

“Why is it important that we have news media that are independent of the government?”

It just so happens that one of the most distinctive memories during my early life in South Korea proves the most difficult to understand. Nine years ago, in the solemn, musty atmosphere of my grandfather's room, I would wake to the sight of him quietly flipping through the international section of the local newspaper. The clock's hands would point to 4 AM, sometimes even earlier, and the only thought that came to mind was, “why?” Of all the things this wise, intelligent man could choose to do, why read the newspaper? As if my grandfather possessed telepathic abilities, he would stare at me through his antique reading glasses and whisper, “you'll understand someday.” Now, through examples of revolutionary change across the globe, I finally do.

In the Middle East, independent media stitched together a people's army, and banished fear of the unknown. News stirred up the realization that the government is a mere paper tiger in the presence of the people, and watered the seeds of the Arab Spring. From the powerful messages of pictures that showed willingly abandoned military uniforms in Libya to the countless martyrs that the Algerian, Tunisian, and other regimes tortured and killed, the news picked apart ignorance and invoked powerful feelings. As stories and images circulated, men and women gradually came out from the comfort of their homes, feeling vindicated and abandoning feelings of discouraging solitude. Independent media stitched together a people's army, and banished fear of the unknown.

As Thomas Jefferson once famously said, “a little rebellion every now and then is a good thing,” the news righteously helped deliver a long overdue series of successful revolts in the Middle East. The revolts seem almost formulaic at a glance. Mix people, an

oppressive government, some news media, and get revolution as a product. Thus, one can see the great, ubiquitous checks and balances of the world: the news (information and knowledge), the people, and the government. Distinction between the news and governments will always remain paramount for this system to function in equilibrium.

Independent news media does not simply abolish ignorance, but also unites people to do battle with colossi politically and physically. People can help others fulfill their basic tenets of life by acting based on knowledge and awareness free from filtering by governments. News lives and breathes as the perpetual connection between individuals and the global network.

Our world translates into our home, and its inhabitants our family. News free from governments gives us the power and means to take care of our global home. Maybe that memory stayed embedded in my mind for a reason. It was clinging on to my mental fabric, waiting for the day where I would be mature enough to understand and use it to my advantage. That time has come, and to prove it, the memory needs a second description. Nine years ago, in the solemn, musty atmosphere of my grandfather's room, I would wake to the sight of him quietly reading the world.