

HST 203: ONLINE U.S.History Sp19 (Escobar)

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Rights, Rights, Rights
by [Joe Escobar](#) - Saturday, May 25, 2019, 2:24 PM

This thread is for discussions on the Rights, Rights, Rights topic.

To make your POSTS, click the reply link in this, MY post. To reply to another student's post, be sure to click the reply link within in THEIR post.

IMPORTANT - SUBJECT LINES

BE SURE to use an informative subject line for your post, which clearly describes the parts, pictures, and questions you are addressing. Do NOT simply leave it RE: Rights, Rights, Rights

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Rights and Wishes
by [Jamie Atkins](#) - Sunday, May 26, 2019, 3:43 PM

Professor Williams does clarify the differences between rights and wishes. He then asks if it is constitutional for the government to make us pay for other peoples needs. I would answer that whether it is or not, at some point the majority of people in this country agreed that we should pay taxes, and that became part of our constitution. The Constitution defines our rights. The intention of the government was to safeguard the basic rights of citizens and the minority, as they defined them. The reasons for this are obvious, that we should not, for any reason, deny a citizen something that another citizen enjoys. So then the problem becomes the capitalist system that may not allow that. Is it the people's responsibility to pay or care for those who are economically disadvantaged? As things are now, you will pay for things, and the government will decide on what and how much. We as citizens do not, and have not since the ratification of the 16th amendment had the right to all we have earned. We have the responsibility to pay our taxes to fund the government, and to pay for programs our elected officials have seen fit to implement, ideally due to the wishes of the citizens of that republic. We elect our government representatives to carry out our wishes, those then appoint judges to define our rights; everything made into law has the right to be questioned and overturned or repealed. If the majority of Americans believe social programs infringe upon their liberty, why do they still exist? If what we had before was sufficient, why was it necessary in the first place?

The t-shirt stating that education is a right would be the one that follows the true definition of a right, as Professor Williams described it because it doesn't infringe upon another person's right to what she/he has earned like providing free college would. Our right given by our government to receive an education pertains to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness in the following ways: A citizen of a constitutional democratic republic has responsibilities (as listed on the uscis.gov page) that they will be unable to perform if uneducated. All laws and constitutional amendments, as well as duties and responsibilities, must be understandable to them to ensure the survival of the republic. A citizen's ability to contribute to society is very dependent upon their level of education. We are finding that as society advances, high school level is not sufficient. It is not enough to earn a livable wage in most cases. It is not enough to ensure liberty, therefore, and even less sufficient in regards to the pursuit of happiness. One could

argue that health care, as it pertains to life, is also not secure without a secondary education, due to the system of capitalism which reaches into all aspects of life. We do have the right to education, but not to a free one. The wish to extend free public education to the college level can only be granted by the will and benevolence of the people, who then communicate to the government that this is how they wish their tax dollars be spent. If the wish to have free higher education paid for by the government becomes the wish of the majority, so be it.

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Re: Rights and Wishes
by [Genevieve Martini](#) - Tuesday, May 28, 2019, 8:21 PM

Jamie,

Your paragraph on defining rights by the fact that they are brought into place by the American people is a very compelling read. I especially loved when you said, "We elect our government representatives to carry out our wishes, those then appoint judges to define our rights; everything made into law has the right to be questioned and overturned or repealed." This is a beautiful way of defining the way our government works. Although I feel I must mention that it doesn't work as perfectly as we'd like it to, as I'm sure you're fully aware of. It is, however, what we as Americans strive for: a government for the people, by the people.

The question you proposed about why social programs are still in place if the American people believe they infringe on their rights, is a great one- and I believe to answer it we have to determine why they were created in the first place. In our textbook(Liberty, Equality, Power), in chapter 25 we read about both the causes and the effects of the Great Depression. And on page 836 we can see that many programs were created during this time to try to get the country back on its feet. Programs such as the Social Security Act, the National Labor Relations Act and the Works Progress Administration, were all created under Roosevelt's Second New Deal to pull America out of the pit it had dug for itself.

These programs were created when America was at its worst, and although the WPA might not be standing today, both the Social Security and National Labor Relations Acts are still functioning government programs. And programs that were created in times of distress, programs that genuinely helped people, are not often seen as programs that impede on American freedom.

Many people today say that we need these programs to help Americans; this automatically makes my think of a quote in the video 'Walter E Williams - What is a Right?': "Well, when people say that, 'We absolutely need this program or that program', I always ask, 'What did we do before?'"(minute mark 3:19). People were able to survive before these programs, people will find a way to survive without them.

Just because I'm curious, was there a specific social program that you were thinking of when writing your post? I'd love to hear about it.

Lastly, addressing your opinion on the images, I think it's interesting that we got such different answers. I have to say that after reading your paragraph I was almost convinced I was wrong! However, I went back and read my post and I realized that although we cam up with different conclusions, our reasonings were fairly similar. While I said that the image on the right is "simply expressing an opinion", you said, "We do have the right to education, but not to a free one." When I see this statement I believe that you are saying that the image is not expressing an opinion but rather demanding free education. If this is the case, I would agree that the image is incorrect, however, I don't believe that is what the image means therefore I don't think my answer has changed.

So although you ultimately said that the image had the incorrect view and I said that the t-shirt did, I do believe that we are still on the same page about what constitutes a right.

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Re: Rights and Wishes
by [Jamie Atkins](#) - Thursday, May 30, 2019, 10:31 AM

Hi Genevieve,

Thank you! I appreciate the compliment, though I wouldn't give my writing such a glowing review. That is exactly the point I was trying to make, our government, is of the people, by the people, and I agree with it not always working out that way, I sort of subtly slipped in the "ideally".

Great points about the New Deal and the Great Depression. Because we had a large amount of Americans in abject poverty, it is here we can see the most extreme examples for government intervention versus non-intervention; on one hand we have President Hoover who “was especially reluctant to engage the government in providing relief to unemployed and homeless Americans. To give money to the poor, he insisted, would destroy their desire to work and undermine their sense of self-worth”-Murrin text p.821, and on the other hand we have FDR establishing FERA in his first Hundred Days and granting \$500 million in aid to the poor (Murrin text p. 825). In this example, I have a hard time reconciling the “what we had before” statement by Mr. Williams. What we had before was private voluntary and religious charities, who may have been able to keep the Irish immigrants from dropping dead in the streets, but they were unable to solve the large-scale malnourishment, starvation and homelessness. In the case of the Red Cross, they were unwilling to help because “its investigators would be unable to determine whether a claimant was out of a job because of hard luck or because he “willfully or maliciously” chose not to work”(M. Wooster, article below). The roots of social policies can be seen in the Progressive movement at the turn of the century where they “had to build a new case for strong government as the protector of liberty and equality”-Murrin text p. 687. They thought that we have a responsibility to make things better than just survival for our citizens. I’m not sure if Mr. Williams is just calling people out on their entitlements, and making a point that these are privileges not rights, or like some on the right side of the spectrum, believes that all social responsibility should be voluntary. In my opinion, it has been proven time and again that trickle-down economic policies fail, ie... President Coolidge’s policies leading to the large maldistribution of wealth that was one of the causes of the Great Depression (Murrin text p. 818). In a capitalist, consumer-driven society things must be equalized somehow or it all falls apart.

As far as the images go, I was actually going to respond to your post and tell you that I thought your interpretation was correct. If you look at the actual statements from the images and the definition of a right as given by Mr. Williams, he would say that education is not a right unless it is obtained without infringing upon his right to what he has earned, so technically public education is not a right in his opinion, as it is taxpayer funded. The statement “College should be free” is expressing a wish. I guess my misinterpretation comes from the fact that education, primary I mean, goes beyond being granted as a right by our government, it is compulsory and has been since the first law was passed in Massachusetts in 1852. The history of public education goes back even farther into ancient times, so I will reference your post and say that I think people have seen it as a basic need for a long time. The point I was trying to make about that is, ideally, we should have some say in how our right to what we earn is infringed upon. If the majority of the people in this country decide that secondary education has become just as much a basic need, the government should be able to accommodate that wish, with the funds they are already taking in taxes.

capitalresearch.org/article/americas-response-to-disaster-the-20th-centurys-imprint-on-the-american-red-cross

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Re: Rights and Wishes
by [Genevieve Martini](#) - Thursday, May 30, 2019, 10:21 PM

Jamie,

Thank you for your response! At the very end of your post you said that you believe that the majority of Americans today see secondary education as a right, and I very much agree with that statement. The fact that so many people believe this is almost saddening for our country. The less people realize how many opportunities that we have and working for them, the more they demand they be given to them instead. The more rights that Americans demand, the more privileged and out of touch with the rest of the world we are going to become. Don’t get me wrong, free secondary education would be fantastic, and it was obviously cheaper before the increase of inflation meaning it’s slightly harder to afford, but I don’t think that we should have everything just plopped on our lap.

One example of government programs giving people “rights” I’ve seen first hand is the foodstamp program. Once again, I’m not saying this is a bad program, I’m certain that it helps many people. The problem is that like all government funded programs, it has issues.

My parents own a small, local grocery store/gas station, and there are quite a few people that come into the store with foodstamp cards. In order for an item to meet the requirements of being purchased with this card is that it contains a nutrition facts label. So, when a person comes to the table to buy food with their card, they purchase their foodstuffs with the government given money, and then run a separate purchase to buy their tobacco and alcohol products with cash. So my problem with this program is that it allows people to use government money to feed themselves so that they can use their own money for things they don't need; instead of the other way around.

I know that this is not the case for every foodstamp owner, but it is an issue that I see with people. People saying that foodstamps are a right and using it so liberally. Williams even addresses it in his video: "What could we do without a foodstamp program, we absolutely need a foodstamp program. Well when people say that we absolutely need this program or that program. I always ask, what did we do before?"(minute mark 3:14) We are so used to the programs that the government has set up for us, from Roosevelt, Hoover, FDR, Coolidge and many after, that we are forgetting what are rights and what aren't.

Just like foodstamps, education is a privilege and a luxury, not a right. And America needs to figure that out before we become so absorbed in ourselves that we lose sight of what our country is already doing for us.

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Re: Rights and Wishes
by [Jamie Atkins](#) - Friday, May 31, 2019, 2:37 PM

Hi Genevieve,

I agree with you on many of your points. I agree with LBJ's general philosophy in his Great Society of giving people a "hand up, not a hand out"(Murrin text p. 956-957) I believe that people need the dignity of work, but in that, I think that work should allow them the dignity of a decent standard of living. Education is essential in the present time to be able to earn a livable wage. This is what I mean when I say that the people of our country may decide that secondary education is now a basic need to be funded entirely. It still, by definition, isn't a right. This is a great forum because we can all take a look at what are actually rights, and be more objective about it. I agree that all of us should realize what an actual right is, and be grateful for our privileges. Demanding more, without realizing the implications and the infringement on others is unacceptable. Another point to this that should be brought up is that I and many others are recipients of federal and state grants for my secondary education, so some of it is already "free". What is not paid for with these grants is loaned to me, which I must repay upon graduation (or non-graduation). This is a good example of a "hand up" program. What we are seeing now is many, upon graduation, are faced with the crippling debt of these loans, and are hearing from some of them that college should be free. I don't have any examples of individual situations to present here, but I think the situation should be looked at. Again with the understanding that we have many privileges, and we should evaluate that and how much we are entitled to what we earn as individuals. I don't agree with any amount of focus that some politicians have on the food stamp program. I have also seen first-hand, abuses of this program. I agree with the recent restructuring to make it more temporary. I can say that having been a divorced mom of 4 who needed to enroll in the program, and then as I moved just above the poverty line, became ineligible. This program can be abused, but is also a "hand up" for many people who find themselves in situations that are not ideal. I also think it is unrealistic to think of "what we had before" as a complete solution for the future. Would people survive? Maybe. But is that all we as a society are striving for? Here's the thing that concerns me: The food stamp program, and programs like it, constitute a very small part of our government's entitlement spending, the lion's share goes to the elderly and health care. Perhaps we should look to the larger issues here, like, as you mentioned, inflation, and the multi-million dollar prescription drug corporations that a large amount of our tax dollars are going to. We have many good and rational points on the free market side and many valid points on the government regulation side. There are no easy solutions at this point. Hopefully, we can find a balance. The keyword causing problems here is "entitlements", these are not rights, entitlements are privileges granted by the government (and by the people of America) that many around the world do not enjoy.

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Re: Rights and Wishes

by [Genevieve Martini](#) - Friday, May 31, 2019, 10:43 PM

Jamie,

You made some very good points about education being a basic need in America. It is possible to get a well paying job without a college degree, but it isn't easy or common. One thing that came to mind in reading your post is the fact that education for children kindergarten through high school is paid for by the government. For some reason, when considering the discussion of whether or not education is a right I only thought of college, and not elementary through highschool. Is this because is see this kind of education as a right?

I thought about it a little bit and I came to the conclusion that I do somewhat see it as a right, but considering Williams definition, it would be wrong to call it that. Even though it's not secondary education, it still requires others to do something for you(pay for books, buildings, teachers, etc.). So is our basic education a privilege that we don't appreciate? This forum has definitely take a second look at what I have and appreciate is more!

I loved reading your first hand account with the foodstamp program. Rising above the line for eligibility for the program is an awesome achievement, and I'm sure that that is the kind of situation that it was created for. Someone in need of help using it until they get back on their feet. Unfortunately, as we're both well aware of, there are people that abuse it and use it as a hand out instead of a hand up. This is the kind of thing that sparks debate; should we eliminate a program that is helping people just because there are people that exploit it?

And yes, I agree with you, we should be focusing on the bigger issues. I simply used foodstamps as an example because it's what I thought of when considering programs that people take for granted, thinking of it as a right.

I found a website called 'The Motley Fool' that shared what percentage of tax dollars go where that I thought I would share. Now, this was posted in 2017, so it's entirely possible that there have been changes in spending made since then, but I still think it's fascinating.

"About \$2.7 trillion -- more than two-thirds of the total -- went for various kinds of social insurance (Social Security, Medicaid and Medicare, unemployment compensation, veterans benefits and the like). Another \$604 billion, or 15.3% of total spending, went for national defense; net interest payments on government debt was about \$240 billion, or 6.1%. Education aid and related social services were about \$114 billion, or less than 3% of all federal spending."
(<https://www.fool.com/taxes/2017/04/06/where-do-your-tax-dollars-actually-go.aspx>)

I honestly didn't know the percentage of where tax dollars went so this was very interesting for me to see. I was astonished to see how much of our tax money is going toward social insurance. Are the multi-million dollar prescription drug corporations that you were talking about Medicaid and Medicare, because if so, I believe this is something we really need to address. Thank you for bringing it to my attention!

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Rights vs Wishes

by [Genevieve Martini](#) - Monday, May 27, 2019, 4:40 PM

The question of whether rights are granted by God or governments is a difficult question. Most Americans often think of their rights to free speech, religion and voting as God given. But as the question mentioned, "Human beings and their chosen governments can and have changed throughout time by granting or taking away rights."(resources page)

The fact that government regulates and changes rights brings an interesting dynamic to the table. If one believes that rights are God given, and then those rights are taken away by their government, would this lead them to believe that man can blatantly disregard God and even go so far as to say that they possess more power? Would this not be considered blasphemy?

Last term I took an anthropology class in which I took a poll on about 100 people, asking them to sort items(on a list that I created) into two categories- basic needs, or luxuries. Although ‘basic needs’ are slightly different than ‘rights’, I thought about this poll a lot when I say this line in our resources page: “Today, a growing number of American citizens believe that they are entitled to an ever expanding list of ‘rights’”. There was a variety on items on the list such as hygiene, transportation, food, religion, etc. However, the one that I specifically though of in the reading was education. Education was one of my listed items, one that many people sorted into the basic needs column. I was quite surprised at the amount of people that considered education a basic human need rather than a luxury(54%).

In the video, “Walter E Williams - What is a Right?”, Williams says, “I wish every American had a nice car, nice house, had a good job; but it’s not a right! So there’s a difference between wishes and rights.” (minute mark 2:37) I believe that this applies perfectly to what I found in my poll. The people that said education was a basic human need are, I’m sure, people that would believe that it is also a right. Like I said, there is a difference between needs and rights, but just like rights and wishes, there are bound to be a lot of people that get them confused as well.

Bringing this back around to the question whether or not rights are God given, I’d have to say that one’s own definitions and beliefs would change the answer every time. As we have seen, people have different opinions on what are rights and what aren't. Many people would like to think that the rights that we, as Americans, enjoy are God given. However, there are many places in the world where people don’t have access to these so called ‘rights’. In my own personal opinion, rights are too regulated and enforced by the government to say that they are God given.

In regards to which image Williams would say has a better understanding of what a right is, I’d have to say the image on the right, “College should be tuition free.” Rather than the shirt that says, “Education is a right.”. The reason for this simply being that the image on the right does not mention that tuition free college is a right. It’s simply expressing an opinion rather than demanding that the government provide us with free college. And since Williams defines a right as "something that exists simultaneously among people. A right does not confer any obligation on another."(Walter E Williams - What is a Right?, minute mark 0.30) saying that tuition free college is a right would be contradictory. It's a wish, not a right.

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Rights vs Freedoms

by [Alexandra Selig](#) - Monday, May 27, 2019, 5:18 PM

There is far to much confusion regarding what should be considered our rights and what should be better classified as our freedoms, wishes or privilege . As discussed by Professor Walter Williams in his clarification video of human rights, our rights a humans and as citizens of the United states should not hinder the rights of others. If by any means those right do hinder the right of another they can no longer be classified as a right but should be referred to as a wish, duty or privilege. The only true human rights are those that can be granted to everyone equally regardless of status. These rights may be established by God or government depending upon interpretation. In the given pictures of a T-shirt stating that education is a right and a sign stating that college should be tuition free shows this difference. Education in a generals sense is not a right, it may be misinterpreted as a right but it is more of a privilege. Although I agree that it would be great if college was free there is no way that any form of education can truly be free. Someone, somewhere is paying for it. This makes this statement a wish. Is it fair to ask all individuals to pay for college even if they have not made the choice to further their own education, taking away from their right to enjoy their earnings by means for their choosing? Rights can be very subjective and open to interpretation depending on the context in which you are looking at the term and what you are relating it too.

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Re: Rights vs Freedoms

by [Clifford Lyon](#) - Friday, May 31, 2019, 5:28 PM

Hi Alexandria, When I initially posted to this forum, I decided that Professor Williams would most likely agree with the statement that “education is a right” as we can attain a certain degree of education through self-education, at no cost to ourselves or anyone else. As I read your post and continued thinking about this, I believe that that my reasoning was flawed. You stated that “The only true human rights are those that can be granted to everyone equally regardless of status,” I thought this was very well stated. From the time we are

born, we are being educated by our parents or caretakers. We emerge on this earth with very little knowledge of how we are supposed to behave in order to remain alive and successful. The education which we receive from birth is given to us at great cost to those presenting the information. This is often, but not always, a voluntary sacrifice which parents make in order to one day see the fruits of their labor, but it is still a cost to others. The fact is without that basic education from birth, we would die very soon, and the human race would no longer continue. Of course, if we use this line of reasoning, the right to life is not a right at all, since it requires something of our parents. In this way we get into very sticky territory with Professor Williams’ definition of a right. If we really wanted to take his definition as the law of the land, the only thing that we might consider a right is oxygen and perhaps sunlight. The truth is that we all enter this world helpless and we inherently rely on the care of others in order to get us through the early parts of our lives before we can become self-sufficient. When we look at it from this perspective, is anything really a right, or are we born relying on the kindness of other human beings to help us through our struggles at some cost to themselves? If the latter is true, then does human decency become more important than “rights?” I think these are all very interesting questions which I personally had not considered before this forum. I am hoping that some other students have some input on the topic.

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Re: Rights vs Freedoms
by [Alexandra Selig](#) - Friday, May 31, 2019, 7:12 PM

Clifford,

Thank you for your feedback. You made me think about this even deeper then I had previously. I have swayed back and forth regarding education as being a right. In looking up the United Nations list of what is considered our Human rights on a national level, they do list the right to education as a basic human right. Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states: 1) everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory. Technical and professional educations shall be made generally available and higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit. 2)Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understating and tolerance of friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups and shall further the activities of the UN for maintenance of peace. Parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children. I have mulled this over and over the past week and have established the same consideration that you bring up. Do we truly have any rights, even from the time of conception. At what point do we consider a burden a burden, whether physical, emotional or monetary? I too would like to get the opinion of others on topic.

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Re: Rights vs Freedoms
by [Kathy Holmes](#) - Sunday, June 2, 2019, 11:55 AM

Alexandra and Clifford,

Wow. After reading these entries my view has changed as well about the T-shirt stating education is a right. I do still think that between the two items, Professor Williams would still agree more with the Education is a right shirt but my overall view of a "right" has changed after reading your posts. I stated in my original post that rights only exist when upheld by the government but I agree that it is deeper than a God vs. Government debate. I stand by what I said that in my original post that we have a right to learn or to self educate but like you stated Clifford when we are children we have to be taught everything, we don't have the ability to self educate therefore we are imposing an obligation on another. As a preschool teacher, the kids I teach impose an obligation on me, not because they want to but because they don't know how to learn their colors/shapes/letters, etc. on their own. If I weren't there to teach them those things the obligation would be switched off of myself and onto parents or others. I would say it is now daunting to think about what is considered a right.

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Re: Rights vs Freedoms
by [Christina Dukes](#) - Sunday, June 2, 2019, 8:14 PM

Alexandra,

I feel like I personally connected with your forum post much more than that of others which I had read. I feel like your last sentence stating "Rights can be very subjective and open to interpretation depending on the context in which you are looking at the term and what you are relating it to" - is very simply and correctly precise. So many of the things that we take for granted today in society I think a lot of people are more so simply feeling a sense of entitlement to something that necessarily isn't a "right" that is given to them. I understand the want for college/ education to be a necessity for some and some view it as their right to be given this opportunity, but as you stated; someone, somewhere is paying for it. Simply, there are not enough resources nor people who advocate their time and efforts to educating the human population simply because they believe it is a human right and they should help put forth effort into helping give people this "right."

That said, I do believe there is somewhat of a difference in interpretation over the entire concept too. That is, education in the fundamental aspects (k-12 in america for example) vs. secondary education. I think those who are voting for fundamental education as a right sometimes are looped in with those who think fundamental education AND secondary education is a right, and sometimes that leads to more of a biased opinion. I think since education in the fundamental sense such as reading and writing is such a universal and necessary set of skills for people all around the globe, it is only fair that everyone have access to the same set of education. The 1600s would be more of a different story though for example, since reading and writing were only demonstrated by smaller populations - compared to current modern times where almost everyone needs to know these skills. To have it more simply put, I found a very intriguing article online about education as a right, basically stemmed from my curiosity of what others thought about the subject.

<https://www.right-to-education.org/page/understanding-education-right>

This article talks more in depth about fundamental education as a right, more than the overall education (post high school graduation and then on), and I think it opened my eyes more so to the views of other people. Hope you get a chance to read and enjoy!

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Re: Rights, Rights, Rights
by [Kara Miner](#) - Monday, May 27, 2019, 5:28 PM

Our rights are granted not by a god, but by our government. Every day we take our simple rights for granted, because there are many countries in this world today where people do not have the same rights that we have. In North Korea for example, people don't have the right to freedom of speech. A citizen can be arrested for saying anything negative about their government. In North Korea many of the rights we are so familiar with today simply don't exist. Here we get to enjoy rights such as freedom of speech, religion and even a fair trial for our crimes. In North Korea, there are likely no trials. Humans only poses rights when they are given to them by a government, and we are fortunate to belong to one that protects our rights on the basis of the constitution.

Professor Walter Williams defined a Right as something that exists simultaneously among people and does not impose any obligation on someone else (Walter Williams explains What is a Right). For this reason I believe that Professor Williams would find the picture on the right as being more closely related to his understand of what a Right is. The left picture says that education is a right, this would imply that other people would have to pay for people's education, effectively taking away that person's rights.

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Re: Rights, Rights, Rights
by [Genevieve Martini](#) - Tuesday, May 28, 2019, 8:48 PM

Kara,

In your post you blatantly say that you believe that rights are government, not God, given; and I appreciate your tenacity behind your answer. I agree with you, the fact that rights are government given is also the conclusion that I came to after reading the materials this week. We are also extremely blessed to live in a place that acknowledges these rights that we've grown accustomed to. However, you seemed so confident in your answer

that it made me wonder if you believe that there are “basic human rights”. I’d like to know your opinion on if you think there are rights that everyone is entitled to? Not necessarily always granted under harsh governments such as North Korea, but still considered.

I believe that there are basic human rights that everyone on earth possesses, such as the right to live, the right to think for themselves, and the right to believe what they want. Yes, it’s true, government sometimes takes away the manifestations of even these extremely basic and seemingly harmless rights, but that doesn’t mean I don’t believe that everyone possesses them. I like to hold onto the idea that everyone is able to retain the right to(for example) think independently, even if they lived in Nazi Germany.

I agree with you, the image on the right does seem to be the image with the most understanding of what a right is. As Williams said, "there’s a difference between wishes and rights."(Walter E Williams - What is a Right? minute mark 2:40) The t-shirt appears to display more of a demand(this is my right and the government owes it to me) than an opinion(I wish that everyone had access to a good education). While the image, while still bordering on not understanding what a right really is, has a slightly less commanding tone. Both of the provided images are a little authoritative in their statements, as I believe education is a luxury Dana privilege, the image on the right is the one that I believe Williams would approve of more.

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2

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Re: Rights, Rights, Rights
by [Breanna Lindsey](#) - Sunday, June 2, 2019, 1:23 PM

Hi Kara,

I really appreciated reading your post on rights. America and its citizens absolutely take our rights for granted. We are aloud to say pretty much anything we want about our government and president. Protestors can even stand before the white house, governments, courthouses and protest. Some of these protests are extremely negative or some are not as much. When I say negative I mean protestors are shouting, insulting the president or government etc. There was the Vietnam protest, there has been woman marches, protests against the trump administration. These protests can happen because we have the right to freedom of speech. Many places such as North Korea, China, Iraq etc if you even voice a different opinion you could be executed. Even with religion. American citizens have so much freedom with who they want to worship. Many countries if you don't believe in the same God that the government does you could be killed. American citizens can really be so unthankful for all that they have. Our country grants many freedoms to us, that we shouldn't take for granted. If people looked around the world and saw how hard many other countries have it, American citizens would realize how fortunate we are.

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1

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Re: Rights, Rights, Rights
by [Christina Dukes](#) - Sunday, June 2, 2019, 8:57 PM

Kara,

While I agree with many of the aspects of the subject you touch base on in your forum post, I think it might be a bit bold to claim simply "our rights are not granted by god, but by our government." Personally, I am not a religious person, but I am very open to hearing opinions of every individual and respect their decisions, whether it be influenced by religion or not (so be of course not at the expense/harm of another person.) I feel like a lot of the decisions in government are highly influenced by political figures in government having a religious affiliation, and its because of their beliefs in their respected religion that they have the opinions they do. Take for example the widely publicized topic of Abortion in the media recently:

<http://time.com/5591166/state-abortion-laws-explained/>

Here, there is a widely controversial topic that has just had a law impacted recently in Alabama (that exists in other states in similar ways and now of course is brought more attention to), that a lot of people are engaging in debate with one another about. The governor of Alabama specifically, is a member of First Baptist, and it is her religious morals and beliefs which drive her every day decisions, and since she is a woman of political power, her religion can show directly in her work. Here is an article more about her specifically if anyone wants a read about her: <https://governor.alabama.gov/governor/>

6/12/2019

HST 203 Sp19 (Escobar Meta 44752 44789): Rights, Rights, Rights

Not to get into debate about pro-life vs. pro-choice because this is not the topic of discussion, but I believe that this example is a perfect one at describing how government and religion intertwine. If you think about it a little different, the messengers of government such as members of congress and governors for example, are the ones who grant us our "American human rights", that they believe it is their duty by their religion/god to help instill as a right. In the view of some, they believe that God has imposed rights to humans, and it is only right for them to help make sure it happens/shows. So I think that making the claim of how our rights are not granted by god is a bit quick to jump towards, since I feel is not true since it is so easily shown all the time in politics.

I agree however that different cultures have different opinions as to what they think is the rights of humans, and the example you brought in about American culture and rights vs. North Korea and rights was a perfect example! I think it also goes to show that the religious opinions of different cultures/nations around the world also help to influence political decisions as well. For example, North Korean leaders are viewed as God to the people of the nation, and what they say is a "Right" is simply stated as a right imposed by "God". So I feel like it can be interpreted various different ways as well, just depending on how you look at it!

Sum of ratings:1(1)_ 1

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Re: Rights, Rights, Rights
by [Trey Husko](#) - Sunday, June 2, 2019, 9:31 PM

Hi Kara,

I definitely agree with what you said about North Korea. While the US can improve upon it's enforcement of rights, it is something we take for granted. Just a few days ago I saw a news article mentioning that some top officials were potentially executed after the US-North Korea Summit (source: <https://www.cnn.com/2019/05/31/politics/north-korea-execution-report-intl/index.html>). While this hasn't been confirmed yet, this really isn't the first case involving executing people for disobeying Kim Jong Un in some manner. I think we're lucky we don't have a government that executes its' people willy-nilly, and that most other countries are established democracies that don't either.

As for which image is closer to Williams definition of a right, I don't think either are what Williams would consider accurate, but the "College should be free" (image #2) fits his description better. It doesn't ever say education *is* a right (although it could be implied), but is wishful of it saying it should be free. In order for college to be free it'd require others to carry the obligation and pay for it which Williams says that something that others have to become responsible for if everyone is entitled to it as a so-called "right", is in fact not a right (paraphrase of Williams video ~2 minutes in).

Sum of ratings:1(1)_ 1

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Education is a right, free education is not.
by [Clifford Lyon](#) - Monday, May 27, 2019, 11:59 PM

I think Professor Williams gave a perfect definition of the difference between a right and a wish in his short talk. Of the two pictures in the forum materials, I believe Professor Williams would agree with the one that states that “education in a right,” but disagree with the one which states that “college should be tuition free.” Professor Williams stated that “A right is something that exists simultaneously among people. A right does not confer any obligation on another,” (*What is a Right?* 0:30 minute mark). The idea that everyone has a right to education is sound because people can educate themselves to certain extents without imposing any obligation on another person. If they wish to go beyond this extent, they need to be able to earn the education which they are receiving, and there are many ways to do that. The idea that everyone has the right to the same level of education, whether they can pay for it or not, is unsound because it imposes an obligation on others to pay for an education which one has not earned. Professor Williams uses the example of medical care. He states that “If you have a right to medical care, whether you can pay for it or not, it of necessity means that somebody else does not have a right to what he earned, because the government does not get the money from the tooth fairy or Santa Claus, it has to get it from somebody,” (*What is a Right?* 1:19 minute mark). We live in a society in which everything costs something. If one person is getting a free ride, it undoubtedly means that someone else somewhere is paying for it. Many Americans today have strayed away from the idea that we should each earn our own way, and I think this is a tragic mistake. It unfairly places our burdens on others and does not promote the ideal of self-accomplishment which made this country great.

Sum of ratings:1(1)_ 1

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Rights Vs. Wants
by [Kaiser Slocum](#) - Tuesday, May 28, 2019, 9:37 AM

<https://classes.lanecc.edu/mod/forum/discuss.php?d=509474>

10/24

Rights are granted by God. Others, governments, animals, viruses, and bacteria can all take away my rights until I cannot make use of those rights, but I still have those rights from God. No one can decide what rights I can have, but they can decide what rights they will allow me to use/express. I really liked Walter Williams’ short talk. I had a vague understanding of what is a right and what is not, but now I *know* what defines a right and what defines a wish/want. Based on what Walter said, I guess the issue of abortion is pretty clear. Abortion is not a right to a female because then they would be taking away the right to life of another human being. Abortion must be a wish/want. The right picture which states, “College should be tuition free,” is an expression of a wish. I wish that college would be free if the money paying for me to go came out of nowhere, but the fact that someone else is paying for me if college was to be free, discourages me from wanting this. The t-shirt on the left is declaring that free education is a right whereas we just learned that education is a want/desire. Basically, all humans possess rights that are from God, and desires, but whether we can attain/express these items are up to the people around us.

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Re: Rights Vs. Wants

by [Genevieve Martini](#) - Thursday, May 30, 2019, 9:52 PM

Kaiser,

I really appreciate your post in that is the only one I saw that began with “Rights are granted by God.” And although I do believe that we are all born with “basic human” or “fundamental rights”, I said in my post that I believed that since government was so involved in creating, taking away, and enforcing laws, then they are government granted. After all, the main reason that the pilgrims traveled to America all those years ago was for freedom, for rights that their countries were not granting them.

The reason that I enjoyed reading your post so much was the different point to view. Although I do not enjoy debating myself, I love hearing different sides of arguments, and this forum offers that in a very civilized way.

On one side of the argument we see people saying that rights are granted by government. My main issue with saying that rights are granted by God is the fact that they are so regulated by the government that to say that they are God given(to me) would be like saying that storeowners make laws against stealing, not the government. The laws, rights, and amendments in America are all made by man, so to say that they are God given would be incorrect since there are other countries that do not posses them. Do you see the connection that I’m trying to make?

Now, on the other side, there are people saying that they are granted by God. This makes sense to me as well, because, as I said earlier, I believe we are born with basic human rights. I believe every human being deserves the rights to live, that is a rights that I believe to be fundamental. In this case it could possibly be seen as granted by God, however, as abortion is a right for women, it could be seen as taking away the babies right to live. (Thank you for touching on this subject by the way, it's a very tricky one and I have to say that after watching Williams video it's hard to say that abortion is a woman's right) In which case, infringing on that babies basic human rights at the hands of the government. Which brings me back to my original argument, that rights are granted by government.

In my opinion, the level at which our government is involved with determining what rights are, is too high to say that they are granted by anyone else.

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Can we really get complete rights?!

by [Kaiser Slocum](#) - Saturday, June 1, 2019, 2:08 PM

Genevieve,

Thanks for your comment. It was very thought-provoking.

This rights issue is much more difficult than Williams made it out to be. When I first heard the podcast, I though that all my difficulties over “rights” had been solved, but now I see that that is not completely the case. Going back to the issue of abortion, things can get tricky. I know this is a very controversial issue but let us assume that both the mom and the unborn child are 100% living, breathing, functioning

humans. Williams said, "A right does not confer any obligation on another." (What is a Right?, 30 seconds) Here is the problem though, every human has a right to life since that is not technically an obligation on anyone else, but an unborn baby (who also has the right to life) is completely dependent on the mother for "resources." This means that that baby's right to life is obligating on the mother. Does that mean the baby has no right even though it is as much as a human as its mother?! If we take this a step farther we run into the point that although we have absolute rights (rights that always exist) anything we do is interfering with someone's stuff. For instance, America does not allow citizens 100% freedom of speech, in which case I could tell everyone how to make an atomic bomb and I could not get in trouble for it.

Rights, in my mind, are absolute truths that existed from the very beginning of time. New rights cannot be created and old ones cannot be retired. Rights are always here, according to their definition, and can be boiled down to one big right, the right to do whatever you want as long as it doesn't obligate/interfere with someone else. However, now days, *anything* we do has some affect on someone else in the world. This means, that although we have this main right, depending on those around us, everyone is going to have slightly different constriction on this right.

Basically, all humans have rights, which are abstract concepts. Humans all *have* rights but no one can full *utilize* their rights. Everyone has some amount of dependency on each other. I believe that I am correct that God has given all humans rights (or at least rights just "are") which have always stayed the same and always be the same, but fellow human beings restrict our expression of these rights. Therefore the question for governments is not "Are there rights?(which there most certainly are)" or "Can we give our citizens their complete rights? (which is impossible)" but more like "How much of their rights can we give citizens to make society the best possible?"

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Re: Can we really get complete rights?!
by [Genevieve Martini](#) - Saturday, June 1, 2019, 11:01 PM

Kaiser,

Wow, I loved reading your take on how even newborns dependency on a mother could be seen as putting obligation on the mother, meaning that there may not even be a "right" to life! It's such an interesting view on this issue that I never thought of before. However, if we were to say that getting nourishment and depending on others to live takes away our right to live, does that mean that neither small children, injured, sick, disabled nor old people have the right to live?

One of the pro-choice arguments out there is that the baby's is imposing on the mothers freedoms, and right to her body. And when we look at this from Williams definition of a right, the argument does make sense. If the baby is obligating the mother to nourish and carry the baby around, taking away the mothers ability to function properly, and the right to her normal body, then the baby's "right" to live wouldn't actually be a right since it's imposing an obligation on the mother.

There is so much to unpack from such a short video that I almost wish that our forum lasted longer so that we had more time to debate on the topic, but since we only have until the 2nd, I'll leave you with one last thought.

Like you said, nearly everything we do today has an effect on someone else; even just living, as we have discussed, can be seen as imposing on another. But so does dying. Death is something that happens to everyone everywhere, there's no avoiding it. And, if it hasn't happened already, at some point someone we know and love is going to die. Their death will have an impact on us emotionally, and leave us with responsibility. There are many cases in which a loved one dies that their effects haven't been sorted out, and their funeral needs arranged, little things like that. However, even if they're just "little things", they are still responsibilities that are being placed on another. So if dying gives other people obligations, and imposes in their life, does that mean that we don't even have the right to die?

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Re: Can we really get complete rights?!



by [Clifford Lyon](#) - Sunday, June 2, 2019, 6:48 PM

Genevieve,

Once again you have made me think. I had a math teacher in high school who used to say "The only thing you *have* to do is die." From the time we are born, we are issued a death sentence, so I would argue that death is possibly the only thing we have a right to. This is not a right in the sense that Professor Williams would have us believe, as you outlined in your post. There are very few instances I could think of in which someone would die leaving behind no friends or family or belongings or anything else for others to sort out. As you have said, this imposes upon others and therefore is not a right according to Professor Williams. I would argue that a right is something that cannot be taken away from you by anyone else. The only thing I can think of which fits into this category is death, as we will all die one day. I don't want to sound morbid but these are the facts. Every other aspect of our lives can be changed by ourselves or others even against our will. The only guarantee in life is death, and therefore this makes death our only right. It touches everyone one earth eventually and while we ourselves or others can speed up the process, and in some cases slow it down, no one can stop death from happening. Everything else in life is subject to laws and circumstances and a million other variables that make almost everything else uncertain. While we do not know the time and location of our death, we know it is coming. It sounds like a pretty bad deal, but I think the certainty and finality of death are the only things we can truly count on in this life. Professor Williams said that "a right is something that exists simultaneously among people," (*What is a Right?* 0:30 minute mark). I think this is a much better definition than the second one he gave about not imposing upon others. Death is the one thing in life that exists simultaneously among people.

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Do we really have any rights?!
by [Kaiser Slocum](#) - Sunday, June 2, 2019, 10:15 PM

Genevieve!

I laughed pretty hard when I read your post. Your logic is impeccable as usual.

Even if someone died and we completely ignored them and let their corpse rot, that diseased ridden body would impose an obligation on someone eventually to deal with it or move away. The more I think about this, the more I believe that no one can ever perfectly get 100% of their "rights" because all rights have some impact on someone else in some way. I think the best thing we can do is not blow our brains on this subject but to realize that the best way to allow people their rights is to be willing to enhance others' lives at the cost of some of our enjoyment. The society as a whole has to be careful to (and I know this sounds bad) limit or extend citizens' expression of rights so as to make a country as best as possible. This means that some will have to deal with dead bodies, others will have to put up with some physical pain to give birth to babies, others will have to be silenced so that they don't tell atomic secrets, etc. The problem is, all governments have different ideas as to what is "better" for society... I think I have worked my reasoning around in a circle, back to complete confusion again.

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Are rights applicable to today?
by [Kaiser Slocum](#) - Tuesday, May 28, 2019, 9:38 AM

I feel like there are some big differences between the current citizenship rights issues and the historic civil rights era. During the civil rights era, America was trying to figure out if all citizens should be treated the same and given the same opportunity as any other citizen. Now, we are not deciding whether citizens should be treated equal (virtually everyone agrees on that) but as to if we should allow non-citizens/immigrants into the country. Basically, should we allow any people that want to live in the U.S. to be a citizen? These two issues, though, are similar in that they are/were very controversial and there does/did not seem to be a perfect solution.

Interpreting the Constitution(laws made long ago) has been a considerable dilemma that people have faced as it is hard to know if we should apply those laws literally or in principle or completely ignore them because of their “out-datedness.” It takes very wise leaders to apply the principals of the past to now. When America was founded, everyone agreed on the Constitution’s precedence over America, and I think we still need to honor that and make sure we are not drifting from the Constitution’s rules. However, I do think that current leaders are forced to adapt rules from the Constitution to now days in order that we have rules that can apply with the current situations. How rules should be adapted, though, is still in question.

Rights are from God, so the rights of humans should be respected if you are a citizen of America or not. All people in America, no matter how they “got in,” need to be given these rights, and they should be respected. However, I do not believe that illegal immigrants should be given the same benefits that Americans are given. For instance, it is not fair to U.S. citizens if illegal people come in and use money from Medicare and Social Security when they contributed squat to those funds. With this said, immigrants and their ideas (as well as outlooks on life) are vital for America, and we need immigrants, but if we need more immigrants we should allow ways they can get in legally and become citizens. If more immigrants than are “beneficial” for America are trying to come in, we have to stop them. This sounds terribly harsh, but too many people have numerous negative effects and America physically cannot allow any and all people that want to, into America.

The problem of rights is a big deal in America. Americans have no more rights than any other person in the world, but Americans do have more benefits that many people in the world. Whenever someone illegally tries to get into America, we are required to allow them human rights, but we are not required to give them American benefits and allow them into the country. Being allowed into America is not a human right by any means. When people, especially citizens of a country, have an incomplete idea of rights, then the issue of illegal immigrants becomes very complex and dangerous. If you believe that American “benefits” are rights than all immigrants must be allowed into the country, but if you believe that humans have no rights, then mistreating illegal immigrants could be enacted.

In summary, God has given all humans rights; and using the resources belonging to a country is not a right, it is a gift that has been given. The government and citizens of a country should be allowed to choose who they want to supply the gift of resources to, but not the rights of people because those are absolute.

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Re: Are rights applicable to today?
by [Alexandra Selig](#) - Tuesday, May 28, 2019, 9:01 PM

This is very well put. The way individuals, local and federal government "interpret" the constitution and the "rights" that it bestows on American citizens can be very controversial. Over the course of time and the changes in government leadership, technology and domestic and foreign status, there have been significant changes (amendments) made to our constitution to either clarify or specify the "rights" depicted by our constitution. Being that our nation is founded on immigrants, I can agree that their is a need for immigration. All those who decide to illegally enter the United States may have the same human rights as everyone else, but should not be granted the privileges afforded to those of natural or earned citizenship. As stated in Walter E. Williams video, true rights should not infringe the rights of others. The more illegals that are allowed into our great nation and awarded Medicaid, foods stamps and other government subsidies, the greater the burden on those legal citizens who pay taxes to support such programs. How is this not infringing on the right for one to earn an income and support ones family?

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What is a right?
by [Hannah Harp](#) - Tuesday, May 28, 2019, 4:25 PM

I never thought that rights could be so complex before this forum. In terms of the constitution, I think that rights are granted by “God”, or more specifically from the constitution, “...they are endowed by their **creator**...”. Whatever you may believe in, rights are granted from a higher power that is responsible for creating us, not the government. I have to admit I used to be one of those people that would often mistake wishes for rights. Williams did an excellent job at explaining the difference between the two. He defined a right as, “something that exists simultaneously among people, a right doesn’t confer any obligation on another”. A perfect example would be something like health care. Many people would say that this is a right. Yet, if someone were to get free health care, the money to pay for it still has to come from somewhere. So that means that an obligation would be placed upon where ever this money is coming from, therefore, it cannot be a right. This sounded a little harsh to me at first, but it makes sense. The health

care being received costs money, and how is it fair to say every individual has the right to health care when that means some other organization or person is then forced to pay for it? The answer is that it's not fair, because that would be taking away from someone else's rights. The two can't exist simultaneously without taking from one party. Therefore, that would make it a wish rather than a right. We would all love for a lot of wishes to be rights, but they just simply cannot. Williams did a really good job at walking us through this so that it made sense.

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Re: What is a right?
by [McKay Luke](#) - Saturday, June 1, 2019, 11:06 PM

Hannah,

Thank you for your insights! Much of what you said I too stated in my response. Reflecting again on what Williams stated a right to be- "something that exists simultaneously among people, a right doesn't confer any obligation on another", makes me think of the adolescents I work with each day. I work as an Educational Assistant at a middle school and one of the biggest takeaways I have learned in my three years there is that the majority of kids cannot comprehend ownership. Every day at work I speak with kids who are always "innocent". I could probably count on one hand the number of times a student has actually owned up to a decision they have made that lead to consequences. I may be ranting here a little, but I see this today with adults as well. These "wishes" as Williams states, are typically selfish and lack equivalence. Sure, it would be great to have free healthcare, but as we know, that money has to come from somewhere. Receiving these benefits without putting in the effort put the strain on another individual. I believe this is in a way a reason why communism is often unsuccessful.

Willims view on these rights also reminded me of some of the ideals Calvin Coolidge had back in the '20s. In the speech he gave on taxes that we listened to in an earlier forum, he spoke of how he wished Americans did not have to give up so much of their hard-earned paycheck to the federal government. But he also mentioned in his speech how taxes were required by all, and no one gets a free ride. I agree firmly with this view of taxes/rights. I understand that some people are dealt harder hands than others and may rely on government assistance at times, but I feel it can sometimes be easy to abuse the benefits. I feel most of this goes back to ethics. It is pretty simple to just look at what is fair and while we both agree with Williams, there are many who feel the opposite.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

3

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Unalienable rights part 1
by [Kathy Holmes](#) - Wednesday, May 29, 2019, 3:36 PM

The declaration of independence states "...that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights..." making it very clear that rights are granted by God or whatever the higher power is. Professor Walter Williams clarified in the audio clip "What is a Right?" the differences between rights and desires or wishes very simply, stating "a right is something that exists simultaneously among people" (0:30) "When somebody is talking about the right to healthcare... that imposes an obligation on someone else" (1:10).

Based on the two photos given, I think Professor Walter Williams would consider the T-shirt stating "Education is a right" to have a more accurate understanding of actual rights. We as humans have the right to learn, to educate ourselves. If I go out and educate myself, I am not imposing an obligation on another, but the statement "College should be tuition free" does impose an obligation. Who pays for the Professors salaries if college is tuition free? Similar to the audio clip, the money doesn't come from the tooth fairy or Santa Claus it comes out of the pockets of people who worked for it.

Although per the Declaration of Independence the unalienable rights are endowed by the Creator, I think the rights only exist to some extent when upheld by governmental enforcement. The list of rights listed by the USCIS states things like "Freedom to worship as you wish" and "freedom to express yourself" Which are things that don't need to be upheld by the government because you can do them without baring obligation on someone else. The USCIS also lists the "right to apply for federal employment requiring U.S. citizenship" as a right. This is the right to APPLY, it does not mean you will get accepted. So this has some obligation to another human as someone else gets to decide if you're worthy but you will always have the right to apply. So I believe that rights exist primarily as a possession but I do think they exist to some extent when upheld by the government

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Government Possession of Rights
by [Connor Antich](#) - Wednesday, May 29, 2019, 6:24 PM

Professor Williams would consider the photo on the right to be an actual accurate understanding of rights. The picture of the left which says, "Education is A Right." As Williams would say, this is more of a wish and not an entitled right. It is kind of confusing and brain twisting to me a little bit about what he saying. But, overall I think I get the general picture. Saying education is a right, is wrong because people have earned their education through work and money and by saying education is a right, it takes away from the people that have earned it.

I don't think humans actually possess any of these "rights." They only exist when government acts on them and upholds them. Everywhere on earth there is a government in power and ultimately deems what rights you have and enforces them. Central governments enforce and allow rights. Governments around the world enforce their countries rights and laws. So technically the body of government holds the true possession of rights because they uphold them and allow them. The government is above the people and enforces law upon the people. Unless there absolutely was no government and possession of power or political power and we lived in a free for all society with no government or law then each individual person would truly possess their own rights because know one above them would be enforcing anything upon them. I'm not saying I think we should have society without government, but I do agree that the true possession of rights lies within the government because they are the ones who uphold these rights and determine and enforce law.

Sum of ratings:[1](#)(1)

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Re: Government Possession of Rights
by [Alexandra Selig](#) - Wednesday, May 29, 2019, 7:39 PM

Connor,

I think you make a valid point. What we think of as rights are actually government allowances. The 2nd amendment for example gives individuals the rights to bear arms and establish a militia in the event of corruption. Although this is usually considered a right, it is not universal and therefore is not a god given right but a government allowance. Our Constitution is filled with amendments and changes to what we consider our rights as American Citizens. A true right is that that is unable to be infringed upon or is not subject to the infringement of another's rights. A lot of what we consider our rights are really just government permitted actions. According to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights established by the United Nations, there are 30 true human rights according to the university of Minnesota (hrlibrary.umn.edu):

Article 1-Right to equality

Article 2- Freedom from discrimination

Article 3- Right to life, liberty and personal Security

Article 4- Freedom from Slavery

Article 5- Freedom from torture and degrading treatment

Article 6-Right to recognition as a person before the law

Article 7- Right to equality before the law

Article 8- Right to remedy by competent tribunal

Article 9- Freedom from arbitrary arrest and exile

Article 10- Right to fair and public hearing

Article 11- Right to be considered innocent until proven guilty

Article 12 Freedom from interference with privacy, family, home and correspondence

Article 13- Right to free movement in and out of the country

Article 14-Right to Asylum in other Countries from persecution

Article 15- Right to Nationality and freedom to change it

- Article 16- Right to Marriage and Family
- Article 17- Right to own property
- Article 18- Freedom of belief and religion
- Article 19-Freedom of opinion and information
- Article 20- Right of peaceful assembly and association
- Article 21- Right to participate in government and free elections
- Article 22- Right to social security
- Article 23 Right to desirable work and to join trade unions
- Article 25- Right to adequate living standards
- Article 26- Right to education
- Article 27- Right to participate in the cultural life of community
- Article 28- Right to social order that articulates the document
- Article 29- Community duties essential to fee and full development
- Article 30- Freedom from state and personal interference in the above rights.

Not all governments, including our own, abide by all of these "human rights". Some governments have clearly ignored these or have used these as a basis to establish their own standard set of rights or allowances by individual governments.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

1

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Re: Government Possession of Rights
by [Connor Antich](#) - Sunday, June 2, 2019, 2:32 PM

I could not agree more. It is interesting to me because I watched a video the other day about the countries of Norway, Sweden and Denmark and how they are rated as some of the top countries in the world to live in. The video talked a lot about how free health care and a free college education are two important things that make the countries popular. Also in the video they interviewed people that live in these countries and they talked about how they have the "right" to free healthcare and a college education. Surely, Professor Williams would agrue against those things being right. But to me when I think about rights and the definition of them, to me it just seems like rights are whatever the state or government grants its people and allows. That is what it seems like to me in my mind in the easiest way to describe it.

Sum of ratings:0 (1)

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Rights Without Imposed Obligation
by [McKay Luke](#) - Wednesday, May 29, 2019, 8:01 PM

Being the most advanced species, It is sometimes easy to only note morality and complex emotions as a human trait. However, we can find in nature certain codes and compasses to which animals are governed. Whether for selfishly individual reasons and ulterior motives or compassion and genuineness, coexisting has many benefits and has proven successful as far back as history can show. We are not all savages with an individual aim to survive, and neither are animals. Despite whether or not one believes in God or another higher power, it is clear that certain codes have proven the success of societal mankind. With this being said, I believe that government does not create rights but regulates and ensures them.

Walter Williams discusses the relationship between rights and obligations. A right is universal and exists without obligation upon another. By this, one can deduce whether a state sanction is a true liberty or not. The example used by Williams is the supposed 'right' to healthcare. Williams states that "[Healthcare is] not a right because it

imposes an obligation on somebody else... that is if you have a right to medical care, whether you can pay for it or not, it of necessity means that somebody else does not have a right to what he earned” (Walter E Williams - What is a Right? 1:15). By this, Williams claims that such a proposal would allow the government to decide who gets what rights.

I can understand and agree with this point of view, but I can also see the necessity of certain taxes. The state requires a part of the citizen’s earnings in order to maintain freedoms and protection of other rights. Taxes also fund certain universal benefits such as roads and parks. I do agree, however, there is a lot of grey area when it comes to government spending and this can very easily lead to misuse, corruption, and debt.

I do not believe Williams would agree that tuition should be free. Paying for school upfront or acquiring loans with the expectation to repay is allowing one to not put an obligation upon another. I believe the only fair way to have college tuition be free or less expensive would be a small, gradual decrease over time. This would allow a slower shift for an equal opportunity for those done with school as opposed to those currently paying the rates. A sudden drop in tuition would not be fair to those still paying off their school debts and getting taxed higher to entirely to pay for those not acquiring any debt at all from school.

Sum of ratings:[3 \(1\)](#)

3

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Wrongs, Wrongs, Wrongs?
by [Elizabeth Crandall](#) - Wednesday, May 29, 2019, 8:42 PM

I'm not sure I actually believe that rights are granted by Gods and governments. In fact, I think it has a deeper interpretation than what modern-day believers in the word use it for. That is, however, a more philosophical way of looking at this issue. On a more practical note, yes it appears that government in modern-day society does have the power to grant you your "rights" - meaning that it spells it out for you and depicts what is right or...wrong.

I believe Professor Walter Williams did clarify a few things for me regarding its definition, like when he said "A right is something that exist simultaneously among people." (0:32/4:11). When something does not "impose an obligation on another, accept that as non-interference" (0:45/4:11) then it is a "right," according to Williams. He definitely would have considered "College should be tuition free" more of an appropriate statement than "Education is a right" because he would also agree that yes, college should be free! But is it a right? To him, no, because it is imposing obligation onto others to teach.

It hurts my brain when I try to wrap my head around the question of "do humans truly have rights just in general, or is it depicted by government?" The natural rebellious side of me wants to say that, no, I don't believe we possess rights naturally, since humans have more consciousness than other creatures and life-forces out there on this planet. It is our consciousness that tells us such things exist. Technically, the government does give us that, but it's more of a confirmation to our consciousness than it is an actual ticket to the Rights show.

Sum of ratings:[2 \(1\)](#)

2

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"God given rights"
by [Steph McGuire](#) - Wednesday, May 29, 2019, 10:24 PM

I believe that our rights are not granted by government. After doing some research online I came across an article called ["Declaration of Independence: Do our rights come from God, the Constitution, the Supreme Court or Congress?"](#). (Huldah) The author describes this same idea: “our Declaration of Independence says that our Rights come from God. Our rights thus pre-date and pre-exist the U.S Constitution”. She makes the same point as Professor Williams. Our rights are held and enjoyed at no expense or loss to another person.

Professor Williams worded it perfectly by saying that rights do not put an obligation on another. The example on this forum of “free” education is an idea that works with this perfectly. Most of the people I know want free education. Heck, as a student myself, I think this would be great! But I am realistic enough to know that someone has to pay for it. If my getting a free education puts an obligation on the professors to teach me for free, how does that help all of us? It doesn’t. So education is a privilege, not a right. Education is not something everyone wants or deserves. Having a family and being able to care for them without interference from the government, that is a right. I can decide what time my child goes to bed, what school he goes to or what he wears. This is my right. This is something that “pre-dates and pre-exists the U.S Constitution”.

I believe the Professor Williams would say that the picture on the right (ironically) shows a better understanding. This picture is not making a demand for a perceived right. It is stating an opinion or a desire. The picture on the left is stating a demand leaving no room for question.

Humans do possess rights. Whether or not someone has taken them away, they still exist. Governments are created by people, for people. The U.S constitution, for example, was created by the will of the people to protect those rights. So, the government does not make our rights exist. But it certainly helps us remember that we have them.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

3

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 **Are your Rights your "Rights"?**
by [Christina Dukes](#) - Wednesday, May 29, 2019, 11:18 PM

The rights behind each and every human being on earth has been such a lengthy disputed subject of discussion all around the globe since the beginning of basic man I believe. Each culture is different and each culture allows different rules of society for its constituents that allows them their "rights". For example, the rights of the people living within the United States' differs from the rights of the individuals living within China. Each sub-group or "population" of people falling under different government rule has different laws imposed on them, that I believe gives humans different rights from one another, and in turn sometimes it even makes people believe that they are allowed different rights than others - solely dependent on where they live/are from. To put it into context, there is the controversial topic I see frequently talked about in the media today covering the American peoples' second amendment right; the right to bear arms. Some believe that since it is documented within our amendments or our "Bill of Rights", then it is our duty to be able to with hold those rights, and if someone is from another country, then they necessarily wouldn't be allowed the same rights because they aren't from a country that allows it.

For me, I believe that basic human rights should be more universal and widely accepted and each government should not be able to control what they believe is the definition of what is a human right. There are so many factors that individuals are discriminated against in the past that we find later on, we were very prejudice against. For example, on pg. 919 in the Text book, it writes "In 1954, Chief Justice Warren wrote a unanimous opinion (in *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka*) declaring that states could not segregate their public schools on the basis of race without violating the constitutional right of African American students to equal protection of the law. " (pg. 919, Liberty, Equality, Power). I am not a wildly religious individual, but I do feel like a lot of religions follow the same ideal - the idea behind self growth and happiness.

We should be able to protect an individuals right of growth (be not at the expense or hurt towards others), and be able to promote happiness. Our rights should reflect on this behalf as well. I just believe that since humans are naturally hostile towards other religions or groups of people, and its going to be almost impossible to accomplish, which is a bit sad but its the reality behind human nature thus far.

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 **Walter Williams**
by [Breanna Lindsey](#) - Wednesday, May 29, 2019, 11:28 PM

Walter Williams would believe that education is more of a right than having free tuition. Everyone should be able to have the opportunity to learn and have an education. Giving humans an education helps them have a chance at living in the world. They learn how to read, write, and build relationships with others. If someone chooses to continue their education and graduate to obtain a high school diploma, they can get a decent paying job. This way they can work hard and they will be rewarded with a job, and contribute to society. College tuition should by no mean be free. Williams would also admit that free college tuition would be a wish not a right. If anyone could attend college the significance of college would decrease significantly. K-12 education is required, but anything after that is optional. If you choose to go to college you work hard to obtain your degree. Scholarships and grants are more than okay, but if it was free for anyone it wouldn't be as important. It would lose its value. Williams would agree that if college was changed to free tuition; it would be right to all those other people who are severely in debit and worked hard. Williams would agree that education is a right, but free tuition is a wish.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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What is a right?
by [Daniela Rosales Name](#) - Wednesday, May 29, 2019, 11:56 PM

Professor Walter Williams' shot talk about rights was a different perspective then the one I hear on a day-to-day basis. It was interesting to hear him expand on the idea that not everything we refer to as a right is actually one. His definition of a right as "something that exists simultaneously among people. A right does not confer any obligation on another" (min 0:30). What many people view are rights are things that "impose obligations on someone else" which directly opposes the definition of a right and is therefore simply a wish. This doesn't mean it's wrong for you to want it, but that it cannot be labeled as a right.

When viewing it through this lens then the t-shirt that says "Education is a right" is incorrect. Instead the poster saying "College tuition should be free" is correct. Because, when viewing it under the lens of Professor Williams' definition saying education is a right you deserve, even if you didn't earn it, means that someone will not have the right to the education they earned.

I don't know if I fully agree with this. In the Bill of Rights it states people "are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness." This statement is quite open to interpretation because what does the right to "Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness" mean? What does it exclude? If someone who needs health care does not have access to it, is their right to Life really being met? I'm not sure I have the answers to this, but it opens up space for a grey area of what people's rights are. Anyone have any thought on this?

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Do any of us actually posses rights?
by [Hannah Harp](#) - Thursday, May 30, 2019, 1:13 PM

Under the definition that Williams gave us for rights, "something that exists simultaneously among people, a right doesn't confer any obligation on another," we know that education is not considered a right, but rather a wish. In order for education to be a right, that would mean it puts no obligation on any other person, yet, in order to get an education, the money must come from somewhere, and someone else is required to give it. Therefore, I strongly believe that Williams would consider the red picture on the right that says, "College should be tuition free," because "should" implies a wish, rather than an obligation. According to Williams, a right is the legal or moral entitlement to do or refrain from doing something. I think that with these terms, I wouldn't exactly consider any human to posses these things we call "rights" without the protection and upholding of the government. An example of his that caught my attention was the idea of having a right to live. If one person has the right to live, then that implies that others do not have the right or liberty to kill him. I think this is a perfect example of where the government comes into play. The government upholds the law of not killing others, so therefore, living can be a right. Without this, there would be no law or structure to protect "rights".

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Rights and Obligations
by [Kimberly Wong](#) - Friday, May 31, 2019, 1:24 AM

Walter Williams speech was informative and I found myself agreeing with him on many points. I also disagreed on points. Mainly about a right not incurring an obligation on anyone else. Because if you have a right that means it will be enforced. Enforcing that right requires obligations from somewhere. Unless you can enforce it on your own. We as U.S. citizens have the right to freely express ourselves and worship how we see fit. But what if someone tries to take that right away from us. Then we call the police, the government, or even on our own communities at times. These people help to uphold these rights. So, someone was obligated to step forward and help me uphold my rights. If they are not being upheld, they are not rights.

When African Americans were first granted the right to vote. The government did not feel obligated to uphold that right. In fact, many tried and succeeded in taking that right away from them due to that. They were given the right but because no one felt obligated to enforce it, it was a basically nonexistent right.

The list of rights listed on the uscis.gov site are all rights that are upheld by the government. A couple of these cannot be given to people without major obligations from an entire legal system. Such as the right to a fair trial. How can one have that right without a judge obligated to preside over the trial. Or for that matter all of us that are obligated to do jury duty every year.

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Re: Rights and Obligations

by [Daniela Rosales Name](#) - Sunday, June 2, 2019, 11:02 PM

Kimberly,

I really enjoyed your interpretation of the Walter Williams speech and it made me think about it differently. Like you I agreed and disagreed with different points of the speech but I hadn't really thought critically about the the obligation portion of it. I think you are correct that in our every day we use other people to help uphold our rights if another person is infringing on them. That is part of the reason we have laws and checks and balances in our system. If there was no one to check, then people could continue to abuse their rights.

In out forum instructions there is a paragraph explaining the concept of rights. In the paragraph, the writer uses this example "if one has a right to life, this means that others do not have the liberty to kill him." Using this example as basis to add on to I propose this addition. If person "A" has the right to life and person "B" makes an attempt to kill them. Person "A" can go to court to defend their right to life and convict person "B."Doesn't this place the obligation on jurors, judges and lawyers to defend person "A's" right to life? I think there is a grey area that wasn't explained very well in the Williams video about obligation. If someone is being payed, does this mean that it is okay to place obligation? It's one thing to expect a doctor or a police person to take on an obligation to defend a person's right to life, but is it the same to expect a bystander to intervene?

If we rely on a system of checks and balances to be able to uphold our rights, can we truly say we aren't placing obligations on another person? I don't think so...

Sum of ratings:[1 \(1\)](#)

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Rights to illegal immigrants

by [Breanna Lindsey](#) - Friday, May 31, 2019, 1:56 PM

People are valuable and they should be respected. But if you are an illegal immigrant then you should not be able to obtain the same rights that citizens obtain. I understand that we as humans don't get to choose where we are born; but that still doesn't make it okay to break the law. It is important to grant our citizens our rights, so they can actively practice those rights. Even in the US it can be hard to watch other citizens use certain rights. Freedom of speech, you may not always agree with what they are saying, but it is their right so they can continue to do so. I don't believe it is right to give illegal immigrants the same rights citizens have. I say this because America is still struggling to give all of its citizens rights. It wasn't long ago that African-Americans weren't aloud to vote, they were abused, and segregated. And these people were our citizens, and America was still struggling to treat them like ones. There are disadvantages to giving illegal immigrants the same rights as citizens. Some US citizens may become angry with this, they feel their tax dollars are supporting something illegal, and they want to see justice. They are advantages though I have to admit. Many illegal immigrants are hard working and work a lot of jobs that American citizens don't. They want to live here, so they will contribute to society greatly. These laws were set in place to help our government run more efficient. Illegal immigrants are still people, they should be treated with respect and care. Circumstances are always different for why people choose to enter a country illegally, but it is still important to enter legally and not to break the laws.

Sum of ratings:[1 \(1\)](#)

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Girls just want to have FUN-damental Rights.

by [Carisa Snell](#) - Saturday, June 1, 2019, 8:03 PM

I think that when dealing with the topic of whether or not something is a "right" or a "wish" or "privilege," it's important to know the difference. When you look up the definition of a right, there is a list of ways in which to interpret it. The one I chose to use was one about human rights, and it said, "fundamental rights, especially those believed to belong to an individual and in whose exercise a government may not interfere, as the rights to speak, associate, work, etc." ([found here](#)) This seems to jive with the clip from Walter Williams where he defines it as "something that exists simultaneously among people. A right does not confer an obligation on another." (:30 into the speaking clip) Both definitions indicate that rights are personal, beyond the scope of the government's reach, and don't affect other people. Privilege, from the same website listed above, is defined as "a right, immunity, or benefit enjoyed only by a person beyond the advantages of most." I thought it was interesting that the word right was in that definition.

I don't think we can say that "God" grants rights as not all humans believe in God, so then if they don't have a creator do those people not have rights? On the other hand, I also don't believe that Governments grant rights in the way of it being their creator. However, I do think that governments have a say in the defining of our rights, and that we probably wouldn't have these rights without the government protecting and enforcing them. Take the Declaration of Independence for example. When it was created in 1776, it clearly said that "all men are created equal," however it is still justifiably argued today that men (and women) are still not equal under the eyes of the government as well as in general. Women's rights didn't see a huge movement until the Progressive Era as we learned in chapter 21 of our text, and Slavery wasn't even abolished until the 13th amendment in 1865. ([13th amendment](#)) Then, we have the Bill of Rights. The government is outlining our rights, as well as amending them as they see fit. Now I do agree that these rights as listed fit well in the definition Williams gave in the audio clip, and that these rights don't confer any obligation on another as I linked above, but as I mentioned with women's rights and slavery, these groups (among others) clearly weren't seen as "equal" in the eyes of the government for years past the creation of these documents. I do think that Professor Williams did a good job of defining what he thought a "right" was compared to a "wish," though. It's true that I wish everyone free healthcare, but under his definition of a right, that for sure wouldn't fit.

When looking at the two pictures in our outline, I think that Professor Williams would probably say that education is more of a right than free college tuition, since we can educate ourselves freely and it doesn't confer obligation on anyone else.

Sum of ratings:[2 \(1\)](#)

2

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Rights vs Wishes
by [Trey Husko](#) - Saturday, June 1, 2019, 11:25 PM

The right's of the people of the US are those laid forth by our government. I think this can be supported by the paraphrase used in the Constitution that establishes "separation of church and state." This meaning that people can freely choose their religion and that religion will not be used to dictate our government's foundation.(Wikipedia "Separation of Church and State"). As a result of this, rights are basically what our government decides to give us. Some of the rights listed in US list of rights don't exist in other countries especially of those that do not following a democracy.

I found myself torn to believe so, but I sort of agree with the way Walter Williams described what I right is. By the definition provided in the resources, a right "serves as rules of interaction between people" while something like health care is more of a "privilege" (that I do believe everyone should have to clarify). The government is responsible for protecting our rights and that's where controversy revolving around those such as free speech, freedom of religion, etc. come into play. In the past, there have been time periods where people have seen these rights taken away and have been arrested for crossing the line of what is considered free speech.

As for the 2 images, if I had to choose one, the "College should be free" is a better understanding of rights if you go by what Williams said. While school is free up until college, it is considered a "privilege" that we as people should have but is not a right. The image on right touches the idea Williams said that of health care; it is a wish not a right. It never claims college should be a right but does state it should be free therefore being more of a wish. It is hard for us as a country to separate what is a right from what is a privilege. There's lots of things people should be a right, when it should be described more as a privilege we have.

Sum of ratings:[1 \(1\)](#)

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Rights can be taken away
by [Breanna Lindsey](#) - Sunday, June 2, 2019, 1:59 PM

I do not think our rights are granted by God. I think the government is in control of making and producing the laws. The government also chooses what our rights should be. I do however believe that God was a very strong presence in the government when our rights were created. Meaning when the constitution was created in 1787. So although our government created our rights, some of them may have been influenced by God and religion. All American citizens have these rights, but they can be taken away anytime. The government upholds these rights and does enforce them. But the government also has the power to take away any of these rights if we violate the law. Many people who have been to jail/prison when they get released they lose the right to vote. There is are exceptions though. This only occurs in 22 states. Felons may also lose the right to bear arms. So yes as American citizens we do have rights but some can be taken away.

Sum of ratings:

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Re: Rights can be taken away

by [Clifford Lyon](#) - Sunday, June 2, 2019, 7:03 PM

Breanna,

I agree with what you said about the Government having the power to take away rights, and I think this is proof that our rights are granted or withdrawn by governments. An example is the right of American citizens to bear arms. While we enjoy this right in this country, there are other countries in the world where this is not the case. If the right was granted by God, then it should be universal. I think rights are simply things which governments decide upon and bestow upon their people, sometimes only some of their people (such as the right to vote in America throughout history). Even though women were considered American citizens, and African Americans eventually were considered citizens, this did not guarantee them the right to vote. In this way, governments decide the rights but also who gets to enjoy those rights. This makes our rights more like privileges than rights. If we had a "Bill of Privileges" it would make our government seem dictatorial, therefore we have a Bill of Rights. This situation gets very interesting when one begins thinking about the number of rights which have not been enjoyed universally in the history of our country and the world. Governments hold the ultimate power in determining the rights or privileges of their citizens. This is the dirty secret in the history of human rights.

Sum of ratings:

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Re: Rights can be taken away

by [Carisa Snell](#) - Sunday, June 2, 2019, 8:31 PM

Hi Breanna,

I think you did a great job articulating your thoughts in your post. I agree that in the era that our Constitution was created, religion was front and center in most people's lives and probably influenced the decisions by our lawmakers. However, I do disagree slightly that the government chooses what our rights should be. The constitution itself gives the government an out by way of the Ninth amendment, that states, "individuals have other fundamental rights, in addition to those stated in the Constitution." ([wikipedia](#)) I believe wholeheartedly though that the government are who decide which rights are enforced, and have the capability to alter those rights by way of amendment. Bringing up the prison system and the fact that some states don't allow inmates to vote as well as those that leave the prison system is a perfect example of how our government has limited rights of certain people. I was surprised to learn that only two states allow voting from prison, just Vermont and Maine. (You can find the list [here](#).) It's interesting that voting rights aren't immediately returned after imprisonment when, according to the law, said felon would have completed the punishment set forth by the laws the government has regulated.

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Re: Rights can be taken away

by [Daniela Rosales Name](#) - Sunday, June 2, 2019, 9:56 PM

Breanna,

I agree with your belief that rights are not granted by God. I think God and religion played a huge role when the constitution was first written in the 1700s but nowadays when there is separation of church and state, God and religion should not have any role to play in the government and in the rights of individuals. However, that doesn't always work out the way it should. For example, when it comes to LGBTQA+ people politicians regularly cite their religion as a basis for not giving them full protection of the law. For example, Mike Pence describes himself as a "Christian, a conservative and a Republican, in that order" and his voting, in regards to LGBTQA+ issues, reflects that description (Source: [Times article](#)). Does this mean that the separation of church and state isn't working as it should? Does this mean that some people use God-given rights vs. constitutional rights? When looking at the USCIS website it struck me that they were very vague and again open to interpretation. Should we create more defined rules for politicians?

Three of USCIS's listed rights are

"Freedom to express yourself.

Freedom to worship as you wish.

Freedom to pursue "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness"" (USCIS website)

If we follow Williams' premise that your rights shouldn't impose obligations on another person then, doesn't that mean that religion shouldn't play any role in politics? Because each individual has the right to believe what they want, but that does not include the right to push their belief on other people. What I am attempting to say is that I don't believe God does or should dictate people's rights but that doesn't mean it isn't still happening.

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Re: Rights can be taken away
by [Breanna Lindsey](#) - Sunday, June 2, 2019, 11:36 PM

Hi Daniela,

Thank you for your thoughts, i did find them interesting! I agree church and state should be separated, but unfortunately thats not the case usually. I think people can try to separate the two, but politicians find it difficult to set their opinions aside. Mike Pence does say that, but I think he also states that to let people know thats who he is. I am a Christian myself, and it does bother me how politicians will use Christianity as an excuse for their decisions. It displays the wrong idea, and most of the time is not very truthful or accurate. Another point as well is republicans are usually known to be associated with a religion usually christianity. It brings me to my next question when did people start associating the two? You bring up a great point about the LGBTQA+ community, its not right to not give them full protection or rights. They are still humans and they matter. I think it is important to point out though that not all christians or religious people are conservatives. I know some people who are religious and is very liberal and supports LJGBTQ, women's rights, immigration etc. And I also know know non-christians who don't support those things, or whatever it may be. I really think the only way someone should lose their rights or right to vote, is if they seriously violate the law. I would also like to say that separation between church and state can always be improved. But people should 100% be able to express themselves and who they worship. I don' think anyone is pushing their religion on anyone, they are just expressing themselves publicly. Right not I personally think it could be much worse. Where our government forces us to follow a religion, and if we don't we could be punished like some countries. Thank you for all your great points!

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