

Jimmy Kimmel Show Suspended: A Warning For American Democracy



Jimmy Kimmel Late Night Host – Pic: Jimmy Kimmel, Creative Commons, [Source](#), Cropped.

In Nazi Germany, one of Berlin’s most well-known cabarets—the *Kabarett der Komiker*—had a resident comedian named Werner Finck. His act was daring. He would rush onto the small stage, snap to attention, raise his arm in the Hitler salute, and say: “*That’s how high my dog can jump!*” Night after night, Finck told the latest underground jokes circulating about Nazi leaders, including top officials, according to a forward in a [biography](#) of Hermann Göring’s life. Finck ended his shows with another sly jab, raising his arm and saying: “*Heil... er... er... Now what is that fellow’s name?*”

Remarkably, the Nazis, for the most part, tolerated Finck’s routines reluctantly. The point is that even one of history’s most savage regimes, infamous for its censorship, allowed his political humour to survive. What does this say about today’s American leadership, when those in power target comedians like Stephen Colbert, Jimmy Kimmel, and Jimmy Fallon?

The Fragility of Free Speech

The recent suspension of Jimmy Kimmel's show highlights how fragile America's commitment to free expression has become. The [decision](#) followed Federal Communications Commission chair Brendan Carr—appointed during the Trump administration—issuing blunt warnings to ABC and its affiliates, suggesting that broadcast licences could be at risk if Kimmel were not silenced.

The “money trail” behind the decision was [clear](#). Nexstar, one of Canada's largest TV station groups, was seeking government approval for a merger with Tegna. Disney, ABC's parent company, did the math: resist the FCC and risk billions in deals—or quietly back down and suspend the troublesome comedian. This was not the free market at work, as Senate Republican leader John Thune claimed. It was more about the government using regulatory power to muzzle a critic, aided by corporations concerned about their profit margins to defend principle.

Obsession With Money

Some of America's leaders seem so obsessed with money that they are willing to sacrifice democracy itself for profit. Whether it is a network silencing a late-night host to secure a merger, politicians trading free speech for campaign cash, or media executives yielding to presidential threats, the outcome is the same: [principles for sale](#). Unlike Werner Finck, who faced Nazi Germany armed only with wit, some American leaders today apparently weigh the cost of truth in dollars and are ready to choose silence instead.

Lessons in Integrity

The former Soviet Ukrainian [dissident](#) Danylo Shumuk (pronounced Shoомook) presented a stark contrast in character. Shumuk, once acknowledged by Amnesty International as the world's longest-imprisoned prisoner of conscience, spent 40 years in Soviet prisons and labour camps. In 1987, after Gorbachev finally released him, he attended an American Bar Association conference in San Francisco, where he spoke about Soviet atrocities. Shumuk told the attorneys what his dream was: to gain his freedom without compromising his dignity, to win freedom for Ukraine without compromising its national character, and to secure freedom for other nations of Eastern Europe without compromising their rights.

When asked how he endured when so many other prisoners broke, Shumuk's answer was clear: *“They were prepared to compromise their spiritual values for corporal values (a piece of bread, a visit from a loved one, a rest from work). I was not, and I never did.”* Standing by these principles, he put things this way: *“I know that my place in any autocratic society is in the concentration camp.”* And so it was. Yet he refused to yield his integrity. Contrast that with at least some of America's leaders today—political,

corporate, cultural—who are ready to compromise their spiritual values (justice, democracy, truth) for corporal ones (wealth, comfort, power).

The Role of Comedians In Society

Throughout history, societies have depended on truth-tellers whose job it was to remind the powerful of their true nature. In ancient Rome, slaves rode in the chariots of Caesars during victory parades while returning to the city's streets, whispering reminders: *"Remember, you are only a man."* In the Middle Ages, court jesters were more than just entertainers — they were truth-tellers disguised as clowns. Through their jokes, mimicry, and satire, they acted as a safety valve for political dissent, a reminder of human fallibility amidst constant flattery, and a symbolic inversion of rigid hierarchy. In short, the jester kept power in check with laughter.

Today's comedians—Colbert, Kimmel, Fallon—serve the same purpose. Political humour is not trivial. It is a democratic necessity. It exposes arrogance, fights corruption, and reminds leaders that they are answerable. To silence comedians is not just to end a joke—it is to weaken democracy's openness and freedom.

Speak While We Still Can

Martin Niemöller, the German pastor who initially supported Hitler but later opposed him, [captured this danger best](#):

"First, they came for the socialists, and I did not speak out—because I was not a socialist. Then they came for the trade unionists, and I did not speak out—because I was not a trade unionist. Then they came for the Jews, and I did not speak out—because I was not a Jew. Then they came for me—and there was no one left to speak out for me."

Niemöller's warning remains as urgent today as it was then. Now, when comedians are silenced, networks capitulate, and money takes precedence over freedom, Americans must protest. We need to speak out now—loudly—before America descends into chaos and anarchy, and the administration imposes martial law and makes arrests. From there, it won't be long before concentration camps and a full dictatorship follow.



Andy J. Semotiuk is a U.S. and Canadian immigration attorney. A former United Nations correspondent stationed in New York, Mr. Semotiuk is a Senior Advisor to the Centre for Eastern European Democracy and a contributor to Forbes. Mr. Semotiuk has written four books. He has practiced law in Los Angeles for 10 years and worked in New York for 5. Currently, he works for Pace Law Firm in Toronto.