

Our Uncivil War

March 22, 2022

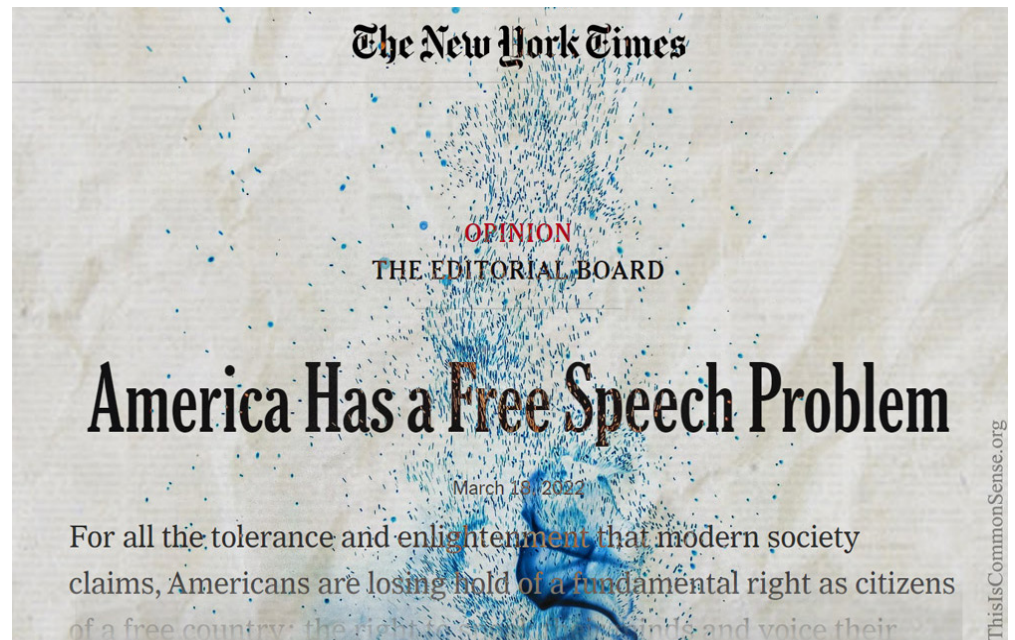
The New York Times admits it: “America Has a Free Speech Problem.” But the March 18 editorial, while trying carefully to distinguish one kind of speech issue from another, fails to acknowledge the full extent of the problem.

The trouble, you guessed it, is partly a left *versus* right issue: “Many on the left refuse to acknowledge that cancel culture exists at all, believing that those who complain about it are offering cover for bigots to peddle hate speech,” which strikes me as a fairly accurate account. But the *Times* cannot help itself — *the right must be made to seem worse*. “Many on the

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right,” the editorial goes on, “for all their braying about cancel culture, have embraced an even more extreme version of censoriousness as a bulwark against a rapidly changing society, with laws that would ban books, stifle teachers and discourage open discussion in classrooms.”

Sans persuasive examples — the *Times* provides none — I reject this claim as a grave misunderstanding of



current trends. What has been happening is not the banning of books, but the mere removal of them from public school libraries and/or curricula.

“Stifling teachers” is not a thing, really. Taxpayer-funded teachers have no more right to teach anything they want than taxpayer-funded police have the right to enforce whatever laws they want.

The multi-racial backlash against the left, most recently in Virginia, was a movement of parents upset over cultural Marxist indoctrination on racial issues . . . taking the place of quality education.

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That being said, the *Times* does get something right: “When speech is stifled or when dissenters are shut out of public discourse, a society also loses its ability to resolve conflict, and it faces the risk of political violence.”

Yes, it’s a problem.

This is Common Sense. I’m Paul Jacob.