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WHAT IS THE IMPORTANCE OF CIVIL DISCOURSE AND FREE SPEECH?

In a civic society, residents have many diverse opinions on social issues. Abortion, marijuana legalization, and gun controls are very crucial to the development of our society. Since citizens are the stakeholders of society's policies, we need to listen to their opinion on their thoughts. Therefore, we should have civil discourse and free speech to let citizens express their ideas.

First, let us define what free speech is. According to the UN, free speech includes "freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers." This statement demonstrates the value of freedom of speech, a basic human right.

Nevertheless, what is the value of freedom of speech? Freedom of speech is important to let people express their opinions, especially when the opinions contradict what the majority disagrees. Galileo claims the Earth was not the center of the Solar System, but the Sun was. Even though later scientists verified the sun is the center of the Solar System, his idea was rebelling at that time. If a society does not allow people to express their opinions, citizens can only listen to what authority wants to tell them. When the authority makes mistakes, there is no one dares to tell the truth to authority and say they are wrong. It is fine when authority makes mistakes,

but it is important to realize they make mistakes and fix them. Until we can freely express our opinions without being oppressed, we can reach the truth a step closer.

Freedom of speech is also essential to let minority to fight for their rights. Many countries still have laws that restrict gay marriages. If people cannot discuss these topics, the LGBTQ community can never be accepted as a part of society. The government needs to discuss these critical topics to show that the problems exist and are trying to solve them. If the government just ignores the request from the LGBTQ community and shuts them up, they will remain to suffer from being unable to be represented in civil discourse. The silence of the LGBTQ community hurts their right to be represented in political discussions. In civil discourse, everyone should have equal participation and rights to discuss social issues. Let citizens decide what they want; not government decide what citizens want.

Freedom of expression is the basis of a progressive society. When various ideas appear and can be discussed without limitation, it will be the best time because we can see the actual value of democracy. No opinion is oppressed, and citizens have the right to discuss it without worries.