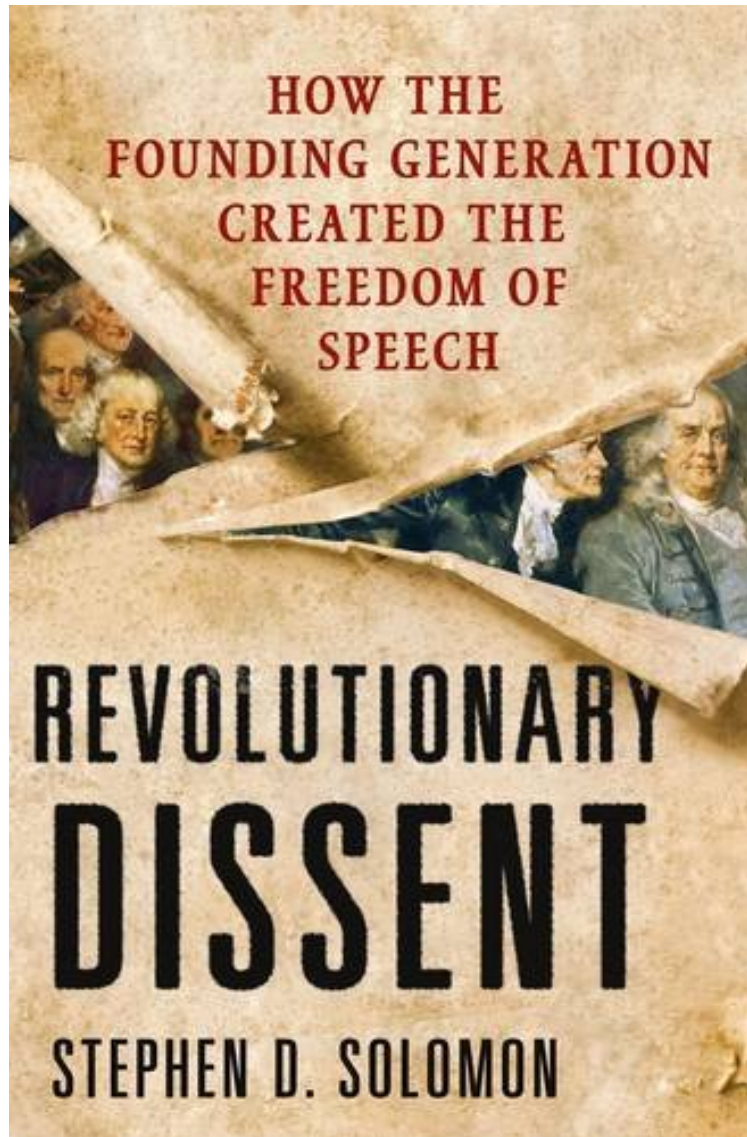


(Free) Revolutionary Dissent: How the Founding Generation Created the Freedom of Speech

## Revolutionary Dissent: How the Founding Generation Created the Freedom of Speech

*Stephen D. Solomon*

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**Stephen D. Solomon : Revolutionary Dissent: How the Founding Generation Created the Freedom of Speech** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Revolutionary Dissent: How the Founding Generation Created the Freedom of Speech:

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before the ready availability of the printed word, colonists were subject to arrest and prosecution for libeling the government. Most astounding is the fact that if the accusation were in fact true, the crime was more severe and the punishment more harsh. The crown made one big mistake in passing the stamp act. Rebels attacked those men paid by the crown to sell stamped paper. They were burned in effigy, their homes destroyed and the crown had no one to administer their stamp act even before the law took effect. The freedom of speech took hold in the colonies largely through jury nullification. People put on trial for libel admitted breaking the laws but juries found them not guilty. The crown was at a loss. Of course three hundred years later, England and even Canada still don't have free speech. Individuals can be arrested and confined simply for stating the truth about government indiscretions. Until recent times, we benefited from a first amendment that was unassailable. Even leftists demanded the freedom of speech. All that has changed in recent times as the left is demanding that any speech considered hurtful or offensive must be criminal. We have gone full circle in just 250 years.

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. A close and detailed examination of both familiar and obscure sources of American press and speech rights. By J. Cadwallader Prof. Solomon covers three and a half centuries of American political persecution - from early seventeenth century religious-based cases, to a brief summary of Sullivan vs. NYT in the civil rights struggle of the 1960s. He primarily focuses on criminal actions involving freedom of the press in the immediate pre- and post- revolutionary era, the development of the 1st Amendment, and the Alien and Sedition Acts of the Adams administration. There are more cursory discussions involving attendant rights of speech, religion, and mere thought and conscience. It is an excellent background and preparation to consider modern instances of the same issues, such as the Citizens United case, the controversy and advantages of tax-exempt status of certain advocacy groups, and the more general speech and content regulations embedded in state and federal election laws.

4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. History brought to life. By Customer The writing of history can be dry and removed. This book brings together both the forces of historical change and the thoughts and feelings of those involved. The wide scope of original materials evidently involved tremendous research with further patience sorting through it all to bring out a focused picture of this battle of ideas. Now we know the true value of our first amendment.

When members of the founding generation protested against British authority, debated separation, and then ratified the Constitution, they formed the American political character we know today- raucous, intemperate, and often mean-spirited. Revolutionary Dissent brings alive a world of colorful and stormy protests that included effigies, pamphlets, songs, sermons, cartoons, letters and liberty trees. Solomon explores through a series of chronological narratives how Americans of the Revolutionary period employed robust speech against the British and against each other. Uninhibited dissent provided a distinctly American meaning to the First Amendment's guarantees of freedom of speech and press at a time when the legal doctrine inherited from England allowed prosecutions of those who criticized government. Solomon discovers the wellspring in our revolutionary past for today's satirists like Jon Stewart and Stephen Colbert, pundits like Rush Limbaugh and Keith Olbermann, and protests like flag burning and street demonstrations. From the inflammatory engravings of Paul Revere, the political theater of Alexander McDougall, the liberty tree protests of Ebenezer McIntosh and the oratory of Patrick Henry, Solomon shares the stories of the dissenters who created the American idea of the liberty of thought. This is truly a revelatory work on the history of free expression in America.

"Solomon's mix of close history...and accessible popular history reiterates the value of examining the historical precedents to America's revered commitment to freedom of expression." Publisher's Weekly "A cogent, organized history of the beginnings of free speech in the United States." Kirkus s "Stephen Solomon has with singular creativity and command of an elusive subject crafted in Revolutionary Dissent a masterful account of how the nation's founding generation secured constitutional protection for free speech and press. What emerges in this seminal work is a four-century account of a uniquely American doctrine of free expression, at a time when no other nation even those as close as Canada and Australia and all other Western democracies remotely matched the U.S. example in this regard. Solomon has distilled the remarkably varied commitment to enduring core values of free expression by those patriots who comprised the founding generation. A masterful Afterword reminds us that, despite its sharp divisions, even an otherwise contentious high Court retains such a consensus." Robert O'Neil, University Professor Emeritus, University of Virginia School of Law "The right to speak freely, especially about important political matters, and then to voice opinions others vigorously condemn, is essential to any society that prizes democratic values, and it is a right that is always attacked as a destabilizing and counter-productive force. That is as true today, as it was during the 1950s, the 1920s, World War I, the Civil War, and John Adams presidency. It is into this endless struggle over preserving democratic vitality that Stephen D. Solomon submits his stunning, fascinating, and engaging history of how the nation's Founding Generation gave a wide berth to the expression of political dissent. It is a remarkable work of scholarship that exudes freshness and is written for a broad audience." David Rudenstine, Benjamin N. Cardozo School of Law's Sheldon H. Solow Professor of Law, Yeshiva University "Solomon's compelling stories of the raucous political speech of the founding generation give us a ringside seat to the protest rallies, provocative cartoons and clever

rhetoric that forever embedded freedom of expression in our national character. Revolutionary Dissent is a must-read for all who want to understand the birth of free speech and press in America and how essential it is to continue protecting these freedoms in our democracy." Nadine Strossen, John Marshall Harlan II Professor, New York Law School "This splendid book contains nine snapshots of courageous Americans combatting prosecution for seditious libel...Solomons cumulative accounts of freedom-loving Americans could well be used today in interpreting First Amendment cases...engagingly written." John P. Kaminski, Director, The Center for the Study of the American Revolution, University of Wisconsin-Madison About the Author STEPHEN D. SOLOMON is an associate professor at the Arthur L. Carter Journalism Institute at New York University. A graduate of Georgetown University Law Center, he teaches First Amendment law to graduate and undergraduate students. He has written for numerous national publications including The New York Times Magazine, Fortune, and The New Republic, and has been recognized with the Gerald Loeb Award and the Hillman Prize. His last book, *Ellery's Protest*, told the story of the Supreme Court's controversial decision forbidding state-sponsored prayer and Bible reading in public schools.