Opinion

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Editorial

Is the free press still free? Examining Trump's crusade against journalism

by the Editorial Board | opinion@dailycampus.com

Last week, agents from the Federal Bureau of Investigation raided Washington Post reporter Hannah Natanson's home, seizing her laptop and other devices. Reportedly, they were looking for evidence of illegally leaked classified documents. An FBI raid on a journalist's property is exceedingly rare, and risks damaging the freedom of the press on several fronts. The Editorial Board supports the freedom of the press wholeheartedly and believes that this raid, among other actions taken by Donald Trump's government, is detrimental to that fundamental right as laid out in the Constitution.

To understand the implications of the FBI's search and seizure, we must review the Trump administration's attempted justification of the matter. Federal law enforcement is investigating Aurelio Perez-Lugones, a government worker with top-secret security clearance who is accused of trying to leak classified documents to the press — a trail that led them to Natanson's home.

This justification does not hold up to established laws on protecting the freedom of the press. The 1980 Privacy Protection Act prevents reporters' work documents and materials from being searched except in very rare circumstances, one of which is the reporter themselves being charged with a crime pertaining to those materials. As of now, Natanson has not been connected to or charged with any wrongdoing, which leaves the case for raiding her home on shaky legal ground.

Many journalists use confidential sources and tips to break stories. Reporters and sources depend on each other to keep their connections safe. This partnership is what enabled the famous release of the Pentagon Papers in 1971, when a top-secret report leaked to the press revealed that the U.S. government was lying about the war in Vietnam. That leak led to Supreme Court case New York Times Co. v. United States, which established that unless the release of classified material presents a grave threat to national security, the First Amendment overrides governmental concerns about secrecy.

If the security that protects the partnership between sources and the press is breached, sources will be less likely to provide information, and reporters' jobs will become immensely more difficult. Enabling this outcome has been a primary goal for the Trump administration. In October 2025, according to the Washington Post, the Pentagon began implementing random polygraph tests and nondisclosure agreements for employees, attempting to ensure no leaks would get out to the press. At the same time, nearly all major media outlets with access to the Pentagon turned in their press passes rather than sign a draconian set of new rules put forth by Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth. These rules heavily restricted access in the building and established that reporters might be punished for simply asking questions of sources. All of these policies have made it more difficult for information, even that which is unclassified, to be released to the public.

Outside of the specific reach of the government pertaining to classified documents, the Trump administration has spent much time trying to wear down the freedom of the press in general. This makes the recent raid on Natanson's home all the more concerning. In the same week as the raid, White House Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt threatened to sue CBS if they did not run an interview with Trump in full and unedited. This came on the heels of another lawsuit filed by Trump against CBS that claimed the news network deceptively edited an interview with Kamala Harris. That lawsuit resulted in a settlement.

The Editorial Board is gravely concerned about the ramifications from the Trump administration's anti-free press stance. Their attempts to suppress information flowing to journalists and bring news organizations' operations in line with their own views run contrary to the First Amendment, which guarantees the freedom of the press as a constitutional right. The government does not have the power to dictate how the media presents information. Established case law and legislation has confirmed this over the years and strengthened protections, but now we face an era where press freedom is being rolled back.

The question then remains: is the free press still free? News outlets continue to do important work and break crucial stories that challenge the government's narrative. By and large, press freedom still exists in the U.S. Still, every day it faces more obstacles from the current administration, ones that the media will have to push through if it wants to maintain its integrity. The press, in this difficult period for journalism, must remain committed to serving the public.

Patrick's Politics:

Renee Good's murder and the spread of ICE terror

by Patrick Minnerly | ASSOCIATE OPINION EDITOR | HE/HIM/HIS | patrick.minnerly@uconn.edu

On Jan. 7, 2026, the world watched as a woman was murdered in broad daylight. As more videos came out and more angles were analyzed, the details became clear: an agent from Immigration and Customs Enforcement shot the woman, Renee Good, three times as she was trying to drive away. After she suffered mortal injuries and crashed into a pole, the agent simply walked away from the scene. The shooting points to a sobering conclusion: the terror of ICE has risen to levels far worse than some even anticipated, and the impact of its policies and practices cannot and should not be understated.

The immediate consideration to remember is that Good was just trying to live her life. She had a wife and children. When she was killed, there were stuffed animals in her car's glove compartment. Despite claims to the contrary, she was not obstructing the federal agents. At no point was any ICE agent in real danger from her car. As she was shot, Good was turning her wheels away from the shooter. And, though it shouldn't matter, she was a US citizen. ICE agents had no business engaging her and no business considering her a deadly threat.

> The federal government, in order to justify the ruthless killing, had to go all in on characterizing Good as the villain and Ross as the poor ICE agent simply trying to do his job.

Yet she was murdered anyway, and thus far the agent, Jonathon Ross, has faced no consequences of note. This tells us, chillingly, that a federal agent can shoot somebody on the street, in front of several witnesses, and walk away without fear of ending up behind bars. Vice President J.D. Vance all but confirmed this in a press conference a few days after the shooting, saying that the agent had "absolute immunity." Recently, Trump's Department of Justice announced that they would not be investigating Good's murder. There is a federal investigation into the matter, but instead of looking at the shooter's actions, they're investigating Good's wife, Becca Good, for possible activist ties. Minnesota Governor Tim Walz and Minneapolis Mayor Jacob Frey are also being investigated for supposedly obstructing federal law enforcement because of statements they made criticizing the shooting.

In the wake of the shooting, the Trump administration did not act with restraint. Instead of allowing the situation to cool as Minneapolis residents turned out in force to protest Good's killing, they doubled down and sent 1,000 more ICE agents to flood the city's streets, on top of the 2,000 already there.

> The reaction from the right was to soothe their own consciences, to convince themselves surely the murder of a US citizen at the hands of a federal officer was justified, and their propaganda reflects this need to avoid reality.

The counterintuitive investigations and additional deployments go hand in hand with the Trump administration's efforts to present their own propagandized narrative, a barrage of falsehoods that, as someone with eyes, was frankly disgusting to witness. Department of Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem referred to Good's actions before she was shot as "domestic terrorism," and Trump – during an interview with the New York Times – claimed that "she behaved horribly. And then she ran him over." White House Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt, always up for regurgitating the Trumpian party line, said Ross "was absolutely justified in using self-defense against a lunatic." That this rhetoric was so far afield of proper assessments of Good's murder is precisely the point. The federal government, in order to justify the ruthless killing, had to go all in on characterizing Good as the villain and Ross as the poor ICE agent simply trying to do his job.

The right-wing media apparatus did their best to support the assertion that Good somehow deserved it; Jesse Watters of Fox News, who apparently considers himself a comedian, sneered that Good was a "self-proclaimed poet...with pronouns in her bio." This statement was a not-so-subtle signal to his viewers that obviously Good was a radical. The reaction from the right was to soothe their own consciences, to convince themselves surely the murder of a US citizen at the hands of a federal officer was justified, and their propaganda reflects this need to avoid reality.

In the raw and angry days after Good's murder, we should remember that ICE's cruelty runs far deeper than this singular incident, and means far more than a simple killing. A sample of ICE's recent actions beyond that horrific act reveals the widespread and casual terror of their "law enforcement": a Minneapolis family with six children was tear-gassed by ICE agents as they tried to make their way home. Elsewhere in Minnesota, two US citizens working at Target were aggressively arrested by federal officers. In Santa Clara, California, a protester was blinded in one eye by a so-called "less-lethal" round shot from a federal agent's weapon. Countless more examples bring the extent and scope of these injustices into focus, and this does not even cover the depravities of what's happening behind the closed doors of ICE facilities. All across the country, agents of the federal government are putting ordinary people in danger. In Good's case, their actions led to her untimely death.

> This government is willing to turn against its own citizens. How will we respond?

We must consider the chilling implications of this reality. Since the federal government is doing nothing to curb the practices of its agents, it is fully complicit in the killings and cruelty they carry out. We often refer to murder as "senseless," but for the agent that shot Renee Good, the shooting made sense because he knew he could walk away and get away with it. He knew he could take a life and face no consequences, because the Trump administration was on his side. And this encompasses the fundamental problem at the heart of Good's murder: we are no longer a nation of laws. A nation that was born out of resisting a deadly military occupation is now controlled by a government willing to imitate the tyranny of the past. This government is willing to turn against its own citizens. How will we respond?

