

Discussion Board Topic #1: Free Speech & Social Media Platforms

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1) Identify one point Nadine Strossen made in the video that you find informative/surprising and why.

Strossen mentions at the start of the YouTube video, “Social media companies have abused their powers to serve the people, but instead serve their own corporate interests and in ways that stifle our speech and threaten democracy” (Strossen, 2019).

Her statement is no surprise to anyone in today’s modern 2025 world since the past three decades have shown us hundreds of such scandals brought to light pertaining to freedom of speech and censorship. This issue plagues many corporations in different industries, including social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter. But for some individuals, why should it not be a surprise to the modern world and why should the individual care about this issue?

Profit and results are the priority for each corporation. Corporations are typically amoral at their core. For corporations, everything else is secondary to profit and desired results, including the following:

- Adherence to morality and ethical behavior.
- Abstaining from behaviors that will tarnish one’s integrity and public reputation.
- Following through with the industry’s governing laws and regulations.
- Respecting or honoring cultural and social norms and values of one’s customer base.
- And lastly, the preservation of free speech and democracy in society.

One scenario displaying the abuse of authoritarian powers of free speech and controlling it is with Facebook (i.e., Meta). On the Joe Rogan Experience podcast, Meta CEO Mark Zuckerberg

claims he was “‘ill-prepared’ to face the anti-Trump media pressuring him to fact-check misinformation on social media” over the past several years (Nieto, 2025). Also, he claims the previous federal government administration and authorities would regularly demand Zuckerberg’s employees to censor a slew of different topics from Facebook’s platform (Potter, 2025). Whether we can verify those claims as objective truth or not is a matter of deeper discussion for a later date. However, we can all agree on that Facebook’s reputation as a place of ‘free speech without censorship’ was a not priority over profit for the last several years. Events during the Pandemic and last two Presidential Elections reveal a heavy and biased controlling force over free speech on the Facebook platform.

2) Provide your own informed opinion about what role, if any, should social media platforms like Facebook perform in censoring hate speech and/or other forms of speech that are potentially harmful to the public.

-Provide an example and cite at least one outside credible source in supporting your opinion.

First, social media platforms should regulate and censor speech that is or can be an immediate incitement to or of violence. Such speech is not free speech, nor protected by the U.S. Constitution. A helpful example or guide is found on X (formerly known as “Twitter”): a list shows impermissible dialogue (like violence, harassment, adult content, and child exploitation) is clearly listed and enforced to ensure all people can freely and safely participate in public conversation on the social media platform (X, 2024).

Second, all other speech should be allowed and be considered protected under the U.S. Constitution. Hate speech is free speech, whether one person likes it or not. Hate speech objectively exists, and we should take great care and responsibility for the words we say and write out of

respect towards others and a sense of duty to a moral or higher law. However, there are severe consequences when those who attempt to define appropriate speech, including hateful speech, then attempt to regulate all of it.

Third, I believe more speech is the best solution and the best remedy to and for hate speech. It is a dangerous kind of authority to regulate any speech when given to any government, social-media platform, corporation, or any other group of people. UC Berkeley Chancellor Carol Christ explains, “One person’s hate speech may be another person’s valid criticism of another person’s beliefs, values and speech” (UCTV, 2018). It remains hard to make such distinctions: we should allow such speech to protect the rights of people, including minorities, who do have valid criticisms when others think those criticisms are hate speech. Also, regulating hate speech appears to be an impossible standard to effectively and efficiently meet for any individual or entity and for authorities to realistically enforce. If left unchecked, those who attempt to do so inevitably attempt to regulate how we think, leading to the inevitable destruction of society’s core values and infrastructure. The reader can easily and quickly look to specific places in our modern world where speech is highly regulated, and you’ll find its destructive socio-economic impact on people in those controlled areas (e.g., China, North Korea, the Middle East, and some places in Europe and Russia). Jordan Peterson summarizes such things in a beautiful formula: “Can’t say offensive things = can’t negotiate properly through the future = everyone suffers in society” (Media, 2023).

What is the solution?

Unless a company’s coffers are greatly and negatively impacted by their decision-making, most corporations (including social-media platforms) WILL continue to take advantage of every presented opportunity to make more money for themselves and their stakeholders, including the abuse of their own power to restrict freedom of speech. Nothing else supersedes that philosophy,

no matter how much marketing a company will advise otherwise to its employees and customer base. And it logically makes sense: without a profit, the companies will fall apart and go bankrupt. I do agree with Strossen that the best philosophical and pragmatic way for people to address the abusing censorship of our free speech is to carry out laws and other tools to constrain their power. However, that is a lofty goal requiring more in-depth discussion using ‘common-sense’ tools that do not turn against us like a ‘double-edge sword’ by restricting our free speech even further than before.

One manner of fighting against censorship is to no longer use the service platform, trading it for similar or entirely different service. Capitalism is beautiful in the U.S.A. because it provides Americans the opportunity to pick and choose where their money is best spent, and there are many innovators that have created competing titans to rival monopolistic platforms. If a company is receiving less profit due to censorship and restricting free speech, then the company must decide between two options: (1) continue without change which will force the company into bankruptcy, or (2) adjust the business model and practices to better suit their customer base and stakeholders’ interests. Another fighting tactic is where some influential and affluent people, like Elon Musk, will challenge and change the social media landscape entirely by outright purchasing a broken and unprofitable company, overhauling the mission and purpose of the platform, then pruning all the waste to provide more space for growth, opportunity, and the freedom to conduct useful dialogue that does not hinder others’ freedom of speech.

Conclusion

I believe more speech is the best solution and the best remedy to and for hate speech. Over the past two decades, we’ve seen many attempts and real-life examples to regulate free speech. Though they may originate from innocent and altruistic intentions to better society, overtime they

have caused more harm than good in the social media industry and in the everyday lives of people.

As Rowan Atkinson once said, (aka, “Mr. Bean,” the great British comedian):

We must first take responsibility for what we say. And second, acknowledge free speech can only suffer when the law prevents us from dealing with its consequences.... And if we want a more robust society, we need a more robust dialogue that includes the right to offend others (Atkinson, 2018).

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