If you will indulge me … some parting words as I fade into the past.

I am a graduate of Columbia College and the Columbia Graduate School of Journalism. My graduate class includes some of the best-known journalistic stars in both broadcast and print. Rick Smith, Robert Siegel, Walt Mossberg, Jack McWethy, Margot Adler and so many more. I have always been proud of that affiliation. So when the Trump Administration rescinded $400 million in grant funding, I waited – checkbook in hand -- for Columbia's call. I knew they would say that principle and fighting the good fight was the highest calling … they just needed our help. And I was ready. But the call and letter never came. Instead, a now former interim president cowered before the Administration and gave in on every demand. And the rest of academia sat by, silently, waiting for their turn. And in the case of Harvard, Penn, Princeton, Northwestern and others … that time has arrived.

We fought Hitler and Nazism in the 1940s and McCarthyism in the 1950s, equal rights in the 1970s (and beyond), and now we are faced with Trumpism in 2025. I'll be 78 years old in a few days, and I don't expect to live long enough to have to answer to my four now-young grandchildren … what did I do in the face of Trump and authoritarianism? But you will need to answer that question … or you will face a society in which questions like that cannot be asked.

A fellow alum wrote back to me saying that you can't fight Hitler without bullets. First, there was a time when the fight didn't require bullets at all. Second, we do have bullets. We are not unarmed – we just choose not to fight. Third, arms have been taken up against us. We simply need to recognize that we are not faced with a choice.

There are not two equal sides to every story. There have never been two equal sides to every story. I learned journalism at the feet of "See It Now" -- the weekly news program hosted by Edward R. Murrow. A man whose name graces RTDNA's highest honor and whose story just moved from cinema to Broadway with George Clooney in the title role. In the movie, Clooney played Fred Friendly, then the producer of the show. Fred and I had our disagreements, but we both saw journalism as a noble calling … and it has never called out to us with greater need than right now. At the end of almost every show, Murrow would give you his take on the events you, the audience, had seen in the previous 20-odd minutes. This is an excerpt of how one such program ended:

We must not confuse dissent with disloyalty. We must remember always that accusation is not proof and that conviction depends upon evidence and due process of law. We will not walk in fear, one of another. We will not be driven by fear into an age of unreason, if we dig deep in our history and remember that we are not descended from fearful men [or women] who feared to write, to speak, to associate and to defend causes that were, for the moment, unpopular.

This is no time for men who oppose President Trump's – excuse me, Senator McCarthy's methods to keep silent, or for those who approve. We can deny our heritage and our history, but we cannot escape responsibility for the result. …. we cannot defend freedom abroad by deserting it at home.

The actions of the junior Senator from Wisconsin have caused alarm and dismay amongst our allies abroad and given considerable comfort to our enemies. And whose fault is that? Not really his. He didn't create this situation of fear; he merely exploited it – and rather successfully. Cassius was right. "The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars, but in ourselves."

Good night and good luck."

Bob Papper