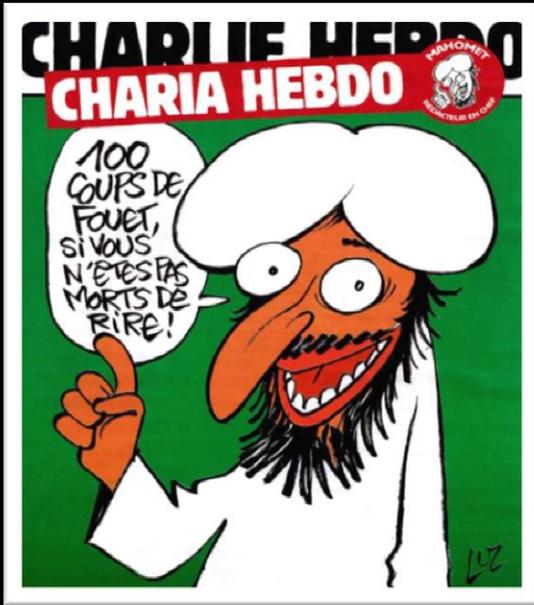


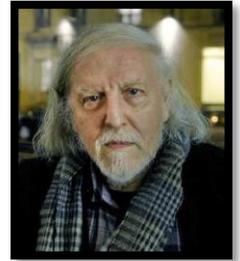
In Memoriam



Stéphane Charbonnier



Jean Cabut



Philippe Honoré



Georges Wolinski



Bernard Verlhac

Free Speech and Fear

By Chip Babcock

The cartoon shown above says, "100 lashes if you are not dying of laughter." The journalists of the French satirical magazine Charlie Hebdo did in fact die but it was at the hands of two terrorist assassins who were offended by this and other cartoons poking fun at the prophet Muhammad. No one is laughing.

But neither is there sufficient outrage in the United States about this armed attack on free speech. Our government did not send a recognizable representative to the Paris March organized to mourn the journalists and demonstrate to the terrorists that the world would not be intimidated. We said our failure to attend was "a mistake".

Many major media organizations (although not all--CBS is a shining exception) in this country refused to publish the cartoons to demonstrate solidarity with the advocates of free speech including those who literally died protecting that right because, as one explained, it would be offensive to Muslims. Another said that the cartoons did not meet its editorial standards.

These justifications surely miss the point. Publishing the cartoon(s) is a symbol not a statement. One does not have to agree with the editorial viewpoint of the cartoonist to demonstrate that free speech should not be suppressed out of fear. It is not about offending a constituency or upholding an editorial standard. It is about not being afraid and saying so by action, that is, publishing the work that provoked the killings.

At least one journalist was candid about why he was not publishing the drawings after the attack. Fleming Rose, features editor of the Danish newspaper Jyllands-Posten, told the New York Times that "we aren't publishing the Charlie Hebdo cartoons because we are afraid," he said recalling prior threats to his newspaper. "But I know well that if you give in to intimidation, it works."

Citizens of this country, and especially the press, should be leaders of the free speech movement. We should not sit on the sidelines or hide behind "editorial standards" or perceived offensiveness that could be interpreted as fear. We should show solidarity and fight back against terrorists who seek to violate our right to speak and for others to hear.

Chip Babcock is, as the New Republic once called him, "a moderately famous First Amendment Attorney." He is also a commercial litigator who tries cases across the United States.