

Education Is One Primary Means Of Preserving Freedom of Choice

BY DAVID ADLER

ANY CELEBRATION of freedom is essentially a celebration of the individual. Freedom cannot truly be abstracted or made separate. It does not exist in a vacuum. It does not function as a solitary concept. It is simply that which makes human interaction and endeavor possible.

Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary defines freedom as "the absence of necessity, coercion, or constraint in choice or action." In the United States, there exists a system of law created for and geared to the reasonable removal of restraint on individual thought and action. Our society, a dynamic and mobile one, is built upon and motivated by the largely unrestricted actions of its members. We are granted a license to live, peacefully.

Yet any form of action must be preceded by a decision to act, whether articulated or not. This decision-mak-

ing process is also a component of freedom. It comprises freedom of choice. This is often referred to as free will.

Our choices define who we are. Our choices shape our environment. This capacity to choose is exercised continually through our entire range of behavior. If we are able to make effective choices, we may be better able to achieve, create, build, help, attain, nurture and produce. The question, in a democratic society, thus becomes how best to maintain and enhance this mechanism of choice.

Use Education

A primary means of preserving and retaining this mechanism appears to be through education. Education, both formal and informal, exposes us to a greater number of options. It may provide us with the technical expertise to approach certain problems. It may offer us new perspectives. It may permit interaction among various ideas and personalities. Education provides the data and analytic tools necessary for any mode of selection.

Law Day is emblematic of this process. It represents a period in which we reflect upon and discuss our legal system and its implications for this country. Other events like it, in a variety of fields, would surely be beneficial. As professionals, it is our duty to impart our knowledge and ideas to the public at large.

Legal education per se in New York State has recently been vastly expanded to apply to all practitioners in all areas of the law. Legal education is also being directed more openly at the non-lawyer, in the form of lectures and seminars. These must continue to proliferate.

Other occupations should also consider such expansion. Ignorance of the law, in addition to being no excuse, can only serve to impede our capacity for decision-making. As officers of the Court, we must generously share the wealth of knowledge. Everyone is entitled to informed consent prior to action.

To celebrate our freedom is to celebrate our individual right to choose. It is from this component of choice that all human action and reaction emanate. We must strive to perpetuate and even enhance this cherished aspect of our humanity. All facets of education, legal and otherwise, serve this end. Finally, let us not forget that in 1776, we chose to be free.

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