



Written by [John Stossel](#) on March 8, 2023

Students Defend Freedom

Government imposes a million rules.
Americans seem to want more!

Leftists want new gun laws and bans on single-use plastics, gas stoves, fossil fuels, gas-powered cars, nuclear power.

Conservatives want to ban porn and books that discuss gender identity and critical race theory.

People just accept bans on recreational drugs, flavored vapes and menthol cigarettes.

Thomas Jefferson said, “The natural progress of things is for liberty to yield, and government to gain.”

What he predicted keeps happening.

Ignorant young people are especially eager to ban things like “offensive” speech and “excess” profit. Some would happily ban capitalism.

Fortunately, there are some students who buck the trend.

“It’s very easy to lose freedom,” says Northwood University’s Kristin Tokarev in my new video. “It’s very easy for politicians to legislate freedom away. But it’s incredibly hard to get back.”

Tokarev is one of the winners of my video contest. My nonprofit, Stossel in the Classroom, provides videos to teachers who want teaching aids that help explain economics. Every year, we give out \$25,000 in prizes to college, high school and middle school students who write the best essays or make the best videos.

This year’s competition is underway. If you know teachers, please let them know about it. The deadline for entries is March 31.

Tokarev watched my videos in school. She found them “more engaging” than listening to a professor lecture.

Unfortunately, most students don’t watch our videos.

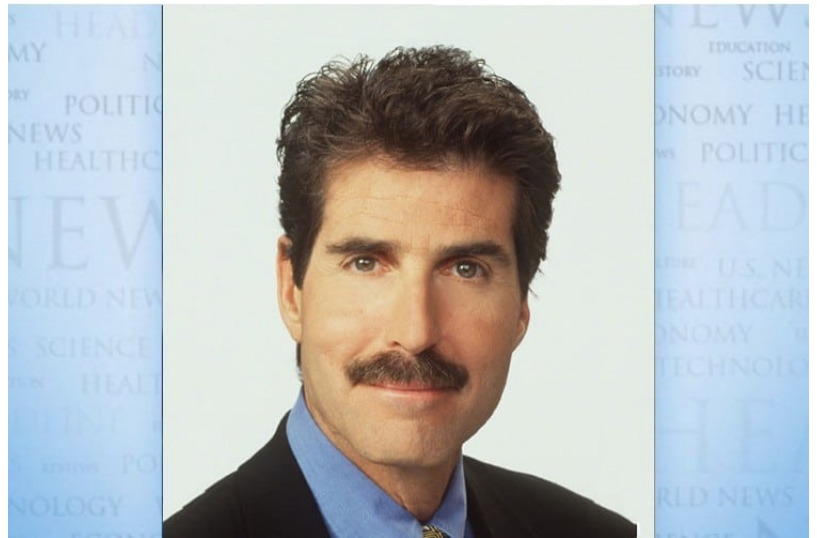
Instead, teachers tell them that capitalism is a problem.

If they don’t hear that in school, they hear it from media. “If capitalism works ... why does it seem to give such a raw deal?” complains MSNBC’s Ari Melber. His guest, Michael Moore, eagerly agrees.

“I can’t say I’m pro-capitalist without friends, or people on the internet telling me, ‘How could you?’” says Tokarev. “Everything on social media is, ‘eat the rich,’ ‘kill capitalism.’ It’s synonymous with greed.”

I push back. “That’s fair. Capitalists want more money for themselves.”

“But with more money, I can create something,” she answers. “Then you get new products and



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innovation.”

High school student Kaden Morgan made a video that points out how everyone now “is living a better life than even the richest men of the 1800s” *because* of capitalism’s innovation.

“We got air conditioning, cell phones, microwaves, we got stinking toilets!” he cheerfully exclaims.

Of course, the media are right to point out that because of capitalism, income inequality has increased.

I say to Tokarev, “Some people are really filthy rich. Others don’t have enough.”

“Under capitalism,” she replies, “there’s going to be people who are wealthier and some who are poorer. But you have the opportunity to become wealthier! Under socialism, sure, everybody is equal, but they’re all equally poor!”

I wish more Americans understood that.

Jaboukie Young-White of “The Daily Show” asked young people what they thought of socialism.

“Socialism is on point!” said one. Then she admits, “I don’t really know what socialism means.”

Tokarev knows. She learned not just from our videos, but from her dad, who grew up under socialism in Bulgaria. Not only were people poor, but modern music was even banned.

“He couldn’t listen to rock music without fear of persecution,” she says.

The only way he could hear what Americans heard was to smuggle in tapes. “The quality was awful, but he would play them all day.”

“What does music have to do with socialism versus capitalism?” I ask.

“Everything!” she responds. “In one system, you’re allowed to enjoy it freely. In another system, you’re being controlled.”

Many of this year’s video and essay contestants focused on freedom versus control.

“Individual liberty is crucial for people and communities to flourish,” says Ian Hunter, the Concordia University student who won first place in the college division.

“Freedom is essential not only to prosper, to make money,” adds Tokarev, “but it’s essential to be yourself.”

I wish our politicians would listen to these kids.

Every Tuesday at JohnStossel.com, Stossel posts a new video about the battle between government and freedom. He is the author of Give Me a Break: How I Exposed Hucksters, Cheats, and Scam Artists and Became the Scourge of the Liberal Media.

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