



# Freedom Not to Speak

*Haig Bosmajian*

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## **Freedom Not to Speak** Haig Bosmajian

Hotly contested and vigorously defended since it was first written into the Bill of Rights, freedom of speech is a basic right that all Americans hold dear. But what of the freedom *not* to speak? Should, for instance, a special prosecutor be able to compel a mother to testify about, and incriminate, her own daughter? The freedom *not* to speak is an implicit "right" that holds great relevance for all of us—the freedom not to speak when commanded by church and state, not to sign an oath, not to salute a flag, not to assert a belief in God, or not to reveal one's political beliefs and associations.

Bosmajian traces the history of the freedom not to speak from the Middle Ages and Inquisition to the twentieth century and the House Committee on Un-American Activities. His history addresses the Civil War and Reconstruction loyalty oaths by Union Confederate soldiers, and the expulsion of Jehovah's Witnesses from schools for refusing to salute the flag, and includes an analysis of coerced speech in a variety of literary works. Bosmajian also contemplates the future of this right to silence and argues for the importance of a specifically labeled and firmly established freedom not to speak.

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