

GREAT AMERICAN THINK-OFF: ESSAY

Is Freedom of Speech Worth the Cost?

In this day and age, we live in a world where there are two sides to every story. We no longer convict a criminal for murdering his partner because evidence proves it so, but we try to look beyond the surface, examine the case and unravel the mysteries surrounding the crime and why it was committed in the first place. The two sides to this story comprise the criminal and witness's perception, or needless to say, their explanations to what lead to the criminal act. The witness may be someone who was close to the deceased or someone completely different, such as a stranger. But either case, both the criminal and witness will present forth different logics as to why the murder was committed, whether or not they hold truth or fact. Regardless, both points of perception hold value towards the process of solving the case so that critical conclusions can be drawn and the case can be closed.

Another instance would simply, and not-so-surprisingly, be a conflict between two individuals. To analyse and try to resolve the conflict, a third-party can intervene, where he needs to understand the root of the problem and come up with proper solutions to fix the noise that caused the conflict.

Oh but these are just literal and direct examples of the expression, "there are two sides to every story". Figuratively, though, the expression still stands as to why freedom of speech is worth the cost or not, even if it is indirectly in relation to the topic. So is freedom of speech worth the cost? Well, there are costs and benefits, the good and the bad, the bone and the bane. By my reference to personal experiences, you can count my word for it. Just read on.

In October 2021, when I was 18-years-old, I was diagnosed with Depression, Psychosis, and Schizophrenia. Because Psychosis and Schizophrenia were a part of my diagnosis, it's not that I was losing my head and becoming crazy, but I was going through an internal battle influenced by the things that were going on around me and how I responded to them consequently. If you research the definition of Psychosis, you will find the words, "a disconnection from reality"

among the others, which is something that some sufferers of depression go through as a result of Schizophrenia. Schizophrenia occurs when you start seeing things for what they are **not** or what you think they are, when the case is completely different. You end up making assumptions in your head that not only hurt you, but cloud your imagination and make you see the world through a different lens. Because of this, everyone around you becomes the enemy.

Luckily, in addition, the two of these conditions didn't have a permanent effect on my life as they didn't last, but the consequences of depression were far-reaching. When I was diagnosed with depression, it wasn't just a medical statement and it ended there, further tests, scans and examinations were done and a shocking discovery was made. I had developed a small benign tumour, of 2,2 cm, in my brain which was a result of the depression.

Known as a silent killer, depression can profoundly impact an individual's mental well-being. Your thoughts, emotions, judgement- they change. And this not only affects you, but it affects the world around you. Depression can be influenced by a lot of negative emotions such as anger, fear, anxiety, stress, regret and pain. And this altogether, makes you a completely different person. From the way you communicate with others, to how you respond to even the slightest things that can bring you down for the day, it triggers an emotion within you that will, in some cases, cause you to react. But that entirely depends on your personality. You may react with anger, hate or even more pain and sadness. And in my case, as an impulsive "Aries", I would, of course, react with anger because I would have built up walls around me to protect myself from more pain. The pain! There's just something about the pain that triggers anxiety, as it's the one thing you constantly fear, knowing that it has the power to completely shut you down. And as you yourself a sufferer of depression, you instead succumb to the pain and let it consume you because you have lost the strength to hang in there and fight. And boy would I lash out like a firestorm about to strike lightning on land when angered. I would be a raging tsunami, saying the most hurtful things with my sharp tongue that would make or break the person concerned without even my realising it. I would not realise it, because I would be so blinded by rage that I would not have the power to see how badly my environment takes it in.

You see, people are the most complex yet fragile beings you will ever meet. Or at least that's what I discovered when I developed the habit of saying what's

on my mind whenever someone hurt me because I would be trying to protect myself. Although it feels good to let the anger out to the person who did you wrong, you may not actually realise how they receive your words because they will try to act tough, almost nonchalant. Words have no bones, but they can break even the most stubborn of souls if you tend observe carefully. In addition, it's not that I'm a bad person, I'm quite the opposite, to be precise. I don't do things without a reason and I would never intentionally hurt or harm another.

Let's speak the truth. Some people are horrible out there, but guess what? It is they who feel the most when you rise above their expectations and hurt them back instead. And what better way to hurt someone than words?

But let's cut to the chase and learn the lesson behind the logic of this topic. So is freedom of speech worth the cost? Yes and no. Yes, because some people deserve it, no, because some could be one of your loved ones that you have no intention of hurting, but ultimately do because you do it without taking into consideration how easily it can destroy them. Some people make mistakes, and some misunderstandings are a result of miscommunication and differences in opinion. We can never all be the same. That's the beauty of relationships. It is embracing our differences and watching them blend in perfectly and harmoniously in our lives to create a beautiful picture. So you be careful with your words, because you may not use them wisely or use them for the wrong reasons.

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