

“If a thousand men were not to pay their tax-bills this year, that would not be a violent and bloody measure, as it would be to pay them, and enable the State to commit violence and shed innocent blood. This is, in fact, the definition of a peaceable revolution, if any such is possible. If the tax-gatherer, or any other public officer, asks me, as one has done, “But what shall I do?” my answer is, “If you really wish to do anything, resign your office.” When the subject has refused allegiance, and the officer has resigned his office, then the revolution is accomplished. But even suppose blood should flow. Is there not a sort of blood shed when the conscience is wounded?”

- Henry David Thoreau, “Civil Disobedience”



# Build Liberty from the Ground Up



This pamphlet was created by Center for a Stateless Society. It is a print version of the online feature Build Liberty From the Ground Up, available at:  
<http://c4ss.org/content/2248>

Darian Worden, the author of the piece, maintains a website at:  
<http://darianworden.com>

The quote on the back cover was taken from the Thoreau Reader:  
<http://thoreau.eserver.org>

Cover images from Wikimedia Commons and  
<http://www.geos.ed.ac.uk/homes/tcrowley>

Think about what you can do in your personal life to expand freedom – then act on this knowledge.

## **Individual Liberty**

A free society is founded on individual liberty.

We have complete liberty when each person is free to do whatever he wills, so long as he does not infringe on the equal freedom of another. The individual's freedom should not be interfered with until he interferes with another person's freedom.

Liberty is equal: each person has full authority over her own life, and no person has authority over another. One may influence or persuade others, or agree to have someone take charge of a task. But there can be no social ranking that claims one person inherently owes obedience to another. As much as possible, individuals should have equal decision making power in organizations they choose to work in.

All relations, from the most intimate to the most elaborate, must be based on consent. People must be free to opt out of any social arrangement, and force can only be used against people who forcibly interfere with the liberty of others.

## Personal Liberty

Creating a free world begins on the most personal level.

If you want to be effective at increasing freedom, your daily activity should be consistent with the principles of individual liberty.

Good people can slip into bad habits. This does not mean they must be condemned to forever be an enemy of freedom. But it does mean that self-improvement is necessary.

When you change yourself, you change the part of the world that you have the most influence over. And your changes will influence those you are in contact with.

Ask:

- How well am I living up to the principles of liberty?
- Do I insist on relating and organizing on a consensual basis that respects individual dignity and desires?
- Do I obey others, or do I obey myself?
- Do I act as if other people should decide the purpose of my life?
- Do I act like other individuals should live for me, not for themselves?
- Do I act like my political, social, or economic rank entitles me to be obeyed?

organization that makes it easier for individuals to resist people trying to control their lives.

Subvert the messages, organizations, and institutions of would-be oppressors. Turn authoritarian things into libertarian things.

Engineer mass defections from authoritarian structures. That which is pulled from authority combines with the free world built from below.

Keep individual freedom, equal liberty, and consensual relations primary goals. Work against anything that restricts the freedom of any individual who did not interfere with another's liberty. Help individuals liberate themselves so they may find their own way to flourish, find their own relation to the rest of the universe, and create the best world possible by living the best lives possible.

Besides Google and Facebook searches, websites that can help you find local events include:

<http://meetup.com>

<http://fr33agents.net>

<http://news.infoshop.org>

<http://libertarianleft.org>

<http://rationalreview.com/news>

## **Revolution**

Overturing rulers is often a necessary step in the evolution toward greater liberty.

When liberty prevails, each individual will rule his own life and nobody else's. This is liberty, equality, anarchy, consensual society. Nobody rules over another.

Understand and implement the principles of liberty. Work toward freedom in daily life.

Withdraw allegiance and support from authoritarian structures. Build the new world in the shell of the old.

Build "counter-power" – that which helps empower people to resist outside authority and live free. This could mean a radical union, a trade or gifting network, a group of people holding cops accountable with video cameras, a community militia, or any other consensual

- Do I hold individuals to different standards because of the categories that other people have thrust upon them – race, gender, sexual preference, immigrant status, etc?

- What can I do in my current situation to expand freedom? Should I put myself in a different situation?

Attitude is very important in working toward liberty. Are you oppressed? Or are you engaged in conflict with people who wish to oppress you? Thinking that you are powerful and free may make it so.

Self-improvement is an everyday process. But you can only start building a free world when you make a conscious effort to enact principles of individual liberty in your daily life.

## **Those Who Obstruct Freedom**

Identifying opponents of freedom helps point the way to effective action.

Individuals who actively work for authority over other individuals are acting against freedom. Individuals who actively work to eliminate authoritarian controls are friends of freedom or at least allies.

When freedom is obstructed, life is obstructed. Individuals are denied the ability to pursue their desires and provide for each other, because their time

and wealth are used up satisfying those who are privileged by power. The use of resources and spaces are determined by the goals of the most dominant power structures, not by the needs and desires of individuals who don't have connections. Monopolies created by political power cause inequality, deprivation, poverty, stress, and conformity far beyond what could exist in a free society. Political authority ultimately creates death and destruction as politicians seek to forcibly take what isn't theirs in order to expand their power and help their cronies.

The most dangerous enemies of freedom use force, command others to use force, or hold great influence over how force is used, in order to keep power structures intact. They could be senators, lobbyists, soldiers, government or private police, or common thugs. Their actions should be recognized as crimes against individuals.

Those who act to strengthen authoritarian power structures are also acting against freedom. They might be bureaucrats, corporate or union bosses, teachers, or big developers, but they really could be anyone who applauds the expansion of government power or cheers on bullying, exploitation, or other authoritarian behavior.

The key is not what labels a person has, but what they actually do. Are they as an individual acting towards

For a couple of great speeches on the past and future of freedom, check out:

Sheldon Richman's "Capitalism Versus the Free Market" at <http://vimeo.com/9866856>.

Charles Johnson's "The Revolution Will Be Made of People" at <http://radgeek.com/gt/2010/03/23/the-revolution-will-be-on-youtube>.

Motorhome Diaries travelled across the United States and interviewed a broad range of activists and folks interested in liberty:

<http://motorhomediararies.com/category/interviews>

Reading and online research are very important, but they are only part of the learning process. Getting a firsthand view of rallies, protests, and organizations will give you a feel for what they are about. Be aware of what kind of event it is you're going to, and go with the intention of interacting – both learning and teaching. Some great annual liberty-oriented events include New Hampshire Liberty Forum and Porcupine Freedom Festival. But also see what kind of anarchist book fairs, anti-war rallies, Campaign for Liberty events, Tea Parties, and other rallies are going on in your area.

Each individual must figure out the best way for herself to advance toward freedom.

It is valuable to build independence from authoritarian power structures. Basic needs like food, housing, medical care, education, and trade can be taken out of authoritarian control. Identify as a free individual, not as a label that would-be rulers would like to tag you with.

Maximizing individual freedom must be the primary goal of any political action. Any form of social organization can become oppressive if the demand for liberty is not strong enough.

### **Learn More and Apply Your Knowledge**

You don't need to be a walking political encyclopedia to contribute to a free world. But the more you know, the more effective your action can be.

You can read a lot for free online:

Center for a Stateless Society creates media advocating the voluntary, consensual forces of market society.

Check out the articles, studies, videos, audio commentary, and more. <http://c4ss.org>.

LibertyActivism.info is an online repository of resources for promoting liberty. You can download full length books, journals, flyers, and more. <http://libertyactivism.info>.

liberty, or towards tyranny? Are they working to control others, or working to eliminate controls?

The most powerful enemies of freedom could be called "the ruling class" or "the political class." They rule over others, or they prosper through politics, not through production. The word "class" is used to classify individuals according to what they do, not to box individuals into unavoidable categories.

Conspiracies do happen, but this section is not based on conspiracy theory. It is based on examining human action: people who value controlling others more than they value a free society will act to control others. They often work together to do so, but they are prone to struggling against each other for dominance.

Governments are not established to provide for the common welfare and common defense. They are established to help politicians expand their power at the expense of other people. Governments protect political power, not individuals. Those who govern try to keep the populace under control by cultivating a commonality of interest between rulers and ruled, by co-opting and monopolizing programs and resources, and by using force against people who step out of line.

Each person who acts against freedom should be approached differently in terms of his individual position. Perhaps it will only take a little persuasion to turn

him into an advocate of freedom. Certainly, nobody is born with a coherent philosophy of liberty, and without that it is easy to be influenced into acting badly. But be cautious: they do not consider a free world to be in their interests. Reach out, but don't reach so far that you fall over. Keep your feet planted in the principles of individual liberty.

In general, it is acceptable to use force against those would-be oppressors who rely on force, and acceptable to use social and economic pressure against those who rely on social and economic pressure. But it is optimal to keep an eye toward integrating people into a future of liberty. And maximizing liberty requires more than arranging superior force against any current regime. It requires overturning bad ideas and building anti-authoritarian power that helps people become ungovernable.

## **Network Against Authority**

More people will realize it is in their interests to turn away from authoritarian power structures when they experience a thriving revolutionary society. Enabling this means building networks that help people live apart from authority and in opposition to authority. Talk to others about individual liberty, what it means to you and how you can apply it in daily life. From relationships at work, school, neighborhoods,

organizations, or social networks, little revolutions can spring.

Understanding a common interest in liberation can breed solidarity. When people realize that supporting other revolutionaries means supporting revolution, mutual aid can develop. In practice this can mean: supporting people arrested or fined, helping with medical bills, providing for mutual security, helping each other maintain housing, sharing skills and tools, making deals with striking workers instead of with their bosses, or finding ways to give discounts to those working toward freedom.

Relationships among revolutionaries should be based on seeking mutual interest, not based on seeking advantage over other individuals.

The idea of "counter-economics" centers on analyzing and building an economy that works counter to the established economy of state power and privilege. "Engaging in counter-economics" is one way to think of taking steps to live a freer life now. It can mean building networks of trade that create revolutionary power. It can mean creating an alternative currency. It can mean selling goods that the state prohibits. It can mean reducing official income and monetary transactions so it is harder for the state to take what you create. Or it can mean taking your business into the underground economy and avoiding taxes.