

Slavery is Easy; Freedom is Hard

By

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Freedom is power to make one's own decisions, and the responsibility to benefit from or suffer from the consequences of those decisions without complaint.

Slavery, in the definition of Lewis Carroll, is the labor of those who do not enjoy for the enjoyment of those who do not labor. In that circumstance, whoever owns or controls you makes your decisions for you.

A lot can be said for slavery that cannot be said for freedom. Even the plantation slaves of the Old South were protected to an extent by simple economics: Slaves were fabulously expensive to acquire, and it took about half of what a slave produced, just to support the slave. Slaves had to be fed, clothed, housed and doctored at least well enough to make them productive. There were abuses (most of the truly horrible pictures we encounter in our racial südenbücher date from the Reconstruction or later), but as a rule it made about as much economic sense to abuse a slave as it would to mistreat an imported draft horse.

Most of America's imported slaves, moreover, were purchased in the slave markets of Africa. These had usually lost a war, or had just been rounded up – by their fellow Africans – to feed the lucrative slave trade. If they were not sold into slavery, the usual practice was to kill them, often by impaling, a truly charming method of taking life that, while not exclusive to African nations, is not normally encountered in civilized societies. The Atlantic Passage to America was hard, and a fair number of slaves died en route, but compared to the ones who stayed behind, they were probably the lucky ones.

As the Industrial Revolution took root, machines began to replace many of the functions once performed by slaves. By the time of the Civil War, slavery was a dying institution. People like Frederick Douglass had become free to move about, to seek employment off the plantation, and to live pretty much where they pleased or could afford to. The only thing they had to do that free people did not have to do was pay an agreed-upon percentage of their earnings to their masters.

Slavery thus had a lot going for it: If you survived the passage, as most did, you got to live. You had to work very hard to please your master, but everyone had to work hard just to get through the day back then. For that labor, you didn't have to worry about being fed or clothed. You might have a dirt floor, but at least you had a roof to keep the rain off, and if you got sick, someone would visit you to do what was possible at the time.

It's little wonder, then, that many slaves returned to the plantation even after the war, seeking to be cared for as they had been earlier. Alas, the plantation system was gone with the wind, and they had to deal with the stark reality of being free.

Socialism is economic slavery: One is not perceived to have “earned” wealth, but merely to “have” it. The rich – those who have an income that exceeds a certain arbitrary value – are indebted to every person who has an income below that value. The government confiscates wealth from the rich and redistributes it to the poor and the middle class to settle this debt.

This means that whatever the rich did to acquire their wealth counts as the labor of those who do not enjoy for the enjoyment of those who do not labor. All forms of socialism, fascism, national socialism, and communism, are redistributive, hence enslaving by design.

Freedom is different from slavery. Where slavery is easy, freedom is hard. Freedom is, as F. D. Roosevelt’s union assault troops loudly asserted, the freedom to starve. It’s the freedom fail, to get hurt or get sick, to lose everything you have, up to and including your life.

Freedom is also the freedom to succeed without limit, to earn all you’re capable of earning, to create, to build and to enjoy, even if that means that you’ll end up with significantly more than someone else might. Disparity of wealth and income is the key marker of a free society, especially – but not necessarily – if the lowest earners on the scale live better than 99.999% of the rest of the world.

Capitalism is economic freedom. It is defined as total private ownership of the means of production. There is no such thing as “regulated” capitalism: Government control is government ownership. There are no capitalist systems in the world today, albeit some are more mildly socialist than others.

In a free, capitalist system, private individuals make their own decisions about what they eat, whom they marry, where they live, what they buy and what they’ll spend for it. If they fund a business, they own that business: They decide what they’re willing to pay an employee, and to whom they may or may not provide service. They’re free to charge for something they own whatever they want to charge, even if it’s raining outside. Owners alone decide whom to hire and whom to fire. If an employee fails to show up for work (or strikes) the owner is free to replace that worker.

Capitalists are bound by legal restrictions, but these, notably the Constitution of the United States, are viewed as contracts among free people rather than the exercise of raw power of one citizen over another, as socialist systems are. Your ownership right to destroy something you own, for example, would not permit setting your lumber yard alight, because that could damage someone else’s property. I doubt that any capitalist would have a problem making that asseveration.

Freedom is hard because to own your own decisions is also to own their consequences. If you get hurt, you’re responsible for getting yourself fixed. If you lose on a venture or a bet, you pay up and start over. If you lose your job, you take another one, even if it doesn’t pay as much as the old one, and so forth.

Slavery is easy, because in a socialist system, you can never have more than anyone else, but you're not responsible for your decisions either. If you get hurt, the government will assess from some rich person whatever it takes to get you well again. If you buy a house you can't afford, then get behind on your mortgage, your government will tax a person who has money to keep you in it. If you lose your job, the government will either help you sue your rich employer to get it back, or put you on some endless dole financed by those citizens who pay income taxes. This is why so many Americans, given the choice between freedom and slavery, pick slavery every time.

We recently elected an apostle of Saul Alinsky, hence of Karl Marx, Nicolai Lenin and Josef Stalin, to our nation's highest office. He has subsequently surrounded himself with cabinet members and quasi-constitutional "czars" as a means towards transforming our once moderately fascist economic system to a communist one. To get there, he appears to be employing an interesting strategy pursued by some Nazis in the 1930s called "Brown to Red." This strategy saw Hitler's National Socialism as a springboard to communism: They wanted to nationalize industries under a national socialist economic scheme; however, instead of limiting the nationalization process, they wanted to continue it until all economic activity, not just, say, the auto industry or the banking system, became the province of the state. Hitler agreed that National Socialists were indeed socialists, but saw Brown to Red as a move to Bolshevism. He put the kibosh on it in the Night of the Long Knives, but the idea lives on in America today. Make no mistake, though, communism is the goal, and the party of slavery is infamous for keeping its eyes on the prize.

There may not be an election here in November of 2010: The party of slavery is good at producing wanabee dictators. If there is, though, we'll be asked to make a choice between a limited degree of freedom and abject economic, and very likely civil, slavery. If there is no election, we will have already made the choice.

Given the chance, then, which one will you choose?