

Censorship: Yea or Nay?

Censorship has been debated by leaders and individual citizens alike for as long as governments and communities have existed, always seeking a balance between free speech and potential offensive speech. Many have favored censorship in this discussion, emphasizing the idea of hate speech and the effect it can have, while others have taken the side against censorship on the basis of free speech and its importance in a society controlled by a government. This anti-censorship argument has been centered around the idea that personal freedoms, education, creativity, and self-expression are all hindered by censorship if and when it exists. Censorship is detrimental to the progression of individual livelihood and societies as a whole, so it must be avoided.

Where censorship exists, there also exists the potential for governmental corruption and suppression. If the government is in full control of what words and information are able to be discussed amongst the general population, no barrier exists between the freedom and control of the people. While it may seem beneficial to censor words that are widely considered to be proximal to hate speech, the government cannot possess the power to do so without additionally possessing the power to continue censoring words that don't fall under this category. The government censoring words and phrases would inevitably lead to the suppression of ideas and beliefs; what was once a free and diverse country would turn into an authoritarian state. It is essential to protect the free speech, without censorship, of every single person if free speech is to exist at all, regardless of prejudice or disagreement.

The censorship of specific words cannot occur unless there is someone deciding what will and will not be acceptable, leaving room for biased and subjective decisions. In the United States, as a country with freedom of speech as a fundamental right, every individual is granted

the ability to have and express any opinion, with the exception of any speech that causes or threatens physical harm. While some may argue that a specific word should not have a place in society, whether in personal conversations or in media, there will always be others who disagree with that sentiment. Everyone is entitled, via the Constitution, to their own opinion on any matter, so it is unconstitutional and unethical to enforce any single opinion onto a population. Censorship cannot exist without taking this freedom away and controlling the everyday lives of the people beyond governmental authority.

Censorship hinders education by preventing the exchange of ideas and information necessary for academic debates and conversations. The censoring of words can limit the ability of students and educators to understand and discuss the varying viewpoints and opinions regarding important topics. Open discussions, free from limitations, are essential to understanding complex ideas, especially those regarding social and/or political concepts, but the censoring of words or phrases that may be considered controversial stops these discussions from occurring. Many politicians, for example, oppose the teaching of critical race theory in public schools and wish to censor teachers and curriculums to avoid racial topics. If educators are unable to facilitate an understanding of the history of race around the world and in the United States, students will be unaware of an incredibly important piece of history and present-day society.

While most societies have manners and etiquette that are very valuable and important to honor in conversation and there is always a time and a place for certain words and terms, censorship can obstruct the emotion and passion of a verbal expression from being conveyed properly. Words that are generally considered to be swearing or cursing can add emphasis to the articulation of one's thoughts, or they can be used in pieces of art, such as fiction, poem, or song

writing, to creatively develop the main idea. These words are often censored in media, such as in TV shows, movies, or the radio, or their usage is considered to be taboo in social groups or public spaces, preventing the listener from truly understanding what the communicator is attempting to say. Censoring words in media and within communities can stifle the creative and communicative abilities of the people. It is said that those who do not learn history are doomed to repeat it and censorship would guarantee this repetition.

The enforcement of censorship in society encourages government corruption and the suppression of public knowledge; enforces biased and subjective policy making, ultimately leading to an erosion of democracy and a violation of human rights; hinders education by limiting the exchange of information and ideas; and impedes on artistic emotion, passion, and creativity, preventing artists from conveying their intended message. The existence of censorship within governments, media for public consumption, and communities plays a detrimental role in the constant growth and facilitation of an open society.