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By: Tom Wiknich

Is political correctness more important than free speech?

There are numerous examples in the media, on college campuses, and in communities of intolerance for free speech. There is a report of a college administration putting out a notice like this: Students and faculty have a right to study, work, and enjoy a college environment free of intolerant speech. On the surface of that statement, I agree. But wait! Who decides what speech is intolerant? Do we have to take a speech and put it to a vote on whether it may be offensive? Does a majority vote nullify the 1st amendment to the constitution? Even worse, does a minority vote nullify the 1st amendment? Or worse yet, can one person suppress another person right of free speech? Who decides what speech is intolerant?

When I grew up, my buddies and I were of diverse nationality/background. Were we aware of our diversity? Yes. Did we also tease each other sometimes about our nationality? Yes, we did. Did anyone get mad or try and stop the talk? No. Why? Because, it was all in fun. Take me for example, I’m 1/3 German, 1/3 Polish, and 1/3 Scandinavian. What would you call me to offend me? If you tried to offend be by using what is now considered an ethnic slur, it wouldn’t bother me at all. You know why? Because I’m an American. I’m not German American, or Polish American, or any other qualified American. I’m an American.

And guess what, if you wanted to criticize me because I’m American, then you can do that too because the Constitution gives you the right of free speech. Other than certain phrases which the courts have determined unlawful, free speech is allowed. Do people say things I don’t like? You bet. But I don’t try and stop them.

In today’s progressive political environment, they believe everyone has to be tolerant of their speech, but they do not afford that same right to the opposing speech. Are we at a point where people get a vote on what speech is deemed intolerant? What if the majority voted something was intolerant? Or worse, what if the minority voted something was intolerant? Or worse yet, what if one person had the right to shut down a speech because that one person found it offensive? Tolerance is supposed to work equally for all. The 1st amendment applies to all equally. For example, when I grew up, certain words were deemed inappropriate in normal conversation. I’m referring to swear words. Our generation viewed the use of those words as the language of the uneducated. People that were not smart enough to make their point without the use of swear words. Now today, many of the young often use those words in their normal conversation. Those swear words are not viewed as inappropriate by many in this young generation. My generation is offended by those words. Did we raise our kids to not use that language? Yes, we did. If we caught them using that poor language, they got punished. As parents, we have the right to raise our kids as we see right. However, that right to suppress another person’s speech stops when it goes into the public realm. People have the right to voice their opinions just as opponents have their right to speak in opposition to that person.

One does not have the right to stop the speech they might find offensive. They have the right to oppose, to not listen to it, to go away. There were all sorts of phrases we used in the old days that are now not politically correct. Sometimes people are just too sensitive. They have no sense of humor. Lighten up people. Sometimes things are said as a joke. Even comedians come under attack sometimes for offensive comments. Get real people. They are comedians that tell you jokes.

I know what you’re thinking. Comedians often bring in political humor to their routines that will always offend one side or the other, but they still have the right to say it. Why aren’t the many colleges now taking the same stand for free speech? These supposed institutions of higher learning, are not allowing diversity, unless it fits a progressive definition of diversity. They allow students to protest to suppress free speech. In fact, many college professors encourage suppression of free speech they don’t agree with. Instead of teaching tolerance of free speech, students are being taught to go in and disrupt people that are speaking things they don’t agree with. Where is the media on this? Where is their anger against these institutions allowing suppression of free speech? Most of the mainstream media is actually supporting this political correctness because it fits the progressive agenda they support. On the other hand, if some large group started to rise up against their free speech rights, they’d be screaming about their 1st amendment rights. How about it, media? How about defending your opponents right to the same freedom you assert for yourself, or does free speech only apply to you? Political correctness has got to stop. Free speech is a right we all have. Tolerance includes tolerance of speech you don’t agree with. Hey, I grew up in the 60’s and 70’s. I understand protests. Back then young people protested political policies and unfairness to people’s rights. Today’s protests are attempts to shut down that basic free speech right. They better be careful. Your protests could backfire on you. Your own protests to stop opposing speech, could just wind up suppressing your right as well. Think about it.

In conclusion, the Constitution says we have the right of free speech. It’s the law of the land. If you don’t like it, go somewhere else or work to change the law. Until then, deal with it. And by the way, this editorial was allowed under the 1st amendment.

I’m Tom Wiknich, and that’s what I think. I’d like to know what you think. If you have any comments about this editorial, or would like to discuss or recommend a topic, I’d like to hear from you. Please email them to info@kzgn.net.