



# ISSUES & OPINIONS

PAGE 3

## First Amendment rights of students

By Michelle Puckett

Nationwide, few high school students understand the First Amendment or appreciate how it applies to them, a major national study has found.

In January 2005 the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation's Future of the First Amendment study revealed that 58 percent of all high school students have never taken a class dealing with the First Amendment.

Why is this important?

"First, high school students will be voting in just a few years," said Mike Farrell, a University of Kentucky journalism professor who teaches media law. "They need to know their rights and understand why they are important. Second, they need to understand the responsibilities that go along with these rights. Third, they need to understand why these rights are worth defending. Too many students think the government can censor the news, an idea that is totally outrageous in a democracy."

First Amendment concerns are nothing new for high school students.

In Des Moines, Iowa in 1969 students were banned from school for wearing armbands that mourned the deaths of people on both sides of the Vietnam War. The school was taken to court and defeated for violating the students' First Amendment rights.

The court decided that teachers and administrators cannot censor student speech unless it infringes upon the rights of others or it will cause a substantial disruption.

Trying to limit what kids wear is not the only thing schools have been taken to court over. In 1988 in the Hazelwood School District vs. Kuhlmeier case, the students who ran the school newspaper wanted to put an article in the paper about teenage pregnancy and the extent of the effect of divorced parents on kids.

The principal didn't agree, saying that even though the article referred to anonymous girls, some students' situations might have been recognized in the article. Hearing this, the students decided to sue, claiming their First Amendment rights had been violated. The court decided there was a difference in private student speech and student speech in school. The students were ultimately defeated.

The Knight study pointed out that few students know this history. 74 percent of students said their schools offer little more than a newspaper in the way of journalism education.

The Knight Study also revealed that three out of every four students acknowledged taking the First Amendment for granted.

The findings worry journalists like Farrell.

"The First Amendment is not cast in concrete," Farrell said. "Our rights to free speech and free press can be diminished if American citizens fail to stand up for those rights and insist that legislators and judges protect them. It is alarming that high school students, who in the not-too-distant future are going to be voting, have so little appreciation for these most basic of all rights."

## Freedom vs. limits?

By Faith Clark &amp; Norma Solis

It has taken several hundred years to define one of the most important rights we as Americans have: the First Amendment. In many ways, the First Amendment is a response to the cruelty that England tortured us with.

People have fought and died for the chance to preserve this freedom for future generations. Many people around the world would give their right arm to be able to have the First Amendment, while many Americans have taken their basic rights for granted.

The First Amendment in its entirety states "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech or the press, or the right of the people to peaceably assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances."

Religion is a tool people have used to explain the phenomenon of life. Today, we as Americans can freely express our beliefs without fear of persecution. Many of the people who came to

America did so to escape persecution, establish churches and worship.

Free speech grants you the will to say what you would like, within respectable limits. This is often debated. Many feel as if the U.S. government censors us as people, our music, and our way of life.

Especially after the tragic events of September 11, 2001, people have been cautious with their words. In many places today, you could be arrested for making jocular threats, jokes or using profanity.

The press has been under attack since the beginning of journalism history. Newspapers, telegrams, word of mouth; people's judgment of a particular event has put the press as a whole at risk for discrimination. It is bold to be unbiased and truthful especially in a field such as journalism. Many people have risked their lives for the chance to report an injustice to the country, or expose a scandal.

The freedom of assembly is the freedom to protest and to boycott. The ability to boycott is extremely meaningful because it was one of the

things that blacks had to do in order to make a statement when it came to riding the public bus. It is also a tactic used by ordinary people to protest mistreatment by a store clerk, a waitress, or business owner. Consumers who want to protest a particular musical artist because of offensive lyrics also use it.

We have the right to petition the government if we disagree with its policies. In some countries, if you express your thoughts about the government (and they aren't exactly the nicest things to say), you could lose your livelihood.

Even though we are entitled to these awesome rights as people of the United States, are our freedoms truly free?

To us, freedom has always been infinite, mainly because that is the way that it was taught to us. If you are free, you aren't encased in a physical containment. You are FREE to do your will.

If you decide afterwards to place limits on our freedoms, they aren't freedoms any longer. "I don't believe in freedom because it is limited," said Patrick Easley, a rising senior at Lexington's Henry Clay High School.

Laws have been established since the beginning of time to ensure the safety of mankind. People try to avoid disorder and chaos, even though it is part of our nature.

Eight years after the Bill of Rights was ratified in 1791, we faced our first test of its limits. The Alien and Sedition Acts were passed to limit our opinions of the government. If someone spoke ill of the president, Congress, or any other branch of the government, they could be jailed.

Today, laws like the Alien and Sedition acts would be considered unconstitutional.

Our interpretation of the Constitution has come a long way, but there is still a long way to go as far as freedom goes. There are so many different definitions as to what people really think freedom is. Will America ever come to a happy medium?

Will we, as Americans, finally be able to express ourselves completely, without being persecuted or blamed for our feelings?

Even though the First Amendment is not perfect, it does give us basic freedoms that should never be discredited.

ISSUE ANALYSIS

COMMENTARY

COMMENTARY

## The treasured Ukraine

By Anya Maksymova

On our visit to the Cincinnati Freedom Center we had a chance to learn about the painful path African-Americans had to travel on their way to freedom. This experience prompted me,

a native of Ukraine, to ruminate, "And what was the cost that my people paid for the liberty of our country?"

The historical road of the Ukrainian nation wasn't very smooth either. As my friend once phrased it, "Ukraine was a constant soccer field for both Europe and Asia," being continuously invaded by one or another foreign force and hardly ever managing to break this closed circle of

unfortunate destiny.

Ukraine was once the Motherland of the first developed civilizations in the region and the territory of a powerful medieval state, Kyiv Rus. Its lands were a home for flourishing skif, sarmat, and Western Slav tribes as early as the 5<sup>th</sup> century B.C. And in the 10<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> centuries, when Kyiv Rus was formed, my country was at the peak of its might and grandeur.

However, after Kyiv Rus's downfall it became an easy target for all nearby peoples chasing new lands to conquer. Ukraine's convenient location, extremely fertile soils, and rich natural resources only increased its chances to be invaded. As a result, over the

next few centuries Ukraine was constantly under the yoke of other nations, such as the Mongol-Tatar hordes, Lithuanian lords, and Polish szlachta (nobility).

But the main characteristic of the Ukrainian nation is its rebellious spirit, striving for freedom. Eventually, my ancestors' struggle for independence ended victoriously under the leadership of Bohdan Khmelnytsky, when a treaty of union was signed between Ukraine and Russia in 1654. That's when the special independent republic-type country called Getmanshchina was formed in place of modern Ukraine.

However, my people didn't get to enjoy the aroma of freedom for too long. The Russian czar broke the treaty soon after signing it and Cossacks, Ukrainian warriors and defenders of Ukraine's right for existence, had to fight for the liberation of their country once again, this time against its own "sister" Russia. Apart from that, they also needed to oppose the pressure of Poland and struggle against their own domestic problem – the slavery-like system called serfdom.

After the overthrow of the czar in the early 1900s, Ukraine became part of the USSR as the Ukrainian People's Republic. And no matter how much the Ukrainian culture was oppressed throughout its history, the times of Joseph Stalin were the hardest for our nation. He accused Ukrainians of "nationalism," prohibited the usage of Ukrainian language, and persecuted any sign of national expression. In addition to that, some several

million Ukrainians were starved to death in gulags partly because they refused to give up their national identity and were claimed "the enemies of the nation."

And only after the Soviet Union broke apart was Ukraine solemnly proclaimed a sovereign independent democratic state on August 24, 1991. Now Ukraine tries to raise its damaged economy and unique culture from the ashes. It's an extremely complicated procedure, but recently our country has made much progress and is confidently moving into the future.

One of Ukraine's recent breakthroughs happened in fall 2004, when the Orange Revolution took place in our capital, Kyiv. It was a turning point in Ukraine's development, because Ukrainians realized that together we constituted power and fought for our constitutional right to actually elect our leaders. Because of the national outrage and a two-months-long strike in Kyiv, Ukraine gained a new President and new perspectives for future development. Now President Yushchenko, the hero of the Orange Revolution, is actively negotiating with NATO and the European Union for co-operation and trying to improve the Ukrainian economic situation.

As centuries and epochs went by, Ukraine lived under many foreign banners. Today it finally has its own blue and yellow flag, fluttering like a butterfly, inspired by the wind of change. And Ukrainians finally have their own freedom, the most sacred national treasure that our ancestors were dreaming of and gave their lives for.

## Thanks

Major funding for the workshop was provided by the Dow Jones Newspaper Fund. The Lexington Herald-Leader printed the workshop paper, hosted the students at a luncheon, and provided a number of speakers. We're also grateful for financial support from the Scripps Howard Foundation, Louisville Courier-Journal, Dr. Bill Turner and the UK Office of Multicultural Affairs, Dr. Philipp Kraemer, Associate Provost for Undergraduate Education at UK, and Dr. Patricia Terrell, UK Vice President for Student Affairs.

Many people gave their time to meet with the workshop students. We thank Mark Cornelison, Chip Cosby, Merlene Davis, Vanessa Gallman, Mike Horenkamp, Janet Patton, Monica Richardson, Marilyn Thompson and Sharon Walsh from the Lexington Herald-Leader; Mark Niekirk of the Cincinnati Post; Calvert McCann and Audrey Grevious, who spoke about the civil rights movement in Lexington; Jerry Gore and Peggy Overly from Freedom Time; John Bobel, Eric Howard, Milton Dohoney and Kathy DeBoer with Lexington-Fayette Urban County Government; Freddie Brown, Lexington YMCA Black Achievers; Tava Clay,

Fayette County Schools; Larry Glover, Kevin Vital and Jonny Ash, Lexington Legends; Connie Trounstine, National Underground Railroad Freedom Center; Wayne Murty and Mariann Debeczeni, Murty Farms.

Workshop instructors were Mike Farrell, Alyssa Eckman and Deborah Chung of the UK Journalism faculty, Chris Poore, Steve Ivey and Ben Roberts of the Kentucky Kernel, Debra Vance of Covington Schools and Angela Tuck of the Atlanta Journal-Constitution. NeShaune Mahin and Bennie Mills served as workshop counselors. Julie Berry, assistant to the director of the School of Journalism and Telecommunications, handled many of the arrangements. Lisa A. Brown, Director of Student and Multicultural Affairs for the School of Journalism and Telecommunications, headed up student recruitment, arranged for many of the speakers, and served as surrogate mother/sister to the students.

- Dr. Beth Barnes, director, UK School of Journalism and Telecommunications and workshop driver

