

You Are the Judge

Hazelwood School District v. Kuhlmeier

It is Monday morning. You arrive at school a little early and run down to the office where the school newspaper is prepared. The latest edition of the weekly paper is hot off the presses, and you are eager to see how it came out. You are especially excited because the first article you ever wrote is to be featured on page one. When you arrive at the office you discover that half of the first page, including the space where your article was to appear, is blacked out.

You immediately assume that the printers made a mistake. But your fellow reporters inform you that the school's principal purposefully blacked out two front-page stories because he thought they were too controversial. Is this fair? More important, is it legal?

Are students protected by the First Amendment right to free expression? In October 1987, the U.S. Supreme Court heard arguments in a case that decided whether student reporters are protected by the same First Amendment rights as are adult

reporters. The case, *Hazelwood School District et al v. Kuhlmeier et al*, involved the principal and three student reporters from Hazelwood East High School, in Hazelwood, Missouri.

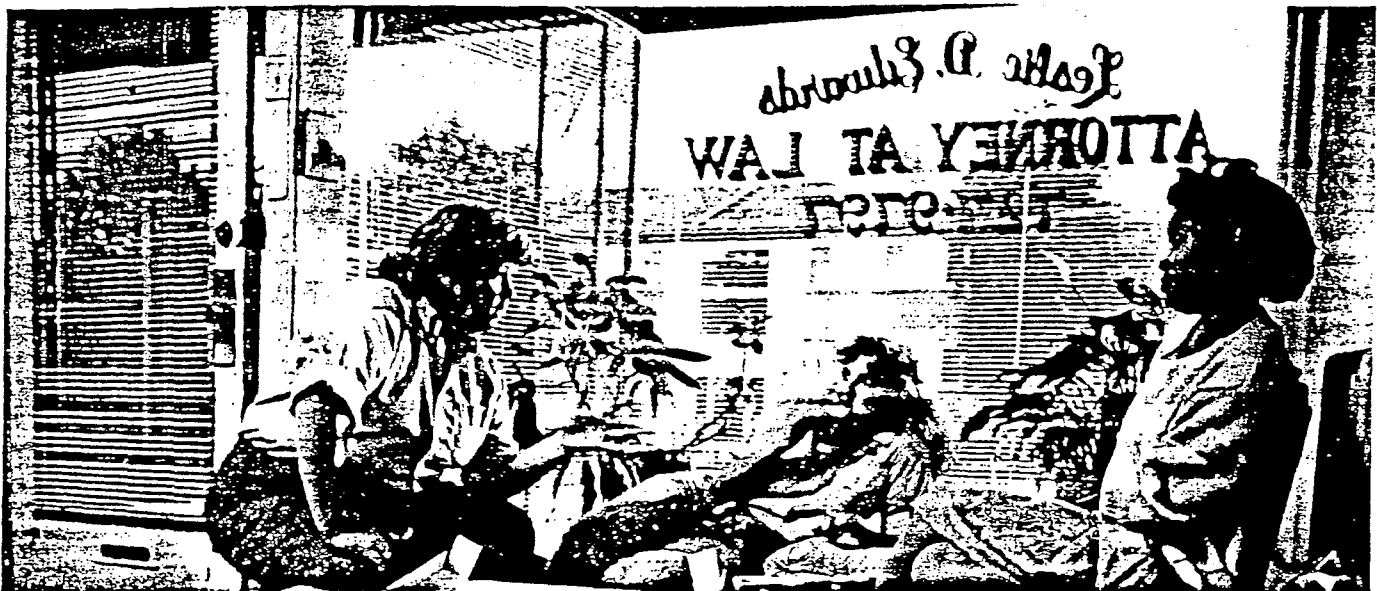
A Special Edition of the *Spectrum*

In 1983, Cathy Kuhlmeier, Leslie Smart, and Leanne Tippet were reporters for the *Spectrum*, Hazelwood East's weekly student newspaper. In May of that year the three students devoted a two-page special section of the *Spectrum* to articles on problems facing high-school students. Issues such as parental divorce, teenage pregnancy, and runaway teens were featured.

Dr. Reynolds Responds

The *Spectrum* already had a reputation for publishing controversial articles, and Hazelwood's principal, Dr. Robert Reynolds, kept a close watch on the kinds of articles students were writing. When Dr. Reynolds read early versions of some of the articles scheduled for the May issue, he decided they were too controversial.

One story was about a student whose family was going through a painful divorce. The reporter interviewed a student who explained her views of the



Are students protected by the First Amendment right to free expression? That's the question Attorney Leslie Edwards (left) and students Leslie Smart (center) and Leanne Tippet raised.

