Freedom of speech for me, not thee and the tyrannies of social media censorship

written by Stephen Z. Nemo

Freedom of speech for me, not thee: tyrannies of social media censorship

WASHINGTON: The election of Donald Trump as the nation's 45th president proved the power of social media. No, not in the way Russians formed silly and ineffective Facebook groups in opposition to Hillary Clinton. Rather, it was what the Columbia Journalism Review (CJR) discovered. In a study conducted shortly after Trump's victory. CJR found it was average folks passing along political content (via Facebook, Twitter, and Google) from the Trump-supporting Breitbart and Daily Caller websites. The forwarding of these stories to their aunt Martha and cousin Tom proved the deciding factor in Clinton's defeat.

Donald Trump and family appear before supporters after the real estate developer wins the presidency. Bloomberg Politics screen capture.

That's why social media sites like Facebook and Twitter have been culling right-leaning voices from their platforms ever since. It wasn't the Russians who meddled in the 2016 presidential election, you see. It was you.

Censoring the “hateful”

The banning of certain individuals from the globe’s most popular social-gathering sites is justified in the name of stamping out “hate.” Translation: our feelings are hurt by your salient points concerning the absurdity of our bizarre notions. Whether it concerns the cynical Neolithic puritanism of Hollywood’s #MeToo movement or the fevered attention given an insignificant fringe of American society – males choosing to identify as females.

Infowars host Alex Jones is banned from Apple, Facebook, Youtube, Spotify, and Twitter. Screen capture of Jones being interviewed by NBC News’ Megyn Kelly.

The architects of these digital townhalls are horrified they’ve created a monster. One that sidesteps the media and its experts, discussing the issues of the day

amongst themselves without the “gatekeepers” of old media to say what is and isn’t appropriate discourse.

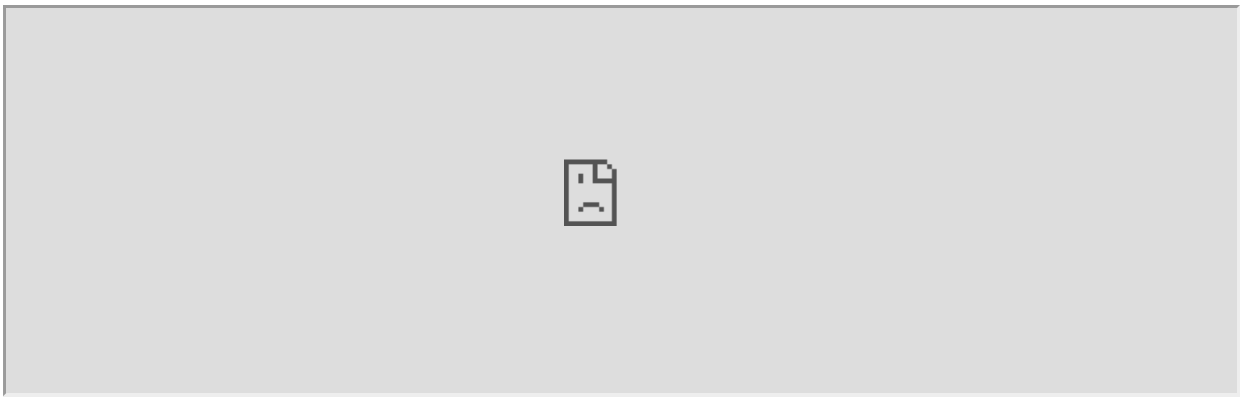
Freedom of the press but no freedom of speech

It’s ironic that reporters in a declining news market have the Committee to Protect Journalists in the interest of “press freedom,” while alternative journalism passed along in a democratic fashion is so nonchalantly censored through the closing of accounts.

Fox host Tucker Carlson speaks with radio talk show host Jesse Kelly after his suspension from Twitter. Fox News screen capture.

Last Sunday, Houston conservative radio talk show host Jesse Kelly discovered that his Twitter account disappeared.

> “They’ve giving me no explanation,” Kelly told Fox News host Tucker Carlson, “All they sent was an email that said, ‘You’re permanently banned – you can’t appeal it – for repeated rules violations… all of a sudden, my account vanished like a Hillary Clinton email.”



Social media and pubic forums

Last May, US District Judge Naomi Reice ordered President Trump to unblock certain followers that were denied the ability to comment on his tweets.

> “We hold that speech in which they seek to engage is protected by the First Amendment… That interaction space is susceptible to analysis under the Supreme Court’s forum doctrines, and is properly characterized as a designated public forum.”

That suggests the dominance of these social media platforms, at least in the eyes of Judge Buchwald, is analogous to a 1960s segregated Woolworth lunch counter.

Segregated lunch counter sit-in. Southern Foodways Alliance
Documentary “Counter Histories” screen capture.

That interesting legal theory has yet to be kicked up the chain of judicial review, at the end of which sits the United States Supreme Court.