

Should television be censored



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Censorship could be traced all the way back to Greeks and Romans to Protestants English, each having his own use and definition of censorship. Greeks, as a democratic nation banned freedom of speech by banning Socrates. This could be accounted for censorship that is defined nowadays as the “ supervision and control of information among the members of a society” (Konvitz, 2006). The Greeks censored Socrates’ teachings by saying that it corrupted the minds of the youth. Romans constantly issued censorship among its citizens, especially among the poor and without authority in politics or whatsoever.

They created authorities called “ censors” whose main responsibility is to assign citizens into tribes and class according to its amount of property owned. Here, the less property and authority you have, the more the citizens suffer to banishment. Authority comes with freedom. The Romans, with its diverse nationality and religions issued that citizens should first worship those with authority then their gods. Through this, Roman officials control the citizens; a form of censorship. Censorship’s definition and use, changes and develop. The Romans censored “ heretical books” that does not conform to religion.

They even have a list of censored books called “ Index of Forbidden Books” that is punishable by excommunication. Censorship was mainly used to control and unite the members of the society. However, every bright side have a dark side. Censorship also have dangers of misinformation. Many stories have been censored to the public to avoid unnecessary events from happening. An example of these are “ hazards of nuclear power, corporate crime, fraudulent safety tests, and U. S. terrorism” from Jensen, Carl’s

Twenty Years of Censored News. At the beginning of 18th century, the mark of modern times, censorship shifted from religions to media.

Religion censorship lifted as humans realized the importance of respect in religion and considering it as a personal conviction and not a public matter. Censorship, in this time was considered and lifted when freedom was directly hindered. The United States of America (USA) created a Bill of Rights that protected its citizen from unjust censorship especially from the freedom of speech. Through this, people could openly criticize and say their opinions about almost anything. Citizens, not only can criticize they can also disperse information about almost anything in any form.

Technologies with its fast development could distribute any information in seconds through radios, internet and the most common is television.

Television, first made by Philo Taylor Farnsworth, is one of the effective information distributor since most Americans watch television five hours a day, depending on year and survey. Many television programs influences people especially children that is on learning stage. Unfortunately, informations could be anything from educational to violence, moral to immoral. Since then, television censorship was made but should it really be censored?

American government already made a bill of rights about freedom of speech. Isn't this television censorship violates freedom of speech? Also, this issue of censorship is tainted with political interest. If this is the case, should it not be better to not censor television programs? To censor television or not, only the American public can decide for that issue. Do they really want to censor

television? Federal Communications Commissions or commonly known as FCC are the ones that regulates interstate and international communications on televisions, radio and other forms of communications by regulating the television and radio programs.

They could prohibit this program if the FCC found it to be indecent. Indecent programs contains offensive sexual activity, does not have political, educational or even artistic value for public viewers, and having revenge, murder etc as a motivation. Having these characteristics may influence people especially the children to commit these kinds of acts so parents naturally report television programs that contains as such. FCC handles the complaints of the public viewers by counting and reporting it. Through this statistics, The American public viewers can voice out their concern on television censorship.

FCC tallied that on the second quarter of 2005 to the third, there was an increase of complaints about the lack of decency in television from 6, 161 to 26, 815. Due this, an “ Open Forum on Decency” was organized by the Senate Commerce Committee but the statistics showed that there may be changes on how the data was gathered by the FCC. Complaints were viewed as one from each e-mail of a group. This was done in 2003. However, in 2004, FCC counted complaints sent at different centers of FCC thru e-mails from a group, as one.

Through this, the Parents Television Council gained more authority in the percentage of complaints concerning the lack of decency shown in television. The Parents Television Council (PTC) is a nonpartisan group that protects

children from the indecency of television and other forms of media. PTC also regulates television programs that may contain and have an increase of indecency. This organization continually complains any programs that contains indecency that can influence children and thus, affecting the future of America.

The PTC's continuous complains to FCC have garnered to 99. % of total complaints given to FCC. These complaints are not without basis. The PTC watch and observe every television programs that is on the primetime hour. FCC's most received complaints are all about sex and use of vulgar language and not of violence. Considering this, violence is not considered indecent by the American public. We can say that indecency in television programs varies according to the public taste. They consider offensive sexual activities and profanity as indecent but why not violence? The majority of the viewing public do not have a united sense of what is really indecent for them.

On the other hand, violence is not shown in television premieres due to its lack of selling value and commerciality. Since violence is not a thing for the viewing public, producers and other television program makers doesn't add it to the television programs. If this is the case, then are sex and profanity a rating seller for the producers? Since, 99. 9% of the complaints about the indecency of the television programs are PTC, the general idea of indencency for the American viewing public is not clear. Their lack of definition of indecency makes them indecisive on their stand about television censorship.

The American viewing public's position on whether they approve of television censorship or not is hard to determine since there are factors such as the FCC's incompetency in counting the tallies of complaints of American public viewers, the PTC dominated the complaint percentage of television indecency, and the viewing public does not know their ground on whether to censor television or not. In the case of some Americans who opposed television censorship, it seemed to them that censorship greatly violates the freedom of speech.

Television indecency, performing gratuitous sex and cursing on the show is still part of freedom in speech. The issue of television censorship made politicians interested in meddling. This issue is formerly an issue of moral but it was now tainted with political ideologies and is used for the personal merits of many politicians and parties. Christian Right and Liberal Left have taken their own grounds concerning television censorship. Christian Right refers to a group of politically active Protestant leaders whose influence and activity in politics made them a strong support for any politician.

This party supports life by condemning abortion and disapproving same-sex marriage. In television censorship, the Christian Right supports this idea by persuading the Republic to censor the television programs. Protecting life and their conservative views may have been their first reason for vouching television censorship. Offensive sexual activities and profanity are considered shocking and very unconservative. The Christian Right should not press their own ground on the Republic. The majority should be the one to decide for themselves and not just any influential party.

On the other hand, the Liberal left is one of the coalitions that exist in USA. This group opposes television censorship since they believed that television censorship hinders the freedom of speech. Freedom of speech have many privileges but it should also be remembered that freedom comes with a price. Freedom will not matter if our own future is endangered because of wrong interpretation of what really is freedom. Both parties have their own points and firmly stand on what they believe to be true and appropriate.

The Christian Right and Liberal Left uses their own influences in politics to gain what they want. In their contrasting views, both parties may influence the outcome of this confusion on whether television censorship should be thoroughly enforced. However, both parties not just have their own belief to fight for, both will gain political interests if their own ground is enforced upon the other. The matter of television censorship should not be decided among these two groups if only their own political interests are the reason.

The American TV audience does not need censorship—it already has it”, said by MacQueen, in his Cashing in His V-Chips. Controlling the programs aired on television is a hard work especially for parents who have the most responsibility on their child’s education and upbringing. In order to censor certain programs that may have indecency, a technology called V-chip was developed. V-chip is an electronic device that allows parents or guardians to control or censor programs on television by blocking the program from the viewing of children.

A parent could select what rating of television programs are appropriate for the viewer. Any rating that does not include in the selection will be

automatically blocked by the v-chip. This program is embedded on every television sold and bought since 1999. The FCC have made sure that all television sets that is at least 13 inches will have a v-chip technology, already inside. To further control the viewers' exposure to indecency in television programs, ratings of shows are implemented by the Congress.

Each rating corresponds to who you're viewer is and what kind of shows the viewer can handle. Through this, parents who fear for their children's exposure to sexual activities and profane language can now be at ease and let v-chip do the controlling. Although, v-chip can be very helpful, there are also certain disadvantages. The V-chip is not known because many parents does not know that their television set even have that kind of technology. Not only that, many parents find it difficult to use that they just abandon the idea of using the v-chip.

When it comes to being cost-effective, v-chip is very inexpensive but the government used up a considerable budget to educate the parents on how to use v-chip but it ended as a failure since many still did not manage to understand how to use v-chip. Only 15% of parents who know the v-chip existed in their television actually used it while 39% did not know that they have v-chip and 20% of them did not used the v-chip even though they know about it. Lastly, many public viewers did not like the actual thought of television censorship in the form of v-chip.

The American public viewers expressed their disappointment in their belief that the government is meddling on the affairs of parents to their children. Control of public viewers in their television programs will not fully take effect

if their willingness is lacking. Parents who really care for their children's upbringing should know how to prevent their child's exposure to the indecency of television programs. Although, the American public viewers does not have a definite ground on what is television indecency for them.

There is an inconsistency in their moral values concerning indecent acts such as cursing and sexual activities because the public viewers does not seem to mind these kind of things when shown in television. Only the PTC voice out their disappointment and negative opinions on such matters. In order to prevent the future Americans from too much exposure to television indecency, the congress censored programs that is deemed as immoral. Censoring certain programs in television that contains indecent activities and verbal messages is desirable.

Many American public viewers would gladly censor their television programs for their children but the only problem lies on how to implement such censorship. American viewers especially parents does not know that there are technologies available to them so that their child could easily watch any programs without the parents' uneasiness on whether the television programs are appropriate for general viewing. Implementing censorship should be done individually and have been chosen by the viewer on his/her own. Also, the v-chip should come into more friendly-user package so all customers will be able to enjoy using such privileges.

The government already have the solution for this age-long problem, the only thing missing is how to properly implement it without using up too much budget but with higher rate of success in censoring television programs.

Considering this difficulty, it would be better if all factors concerned would be able to participate actively in implementation of television censorship. The government must be able first to know what is it that America wants? It is not clear on what side is America. America must first have a majority of ideas on what they want to do and what is indecent for them.

Implementing censorship on television programs may be difficult to achieve but with dedication and caring for the public viewers such as children, anything can be achieved. Television programs that are considered indecent because they contain profanity and sexual activities are not suitable for children viewing and should be censored. Through this, American public viewers protect television viewers from exposure of too much immoral actions. Most things of great importance such as this issue of television censorship have already been tainted with political issue.

When it comes to politics, the reason behind the reason is the true motive of the one who's going to implement it. The only thing scary is that there is a possibility that the meaning or reason behind television censorship may be forgotten and the fight for censorship will be meaningless. The true reason for applying censors on television is that it may influence children, teenagers and other viewers to bad attitudes such as immorality. To prevent this, censors for television programs are implemented and it is a good thing that politicians and other coalitions have taken their sides on television censorship.

Unfortunately, not all politicians have good intentions of just solving this moral problem. Others would like these opportunity to have their name

echoes in good resonance. When it comes to television programs, shows that are after higher ratings have the more reasons to present indecent activities in television programs. With the use of V-chip, parents and other television viewers can control their children's watching time but a great obstacle come in the way for parents, even with the support of the government, does not know how to use v-chip.

Not only how to use but some also do not care for the existence of such chips. The American television viewers lack the motivation and drive to censor their child's television programs. This results in failure to properly censor television programs that could have been indecent. Using only v-chip as a method for censorship of television programs are asking for too much. FCC, PTC and the American television viewers should hand-in-hand censor indecent television programs. The television censorship in America is still a controversial issue.

Many politicians have touched this issue and sided whether television should really be censored or not. Not only politicians have taken steps but also, different coalitions and groups have expressed their opinions. Even though, most politicians have already sided, the American television viewers are still indecisive on their stand. The television viewers have a casual manner when it comes to sexual activities and profanity of television programs. However, when it comes to violence, the television viewers goes all out.

The FCC and PTC are the ones that handles by rating the television programs on whether they are moral or immoral. The FCC bans all immoral television programs but they made a mistake when it came to counting the tallies of

complaints of the American public viewers. Since then, the PTC kept a close look-out on the contents of television programs by watching every second of primetime television and making a copy of every profane language they heard and sexual activities they saw. After doing all these, the PTC will file a complaint on programs found to be immoral.

Many of complaints about the indecency of television programs are made by the PTC. Through this, It is still not clear on what ground, the American viewing public stands. One of the issues with television censorship is that is now a political issue. Politicians have helped the American viewers on how to effectively censor programs that contains indecent activities by declaring a decree that all television, at least 13 inches must have a program inside, most commonly known as v-chip. This v-chip will censor and block programs according to the individuals' preferences.

Unfortunately, the v-chip is not popular with television viewers to be very effective. Most parents do not know that they have this electronic device. In the end, this project of censoring television for the benefit of the children is a failure. Considering all these data, television censorship should be applied to an individual's discretion. This censorship provides a better background in education the children, the future of America. This kind of education is better than educating them in profanity and offensive sexual activities.

Even though, censoring television is not complete, it is better this way since many programs that is educational and beneficial may be censored.

Educational in way of appreciating arts. Freedom in speech does not mean total freedom. America should still consider her children who might end up

doing indecent activities due to our excess in freedom. With freedom, America must cope with the duties and responsibilities bounded with it. Television censorship is one of the duties and responsibilities with freedom. It should be implemented even though it is with difficulty for it may come with greater reward.