

# The Solution to Social Media Censorship Is Simple



By Atiller Sulker | [Foundation for Economic Education](#)

Individuals from all corners of the political spectrum have been stirred up by the recent bans of various figures including Alex Jones and Louis Farrakhan. Some have praised these bans for providing good constraints on what they deem “fake news” or “hate speech.” Others have attacked these bans for being influenced by nefarious motives that are contra free speech. The debate regarding the extent to which social media sites may regulate speech has been going on for years now. Perhaps it is time for a reassessment.

## The Fallacy of “Social Media

# Homogenization”

One of the biggest fallacies people fail to avoid in these debates is that all social media sites are homogenous goods. The successful entrepreneur understands the importance of differentiation in marketing their product, for it is differentiation that allows the entrepreneur to narrow down his market and attract consumers.

Just as in any other market, the social media titans, Facebook and Twitter, have developed [very differently](#) from each other, and each has its own distinctive features. Facebook has developed best for allowing like-minded people to connect with each other, while Twitter has become a bully pulpit for various figures in the political and pop culture world.

If we step back and look at the bigger picture, it is a fallacy to paint all social media sites with a broad brush stroke.

It would thus be wrong to compare all social media sites as if they were the same. The various consumer ends each social media site serves to satisfy determines its overall development. Many different factors will influence these ends. Among one of these factors is the extent to which speech is regulated.

If a given social media site aims to assist individuals and firms in networking with each other, they will likely not have any role in the market of sharing controversial opinions. Conversely, the social media platform that aims at giving a voice to those on the fringes of society will likely have no interest in entering the market of business networking. If we step back and look at the bigger picture, it is a fallacy to paint all social media sites with a broad brush stroke. Each one of them serves a unique purpose, and this purpose has a huge impact on how the site will develop in the longer run.

So perhaps the solution does not lie in calling for state interventions and boldly proclaiming that social media sites are ruthless [monopolies](#) trampling on free speech.

Perhaps a site like Facebook is not meant for the sharing of controversial opinions or genuinely serious discussions. Perhaps it serves the market of people who want to connect with each other through shared interests and friendly banter. Perhaps the initiation of controversial discussion is irrelevant and disruptive to Facebook's purpose. Perhaps the sentiments of Farrakhan and Jones don't fit in the environment Facebook is trying to create.

The market has offered solutions to this already. Where the "networking social media site" is lacking, the "controversial opinion sharing site" will compensate. Gab is a good example of this. The site claims to be a bastion of free speech and individual liberty and has become a platform for many controversial figures who identify with the so-called "far right." The differentiation of various sites can, of course, be based on different premises. There could perhaps be the "leftist social media site" on the one hand, and the "right-wing social media site" on the other.

## **What Should We Pursue?**

By advocating for repercussions for social media platforms that practice censorship, we are merely treating the symptom of a much more fundamental problem, i.e., government intervention. Let the "safe space junkies" and the "rugged individualists" go their separate ways.

Rather, we should be advocating for the splintering of all governmental partnerships with firms such as Facebook, among others. It is these economic interventions that fundamentally stymie voluntary freedom of association and replace it with militant, state-enforced censorship. Those who are truly against censorship will let the market gradually filter it

out. One has to support the property rights, and consequently, free speech of his political enemies in order to uphold that of his. Thus we must advocate for a system in which the state doesn't take sides, nor try to fix the consequences of interventionism through further intervention.

Just as in the physical realm, individuals on the internet associate with whom they have shared interests. Market mechanisms have allowed for the exercising of this freedom of association, and state intervention only blurs the lines. Let the "safe space junkies" and the "rugged individualists" go their separate ways.

## About the Author



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