

# Freedom Lies



They say our freedom depends upon local control and exploitation of our public lands, that freedom is diminished when we the people establish governments to protect our air, water and public lands. They lie.

They say our freedom depends upon the number of our citizens carrying guns, and having assault rifles at home. They lie.

An “Okie from Muskogee” sang of “livin’ right and bein’ free”, unaware of the shackles created by self-righteousness. Unknowingly, he lied.

These are insidious, dangerous lies. They use “freedom” as a propaganda buzzword to justify wars, guns and economic exploitation. They also divert public attention while the real bedrock of freedom is declining all around us. Freedom is far too important to be misused in these ways.

In the last analysis, freedom depends upon diversity – diversity in the countryside, in our towns and cities, and in our communities of human beings.

**Freedom is a maximum diversity of opportunity for individual human experience and self-expression.** Freedom is enhanced when more of our people have more access to a greater diversity of opportunities. Above all, freedom requires a diverse environment.

Freedom is diminished:

- As the world is monotonized and opportunities for many kinds of experience become expensive, rare, and disappear.
- As economic prosperity accrues to a favored minority, limiting both funds and time for the working majority to use for expanding and diversifying their lives.
- As economies grow sluggish and fail to invest in research and infrastructure that could expand and diversify opportunities for all.
- As the human population grows, necessitating more rules to restrain conflicts and competitions. (The population of the USA is 2.5X larger today than when I was born.)

Of course, the aggregate of freedom is limited whenever one person's activity infringes upon another's needs or desires, as indicated by the last bullet. We all must share the burden of maintaining each others freedom. It's the ethical component of freedom. The Montana Constitution recognizes this component by declaring that inalienable rights engender corresponding responsibilities. Unfortunately, ethics often fail and laws must replace them in moderating human interactions.

So, freedom is not as simple as the National Rifle Association, the industrial exploiters of our air, water and land, or the Sagebrush Rebellion would have us believe. Let us not be confused by their simplistic, self-serving propoganda. And let us not belittle "freedom" by using it so casually.

Jim Bailey, 2016