

NO—Arguments to Oppose the Deliberation Question

1. No democracies allow absolute freedom of expression. By defining hate speech as unacceptable, the government balances freedom of expression with other essential democratic values such as respect and tolerance for diversity. The balance is established through laws, which citizens in a democracy can always change.
2. Punishing hate speech provides equal protection for all persons in a democracy. Punishing hate speech helps to prevent unequal power relations from becoming overt discrimination. When hate speech is directed against weak or despised groups, such groups suffer not only from the hatred itself but also because they lack the power of the majority.
3. A message of hate, spoken once, can be more powerful than a message of tolerance spoken many times. The “chilling” effects of hate speech on other, more positive forms of democratic speech should not be underestimated.
4. Throughout history, words have been used to identify persons and groups for persecution. By the time popular opinion or the legal process can act, it may be too late. A law that punishes hate speech sends the right message about society’s real intentions.
5. Certain symbols and expressions are clearly hateful and have no meaningful social content. Like the Nazi swastika, these expressions are designed solely to create fear and to intimidate other people. Such symbols have no useful purpose. Society loses nothing by banning them.