



CE&SJ NEWSLETTER

SPRING 2023 EDITION

The beginning of the Black Lives Matter protests was a breaking point resulting from decades of boiling tension. Following the murder of George Floyd, the subsequent protests showed the world that there were deeply ingrained issues of racism in America that continued to persist. Beginning in the Minneapolis-Saint Paul area, an estimated 15 to 26 million people across the country and the world joined arms to protest. These protests showed that there were people deeply enraged by racism in America. It was this summer that a group of thirty students from Legal Outreach, a nonprofit organization based in New York City, came together and created the Civic Engagement and Social Justice Council. These thirty students, all people of color and all deeply moved by the Black Lives Matter protest, took a stand to enact change in their communities with the help of education. The creation of the CESJ council is just one of the many results of the Black Lives Matter protests. Similarly, these protests brought global attention to the eminent issue of racism in America, ushered lawmakers to create progressive laws, and changed the way law enforcement collected and recorded data. Despite the many positive changes that resulted from the protests of 2020, it is clear that changes still need to be made. It is with the CESJ council, birthed in that world-altering summer, that we promise to spearhead said change through education. In this section, duly labeled the "Police Use of Force" section, we will continue to shed light on current, pressing cases relating to police authority.

THE NEW ARMBAND

With the rise of activism in the United States, questions arise that pertain to our freedom of speech. While cases like *Tinker v. Des Moines* have advocated for students' rights to free speech in schools, it is not unlimited and can be restricted accordingly, which is what UAlbany said in their defense against a freedom of speech lawsuit brought on by Amie Zimmerman. In a protest against fees for graduate students who teach, Zimmerman grabbed a megaphone and started chanting. Allegedly, she was then grabbed by an administrator, who removed the megaphone from her hand. UAlbany is a public university, making the university the government in this case, along with the teacher who grabbed the microphone. This is where Zimmerman claims her First Amendment rights were violated: by taking the megaphone from her, she argues, they also took away her free speech. However, UAlbany, in its short and brief statement addressing the lawsuit, contends that under the time, manner, and place doctrine interpretation of the First Amendment, government officials have leeway to restrict freedom of speech when it hinders the rights of others, such as by protesting in the middle of a busy highway. However, the overarching question is how the time, place, and manner doctrine affects a public university. One can say that the megaphones' loud properties disrupt the learning process for students, which aligns with the opinion in *Tinker v. Des Moines*. Others argue that since it was outside the building, it did not disrupt any learning. As this case has not been decided yet, what are your thoughts?

To what extent should students have free speech in schools?

What do you think the appropriate time, place, and manner of a protest are?

The decision in this case can reshape the way the legal system views protests, so stay informed.

AREPAS CAFE



"Venezuelan restaurant with a diner setting & a variety of arepas & dishes for eat-in or takeout."

A local favorite location for coffee, and Venezuelan dishes. Coming to this place brings a well of joy and happiness. Arepas Cafe holds a special place within Legal Outreach staff members.

NASHVILLE

On Monday, March 27, a 28-year-old shot 152 rounds killing three children and three adults at an elementary Christian school in Nashville, Tennessee. The victims are Cynthia Peak (age 61) a substitute teacher, Katherine Koonce (age 60), the head of the Covenant School, Mike Hill (age 61), a janitor at the school, and Evelyn Dieckhaus, Hallie Scruggs, and William Kinney, who are 9-year-old third graders.

This attack was premeditated, involving months of prior planning. The suspect, Audrey Hale who was a 28-year-old, had detailed drawings of the school, including the entry points of the building. Before the incident, the suspect legally bought seven firearms locally. Police also noted that they had an emotional disorder, which may have been depression or a type of anxiety, but it was never clarified. After the arrival of police, the suspect was fatally shot on site. This shooting occurred over the span of 14 minutes across two floors of the school, and in the camera footage, the suspect is seen carrying multiple weapons in their vest.

All we know is that Audrey Hale was a former student of the Covenant School. Authorities initially identified Hale as a woman but later clarified that Hale used he/him/his pronouns; however, the direct motive of the attack is still unknown.

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What you should take from this event?

On average, over 40,000 people die from gun violence annually while 85,000 people are injured annually in the United States. The U.S. has 25 times the gun homicide rate of similarly developed countries with over 400 million guns. Specifically, Tennessee ranks 11th in overall gun violence. Between 2011-2020, gun deaths skyrocketed by 48% in Tennessee, homicides increased by 103%, and suicides increased by 20%. Studies have shown, gun violence is the leading cause of death among children and teenagers as schools have been hit the hardest.

With a rise in gun ownership, there is a rise in gun violence. Tennessee currently has few laws that keep guns out of the wrong hands. Because of this schools, struggle to find solutions to protect their children and families without turning our schools into armed encampments.

Other states have enacted Red Flag Laws, Safe Gun Storage Laws, waiting periods and universal background checks, banned or restricted assault rifles and high capacity magazines, raised the age for gun purchases, and organized gun-buy back programs, which are programs that offer compensation to people who turn over their firearms through a government, law enforcement agency, or community group to reduce gun circulation. However, Tennessee has none of these. Limiting access to guns can prevent gun violence and save lives. Adopting these same strategies in Tennessee and prioritizing the lives of the people over guns allows for stricter gun laws and less gun violence.

NEW YORK HIGH LINE



"The New York High Line is a 1.45-mile-long elevated green walkway with hundreds of different flowers that accompany its walkers. The High Line was built on a former New York Central Railroad spur on the west side of Manhattan in New York City. With multiple entrances, the High Line is a perfect place for some of the most memorable events."

TRUMP INDICTMENT

Former President Donald Trump surrendered to authorities on March 30, 2023, and was indicted for allegedly falsifying business records to conceal his affair with Stormy Daniels during the 2016 presidential elections. This unprecedented indictment, comprising of 34 felony counts, sent shockwaves throughout the country, leading to mobilization efforts by both supporters and opponents. Furthermore, on June 8th, 2023, the former president received another indictment in a separate legal case involving his unauthorized possession of classified documents containing some of the country's most important military intelligence, following his departure from the presidency in 2021. Due to these documents being owned legally by the United States government and possessing information that, if distributed, could pose a danger to national security, the former president holding these documents privately and post-presidency could present legal consequences, as it would to any other American citizens holding classified documents. These indictments have a major impact on democracy and future elections due to there never being a situation before in US history where a president has been officially

dedicated to engaging in criminal activities, raising questions about the accountability of presidents, and the need to revise policies that allow individuals involved in criminal trials to run for public office.

The indictment of a former president with criminal charges challenges the United States' primarily clean record of presidential discipline. Unlike other Western countries, where former leaders have faced charges and arrests, this indictment carries significant weight. It tarnishes the image of a democracy led by law-abiding individuals who uphold equality and the law, highlighting broader issues of corruption and criminality within the country. The trial's outcome will shape the legitimacy of democracy, emphasizing the importance of leaders adhering to the same standards and rules as the governed.

Another major concern is the trial's impact on future elections, as the former president continues his campaign for the 2024 presidential race despite the criminal charges. The absence of a law barring individuals involved in trials from running for public office allows this situation. Calls for changing this rule reflect the risk of a democratic system where candidates with ongoing legal issues can hold crucial positions. Such changes, including constitutional amendments, would restore the legitimacy of the presidency and reinforce the fundamental principles on which the nation was founded.

In conclusion, the indictment of former president Trump on criminal charges, in addition to his pursuit of the presidency, sparks debate about the limitations of presidential power and the importance of upholding the country's founding principles. It underscores the need for democracy to remain a beacon of hope and an advocate for human rights, distinguishing itself from other forms of government that fail to protect citizens' rights. Paying close attention to this headline event is crucial as the nation moves forward and seeks leadership that upholds the core values that define the country in the 21st century.



TIKTOK: AMERICA'S WORRY

Washington D.C. - TikTok CEO, Kevin Mayer, appeared before Congress to testify on the company's data collection practices and security measures. Mayer started by saying that TikTok is

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committed to transparency and accountability in its data practices. "We are committed to protecting the privacy and security of our users' data. We do not share user data with the Chinese government, and we never have. We also have strict data storage policies that ensure all data is stored in the United States with a backup in Singapore," Mayer said in his opening statement.

Despite Mayer's reassurances, lawmakers remained skeptical of the company's practices. Senator Josh Hawley, a vocal critic of the app, pressed Mayer on whether TikTok collects data on users' political affiliations or religious beliefs. "Can you tell me whether TikTok collects data on users' political views, religious beliefs, or other sensitive personal information?" Hawley asked. Mayer responded that the company does not collect such information and that TikTok's algorithms are designed to ensure that content is presented to users based on their interests and behaviors on the platform, not their personal beliefs. "We do not collect information on our users' political views or religious beliefs, and our algorithms are designed to ensure that our users see content that is relevant to them based on their interests and behavior on the platform," Mayer said.

Other lawmakers focused on the company's use of artificial intelligence and its potential to censor content. Mayer responded that TikTok does not censor content based on political beliefs, but rather on its guidelines for what constitutes inappropriate content. "Our content moderation policies are designed to ensure that TikTok remains a safe and welcoming place for all users. We do not censor content based on political beliefs, and we have rigorous policies in place to ensure that our guidelines are applied consistently and fairly across the platform," Mayer said.

The hearing also touched on TikTok's handling of minors' data, with lawmakers questioning the app's age verification system. Mayer stated that the company uses a combination of algorithms and human moderators to ensure that minors are not targeted by inappropriate content or advertising. "We take the safety and privacy of our young users very seriously. We use a combination of technology and human moderators to ensure that minors are not exposed to inappropriate content or advertising on our platform," Mayer said.

Overall, the hearing was a contentious one, with lawmakers expressing concerns about the company's data practices and its ties to the Chinese government. Mayer maintained that TikTok is committed to transparency and accountability, but it remains to be seen whether lawmakers will take action to regulate the app further. What should you take from this event? Here are some possible outcomes of the event:

Some sort of enhanced regulation: The testimony may lead to increased scrutiny and regulation of social media platforms, including TikTok. Congress might consider enacting stricter data privacy laws and imposing additional requirements on platforms to safeguard user information. More agreement and collaboration

with lawmakers: The testimony may create a closer relationship between TikTok and lawmakers. Ongoing dialogues and collaborations could result in better alignment between the platform's practices and legislative expectations. Reassurance and comfortability with users: The CEO's testimony may have reassured TikTok's user base by addressing concerns about data security and privacy. Users might feel more confident in continuing to use the platform, knowing that their information is being protected. Finally, increased public awareness and engagement: The testimony generated public awareness regarding the issues surrounding social media platforms and data privacy. It encouraged discussions about the responsible use of technology and the need for stronger safeguards in the digital space.

THE MET ROOF GARDEN

"The Met's rooftop garden exhibit is back this summer! From April 18th to October 22nd, MET visitors can explore Egyptian symbolism, and contemporary visual expression, and enjoy the 1960 utopian architecture designed by American artist Lauren Halsey. Admissions are free with MET tickets. MET tickets are free for New York City residents. Don't miss the view!"

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