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## Politically Correct' and Inappropriate Words to be Excluded from First Amendment

The first amendment in the Bill of Rights guarantees the basic civil rights, including the freedom of speech. However, this does not provide justification for Americans to strut through the streets and yell racial epithets. This same concept also applies to political campaigns. While candidates are allowed to speak bluntly on all issues, they must refrain from offensive or inappropriate comments that are directed to towards other individuals or minority groups. Candidates, especially those who run for president, should use non-offensive language and politically correct terminology to discuss controversial issues in order to instill positive change and increased sensitivity in the United States. However, certain language vigilante groups have advocated for the deletion of numerous common words, which only obscures communication and destroys the meaning of the message.

Current presidential candidates have faced criticism for their poor language choices, controversial comments, and racist statements. In particular, Donald J. Trump has been under scrutiny for claiming that Obama has lost the respect of foreign countries because he is a “weak president that kisses everybody’s ass.” As a candidate whose comments are publicized, Trump should be aware that his comments also reaches an audience of young children who may become intrigued by his uncensored language. Furthermore, by making obscene and inaccurate comments about Mexican rapists, Trump has gained the ridicule of prominent world leaders and potential voters who fail to view him seriously. Following his statement which implied that Hillary Clinton’s inability to satisfy her husband meant that she was incapable of satisfying America, Trump justified his action by claiming that he likes to “tell it like it is” and that her believes in frankness. Through speaking with words that yield the “strongest and most disagreeable affective connotations,” and through the public’s condoning of this unacceptable behavior, society may provide “our minds with a greased runway down which we may slide back into unexamined and reactive patterns of evaluation and behavior” (Hayakawa).

However, the minority and disadvantaged groups should ultimately control what terminology others use to characterize them. Different individuals have varying preferences of what they want to be called, but ultimately, every individual deserves to be comfortable with their label. For instance, Nancy Mairs describes herself as a cripple because she believes that she is a tough person “to whom the fates/gods/viruses have not been kind, but who can face the brutal truth of her existence squarely.” While “crippled” is a precise word, “handicapped” and “disabled” moves away from Mair’s condition, “widening the gap between word and reality.” Although some disabled individuals appreciate the use of the term “differently abled”, Mairs admits that

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the term strikes her as “verbal garbage designed, by its ability to describe anyone, to describe no one.” In these situations, a “politically correct” term that describes everyone in a generalized group ceases to exist; each person within the group personally approves of different terms.

In extreme cases, changes that have been applied in the name of “political correctness” has altered “language to the point of obscuring, even destroying, its meaning” (Random House). Organizations such as state departments of education, textbook publishers, test developers, educational research organizations, and other interest groups have banned a ludicrous list of words. For example, “dialect” has been replaced with “language” because of its ethnocentric connotation (Ravitch). Furthermore, “drunk” is only considered offensive when it is utilized to describe Native Americans, but it is permissible to label other ethnic groups as drunk or intoxicated (Ravitch). Some colloquial words such as “huts” and “Down’s Syndrome” have been substituted with terms such as “small houses” and “Down Syndrome” which seem to serve no purpose in enforcing positive changes or increased sensitivity (Ravitch). After all, is “animal companion” a necessary replacement for “pet” (Random House)?

Although prominent figures and civilians should all attempt to monitor their language usage, words and statements that do not target a specific group of people should remain acceptable. Action should be taken to encourage the use of “politically correct language” to rectify the unequal social status between one group and another. However, the English language should not be meticulously censored to the point where the precision of thought is inhibited. The use of edgy terms is sometimes necessitated to capture attention and facilitate the communication of a message. “Politically correct” language should ultimately be enforced to act as a successful agent for positive change and increased sensitivity, not as a measure to limit the freedom of speech in America.

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