**Silence is complicity - Michael M Bartle Frere**

Silence is complicity. What does this actually mean? Complicity is the act of being involved in something that is morally wrong or illegal. So ‘silence is complicity’ means that if someone keeps quiet about something that is morally wrong or illegal, they are to blame for it.

My opinion is that silence *is* complicity.

Many will know that if you witness a crime, it is a criminal offence not to report it. However, not shouting out about injustices such as racism or poverty isn’t a criminal offence, but is it morally wrong? Yes, this is definitely the case as tens of millions, if not hundreds of millions, of people around the world are subjected to social injustices such as poverty, racism, homophobia, religious based hate, oppression and many more. 70 million people (that’s 70,000,000) around the world currently are fleeing areas ravaged by conflict and oppression according to the United Nations. That’s 70 million innocent people, being ignored by Western Society, and there is limited coverage by western media unless it’s negatively portraying them. So what can you do to break the silence that is complicit with social injustices of the 21st century?

It is our moral duty to challenge someone in your family or a friend if they say something racist.

If there is poverty or vulnerable people, it’s our duty as members of the community to to think of ways to help out. Examples include giving to food banks, donating money to charities and giving our time to volunteer.

In most schools and workplaces, there is a homophobic culture. If we notice someone saying something abusive, we cannot tolerate this, otherwise we are directly responsible for the spread of the epidemic that’s homophobia.

It is said that if you are not part of the solution, you are part of the problem. But is this even a valid point of view? The UK is a free country, and anyone can express whatever opinion they want to. This is called ‘freedom of speech’ and the UN says it’s a Human Right. The ideology that ‘you’re either with us or against us’ means that you can’t hold an opinion, share ideas or have a debate about anything unless your opinion is the politically correct opinion. And this is a problem because at the end of the day, all problems are solved through debate or discussion, whether it’s parliament or just resolving an argument between friends.

In the 1950s, the People’s Republic of China was founded and ruled by Mao Zedong. Mao started the Cultural Revolution, which was a programme to remove any ‘counter-revolutionary’ element. Tens of millions of people were persecuted for not

fully supporting Mao’s Regime. Having the opinion that silence is complicity is also authoritarian.

When Adolf Hitler was Führer of Germany from 1934 - 1945, he would send anyone with a communist opinion to a concentration camp, as he was a fascist. Today, neither of these examples wouldn’t be acceptable on any level, as we believe in the right of freedom of speech. And as Voltaire famously said, “I disapprove of what you say, but I will defend to the death your right to say it”.

In summary, if you only allow one point of view, even if it is morally correct, you are taking away freedom of speech, debate and expression, without which we cannot fix any of society’s problems. And most importantly, freedom of speech includes the freedom to remain silent.

How could it possibly be right to remain silent? Democracy can’t solve the problems in our society so it’s the responsibility of the individual to speak up through petitions, protests, lobbying politicians, educating yourself and others and threatening the government with large numbers of people not voting for them, and that’s the sad truth about today’s world.

To conclude, Humans Rights include freedom of speech, and freedom of silence. If someone does not have a strong opinion about how to solve society’s problems, why should we assume that they are against fixing this problem?

On the other hand, it is our duty as human beings to act against the social injustices people have to go through every day, as being silent will achieve nothing.

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