

Censorship, Polarization and the Demise of Satire

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CENSORSHIP

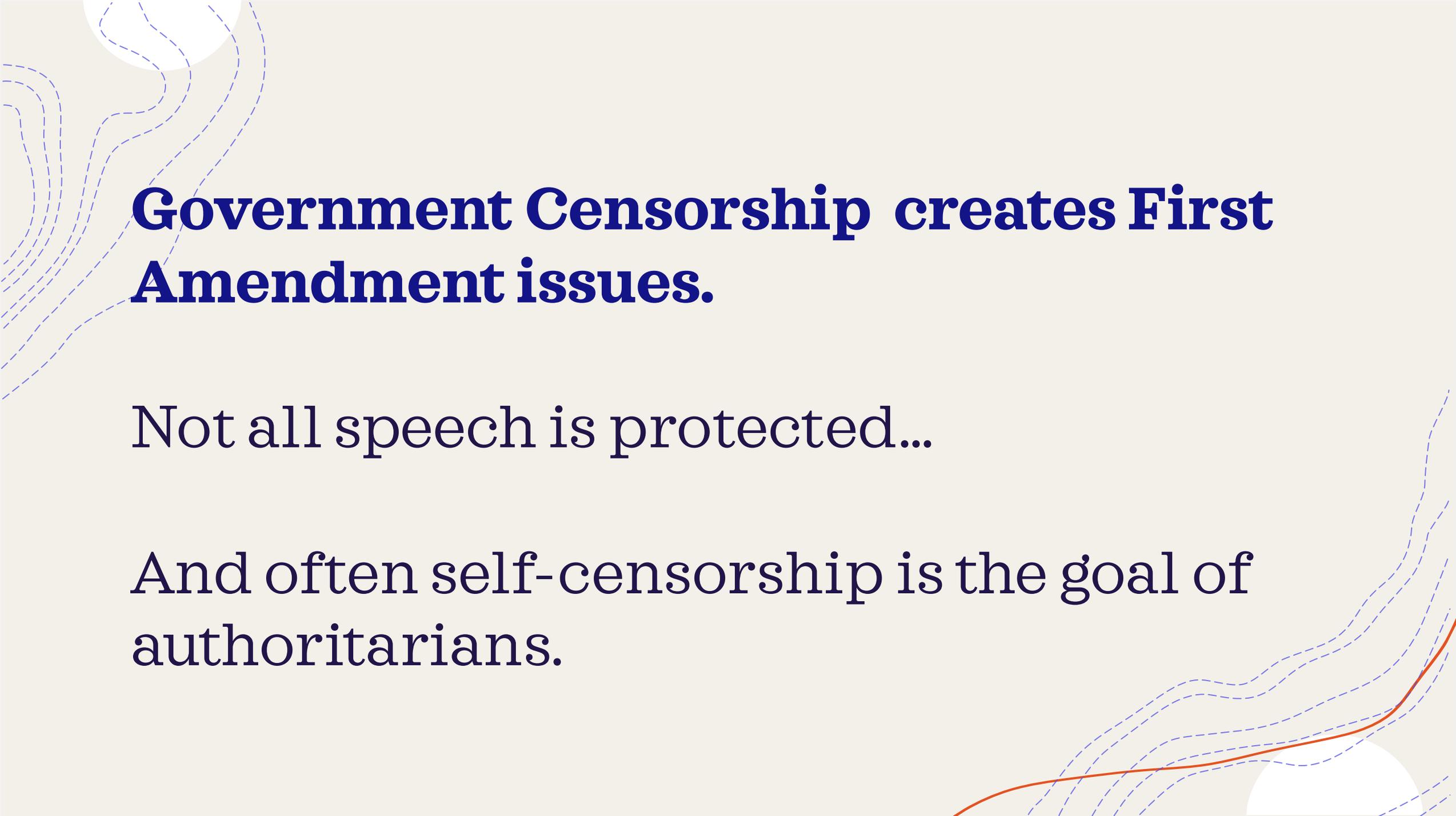
“There is more than one way to burn a book. And the world is full of people running about with lit matches.”

Ray Bradbury , Coda from Fahrenheit 451 (1979)



Censorship happens when people/groups prevent others from saying, exhibiting, printing/publishing things like books, music, commentary, satire, news, art...

Book bans may arise from community or governmental objections.



Government Censorship creates First Amendment issues.

Not all speech is protected...

And often self-censorship is the goal of authoritarians.

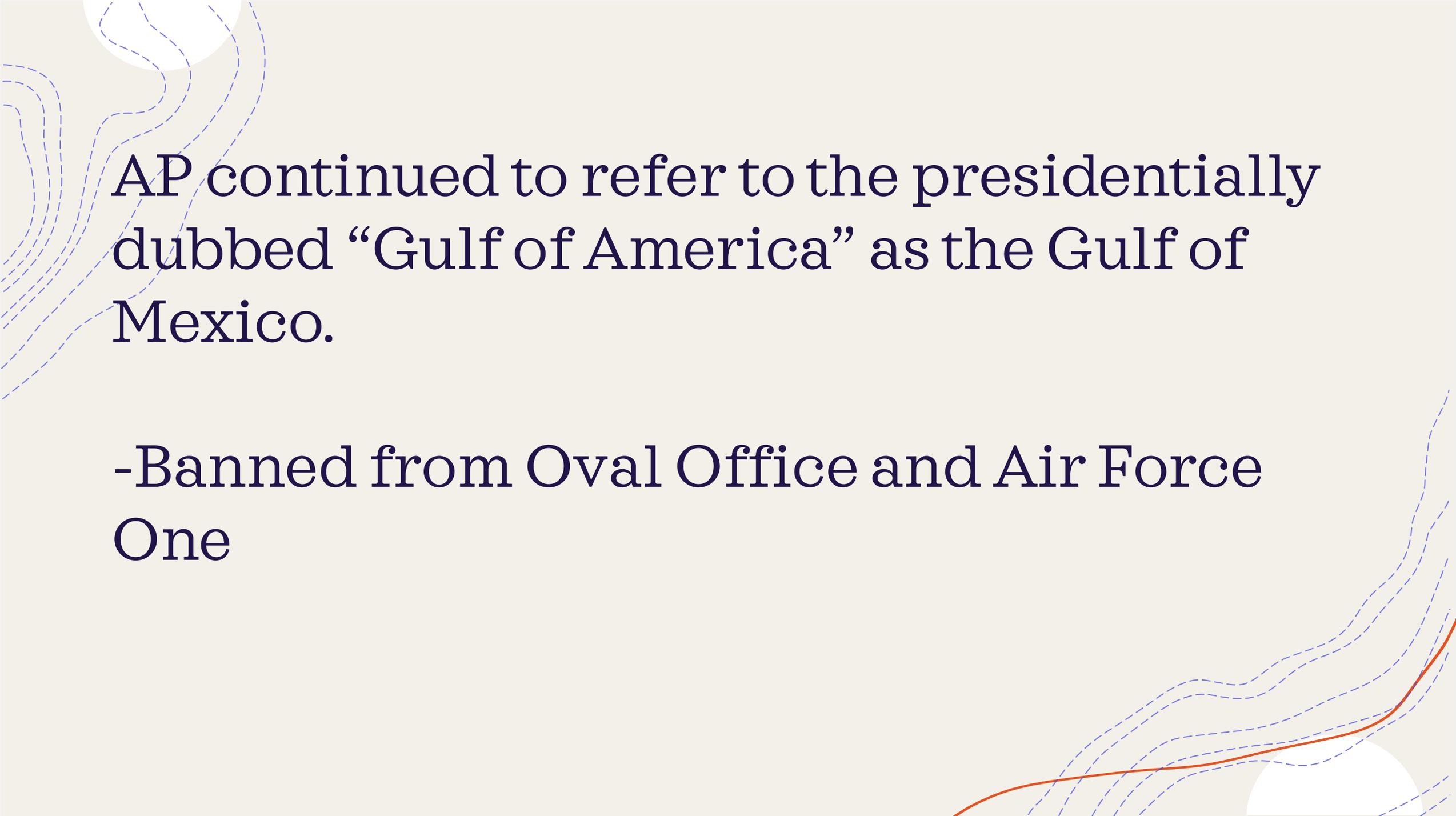


↶ PRESIDENTIAL ACTIONS

RESTORING FREEDOM OF SPEECH AND ENDING FEDERAL CENSORSHIP

The White House

January 20, 2025



AP continued to refer to the presidentially
dubbed “Gulf of America” as the Gulf of
Mexico.

-Banned from Oval Office and Air Force
One

Hegseth's new Pentagon pledge for journalists

The Pentagon says it will require credentialed journalists at the military headquarters to sign a pledge to refrain from reporting information that has not been authorized for release — including unclassified information.

“The Trump administration is on pace to shatter historic records,” the DHS said.

“The numbers don’t lie,” Assistant Secretary Tricia McLaughlin added.

“(Two) million illegal aliens have been removed or self-deported in just 250 days — proving that President Trump’s policies and Secretary (Kristi) Noem’s leadership are working and making American communities safe.”

The Miami Herald 9/25/25



Donald J. Trump

@realDonaldTrump

'I love the smell of deportations in the morning...'

Chicago about to find out why it's called the Department of WAR 🚁🚁🚁



DEMAGOGUERY- Polarizing propaganda.

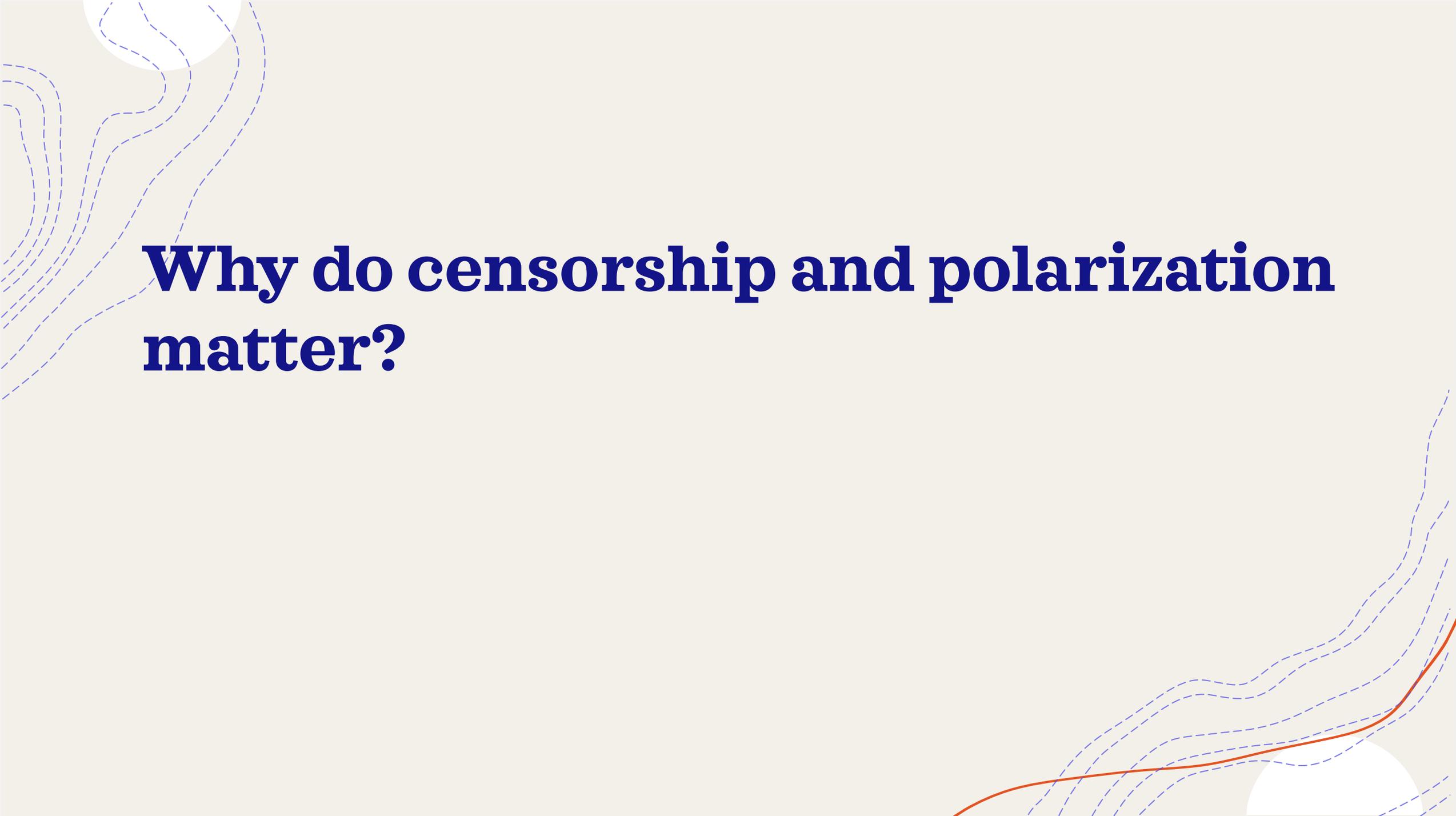
Scapegoat “out” groups.

McCarthyism - Red Scare, Lavender Scare

Blacklisting polarized Americans

MAGA - Polarizing and dehumanizing

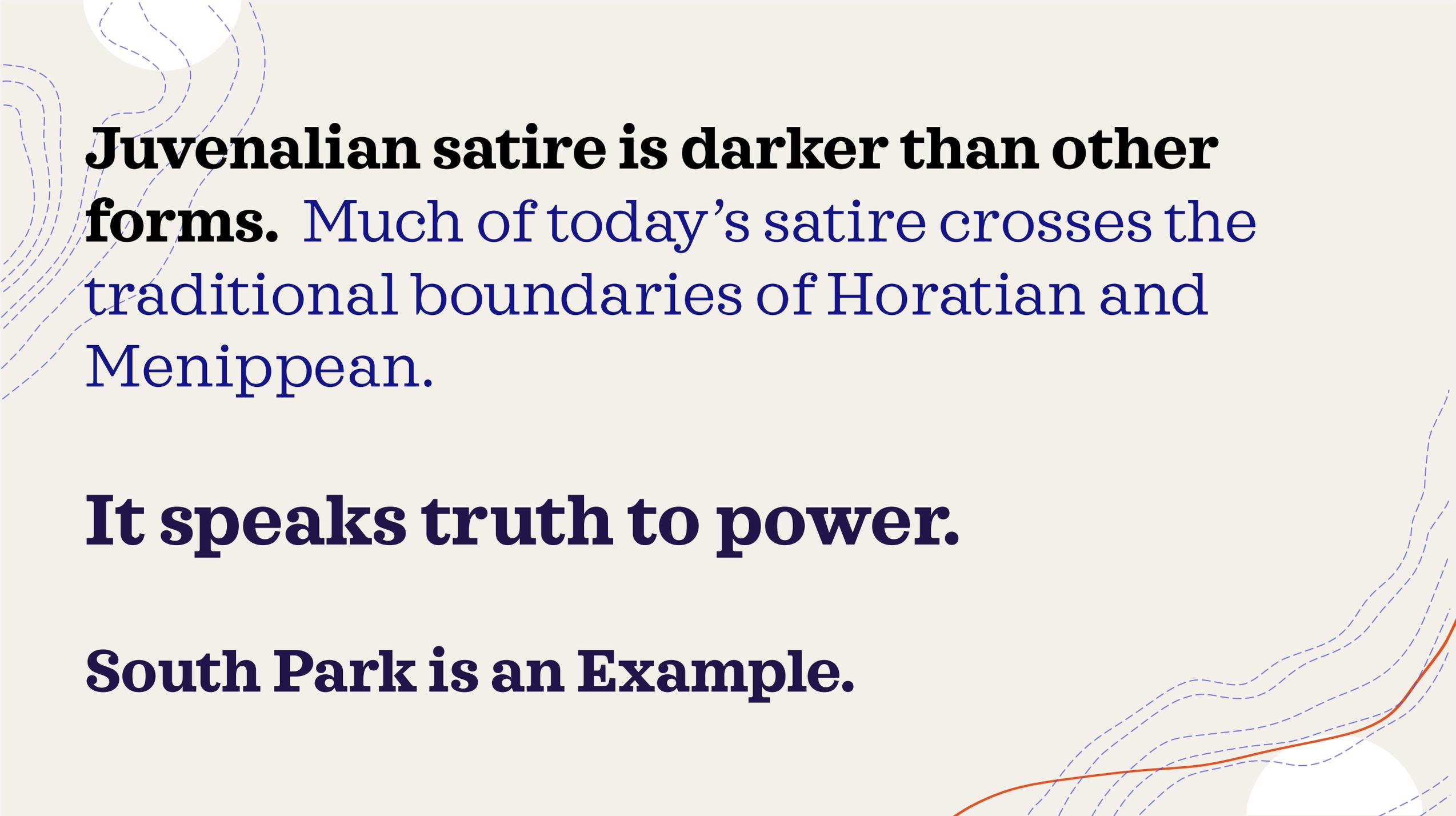
language. Immigrants eating dogs. Bathroom bans. Barring transgender people from serving in the military



Why do censorship and polarization matter?

A "divide and conquer" approach "OTHERS"

“Mr. Trump's most conspicuous threats to LGBTQ rights specifically target trans people, a pattern that has drawn accusations of scapegoating from his critics, given that trans people make up an estimated 1% or less of the U.S. population.”



Juvenalian satire is darker than other forms. Much of today's satire crosses the traditional boundaries of Horatian and Menippean.

It speaks truth to power.

South Park is an Example.

Following 9/11, Satire was Villainized

“I do not relinquish, nor should any of you, the right to criticize even as we support our government.” Bill Maher (9/17/2001)

Satirical Criticism Not Allowed:

Colbert's show was cancelled (effective May 2026) shortly after he criticized his parent company, Paramount, for a \$16 million settlement with President Donald Trump during Paramount's pending merger with Skydance Media, leading to questions and skepticism about whether political pressure played a role.

BERLIN, Feb. 3.—Propaganda Minister Joseph Goebbels today ended the professional careers of five "Aryan" actors and cabaret announcers by expelling them from the Reich's Chamber of Culture on the grounds that “in their public appearances they **displayed a lack of any positive attitude toward National Socialism** and therewith caused grave annoyance in public and especially to party comrades.”

The New York Times, 1939

 jimmykimmel and j...
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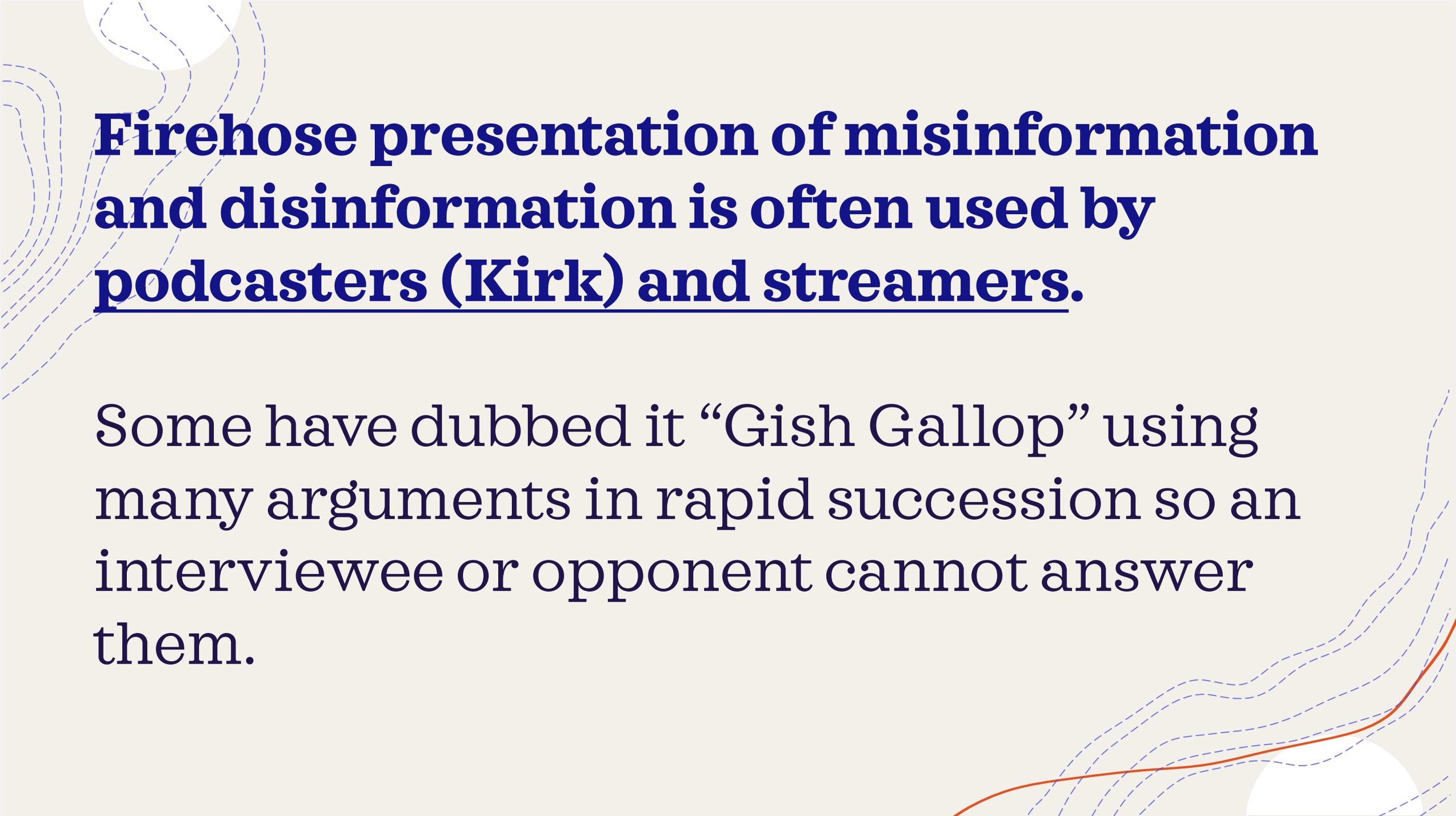
 719K  10K  3,612  3,756

jimmykimmel Which member... more
September 15

Assault on Satire

First, they came for Colbert...

Disney suspended Kimmel after threats by FCC Chair Brendan Carr to revoke ABC's broadcast license, sparking nationwide debates over free speech.



Firehose presentation of misinformation and disinformation is often used by podcasters (Kirk) and streamers.

Some have dubbed it “Gish Gallop” using many arguments in rapid succession so an interviewee or opponent cannot answer them.

Kimmmel suggested that some Trump supporters are trying to capitalize on Kirk's death.

“The MAGA gang (is) desperately trying to characterize this kid who murdered Charlie Kirk as anything other than one of them and doing everything they can to score political points from it,” Kimmmel said.

FCC Chair Brendan Carr whose threats against ABC came before the network suspended Kimmel.

“They give me only bad publicity or press,” Trump said. “They’re getting a license. I think maybe their license should be taken away. It’s up to Brendan Carr.”

- Nextstar and Sinclair are still boycotting Kimmel while evaluating.

“No fourth-rate show can derail President Trump’s hot streak,” a White House spokesman said in response to South Park.



**Could reducing
Colbert's regular
satirical criticism
platform create a
dearth of political
knowledge in our
society?**

**How will satire evolve
and survive
authoritarianism?**

