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WHAT IS THE IMPORTANCE OF CIVIL DISCOURSE AND FREE SPEECH?

Free speech and civil discourse are inherent balances of each other. Free speech is the razor-tongued defender of liberty, while civil discourse tames that force into usable tempered solutions. It is impossible to speak of one without the other. If one is only to be a defender of free speech, then one is left with no ability to sift through the manic ramblings of the foolhardy and the constructed genius of a thoughtful proposal. On the other hand, if we are only to vest importance in civil discourse, we would lack the ability to harbor the innovation of thought so necessary for change.

We must first appreciate the impact of these notions to understand the depth of both. Free speech has been the cornerstone of American democracy, and while it was initially limited to those of privilege, in the modern era, we are privy to the same rights as our founders. Free speech is, more than any other liberty contained in any of the original amendments, an act of trust. The use of speech as a tool for tyranny, fearmongering, or as a means to those ends has been observed throughout history. However, in the United States, we can still speak our minds even if supporting or even using those tactics. This is a vested trust by our founders that we (as individuals) would use our words as tools of impact, which places the importance and greatness of America onto our shoulders though not individually. It seems apparent that with this ability to speak freely, we must

have a framework of acceptability as to not push outside the bounds that remind us of our responsibility to the citizenry. It is at this point that civil discourse blooms, and we take the trust given to us through the medium of words and hone those lofty values into utilitarian practicality. Civil debates provide the population the ability to reconcile points of nuance, complications in arguments, and potential follies that could or do have outsized effects on those who may have been overlooked. In the present day, civil discourse is more relevant than ever when a diverse group of individuals from various viewpoints have a seat at the table to fully contextualize previously esoteric arguments.

And now, we come to the question of importance. Free speech and civil discourse allow us to live in harmony despite our conflict. Whether agreeing or disagreeing, the ultimate goal of these two concepts in union is to strive to see the opposite side of an argument and to improve it to the benefit of our society. It is both to think outside of and live in the box, to rapidly adapt to an argument while still holding the highest moral ideal. It may be impossible to fully embrace another viewpoint or even understand it, but the attempt to do so is a noble articulation of respect for one's fellow man, which in turn is to honor the foundations of our country being distributed to all.