

I'm Not Alex Jones, But I Stayed at a Holiday Inn Express Last Night

Over the past 48 hours, Alex Jones has been “memory-holed” by most of the Internet for what has been called hateful and dangerous speech. Instead of listing all the social media sites that no longer carry Jones or Infowars, it might be easier to count the social media sites that do. And so far...it looks like it's just Twitter.

Jones has taken his situation in stride, meaning he's trying to figure out how to blame it on fluoride making frogs gay or something. One of the things his supporters and he have said is the removal of Jones from social media is a violation of free speech. It's even inspired a hashtag, #WeAreAlexJones.

Although recent events are more disturbing than a Jeffrey Dahmer cookbook, it's not really a free speech issue. The First Amendment starts with five words that often get overlooked in discussions like this: “Congress shall make no law”. As hard as it is to accept, social media sites have the authority to decide who gets to use their service and can punish people who don't abide by the rules they set. Congress didn't pass a law, so the First Amendment doesn't play a role here. (Oddly enough, the same argument can be used against the ACLU when they try to ban school prayer, but that's a blog post for another time.)

That's not to say Jones and his followers have no legal recourse. It can be argued those social media sites are not applying their rules fairly, which opens the door for Jones and company to argue they are victims of disparate treatment. Although this concept is usually reserved for the workplace, the fact Antifa, Black Lives Matter, and Louis Farrakhan among

other groups that have shown as much if not more hate have yet to see even an iota of the punishment Jones has experienced in the past two days means there is evidence of the rules not being enforced evenly.

It may be a long shot, but it's a stronger argument than the free speech argument is.

There may be others (after all, I'm a blogger, not a lawyer), but we should avoid invoking the First Amendment when defending Alex Jones and Infowars. But there are two things that I do know. First, this is a great opportunity for social media sites looking to attract users to make a splash and get people away from the big ones. And second, Alex Jones, as bat-crap cray-cray as he may be, can and will be turned into a martyr for those who already don't like existing social media sites. That is a **really** dumb idea because it creates a situation where people who wouldn't give Jones the time of day can defend him against what is a gross overreaction to someone who is at best a minor problem...and be absolutely right to do so.

Is Alex Jones being made into a free speech hero worth looking like hypocritical partisan asshats? Social media may need to answer that question sooner rather than later.