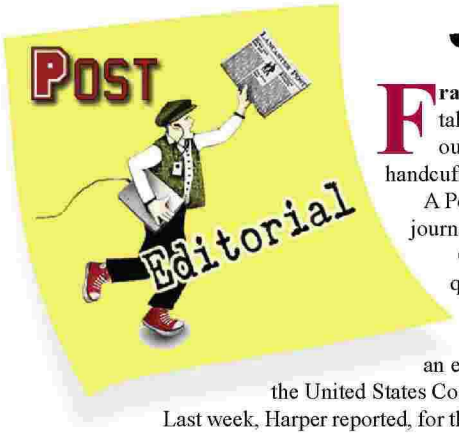

John Fry Assaults the Constitution

Franklin & Marshall president John Fry stood across the street looking on as the publishers of this newspaper were taken into custody for practicing our Constitutional rights. We legally put a newspaper box in a public place. This was our "crime." One of the publishers, Ron Harper, Jr., was roughed up badly by F&M cops on a public road. Both were handcuffed and detained for hours.

A Post news story written by Harper last week apparently so bothered Fry that the college's police force was sicced on the journalists, never mind First Amendment protection and basic rights as citizens of this country.

One of the frequent criticisms of John Fry, whose is paid about $30,000 per month, is that he is academically under qualified for the position he holds. Fry is one of very few college presidents in the country without a (non-honorary) doctoral degree.

A Ph.D. is an important credential for the titular head of an institution of higher learning. The Post has now seen an example of Fry's apparent lack of regard and evident contempt for the principles of academia, and, more disturbingly, the United States Constitution.

Last week, Harper reported, for the first time by a newspaper, that three local college basketball stars committed burglary and other felonies at an upscale Lancaster city brewery last fall. Two of the students were from Franklin and Marshall College.

The Post was tipped by a high-level courthouse source that Fry had contacted the county district attorney, Craig Stedman, and requested Stedman "go easy" on these "good boys."

Naturally, Harper would seek comment from Fry, and made multiple attempts to do so by phone and email at Fry's business office, on separate days. When no call was returned, not even a "no comment" from Fry, Harper went to Nevonia, the College-owned residence of Fry.

This is something a good reporter does in this circumstance. Mr. Fry, born and raised in Brooklyn, and with many years in Philadelphia, knows this.

In broad daylight, and without any attempt at stealth, Mr. Harper went to the front door of Fry's home and knocked. Harper left a business card on a car in

It was only after attempting to contact Fry at Nevonia that Harper heard from the college (but not from Fry himself). Public relations liaison, Dulcey Antonucci, told Harper "the procedure" that he should use when he wanted information from the college and then she referred him to the legal authorities. Harper, again in broad daylight, knocked on Fry's door and left another business card.

Lancaster County District Attorney Craig Stedman had respect enough for the First Amendment and promptly responded to Harper's inquiry. John Fry is too important to respond by phone or email?

Instead of answering legitimate questions in the public interest -- we are talking about interference with the judicial process -- the president of Franklin and Marshall decided to, first, intimidate Harper and the Post by delivering a "Criminal Trespass Warning" against Harper to our business address right before we went to press. When that did not stop the Post publishing the story, they assaulted Harper and took Hart Nibbrig into custody against their will and for no reason.

It is twisted that John Fry is the front man for a college named after Founding Father, Benjamin Franklin. Franklin was a publisher, and helped craft a country where the press' rights were spelled out and guaranteed. Benjamin Franklin would be sickened by the behavior of the man who now heads the college he founded.

We certainly are.

John Fry's Idea of a Free Press



Illustration by Jordan Martin

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