

Is Yelling Slurs in Someone’s Face “Peaceful”?

Usually, no.

While broad, the First Amendment does not protect behavior that is personally targeted, threatening, or likely to provoke violence. Walking up to someone and screaming slurs inches from their face crosses into the territory of “fighting words” or harassment, both of which may be punished under state disorderly conduct or assault statutes.

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Conduct	Protected Speech?	Why
Chanting slogans in a public march	Yes	Peaceful, nonthreatening
Displaying offensive signs or flags	Yes	Protected symbolic expression
Screaming slurs into someone’s face	No	“Fighting words” / intimidation
Threatening harm or violence	No	“True threat”
Ignoring lawful police dispersal orders	No	Disorderly conduct

The key legal test is whether a reasonable person would view the behavior as likely to cause immediate violence or fear. Once that line is crossed, the conduct is no longer “peaceful,” and law enforcement may intervene.