

Racist speech

Literature



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As a society, we need to realize that with honesty, you have a certain responsibility and walk a fine line between offending people and possibly making racial statements. Therefore, the main difference between my interpretation and the conventional one is my focus is on unintentional vs.. Intentional racist speech. The Balance between racist speech and expression in a college environment can be difficult to decipher; students are encouraged and should express themselves while on campus, this embraces their creativity, passion, talent and allows them to feel like they're in a safe environment.

However, there is a fine line between expressing themselves in an offensive way vs.. An effective way. The article written by Derek Bok titled Protecting Freedom of Expression on the Campus focuses on a situation that occurred at Harvard, stating that "Two students hung Confederate flags in public view, upsetting students who equate the Confederacy with slavery". According to my deflation this is clearly racist speech and started quite the commotion among the Taft at the prestigious university and caused some other colleges to take racist speech to a new level.

In Bok's article his statement of colleges "some have enacted codes to protect their communities from forms of speech that are deemed to be insensitive to the feelings of other groups." Even the words "insensitive to the feelings of other groups" degrades the first amendment and could lead to racism. While some colleges chose not to enforce any restrictions, others varied in their approach and severity of retribution.

There are many ways to deal with this issue but the fact that each institution deals with it differently proves that racist speech continues and the answer remains elusive. Even though communities have the right to regulate speech they must do so very cautiously. If they do, they must apply the rules and limitations across the board and cannot enforce selectively to prohibit certain kind of messages and allow others that they think are acceptable; which can again be portrayed as racist speech.

He goes on to say that " I am sure that the vast majority of Harvard students believe that hanging a Confederate flag in public view-or displaying a swastika in response-is insensitive and unwise because any satisfaction it gives to the students who display these symbols is far outweighed by the discomfort it causes to many others. " When freedom of speech does not guarantee that the choice made by the student's will be the same choice Book would make. Right after that quote, Book states " I share this view', but we forget that the flag symbolizing slavery was not the intent but rather an unintentional form of racist speech.

If you are an agency of the government including public universities the free speech clause in the first amendment will be upheld even if the event offends the feelings or beliefs of that community. Book says in his article " I have difficulty understanding why a university such as Harvard should have less free speech than the surrounding society- or than a public university'. In response Harvard is a private university which means it is not obligated to all government rules and regulation, the problem comes from the ambiguous limitations of the first amendment.

Who's to say what is offensive or not in the eyes of the law, there are no tangible words for racist speech which results in many different interpretations. Colleges are not the only institutions with this problem; racist speech can be found everywhere. Even President Barack Obama is trying to end discrimination regarding the military and people who have different sexual preferences. The controversial "don't ask, don't tell", passed in 1993, prevents gay men and lesbians from revealing their sexual orientation, and prevents the military from asking about it.

This discuss policy has been in effect for over 15 years, and it's been supported by our military at all levels. However, this law of the "don't ask, don't tell" policy is unconstitutional because the main purpose of the First Amendment is freedom of speech, if lesbians and gay men are not allowed to have this right in the military; then the military and congress who approved this law are both racist. This is an example of racist speech and our government is acting as if it were a private institution and not part of a government that is owned by the people.

President Barack Obama wants to put an end to the anti-gay policy because it clearly sends a message of discrimination regarding the right to freedom of speech. It is a battle between our right to freedom of speech and the Military right to pass a law only because it can. Although these incidents seem quite manageable they can easily become a much bigger problem. For instance what if someone decides to burn the offensive flag at Harvard down, we now have crossed the freedom of speech line and have committed an illegal act.

Can you imagine what would happen in our public schools if we tried to enforce " don't ask, don't tell". Speech can cross over to action which causes racial tension but is also considered a crime. If you minimize racist speech you put a spotlight on racism only making the situation worse igniting the flames that started the problem in the first place. Book says " it would be better to ignore" however ignoring the problem is a Band-Aid not a solution. In order to come to a universal agreement that will end racism, means making it a priority to our first amendment.

Book says " The fact that speech is protected by the tuition from Harvard the students who felt offended by the flag that symbolized slavery through their eyes, would strongly disagree with Book protesting that it is our right. However our leaders in congress seem to strongly agree, by their actions of standing by " Don't ask Don't Tell", they must believe gay men and lesbians do not have the right to voice talk or congregate with others of their persuasion while in the service of our government about their sexual preference. As long as there is freedom of speech, it is considered wrong to tell someone what they can or can't say.