

# The Daily Targum

## Experts discuss ‘tyranny of speech’ in relation to Charlie Hebdo attacks

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People have many contradictory opinions about the Islamic riots relating to the controversial magazine covers depicting the Prophet Muhammad.

Gregory Salmieri, moderator of the panel “Freedom of Speech or the Tyranny of Silence?” an event on Jan. 22 at the Livingston Student Center, initiated the event by introducing Flemming Rose, editor of the Danish newspaper Jyllands-Posten, which published Charlie Hebdo issues in the past.

“I think I will start off by not by speaking so much about my book but about recent events and what kind of challenges I and my newspaper have confronted with after uprisings two weeks ago,” Rose said.

Rose commissioned the publication of controversial satirical magazine Charlie Hebdo in his newspaper since 2006, but stopped due to the recent Paris attacks.

According to CNN.com, two gunmen killed a total of 12 people during their attack on the Charlie Hebdo office on Jan. 7. The gunmen said they were avenging the prophet Muhammad after the magazine published controversial depictions of their prophet, shouting “God is great” in Arabic as they fired.

“My newspaper did not republish Charlie Hebdo cartoons as many of the newspapers about the world didn’t do, especially in the United States,” he said. “It is not a decision that I am proud of.”

Rose said he would have been happy to see republication of the cartoons, but understands the decision.

The staff of the newspaper and the writers face great challenges when publishing controversial subjects, Rose said. In attempt to promote unconventional thoughts, they are putting themselves in danger, he said.

“It’s a huge pressure for the employees. People have to go to psychologists. They cannot sleep at night,” Rose said.

Many newspapers in the United States, such The New York Times, refuse to publish cartoons because they do not want to fuel a spark, Rose said. Publishing such controversial cartoons may cause more terrorist attacks, uprisings and riots.

Another reason the cartoons should be republished is because they are news, Rose said.

“Publication does not mean endorsement. We publish things that I find offensive, but nevertheless, I publish them,” Rose said.

Robert Shibley, an attorney and executive director of the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education, also took part in the discussion, relating the topic of free speech to college campuses and the actions taken by universities across the United States.

“NYU actually made the decision that the cartoons could not be shown. Instead, they were represented by an empty easel,” Shibley said. “They had to sneak the speakers out of a back way in New York City.”

It is difficult to define freedom of speech when there are many restrictions to speech, Shibley said. Speech is easily restricted because many things are stopped from being published, such as Muhammad cartoons in school newspapers, he said.

“I don’t think anyone is willing to try it — there is a clear reason why.”

When universities in United States prevent news from being told, it is hard to have freedom of speech, Shibley said. Universities have established trigger warnings. A trigger warning is a statement preceding a written piece or video notifying the reader or watcher that they may encounter distressing content.

Onkar Ghate, a senior fellow at the Ayn Rand Institute, concluded the panel by providing a perspective as a philosopher on free speech and religious intervention.

Sheena Satpute, a Rutgers Business School sophomore, believes that magazine covers like Charlie Hebdo should not cause such violence.

“Comic strips and the newspaper are methods of communication,” Satpute said. “If people are offended over such things, what about other cultures such as Christianity or Hinduism? Do they feel offended when certain things are offensive about their cultures?”

Freedom of speech is important, but there is a sense of censorship in regards to presenting news to the public, Rose said.

Rose said controversial cartoons test the boundaries and do cause riots, but it only attempts to show people another form of news regardless of whether it is offensive or not.

Coming up with a definition of hate speech that some would be willing to accept would almost certainly be rejected by others, Shibley said.