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Subject: Dissent is the highest form of patriotism?

Posted by [Fabian](#) on Wed, 09 Feb 2005 03:05:59 GMT

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It might be something Jefferson just said, and someone recorded. It may have never been in a speech. I find it hard to believe that such distinguished historians like Howard Zinn would use that quote without knowing it to be an actual quoting.

And secondly, does it really matter? Does whether or not Jefferson said it negate its truth?

Howard Zinn While some people think that dissent is unpatriotic, I would argue that dissent is the highest form of patriotism. In fact, if patriotism means being true to the principles for which your country is supposed to stand, then certainly the right to dissent is one of those principles. And if we're exercising that right to dissent, it's a patriotic act.

One of the great mistakes made in discussing patriotism -- a very common mistake -- is to think that patriotism means support for your government. And that view of patriotism ignores the founding principles of the country expressed in the Declaration of Independence. That is: the Declaration of Independence makes it clear that governments are artificial creations set up to achieve certain ends -- equality, life, liberty, the pursuit of happiness -- and when governments become destructive of those ends it is the right of the people in the words of the Declaration, to alter or abolish the government.

In other words, obedience to government certainly is not a form of patriotism. Governments are the instruments to achieve certain ends. And if the government goes against those ends, if the government is not defending our liberties, but is diminishing our liberties, if the government is sending young people into war or making war which is unjustified, well then the government is not following the principles of caring about life, liberty and pursuit of happiness. When the government is taking huge sums of money from education and health, and using that money for military purposes, that's a violation of the principles of the Declaration of Independence. And a government like that cannot be obeyed. To obey a government like that is not being patriotic. At that point, when a government behaves like that, it is the most patriotic thing to disobey the government.

And for Christ's sake, SFE is the only one to use the quote. Stop saying that I and other "liberals" use it.

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