



THE FIRST AMENDMENT SYMPOSIUM

STUDENT & KEYNOTE SCRIPTS

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Student Board President
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"You Matter"

Haley Pritchett
Student Board President
GREENWOOD COMMUNITY HS

Good morning, and welcome to the 2019 First Amendment Symposium. My name is Haley Pritchett, and I am the Indiana High School Press Association student board president. Today, the student board has prepared speeches to help you understand how much you matter.

As student journalists, there has been at least one moment in our lives where we have had to listen to someone rant about how media is bad, journalists are liars, and soon our craft will die out. Some of us are brave enough to speak up and try to convince them otherwise, although others of us have simply learned that you can not argue with ignorance. The world around us sometimes seems to be anti-journalism, but that might be because they do not understand how crucial and important journalism is.

Journalists have one of the most important, yet underrated jobs in the world. If it weren't for journalists, who would make the local superheroes seen? Who would bring attention to ordinary people and personal struggles people face? Who would inform the public about our environment, and report on issues such as inequality? Ask yourself, what would the world really be like without journalism... Imagine all of great people who would stay unknown, resources that would be made unavailable, and corruption that would continue to occur. Journalism gives people a platform, it saves lives, and it keeps our country held accountable.

As you listen to these speeches, I encourage you to not only reflect on how much impact your stories have made on your communities, but to also think about how much of an impact you are capable of making. Media is not bad, the majority of journalists are not liars, and our craft will never die out. The world around us might seem anti-journalism, but it is our job to show them how crucial and important journalism is.

You matter, because without you, nothing else would.

"Local Superheroes"

Emma Uber
Student Board At-Large Member
CARMEL HS

Swooping around cities, armed with extraordinary powers and an arch nemesis never too far behind. These are the characters that multi-million dollar industries are built upon. Lines wrapping around the theater form at midnight premiers, costumes are sold to the masses, spin off upon spin off is produced. These are superheroes. I've never understood the superhero phenomenon, always the friend dragged to the theater, the plot of the movie entirely lost on me. I've found myself wondering "How can so many people around the

world fall in love with this concept? What is the appeal?"

Recently, as I was pondering the topic of this speech, I think I found my answer. The factor powerful enough to captivate millions worldwide has never been the flashy outfits, or the advanced CGI, or even the tragic back stories... although I'm sure those definitely don't hurt. No, at the end of the day, we all want to be told that good triumphs over evil, and anyone can be extraordinary, and maybe, just maybe, there is someone looking out for us after all. As journalists, it's our duty to shed light upon our community's real life superheroes.

Part of the job is attention to detail. Without it, journalists would never write clean copy or uncover authoritarian corruption. Yet both of those require looking closely for the flaws. Meanwhile, the actions of our local superheroes often go unnoticed amid the pandemonium of panic and fear.

A large section of my school was recently demolished by an explosion. Directly following, we had a student commit suicide. As an editor of my school publication, my mind automatically started processing how to best cover these intensely somber issues. It was crucial we covered them, they were big news. Yet, when sitting down to ponder story angles, I realized I had overlooked our school's response: a program deemed the "Culture of Care."

This effort by our administrators included student mentors, therapy puppies, activities available in the counseling office, you name it. Immediately, I noticed many less students knew about the Culture of Care program than I had suspected. In a time where mental health was becoming precarious at my school, it was crucial to bring light to the student resource officers, lunch ladies, counselors, teachers, and administrators who took part in this program to ensure our mental safety. These were our local superheros.

As a society we focus on the negative. As journalists we tend to do the same. That being said, journalists need to shed light. On corrupt politicians and on inequality and on the environment, but also on that police officer trying to ensure justice is served, on that teacher taking money out of their own pocket to fund projects, on that citizen running her own clothes drive every week in an attempt to make a difference. They may not be wearing capes, but these superheroes deserve an audience too.

"Environmental Guardians"

Betty Huang

Student Board At-Large Member

HIGHLAND HS

Everyone has a story to tell. Whether that be your fourth grade teacher who conquered cancer or a small town boy breaking world records for his favorite sport, every narrative deserves a voice. But what about those who do not have a voice, those who cannot tell their story?

Earth is the most precious thing that we possess. Without protecting our environment, a plethora of problems occur, such as deforestation and pollution, and we risk devastation and peril. Although global warming and climate change have been in the spotlight lately, other environmental issues are swept under the rug, unnoticed by those who could make a difference.

Pollution is one of our greatest problems. With emissions for industrial plants, combustion from fossil fuels, and usage of household and farming chemicals being some of the lead causes of pollution, it is clear that our planet is suffering largely due to human activity. Due to industrialization throughout history, an abundance of manufacturing facilities were constructed, contributing to the pollution issue greatly. Everyone is focused on making things bigger and better, but at what cost? There will be no way to enjoy the bigger and better things if there is nowhere to enjoy them.

Sacrificing the environment affects not just the human population, but millions of other species. The Miombo Woodlands in Southern Africa, the Amazon-Guianas, and southwest Australia are estimated to be some of the most affected areas due to climate change. According to worldwildlife.org, "If there was a 4.5°C global mean temperature rise, the climates in these areas are projected to become unsuitable for many the plants and animals that currently live there." This means that, in the Miombo Woodlands, up to 90 percent of amphibians, 86 percent of birds, and 80 percent of mammals could potentially become locally extinct.

Deforestation also strips away the homes and lives of millions of animals. It is a major leading cause for climate change due to the fact that it releases carbon dioxide into the air and lessens the amount of carbon stored. Deforestation is the second leading human-caused source of carbon dioxide being distributed into the air, following fossil fuel combustion.

Problems regarding our environment are recognized in the media, but not enough. Headlines that get the most clicks highlight the newest trend or the latest drama. The stories that go viral are featured prominently by the media, giving trivial topics, like the latest drama in reality entertainment or what a celebrity was wearing yesterday, an abundance of publicity, while ignoring more serious issues.

Major issues, like the environment, are put on the backburner. They are not plastered on front pages and therefore are not the center of attention. It is almost as if the stories that do not feature real-world obstacles conceal the stories that impact us and our future.

“Ordinary People”

Haley Miller

Student Board At-Large Member

SOUTHPORT HS

Journalism granted us a special gift that not many professions can claim. We are entrusted with serious responsibility, with an essential mission: to recognize the ordinary people. Sure, we spend time covering the events and people with high profiles – it’s part of the job, of course – but often, especially in high school journalism, we are privileged enough to be able to cover those without the fame and fortune. The everyday citizens. The unseen. It’s a task that is thoroughly unique in both meaning and practice.

In November, my school was informed that we would host President Trump in our Fieldhouse for a political rally. My fellow classmates and I, as student journalists, were given the opportunity of a lifetime-- to cover the president himself. It’s a rare experience, right? Providing coverage on the most important man in America at such a young age? It’s not your run-of-the-mill high school newspaper story.

Quick side note – I wasn’t actually there for the event. I was in Chicago, believe it or not, for the National High School Journalism Convention, along with my editor-in-chief and managing editors. We were all desperately attempting to contact my writer and other reporters back in Southport in between contests. I remember thinking about it throughout the entirety of my Newspaper Editing contest. The entire situation was incredibly surreal.

The thing that struck me most about all of it wasn’t the President in the Fieldhouse. We didn’t even cover him, really. Yes, we snapped photos and recorded his speech, but the story wasn’t about him. The story was the protest happening 100 feet away, as people chanted, “Love, not hate, that’s what makes America great!” It was the people inside the Fieldhouse: the diehard supporters decked out in American flag apparel, and the passive bystanders, who simply wanted a chance to see the President in real life. No, the story wasn’t Donald Trump. The story was the people.

That’s what makes journalism so special, so different from everything else. We can cover the ordinary people. We can tell their stories and make them as worthwhile and meaningful as our coverage of the President. We often get caught up in chasing after the juicy cover story, but don’t forget the importance, the gravity, behind reporting on the everyday citizen. It’s influential. It’s life-changing. It’s truly a gift-- one that journalism alone can offer.

What I’m asking for you to do today is to not take that for granted. Don’t let yourself become bored with coverage of the public, of your student body. Don’t let your work slack because you think it’s not as important, because it is. It’s more important. Your most meaningful piece? It’s going to be on the ordinary people who go unnoticed. As student journalists, we have the chance to illuminate their stories and truly make an impact.

“Personal Struggles”

Peighton Noel

Student Board At-Large Member

MOORESVILLE HS

Every day, we wake up in the morning, go about our routines, and this is usually pretty normal. Occasionally, we wake up late or something in our day goes very wrong. Sometimes this can be a bigger deal than others. We might think our days are the worst and no one understands what is happening at that time. We are not the only ones in these positions.

I’m Peighton Noel and I am the editor-in-chief of The Pulse, Mooresville High School’s student published newspaper. My sophomore year, I had an idea for a story that would challenge me more than any story ever would. I decided to create a spread about depression and anxiety, focusing on the personal struggles teenagers within my community face. While I was sitting down to write this story, I didn’t even know how to begin, but I knew mental illness was a topic that needed to be handled with care. I began with research, but it didn’t seem to fulfill my story in anyway.

A few brave students who suffered from different types of anxiety and depression came forward and allowed me to include their stories in my piece. Because of them and two long months of writing, my story was complete, and I had a satisfactory finished product. I published the story proudly, but also under the impression that it was just another routine story. This was until students began approaching me in classes and in the halls.

The amount of students in my school that had experienced things similar to what was described in the story took me by surprise. Some thanked me for providing resources and hotlines they never knew existed. Some thought they were alone with their feelings, and some didn't know what their feelings meant until they were educated on the topic, and exposed to the facts and experiences surrounding the issue.

Being on my newspaper staff and having the ability to write this challenging story opened not only my eyes, but the eyes of many around me who never knew what to make of their feelings. Having the ability to reach a widespread audience gives us the ability to help and inform our communities of many things of importance. Journalists spend every day of their lives bringing awareness to the people around us. We inform them to protect them. We see the issues, and we help resolve them.

We tell their stories for others who need to hear them.

"Ensuring Equality"

Brianna Brown

Student Board At-Large Member

PIKE HS

I know you probably think it's cliché. One of the only black girls in the room doing a speech about inequality. It does not go unnoticed how I am always the minority in a room. I get dirty looks and mean mugs, but I stay quiet. I stay quiet because if I say something, I'm the stereotypical loud, disrespectful, ANGRY black girl. I am NOT the only one.

There are other stories about the injustices towards black women...such as the story of Kenneka Jenkins, The 19-year-old black girl who was found dead in a freezer in the Crown Plaza Hotel in Illinois. This happened in September of 2017. I would not be surprised if this the first you're hearing of this story. Some people might even say I made it up, but Google is just one click away. There was one article written about her on the national news. The Washington Post. Other than local Chicago news stations, there was minimal coverage. The lack of racial coverage in the media is a problem. I found out this story from Twitter, my only news source lately. Twitter, a social media platform, is my main source of news.

We are here today to talk about the First Amendment. Not only does it address the freedom to speak up, but the topics that are NOT talked about. The truth is there needs to be less biased racial coverage in the media. Not just blacks, but Native Americans, Latinos, LGBTQA+, women, the lower class, the disabled, Muslims, Jews, immigrants of all continents, and so many others.

It is a journalist's responsibility to speak for the people whose voices are not heard. Why haven't we, as journalists, been fulfilling our duty? We need to do better. Everyone in this room has a strong enough voice to bring attention to our schools, communities, cities, states, and our country. We must give the people a voice. The people who are not heard rely on us to give them that voice. Together we could be the difference that is needed.

"Our Voices"

Anu Nattam

Student Board At-Large Member

PLAINFIELD HIGH SCHOOL

As student journalists, our biggest desire is to be afforded the same support and protection that professional journalists receive as we work hard to write and report on real events. That was the goal of HB 1213, also known as the New Voices Bill. This bill would have eliminated the injustice that scholastic journalism currently faces, where due to censorship and prior review, all of our hard work can be crossed out with a pen and no one would ever see it. New Voices would have allowed us to be the confident, self-assured, aspiring journalists we long to be, instead of the students we are right now -- filled with doubt, hesitation, and fear.

Though HB 1213 did not get a hearing this year, it is essential to journalism in its entirety that we keep fighting for our rights. We have to fight so that students in schools all across the state can write far-reaching stories about issues that matter, like sexual abuse and rape culture, suicide and mental health issues, and LGBTQ support, to name a few. All of the topics I just mentioned are ideas that came from real students who feel they are relevant and important to cover, but who cannot cover them in their publications due to prior review.

Forty years ago, the Supreme Court decided in the Hazelwood v. Kuhlmeier case, that student publications did not need to be protected in the same way that professional publications are. Student journalists know that we aren't in this to commit libel, print obscenities, or cause a disruption to the school environment. We just seek to print the truth, even when that truth might make certain individuals uncomfortable. In a time where

journalists are often mistreated and the press is made out to be the enemy, student journalists having the right to report the truth without fear of censorship and receive a proper journalism education can save the foundational principle of “freedom of press” that our nation was built on.

Even though legislation fails to uphold our rights in the classroom, it is important that we use our voice to reach out to our representatives and advocate for our rights. As student journalists, we have to realize that our main duty is to report the truth to our community fearlessly. It is important that we report every case of censorship or prior review in the classroom so our lawmakers realize how big of an issue this is.

Any contribution made for the progress of this movement is a step to finally bring scholastic journalism to the position it was in over 40 years ago. I urge you all to not lose hope because HB 1213 was not given a hearing this year, but to use that energy to fuel better arguments and more courage to fight for our rights in the coming years. In the words of Joseph Medill of the Chicago Tribune, student journalists must continue to, “Write boldly and tell the truth fearlessly” in the face of censorship and prior review.

Jon Webb
Reporter & Columnist
EVANSVILLE COURIER & PRESS

Who here has written something that’s made someone else mad? Show of hands. If you haven’t, boy are you missing out. I’ve written opinion pieces off and on since I was 16 years old. I’m almost 70 now, so that’s roughly a half-century worth of material.

And I get a lot of emails. I’ve lost track of how many times I’ve been called an idiot or a communist or a member of the Illuminati. The Illuminati part is true, actually. The world is secretly controlled by me, Barack Obama and Kendall Jenner. But we’ll get into that later.

There’s a good side to all those emails. It means that, at least sometimes, I write about topics people care about.

Anyone in this room can unfurl an opinion about Donald Trump and get a reaction. If any of you have ever looked at social media or watched TV or seen the spray-painted Dumpster outside my local gas station that says, “Trump Sucks,” you know that’s the case.

And that’s great. It’d be pretty tone deaf of me to come to a First Amendment symposium and tell you something is off limits. This is America – at least for the time being – and you’re allowed to have whatever opinion you want.

That especially applies to the young people here today.

I’m not one of those insufferable geriatrics who thinks everyone younger than me is dumb. I almost walked into traffic the other day because I was watching sloth videos on my phone, so there’s a solid chance I’m the stupidest person in this room.

If you’re moved to write about the man in the Oval Office, be it positive or negative, go for it. But remember: your readers can get that kind of material anywhere. What we’re gonna talk about today are the kinds of things you can write at a local level. The kind of stuff readers can only get from you.

I’m only speaking from my own experience. Hunter Thompson once wrote that “all advice can only be a product of the person who gives it.” Not everything I say will work for you. Everyone has their own process. But I promise I won’t blather about something I don’t know anything about. That happens at the Statehouse enough already.

So here we go.

SUGGESTION NO. 1: KNOW WHAT YOUR READERS CARE ABOUT.

I work at the Evansville Courier & Press. We keep meticulous track of how many people click on each story. We know how long they read, and how likely they are to click through to a second article. I’m not supposed to tell you this, but we also know what they ate for breakfast that morning and their grandmother’s maiden name.

From those numbers, we can learn a lot about our audience. For example: I know that the people of Evansville are really interested in stories about crime and stories about animals. If a pug ever robs a bank, we’ll hit our click goals for the next nine months.

But the numbers can’t teach you everything. The only way to know your readers is to, well, know your readers. Everyone in this world cares about money and safety. Thousands of stories are embedded in those two topics. So study your community. Learn what really affects normal people’s day-to-day lives.

One way to do that is social media. It might be destroying our privacy, disconnecting us from our families and turning us all into zombies, but man it’s great for stories. If you scroll through Facebook and see multiple people grousing about the same local subject, it’s probably worth writing about. Better yet, if you see people asking the same question, you can be the one to swoop in and answer it for them.

I'll give you an example. Last year, the power company where I live got purchased by a bigger company. And everyone in Evansville was wondering how much money the CEO of Vectren would make in a buyout. It's a great question. And timely, especially in an age where a CEO makes 361-times more than the average worker. So, with the help of a source, I dug through Vectren's financial documents and found out the CEO would walk away with a package valued at \$32 million.

It was a good story and it got a strong reaction. A lot of people got mad at the CEO because of it. But don't worry. He'll be fine. He got a buyout worth \$32 million. You don't always need social media to know what people care about, though. You could talk to them face-to-face. I know that's a laughable suggestion in 2019. I'm not even here right now. You're listening to a hologram.

SUGGESTION NO. 2: KNOW WHAT YOU CARE ABOUT

When you're writing a column, you're presenting an argument. And if you care deeply about the subject matter, you'll produce better work. I'm lucky, because I get to write about pretty much whatever I want – as long as it's local and relevant. That freedom has allowed me to pursue subject matter I care about.

I've spent the last month writing about the victims in priest sex abuse cases. It's horribly depressing work, but I think it's important. My main argument in anything I've ever done is that people should be honest and treat others fairly. You can imagine why I get so much hate mail.

But just because you care about something doesn't mean you shouldn't be open to changing your mind. Follow the facts – not your preconceived notions. Never argue something you don't believe – even if it's popular. If you can't be honest with yourself, you can't be honest with your readers.

SUGGESTION NO. 3: KNOW WHAT YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT

That seems self-explanatory. But a quick look at cable news proves it's not.

If you're going to write something, report it within an inch of its life. Just because it's an opinion piece doesn't mean you can rely on traditional reporters to do all the work for you. Newsrooms are shrinking, and you have to know how to do a little bit of everything.

Dig. Talk to people. Learn.

For good or ill, the title of "columnist" makes people think I possess some secret wisdom they don't have. As you've seen by now, that's clearly not the case. But they put my picture next to everything I write. So if I don't know what I'm talking about, I'm going to look really, really stupid.

Never assume you know something.

SUGGESTION NO. 4: DON'T WRITE ABOUT TOPICS. WRITE ABOUT PEOPLE

Here's the depressing truth: no one cares about your opinion. That's not a knock on you. Most people don't care about anyone's opinion but their own. But there are a few ways to change someone's mind, or at least get them to think differently about something. The best way is to tell them a story.

I hate our health insurance system. I think it's a criminal enterprise, and one of the biggest problems Americans face today. A lot of us are one medical emergency away from financial ruin. I tried to write about that a hundred different ways. I spewed a bunch of data, but none of it resonated.

Then I found a woman in Evansville who had to give up her medical insurance so she could afford to cover her two young daughters. Not only that, but she also had to make sure she didn't make too much money. Because if she passed a certain threshold, she'd lose her tax credit and not even be able to afford insurance for her girls.

She couldn't afford to be poor, but she couldn't afford to be not-poor either.

Seeing a woman struggling in their own community snapped the issue into focus for a lot of readers. And I think it showed the absurdity of our health care system better than data ever could. Behind every huge story, there are always people.

When news erupts, find an angle no one else thought to cover. One of the greatest columns ever written is called "It's An Honor." Jimmy Breslin wrote it in the wake of the Kennedy assassination. While his colleagues were rushing around covering the biggest story of the 20th century, he found the one angle no one had thought of: he profiled the man who dug Kennedy's grave.

It was a small, personal story with a huge, national backdrop. And it's a great example of how you can localize national news. It's an astonishing piece of writing. You should stop listening to me, pull out your phones and start reading it right now.

In that spirit, let me give you the final suggestion.

SUGGESTION NO. 5: GIVE A CRAP. BUT DON'T GIVE A CRAP.

Care about everything you do. That's tough in a business that's shedding jobs. You'll get down. Your spirit will shatter. You'll wonder why you didn't go to business school. But if you really want to be a journalist in 2019, you must give a crap. You have to be in this for a good reason, because it sure ain't the pay. Find whatever that is and don't let it go.

You also cannot give a crap. Remember those hateful emails we talked about three hours ago, when I began this godforsaken speech? Sometimes they're good. If a reader is reaching out to tell you you've bungled your facts or missed an important aspect of the story, you should listen to them. Sometimes your reader is your best friend. They give you story tips and help you pay the bills.

But if your story is solid, and you carried it out with honesty and ethics and hard work, and they're just emailing to screech FAKE NEWS into your face because the column didn't perfectly adhere to their world view? Ignore them. That email probably has a lot more to do with the sender than the recipient. Let them have their say and forget about it. Just keep doing your work.

And I know you will. I don't trust anybody – it's an occupational hazard – but for some reason I want to trust you. If you decide to get into journalism, know that the business will constantly move under your feet. It's changed more in the last 10 years than it did in the previous 40. But adapt. Be quick, be smart, be honest, and take care of yourselves.

I know you can handle it. Thanks for your time.

JON'S SUGGESTED READING LIST OF STUFF HE DIDN'T WRITE:

ARTICLES

"Death of a Racehorse," by W.C. Heinz

"Betsy DeVos Has Definitely Seen a School At Least Once," by Alexandra Petri

"The Death of Captain Waskow," by Ernie Pyle

"It's an Honor," by Jimmy Breslin

"Death in Emergency Room One," by Jimmy Breslin

"Are You John Lennon," by Jimmy Breslin

"Is Donald Trump's Hair a \$60,000 Weave?" by Ashley Feinberg

"'This happens way too often': Evansville shooting victim's family reflects on his life," by Tori Fater

"The Runaway General," by Michael Hastings

"As a Father of Daughters, I Think We Should Treat All Women Like My Daughters," by Daniel Mallory Ortberg

"A Psychotronic Childhood," by Colson Whitehead

"He Was a Crook," by Hunter S. Thompson

"What Do You Think of Ted Williams Now?" by Richard Ben Cramer

"Thurman Munson in Sun and Shade," by Michael Paterniti

"Gus Grissom: Life and legacy of the 'forgotten' Hoosier astronaut," by Zach Evans

"Dee Dee Wanted Her Daughter to Be Sick, Gypsy Wanted Her Mom Murdered," by Michelle Dean

BOOKS

"Fear and Loathing on the Campaign Trail '72," by Hunter S. Thompson

"Killers of the Flower Moon," by David Grann

"Under the Banner of Heaven," by Jon Krakauer

"I'll Be Gone in the Dark," by Michelle McNamara

"The Operators," by Michael Hastings

"The Right Stuff," by Tom Wolfe

"Notes of a Native Son," by James Baldwin

"Raven Rock," by Garrett Graff

"The Autobiography of Malcolm X," by Malcolm X and Alex Haley

"Slouching Toward Bethlehem," by Joan Didion

"I Can't Breathe," by Matt Taibbi

"America: The Book," by Jon Stewart and the writers of "The Daily Show"

"On Writing," by Stephen King