

Favorite Intellectual Freedom Quotations

Submitted by IFRT Members and Friends

"If there is any fixed star in our constitutional constellation, it is that no official, high or petty, can prescribe what shall be orthodox in politics, nationalism, religion, or other matters of opinion or force citizens to confess by word or act their faith therein." Justice Robert Jackson, *West Virginia State Board of Education v. Barnette*, 319 U.S. 624 (1943)

Carolyn Caywood

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"That Men ought to speak well of their Governors, is true, while their Governors deserve to be well spoken of; but to do publick Mischief, without hearing of it, is only the Prerogative and Felicity of Tyranny: A free People will be shewing that they are so, by their Freedom of Speech." -- John Trenchard and Thomas Gordon, *Cato's Letters*, no 15 (1721).

http://www.constitution.org/cl/cato_015.htm

"But, I thank God, there are no free schools nor printing, and I hope we shall not have these hundred years; for learning has brought disobedience, and heresy, and sects into the world, and printing has divulged them, and libels against the best government. God keep us from both!" -- Sir William Berkeley, "Enquiries to the Governor of Virginia," 1671. Online source: <http://etext.lib.virginia.edu/etcbin/jamestown-browse?id=J1062> But I first saw it quoted in the liner notes to a CD issued by a local low power FM radio station called "Radio CPR" (97.5): <http://www.radiocpr.com/cd.html>

"No right was deemed by the fathers of the Government more sacred than the right of speech. It was in their eyes, as in the eyes of all thoughtful men, the great moral renovator of society and government. Daniel Webster called it a homebred right, a fireside privilege. Liberty is meaningless where the right to utter one's thoughts and opinions has ceased to exist. That, of all rights, is the dread of tyrants. It is the right which they first of all strike down. They know its power. Thrones, dominions, principalities, and powers, founded in injustice and wrong, are sure to tremble, if men are allowed to reason of righteousness, temperance, and of a judgment to come in their presence. Slavery cannot tolerate free speech. Five years of its exercise would banish the auction block and break every chain in the South. They will have none of it there, for they have the power. But shall it be so here?" -- Frederick Douglass, "A Plea for Free Speech in Boston" (Dec. 4, 1860). This speech was given a week after an abolitionist meeting was broken up by a mob. Online source: http://douglassarchives.org/doug_a68.htm.

"Since that first meeting the police have followed me from hall to hall, threatening me with arrest if I dared to say anything against the American government. ... What other conclusion can be reached, or inference drawn than that America is fast being Russianized, and that unless the American people awake from the pleasant dream into what they have been lulled by the strains of

"My Country `tis of Thee," etc., we shall soon be obliged to meet in cellars, or darkened back rooms with closed doors, and speak in whispers lest our next door neighbors should hear that free-born American citizens dare not speak in the open; that they have sold the birthright to the Russian Tzar disguised by the coat of American policeman?" -- Emma Goldman, "Free Speech in Chicago" (Nov. 30, 1902). Online source: <http://sunsite.berkeley.edu/Goldman/Curricula/FreeExpression/chicago.html>.

"I have just returned from a visit over yonder [pointing to the workhouse], where three of our most loyal comrades are paying the penalty for their devotion to the cause of the working class. [Applause.] They have come to realize, as many of us have, that it is extremely dangerous to exercise the constitutional right of free speech in a country fighting to make democracy safe in the world. [Applause.] I realize that, in speaking to you this afternoon, there are certain limitations placed upon the right of free speech. I must be exceedingly careful, prudent, as to what I say, and even more careful and prudent as to how I say it. [Laughter.] I may not be able to say all I think; [Laughter and applause] but I am not going to say anything that I do not think. [Applause.] I would rather a thousand times be a free soul in jail than to be a sycophant and coward in the streets. [Applause and shouts.]" -- Eugene V. Debs, "The Canton Ohio Speech" (June 16, 1918), referring to members of the Socialist Party imprisoned under the Espionage Act for their opposition to World War One. Debs was later himself given a ten-year sentence for opposing the U.S. entry into that war. Online source: http://debs.indstate.edu/d288c3_1971.pdf

"To announce that there must be no criticism of the President, or that we are to stand by the President, right or wrong, is not only unpatriotic and servile, but is morally treasonable to the American public. Nothing but the truth should be spoken about him or any one else. But it is even more important to tell the truth, pleasant or unpleasant, about him than about any one else." -- Theodore Roosevelt, "Lincoln and Free Speech," *The Great Adventure* (vol. 19 of *The Works of Theodore Roosevelt*, national ed.), chapter 7, p. 289 (1926). Online source: <http://www.bartleby.com/73/1507.html>.

" 'A time comes when silence is betrayal.' That time has come for us in relation to Vietnam. The truth of these words is beyond doubt, but the mission to which they call us is a most difficult one. Even when pressed by the demands of inner truth, men do not easily assume the task of opposing their government's policy, especially in time of war. Nor does the human spirit move without great difficulty against all the apathy of conformist thought within one's own bosom and in the surrounding world. Moreover, when the issues at hand seem as perplexing as they often do in the case of this dreadful conflict, we are always on the verge of being mesmerized by uncertainty. But we must move on. Some of us who have already begun to break the silence of the night have found that the calling to speak is often a vocation of agony, but we must speak. We must speak with all the humility that is appropriate to our limited vision, but we must speak." -- Martin Luther King, Jr., "Beyond Vietnam" (April 4, 1967). Online source: http://www.stanford.edu/group/King/popular_requests/kingonwarandpeaceFrame.htm

"Only a free and unrestrained press can effectively expose deception in government. To find that the President has "inherent power" to halt the publication of news by resort to the courts would wipe out the First Amendment. The word 'security' is a broad, vague generality whose contours

should not be invoked to abrogate the fundamental laws embodied in the First Amendment." -- Justice Hugo Black writing for the majority opinion, "New York Times v. United States, 1971". Online source: <http://usinfo.state.gov/usa/infousa/facts/democrac/48.htm>.

Jim Kuhn

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“Vietnam was the first war ever fought without any censorship. Without censorship, things can get terribly confused in the public mind.” Gen William C. Westmoreland Attributed but no source given on <http://www.brainyquote.com>. Direct link is http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/authors/g/gen_william_c_westmorela.html

Jan Gillespie