

Freedom, or the idea of freedom, has been one of human's greatest weapons. It's used by liberators as an icon of hope, to give to the hopeless. It's used by oppressors as justification for exploitation. I want to understand this dichotomy of freedom through the lens of class and power.

Freedom, to an exploited population, is escape from the unjust system enforced on them, to look forward to a future and imagine a reality where their voice is as important as the person who currently has power. Liberators understand that they are systemically unable to access the reigns of power, and in order to gain freedom, they must fight for it. The power of freedom for liberators comes through the ability to build a community devoted to their collective belief in that freedom.

Let's explore examples of how liberators use freedom to justify their cause and invigorate their people. Classically, in American politics, is the American Revolution. The American colonies were under control of the British empire. The colonies understood, as long as they were under imperialist control, they would have limited capacity in their right to rule themselves. The "founding fathers" portrayed a freedom to their people where they could rule themselves. It's important to recognize though, that this revolution was led by the bourgeois, in other terms, a revolution led by the rich, for the rich. There was no concession of imperial power. Once the American bourgeois seized power, the cycle repeated itself as they refused to share it, becoming their own imperial force, exploiting those they could.

The repercussions of that are felt in the cycles of the power struggle. It took 90 years to build another collective reality of freedom for the enslaved Black population. It's important to understand who is leading these movements and the outcome of them. As the Civil war was led by white men, the solution, also led by white men, was the creation of an Apartheid state, known in America as segregation. Movements can only be successful when led by those who need freedom. While it's important to acknowledge the civil rights movement, led by the Black community, led to far better outcomes than the civil war, for their communities, it's also important to acknowledge it was incomplete, there was little power ceded by the American government to Black communities. Although they had access to the same water fountain, they still didn't have a voice in how districts were gerrymandered, further restricting them from generational wealth. Black activists knew this, and it's seen by the rise of post civil rights movements such as the Black Panthers and Black Liberation Army. The American Empire, seeing the threat of the continued black movements, convinced the masses that the black human's freedom was detrimental and then assassinated activists, but that's a story to dive more into on another day.

There are plenty of other examples of freedom being fought by the proletariat. The template of liberation is the same. Once it's understood that your country's resources are being exploited, whether that's labor or natural resources, it's easy to view your collective freedom as independence from the imperial force. Once seen, it's hard to unsee, but the fight against imperialism is never easy.

It's important to understand why the empire cares so much, and enforces so violently the status quo. The classic example here is America undermining any country brave enough to nationalize their oil. In America, we have the *freedom of convenience*, which I define as the right to cheap goods. Americans are notoriously bad at understanding requirements and consequences of cheap goods. The American Empire has sold a compelling idea that convenience is our right, and any attack on the supply chain of cheap goods is an attack on our freedom of convenience. When looking through the class lens, we see how the American Empire double profits from this, using public taxpayer money, they buy weapons from the military industrial complex they are deeply invested in, to give money to dictators to overthrow the democratically elected socialist. The only condition of the military funding is to give full control of natural resources back to the imperialist backed oil companies. This is how oppressors use freedom: giving themselves free reign to partner with dictators, violently quell uprisings, and use slave labor.