



## The First Amendment and Georgia's Journalists

Use this discussion guide to further explore the video resource, *The First Amendment and Georgia's Journalists*.

### "The Reality of Our Liberty"

Where does this quote come from? Read this anecdote from *Our White House: Looking In, Looking Out* from the [National Children's Book and Literacy Alliance](#).

While visiting Thomas Jefferson, the German scientist Baron Alexander von Humboldt came upon a newspaper that included abusive articles about the president. The Baron, aghast, asked why such libels were allowed. Jefferson replied, "Put that paper in your pocket, and should you hear the reality of our liberty, the freedom of the press questioned, show them this paper, and tell them where you found it."

What do you think Jefferson meant by "the reality of our liberty"? Why did Jefferson, and the other Founders, think a press free from government control was essential for the new nation to survive?

### Part I: A Glimpse at the Past

#### Timeline Activity

The video references the Digital Library of Georgia's online exhibit, [Covers Dixie Like the Dew: A History of Newspaper Journalism in Georgia](#). Have students create a timeline of newspapers and ask them to research and include additional modes of news media (radio, television, etc.) in Georgia.

Questions to consider:

- What are the local news outlets in your community (local paper, radio station, etc.)?
- What is the history of your local newspaper? Is it still in print today?

Look at your local newspaper to see what news seems to be important to your community.

- What kind of stories are included?
- What is the editorial about?
- If you were a reporter, what important story about your community would you cover?

### Part II: Georgia's Journalists and the Impact of the Printed Word

#### The Cherokee Phoenix

One of the first items printed in the *Cherokee Phoenix* was the Constitution of the Cherokee Nation. Compare and contrast the preamble of this document with the United States Constitution.

### Constitution of the Cherokee Nation

We the Representatives of the people of the Cherokee Nation, in Convention assembled in order to establish justice ensure tranquility, promote our common welfare, and secure to ourselves and our posterity the blessings of liberty, acknowledging with humility and gratitude the goodness of the sovereign ruler of the Universe affording us an opportunity so favorable to the design and imploring his aid and direction in its accomplishments do ordain and establish this Constitution for the Government of the Cherokee Nation.

### United States Constitution

We the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defence, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.

[View Abraham Baldwin's annotated draft copy of the U.S. Constitution at the Georgia Historical Society.](#)

The *Cherokee Phoenix*, like other newspapers of the time, included short articles from around the world. The March 6, 1828, issue contained the story, “New species of Brilliants.”

*New species of Brilliants.*- At a ball in Calcutta, a lady, remarkable for the splendour of her dress and ornaments, attracted the eyes of all the company on entering the ball room. Rows of brilliants, which threw around her a light like that of the fabulous carbuncles of the Arabian Nights, glittered down her dress, and eclipsed all the jewels in the room. When the other ladies, desirous of examining her sumptuous ornaments, drew near, and began to pry into the mystery, it was discovered that the ingenious fair one had imprisoned some hundreds of fire flies in little bags of muslin, the *ventus dextilis* of Petronius; and that proud to adorn so much beauty, they fluttered as she moved, & gave her the appearance of being decked out with jewels of living fire.

Questions to consider:

- What kind of writing is this? Would it be considered investigative reporting, political commentary, scientific writing, or society coverage?
- Define the bolded words. Do they help you understand the description?
- Create an illustration or political cartoon to accompany this article.

### The Pulitzer Prize

In the video, we discuss Julian and Julia Harris and Ralph McGill, who were awarded the Pulitzer Prize in journalism.

Visit the [History of The Pulitzer Prizes](#) to learn more about [Joseph Pulitzer](#), why he founded the Prize, and why these Georgia journalists were selected to receive the award.

- [Ralph McGill](#)
- [Julian and Julia Harris at the \*Columbus Enquirer Sun\*](#)

Questions to consider:

- Why did Pulitzer decide to establish the award?
- Why were the topics the Harrises and McGill wrote about so controversial?
- Investigate recent Pulitzer Prize winners in journalism. What are some of the topics addressed in their writing?

The school mentioned in McGill's editorial, *A Church, A School*, was Clinton High School, located in Clinton, Tennessee. One of the students who attended the school during integration was Jo Ann Allen Boyce, who wrote in poetic form about her experience in the book, *This Promise of Change: One Girl's Story in the Fight for School Equality*.

Chapter Eight of her book is the poem, "Me, Myself, and I."

*Billie Holiday sings the song,  
"Me, Myself, and I."  
I Myself. Me. You.  
See me. Can you try?*

*Clinton High kids,  
who will you see?  
A "Negro girl"?  
The genuine me?  
The me who laughs,  
the me who sings,  
the me who prays,  
the me with wings.  
Will you see me?  
Outside and in?  
Mind. Heart. Soul, Skin.*

*Me, myself, and I  
are very much like you.  
Daughter, sister, neighbor, friend -  
See me, through and through.*

Questions to consider:

- Based on the poem, do you think Jo Ann is nervous about going to Clinton High School?
- What does she want the other students to know about her?
- Have you ever felt like you were unseen? What do you want people to understand about you?
- How does the message of this poem connect to [McGill's editorial, \*A Church, A School?\*](#)

### Freedom of the Press During Wartime

Early in the life of the United States, freedom of speech and freedom of the press were challenged by the [Sedition Act of 1798](#). President John Adams particularly targeted newspapers that were critical of his administration. After the election of 1800, President Thomas Jefferson allowed the Act to expire.

In 1918, President Woodrow Wilson signed a new Sedition Act to suppress any opposition to the United States' involvement in World War I.

It has not been uncommon for the federal government to limit what information can be made public during wartime in order to safeguard troops and military operations. However, direct suppression due to disagreement with policy decisions is a violation of the first amendment.

In the video, we highlight two Georgia journalists whose work was directly related to telling the story of World War II.

Peyton T. Anderson was a Public Relations Officer assigned to the Seventh Fleet in the Pacific Theatre. His job was to tell the story of the U.S. military operations in the fight against Japan. Through both photographs and the written word, Anderson and his team were instrumental in sharing the successes and challenges faced in the Pacific.

Lois Dozier was an effective communicator to those on the home front. Through her column, *Letters from Lois*, she was able to paint a picture of a soldier's life for those at home. This connection was invaluable to both the military personnel abroad and the communities at home.

Visit "[Collection Highlights: Letters from Lois](#)" at the Georgia Historical Society.

During WWII, most letters coming from the theatres of war was in the form of "victory mail," or "V-mail." Letters were made smaller through the use of microfilm to conserve cargo space. Visit the [National Postal Museum](#) to learn more about V-mail during WWII.

Questions to consider:

- Under what circumstances would it be acceptable for the government to limit free speech in wartime? In what ways would it be unacceptable?

- What is sedition?
- Investigate examples in which individuals or newspapers were accused of sedition in the United States. What was the outcome of each case you investigated?

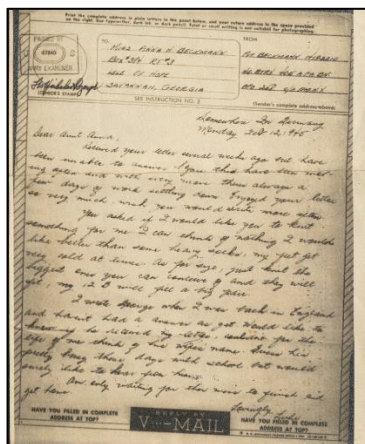
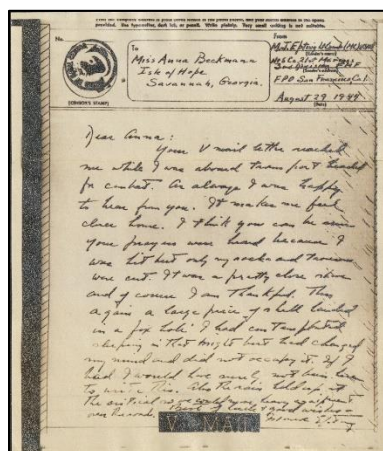
In your community:

- Is there someone in your family who served, or is currently serving, in the Armed Forces? Ask them about the importance of communication (letter, e-mail, text) when they are stationed away from home. What do they most appreciate about that communication? What are/were they allowed to share, based on their deployment location?

Victory Mail:

- Why were things dubbed “victory” during WWII (ex. Victory Gardens, Victory Bonds, Victory Mail)?
- Why were letters scanned and reduced in size? How did this help the war effort?

Analyze these [two V-mail letters from the Georgia Historical Society’s collection](#).



Use the [“Analyze a Written Document”](#) worksheet from the National Archives to learn about the writer, recipient, and content of the letters. You might need a magnifying glass!

### The Leo Frank Trial in the News

Historically, the news media has greatly influenced how the general public understands criminal trials. Usually, people do not attend or observe trials that do not impact them directly, and most are not aired, whether on radio, television or on the internet, in real time. Much of the coverage comes, accompanied by commentary, at the end of the day or close of the trial, from reporters who were in the room.

Watch the [Today in Georgia History](#) episode about the Leo Frank Trial.



Look at the [photograph of the courtroom](#). Describe what you see.

1. Who is on the witness stand? What is his role in the case?
2. Can you locate Leo Frank, the defendant, in the courtroom?
3. Describe the atmosphere in the courtroom. What are the physical conditions of the room? How do you think this affected people's emotions?

Take a look at these two primary sources connected to the Leo Frank murder trial, found in the ["First Amendment and Georgia's Journalists" Dropbox](#):

- A. *The Constitution*, Atlanta, GA, Sunday, July 17, 1913, article, "How Detectives Trailed Clues on Phagan Murder Case."
- B. "I wonder if they're all asleep in there?" political cartoon; *The Atlanta Constitution*, May 11, 1913.

Questions to consider:

- How does the article describe the work of the detectives? How many detectives worked on the case? What process for investigating the case is laid out in this article?
- What does the political cartoon imply about the detectives' work? How does this differ from the article?
- Can you think of a modern trial that has garnered similar attention and been sensationalized by the press?

Citations for items from the Georgia Historical Society collections

The Atlanta Constitution. "How Detectives Trailed Clues in Phagan Murder Case". July 27, 1913. GHS 2361 Steve Oney papers. GHS 2361-MS-OS2-0002. Georgia Historical Society, Savannah, Georgia.

Political cartoon. GHS 2361 Steve Oney papers. Georgia Historical Society, Savannah, Georgia.

Courtroom photograph. GHS 2361 Steve Oney papers. Georgia Historical Society, Savannah, Georgia.

Victory Mail. Item 4: Munroe J. Epting to Anna H. Beckmann. F.P.O., San Francisco, California, 1944 August 29. GHS 1152 World War II letters to Anna H. Beckmann. Georgia Historical Society, Savannah, Georgia.

Victory Mail. Item 6: Luke Beckmann to Anna H. Beckmann. Germany, 1945 February 12. GHS 1152 World War II letters to Anna H. Beckmann. Georgia Historical Society, Savannah, Georgia.