Twitter Thread by Noah Berlatsky



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Trump is the federal government. the 1st amendment was specifically supposed to prevent government interference with the press.

demanding that media publish the presidents words with no editorial interference is exactly what the founders were worried about when they created 1A.

> It\u2019s a little surreal to see the traditional anti-censorship discourse newly applied to the most powerful man in the world right after he incited a mob that attacked a rival branch of government to overturn a free and fair election.
>
> — Matt Pearce \U0001f985 (@mattdpearce) January 9, 2021

free speech absolutists demand (checks notes) that the NYT allow Trump to write all its headlines.

the first amendment was not meant to allow the president to seize control of all media. it seems weird that you have to explain this to free speech defenders.

this is what happens though when you fetishize the speech act and completely lose track of what freedom of speech was supposed to do in the first place.

the president is literally the person the 1A is supposed to *protect media from.* It's supposed to allow media to criticize him and have an editorial policy independent of the government!

but the ACLU is hemming and hawing and furrowing its brow because twitter (a) criticized the president and (b) insisted it had the right to an independent editorial policy!

I'd feel like we were in opposite land if I were not so wearisomely familiar with free speech absolutists and their garbage bullshit.

twitter is odd because it feels like we're all sort of in an equal space and can yell at each other equally but in fact the president of the united states is hugely powerful, and misused that power to force twitter to let him misuse their platform despite their editorial policy.

it was the equivalent of trump demanding a weekly op ed in the NYT without editing. (a Greenwald deal, if you will.)

an actual instance of free speech violation on the internet is the censorship of sex workers, who have been targeted for silencing by the federal government through various laws.

to avoid prosecution, sites online ban sex workers and try to push them off platforms.

that's federal silencing of speech.

twitter refusing to bow to trump and hewing to their own editorial standards despite his threats is an exercise of freedom of speech.

this shouldn't be that hard.

the first amendment is as much about power as about speech.

interpreting it as if it has nothing to say about disproportions of power leaves you nattering nonsense.