

# HIS VIEW: Freedom of speech applies to everyone

By Henry D. Johnston

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Johnston

Webster defines the word freedom as "the quality or state of being free." Many Americans quantify freedom in a number of key categories including freedom of religion, freedom of speech and freedom of the press.

Unless, of course, you're Mike Browne.

In his letter to the editor Sept. 19, Browne suggests that, along with Ed Iverson and Michael J. O'Neill, I'm not a very good writer, and somehow my writings do everyone a disservice. He went on to suggest I should be replaced only with writers he agrees with.

Really?

Such a statement is shocking, especially since Browne proclaimed himself a liberal who believes in civil liberties for all (Letter to the editor, Sept. 25). I wouldn't have thought a liberal such as Browne would suggest the Daily News fire all its conservative columnists and replace them with, ahem, "enlightened" folks Browne approves.

Doing so would be a real disservice to the readership of this newspaper and a clear violation of my rights as a columnist.

But you must remember that, when dealing with liberals, they're always right, and you're always wrong. Unless, of course, you're also a liberal, then you simply hold a "differing viewpoint."

Think back to the Bush administration with the protest signs and buttons with such phrases as "Bush is a Warmonger" and "Bush Lied, Soldiers Died." Do you remember all the Hollywood celebrities taking potshots at the president and then having the severity of their remarks ignored by the mainstream press?

It seems that what used to pass as appropriate "political discourse," when spoken by the left, is now deemed "racist" and "disrespectful" when spoken by the right.

Why did the rules change? Why is it now inappropriate to question President Obama and his motives, even though it was appropriate to call Bush "little Hitler"?

Clearly, a double standard exists.

A few years ago, in our own city, it seemed that Pastor Doug Wilson was the man to hate. I remember when we were told "it's all right" to bash Christ Church and what they stood for simply because of their religion.

The crusade against Wilson that was led by the liberals of Moscow was disgusting to say the least.

I was (and still am) of the belief that what Wilson and his followers believe is their right, even though I don't agree with it. We as citizens cannot pick and choose who holds correct views and, moreover, we cannot dictate what religions can or cannot be practiced in Moscow.

Just because you don't agree with what is written in this space by some writers is no reason to call for our replacement by folks that you approve of. And really, I highly doubt that you are being forced to read these "mean, uninformed, illogical essays" anyway. If you don't like what you're reading, stop and move on.

Respect for all viewpoints is important if a true freedom of the press is to be maintained. Chuck Pezeshki and I are on polar opposites of the political spectrum, yet we have a very cordial relationship. He shops at my store and, even though we toss a few jabs back and forth during the course of his visit, we always shake hands and walk away with smiles.

I'd call that true respect for an opposing viewpoint.

In summation, I would like to remind all readers of my column that the First Amendment covers everyone, not just those who believe the way you do.

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