

There's plenty to fight for besides freedom

I'm thinking of starting a revolution, but I find this problematic given that I'm not sure whom to revolt against. I could steer my anger toward the president for being so wishy-washy and not liberal enough. I'm angry with Kentucky's U.S. senators for sponsoring and/or supporting bills that restrict women's rights. They've also put funding for the unemployed, the arts and the Corporation for Public Broadcasting on the chopping block to balance the budget — while not so much as considering tax increases for people making up to 875 times more than the rest of us.

I could be angry with their former comrades and the previous commander in chief for allowing — even encouraging — corporations and banks to abuse consumers.

Then there are

the people who voted for them. And I can't leave out the people who didn't bother to vote. Or those who made bad decisions and lost their right to vote. Or legislators who won't even debate, much less vote for, bills to restore the right to vote to convicted felons who have served out their sentences. Or the people who vote based on race, class or gender, even when a candidate's principles go against their own. Or the ones who



MARIAM WILLIAMS

ignore issues that affect their daily lives and base their vote on a single issue that reflects individual morals that shouldn't be up for political discourse. Or the voters who vote without bothering to investigate the issues.

Revolution gets complicated when you already have rights. As I watch citizens of Middle Eastern countries prove that the desire for freedom is universal, I have conflicting thoughts. I'm poor, but I make more than \$2 a day. Police officers aren't stealing the scale I need to sell food on the streets and slapping me in the face when I ask for it back. My country's natural resources haven't been used to bankroll the decor in a dictator's palace or to fund his children's yacht parties. I live in America. I have what they're fighting for.

But that's an apples to oranges comparison. "Where is the oppression? We have more freedoms than

anyone on the planet," a friend responded when I suggested I was thinking about revolution. He said this as he tweeted his solidarity with protestors in Wisconsin. My friend went on to say that "It is the American way to stand on your beliefs."

He looks forward to 2012, when Americans once again will have the opportunity to vote out the legislators they just voted in.

I agree that our way of life stands out. Our way is part waste and greed but mostly rights and privileges. We live in the era in this country in which we can stand inside a government building and openly express our beliefs without fear of government-backed thugs beating or shooting us. We sign petitions and call our senators' offices, leaving our names and addresses without fear that they'll send the FBI to harrass us.

But oppression looks different here. It shows up when corrupt bank-

ers not only avoid jail, but also get help from the taxpayers, who they then kick out of their homes and businesses. It's revealed in the disillusioned people who buy the college as vocational school myth and graduate unemployed with debts they can't repay. It comes out when a person's opportunities to live the good life — or simply to support her family adequately — become increasingly limited as the wealth of others increases boundlessly.

What do we, the people who already have freedom, do when the protests, petitions and votes aren't enough to force legislation that improves our lives? We try again every two years or so, or we try something different. ♣

Mariam Williams is a Louisville native. More of her thoughts and stories can be found at RedboneAfropuff.com.