

SELMA

HACKING HATE



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# What is online hate speech?



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# Our working definition

“Any online content **targeting** someone/ a group based on **protected characteristics...**”

Race or ethnicity

Religious belief

Sexual orientation

Transgender status

Disability





# Our working definition

“... with the **intent or likely effect of inciting, spreading or promoting hatred or other forms of discrimination.**”

**Intent:** When someone purposely did it to spread hatred

**Likely effect:** By doing it, that person was spreading hatred, even if they claim they did not do this on purpose





# Our working definition

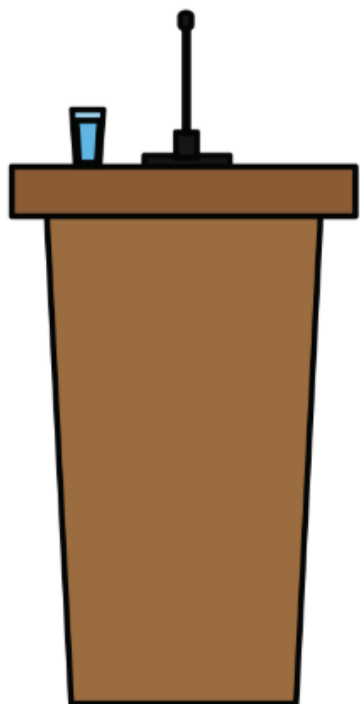
“Any online content **targeting** someone/ a group based on **protected characteristics** with the **intent or likely effect of inciting**, spreading or promoting **hatred** or other forms of discrimination.”





# Giving hate a platform? (1/2)

## The dilemma: What should Dr Susan Jameson do?



Dr Susan Jameson, a historian and expert on race relations in the country Alaran, has been invited to speak at a prestigious event: a debate about whether minority groups that moved from Xenovia in the past decade have helped, or harmed, Alaran.

Dr Jameson has been told that she will go head to head against a famous, and highly controversial, journalist. The journalist, Mr Dale, has been accused of fanning the flames of racial tension by spreading highly negative, and often false, stories about Xenovians. Mr Dale also belongs to a group which has been listed by the Alaran government as a “hate group”. The group seems harmless on the surface, but is known for spreading messages about the threat that Xenovians pose to Alaran’s way of life. Last year, a group of Xenovians were attacked by two young people claiming to be influenced by Mr Dale. Mr Dale denies any role in encouraging the violence.

Mr Dale has accepted the invitation - but the event will only go ahead if Dr Jameson accepts also. The event organisers have made clear that there’d be no time to find a suitable replacement for her.

On hearing of the planned event, huge protests have already broken out amongst members of the public, including members of the Xenovian community, who say that giving Mr Dale a platform helps him to spread his message further, and puts them at risk. Others have argued that cancelling the event undermines Mr Dale’s right to free speech and that actually listening to, and challenging, Mr Dale’s arguments, is the best way to defeat him and his ideas.





# Giving hate a platform? (2/2)

## The dilemma: Perspectives to consider



### Members of the Xenovian community

Argue that their community is already vulnerable and airing Mr Dale's views puts them at further risk.



### Protestors

Argue that inviting Mr Dale makes his hateful views seem respectable, and equal to Dr Jameson's expert comments.



### Free speech advocates

Argue that Mr Dale has the right to speak, even if they and others disagree with him.



### Mr Dale's supporters

Argue that Mr Dale speaks the truth, even if it's uncomfortable, and that he should be heard.





# Key take-aways

When **discussing “free speech”** and its limits, it helps to consider concrete cases, and critical to think of the human beings and groups impacted by that speech. This activity is an attempt to **move us beyond abstract principles**.

De-platforming is not without its risks, and **drawing the line around what counts as acceptable speech** will at times be challenging – but that debate **is itself part of how we define and strengthen our values as a society**.

In a social media context, there has been a **useful distinction made between “freedom of speech” and “freedom of reach”** – “there is no right to algorithmic amplification” (Renee DiResta) – we can and should be asking why certain types of content are allowed and algorithmically promoted on platforms – that is responsibility, not censorship.

In a social media context, the **evidence so far does not suggest that de-platforming someone will turn them into a martyr** and increase their following (e.g. Alex Jones case in Aug 2018: YouTube, Facebook & Apple de-platforming halved visits to Infowars and video views, even before Twitter de-platformed – *NYT* analysis).





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