

history into a controlled, censored, politically-correct mirror of the mainstream news media.

Criminalizing Political Speech. Enacted one year after the Oklahoma City bombing, the Omnibus Counter-terrorism Act does a lot more than go after terrorists. Its "conspiracy" provisions are a threat to any American who has anything to do with a foreign or domestic political organization the government dislikes.

Under this law, any individual or group in America can be branded "terrorists" by the Attorney General. Then the government can seize all of the assets of the banned group, as well as the assets of anyone who contributes to it. If you pay \$5 to attend a lecture by a Middle Eastern group, and the Attorney General later decides that they might have terrorist links, your home and business could be seized.

Persecuting Teenagers. In the wake of the Columbine High School massacre, hundreds of teenagers have been suspended, arrested or imprisoned for simply exercising their freedom of speech by making comments such as saying "I understand" how the Columbine student gunmen felt or for posting critical remarks about school administrators on the World Wide Web.

Government News Management. Increasingly, the government is controlling the news. According to the watchdog group Accuracy In Media, over 87% of national network news comes either from government bureaucrats or consultants. Each year, government controls more of the news you hear, sometimes with deadly results. During the Gulf War, reporters were forced into carefully-controlled press pools and all images of dead soldiers and civilians were prohibited. Years later, how many Americans know that at least 6,000 Iraqi civilians were killed by US "smart" bombs?

The same news control is now being used in the US. In Waco, Texas – where 86 innocent men, women and children were shot or burned alive by the FBI and BATF – all contact between the Branch Davidians and the press was cut off. The few reporters who tried to enter the Davidians' property were turned away at gunpoint by armed troops and told if they persisted, to expect "tragic consequences." As a result, to this day, not one American in 10,000 knows that close to half the Branch Davidians were black or that the CS-gas the FBI used is lethal in enclosed buildings.

Reclaiming Our Freedom Of Speech

For the last 50 years, government assaults on freedom of speech in the US have been growing. Today, not just sexual images, but health information, critical news reports, and even political expression are being censored. People whose only crime is that they hold unpopular ideas or expose government lies, are being harassed, imprisoned and even killed.

In America, censorship is not only wrong, it is illegal. Our Bill of Rights is unmistakably clear. "Congress shall make no law abridging freedom of speech, or of the press . . ." It is time our legislatures and courts obeyed their own laws.

To preserve our freedom of speech, we must fight for it. Support groups like ISIL, the Electronic Frontier Foundation, the American PEN Society, and the ACLU, which are fighting for your freedom of speech. Challenge campus and office speech codes. Subscribe to independent newsletters and share them with others. And encourage others to do the same.

For over 200 years America has stood for liberty and freedom of speech. Today we can no longer these for granted. We must act now to restore our heritage of liberty – or risk losing it forever.

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This pamphlet was originally published in 1991, revised July 1996, again September 1998, and again in October 1999. It is part of [ISIL](http://www.isil.org)'s educational pamphlet series.

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FREEDOM OF SPEECH UNDER SIEGE



by [Jarret B. Wollstein](http://www.isil.org)

*"I disapprove of what you
say, but I will defend to the
death your right to say it."
Voltaire*

No right is more fundamental than freedom of speech. Without freedom of speech you can't communicate your ideas and feelings, decry a social injustice, pursue an artistic vision, investigate scientific truth, practice a religion, or criticize government. If freedom of speech is destroyed, self-development is crippled, social progress grinds to a halt, and official lies become the only "truth."

Although freedom of speech can be inhibited by intolerant people, it can only be destroyed by brute force, particularly government force.

If evangelical Christians demand that Playboy magazines be removed from store shelves, that is not censorship. Others are free to demand – just as forcefully – that *Playboy* be kept on the shelves. And merchants can reject the evangelical's demands. But when government sends in police to close down bookstores, arrest musicians, artists, and photographers, burn videotapes, or shut down computer networks, that is censorship.

Censorship Is The Handmaiden Of A Police State

Censorship is the use of force to control what you can say, read, or see. Although occasionally private individuals and groups engage in censorship – for example by stealing "insensitive" newspapers (which has occurred on several US college campuses) or threatening to kill "indecent" or "blasphemous" artists, like *The Satanic Verses* author Salman Rushdie – the primary agent of censorship is government.

In Nazi Germany, the works of Jewish writers were seized and burned by storm troopers. Resisters were beaten and shot. Merely criticizing the government could mean being sent to a concentration camp. In the Soviet Union and Communist China, the government burned bibles and churches, as well as unapproved books and art.

But censorship does not only exist in police states. In England, since 1974, 6,246 people have been imprisoned without trial under the Prevention of Terrorism Act, for such "crimes" as suspicion of supporting an illegal organization or providing a forum for banned ideas. That hasn't stopped IRA bombings. But it has made the people of England much less free. In Panama, after the US-sponsored overthrow of dictator Manuel Noriega, journalists were rounded up, shot and killed (see the film *"The Panama Deception"*).

The Rise Of Censorship In America

Censorship has been growing in the United States as well. The First Amendment to our Constitution unequivocally states that "*Congress shall make no law . . . Abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press . . .*"

Yet during recent decades, with ever-growing zeal, our legislatures have been censoring books, films, photography, art, music, news, and even scientific information. And our courts – all the way up to the Supreme Court – have said it's legal.

"Dirty" Pictures. On November 2, 1995, Toni Marie Angeli was arrested at Zona Photo Labs in Massachusetts. She was picking up pictures of her 4-year-old son Nico in their bathtub. The photos were for a photography course she was taking at Harvard. Detective W. Phillips of Cambridge accused her of being a child pornographer and threatened: "*If you don't cooperate, I will take that kid away from you on the spot.*"

Under the 1990 Comprehensive Crime Act, nude pictures of your own children can be prosecuted as "*child pornography.*" US Supreme Court Justice Brennan warns that the law is so broad, you could even be prosecuted for having "*pictures of topless bathers at a Mediterranean beach.*"

Burning Books. In June of 1993, the Supreme Court said it was constitutional to destroy over 100,000 books and tapes, and seize all of the assets of a chain of bookstores without trial because eleven of the books and tapes sold by the chain were judged obscene (*Alexander v. United States*). Under this decision, federal police could destroy the entire inventory of every major chain of bookstores in the nation – like Borders or B. Dalton – if only a few of the items they sell are judged obscene.

Politically-Correct Speech. If freedom of speech means anything at all, it means the right to express ideas others disagree with. Yet the political-correctness movement has resulted in thousands of students and workers being punished for such "offenses" as the use of derogatory names, inconsiderate jokes, "*misdirected*" laughter, and "*conspicuous exclusion*" from conversation. Punishments for saying the wrong thing include expulsion, loss of jobs, and mandatory "*sensitivity*" indoctrination classes.

Health Police Armed With Machine Guns. In 1991, an FDA magazine warned, "*the agency will not tolerate the practice of promoting drugs and medical devices for unapproved*

uses . . . [the] FDA is prepared to enforce this law through legal steps such as seizure, injunction and prosecution."

On May 6, 1992, heavily-armed police and FDA agents kicked down the door of Dr. Jonathan Wright's medical clinic in Tacoma, Washington. For 14 hours, employees were held at gunpoint while FDA agents smashed medical equipment and ransacked the offices. Dr. Wright's "*crime*"? Making unapproved claims about high-potency vitamins.

In 1994 alone, the FDA launched over 200 violent raids on vitamin stores, clinics, and doctors for such "*crimes.*"

As a result of FDA policies, the free flow of medical information has been reduced to a trickle. According to former Federal Trade Commission official and Boston University professor John Calfree, "*Cancer newsletters have been shut down. Symposiums have nearly been brought to a halt . . . Press conferences announcing new applications . . . are for the most part eliminated.*" Hundreds of life-saving uses for existing drugs and devices have been banned, and medical manufacturers have begun to leave America.

"Indecent" Speech Could Land You In Prison. Under Section 223 of the Communications Decency Act (CDA), indecent speech via telephone, fax, or e-mail is punishable by up to 2 years in prison and a \$100,000 fine. Under this law, an explicit love note e-mailed to your spouse, discussions of abortion, or even using one of the "*seven dirty words*" banned by the FCC could land you in prison. Fortunately, this section of the CDA was struck down by the Supreme Court in 1998. But virulent attempts to pass similar laws to censor the Internet and other electronic communications continue.

Under the Child On Line Protection Act any materials deemed "*harmful to minors*" would be banned from cyberspace, effectively re-instituting the CDA. Similar provisions are also contained in the 1999 Juvenile Justice Bill passed by both houses of Congress and now in conference committee to reconcile differing Senate and House versions.

Global Internet censorship is also in the works. In September 1999, a three-day "*Internet Content Summit*" held in Munich, Germany recommended worldwide controls on what may be discussed on the Internet.

Fully implemented, these censorship laws would transform cyberspace from the greatest public forum in