

THE FIRST AMENDMENT: IT NEEDS AN ECOSYSTEM

The value proposition Twitter/X shares with the 1st Amendment is strikingly symmetrical. In fact, a digital public square holds the potential as a platform to enable: free speech; free press; peaceful assembly; direct petition to government.

Historically, the platform has extended entitlements of the Bill of Rights and Human Rights using the new media fulcrum of the tweet (140 ASCII characters), emboldened by photos or video -- a rock against any Goliath. So when we speak of Twitter's technological debt (i.e. "trust and safety") we are actually hashing out case law, and at other times interpretation of rule of law.

In practice, free speech is limited. Invocations such as open dissent, hate speech, fighting words, libel and slander, all have analog antecedents. So building solutions for these types of speech doesn't have to be ad hoc. It can be an organized endeavor that doesn't rely on difficult, often piecemeal, regulatory reactions by platform officials.

But most importantly, protecting speech or press from censorship requires an alliance of mission and ethos. Perception around absolute entitlements inside a digital public square must have guardrails, such as tools for context and counterpoint, supported by a knowledge graph ecosystem.

Defining new tools for old rules, can help keep power distributed. And imagining what the new press looks like in the age of social and AI is a design that requires priority.

In fact, the X rebrand may have ironically carved a path for Twitter's reemergence, liberating X to other market spaces. Ultimately, if Twitter is not a cash cow, X can be its sugar daddy. So rebooting Twitter 2.0 is in part semaphore and parcel to the immanent, if deferred, X superapp brand-over.

Intrinsically, Twitter as a platform can support both vital public discourse and democratic process. In the ideation deck, I have outlined a suite of new media technologies, designed to work in synergy. In many cases they are also zero to one opportunities: a media technology frontier intersecting governance, communication and learning spaces.

Going back to first principles yields design questions and hypotheses about how Twitter/X operationalizes not just on free speech, but ostensibly for digital democracy (i.e. DOGE 2.0). If in fact collective self-governance is impacted by mediated infrastructures, placing the burden on platform design can be potentiated by a B-Corp (or "G-Corp") entity.

The antecedent of the tweet may be the town crier, pamphlet, or telegram, but to optimize for democratic values we need public discourse that unifies the concerns of citizens, government, and public entities into one vital ecosystem, a leavening modeled on journalism, social media, and good will.