



Written by [Selwyn Duke](#) on May 2, 2018

New York Times Hails Marx on His Birthday: “You Were Right!”

“The older they get, the better they were.” This saying, authored by retired baseball player Jim Bouton, applies to more than just athletes. A good example is the current celebration of Karl Marx’ upcoming 200th birthday (May 5), an event the *New York Times* recognized with a laudatory [article](#) titled “Happy Birthday, Karl Marx. You Were Right!”



An irony is that the piece was written by one Jason Barker, an associate professor of philosophy at Kyung Hee University in South Korea, which means he need only look across the border at North Korea to see Marxism’s fruits. Of course, the predictable and now somewhat stale response is, “Well, you know, the right people haven’t tried it yet.” This is true, too — only, the “right” people, in the sense necessary here, don’t exist.

One gets the feeling that articles such as Barker’s are penned as guilty pleasures when they’re not money-making ventures (the professor is hawking a new book about Marx — no, I won’t give it exposure), that they sense Marxism’s inherently flawed nature but, owing perhaps to emotional attachment to misbegotten leftist ideas, can’t leave the bad relationship. (Hey, many people stay with abusers.) The problem is that they want to draw others into their open marriage and create an orgy of economic destruction.

Speaking of which, it would be easy to dismiss Marxism by pointing out that its adherents murdered 100 million people during the 20th century and have ravaged economies in all corners of the Earth. We see this playing out today in Venezuela, for instance, where the subjects are reduced to eating cats and dogs. Yet since Marxism is a monster that won’t die — in fact, it has regained popularity in recent times — it deserves more attention.

Barker’s exposition is, in fairness, not a full-throated endorsement of Marxism. He writes, “First, let’s be clear: Marx arrives at no magic formula for exiting the enormous social and economic contradictions that global capitalism entails (according to Oxfam, 82 percent of the global wealth generated in 2017 went to the world’s richest 1 percent). What Marx did achieve, however, through his self-styled materialist thought, were the critical weapons for undermining capitalism’s ideological claim to be the only game in town.”

There’s much to unpack here. First, “capitalism” is a term *originated by socialists* and which, unsurprisingly, serves to demonize “economic freedom,” the term we should use (lamentably,



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conservatives conserve old nomenclature and resist this counsel).

And what's in a word? Much. Juxtaposing "socialism" and "capitalism" puts them on the same plane as competing systems, but economic freedom isn't a system in the way the former is. Socialism requires a large, intrusive government to stifle freedom and orchestrate economic activity soup to nuts. Economic freedom is, as the name implies, simply what occurs naturally when people are afforded liberty: They will produce, buy, and sell. Money, a proxy for goods and services, is created so that bartering isn't the only way to conduct commerce.

As for the wealth controlled by one-percenters, when was it ever different? Who controlled the wealth in the ancient and medieval days of absolute-power potentates? Who controls it in North Korea or any Marxist land but the one-percenters in government?

Moreover, what's implied by Barker's complaints is that "inequality" is inherently problematic. But equality tells us nothing about quality. To illustrate the point, imagine there are two tennis academies training children for a time. In the first, all the kids end up being low intermediates. In the second, some end up being low intermediates, some advanced, and some tournament caliber. At which one is there more equality?

Now, at which one are the kids doing far better overall?

So socialism and economic freedom both breed inequality (not too many North Koreans live like Kim Jong-un), yet the quality is quite different. In fact, economic freedom *is* the only game in town — if that town's name is Success. To paraphrase the late, great economist Milton Friedman, there is simply no system yet discovered that creates as much wealth for as many people as does economic freedom.

The proof is in the pudding, too. As über-liberal Think Progress [reported](#) in 2013, the world's overall standard of living is the *highest it has ever been in history*. This is because of market economies' spread.

Yet economic freedom never gets the necessary credit for this from the world's Barkers; it is instead the cup that's always half empty. And in the professor's piece, reflecting a thread running through all leftism, is a lament. It's something leftists frequently grit their teeth over, yet they never realize what it is they're actually complaining about: human sin.

Were we angels, we wouldn't need government or police or armies or economic incentive. We wouldn't be selfish or slothful and would produce what was needed without prodding; we'd be perfectly charitable and reflexively help others, who, in turn, would never abuse the privilege or develop a spirit of entitlement.

But we long ago exited Eden. Yes, technology will sometimes be misused, people abused, the poor ignored, ethics in business violated, and vice celebrated — because of sin. All we can do is devise social and economic structures that mitigate its effects.

One of these structures is economic freedom. In biblical times, a man might have been wealthy if he had 60 goats. Today we enjoy previously unimaginable affluence because great wealth has been created. How much of it — from supermarkets to cars to computers to appliances to whatever our hearts desire — was born of charitable or government endeavor? Does McDonald's, Boeing, Apple, Häagen-Dazs, or Frigidaire provide, respectively, hamburgers, airplanes, computers, ice cream, or refrigerators because they love us so much?

The beauty of economic freedom, as Professor Walter E. Williams has put it, is that it ensures my fellow



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man will serve me even if he doesn't give a darn about me. And, let's face it, most people don't — including those in government whom some would make our economic overlords.

The ignoring of man's nature and his sinfulness, and utopian delusions, are distinguishing flaws of leftism. Atheism is another. In fact, if leftists actually believed in Heaven above, they wouldn't expend so much effort vainly trying to create Heaven on Earth and, when gaining enough power, authoring a living hell in the process.



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