

The First Amendment as a Shield, Not a Weapon: A Perspective

from the Front Lines

There is no disputing two fundamental truths: the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution protects the right to express ideas without government censorship, and it guarantees the right to gather **peacefully** for protest. However, as an officer who has managed skirmish lines on-duty and watched demonstrations unfold across the country off-duty, I have seen these protections increasingly used as a veil for unlawful behavior.

An assembly becomes unlawful the moment it violates the spirit of the Amendment. Inciting riots, throwing objects, challenging officers, and obstructing traffic are the antithesis of "peaceful." Yet, amid these scenes, two slogans are consistently thrust into our faces: "*F#@ Trump!*"* and "**Abolish ICE.**"

The Path of Objective Discernment

Before I take a stand on an issue—especially a “hill I’m willing to die on”—I look at the matter from every angle with an objective mindset. I evaluate those associated with the subject. If I am delving into a theological matter, I look to trusted pastors who align with my values. I do not let pro athletes, musical artists, or “Hollywood elitists” sway my opinion simply because they hold influence. In fact, I have noticed a consistent pattern: once I find the truth through objective study, it is often the exact opposite of what those elitists profess.

It is a tragedy to see our nation jump on media-driven bandwagons. While many focus their displeasure on recent incidents in Minnesota, they conveniently overlook the **\$9 billion in taxpayer waste** lost to fraud within various Minnesota social service programs.

A Global Perspective on Compassion

When I hear the vitriol directed at the presidency, I feel a profound sense of sorrow. I find myself wanting to apologize to the world on behalf of the American people:

- **To the Jewish Community:** How do those in America feel about a leader who protected them against the horrific terror of an attack that claimed 1,200 lives in a single day in Israel?
- **To the People of Venezuela:** A nation once defined by economic collapse under a dictatorship is now rejoicing after being liberated by U.S.-led forces under the leadership of the man protesters vilify.
- **To the People of Iran:** I apologize to those who desperately need regime change, knowing our President stands with them against a regime that has killed 50,000 of its own.
- **To India and Pakistan:** When these two neighbors stood on the brink of a devastating war, it was American intervention that called for a ceasefire, saving countless lives.

I even think of the unborn—the little souls who, without this President's legislation, would never have the chance to grow up and become members of society. It is easy to shout slogans; it is much harder to face the people whose lives have been saved by the very policies being protested.

The Irony of Protection and the Reality of ICE

The movement to "Abolish ICE" is fueled by media portrayals that strip context from law enforcement encounters. If we abolish this agency, what do we tell the **thousands of families** who lose a loved one to fentanyl smuggled across our borders? What do we

tell legal immigrants who spent years of hard work and money to enter this country lawfully? Choosing to enter the U.S. is a decision, and there are consequences for not doing so legally.

Recent tragedies in Minnesota are often used to vilify the agency, but the facts suggest a different story. Whether it is a suspect repeatedly appearing at protests armed with a handgun or a driver accelerating a vehicle toward an officer, these actions transition a "peaceful protest" into an unlawful, lethal threat.

I have seen this disconnect firsthand. I recall saving a young couple from an armed intruder breaking into their kitchen, only to see anti-police signs in their living room and be called a "pig" by their relative moments later. **We are the people they call in their moment of terror, yet we are the first they vilify when the danger is gone.**

A Foundation of Faith

I am sorry to our President, who works relentlessly to keep our nation safer than it has ever been—a leader whose stated objective is to return America to **“One Nation Under God.”** To the officers across our nation who feel their citizenry has turned their backs on them: do not lose heart.

I find my peace not in the influence of the world, but in the Word:

- **John 16:33:** Jesus said, *“I have told you these things, so that you may have peace. In this world, you will have trouble. But take heart! For I have overcome the world.”*
- **Matthew 5:44:** *“But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.”*

I am saddened by the loss of life and have deep sympathy for the families left behind. But I also have empathy for the officers thrust into these circumstances while trying to

carry out their duty. The First Amendment is a gift intended to facilitate civil discourse—not to shield those who seek to tear down the very systems that keep us safe.

-Written by Sergeant and Chaplain Eric Rogers- Los Angeles Police Dept who has recently released a book entitled “9 Lives, From Close Calls to End of Watch”. Video preview of book can be found at: www.lapd9lives.squarespace.com

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