

# PRESS-IDENTIAL REVIEW

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In light of President Trump's latest actions and comments regarding the media, students and advisers at the Southern Interscholastic Press Association (SIPA) reflect on the censorship and discrimination they face as journalists, from in-school prior review, to the current national mistreatment and discrediting of media sources.

Nighthawk News Magazine staffer Shelby Miller feels prior review -- which is mandatory at First Flight High School in Kill Devil, NC -- prevents her publication from producing the stories they wish to publish. The school's publication is reviewed by the principal, who has the power to deny the publication of stories as well as censor student writing.

"I feel like it should not have to go through our administration. I think our teacher should have enough power to be able to look it over it but not

necessarily our principal," Miller said. "Sometimes they will make us take out articles."

Erinn Harris, the adviser for tjTODAY at Thomas Jefferson High School in Alexandria, VA, understands the rationale behind prior review, but finds it unnecessary.

"In some circumstances I can see how some administrators would think it is a good idea, and that they are protecting their students or whatever, but if students are really following the code of ethics and aren't doing any harm and are really seeking and reporting the truth and are keeping all of those principles in mind, then they don't need prior review," Harris said.

Director of the Mississippi Scholastic Press Association R.J. Morgan has not encountered direct problems with prior review. However, he does fear

for student journalists of the state who face the risk of the termination of their journalism programs.

"In Mississippi, we have a lot of publications that have prior review," Morgan said. "I haven't been notified of any uptick in that since the election or anything, but being that we are in the deep South and schools typically overreach with their control of the paper, it's one of those situations where if you challenge them too much, too fast, then they'll just cut the program. There is no law that says we have to have a journalism program."

According to Tribal Tribune staffer Paige Mistler, of Mount Pleasant, SC, censorship of pieces does not only affect student journalists, but students at the school as well.

"There are a lot of things that go on at our school that not many people would know about it,

Students and advisers attending the Southern Interscholastic Press Association 2017 conference detail the effects of discrimination against journalists from their school administration as well as U.S. administration.

so if they censored it, it would be even harder to get good information," Mistler said.

Student journalists are most often censored when reporting on sensitive issues, which can often be important subjects for their communities.

"In Georgia there are very little protections for student journalists. I was just talking to an adviser here and she was at a school in Georgia where they were not able to do any good journalism," Assistant Professor of Mass Communications at Piedmont College Joe Dennis said. "A student had committed suicide and they wanted to do a story on depression in general, and you can get the topic from a very general perspective, but they wouldn't even let the school newspaper do that because they thought it was too touchy of a subject."

Along with facing censorship, student journalists as well as journalists nationwide are facing discrimination in the form of hate comments and slander.

"We will post stories online, and people will say

we are ignoring facts or we are fake news," Harris said. "They are not really looking outside of their own bias and objectivity to see that what we are doing is actually reporting the truth and what they want to see is not necessarily the truth, so there are lots and lots of facebook comments."

Morgan attributes this attitude towards journalists and the media to President Donald Trump and the U.S. administration, who has publicly criticized the media and publications including the New York Times, CNN, the Washington Post, NBC, ABC, CBS, the Guardian, Politico, the BBC, the Daily Mail and others.

"The White House and the President sets the tone for the country and the tone right now is that we (journalists) are the enemies of the American people and that bleeds over into the way other people think," Morgan said.

Though some perceptions of journalists in the nation are negative, Dennis feels confident that

the attention will spark interest in the profession's future and standing within the country.

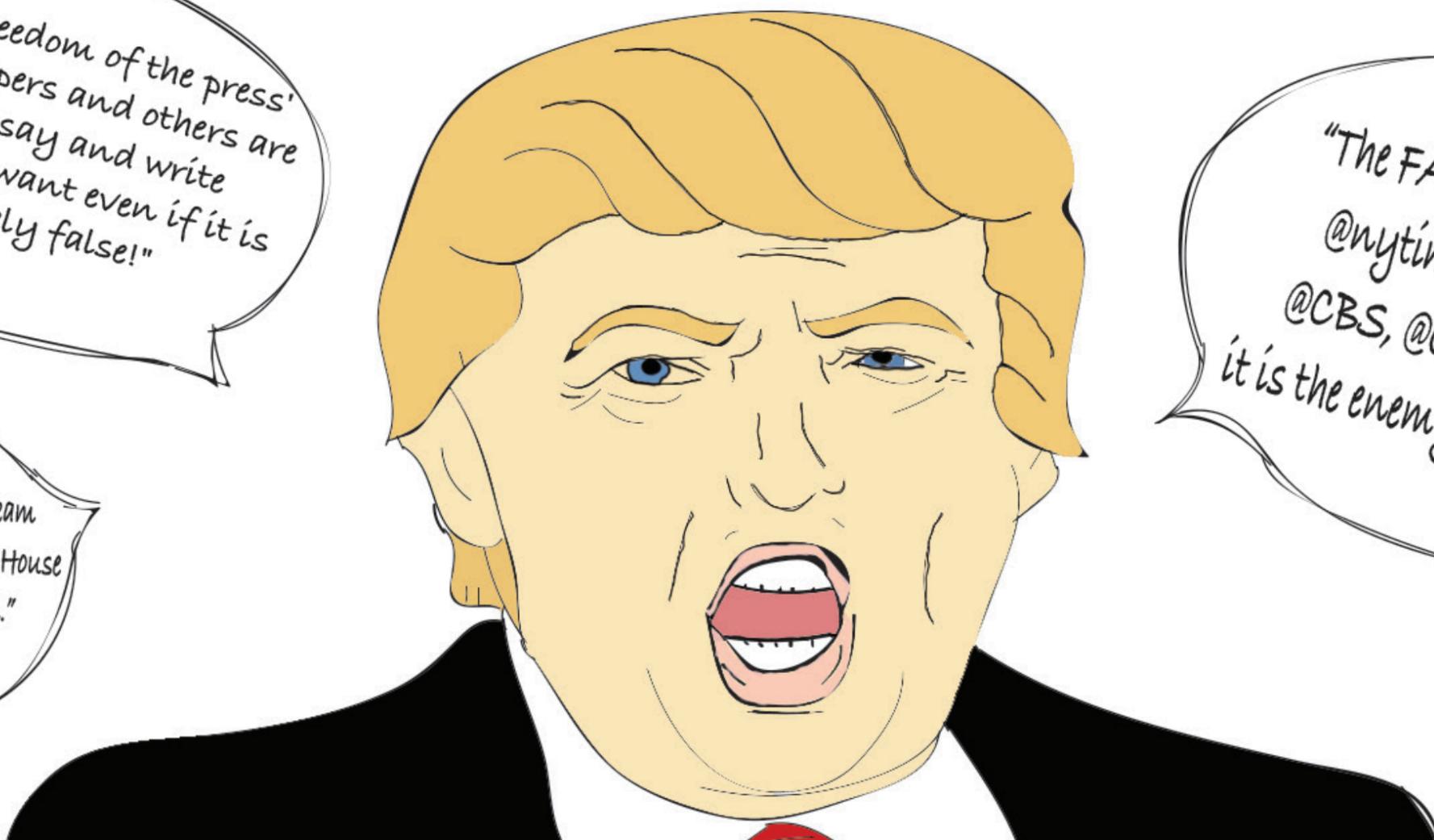
"I think it is a very vibrant time for the First Amendment because of Trump. This country is 241 years old. The First Amendment has withstood the test of time and it will withstand this president," Dennis said. "Although Trump infuriates me with his negative take on the media and his desire to stifle the media, it's not going to happen, and I think it is only going to make journalism stronger."

Regardless of the backlash many journalists face for their work, Morgan emphasizes the importance of accurate and balanced student coverage during this time.

"When you get something wrong, you give fodder to those who critique you saying that you're fake news, enemies to the American people," Morgan said. "The best thing we can do as the media is to make the story right." 

"It is not 'freedom of the press' when newspapers and others are allowed to say and write whatever they want even if it is completely false!"

"Don't believe the main stream (fake news) media. The White House is running VERY WELL."



"The FAKE NEWS media (failing @nytimes, @NBCNews, @ABC, @CBS, @CNN) is not my enemy, it is the enemy of the American People!"

Featured: MEDIA MADNESS: President Trump has recently criticized the media for publishing "fake" and biased news. The White House barred the New York Times, CNN, Politico, BuzzFeed, Los Angeles Times and others they accused of "false reporting" on Feb. 24.