

THE PROTOCOL OF HUMAN RIGHTS

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The some rights of every individual are taken for granted in almost nation. We live in one of the better country on the planet and we have expectations for that freedom. We rarely talk about the price for that freedom.

"Freedom ain't free" is an old truism that gets trotted out usually when we go to war, as if the only price Americans should ever pay for freedom is their blood (or more correctly, the blood of the poorest among us). I suppose some of that is because of the mythology of the American Revolution: we fought a war for independence, true enough, but over the centuries plenty of people paid plenty of dearer prices for freedoms.

I believe the Founders thought that the prices of freedom were so obvious that they didn't need delineation, that there was no need for a Bill of Responsibility to go along with the Bill of Rights, and so subsequent generations have lost touch with the price that must daily be paid to secure our freedom, and have long assumed freedom was a gift the Divinity bestowed upon us as some Chosen People, that our Founders in their gifted wisdom secured for us and gave to us in perpetuity.

I think that if we were truly called to account for our freedom on a daily basis, we might choose more carefully those "freedoms" we fight for. If each morning we woke up and were handed a task that would allow us that day's measure of freedom, we'd quickly start to realize that the need to wear a helmet on a motorcycle careening down a freeway or to smoke a cigarette inside a bar are "freedoms" not worth fighting for.

Hence, the freedom to own property and to use that property as one sees fit, barring any criminal activity, is also written into the Constitution, and is so complex that the Founders could not completely delineate this freedom in ten amendments. It is in the Third Amendment, which bans the force quartering of soldiers on one's land. It is in the Fourth Amendment, the "search and seizure" of personal property. It is in the Fifth Amendment, which establishes the concept of eminent domain and when it may be applied. It is in the Thirteenth Amendment, which banned slavery (which was, sadly, about property). It is in the Sixteenth Amendment, which established the income tax.