

Teach The Rising Generation to be Free!



By Paul Engel

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- What does it take to live free in America?
- You probably think you're free, but are you truly in control of your own choice?
- Do you allow others to define you with labels or boxes?

You've probably noticed, I frequently use this quote from our first Chief Justice, John Jay;

Every member of the State ought diligently to read and to study the constitution of his country, and teach the rising generation to be free. By knowing their rights, they will sooner perceive when they are violated, and be the better prepared to defend and assert them.

John Jay, First Chief Justice of the United States

This quote is the foundational idea behind The Constitution Study. Recently, I realized that I've spent a fair amount of space here on the topic of reading and studying the Constitution, but not nearly enough about teaching people to be free. Sure, I mention how important teaching the Constitution is, and I've put on sessions and events across this country where I teach the Constitution, but how much time and effort have I put into teaching people to be free? Today, I start to rectify that oversight, as this entire article will be about teaching not just the rising generation, but all generations, to be FREE!

Define Being Free

If we're going to teach people to be free, we need to start where so many things here at The Constitution Study start, with a definition.

Free: not determined by anything beyond its own nature or being : choosing or capable of choosing for itself

[Free: Merriam-Webster Dictionary Online](#)

So, to be free is to choose for yourself or to be capable of doing so. Seems simple enough, but I have a question we all need to answer first. Are you capable of choosing for yourself?

The Question

I'm sure most of you are saying to yourself, "Of course I'm capable of choosing for myself. What are you talking about, Paul?"

To explain, I think we need to back up a minute. Think of how many choices you are truly able to make for yourself, choices that are not controlled by arbitrary rules, regulations, and laws. Decisions that are not influenced by others. How many choices are you truly able to make for yourself?

This question first came to my mind during the debates over the Affordable Care Act (ObamaCare). While debating the issue with someone, I realized that I have never had a free choice in healthcare. When I was a child, my parents controlled my healthcare. When I became an adult, I was coerced, by U.S. law, into choosing a health insurance plan provided by my employer. This led to me making healthcare decisions not based on my preferences, but by what was covered by the health insurance that was provided by my employer. Between Medicare reimbursement rates, government regulations, and a system that was designed to force people to follow government health care

policy, none of us really have a free choice in our healthcare. That was the point when I realized that I was not free to choose my own healthcare. I had the illusion of choice, but my choices were controlled by others. That wasn't all though. You see, healthcare was simply the beginning of my realization, that it was just another box to put people in.

Boxes

Today, people are always trying to put you in a box. They slap a label on you, on your organization, or on what you say or do, then expect you to stick within the box they've assigned you. Of course, you're doing the same thing as well. There are two reasons I try so hard to avoid labels, both using them and being defined by them.

First, while we often use the same labels, we rarely mean the same thing. Take, for example, the term RINO for Republican In Name Only. This is used as a pejorative by those members of the Republican Party who do not follow the agenda or support the policies that they believe a Republican should. I, on the other hand, view a Republican as someone who wants their team, and especially themselves, to win elections. So when I see someone like a Susan Collins, Lisa Murkowski, Mitt Romney, or even a Mitch McConnell, I don't see RINOs, I see people trying to win office as Republicans. So when someone asks me about my political affiliation or whether I consider myself a conservative, I tell them I won't label myself. Not because I don't have an idea of what I believe, but because I refuse to have others think they know who I am because of a label I've assigned myself.

Second, when people use labels they more often than not are trying to put people in a box, so they can define and control them or simply dismiss them. If someone can call you a conservative, a progressive, an anarchist, or a socialist, they determine for themselves how you should live, and generally will punish you for not meeting their expectations.

A perfect example of this came from the 2020 Presidential Election Campaign. Take a look about 8 seconds into this video to see what I mean.

[[Rumble Video](#)]

According to Joe Biden, if you are black you are expected to vote for Democrat candidates. If you don't vote for Democrat candidates, "you ain't black". Labels become easy ways to shame people to act the way you want. I'm sure no black person wants to be told they "ain't black". So a statement like Biden's is meant to shame black people to vote for him. Not because he's the best candidate or because his policies have worked out the best for black people, but simply to prove that they are black.

Then there are those who put you in a box so they can dismiss you. This example, from the 2016 presidential campaign, comes about eight seconds into this video, too.

Mrs. Clinton could dismiss half of her opponents simply by labeling them a "basket of deplorables". This tactic is frequently used to dismiss evidence because it came from an opposing source, be it CNN or Fox News. However, it's not simply dismissing a political opponent, idea, or policy. One of the more culturally toxic ideas behind diversity is that only someone that looks like me can understand my point of view. The first time I saw this was when women claimed that men could have no say in the abortion debate because they could not have one. Since then peoples' ideas have been summarily dismissed, not because they lacked information, education, or experience, but because they were the wrong race, sex, or ethnicity. The latest variation of this divisiveness is the idea of cultural appropriation. From someone dressing up as an ethnic character for Halloween, to a white man with dreadlocks, from sports team names to characters in movies, millions of people have been placed into

a box and told they are not allowed to enjoy, support, or participate in any other boxes.

These boxes are just another example of how collectivism has taken over and divided our country.

Collectivism

Part of me understands the desire to label people, to put them in boxes. It's easier to keep track of people as collectives rather than as individuals. Of course it also depersonalizes them, removes what makes them unique, and it makes them into "others". This has been used for centuries to justify tremendous evils against our fellow man, because we didn't consider them human, they were "others". The Romans did it to the Christians, the whites did it to the blacks, the English to the Scots, the Nazis to the Jews, and Soviets to the kulaks. Even today, the Chinese are doing it to the Uyghurs.

In America today we have all sorts of collectives, most of them opposed to another collective. Republicans vs Democrats, Progressives vs Conservatives, Deplorables vs Elites. In fact Christians are famous for their collectives, we call denominations. There are probably thousands of collectives, and millions of definitions for each and every one. There's nothing wrong with being part of a collective, in fact I highly recommend choosing some for yourself. The question is, who is defining the collective and who is doing the labeling? For example, I am a member of a local church. I first researched the congregation by attending several services and talking with others. After we decided that we could comfortably be a part of this community, my wife and I joined the church. That doesn't mean I agree 100% with everything everyone says or believes, but I agree enough that I can support the congregation and the work it's doing. Compare that to the labels being used so often in today's public discourse, where groups, collectives, and their labels are not used to show a common belief, but to deride, devalue, and shame

others.

When I pointed out the failures of the climate change models, I was called a "Science Denyer". When I challenged the effectiveness and legality of mask mandates, many people labeled me a "Grandma Killer". When I point out that the Constitution grants only limited and enumerated powers to the federal government, I'm called an "Insurrectionist" and "un-American". These are only a few examples of the collectivist names used to label people as "others", and justify dismissing them and anything they say. That is where the problems begin; no one likes to be called names. Some people push back while others simply shrink away.

I remember when the politically correct movement really started taking hold in the early 1990's. People were told you cannot use certain words or express certain ideas because it was not politically correct. People began to self-censor, to avoid using certain words or speaking certain ideas because they were ridiculed for not being politically correct. As with almost any other movement, what started as an attempt to avoid controversy soon morphed into a controversy itself. Political correctness changed from "we as a society do not use that type of language anymore" quickly led to "we can't say that because it might harm their self-esteem". This of course quickly grew to "whatever you do, you cannot offend someone" and "if you do offend someone, you must be crushed" that we see today. What most people haven't noticed is that this trip from political correctness to cancel culture was driven not so much by individuals complaining, but by people trying to protect groups, usually groups they are not even in. Think about it; how many Native-Americans were actually offended by the name the Washington Redskins? Yet the pressure to force the team to change their name went on long enough that they yielded. Unfortunately, that is nothing when compared to how this collectivism is being used today.

Collectivism vs Freedom

Critical Race Theory and the ideas behind it have not only spread throughout our colleges and universities, but all of education. Critical Race Theory claims to determine your character by the color of your skin, but it's not alone. Cultural theory, gender theory, queer theory, and intersectionality are all offshoots of Marxist traditions and the Frankfurt School. They are all based on the idea that you can judge people based on the groups they are in. This indoctrination is spreading like a cancer throughout our society. Governments, higher education, and businesses are pushing DEI (Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion), not simply as an option, but more and more a mandatory part of life. Meaning that when you apply for a job or bid on a contract, the decision will not be made simply, or possibly even primarily, based on the skills you have to offer. Rather, the decision will start based on what groups they assign you to. Meaning a black lesbian is more likely to get a job as a press secretary, mayor, or congressperson, simply because she represents two "diversity" checkboxes. Or an application to a top university with a 1560 SAT score may lose to another who only scored 1300, simply because they are of Asian descent.

Over the decades I've watched more and more people allow others decide what they could do, what they could say, and even what they could think. Now we find actors in government, media, academia, and elsewhere, telling us what we are allowed to see and to know. All this time I thought that they were trying to take away our freedom; now I realize what they want is for us to give up our freedom..

During a recent conference call where we were discussing the idea of name calling and labeling, one of the participants said something that caught my attention. I had just talked about how I avoid labels because they destroy individuality, when someone said they thought they had lost their individuality. That's when it dawned on me: If you are not an individual, if you do not get to decide who you are but only

what groups you are in, then you are not free. What you think, what you're allowed to express, even who you are, is no longer determined by you and your nature, but by the labels and coercion of society. Which reminded me of a Benjamin Franklin quote:

Without Freedom of Thought, there can be no such Thing as Wisdom; and no such Thing as publick Liberty, without Freedom of Speech; which is the Right of every Man, as far as by it, he does not hurt or controul the Right of another: And this is the only Check it ought to suffer, and the only Bounds it ought to know.

Benjamin Franklin, writing as Silence Dogood – Letter 8

Collectivism claims control of your freedom of thought, your freedom of speech, and the very essence of who you are. Does this help explain the lack of wisdom we see in America today? Does it explain how millions of Americans complied with the demand by government to lock themselves up, wear a mask, and even try an experimental treatment, all without any evidence that it was safe, much less effective? Has collectivism led to the group think that permeates what was once called the sciences? We've been told repeatedly that our rights don't matter when faced with the public good, but is that not the death knell of freedom itself?

Conclusion

If today's rabid collectivism, political, social, economic, etc., is one extreme of a continuum, rabid individualism is the other. We see this rabid individualism in things like the [The Sovereign Citizen Movement](#), where people claim that laws they don't like don't apply to them. Which begs another question: Are all groups and labels evil or is individuality evil? I believe, as is so often the case, the answer lies somewhere between the two extremes.

How can some in America today live free? Ultimately, that is

the question for this article. Sure, radical individuality may look like the answer, but it leads to its own breakdown of society, ignores the evils of others our own pasts, and creates its own dystopia. For me, the answer isn't labels or freedom, collectives or liberty, but who decides. Remember the definition of free:

Free: not determined by anything beyond its own nature or being : choosing or capable of choosing for itself

[Free: Merriam-Webster Dictionary Online](#)

When we allow others to determine what groups we are a part of, what labels we are assigned, and what they mean, we have given up our freedom and become slaves to the definitions of other people. If we want to live free, we must start by not allowing others to define us, and by extension, not define others by their groups.

I choose not to label myself as a Republican or a Democrat, neither a Conservative nor a Progressive. Why? Because none of those groups have earned my support. When others try to label me as an insurrectionist, an anarchist, or simply someone on the wrong side of history, I simply ignore them, because their claims are without merit. Those labels, and the people who wield them have no power over me unless I allow it. Most importantly, when people call me names I realize I have won the debate. When people have exhausted their arguments and have nothing left but name calling, my evidence has survived and my argument is victorious. Rather than collapsing under the weight of the names, I recognize it shows the emptiness of their argument. They may not accept the fact that their argument has failed, but many of those around us who are watching the debate might.

If we want to live free, then we must determine for ourselves who and what will have influence over our lives, and allow others to do the same. As a people, we have delegated to

governments certain powers over us, and I accept that. When those in government claim powers We the People did not delegate to them though, it is not only my right but my duty to use the most powerful word in the English language: "No." I am no fool. It is not lost on me that there are those who would use their legitimate powers for illegitimate purposes. I may be punished, fined, jailed, or even killed, but I will still be free. My body may be enslaved, but my mind will not, my spirit will not, my thoughts will not, and my speech will not. If Benjamin Franklin is correct, as long as we have freedom to think for ourselves we can have liberty, and as long as we have freedom of speak as we wish, we can have public liberty.

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