



# Revolutionary Sparks: Freedom of Expression in Modern America

*Margaret A. Blanchard*

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The governmental pledge to the American people is found in the First Amendment: "Congress shall make no law...abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press." Written more than two hundred years ago, these words now protect a wide range of expressive activity. A broad-gauged discussion of freedom of expression in America, this book begins by studying the period after the Civil War and Reconstruction when new and unsettling ideas appeared with great regularity on the American scene. So many of these ideas were floating around during this period that the nation's leaders often joined forces to repress aberrant notions. In response to such suppression, individuals seeking to better their lives through the expression of new ideas began to demand their rights to speak, write, and associate together to advance their points of view. Blanchard traces this contest for control through the Watergate scandal of the 1970s and the Reagan and early Bush administrations. Blanchard presents a lively discussion of freedom of speech ranging from questions of national security to those of public morality, from loyalty during times of national stress to the right to preach on a public street corner. Including examinations of controversies involving the press, the national government, the Supreme Court, and civil liberties and civil rights concerns, *Revolutionary Sparks* presents a strong case for the right of Americans to speak their minds and to have access to knowledge necessary for informed self-government.

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#### **Dustin Davis:**

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