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The first Amendment is extremely prudent, not only in the corporate world of media and press, but in our public schools as well. The First Amendment basically states that all Americans have freedom of speech and press, as well as the right to assemble peacefully or petition the government. If that is so, then why are school newspapers and yearbooks subjected to the doom of censorship? Aspiring teenage writers are shut out because of an inappropriate word or phrase in their poems and stories, therefore condemning them to a world of conformity and censorship. According to the First Amendment, we have the right to petition and protest, so why shouldn't we take a stand for our art? I feel like the importance of the First Amendment is buried by the weight of our cowering administrators who fear the responses they receive for allowing "inappropriate writing." Why is it that when we were first given this essay topic in class, three-fourths of the students didn't even know what the First Amendment was? I believe it is something that should be implemented in our minds from the very start; we should be able to recite it as easily as the Pledge of Allegiance. So why can't we?

I recall a situation that happened a few years ago in my high school. The buzz and excitement for the new yearbook was tangible in the air. Everyone mused over what was inside, however they didn't even come close. When the 2005-2006 yearbooks were released and people saw the section entitled "Teen Issues," they were shocked. The mini ten-page insert gave information and statistics on everything from teen pregnancy to drug and alcohol use, which proved to be extremely controversial-especially to parents and administrators. But why was it such a big deal? Teens often have to face these issues, and the insert offered insightful information on dealing with those problems. The school system should have recognized this as mature awareness; however they simply regarded the whole situation as inappropriate.

Our school's literary magazine, threshold, is subject to censorship as well. So many great writings cannot be included because of profanities or inappropriate content. These students are being shut out from their imaginative minds and freedom to speak out for what they believe in; they are being denied their First Amendment rights. The people who produce these works of art are simply expressing themselves and exercising their rights. Why won't we fight to defend our rights? Don't we care anymore?