



Does Media Censorship Cross the Line?

Katie Jenkins, Junior

In recent weeks occurrences of censorship and lack of censorship have continued the trend they seem to have been following for a while. Book bannings upon book bannings, increased restrictions across media platforms; it's ongoing. While some of these censorships are based in good reason, such as spreading false information about COVID-19 and the usage of slurs, many cases, such as the banning of the graphic novel **MAUS** in a Tennessee school county, seem unnecessary, and even backed with ill intent. With all these cases, the question arises: When does censoring and regulating the media we consume alter the American right to freedom of speech?

With the rise of the internet it has become increasingly easy for people to share thoughts and ideas with the largest achievable audience all at once. With that, platforms such as Facebook and Twitter have been among the many places where people tend to share incorrect information. Facebook, the third top used website in the US as of December 2021, has been regulating posts spreading misinformation, and by May 2021, had blocked over 18 million posts pertaining to COVID misinformation. The company has recently launched a new AI system to help combat the spread of misinformation. The fact checking system formerly relied on third party fact checkers in order to remove posts, a process that can take months. The new AI system, known as the Few-Shot Learner (FSL), has been recently deployed with the goal of taking action against "harmful content" as it is referred to by Meta, within weeks instead of months. Since the FSL system has been launched, Facebook has reported a significant decrease in the prevalence of hate speech on the platform, though many feel it is still not enough. In the process of regulating political content on the platform, Facebook removed over 800 political pages and accounts for "coordinated inauthentic behavior" and spamming" in 2018. Many of the people behind said accounts and pages, as well as their followers, were angered by this and accused Facebook of censorship and limiting free speech.

Book bannings have also been a prevalent form of media censorship, perhaps the most notable recent instance being the banning of the graphic novel **MAUS** in Tennessee's McMinn county. On January 10, the McMinn County school board voted to ban teachers from using **MAUS** by Art Spiegelman in schools. The proximity of the ban to International Holocaust Remembrance Day has also contributed to the backlash the school board has faced. Art Spiegelman referred to the vote as "Orwellian" and

commented that "Tennessee is obviously demented, There's something going on very, very haywire there." The board opposed teaching the book because of some of the language used, and some of the images used. "Being in the schools, we don't need educators and to enable or somewhat promote this stuff," said board member Tony Allman during the meeting. The board also said that they "do not diminish the value of **MAUS** as an impactful and meaningful piece of literature, nor do we dispute the importance of teaching our children the historical and moral lessons and realities of the Holocaust." **MAUS** is not the only Holocaust survivor story to have been challenged by school districts, Anne Frank's **The Diary of a Young Girl** has been challenged many times over the years. In 2011, Culpeper County, Virginia for the second time, challenged the book for containing "sexual material and homosexual themes." The challenge was solved by moving the book's curriculum to a higher grade. Why couldn't a similar conclusion be reached for **MAUS**? **The Diary of a Young Girl** has not been challenged since the 2011 resolution, so clearly it's effective, so why couldn't Tennessee move **MAUS** up to the high school curriculum such as it is in many other American school districts?

As we examine these cases and decide whether or not censorship is going too far, or not far enough, it is important to look at what sorts of things are generally censored, and by whom. Many of the posts flagged by Facebook pertain to misinformation about COVID 19, as well as racist comments. In 2020, **Stamped: Racism, Antiracism, and You** by Ibram X. Kendi and Jason Reynolds was the second most challenged book in 2020, followed by **All American Boys** by Jason Reynolds and Brendan Kiely. **The Hate U Give** by Angie Thomas was the 10th most challenged book of 2020 according to the ALA Office of Intellectual Freedom. As we go forward with regulations and banning of media, where is the line between censoring harmful material and, as is the argument of many opposed to Facebook's regulation, limiting free speech? Is regulating the media people have access to even doing any good?



Another Six Weeks of Winter?

Martha Heffernan, Junior
SOCIAL MEDIA EDITOR

February 2nd has come and gone, and spoiler alert: the groundhog saw his shadow. This means, unfortunately, six more weeks of winter rather than an early spring season. Whether you believe in this tradition, or you're just a fan of the movie, Groundhog Day tends to affect people more than you would think. The dreary days of January with the sun setting at 4:00 pm takes a toll on everyone, and we subconsciously tend to put a lot of faith in this little groundhog.

Human beings are animals and it's normal for animals to hibernate in the colder months to prepare for spring. But (for some odd reason) we are expected to continue our daily routines and not let the sunless skies affect us. Every day can start to feel the same, or like *Groundhog Day*. As the dirty snow starts to line the streets,

we suddenly hope for spring to come sooner rather than later. But then the groundhog comes out and crushes that hope.

The groundhog, Punxsutawney Phil, has seen his shadow 107 times and has not seen his shadow 20 times. These odds are not in our favor and, even though it might not be completely accurate, hearing the news of six more weeks of winter can be daunting. So try to make the best out of these 6 weeks - buy some snowshoes, watch a good movie, or maybe stop letting a groundhog give you false hope. But just be sure to not be too hard on yourself for not wanting to be super productive during these dull months, since after all, we are already going above and beyond by not hibernating.



All of us on the
Headlight Staff
wish YOU and
YOURS a
Happy
Valentine's
Day!

Album Review: *Aja* by Steely Dan

Benjamin Burns, Sophomore

I am reviewing the album *Aja* by the band Steely Dan. The group at the time consisted of main members Walter Becker and Donald Fagen. It was released in 1977 by ABC records. The album lasts seven songs and has a runtime of nearly 40 minutes. This was their sixth studio album and their first to go platinum. It is even in the Library of Congress.

I definitely recommend this album as it still holds up as a great piece of music 45 years later. The album is much more jazz influenced than their other albums, which are more classic rock. The album is not as focused on lyrics and has multiple instrumental breaks that are a few minutes long. It often shows their inspiration that they got from jazz musicians.

This album has also been sampled many times, with De La Soul sampling "Peg"

for their song "Eye Know." Overall, I would recommend this album to anybody who already likes classic rock or would want to start listening to it. I found it very engaging and I plan on listening to more music from this band.



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