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Export date: Fri Oct 30 7:36:25 2026 / +0000 GMT

Free Speech

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I worked with a service club a few years ago and one of the tenets that it encouraged its members to abide by was ?What good will it do?'

They encourage members to always think about their actions and if it will produce a positive result, or result in something negative happening.

I think that's a good way to live and I always try to abide by that action. If undecided, I try to figure out if something negative can happen, and if so, I steer in another direction. I also try to do that in speech, and avoid saying anything negative about a person.

Most people probably live along the same line of thinking to a large degree, but not all do.

There was a protest this past week at McGill University in Montreal by a group of students who are quite angry about a fall lecturer's tweeted comment.

Yes, another tweeter ? the social media, which I'm sure produced many negative results when late night surfing is combined with alcohol. A tweet only allows a few words in any posting, so if you're going to be a tweeter, you have to be concise.

To quote a line from a movie with a little twist, ?You know what it means if you tweeted don't you? He tweets, she tweets, I tweet, we all done tweeted!?

The lecturer tweeted how ?heartwarming it will be to experience the execution of hundreds of Mojahedin leaders arrested in recent riots.'

The reference was in regard to recent protests in Iran where a lot of people have now been arrested and detained.

A young woman was arrested for violating the country's strict dress code, and somehow ended up dead at the hands of police. It was reported she was severely beaten and had a fractured skull along with other injuries. Apparently, the women of Iran have had enough of decades of being told how to dress and behave, and fear the wrath of ?morality police' who operate at their own discretion.

It's not just women who are protesting. They are supported by many men who are also fed up at being forced to abide by ridiculous government regulations. Protesters have received widespread support in other countries, especially many nearby countries who are more liberal, where woman aren't forced to cover themselves from head to toe, or not allowed in public unless accompanied by a male relative.

I don't blame the students in Montreal, many of which were from Iran, for not being too happy to have a lecturer at the school who finds the potential murders of several hundred people to be a ?heartwarming' event. What would a person like that contribute to a university class other than to try to indoctrinate students to some way of backwards, medieval thinking?

While a couple of comments from students seemed to imply this ?shouldn't be allowed' in Canada, for the most part, comments were mostly in opposition to the tweeted statement and in support of the Iran protests.

Even the university issued a statement saying, ?we must also take into account the wide protection offered to free expression in our society, even when such expression is distasteful or disturbing.?

The university is correct ? just because a person says something that is distasteful or disturbing, doesn't mean you need to get a mob

with torches and storm their house for revenge. There are places in the world where that would indeed happen.

It also doesn't mean you have to try to have someone arrested under the ?hate speech' laws. The hate speech laws are bogus and are never applied evenly ? they only apply to a certain demographic.

The thing about free speech is no one is ever going to have 100 per cent of the population agree with them. You could make the most obvious comment, and there will always be someone who disagrees.

If you make negative comments in a public forum, especially in a high-profile situation, you should always put some thought into those comments before hitting the ?send' button.

This lecturer's comments were obviously not well thought out. Either he didn't realize that glorifying murder would not go over well with a lot of people, or he did it deliberately to create a controversy. I'm guessing the latter.

Protesting won't solve the issue, but refusing to attend his classes will.

Sometimes the best way to disagree ? is just to ignore the comment.

Sometimes, silence is the best rebuttal.