



Written by [Selwyn Duke](#) on July 7, 2018

The Democrats' Dropping Mask: Now They Aim to End Free Speech

With the Left now admitting that it wants to abolish ICE, eliminate borders, and institute socialism, one may wonder what's next. Nixing First Amendment rights is what, with a college professor saying that free speech cannot be progressive, another stating that it "reinforces and amplifies injustice," and other people [insisting](#) it reflects "white privilege."



In fact, the *New York Times* has just advanced the anti-free-speech movement, claiming that "Conservatives [Have] Weaponized the First Amendment." The paper [informs](#) that "liberals who once championed expansive First Amendment rights are now uneasy about them."

The *Times* continues,

"The left was once not just on board but leading in supporting the broadest First Amendment protections," said Floyd Abrams, a prominent First Amendment lawyer and a supporter of broad free-speech rights. "Now the progressive community is at least skeptical and sometimes distraught at the level of First Amendment protection which is being afforded in cases brought by litigants on the right."

Many on the left have traded an absolutist commitment to free speech for one sensitive to the harms it can inflict.

{modulepos inner_text_ad}

Of course, this merely reflects cultural shifts. Leftists have long pushed college speech codes, "safe spaces" where snowflake students don't have to hear contrary opinions, and the general notion that suppressing Offensiveness™ (as defined by the Left) justifies suppressing speech.

Many conservatives' response to this attack on speech is to reflexively deny its "weapon" status. But whether we like that figurative description or not, this defense reflects fuzzy thinking, too. Haven't we heard the saying, "The pen is mightier than the sword"? We all know that words can instigate and inspire, strengthen and seduce and, exemplifying this, rivals Winston Churchill and Adolf Hitler both used their tongues to move masses — in very different directions.

So as with an actual weapon, such as a gun, speech is a tool that can be used for good or evil. It is powerful. But is this a reason to deny it to the common man? Or is this why the First and Second Amendments guarantee him access to both? Note that denial of such rights doesn't eliminate firearms and fearsome speech — it just ensures that, ultimately, only the powerful will have recourse to them.



Written by [Selwyn Duke](#) on July 7, 2018

This certainly isn't the Left's position, however. As the *Times* puts it, "Some liberals now say that free speech disproportionately protects the powerful and the status quo"; the paper also quotes radical University of Michigan law professor Catherine MacKinnon as expressing that "free speech reinforces and amplifies injustice." But how much justice is there with a muzzled citizenry?

The *Times* buttresses its "conservatives weaponizing of free speech" theme, writing that the Supreme Court "led by Chief Justice Earl Warren from 1953 to 1969 was almost exclusively concerned with cases concerning liberal speech. Of its 60 free-expression cases, only five, or about 8 percent, challenged the suppression of conservative speech."

But this has changed markedly. The paper continues, "The proportion of challenges to restrictions on conservative speech has steadily increased. It rose to 22 percent in the court led by Chief Justice Warren E. Burger from 1969 to 1986; to 42 percent in the court led by Chief Justice William H. Rehnquist from 1986 to 2005; and to 65 percent in the Roberts court."

The *Times'* failure to place this in perspective reflects at best shoddy analysis, at worst outright dishonesty. The reason why the proportion of challenges to restrictions on conservative speech has steadily increased during the last 65 years — a period seeing our culture undergo a sea change — is that leftists' restrictions on conservative speech have steadily increased.

In the '50s, '60s, and '70s, the First Amendment cases often concerned obscenity laws and matters such as flag burning. Could anyone even have dreamed that, for example, governments would attempt to compel Christian bakers to place homosexual-oriented messages on "wedding" cakes, students would be told they couldn't wear American-flag-themed clothing, or that conservative speakers would be hounded from college campuses?

So, as is frequently the case, liberals start a raging fire designed to burn their opponents (e.g., stifling rightist speech) and then cry foul when conservatives throw water on their inferno. They rain down blows and then are shocked when traditionalists raise their arms in defense.

Many may suppose, as the *Times* does, that conservatives and liberals have switched roles to now become, respectively, defenders and attackers of speech. This is a fallacy. The First Amendment's protections for speech are for just that — *speech* — the written or spoken word used in political, social, or religious discourse. Does anyone really think the Founding Fathers meant to protect vile smut or flag-burning? The Left's "free speech" efforts were generally designed to distort the First Amendment, whereas conservatives' efforts tend to respect its letter and spirit.

Another false equivalence occurs when people liken leftist speech police to medieval inquisitors. This flatters them.

Note here that we don't actually have true "freedom of speech"; we can't, for instance, yell "Fire!" in a crowded movie theater that isn't burning or make certain kinds of threats. Some commentators, such as late essayist and famed atheist Christopher Hitchens, are absolutists who don't accept even these restrictions. And while I do agree that a principle (i.e., free speech) shouldn't be espoused if we can't or won't actually uphold it, my point here is different.

Note that the *Times* also cites Georgetown law professor Michael Seidman, who recently wrote a paper [entitled](#) "Can Free Speech Be Progressive?" To this question he answers "no." So speech is a problem if it's "offensive," "hurtful," politically incorrect in general, and now if it's not progressive. Never even mentioned is the most important matter: whether it's *true*.



Written by [Selwyn Duke](#) on July 7, 2018

Say what you will about medieval inquisitors, their contention was that certain speech should be limited because it was contrary to Truth — it was a *lie*. Yet today's leftists merely contend, when you boil it down, that certain speech is contrary to leftism.

This is why it has been said that the Truth is no defense against charges of hate-speech, a legal category in most of the West. Leftists, defined by atheism and its correlative relativism, have given their ever-morphing ideology Truth's role and themselves the position of its author, God.

So leftists are dangerous not just because they often claim that everything is relative, but because they want everything to be relative to themselves.

Photo: Marcos Calvo/iStock/Getty Images Plus



Subscribe to the New American

Get exclusive digital access to the most informative, non-partisan truthful news source for patriotic Americans!

Discover a refreshing blend of time-honored values, principles and insightful perspectives within the pages of "The New American" magazine. Delve into a world where tradition is the foundation, and exploration knows no bounds.

From politics and finance to foreign affairs, environment, culture, and technology, we bring you an unparalleled array of topics that matter most.



[Subscribe](#)

What's Included?

- 24 Issues Per Year
- Optional Print Edition
- Digital Edition Access
- Exclusive Subscriber Content
- Audio provided for all articles
- Unlimited access to past issues
- Coming Soon! Ad FREE
- 60-Day money back guarantee!
- Cancel anytime.