

## Freedom of Expression: A Path to a Better World

The lack of freedom of expression represents the worst of society. Inequitable access to education and the marginalization of communities presents barriers to full access to freedom of expression. To build a better society, freedom of expression should be fully extended to all, including those with dissenting opinions. Historically, in turbulent times such as war, those with dissenting opinions have been prevented from expressing their views. However, the only way for the world to aspire to be better is by allowing full societal participation. Differing views must be respected to have a world that more accurately defends the basic rights of all.

Discrimination is a core element of unequal access to freedom of expression (“Why is access to...”). Marginalized groups are denied equal say and participation in the decisions that affect their lives. This creates a vicious cycle. If marginalized groups are unable to communicate their needs and perspectives, they are stripped of the ability to better their own lives. One frequently marginalized group globally is the LGBTQ+ community. For example, in Uganda the LGBTQ+ community faces persecution (Sands). Gay relationships are considered unnatural under the law. Between 2017 and 2020, 194 people were charged for gay relationships (Sands). This attack on the expression of sexuality constitutes an attack against wellbeing and happiness. Everyone should have the right to safely express their sexuality without fearing repercussions. In a better world, freedom of expression would universally allow the LGBTQ+ community to not only celebrate their identities but to also speak up about the changes that need to be made so that everyone can feel comfortable being themselves.

Another major obstacle to freedom of expression is the lack of universally available education. The poorest communities struggle to have equitable access to education. Women and young girls are especially affected. In 2009, 35 million girls were excluded from primary

education compared to 31 million boys (“Why is access to...”). Lack of education is a major contributor to illiteracy and thus a barrier to freedom of expression. Without the ability to read and write, the ability to fully engage with society is hindered. Yet again a vicious cycle is created. People that lack the ability to stand up for themselves will only be further marginalized. Thus, the ability to fully use freedom of expression is vital. A world that strives to be truly equal and inclusive of all views must significantly reduce barriers to expression.

Freedom of expression must be maintained, regardless of whether the government disagrees with the opinion being expressed. The first targets of government repression are never the last (“Freedom of Expression” [ACLU]). Everyone’s right to freedom of expression must be defended if everyone’s liberties are to be safe. In times of war, protestors have been frequently suppressed. During World War I, peaceful protestors that opposed U.S. entry were jailed for expressing their views (“Freedom of Expression” [ACLU]). For a more recent example, one needs to look no further than the war in Ukraine. The Kremlin has passed a law imposing a sentence of up to 15 years for those who publish “fake news” about the war as a way of dissuading those who disagree with the war from speaking out (Dress). Alexander Nevzorov, a popular journalist in Russia and former member of parliament, criticized the Russian bombing of a maternity hospital in Ukraine, leading to a court ordering his detainment (Dress). Laws, such as the one passed by Russia that give the government the unquestionable power to decide what is “fake,” allow the government to remain corrupt and not answer to its people. Access to information and all viewpoints gives people power, as ignorance will only lead to oppression. So, to have a better world, freedom of expression can’t be restricted whenever it is convenient for the government. It is through freedom of expression that people can ensure their voices are heard.

Freedom of expression is not only vital for a better world, it also vital for the development of a person (“Freedom of Speech” [Human Rights House Foundation]). It is through freedom of expression that safe platforms for all voices, including critical ones, are created. People should always have the right to freedom of expression to live in a society in which all can enjoy their human rights (“Freedom of Speech” [Amnesty International]). To ensure that freedom of speech truly encompasses everyone, barriers to expression must be dismantled.

## Works Cited

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