



Written by [Luis Miguel](#) on May 2, 2022

Time Columnist: Free Speech Is a White Man's "Obsession"

In the Left's religion of social justice, every pillar of western civilization can be torn down by simply deconstructing it as the arbitrary ruminations of dead white men.

Charlotte Alter, columnist for *Time* magazine, recently [penned a piece](#) in which she claims freedom of speech is no more than a white man's "obsession."

Framing her perspective through Tesla founder Elon Musk's purchase of Twitter, she titles her article "Elon Musk and the Tech Bro Obsession With 'Free Speech.'"

From the get-go, Alter's framing of the "Tech Bro" is a curious one, creating a narrative of Musk as the culmination of a despicable group of Tech elites who are pushing free speech at the expense of truth. This, of course, ignores the reality that Musk's recent moves are an outlier; most of Silicon Valley has observably been in line with Alter's desire to forcefully censor speech that runs contrary to social-justice dogma.

"Why does Musk care so much about this? Why would a guy who has pushed the boundaries of electric-vehicle manufacturing and plumbed the limits of commercial space flight care about who can say what on Twitter?" Alter asks.

Writes Alter:

"Freedom of speech" has become a paramount concern of the techno-moral universe. The issue has anchored nearly every digital media debate for the last two years, from the dustup over Joe Rogan at Spotify to vaccine misinformation on Facebook. Meta founder Mark Zuckerberg gave a major speech at Georgetown in 2019 about the importance of "free expression" and has consistently relied on the theme when explaining why Facebook has struggled to curb disinformation on the platform.

"It does seem to be a dominant obsession with the most elite, the most driven Elon Musks of the world," says Fred Turner, professor of communication at Stanford University and author of several books about Silicon Valley culture, who argues that "free speech seems to be much more of an obsession among men." Turner says the drive to harness and define the culture around online speech is related to "the entrepreneurial push: I did it in business, I



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did it in space, and now I'm going to do it in the world."

She then makes the case that "'free speech' in the 21st century means something very different than it did in the 18th, when the Founders enshrined it in the Constitution."

"The right to say what you want without being imprisoned is not the same as the right to broadcast disinformation to millions of people on a corporate platform," the *Time* columnist adds. "This nuance seems to be lost on some techno-wizards who see any restriction as the enemy of innovation."

Alter also speculates whether Musk's attempt to protect free speech doesn't just come down to contrarianism:

In a culture that places a premium on achieving the impossible, some tech titans may also see the liberal consensus on acceptable speech as yet another boundary to break. In Silicon Valley, bucking the liberal conventions about harmful speech can seem like the maverick move.

"Contrarianism is a big part of this free speech thing. If the left says, 'I can't do XYZ,' that makes a lot of people want to do it more," says Peter Hamby, host of Good Luck America on Snap and writer at Puck News. "Contrarianism, whether it's embodied by Elon Musk or Andrew Yang or Bernie Sanders or Joe Rogan, becomes this ideology in itself."

She also quotes Jason Goldman, a founding team member at Twitter who was on the company's board before joining the Obama administration, about free speech being an "obsession of the mostly white, male members of the tech elite," who made their fortunes before Silicon Valley became so diverse.

They "would rather go back to the way things were," Goldman says, "and are couching that in terms of 'free speech' or 'we're not going to allow politics to be part of the conversation.'"

Alter further quotes Goldman as saying it's "naive" to believe that Musk can throw out Twitter's guardrails without degrading the platform. "To say you're just going to allow for any type of abuse or harassment," he says, "is an inherently anti-speech position, because you're going to drive out a set of users who would use your product but no longer feel safe."

In short, social-justice warriors such as Goldman and Alter are no longer hiding behind the veil of "free speech" that was once the universally accepted standard agreed upon by both Left and Right in America.

On the contrary, they are tossing it aside and openly declaring that suppression of any and all viewpoints they disagree with is the only standard they will accept.



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