

Does Freedom of Speech Give People the Right to Use Hate Speech?

“What is freedom of expression? Without the freedom to offend, it ceases to exist” Salman Rushdie. The quote perfectly sums up the never-ending debate about freedom of speech and hate speech. It is a well-known fact that freedom of speech and expression belongs to the group of fundamental human rights of every person on this planet. Lately, we are witnessing the rising concerns about hate speech, is it protected by this basic human right or freedom of speech should have some limitations? Given the fact that every individual is allowed to express thoughts and beliefs, banning the negative comments would, in fact, deny his or her basic rights i.e. freedom of speech.

Freedom of speech reinforces all other human rights, thus allowing society to develop and progress at a constant rate. The ability to state our opinion and speak freely is pivotal for any change in society. Throughout the history, society evolved thanks to the individuals, great thinkers, brave leaders, who were not scared to express their beliefs. Back in time, those beliefs that were contrary to the typical “mindset” would be considered as hate, a hatred towards their way of life, culture, and tradition. The most reputable professors, experts, and campaigners only confirm that free speech has always been used to fight for change, for better times.

Besides reinforcement of other human rights, free speech is also essential due to the ability to hear others and be heard at the same time. We need to hear other people’s views as well as offering them our own opinions. Unfortunately, one of the fastest-growing problems of our society is that people rarely listen to others and acknowledge their takes on certain topics if they don’t agree with them. We should feel comfortable exchanging ideas and thoughts with those who have opposing views. Experts agree that way there would be less “hate speech” circling around.

We hear or read the term “hate speech” a lot, especially now with the easy internet access and a multitude of social media websites to join. It comes as no wonder why insulting comments and expressing negative ideas are considered a threat to the humanity. A lot of people are anti-Semitic, anti-Muslim, anti-gay marriage, and so on. Those who assume hate speech is not a freedom of speech, primarily, focus on the expression of a negative attitude towards certain people and ideas. However, if we start banning people from expressing their beliefs, then what comes next? After one thing, there always comes another and, eventually, the mankind would live in fear of saying anything. The reality is that the society has become oversensitive; everything one does not agree with is considered insulting and branded as hate.

Finally, freedom of speech is the most important human right that every individual has the right to exercise. This freedom comes with the ability to express one’s opinion, regardless of its nature good or bad. What our society needs today are not limitations of free speech, but making efforts to establish dialogues between people with

conflicting beliefs. Listening and being heard will go a long way; that way we could build bridges instead of burning them.

<http://www.news.cornell.edu/stories/2011/03/free-speech-central-democracy-rossi-says>

<https://www.indexoncensorship.org/2016/04/free-speech-important/>

<http://www.debate.org/opinions/does-freedom-of-speech-give-us-the-right-to-offend>