

# Freedom of Speech

BY ALEX DEPRANO

Hell, my ears will bleed if Madonna, after her latest act of public prostitution, whines that it is her Constitutionally-protected right to spread her legs for a camera. But even Madonna's First Amendment tirades should not be received with a grunt of indifference.

Everything that is distinctly "American" is that way because of our freedom to mouth off. Rock'n'roll and this very paper putting newsprint all over your hands right now are children of the First Amendment. If you truly love America, you should support freedom of speech with the same vigor that the NRA defends, with an incestuous passion, the Second Amendment.

The greatest irony of the First Amendment is that it is so liberal to serve a very conservative function. By letting citizens speak freely, the government hopes to prevent the need for violent overthrows. Conservatives, therefore, who honk and bleat like constipated geese about "those damn kids," should cool their heated tush for abridgments of the First Amendment.

If those damn kids weren't able to cut up in a loud, vocal manner because of penalty of law, they'd rise up in a loud, violent manner. Being the first country to guarantee its citizens the right to run at the mouth insures our stability. When one can complain freely, it helps prevent an accumulation of pent up rages that'll one day

make you wake up and say, "I'm gonna go waste the President."

Freedom of speech serves the status quo. The freedom of the oppressed make their plights known causes most to lose that urge to take their complaints directly to the rich in a double-barreled, pump-action way. Only segments of the population who feel completely ignored begin to riot. (Good Morning, South Central!)

The First Amendment, in some ways, is an American myth the same way people say, "Anyone can grow up to be President of the United States." (I mean, come on! When was the last time we had an actual grown-up as President of the United States?) The First Amendment makes us believe in social action—because it can be advocated, it can be accomplished.

The First Amendment shows how we can keep a country as large as ours from falling apart. It provides the communication between completely different groups of people who, for some reason, all call themselves "Americans." More than anything else, people like to talk about themselves. (Think of all those excruciatingly long conversations with Aunt Betty about her hemorrhoids flaring up and other ailments, for example.)

Because Americans like to explain their wants, needs, prejudices, etc. in exhaustive detail, we learn about each other. From this comes a discourse that

## LORD OF THE FLIES WILLIAM GOLDING



COVER: 7 MILLION COPIES IN PRINT

### We're Gonna Say it Now

William Golding's classic *The Lord of the Flies* was challenged in 1981 by Owen (N.C.) High School because it was deemed "demoralizing inasmuch as it implies that man is little more than animal."

Polls say the majority of us support the repeal of the First Amendment. Omni thinks they can't see through the rising smoke of the books they like to burn. In honor of Banned Books Week, here's why.

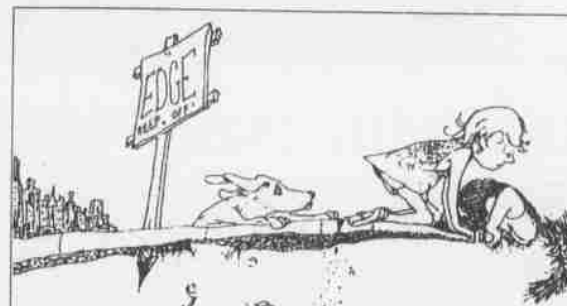
makes for a semblance of participatory democracy in a heterogeneous society. If there were no First Amendment provision and if the country were run by some Jesse Helms fascist so that we were not only silenced but forced into some government-defined role of a "True American", the United States would be having a going-out-of-business sale by the end of the week.

In America today, the Supreme Court's Chief Justice Rehnquist doesn't seem to grasp the fact that flag-burning, dirty rock lyrics and war protests aren't stoppable nor should they be muzzled. And that's too bad because if Rehnquist were only getting a better grade of the crack he seems to take before he writes some of his more extreme opinions, he'd see that the First Amendment is his and the country's best friend.



According to administrators in Mayfield, Ky., William Faulkner's 'As I Lay Dying' contained "offensive and obscene passages referring to abortion and used God's name in vain." The book was challenged in 1981.

# Freedom of Expression



## Where the Sidewalk Ends

the poems and drawings of Shel Silverstein

## Books and the Big Bad Censors

BY SPERDYMAN

And some people say the First Amendment is absolute. It's a darn good thing we can supersede that pesky law. Why, in a public school in Wisconsin, officials discovered a book in the school library that not only contained passages about cannibalism, but the author tolerated and even approved of it.

Here's a passage — please, don't read it if you have a weak stomach: *Someone ate the baby. What a frightful thing to eat! Someone ate the baby. Though she wasn't very sweet. It was a heartless thing to do. The policemen haven't got a clue. I simply can't imagine who Would go and (burp) eat the baby. Children have access to this filth! How disgusting! How vile! How ridiculous.*

That excerpt is from the poem "Dreadful," from the book of children's poetry, *Where The Sidewalk Ends*, by Shel Silverstein. The Mukouwata, Wis., school system challenged the book in 1986 on the grounds that it

glorified Satan, suicide and cannibalism. The book had already been challenged once before, in Xenia, Ohio, on the grounds that was anti-Christian and emphasized the use of drugs and sexual activity.

Books have been the political right's (i.e., the Moral Majority and cohorts) specific target for years. Judith Krug, head of American Library Association, said that her office used to hear of about 100 incidents a year in the early 1970s. By the late 1970s, there were 300 a year; by 1981, the figure reached 1,000. Much of this challenging and banning takes place in the schools.

• *One Hundred Years of Solitude* by Nobel Prize-winning author Gabriel Garcia Marquez was purged from the book list at Wasco (Calif.) Union High School in 1986. Censors said the book was "garbage being passed off at literature."

• *Zen Buddhism: Selected Writings* by D.T. Suzuki, was challenged in Plymouth-Canton, Mass., because it detailed the religion of Buddhism in such a way "that the reader would could be very likely to embrace its teachings and chose it as his religion."

• *Are You There God? It's Me, Margaret* was challenged in Xenia, Ohio (is it the water there or what!), because it was "sexually offensive and amoral," and built around two themes: sex and anti-Christian behavior. It was also challenged in Alabama, Minnesota and Missouri.

Some say we're at war — a culture war — with the battles being fought in our libraries, on our stages, in our museums. Case in point are the works of Robert Mapplethorpe: An Ohio museum curator was even taken to court on obscenity charges for displaying Mapplethorpe's homo-erotic photography exhibit.

"We can't support free expression by saying it won't do any harm," wrote John Berry III, editor-in-chief of *The Nation*.

It is the impossibility of predicting the harm of a particular expression that makes censorship wrong.

"Freedom is expensive, dangerous, unpredictable, and sometimes ugly and offensive," he continued. "At such a high price, no wonder it is so sweet."

## Omni talks politics twice in one issue: scary, scary

BY MARALEE

The dream ticket — two good-looking baby boomers and their attractive, independent career wives. Liberal, but not too liberal; traditional, but not judgmental.

At least that's what the Democratic convention would've had you believe. For some college voters, however, Tipper (a.k.a. Ms. Gore — that's Mrs. to you, buster) is the fly in the ointment.

While MTV's trying to Rock the Vote for the answer to the long-hungry Democrats' prayers, everyone is conscientiously avoiding the subject of the Parents Music Resource Center.

PMRC was created when Tipper Gore, Sue Baker and other Washington Wives joined to censor the album industry. The lobbying group insisted that they didn't want to censor, only to label albums, modeling the warnings

after the ratings that replaced the old Hays censoring system.

WXYC Music Director Stacy Philpott said censor or protector, the rose still smelled as rotten. "If record companies see it as a liability, then they will try to influence what people put on their albums — and this is happening already."

Ice-T's heavy metal song "Cop Killer" demonstrates the pressure that can be brought to bear on record companies. Warner released the album with no trouble. But after the L.A. riots, the president said the song was "despicable" and incited murders. After boycotts and even death threats against Warner execs, Ice-T withdrew the single from his album.

Steven Smith, a sophomore from Goldsboro, said he thought the "issue" was blown out of proportion. "It's like

it's just a song, and I don't think people should take it out of context, because it was not written to tell people to go out and kill cops. It's written from one person's perspective and how he's feeling at the moment.

"I really don't know why they picked it out. First of all, the album had been out for a while. There have been various other songs that talk about killing people."

Journalism Professor Chuck Stone, who teaches a censorship class, said he knew why the rapper was targeted. "I think it's because he's black," he said. "That's the reason. White boy done it, there'd be no problem."

Melinda Morrison, a junior from Aberdeen, said she thought the riots were the rationale for targeting Ice-T. While she thinks that scapegoating is wrong, she added she had mixed feelings about album labels. "I think album labeling is good in a way, so that the real young people won't be able to be exposed to lyrics. I kinda also feel like it's an infringement on rights."

Philpott has no such caveat. "This is probably horrible," he said, holding up an album with a warning sticker. "But they have a right to make horrible records. There're so many other things to worry about. It's just so tired. I don't have enough time to worry about Tipper Gore. Y'know, who cares?"

Stone agreed: "What do you need it for? You don't label books. We don't label newspapers. We don't even label television shows. We label movies — that makes it more attractive."

Tipper's conservatism lends strength to the Democratic ticket, Morrison said. "It will add a new dimension to the Clinton/Gore side."

Stone said although Clinton didn't think about Tipper at all in balancing the ticket, he did need the Reagan

"Tipper Gore is going to lead us all down the family values path to hell."  
—Stacy Philpott

Democrats to come home. "They're two good ol' boys," he said, who have to target white males.

"Bubba is ubiquitous. Bubba isn't just in the South. Bubba lives in the Detroit suburbs. Bubba lives in the New York suburbs."

Philpott agreed that Ms. Gore won't hurt Clinton's chances, but for a different reason. "I mean, I'm not going to vote for George Bush or Perot, I mean, I'm going to vote, therefore, logically, it's Clinton."

"The people who would be offended by Tipper, there's no way they would vote for Bush or Perot," he said. "I think he could write off acquiescing to those people who would be offended by Tipper Gore."

"I don't think Tipper Gore is going to keep someone from voting for Bill Clinton," Philpott said.

Stone said Ms. Gore would have no impact before the election or even after a victory. Vice presidents' wives are "the quintessence of powerlessness," he said.

"She'll have less power as the wife of the vice president. As a senator's wife, she could rally other senators' wives. If she doesn't know that yet, she's in for a rude shock."

Although Philpott pooh-poohed Ms. Gore's influence, he couldn't resist one more slam: "Tipper Gore is going to lead us all down the family values path to hell."



At Gore's wife, Tipper, hasn't been in the news lately — is she mellowing?