

What Happened to “Journalism” in the “Greatest Democracy on Earth”?

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Region: [USA](#)

Theme: [History](#), [Media Disinformation](#)

Before discussing the arrest of Assange in some depth, by way of an introduction, its important to mention a **Gore Vidal** observation

“We Americans should stop going around babbling about how we’re the greatest democracy on earth, when we’re not even a democracy. We are a sort of militarised republic. American democracy is apparently a place where numerous elections are held at great cost without issues and with interchangeable candidates, where fifty percent of people won’t vote, and fifty percent don’t read newspapers. I hope it’s the same fifty percent.” concluding “The genius of our ruling class is that it has kept a majority of the people from ever questioning the inequity of a system where most people drudge along, paying heavy taxes for which they get nothing in return”

Assange was carrying a copy of “Gore Vidal: History of the National Security State & Vidal on America” when he was arrested last Thursday at the Ecuadoran Embassy in London.

By Friday afternoon, the 2014 publication was No. 35 on Amazon. “Gore Vidal” features conversations between the author-playwright and Paul Jay, founder of The Real News Network, a non-profit with a stated mission of “independent, verifiable, fact-based journalism.”

Vidal, who died in 2012 at age 86, had a longtime aversion to U.S. military force and surveillance and the unbridled power in Washington.

Assange hadn’t left the Embassy since 2012 for fear of arrest and extradition to the U.S. for publishing thousands of classified military and diplomatic cables.

Assange, whatever one thinks of his personality traits, is still a publisher and is irrefutably entitled to the same First Amendment protections as any other US citizen.... only he’s NOT a US citizen - think about that for a moment.

The Knight First Amendment Institute was established in 2016 by one of the most famous universities in America, Columbia University in combination with the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation to safeguard free expression in the shifting landscape of the digital age.

The Institute made one of the first professional comments in public on the case made against Julian Assange by the US Government. “The indictment and the Justice Department’s press release treat everyday journalistic practices as part of a criminal conspiracy,” **Executive Director Jameel Jaffer** said in a statement provided to the equally prestigious Columbia Journalism Review “Whether the government will be able to establish a violation of the hacking

statute remains to be seen, but it's very troubling that the indictment sweeps in activities that are not just lawful but essential to press freedom; activities like cultivating sources, protecting sources' identities, and communicating with sources securely."

There seems so far no official statement about Assange since his arrest from the greatest investigative journalist of our age, **Seymour Hersh**, whom one can imagine is wisely keeping his powder dry to see how things develop.

In the present absence of his opinion, here are some links to comments made by a few other notable persons, not in order of importance:

1. [Daniel Ellsberg On Assange Arrest: The Beginning of the End For Press Freedom](#)
2. [Chomsky: Arrest of Assange Is "Scandalous" and Highlights Shocking Extraterritorial Reach of U.S.](#)
3. Partnering with Assange was unpleasant. But work like his is crucial. - The Washington Post

[By Alan Rusbridger](#) who is a former editor in chief of the Guardian. He is principal of Lady Margaret Hall in Oxford and chairs the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism.

A pertinent question posed from the above very informative and explanatory piece on Assange:

"...if Assange is in the dock, why not the editors of the Guardian, the Times, Le Monde, Der Spiegel, the Hindu, El Pais and numerous others?"

The only note of criticism of the Alan Rusbridger piece is where he says "Educated, journalist working for a respectable organization". This has nothing to do with it. There were no institutions providing degrees in journalism back in 1789 when the US First Amendment was written into the US Constitution. There were no "respectable organizations" either, just a bunch of enterprising individuals, some well intentioned, some crooked, who published newspapers, magazines, pamphlets and all sorts of stuff.

"Freedom of the Press" does not refer to snobs who sniff each other's bottoms and act like they know everything; it literally refers to the Freedom to Print and disseminate whatever you want. "Freedom of Speech" guarantees our right to speak our minds in the public square, and the government is required to protect us from being stopped by its own agents or others in the community. Your voice can carry only so far, so to be able to "speak" to a wider audience you need a different medium. In the 18th century that was the printing press. You could print your "speech" and distribute it at will to people. The government cannot infringe on your right to do so, and other private parties cannot do so either. They do have recourse if you slander them, misrepresent them or steal from them (copyright) etc.... But it has nothing whatsoever to do with being a member of the media circus we call journalism today with its coziness to power, with its sense of self-importance and its base corruption with money and influence.

And finally I end with the view as of April 11, from one of the many Russian English language publications (The Saker), to satisfy the insatiable appetite of those afflicted with 'Russophobia'.

“What happened is this: since the legacy Zionist-media hates Assange and since they were embarrassed by having this Uber-whistle-blower locked away for 7 years for daring to reveal the true nature of the Anglo/Zionist Empire, they did not have anybody in front of the Ecuadorian Embassy when Assange was rendered. Now they have to humiliate themselves and ask RT (whom they hate and constantly insult) for some footage.

Here is Margarita Simonian’s brilliant reaction (translated from Russian) describing this state of affairs:

The most obvious sentence one could pass over total disgrace the world media has become can be seen in the fact that nobody was here to film the arrest of Julian Assange, only us (RT). That in spite of the fact that everybody already knew that he would be expelled. Now they have to come and ask for our footage. CNN and The Guardian have the gall to call us and ask how it is that we were the only ones to get this footage. It’s obvious: you are just the spineless hypocritical servants of your Establishment and not journalists at all. This is why such a thing happened.

As for Russian spokesperson, **Maria Zakharova**, her succinct comment speaks for itself and I believe for the majority of us, the people of the world.

“The hand of ‘democracy’ chokes the neck of freedom.”

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