

The Many Faces Of Freedom

by SHERALYN ROMAN

We can't help but weigh in on a heavy topic: the 'Freedom Convoy' that took place this past weekend which, at time of writing at least, was still very much an ongoing affair.

I'll wade in regardless of the risk of offense, if only to 'walk the talk' that while I believe in the right to freedom of speech, I believe even more in the idea that there is a level of responsibility that comes with that right.

Therein lies the problem when anyone discusses freedom or rights, and that is, whose version of freedom are we discussing? Whose version of freedom is correct? On at least one version of 'freedom' however, I would have hoped we could all agree that no one should have the freedom to walk freely while bearing a flag with either Nazi or Confederate symbolism. And yet they did. Oh, the many faces of freedom indeed.

I'll start by clarifying that I have now, and always have had, the utmost respect for truck drivers as a profession. They are correctly called front line workers and heroes for getting goods to market throughout this pandemic. Close to 90% of these hard-working people are vaccinated and continue to support each and every one of us through their efforts. Unfortunately, what we saw this past weekend was a small handful of individuals who have co-opted a cause to use as their own personal platform for spewing hate, intolerance and engaging in civil disobedience seemingly without consequence - and that's a freedom that no one should have any right to engage in.

The truth of the matter is the City of Ottawa is currently being held hostage by a minority fringe group who have very little to do with truckers and vaccine mandates. While these individuals revel in their right to protest, they are, in fact, disabling the rights of every other citizen to move freely about the city, to open their businesses (already suffering greatly from the very lockdowns they are protesting) or even at last report, to attend school safely.

Paramedics have had rocks hurled at them, the statue of a TRUE Canadian hero has been desecrated and the treatment of both the National War Memorial and the National Aboriginal Veterans Monument is beyond abominable. Does anyone anyone at all think that urinating on the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier is an appropriate way to honour the memory of REAL heroes who actually fought and died for us? If you do, SHAME on you.

Despite raising millions of dollars for their cause, these same fringe groups have attempted (and succeeded) in obtaining food meant for people experiencing homelessness and now the Ottawa police are handing out blankets. Blankets! I actually have to wonder who is in charge right now, the police or the protestors? My Dad had an expression and I'm sure your family had something similar; 'the tail is wagging the dog' and at this point, frankly it's time the dog was returned to its kennel.

Why are we not forcibly removing protestors like we do homeless encampments? Why do we tolerate the events in Ottawa but send in the RCMP to remove Indigenous persons protesting on their own land? Why have some politicians waded freely into this crowd, posed for pictures and continued to enable them?

Of course, you might answer it's because we have the right to freedom of expression, which includes the freedom to protest, but I would ask another question why are these freedoms ok but BIPOC, homeless or Indigenous 'freedoms' are not?

This protest should have been shut down the moment a Nazi flag appeared. That these groups exist is bad enough but allowing them to freely participate and move about the capitol on the very grounds where preserving democracy is practiced is unacceptable. The individuals trashing sacred ground should have been arrested. That we are now handing out blankets in an attempt to peacefully 'encourage' protestors to go home is so very Canadian. Sadly, so too are the terrible behaviours we've seen by many of those same protestors. To those who say, 'This isn't Canada,' I have news for you; it is and we should be ashamed, no matter which style of

?freedom? you believe in.