

## Synthèse Free speech - Proposition de corrigé

### **Free speech under the test of the internet and terrorism**

Free speech has always been a bedrock value in democracies, yet nowadays it seems threatened, and might even appear as a threat itself. Should freedom of speech be redefined? While Marantz, in a 2019 New York Times editorial, claims that, faced with hateful deeds deriving from free speech, we cannot do nothing, and Schwadron highlights the limits of free speech in a 2017 Wall Street Journal cartoon, Ellian, in a 2015 Time article warning against the terrorist attacks on freedom, and Mchangama, in a 2020 Economist editorial advocating the defense of free speech for all voices, however harmful, both stress the imperative need to protect it.

**Some hold it an emergency to limit free speech faced with the current threats.** Recent events have proven that the internet serves as a crucible for harmful ideas which can then turn into action, Marantz asserts. Similarly, Ellian depicts how free speech was struck by a terrorist attack at a cartoon exhibit featuring Muhammad in Texas. Consequently, democratic leaders like Merkel or Macron have tightened online speech laws, Mchangama explains, also showing how free speech enabled dictators like Hitler to openly broadcast their ideas and seize control, an idea echoed in the cartoon showing a Neo-Nazi demonstrating for his right to free speech.

**However, many consider free speech an unalienable right** and that, under the cloak of the First Amendment, nothing must be done, which Marantz calls an injunction causing immobilism. If free speech is anyone's prerogative, nobody can be deprived of this right, whatever their opinions, Mchangama contends, which is corroborated by Schwadron illustrating individuals of diverging opinions claiming their rights to free speech. He adds that struggling intolerant ideas with restrictive laws recreates intolerance, and stifling harmful speech only creates a time bomb. Secondly, to Ellian, terrorism creates self-censorship by disseminating fear. He warns that if limits should be set to free speech, they should be determined by legal means, and that governments should fight terrorism first as freedom cannot exist without safety. Thirdly, restricting free speech can prove dangerous: Mchangama highlights how cracking down on dictatorial regimes' free speech served their ends, and that once in power, they used the very same tools to muzzle the opposition. Moreover restricting speech may turn against people working for the common good, like famous progressists who were jailed for fighting for equality.

**Therefore, some dare plead for it to be adapted to nowadays' challenges.** Marantz claims that wielding free speech as an excuse for doing nothing is dishonest : even some social networks have banned disreputable people and the First Amendment prohibits unlawful speech like incitement to racial hatred. The journalist does not plead for a repeal of the amendment; he suggests that governments take action, creating a public twin to Facebook for instance. Furthermore, social media companies could hire more efficient moderators instead of biased ones, Mchangama denounces. Secondly, he gives the testimony of Powell, former director of the ACLU and lawyer of the KKK, for whom protecting somebody's freedom of speech also requires protecting other people's rights like the 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment: we cannot defend one Amendment at the expense of another's.

As well as cars should not be eradicated but their use framed to save the planet, so should the First Amendment to save people, Marantz concludes.

550 words