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*Freedom of speech  
how hard is it  
to understand?*

Something rank is in the air. It exudes the bittersweet stench of a 3-month-old tuna sandwich. It tastes like the layer of grime and rust caked at the bottom of a dumpster. It rings in our ears like an off-key note being played for hours without pause.

Ignorance. No doubt about it. The problem with censorship is that the wrong people are the censors. In fact, those self-proclaimed "censors" who believe in their so-called authority are often the ones who need to be censored most. They think they have America's "best interests" in mind when they ban "Catcher in the Rye" from our public schools or 2 Live Crew from our music stores.

I don't buy that. I don't buy some 43-year-old senator or 69-year-old local politician telling me the music I like is not "acceptable" for my ears or that it sends me messages about blowing away the next person I see.

It's easy for them to sit in a room, sign some obscure and politically-worded document and declare that my favorite artist is obscene and unfit for public consumption.

Well, not quite, but almost and hopefully some day" free and the home of the "I can decide what's right for everyone so that makes me" brave.

This is not acceptable. Somewhere in America, there is a group of local citizens and politicians in Smalltown, USA, which is about to declare to its community that its children should no longer be able to read "The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn" because it is "rough, coarse and inelegant" and furthermore unsuitable for "intelligent, respectable people."

Where do these people get off spitting on a constitutional amendment? Sometimes I wonder if the problem maybe starts with the simple act of reading. I hope by now we all know the basic text of the First Amendment. Yet, some people, some seemingly ignorant people, are evidently reading a different version than you or me. Maybe this is how they read it:

*Congress should make any law it so chooses respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the semi-freedom of speech, or of the press ... and basically allow anyone who perceives to retain authority to decide what is best for everyone they so desire.*

What other possible explanation is there for the act of determining that free speech or freedom of the press means anything less than FREE? Not "semi-free," "almost free," or "in the vicinity of being free" - FREE!

If we banned every book, every compact disc, every song, every poem or every monologue that offended someone in America, then art would cease to exist in anything but pre-school form. Is anyone out there offended by "The Cat in the Hat"?

America, what is the hang-up with BAD words? We shouldn't say "s\*\*\*," but it's OK to say "lawyer." It's not polite to say "bitch," but "jerk" is a little better. What about "dipwad?" That can appear in any radio broadcast in the country.

Words carry no power on their own. It's the meaning we create out of them, the way we address them, that fuels the fire of hostility.

We need to subscribe to the unpopular theory of desensitization. We need to stop banning, denouncing and regulating everything so that people don't find it as appealing to say these "bad" words or listen to these "controversial" albums as much.

In Chinese, Coca-Cola supposedly means "bite the wax tadpole." We better eradicate this diseased problem from our society. I don't want to hand my international friends a drink that will imply I don't like them very much.

Don't think for a second that by "free speech I believe we should be able to say whatever we want with pure unrestricted protection. If a man seduces children on the Internet for purposes of pornography, he should be arrested, and we should throw away the key.

The problem with free speech is that those who abuse it most are the ones who have ulterior, selfish or immoral motives. I think free speech should exist as long as it doesn't infringe on the basic rights of another person, such as general safety and the pursuit of happiness.

I think freedom of expression should exist on the same level. Again, ignorance and hateful motives are behind acts of putting a Nazi flag on the door of a Jewish person, but education will solve that problem nine times out of 10.

A flag with red, black and white depicting a swastika is obviously a message intended to convey hatred. But a swastika drawn in a quilt or painted on a religious building denotes a sign of good luck in many cultures.

America, if you want your children to stop hurting each other, then instill values in them that will prevent them from taking Ice T literally. I believe laws that would keep albums such as Ice T's "Cop Killer" or Bone Thugs-N-Harmony's "The Art of War" out of children's hands are good laws.

But laws that would attempt to restrict these artists from expressing their views and artistic works are in direct contradiction with the Bill of Rights.

No one can see to the explicit obedience of every law, so teach your children, America, to listen to all sides and filter them from within. Teach them the dangers of drugs, the risks of smoking and the problems with haphazard teen-age sex so that one song or one book won't turn them into a serial rapist or drug dealer.

**Cooper's Law: Freedom of expression is not the problem. Freedom of ignorance is.**

Read "banned" books, not because they are banned, but because they are as much a part of literature as those books that are not banned. Listen to 2 Live Crew, not because they have been censored enough to last 20 lifetimes, but because they strike a chord within you - one that makes you feel alive and view the world in a different way.

Pointing a disapproving finger at an art work, especially if you haven't truly "listened" to lyrics or read between the lines of a major literary work, is worthless.

Not all rappers write lyrics that so many people question. Listen to E40's "Things I Never Change" or Fiend's "Take My Pain." And why aren't more country artists banned? People say rap contributes to hostility and depression, but what about the hillbillies of the world?

If having "Friends in Low Places" and wishing on "Someone Else's Star" aren't enough to make you want to go into a post office and start firing away ...

then WHAT IS?

**CENSORED**



**LESLEY OWUSU is a sophomore broadcasting major and a Daily Nebraskan columnist.**

*Protecting children,  
minimizing crime  
should be priorities*

So you have just read an argument against censorship. It's now my turn to discuss why censorship is a good thing.

You have to remember that this is a pretty sensitive topic, and giving a strong argument for censorship is pretty tough, as many of you may be against it. Some of you may not care for censorship, and others may find this discussion very interesting.

I generally feel that we should be free to read, hear and view whatever we like because we live in a liberal society. But there needs to be some kind of regulation, or else we would live in complete chaos.

I'm not going to bore you with all the reasons why we need censorship. Censorship exists whether you like it or not.

I will base my argument on this simple question: Is censorship a necessary evil?

Well, I believe that censorship is very necessary, and censorship is not evil. Censorship is very much a good thing.

Censorship is a very broad topic. We could discuss this all day, but I'm going to take an overall view on it, to keep it brief.

I think that we need to understand that we live in a world that is full of individualism. We are all very different. Certain lyrics in music and films are disturbing to others. Certain things do and do not apply to others. Certain graphic material should not be exploited to some groups like the elderly and, most importantly, children.

There needs to be respect for these groups in our society, and there needs to be regulation.

We need to consider moral values and beliefs when discussing censorship.

Some people find the contents of films and books to be offensive and in "bad taste." That is why the "self-proclaimed censors" decide what we can and cannot see. The censors have the power to examine material and label it tasteful or unfit for publication.

Some books and films are completely removed from the shelf because they are deemed as inappropriate for our eyes.

You may disagree that censors should have the authority to do this, but it simply is a fact.

You're probably thinking, "What gives censors the right to decide what I can see?" But let's try and think about this logically.

If people are allowed too much freedom, many people will take advantage of exercising this right.

The First Amendment does state that we all have a freedom of speech and expression. As an adult you can do whatever you like. But imagine if we lived in a world where people were allowed to walk the streets naked and throw foul language around whenever we wanted.

Students would be free to swear and cuss at their professors, and young children could do and say whatever they wanted. Drugs would be legal, and there would be no need for a government. There would be no control, law or order. No one would have to respect others. We would live in a world full of complete anarchy. How many of you could live in a world like this? Probably few.

Would this be healthy and ethical? I don't think so.

I think television is among the most influential mediums for needing censorship.

My biggest concern is about children. Children are one of the most vulnerable groups of people in our society, and they need to be protected from certain materials. The contents of certain materials are too explicit for children. I'm not saying adults should hide the secrets of life, but adults and parents should educate children in an appropriate manner.

This doesn't mean that allowing children to watch pornography will teach them about sex. No. Young children need to understand the importance of sexuality and sexual relationships.

I remember when I was about 10 years old, and I was flicking through the stations one evening. I remember it was not very late. I changed the station, and I saw two homosexual men having sex. I was in shock. I should not have been allowed, at that age, to see that sort of graphic material.

I changed the channel so fast. I knew it was wrong to view this, not just because my father was in the room, but because I was not mature and ready to view such things.

I believe things like this, because of their disturbing and offensive nature, need to be censored from children. Many would regard this as foul. It may be a natural activity between some groups, but some individuals do not need to be exposed to this.

These days, children learn so quickly, and there is a need for regulation.

That is why we have age group ratings and editing. The V-chip exists as a deterrent against children seeing certain films.

Films like "Power Rangers" and "Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles" contain plenty of violence, and often young children try to imitate what they see. This is what many people believe has helped influence the increase of crime and violence among youths.

Children are killing children. Look at the case of James Bulger, an international story that stunned the world. Two 10-year-old boys brutally murdered a 1-year-old child. I hate to imagine what kind of background these boys came from and what kind of mentality possessed such young people to commit such a crime.

Despite all the protection parents and adults attempt to do in regulating certain material, it perhaps still isn't enough. Children still manage to get hold of certain material.

We need to draw a line somewhere. We need to minimize crime and violence through censorship.

Censorship is very much necessary, as it prevents the viewing of material that many would regard as obscene and offensive. Whether or not you and I agree with censorship, it exists for our own benefits.

Give the censors a break. They're only trying to do their job - protecting us.



MATT HANEY/DN