

What does Freedom mean to you?

Poet Caroline Burrows engaged with communities in the Highlands to create a poem exploring how our basic freedoms are being upheld or threatened; why the question itself has become increasingly pivotal, and why the answering of it potentially carries the fear of being misunderstood.

The project considers the challenges being faced regarding the themes of resistance, justice, migration, identity and solidarity, using as its basis the 1948 *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, established to protect amongst others: Freedom of Asylum; Freedom from Fear; Freedom from Want; Freedom of Speech; and Freedom of Worship.

In what ways do our community stories and histories connect to these freedoms and themes?

The poem forms part of Eden Court's *Cinema Against Fascism* season and the UK-wide creative programme *Our Freedom: Then and Now*, marking 80 years since the end of World War II.

FREEDOM FROM FASCISM

From groups round the Highlands, these voices chime,
Reaching across borders, distance, and time,
Encounters in classes, halls, online, a shed,
Expressed by incomers, and those born and bred,
Directors, volunteers, tradies, creatives,
Old, young, a *Local Hero*, *Restless Natives*,
Multi-denominations, this choir's hymn
Sings solidarity, "Freedom from Fascism."



*'Though tyrants threat, though Lyons rage and rore,
Defy them all, and feare not to win out.'*

(1603)

'Ane Godlie Dreame' by Elizabeth Melville, Lady Culrossⁱ

Universal Declaration of Human Rights: ⁱⁱ **Article 27:** 1. Everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits. 2. Everyone has the right to the protection of the moral and material interests resulting from any scientific, literary or artistic production of which he is the author.

FREEDOM OF ASYLUM

For Freedom a flag is flown in Glenmore,
Raised for a Resistance forced into War,
Eighty years since its enemy withdrew,
Each cross on this flag flies red, white, and blue,
Displayed for Norwegians who weathered storms,
Occupied, their exiles trained in the Cairngorms,
Mountains, where *The Heroes of Telemark's* path,
Shared words scribed in Nan Shepherd's epigraph:



'Islands are united by the bottom of the sea.'
(1934)

The Living Mountain by Nan Shepherd ⁱⁱⁱ



But, a lamppost made into a flagstaff
By a social-media guerilla
Flies a divisive cross near Cameron Barracks,
Which, to me, appears ultranationalistic.
Such unwelcoming posts stir *Tea with Mussolini*,
That send the wrong message to asylum seekers,
And forget the meaning in John Barbour's 'Freedom':

*'The angry, na the wrechyt dome,
That is cowplyt to foule thyrlidome.'*
(14th Century)

The Brus by John Barbour ^{iv}

Universal Declaration of Human Rights: Article 14: 1. Everyone has the right to seek and to enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution. 2. This right may not be invoked in the case of prosecutions genuinely arising from non-political crimes or from acts contrary to the purposes and principles of the United Nations.

FREEDOM FROM FEAR

From World War II to a village primary school,
Records show Czech children escaped Nazi rule,
Enrolled like them, a new class makes analogies
Exclaiming, "That's like us with Ukraine refugees!"
Depicted from real footage, a Russian shows me,
Ordinary Fascism, a documentary,
"Memories of the previous generation,"
Saved to serve as a warning and education:



'Where they burn books, they will ultimately burn people as well.'
(1820)

Almanson: A Tragedy by Heinrich Heine^v

'Dort wo man Bücher verbrennt, verbrennt man auch am Ende Menschen.'
is on a memorial plaque at the site of the 1933 book-burnings in Bebelplatz, Berlin.



"Rocky Horror was great, like the lid coming off,"
Tells a man, "and *Sebastiane* at the cinema.
But I'd walk out of gay nightclubs into gangs of guys
No wishing me well, being homophobic.
I was lucky, twice there was a taxi,
But half my mate's face was rebuilt with steel plates
When he got a kicking that could've killed him."

*'Your enemies around you watch with cheerful laughter,
Bending their bows,'*
(1907)

'Saint Sebastian' by Valery Bryusov^{vi}

Universal Declaration of Human Rights: Article 3: Everyone has the right to life, liberty and the security of person.

Universal Declaration of Human Rights: Article 5: No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

FREEDOM FROM WANT

"Freedom," a gran tells me, "is having a voice,
Rights to control my own body, my choice,
Education! Our sixth-form did protests in Ireland,
Even 'til the 'eighties there, Durex was banned."
Dealing with M.S., a young guy shares he gets good care,
"One pal's in a bungalow since needing a 'chair,"
Made accessible, they've fitted, waist high, each plug,
"So, we're both well looked after, but it's just pot luck."

*'An' wha cou'd get, an' what they got,
Was at the kirk's decision.'*
(1873)

'Ballad of The Monkland Cottar' by Janet Hamilton ^{vii}



"Even Highland Council employs some staff relief!"
"Did you see that Ken Loach zero-hours drama?"
"Scotland signed 'The Promise' but care services
For children are falling short of basic."
"They took pensions away from women: W.A.S.P.I."
And in the past, the Courthouse jailed army deserters
"Who needed to bring in the harvest on their farm."

*'They! an' be damn'd! what right hae they,
To Meat, or Sleep, or light o' day,'*
(1786)

'Address of Beelzebub' by Robert Burns ^{viii}

Universal Declaration of Human Rights: Article 25: 1. Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control. 2. Motherhood and childhood are entitled to special care and assistance. All children, whether born in or out of wedlock, shall enjoy the same social protection.

FREEDOM OF SPEECH

From a black husband's white wife comes measured thought,
"Racism's learned behaviour, it can be untaught,
Everyone has free speech, you can still cause offence,
Except, that doesn't mean words have no consequence."
Diverse 'Our Stories' in the Highland Archives,
Officially transcribed transgender lives,
"Making this mark's powerful because it's public,
Some young ones don't know how things can change, quick."



*'The life that I have/Is all that I have,
And the life that I have/Is yours,'*
(1944)

'The Life that I Have' by Leo Marks, cryptographer. ^{ix}

This was used as a Code Poem in WWII by the Special Ops. Exec. and given to agent Violette Szabo (G.C.) who was captured and executed by the Nazis.



Everyone agrees they feel, "Bombarded with stuff."
I'm told, "We're controlled, watch *The Social Dilemma*."
"Kids are so anxious now, if they went on protests
They'd be filmed, online forever, it's so toxic."
"*Forbidden Planet*'s Id monsters are like A.I."
And Reform posts fake news that falsely accuses
An M.S.P. of sectarianism.^x

*'Oh, what a tangled web we weave,
When first we practise to deceive!'*
(1808)

Marmion: A Tale of Flodden Field by Walter Scott ^{xi}

Universal Declaration of Human Rights: Article 19: Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.

FREEDOM OF WORSHIP

Faith guides a woman, who through Christianity
Reads her bible, and runs a charity,
"Establishing schools where they wouldn't exist."
"Everything Everywhere All at Once," says a Buddhist,
"Depicts how thoughts, feelings and actions affect
Ourselves and others, karma's cause and effect."
"Maybe there's a higher power? I've no fixed views,"
Says an agnostic, "And it's my right to choose."



*'Korans and Bibles-even a martyr's bone,
All these and more my heart can tolerate/For my religion's love, and love alone.'*
(11th Century)

The Luzumiyat of Abu'l-Ala by Al-Ma'arri ^{xii}



A mum states, "Fifty thousand kids, says Unicef,
Have now been killed or injured in Gaza.^{xiii}
But I'm scared if I bang my protest drums,
I'll get arrested, or branded antisemitic."
"My dad was in Stalag VIII B in WWII,"
Prison camps, like *The Great Escape*, a local explains,
"They were forced on a death march just before freedom."

*'genocide, whether committed in time of peace or in time of war,
is a crime under international law'* ^{xiv}
(1948)

Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide
by the United Nations

Universal Declaration of Human Rights: Article 18: Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.

Universal Declaration of Human Rights: Article 2: Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status. Furthermore, no distinction shall be made on the basis of the political, jurisdictional or international status of the country or territory to which a person belongs, whether it be independent, trust, non-self-governing or under any other limitation of sovereignty.

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