



JAKOB BUCKLEY
Political Science

WHAT IS THE IMPORTANCE OF CIVIL DISCOURSE AND FREE SPEECH?

If we don't have civil discourse, we don't have freedom. We do not have a democracy.

Civil discourse is an essential facet of our political system. Our ability to protect our rights depends on our ability to discuss freely. Civil discourse is crucial to our democratic system in government formation, political change, and equality. Our government is in a constant process of change, of improvement. No system is perfect, but we must constantly attempt to work closer to an ideal system.

Even in the best system, some have an unequal level of influence. This could be due to a host of reasons, such as social status, wealth, long-lasting power structures, and others. Those who have undue power have an unfair say in the system and ultimately have a disproportionate level of control. In systems without the protected right of civil discourse, these groups can silence the unorganized majority, making sure their voices are not represented.

In the context of the government's actions, this suppression of the unorganized majority has a cascading effect. Critical social issues, such as healthcare, racial equality, environmental concerns, and public safety often have little to no impact on the powerful elite class. Even worse, the elite class can repeatedly profit off of the plight of the working class.

The working class has the potential to be the most powerful. Through sheer size, the majority's combined wealth and potential influence on the government is potentially the most potent force, especially in a democratic system.

The majority's greatest strength, its size, is also its weakness. With its great size, it becomes hard to organize. The concentrated interests have undue influence in large part due to being organized much better, meaning they can coordinate and work for the same interests far better. The most crucial measure for an effective organization of the populace is the freedom of civil discourse. Civil discourse is the leveling field that allows the disadvantaged to express their viewpoints and rationally persuade others to their views.

As crucial as contemporary social issues can be, people can often either not understand the extent or feel that they are too large of matters for them to do anything about. Civil discourse provides both the opportunity to educate the masses and give assurances they can make a change on the issue.

As Abraham Lincoln once said, 'Democracy is a government of the people, by the people and for the people. The populace designs the government. To make sure the government represents the people's interests as effectively as realistically possible, the people's voices must be heard.'

The people are more than just those who officially have power; the people are also those affected by the government's power dynamic. Civil discourse provides the opportunity of representation for those who lack a formal mechanism in the political system to enact change otherwise. Civil discourse serves as the mechanism for the disadvantaged to gain representation and influence, make their voice heard, and ensure the government is representative and equal.