Chick-fil-A for? Having a different viewpoint? It would be absolutely impossible to get that lawsuit started due to the fact that there is nothing to sue them for, but even if it did somehow make it to court, it would be undoubtedly extremely unsuccessful since Chick-fil-A has the First Amendment on their side. Now, if Chick-fil-A had been openly turning away homosexual customers on the basis of their sexual orientation, there would actually be something concrete to bicker and go to court for, although that has not occurred. In addition, the comment made by Cathy was not directly anti-gay. In fact, I don’t believe he even mentioned the words “homosexual” or “gay” or anything of the sort in his commentary at all—he simply stated that he and the Chick-fil-A corporation supported the classic biblical interpretation of marriage between a man and a women. To me, assuming that he is completely anti-gay based on his pro-heterosexual statement is the same as assuming all pro-choice advocates want to kill babies (disclaimer: it’s probably safe to say that Cathy is against homosexual relationships, but such knowledge cannot be safely derived from his single statement in the Baptist Press interview). While I do believe that the sphere of tolerance in the United States of America must be extended to include homosexuality in order for the United States to become a socially modern and just society, it is Cathy’s right to announce the views of his company without suffering any sort of undue persecution.

In addition to the freedom of speech issue, there are a couple of other more minor issues that are covered under the First Amendment. One is the right of citizens to peacefully assemble, which has been briefly exercised during this controversy. Members of the homosexual community have united to stage what they call “kiss-ins”, in which they go to Chick-fil-A restaurants and outwardly display their affections for one another through physical actions. These demonstrators were careful not to violate private property rights, and so their actions were protected under their First Amendment rights.

Religion is another minor aspect related to this controversy. It cannot come as a surprise to anyone that Chick-fil-A, an openly Christian corporation, would better support heterosexual marriages than homosexual ones. A company that even goes so far as to require all of its stores to close on Sunday in honor of the Sabbath can be certainly expected to support other biblical principles, such as the basic definition of marriage. This being said, I do not understand why Cathy’s statement seemed to shock so many people and cause such a sudden outbreak of opposition to Chick-fil-A as a whole. This, to me, demonstrates a willful ignorance by the homosexual community, who decided they would eat their chicken until forced by principle to stage a boycott once Chick-fil-A’s quite obvious opinion was thrust under the public’s eye. On a different note, it would be absolutely unconstitutional for cities to ban Chick-fil-A from opening new stores within their city limits, as that would be interpreted as discrimination against the corporation based on their religious beliefs. So although Boston, Chicago, and San Francisco have all expressed interest in blocking Chick-fil-A, such a conquest would be prevented by the First Amendment’s protection of free exercise of religion.

Now although I adore Chick-fil-A’s chicken, and I am not opposed to gay marriage, this entire controversy baffles me, and I do believe it has been blown