Twitter Thread by Matt Taibbi



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Thread. 1) Thirty or forty years ago, supporting free speech was understood to be a non-negotiable core value of the liberal left.

2) Pop culture endlessly celebrated liberalism's uncompromising support of speech rights — from The People Vs. Larry Flynt to Field of Dreams to The American President. https://t.co/ZWpiCOocUi

3) Think of "President Shepard's" speech in "The American President" about how "America isn't easy" and citizenship requires we "acknowledge a man whose words make your blood boil." https://t.co/ZWpiCOocUi

4) That started to change long before Trump. As "The American President" came out, Bill Clinton was pushing the first Internet censorship laws. https://t.co/ZWpiCOocUi

When the PATRIOT Act passed, every Democrat but one in both houses voted yes. Russ Feingold, Independent Bernie Sanders, and three Republicans voted no. https://t.co/ZWpiCOocUi

6) After Trump and especially after Charlottesville, mainstream Democrats mostly stopped defending the principle of free speech. https://t.co/ZWpiCOocUi

7) A leaked ACLU memo read: "Our defense of speech may have a greater or lesser harmful impact on the equality and justice work to which we are also committed." https://t.co/ZWpiCOocUi

8) Democratic lawmakers pressured Internet companies to censor more and activists cheered as Internet companies suppressed books like "Irreversible Damage." https://t.co/ZWpiCOocUi

9) This gave Republicans a political opening to sell themselves as defenders of speech rights. But they've blown it so far. https://t.co/ZWpiCOocUi

10) So far, the signature Republican responses to censorship have been legislative bans as batty as the worst lefty speech codes. https://t.co/ZWpiCOocUi

11) Either that, or Republican lawmakers are pressing firms like Barnes and Noble to suppress books like “Gender Queer” — new-age lefty censorship in reverse. https://t.co/ZWpiCOocUi

12) From the lab-leak fact-checking fiasco to the insane overreaction to @ElonMusk’s attempted purchase of Twitter, it’s clear we need an effective non-partisan lobby to defend free expression. https://t.co/ZWpiCOocUi

@elonmusk 13) The announcement of a major expansion by the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education (@theFIREorg) is a step on the road to such a lobby. https://t.co/ZWpiCOocUi

@elonmusk @TheFIREorg 14) Either way, neither of the two parties currently shows much interest in the principle of free speech, which really sucks and means those rights are in danger. https://t.co/ZWpiCOocUi

@elonmusk @TheFIREorg 15) The worst case is a world where censorship will be yet another underreported area of near-total consensus between the two parties, like military spending, bailouts, and corporate taxation. We're almost there. https://t.co/ZWpiCOocUi