

Democracy can be uncomfortable. Peaceful public protest and civil disobedience — a manifestation of democracy in action — work by disrupting the status quo. But discomfort is a sign of healing, like the symptoms of our body's immune response. Confronting injustice is not a comfortable thing, but it's what our country is built upon and the source of every meaningful positive change in our history.

Yet such change is threatening to those benefiting from the current system. House Bills 109 and 22 claim to stop “riotous” behavior. In fact, they would effectively criminalize public protests of any kind.

One clause could charge you with a felony for merely “diverting the attention” of a police officer. Speak, it says, but not too loud. What clearer attack on the freedom of speech could there be?

If we're going to move forward together out of the brutal year we've all been through, we need to speak freely. Sometimes, honest conversations are uncomfortable. Sometimes, they move to the streets. Sometimes they get loud. But we have to get more comfortable with discomfort if we're going to build a future worth giving to our grandchildren.