

# 24.150 Liberalism, Toleration, and Freedom of Speech, Fall 2023

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## The Pentagon Papers

Internal Defense Dept history of US involvement in Vietnam, covers events going back to 1945. Completed in 1968.

Suggests that the war was unwinnable, and that winning (that is, establishing an independent South Vietnam) was not the government's goal.

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## The Whistleblower

Daniel Ellsberg had access to the papers as a Defense Dept analyst working at the RAND Corporation.

Secretly 'xeroxes' them at night, leaks them to the *NY Times* and the *Washington Post*.

Spends 13 days in hiding in Cambridge, MA before surrendering; expected to spend his life in prison.

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RAND building, Santa Monica

RECORD OF **Ellsberg, Daniel** CLASS **1952** HARVARD COLLEGE  
 CLASSIFIED IN MASSACHUSETTS

Received A.B. degree **Summa cum Laude** ON **June 19, 1952**

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DATE OF BIRTH: **June 17/1927** PLACE OF BIRTH: **Chicago, Ill.**

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Harvard College (1780-). Harvard College transcript of Daniel Ellsberg, June 19, 1952. Daniel Ellsberg Papers (MS 1093). Special Collections and University Archives, University of Massachusetts Amherst Libraries. © University of Massachusetts Amherst. All rights reserved. This content is excluded from our Creative Commons license. For more information, see <https://ocw.mit.edu/help/faq-fair-use/>.



Daniel Ellsberg shaking hands with Lyndon Baines Johnson, ca. 1964. Daniel Ellsberg Papers (MS 1093). Special Collections and University Archives, University of Massachusetts Amherst Libraries. © University of Massachusetts Amherst. All rights reserved. This content is excluded from our Creative Commons license. For more information, see <https://ocw.mit.edu/help/faq-fair-use/>.

Ellsworth and President Lyndon Johnson, 1964



Ellsworth was in Vietnam, 1965-7, and became an assistant to the US Ambassador

Daniel Ellsberg holding a rifle in front of bunker, ca. 1965. Daniel Ellsberg Papers (MS 1093). Special Collections and University Archives, University of Massachusetts Amherst Libraries. © University of Massachusetts Amherst. All rights reserved. This content is excluded from our Creative Commons license. For more information, see <https://ocw.mit.edu/help/faq-fair-use/>.

## May Day protests, 1971



Daniel Ellsberg, Howard Zinn, Noam Chomsky, Cindy Fredericks, and Marilyn Young at Mayday protests, May 3, 1971. Daniel Ellsberg Papers (MS 1093). Special Collections and University Archives, University of Massachusetts Amherst Libraries. © University of Massachusetts Amherst. All rights reserved. This content is excluded from our Creative Commons license. For more information, see <https://ocw.mit.edu/help/faq-fair-use/>.

Ellsberg (left), Noam Chomsky (middle)



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(BX16)CAMBRIDGE, MASS., JUNE 17--ELLSBERG RESIDENCE--Daniel Ellsberg, 40, alleged to have provided to the New York Times the top secret Pentagon report, identified Ellsberg as the source of the secret documents on a local radio interview in New York. Ellsberg was one of the "Whiz kids" in the Defense Department under former Secretary Robert S. McNamara. (AP/WIDEWORLD) (jzk51925AEM)71

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### after surrendering, June 1971



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### Nixon and the Plumbers



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damaged filing cabinet of Ellsberg's therapist (September 1971)

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day after resignation, August 9, 1974



Image courtesy of [Indutomar](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Watergate.jpg) on Wikimedia Commons. This image is in the public domain.

Watergate complex, site of the Plumbers' break-in to the DNC headquarters (1972)

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## The First Amendment

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'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.'

Note: now interpreted to mean **no government agent** (President as well as Congress; state and local as well as federal) may act so as to 'abridge the freedom' etc.

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## Stewart vs Black

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In oral arguments, Judge Stewart asked Times lawyer Bickel if prior restraint would be okay if publication would 'obviously, directly, and immediately cause the death of one hundred American soldiers'?

Bickel said **yes**.

Judge Black, in chambers, implied that his view was **no**: even then, prior restraint was not justified. ('Too bad the Times couldn't find someone who believes in the First Amendment.')

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## Stewart vs Black

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Black's opinion: 'The press was protected so that it could bare the secrets of government and inform the people. Only a free and unrestrained press can effectively expose deception in government.'

Stewart's opinion: prior restraint would be okay if publication would 'result in direct, immediate, and irreparable damage to our Nation or its people.'

(He just didn't think the Pentagon Papers met this criterion.)

From "NEW YORK TIMES COMPANY, Petitioner, v. UNITED STATES. UNITED STATES, Petitioner, v. The WASHINGTON POST COMPANY et al. (1971)." This text is in the public domain.

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## What do you think?

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Stewart's actual question is more pointed than reported in the reading.

What if the court is convinced that 'disclosure would result in the sentencing to death of a hundred young men whose only offense had been that they were nineteen years old and had low draft numbers. What should we do?'

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During World War I, Jacob Abrams and four other Russian immigrants living in New York City had printed and distributed two leaflets condemning U.S. intervention in the Russian civil war involving the Bolsheviks (communists). The leaflets did not concern the war with Germany. In the course of an appeal to the 'workers of America,' one leaflet advocated a general strike and a resort to arms if the United States intervened in Russia.

O'Neill, Timothy J. From "Abrams v. United States (1919)." Free Speech Center at Middle Tennessee State University. January 1, 2009. © Middle Tennessee State University. All rights reserved. This content is excluded from our Creative Commons license. For more information, see <https://ocw.mit.edu/help/faq-fair-use/>.

<https://mtsu.edu/first-amendment/article/328/abrams-v-united-states>

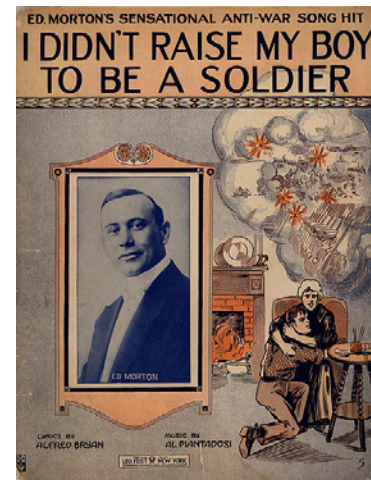
18



Anti-war demonstrations, like the 1914 one pictured here, took place in the United States leading up to and during World War I. The Espionage Act of 1917 tried to stifle political criticism of the war. In 1918, the government arrested five immigrants who had distributed leaflets condemning U.S. intervention in the Bolshevik revolution Russia. Although their leaflets did not concern the war with Germany, their conviction under the Espionage Act was upheld in *Abrams v. United States* (1919). The case later led to the development of thought that such political speech was protected under the First Amendment. (Image via [Library of Congress](https://www.loc.gov/item/2001704462/), public domain)

Anti-War Meeting., 1914. August 8. Photograph. <https://www.loc.gov/item/2001704462/>. This image is in the public domain.

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This image is in the public domain. Source: [Wikimedia Commons](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:I_Didn't_Raise_My_Boy_to_Be_a_Soldier.jpg).

I didn't raise my boy to be a soldier,  
I brought him up to be my pride and joy.  
Who dares to place a musket on his shoulder,  
To shoot some other mother's darling boy?  
Let nations arbitrate their future troubles,  
It's time to lay the sword and gun away.  
There'd be no war today,  
If mothers all would say,  
"I didn't raise my boy to be a soldier."

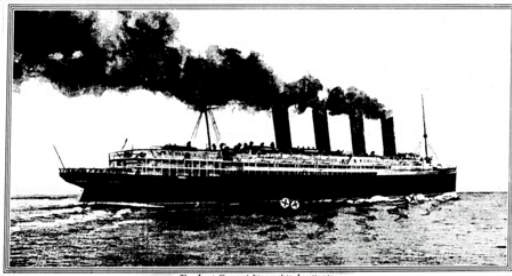
20

**SHOCKS THE PRESIDENT**  
 Washington Deeply Struck by the Loss of American Lives.

**BULLETINS AT WHITE HOUSE**  
 Wilson Reads Them; Cheers, but is Silent on the Nation's Course.

**SENATE OF CONGRESS CALL**  
 Loss of Lusitania Results First Step of Our First Meeting in Germany.

**CAPITAL FULL OF HUMORS**  
 Reports That 'Lion' Will be in Room with Mrs. Wilson's Husband.



The Lost Cunard Steamship Lusitania  
 X Where the First Torpedo Struck. XX Where the Second Torpedo Struck.

**SOME DEAD TAKEN ASHORE**  
 Several Hundred Survivors at Queenstown and Kinsale.

**STEWARDS TELL OF DISASTER**  
 One Torpedo Crashes into the Dining Room; Another into the Engine Room.

**SHIP LISTS OVER TO PORT**  
 Makes it Impossible to Lower Many Boats, So Abandonment Must Have Been Quick.

**ATTACHED IN WRECK DAY**  
 Passengers at Liverpool-Wrecked Ship Seen from Liverpool.

**Only 600 Were Saved, Five Cable Passengers**  
 of PENNSYLVANIA, Report May 4, 1918. A. R. Frohman and J. P. Vanderbilt of the Lusitania have been reported to have been among the 600 who were saved.

**CUNARD**

**EUROPE VIA LIVERPOOL LUSITANIA**

Patrol and Largest Steamship in Atlantic Service SINCE SATURDAY, MAY 4, to A. M.  
 Liverpool, Fri., May 7, 11 P. M.  
 Orleans, -- Tue., May 14, 10 A. M.  
 Tientsin, Fri., May 17, 11 P. M.  
 LUSITANIA, Sat., May 25, 10 A. M.  
 Liverpool, Fri., June 4, 11 P. M.  
 Gibraltar-Creva-Naples-Panama S.S. Carolina, Thur., May 15, Noon

**NOTICE!**  
 TRAVELLERS intending to embark on the Atlantic voyage are reminded that a state of war exists between Germany and her allies and Great Britain and her allies; that the name of war involves the waters adjacent to the British Isles; that, in accordance with the Imperial regulations, vessels flying the flag of Great Britain, or of any of her allies, are liable to destruction in those waters and that travellers calling in the war zone on ships of Great Britain or her allies do so at their own risk.

**IMPERIAL GERMAN EMBASSY**  
 WASHINGTON, D. C., APRIL 16, 1918

This image is in the public domain. Source: [Wikimedia Commons](#).

This image is in the public domain. Source: [Wikimedia Commons](#).

Justice John Clarke, writing for a seven-member majority of the Supreme Court, upheld the immigrants' sentence of 20 years in prison for violating a 1918 amendment to the 1917 Espionage Act. The law made it a **crime willfully to speak or publish 'disloyal' language about the American political system or to incite or advocate 'any curtailment of production...necessary or essential to the prosecution of the war...with intent...to curtail or hinder the United States in the prosecution of the war.'**

From "The Sedition Act of 1918." This text is in the public domain.

### Holmes, dissenting

1. Holmes starts para. 58 of his 'Abrams' dissent with 'Persecution for the expression of opinions seems to me perfectly logical,' but ends up asserting that 'we should be eternally vigilant against attempts to check the expression of opinions that we loathe and believe to be fraught with death.' What is the argument behind the first quoted sentence, and what is Holmes' rebuttal of it, which concludes with the second quoted sentence?

From "Abrams et al. v. United States (1919)." This text is in the public domain.

Persecution for the expression of opinions seems to me perfectly logical. If you have no doubt of your premises or your power and want a certain result with all your heart you naturally express your wishes in law and sweep away all opposition. To allow opposition by speech seems to indicate that you think the speech impotent, as when a man says that he has squared the circle, or that you do not care whole heartedly for the result, or that you doubt either your power or your premises. **But** when men have realized that time has upset many fighting faiths, they may come to believe even more than they believe the very foundations of their own conduct that the ultimate good desired is **better reached by free trade in ideas-that the best test of truth is the power of the thought to get itself accepted in the competition of the market**, and that truth is the only ground upon which their wishes safely can be carried out. That at any rate is the theory of our Constitution.

From "Abrams et al. v. United States (1919)." This text is in the public domain.

It is an experiment, as all life is an experiment. Every year if not every day we have to wager our salvation upon some prophecy based upon imperfect knowledge. While that experiment is part of our system I think that we should be eternally vigilant against attempts to check the expression of opinions that we loathe and believe to be fraught with death, unless they so imminently threaten immediate interference with the lawful and pressing purposes of the law that an immediate check is required to save the country. I wholly disagree with the argument of the Government that the First Amendment left the common law as to seditious libel in force.

From "*Abrams et al. v. United States* (1919)." This text is in the public domain.

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### *Gitlow v NY (1925)*

Benjamin Gitlow, a socialist leader, was convicted under New York's criminal anarchy law for publishing 16,000 copies of the Left-Wing Manifesto, which advocated 'the proletariat revolution and the Communist reconstruction of society' through strikes and 'revolutionary mass action.'

The Supreme Court voted 7-2 to uphold the constitutionality of New York's Criminal Anarchy Statute of 1902 [under which Gitlow had been convicted], which prohibited advocating violent overthrow of the government.

Beaumont, Elizabeth. From "*Gitlow v. New York (1925)*." Free Speech Center at Middle Tennessee State University. January 1, 2009. © Middle Tennessee State University. All rights reserved. This content is excluded from our Creative Commons license. For more information, see <https://ocw.mit.edu/help/faq-fair-use/>.

<https://mtsu.edu/first-amendment/article/80/gitlow-v-new-york>

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History seems to me against the notion. I had conceived that the United States through many years had shown its repentance for the Sedition Act of 1798 (Act July 14, 1798, c. 73, 1 Stat. 596), by repaying fines that it imposed. Only the emergency that makes it immediately dangerous to leave the correction of evil counsels to time warrants [250 U.S. 616, 631] making any exception to the sweeping command, 'Congress shall make no law abridging the freedom of speech.' Of course I am speaking only of expressions of opinion and exhortations, which were all that were uttered here, but I regret that I cannot put into more impressive words my belief that in their conviction upon this indictment the defendants were deprived of their rights under the Constitution of the United States.

From "*Abrams et al. v. United States* (1919)." This text is in the public domain.

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### Holmes, dissenting

MR. JUSTICE BRANDEIS and I are of opinion that this judgment should be reversed. The general principle of free speech, it seems to me, must be taken to be included in the Fourteenth Amendment, in view of the scope that has been given to the word 'liberty' as there used, although perhaps it may be accepted with a somewhat larger latitude of interpretation than is allowed to Congress by the sweeping language that governs or ought to govern the laws of the United States. If I am right, then I think that the criterion sanctioned by the full Court in *Schenck v. United States*, 249 U.S. 47, 52, applies. "The question in every case is whether the words used are used in such circumstances and are of such a nature as to create a **clear and present danger** that they will bring about the substantive \*673 evils that [the State] has a right to prevent."

From "*Gitlow v. People of the State of New York* (1925)." This text is in the public domain.

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It is true that in my opinion this criterion was departed from in *Abrams v. United States*, 250 U.S. 616, but the convictions that I expressed in that case are too deep for it to be possible for me as yet to believe that it and *Schaefer v. United States*, 251 U.S. 466, have settled the law. If what I think the correct test is applied, it is manifest that there was no present danger of an attempt to overthrow the government by force on the part of the admittedly small minority who shared the defendant's views. **It is said that this manifesto was more than a theory, that it was an incitement. Every idea is an incitement.** It offers itself for belief and if believed it is acted on unless some other belief outweighs it or some failure of energy stifles the movement at its birth. The only difference between the expression of an opinion and an incitement in the narrower sense is the speaker's enthusiasm for the result. Eloquence may set fire to reason. But whatever may be thought of the redundant discourse before us it had no chance of starting a present conflagration.

From "*Gitlow v. People of the State of New York* (1925)." This text is in the public domain.

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If in the long run the beliefs expressed in proletarian dictatorship are destined to be accepted by the dominant forces of the community, the only meaning of free speech is that they should be given their chance and have their way.

If the publication of this document had been laid as an attempt to induce an uprising against government at once and not at some indefinite time in the future it would have presented a different question. The object would have been one with which the law might deal, subject to the doubt whether there was any danger that the publication could produce any result, or in other words, whether it was not futile and too remote from possible consequences. But the indictment alleges the publication and nothing more.

From "*Gitlow v. People of the State of New York* (1925)." This text is in the public domain.

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### *Whitney v CA (1927)*

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Charlotte Anita Whitney...joined prohibitionist and suffragette organizations and the Socialist Party. In 1919 she attended the national convention of the Socialist Party in Chicago, where she was part of a radical group that split...and formed the Communist Labor Party (CLP) of America. Subsequently, she became an officer in the CLP of California, which was devoted to the enhancement of the political power and economic strength of the working class.

Belpedio, James R. From "*Whitney v. California* (1927)." Free Speech Center at Middle Tennessee State University. January 1, 2009. © Middle Tennessee State University. All rights reserved. This content is excluded from our Creative Commons license. For more information, see <https://ocw.mit.edu/help/faq-fair-use/>.

<https://mtsu.edu/first-amendment/article/263/whitney-v-california>

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Whitney was arrested and convicted of violating the California Criminal Syndicalism Act of 1919 for her role in helping to establish the CLP. California alleged that the CLP advocated the violent overthrow of the United States government. The mere act of assisting in the formation of the CLP, becoming a member, or assembling with others to teach syndicalism constituted an illegal act, a felony, under the law.

Whitney appealed to the Supreme Court, contending that it was neither her intent nor the intent of the other organizers that the party should become an advocate of any sort of violence.

Belpedio, James R. From "*Whitney v. California* (1927)." Free Speech Center at Middle Tennessee State University. January 1, 2009. © Middle Tennessee State University. All rights reserved. This content is excluded from our Creative Commons license. For more information, see <https://ocw.mit.edu/help/faq-fair-use/>.

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Justice Edward T. Sanford ruled for a unanimous court that Whitney was a willing participant in the CLP and that...the goals of the CLP abused free speech by uttering words that were 'inimical to the public welfare, **tending to incite crime, disturb the peace or endanger the foundations of organized government and threaten its overthrow.**'

Belpedio, James R. From "Whitney v. California (1927)." Free Speech Center at Middle Tennessee State University. January 1, 2009. © Middle Tennessee State University. All rights reserved. This content is excluded from our Creative Commons license. For more information, see <https://ocw.mit.edu/help/faq-fair-use/>.

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2. In his 'Whitney' ~~dissent~~ concurrence Brandeis holds that 'Only an emergency can justify repression [of speech].' What are his reasons? Do you think they are good ones?

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### Brandeis, concurring

Those who won our independence by revolution were not cowards. They did not fear political change. **They did not exalt order at the cost of liberty.** To courageous, self-reliant men, with confidence in the power of free and fearless reasoning applied through the processes of popular government, no danger flowing from speech can be deemed clear and present, unless the incidence of the evil apprehended is so imminent that it may befall before there is opportunity for full discussion. If there be time to expose through discussion the falsehood and fallacies, to avert the evil by the processes of education, the remedy to be applied is more speech, not enforced silence. Only an emergency can justify repression. Such must be the rule if **authority is to be reconciled with freedom.**[4] Such, in my opinion, is the command of the Constitution. It is therefore always open to Americans to challenge a law abridging free speech and assembly by showing that there was no emergency justifying it.

From "Whitney v. People of State of California (1927)." This text is in the public domain.

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### US v Schwimmer (1929)

Rosika Schwimmer, a Hungarian citizen, supported progressive, feminist, and pacifist causes, particularly during World War I...

In 1921 she fled political persecution in Hungary and moved permanently to the United States... In September 1926, she applied for naturalization. Statutes at the time required that applicants be 'attached to the principles of the Constitution' and take an oath to defend the United States 'against all enemies, foreign and domestic.'

Capozzola, Christopher. From "United States v. Schwimmer (1929)." Free Speech Center at Middle Tennessee State University. January 1, 2009. © Middle Tennessee State University. All rights reserved. This content is excluded from our Creative Commons license. For more information, see <https://ocw.mit.edu/help/faq-fair-use/>.

<https://mitsu.edu/first-amendment/article/455/united-states-v-schwimmer>

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Asked on a form if she were 'willing to take up arms in defense of this country,' Schwimmer replied that 'I would not take up arms personally.' Federal officials...denied her naturalization petition.

Writing for the majority, Justice Pierce Butler insisted that Schwimmer's refusal to take up arms disqualified her for citizenship.

Capozzola, Christopher. From "*United States v. Schwimmer* (1929)." Free Speech Center at Middle Tennessee State University, January 1, 2009. © Middle Tennessee State University. All rights reserved. This content is excluded from our Creative Commons license. For more information, see <https://ocw.mit.edu/help/faq-fair-use/>.

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The applicant seems to be a woman of superior character and intelligence, obviously more than ordinarily desirable as a citizen of the United States. It is agreed that she is qualified for citizenship except so far as the views set forth in a statement of facts "may show that the applicant is not attached to the principles of the Constitution of the United States and well disposed to the good order and happiness of the same, and except in so far as the same may show that she cannot take the oath of allegiance without a mental reservation." The views referred to are an extreme opinion in favor of pacifism and a statement that she would not bear arms to defend the Constitution. So far as the adequacy of her oath is concerned I hardly can see how that is affected by the statement, inasmuch as she is a woman over fifty years of age, and would not be allowed to bear arms if she wanted to.

From "*United States v. Schwimmer* (1929)." This text is in the public domain.

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And as to the opinion, the whole examination of the applicant shows that she holds none of the now-dreaded creeds but thoroughly believes in organized government and prefers that of the United States to any other in the world. Surely it cannot show lack of attachment to the principles of the Constitution that she thinks that it can be improved. I suppose that most intelligent people think that it might be. Her particular improvement looking to the abolition of war seems to me not materially different in its bearing on this case from a wish to establish cabinet government as in England, or a single house, or one term of seven years for the President. To touch a more burning question, only a judge mad with partisanship would exclude because the applicant thought that the Eighteenth Amendment should be repealed.

From "*United States v. Schwimmer* (1929)." This text is in the public domain.

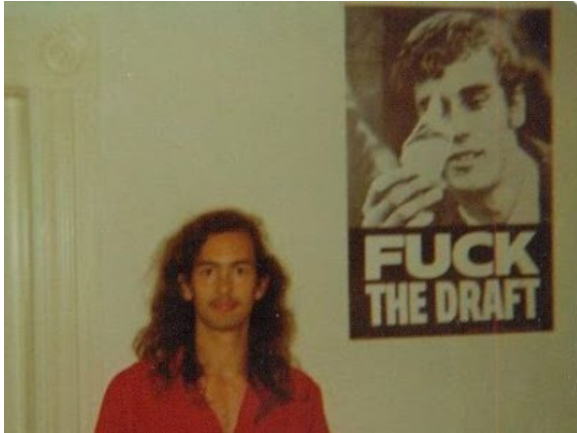
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The notion that the applicant's optimistic anticipations would make her a worse citizen is sufficiently answered by her examination, which seems to me a better argument for her admission than any that I can offer. Some of her answers might excite popular prejudice, but, if there is any principle of the Constitution that more imperatively calls for attachment than any other, it is the principle of free thought -- **not free thought for those who agree with us, but freedom for the thought that we hate.**

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## Cohen v CA (1971)



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On April 26, 1968, the defendant was observed in the Los Angeles County Courthouse in the corridor outside of division 20 of the municipal court wearing a jacket bearing the words 'Fuck the Draft' which were plainly visible. There were women and children present in the corridor. The defendant was arrested. The defendant testified that he wore the jacket knowing that the words were on the jacket as a means of informing the public of the depth of his feelings against the Vietnam War and the draft.

The defendant did not engage in, nor threaten to engage in, nor did anyone as the result of his conduct in fact commit or threaten to commit any act of violence. The defendant did not make any loud or unusual noise, nor was there any evidence that he uttered any sound prior to his arrest.

From "Paul Robert Cohen, Appellant, v. State of California (1971)." This text is in the public domain.

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3. Harlan writes that Cohen's conviction can be justified, if at all, only 'as a valid regulation of the manner in which he exercised that freedom [of speech], not as a permissible prohibition on the substantive message it conveys.' Why does he think that, in this case, Cohen's manner of expression should not be illegal? (Okay for you to come to class with one of his reasons; he lists four.) If the law had been written differently, would Cohen's conviction have survived Harlan's scrutiny? How differently?

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(1) 'Cohen was tried under a statute applicable throughout the entire State. Any attempt to support this conviction on the ground that the statute seeks to preserve an appropriately decorous atmosphere in the courthouse where Cohen was arrested must fail.'

(2) 'This is not, for example, an obscenity case.'

(3) Nor is it 'fighting words'; 'No individual actually or likely to be present could reasonably have regarded the words on appellant's jacket as a direct personal insult.'

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(4) What about 'Cohen's distasteful mode of expression was thrust upon unwilling or unsuspecting viewers, and ... the State might therefore legitimately act ... to protect the sensitive from otherwise unavoidable exposure to appellant's crude form of protest'?

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'The ability of government, consonant with the Constitution, to shut off discourse solely to protect others from hearing it is, in other words, dependent upon a showing that substantial privacy interests are being invaded in an essentially intolerable manner.'

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next time

Harlan's Holmesian moment:

'To many, the immediate consequence of this freedom may often appear to be only verbal tumult, discord, and even offensive utterance. These are, however, within established limits, in truth necessary side effects of the broader enduring values which the process of open debate permits us to achieve. That the air may at times seem filled with verbal cacophony is, in this sense not a sign of weakness but of strength.'

From "Paul Robert Cohen, Appellant, v. State of California (1971)." This text is in the public domain.

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more 1A cases



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