2012

**Just 'Cuz You Can Doesn't Mean You Should**

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**Recommended Citation**

Huempfner, Sarah; Matson, Jordan; and Kopp, Krystal (2012) "Just 'Cuz You Can Doesn't Mean You Should," *Uhuru* Vol. 10 : Iss. 1 , Article 10.  
Available at: [http://lib.dr.iastate.edu/uhuru/vol10/iss1/10](http://lib.dr.iastate.edu/uhuru/vol10/iss1/10)

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I know he cheatin'.
What is ability? The Oxford English Dictionary defines ‘ability’ as “The quality in a person or thing which makes an action possible; suitable or sufficient power or proficiency, capability, capacity to do, or (now rare) of doing something.” The question then, in discussing the First Amendment, is whether or not ability necessitates action. Does the capability to do or say something mean you must? Or is it a Peter Parker situation: with great power comes great responsibility?

On the one hand, ability may give you a free pass. Can you say what you want? Do you have that ability? Then you might as well utilize it to its full extent. Can you run faster or jump higher than others? Then we, in the 21st century society that encourages competition, say do better than others. One glance through anyone’s Facebook profile reveals any number of thoughts on others or pictures or other descriptions of the actions of others. This practice of unrestrained sharing has had some unintended consequences. People get hurt. Just because Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr, and other internet sources present the ability to spout truths about others doesn’t mean that one should, or even that it’s acceptable. Mere knowledge of a truth does not necessitate sharing of it. Of course, there are times when sharing a truth is crucial. Abuse, for example. Or coming forward with information about someone who intends to hurt him/herself or others. The truth is a heavy burden to bear, and with it comes great responsibility.

The conclusion, then, is that mere ability to do or say something absolutely does not mean one should. It is important for all American citizens, who are guaranteed the freedoms of speech and press, to consider the implications of their actions. Empowerment can be found in restraint and in consideration for the wellbeing of others as well as in the green light to say and do anything at the drop of a hat. The freedom of speech should not be interpreted as the freedom to manipulate or hurt. In criticism of government or of peers, one must take into consideration the thoughts and feelings of others instead of exercising this freedom outright.