

Freedom of speech over the internet

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To all individuals, the liberty of expressing their thoughts, feelings, opinions and ideas is of utmost importance. The expression of ideas and externalizing of one's thoughts is important for everyone because it shows people who you are and what you think; it highlights your identity and your individuality. People have different views about censorship of speech over the Internet; however, the U. S. Bill of Rights does state that the freedom of speech and press must be protected (Chen). Inevitably, as in other forms of media, free speech should not be limited on the Internet because people have a fundamental right to say what they think. This constitutionally guaranteed free speech will build good communication across innumerable forums. In addition to allowing citizens to express their individuality, free speech allows entire democratic societies to enact change through open political discourse and fair elections. Famous names like John Milton, John Locke, David Hume, and John Stuart Mill, express the importance of the right to free speech in their writing. John Locke (1632-1704) helped start the Enlightenment in England and France and his ideas were a major inspiration for the U. S. Constitution. He stated “ no one ought to harm another in his life, health, liberty, or possessions.” He believed that liberty encompassed free speech. In addition, in the article, Importance of Philosophy, Landauer and Rowlands talk about John Locke's support of the right to free speech. They argue that freedom of speech is the most important thing to have among liberties of any kind because it gives us a chance to persuade other people about what is right and wrong. That is why the use of force or legal restrictions to curb speech tramples upon people's moral right. In the article, Internet Censorship and the Freedom of Speech, Leatherman argues that, “ Censorship is a possible way for the powerful to terminate individualism, <https://assignbuster.com/freedom-of-speech-over-the-internet/>

wisdom, and the marketplace of ideas; it not only facilitates less freedom, but also promotes governmental coercion, collectivism, and possibly totalitarianism. Preventing individuals from exploring others' thoughts and ideas is a way to prevent the expansion of knowledge and power" On the other hand, speech is often abused and freedom of speech is taken for granted. This is seen when people commit hate crimes, which are often traceable to hate speech that they may have been exposed to (Whitmore). For instance, Machado went to jail after sending a hate email to Asian students in his college (Machado case). Therefore, he set an explicit example for email being equal to telephone and regular mail for such a crime and more so for the propagation of racial intolerance. The continual growth of abusive acts can lead to other disruptions as well. Moreover, people may often use speech in a fraudulent way or to deliberately hurt others. For example, the FBI website lists all of the different ways people use fraud on the Internet. The list is very long, which proves that Internet fraud is a serious problem (" Common fraud"). In addition, Mcgruff's organization lists four different ways cyber bullies hurt other people deliberately on Internet (" Cyberbullies"). Yet, with all the problems that the free speech can bring freedom of speech should not be curtailed in any of the innumerable forums in which it is enjoyed. The benefits of free speech are many. Free speech will build good communication across innumerable forums. For example, one of the articles on the Daum website shows the variability in behavior toward Korean women who are planning to have a baby. The article says that there are many women who work for a company and need to take maternity leave. The Korean government always tells citizens to have more babies because they believe that more babies will bring more power to the country in the

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future. But this article says that when a woman has a baby, the company that she works for doesn't like it at all. Like the other articles in Daum, this article let people comment on how they think. Free speech allows people to share their views, no matter what side they have (Lee). In addition to showing more than one side of an issue, such as in the Daum article, freedom to express quick opinions electronically has been greatly enhanced by services such a Twitter. Now anyone can express a quick opinion and see if people agree with them or not. This is the ultimate convenience for getting your opinion to many people. Free speech can get others to follow you, but it can also offend others just as easily. Twitter is teaching us all that even though we have free speech, we are al accountable to society for the things we do say. Another new forum that is dependent on free speech is a internet site such as YouTube. Professors, politicians, doctors and students are all using this video device to express their opinions (Hasse). Some of their thoughts are inspiring. Some of them are silly or even rude. The wonderful thing about YouTube is anyone can say what they want, so it shows a representative sample of all of the thoughts of humanity. A final benefit of free speech is in the political arena of a democracy. Ideas of political candidates must be able to be freely expressed. If they are censored on the internet or elsewhere, there will not be real political freedom (Kentrige). A candidate may have a great idea for helping the economy or making peace. But if freedom of speech does not exist, the ruling party could suppress the idea in order to stay in power. This is not democratic. People will be more willing to come up with political solutions to problems if there is freedom of speech. People should have a right to speak freely of what they think and what they want because people have a fundamental right to express

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themselves. Limiting expression online will prevent productive communication and can restrict a lot of new talent, which otherwise could be exposed to the world. Therefore, free speech should not be limited on Internet. I have learned from my essay that people's thinking can be different from what I think but I should let them speak freely because how I feel doesn't matter but what is right or wrong does. Haase, David G. "The YouTube Makeup Class." *The Physics Teacher* 47. 5 (2009): 272. Print.

Kentridge, Sydney. "Freedom of Speech: Is It the Primary Right?" *International & Comparative Law Quarterly* 45. 02 (1996). Print.