

Freedom

What we want

For as far back as the historical record goes, human society has been propelled forward by the struggle for freedom. From the slave rebellions of ancient Rome to the peasant uprisings that slashed through China's history, from the African resistance to the slave trade to the anti-colonial struggles that rocked the globe for the last two centuries, people have always resisted grinding exploitation and brutal oppression.

Today the rich and powerful, the tiny handful who squat atop our social pyramid like huge jeweled toads, try to claim the banner of freedom for themselves. They use this mighty word to sell everything from convertibles to panty liners. And when they do, they reveal what they think freedom means. For them, the rulers, freedom means the freedom to structure everything in society to serve their own interests. Meanwhile, for the great working class majority, the freedom preached by the rich means only the freedom to choose between a rock and a hard place, between selling our labor to them to enrich them further and starving to death.

But we have a different vision of freedom. The great majority of the globe's women and men want freedom from misery, from exploitation, from the jackboots of the state, from living our whole lives in alienation and insecurity. And more, we want freedom to become fully human, to develop all our gifts and abilities. And millions of us sense that this cannot be done by each of us as individuals, but only by the pooling of our collective strength and wisdom.

Road

How we get there

The long history of people struggling for freedom shows us a lot about the path we have to travel. It is always a struggle because there are always those who run and benefit from the existing order and who have no interest whatsoever in giving up their power and privilege. We stand in internationalist solidarity with all those women and men the world around who are waging this battle under their own conditions, and often waging it against the same ruling class we

are fighting, for the rulers of the US are the dominant power in the world today.

We look for inspiration and lessons to key recent episodes in this long struggle for freedom. The Paris Commune of 1871 showed that the wretched of the earth could storm heaven, seize power and reorganize society. The Russian revolution showed that the new society could be defended and built in the face of everything the old order could throw against it. The Cultural Revolution in China showed that only the masses of people can keep a new elite from taking over the government and seizing the fruits of the revolution, as had happened in the Soviet Union. Each of these heroic efforts to push forward into the realm of freedom eventually wound up in a swamp or a box canyon, but not before our road had been blazed far into new and uncharted terrain.

There is also much to learn from the countless fighters who have helped scout the terrain ahead on which the road will be built. These include not just Karl Marx and V.I. Lenin and Mao Zedong, but Malcolm X, Ella Baker, Amilcar Cabral, Antonio Gramsci, Assata Shakur, Franz Fanon and many, many more.

And in the end, of course, we can only bring the road into being by the hard work of building it.

Freedom Road

The path in the US

These two words, linked together, have a special meaning. That meaning deals with the central feature of how this country became what it is—the enslavement and continued exploitation and oppression of the African American nation and other oppressed peoples like the First Nations (Native Americans) and the Chicano nation, whose homeland, Aztlán, is in the Southwest. In slavery days, Freedom Road referred to the Underground Railroad. The words became the refrain of the marching song of the Black troops in the Civil War who dealt a decisive blow to the power of the Southern slaveocracy, a great stride forward on history's path.

Today, the oppression of minority nationalities remains central to the capitalist system in this country. Today, the road to freedom means that those communities must have the right

to determine their own destinies. More, because of this, the central feature of the road to freedom in the United States is the alliance of the people's movements in different communities of color with the movement of the vast working class, made up of laboring people of all nationalities.

Socialist

The society we will build

Freedom is not a thing that can be won for a few. If any are in chains, no one is truly free. Nor can freedom be given as a gift. It must be taken by the many because only in doing so can we learn to use and expand it.

The rich hate the thought of socialism so much that they call socialist any reform in the system that cuts into their wealth in the slightest—from public education and the graduated income tax in the old days, to environmental regulations and a national health care system today. Such reforms, however needed they might be, are not socialism.

Real freedom will require the destruction, by any means necessary, of the whole current social order based on the rights of the wealthy to keep everything they have and constantly grab for more.

Real freedom, socialism, will mean turning that system over, or, more accurately, standing things right side up. It will mean organizing society and the economy on a totally different basis, where the wealth created by the labor of the many goes to serve the people and not to enrich a tiny handful of parasites. It will mean that education, health care, jobs, an unpoisoned environment, will all be rights, and that people will have the opportunity and resources they need to develop their potential as human beings and to increase their contributions to the wellbeing of all.

The working people will rule and the old exploiters (and newer wannabes) will be held down. So will those, like white supremacists, who seek to poison and divide the people. True democracy is not choosing between two rich white guys once every four years, it is the masses of people learning to become the masters of society.

The wealth of society, produced by the labor of millions, will

go to benefit the many, not to fatten the few. Because the highest law of giant capitalist corporations is “expand or die,” enormous waste, suffering and environmental destruction are built into the system we live under. In place of this dog-eat-dog madness, we need cooperation, collectivity and planning.

Socialism is society ruled by the working class, and the first step in a transition to a world without classes. The plain fact is, we, the working class of people, make all of society run, each and every day. Why shouldn't we run all of society?

Organization The key tool

The only way that working people have ever won anything is by organizing and fighting. In our neighborhoods in community organizations, in our workplaces in unions, wherever there is a need to fight, people build organizations. As the great labor anthem “Solidarity Forever” says,

What force on earth is weaker than the feeble strength of one?
But the union makes us strong.

This is where you will find members of the Freedom Road Socialist Organization. We are involved in and build a wide range of organizations in many aspects of the people's struggles. We are in immigrant workers' centers and labor unions and rank and file caucuses. We are in organizations in oppressed communities, like the Black Radical Congress. We are in student groups, in teacher and parent organizations. We are in international solidarity groups, and many more.

Socialist organization FRSO

Again, these are words that have a special meaning when linked together. The various organizations mentioned above aim to defend the rights and living standards of working people and other sections of the population. They are invaluable, but they are not enough.

In the final analysis, we need organization dedicated to building all of those struggles and welding them together

into a revolutionary movement which smashes the whole capitalist system and builds a new world on the ashes of the old. Such an organization needs to be disciplined. It needs to be able to call on its members for ideas and summation of the struggle, for sacrifice in building the people's movements, and for courage in fighting the enemy.

Such an organization must also be large enough to unite thousands and tens of thousands and eventually millions of us into a mighty revolutionary force, a revolutionary party that can shatter the foundations of this corrupt, racist system.

We have no illusions that Freedom Road will on its own become such an organization, but one of our principal tasks is to help bring such a force into being when the conditions for it grow ripe. In the meantime, we will seek to strengthen our members, to train and recruit new fighters and always to continue to build the many struggles which defend the ground the people have gained in earlier battles. We will always work to unite with other revolutionary forces. And we will always fight to push the road to freedom a little further into the new territory that lies ahead.

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An Introduction

To understand what the Freedom Road Socialist Organization is all about, our organization's name provides a useful starting point.

Let's break it down.