

The British Indian novelist and essayist, Salman Rushdie once remarked on what constitutes individual freedom of expression? His ironic response which can be construed as a natural defensive reaction to his highly controversial book, *The Satanic Verses* was that without the freedom to offend, it ceases to exist. However when one considers the implications of free speech, one of the primary tenants of western democracy and the current trend in a globalized pressure of politically correct interaction and etiquette, how can the totality of freedom remain when the mode of expression and dialog are curtailed by the same establishment that seeks to uphold it's principle value in a modern civilized society. This is now the dilemma we face in a rapidly globalized world of diminishing national boundaries and emerging nation-states based on esoteric political, ethnic and religious allegiances.

If society and the values it uploads are inconsistent and the ability to critically examine its multi-faceted application is systematically restricted, then it no longer bares any semblance to its original definition. It can no longer provide society the generational benefits bestowed by the sacrifices of the former. The meaning has effectively been altered by ideological dogma, political rhetoric or social mechanisms of control. The present generation will only yield to the status quo acceptance, a blind acquiescence out of societal conformity, ignorance or political party appeasement. This will inevitably result in a new generation whose perception of freedom will be either radically altered from the original, or the devolution of freedom, perpetuated by a generation completely apathetic to civics and the ensuing individual responsibility of maintaining personal liberties through active participation.

Unfortunately the latter scenario is precisely what is happening in America. As the epicenter of the recent economic global collapse, this recently contested first world nation is now severally scrutinized due to the growing disparity between the minority rich business class and the overwhelming vast majority of impoverished and destitute. In the United States, wealth is highly concentrated in a relatively few hands. As of 2010, the top 1% of households (the upper class) owned 35.4% of all privately held wealth, and the next 19% (the managerial, professional, and small business stratum) had 53.5%, which means that just 20% of the people owned a remarkable 89%, leaving only 11% of the wealth for the bottom 80% (wage and salary workers).

This extreme inequality is tantamount to enslavement for those at the bottom. This laissez faire non-social democratic system that has resulted in this highly stratified "caste system" which is evidently the primary catalyst of numerous internal and external problems, from the rise of the plutocracy and military industrial complex to neocolonial imperialism in international relations. This has obviously created an asymmetrical understanding of freedom as expressed, experienced and defined by society in our current generation compared to the past.

John Zerzan the infamous anarcho-primitivist theorist and writer once remarked in the documentary on mass materialism, *Surplus: terrorized into being Consumers* that efficiency has replace human playfulness. Indeed, the human inquisitive nature has somehow succumbed to the technological revolution which creates as a byproduct mass conformity, blind acceptance and apathy. Zerzan so astutely observed, "We can go on making our small choices, "reinvesting ourselves" thoroughly, on condition that these choices do not seriously disturb the social and ideological balance."

This social and ideological Zeitgeist refers to the intellectual spirit of our times, our generation's lack of understanding and appreciation for the choices that do matter concerning freedom. We have become an autonomous and regimented society, where conformity and political correctness reign supreme. The powerful images of freedom that have accompanied glorious struggles of the past have been forsaken by the perpetual bread and circus culture of our postmodern technocratic society. As Zerzan exclaimed, *"This is the reason why, today, "democracy" is more and more a false issue, a notion so discredited by its predominant use that, perhaps, one should take the risk of abandoning it to the enemy."* If democracy is synonymous with freedom, has our generation through casual apathy, conformity and mass distraction discredited its own future?

Alexis de Tocqueville, a French observer and noted historian of the early 19th century, once wrote "a democratic government is the only one in which those who vote for a tax can escape the obligation to pay it. Americans are so enamored of equality that they would rather be equal in slavery than unequal in freedom."