

Writing History

The Development of Student Free Speech and Freedom of the Press

“It can hardly be argued that either students or teachers shed their constitutional rights to freedom of speech or expression at the schoolhouse gate.”

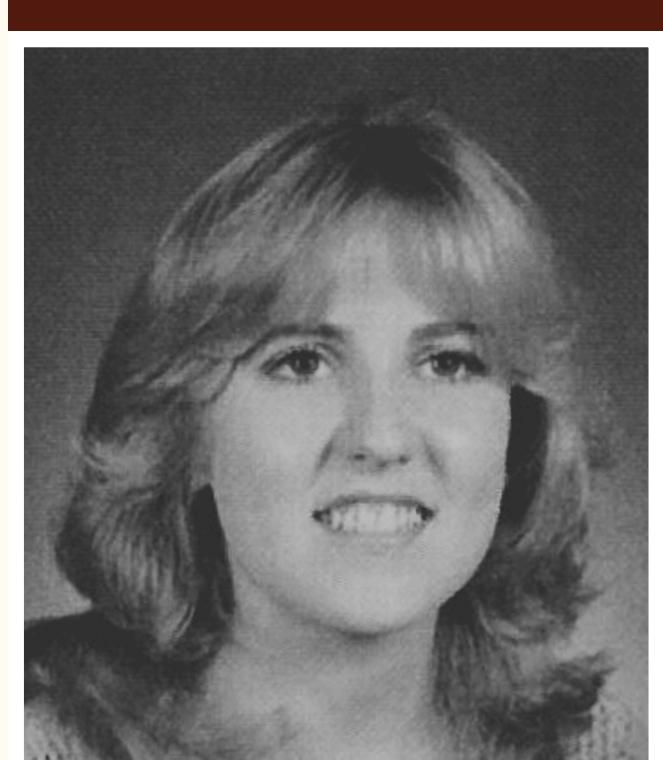
Tinker v. Des Moines 393 U.S. 503 (1969)



Cathy Kuhlmeier



Leslie Smart



Leanne Tippett

JOURNALISM AT HAZELWOOD EAST HIGH SCHOOL

Spectrum was the newspaper produced by the students of the Journalism II class at Hazelwood East High School. Students researched, wrote, selected, and laid out the articles in the paper. Their journalism advisor, Robert Stergos, gave input and advice. Final approval of each issue came from the principal, Robert "Gene" Reynolds. Funding for the publication came from both the school board and newspaper sales. *Spectrum* was circulated within Hazelwood East and the surrounding community.

Mr. Stergos ensured his students received real-world journalism experience. He arranged field trips to the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* offices where students spoke with professional journalists. Students followed established journalism guidelines. Stories covered matters of interest to the entire Hazelwood community, such as race relations, teenage drug use, and the death penalty.



May 13, 1983 issue of *Spectrum* as published,
Hazelwood East High School Library Archives

SPECTRUM UNDER FIRE

In the spring of 1983, the Journalism II students chose to write articles about teen pregnancy, divorce, and runaways—topics they felt were relevant to teenagers—in the May 13 issue. The Hazelwood East principal, Mr. Reynolds, believed these subjects were too sensitive and inappropriate. Without informing the staff of *Spectrum*, Mr. Reynolds removed two full pages of the paper that contained these stories.

Three students, Cathy Kuhlmeier, Leslie Smart, and Leanne Tippett, were angered and believed the deletion of their work violated their First Amendment rights. They contacted the American Civil Liberties Union to express their concerns. The dispute gained publicity quickly, and the three students sued the school district for violating their freedom of speech.

“We just got disgusted with the whole thing and we decided to stand up for our rights”

South Korean Politics



St. Louis Post-Dispatch, August 21, 1983, Personal Collection of Cathy Kuhlmeier