

Freedom...But to Do What?

by John Spritzler

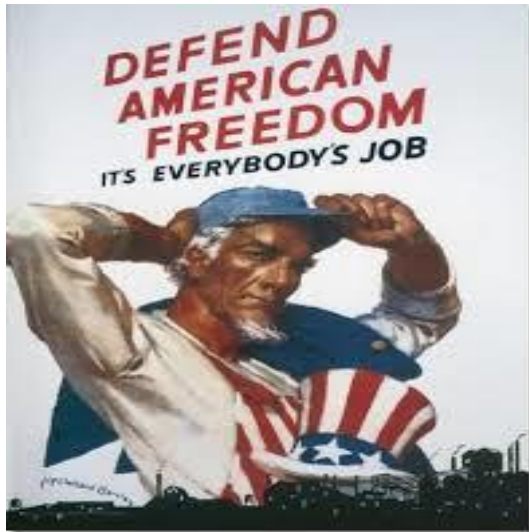
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Freedom. Everybody says freedom is such a very good thing that it's worth fighting for. But something so good and important deserves a clear meaning, no? Well, what is it?

The word "freedom" has been hijacked by all sorts of unsavory characters to mean freedom for them to do unsavory things. Slave owners in the American Civil War fought for their freedom to be slave owners. Adolph Hitler fought for what he called "freedom," [saying](#), "If freedom is short of weapons, we must compensate with willpower." No matter what is the true purpose of a war, the rulers of a nation waging it invariably say the purpose is to defend freedom. Millions of people have died in wars fighting each other even though both sides were

supposedly fighting for the same thing--freedom. Is freedom just a dangerous bogus concept?

Yes, at least in its present deliberately vague sense, it is. The word "freedom" is used more often than not for a bad purpose: as a way for rulers to get the ruled to do what they want them to do. In World War II, for example, the Nazis told Germans that Nazism was about defending "freiheit" (freedom) just as the American government told Americans that the fight against Nazism was about defending freedom. Both the German and American ruling classes used warfare to strengthen their domination over working class people, and this is what they actually had in mind behind the rhetoric of "Freedom" and "Freiheit." (See my [book \[scroll down\]](#), *The People as Enemy: The Leaders' Hidden Agenda in World War II*, for a full discussion of this, summarized online [here](#).)



If we're going to fight for freedom and make great sacrifices to defend (or obtain) it, shouldn't we know what we're fighting for? Let's first list some things that we don't think people should be free to do.

Nobody should be free to:

- Own a slave

- . Own a serf
- . Exploit an employee, *i.e.*, claim to privately own socially produced wealth such as a factory, or wealth belonging to society such as mineral deposits in the earth or vast tracts of land, and then tell the worker that he or she can only have access to these means of production to produce wealth (with which to provide for all the things his or her family needs) if he or she agrees to labor for the employer--who will then own what is produced--and accept in return wages worth less than the value contributed by his or her labor
- . Be a hog, *i.e.*, unfairly make some people suffer as a result of taking for oneself more of the socially owned wealth [such as land] or socially produced wealth [economic products and services] than is reasonable in the eyes of egalitarians. Egalitarians are the majority of people, people who believe in equality and mutual aid, specifically that people should help one another and that all who contribute

reasonably have an equal right to share in the fruits of the economy according to reasonable need and desire, and those who don't contribute reasonably have no such right.

- Do things to make people accept being exploited and being treated unfairly by hogs, such as teaching them that they are inferior in some way and less deserving, or telling them lies to make them fear a boogieman enemy and making them think their safety requires obeying exploiters and hogs
- Make egalitarians (defined above) obey laws that they did not have an opportunity, as equals, to democratically write for themselves
- Prevent egalitarians from a) meeting as they see fit, b) freely discussing anything and everything, c) making and enforcing laws in their local communities, and d) reaching mutual agreements with egalitarians in other communities regarding large scale planning (economic and otherwise), coordination and policies

- . Prevent egalitarians from forcibly preventing anybody from doing anything on this list

Some people (Bill Gates, David Rockefeller, the Koch brothers, the entire Walton family, Barack Obama, Fidel Castro, the entire Chinese Communist Party Central Committee, King Faisal, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, Vladimir Putin, Benjamin Netanyahu, and a host of others) would, to put it mildly, not agree with this entire list of NO-NOs. Most of them would go along with the first two items, but balk at the ones after that. But to disguise the venality and utter selfishness (or perhaps just arrogance) of their view, they would probably try to change the subject by talking about things that people should be free to do; they might offer up a list of such things like the following, and hope that endorsing this list would make people perceive them as "good guys"--defenders of "freedom."

Freedoms that ruling elites want us to be grateful for, if and when they grant them:

- . Worship as you please
- . Quit your job whenever you want to
- . Move to a different part of the country whenever you want to
- . Read whatever newspaper, listen to whatever radio station, watch whatever television station, and view whatever web page you want to
- . Express any opinion you wish, as long as it's not during work hours, to whomever you wish, if you have the means to do so
- . Vote for any politician you wish
- . Own a gun
- . Buy or not buy whatever commodity you wish as long as you have the money
- . Marry whomever you want (unless he or she is a close relative) and have as many children as you want
- . Meet with whomever you wish, write petitions and demonstrate publicly
- . Send your children to whatever school you can afford

- Do almost anything you want on your private property if you own any
- Have your guilt or innocence of a crime determined by a jury of your peers, not be required to testify against yourself, and not be tried for a crime after once being found not guilty of it

It's a very nice list of freedoms, at least in so far as none of them are interpreted as allowing anybody do to anything on the first list of NO-NOs. The problem with this list of freedoms, however, is that it is used to make us forget about the first list of NO-NOs. It is used by people who do bad things on the first list to make us feel grateful to them for allowing us to do things on the second list, instead of feeling angry at them for doing things on the NO-NOs list.

This is how the slippery and ill-defined notion of "freedom" is typically used to attack the most important freedom of all--the freedom to live in a society where people are not allowed to do the no-no's on the first list, and thus the freedom to

create a really wonderful world to live in, where people are free--in all sorts of different and unique ways-- to make it a great world for each other.

Let's fight for THAT freedom! One way to start is what people are doing at PDRBoston.org .