

Don't sit in silence. It's your voice. Use it!

Tania de Jong



Pexels

We all have a voice, but perhaps the greatest challenge to humanity right now is that our voices are being silenced.

Too often we silence, censor, attack, shame, and humiliate those we do not agree with. We live in a world where we are afraid to utter a word for fear it may offend someone and destroy our lives. We are divided. We are upside down and inside out; *yes* is *no* and *no* is *yes*, *left* is *right* and *right* is *left*, *man* is *woman* and *woman* is *man*, *wrong* is *right* and *right* is *wrong*.

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discussed freely. What makes this even more deplorable is that content published by the government, professional news outlets, and educational Institutions is to be exempted in the proposed legislation and will not be considered as misinformation!

It's not the only parliamentary attack on free speech. Queensland's Parliament is about to vote on the proposed criminal law bill which could see Australians face up to three years in jail for posting anything on social media visible in Queensland that the government deems 'offensive'. This could include faith-based and political objections to gender confusion, gay marriage, and Indigenous issues. It promises a reality like that in Britain where police spend more time monitoring Facebook posts looking for objectionable statements than walking the beat.

There are other concerning developments emerging to further censor, control, subjugate, and silence us. The recent Nigel Farage debanking scandal rocked Britain and yet, in Australia, banks can lawfully 'debank' customers they deem to be engaged in 'unacceptable account conduct' which relates not just to their financial activities, but what they say and do.

For instance, the National Australia Bank's updated **terms and conditions** say 'making profane, derogatory, discriminatory or harassing comments' or 'making or promoting threatening or abusive language to any person' could lead the bank to 'suspend, cancel or deny an account holder's access or use of the account, card or an electronic banking service'. What is such conduct and who defines it? Could use of the 'wrong' pronouns be classified as 'profane, derogatory, discriminatory or harassing'?

Imagine your financial existence being taken away under these rules. Criticism of a public official arguably could be branded 'misinformation' and 'threatening or abusive language'. How can we ever truly progress if we cannot be honest about the shortcomings of our society?

This is not how a democracy looks. We are in an era more befitting of a dystopian novel, in which creeping authoritarianism assaults our fundamental human and

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- What is the worst that could happen if I choose to speak, or ask a question, about something that deeply matters to me?
- How do I maintain my presence, listen to my inner voice and speak honestly in uncomfortable circumstances and a world of distractions?

Staying silent allows tyranny, injustice, and atrocities to flourish. Silence keeps dark secrets hidden. Dietrich Bonhoeffer – an exceptional German Protestant minister during the Nazi regime – stated: ‘Silence in the face of evil is itself evil. Not to speak is to speak. Not to act is to act.’

In a democracy, no one's voice should be silenced or censored.

Don't sit in silence. Don't live in fear.

There are many challenges facing human civilisation and our planet. However, if we remain silent and separate then we have only ourselves to blame for the eventual extinction of everything we have created.

Really listen to what your heart is saying. Then raise your God-given voice, speak your truth and help create the world you would like for your children and grandchildren. No one else will do it for you.

‘When I'm hungry, I eat. When I'm thirsty, I drink. Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about the things that matter,’ said Martin Luther King. How right he was. If it is possible to talk, to discuss, to debate without recrimination, the future might be shaped for the better. You have a voice: don't let it be silenced.

Tania de Jong AM is an award-winning social entrepreneur, global speaker and singer. She has founded 4 charities committed to improving mental health through fostering creativity, diversity and inclusion.

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