



ROCKLAND COUNTY WOMEN'S BAR ASSOCIATION

A Chapter of the Women's Bar Association of the State of New York

SCHOLARSHIP CONTEST

Sponsored by the
ROCKLAND COUNTY WOMEN'S BAR ASSOCIATION
AWARD: \$1000

PARTICIPANTS: This Scholarship contest is open to all Rockland County Public High School Seniors

FORMAT: Essays must be fewer than 500 words, double-spaced and submitted via e-mail

The title page must include the following:

Name of student, home address, telephone number and e-mail address

High School name, address and telephone number

Name of teacher or guidance counselor and e-mail address

THE ABOVE INFORMATION MUST APPEAR ON THE TITLE PAGE
ONLY, AND IN NO OTHER PLACE ON THE ESSAY

FAILURE TO COMPLY WITH THE REQUIREMENTS MAY RESULT IN
DISQUALIFICATION

DEADLINE: All entries must be received via e-mail by April 18, 2019

SUBMIT TO: correspondence@rcwba.org

TOPIC: See Attached

THE FACTS

Empire High School is a public high school in Excelsior, New York which offers classes in Journalism. As part of this Journalism program the students are given the opportunity to manage the content and programming of a YouTube Station called Student Network News or SNN. SNN's mission is to report on the news of the school and the surrounding area and to provide a forum for students to voice their opinions on newsworthy matters. SNN has been praised for its evenhanded investigation and reporting of the news. As a result of their work on SNN several students have been awarded substantial scholarships to attend Journalism programs in prestigious Universities.

Patricia Henry is the station's Student Manager and its Chief Political Reporter. She is 17 years old and is an Honors Student. She is counting on her impressive accomplishments at SNN to obtain a scholarship to an Ivy League school.

Patricia Henry is a proponent of federal gun control legislation and in the wake of the school shootings at the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School has run many stories on SNN urging her local Congressman, Marco Cruz to support such legislation. Congressman Cruz is a member of the National Rifle Association and his recent successful re-election campaign benefited from large donations by the NRA and from those who oppose gun control. The Congressman has ignored Patricia Henry's request for an interview. Congressman Cruz has gone as far as to call Patricia Henry and SNN the "Enemy of Excelsior."

Using her knowledge of computer graphics, Patricia Henry created a graphic image of Congressman Cruz with a Hitler type mustache and hairstyle, wearing a Nazi uniform and appearing to give the Nazi salute to the logo of the NRA. She used these graphics in the background of a story reporting on the lack of progress in any gun control legislation. Her story and the use of the graphic was shown five times on SNN and was reported on by the local and national news.

The Excelsior School District has sent Patricia and her parents a letter demanding that she turn over all her computer files regarding the graphic image. They have prohibited her from working on SNN and are threatening to expel her from school prior to graduation if she does not turn over the computer files to the School District and apologize to Congressman Cruz. The Excelsior School District has also banned any further stories on SNN regarding the gun control debate until further notice. The matter is being investigated by the Excelsior District Attorney as a hate crime.

Patricia Henry has taken the position that her actions are protected by the freedom of speech and press found in the First Amendment of the United States Constitution. She believes that the School District has impinged upon her rights and vowed to fight the School District in Court and to vigorously defend against any criminal charges based upon her first amendment rights.

THE QUESTION

Is or should Patricia Henry's use of the graphic image be protected as free speech? Can the School District ban SNN from airing further stories on the gun control debate? Should the press be constrained through legislation or by the courts? Given the facts presented here where do you draw the line. Should all speech be free or as a free society are we willing to accept certain limitations?