

# Reformism Does Not Work: A Critique of Political Activism

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*“They tell us, sir, that we are weak – unable to cope with so formidable an adversary. But when shall we be stronger? Will it be the next week, or the next year? Will it be when we are totally disarmed, and when a British guard shall be stationed in every house? Shall we gather strength by irresolution and inaction? Shall we acquire the means of effectual resistance by lying supinely on our backs, and hugging the illusive phantom of hope, until our enemies shall have bound us hand and foot?”*

– [Patrick Henry](#)

As I've written before, sound strategy rests of the rational synergy between ends and means. Diminishing the possibility of resistance by way of movement and surprise is fundamentally good strategy. Perfect strategy would produce a victory that would be virtually bloodless. Conversely, bad strategy would entail using the direct approach.

Grand strategy, therefore, necessarily requires ends-means consistency in order to have a any probability of success, in accordance with

[just war theory](#), particularly *jus ad bellum*. If there are no strategic goals, then what milestones could possibly ever be used to measure incrementally progressive successes? The fact of the matter is that reformism has utterly failed to satisfy its burden of proof for demonstrating its very integrity, simply because it is strategically unsound for the cause of human liberty.

Reformism, simply defined, is any attempt at working inside of the system in order to change it from within; in brief, reformism is applied collectivism. It operates on the presumption that [individuals](#) do not matter, and therefore only what the collective wants is what matters, in the final equation. Ideologues believe in the sanctity of the centrally planned [tragedy of the commons](#), and they falsely justify the [precautionary principle](#) to shun market options as any sort of viable response to tyranny, preferring instead the empty moral platitudes of **democracy**.

What this means, of course, is that reformists are not only anti-philosophic, but also anti-empirical. They ridicule the twin libertarian maxims of the non-aggression principle and the self-ownership axiom, while also willfully ignoring the [regulatory capture](#) inherent to [central planning](#), or the tragedy of the commons as a [negative externality](#) itself. Reformists, truth be told, worship their superhuman deity called “government,” whenever they insist Americans are just one more law away from utopia. Worst of all, reformists have the unbelievable gall to insinuate that their critics should be dismissed out of hand because they are allegedly [free riders](#).



For three years, I have periodically addressed some technique of reformism that promised the moon to desperate men and women seeking any remedy that might alleviate their grievances. Each and every single time, without fail, my examinations into these methods revealed the grotesque face of modern American democracy. A listed bibliography of the entire series is as follows:

- [Should You Avoid the News?](#)
- [Debating Does Not Work](#)
- [Should You Write a Letter to the Editor?](#)
- [Writing Your Congressman Does Not Work](#)
- [Petitioning Does Not Work](#)
- [Voting Does Not Work](#)
- [Protesting Does Not Work](#)
- [Grassroots Lobbying Does Not Work: A Review of Chris Cantwell's "Anarcho-Lobbyist" Series \(Season One\)](#)
- [Running for Public Office Does Not Work: Why "Infiltrating the State" is Foolish](#)
- [Filming Government Agents Does Not Work](#)
- [Suing the Government Does Not Work: Lawsuits Are Not Useful for Securing Your Liberty](#)
- [The Activist Legal Defense Fund Scam](#)
- [Jury Nullification Does Not Work](#)

Whether it be elections, juries, or the news cycle, I think it is more than fair to say that the efficacy of the ballot box and the jury box can be safely judged to be insufficient for restoring liberty. Although I still have some faith in the soap box as a vehicle primarily for education, I am not naïve enough to believe that the soap box alone will prevent [democide](#), which, as the evitable end of statism, will force you, sooner or later, [to choose between the immediate fate of the pine box or a chance at liberation through the ammo box](#).

For instance, the proliferation of alternative media websites has inadvertently promulgated a culture of gossiping and rumor-mongering. Counter-productive debates between libertarians and statists are hosted by outfits that should know better than to place these very different folks in the same room. Writing letters to congresscritters and editors of corporate newspapers not only disrespects individual privacy, but prolifically wastes the human labor invested in persuading those whom will never read such letters. Petitions for redressing grievances are systematically ignored, and no voter can rationally evaluate which candidate would become the best elected ruler.

Begging for the rulers to solve your problems while yelling like a hooligan on the streets just demonstrates (pun intended) that you don't deserve to be free, and neither does begging the rulers more politely at their own headquarters. Much like the corporate newspaper editors, politicians establish barriers to entry so as to further entrench their thrones from being challenged by hapless Americans. Government agents cannot be held accountable at all, and no amount of filming or suing them is going to change that fact. Finally, should you find yourself in legal hot water, socializing your court costs onto strangers by begging or guilt-tripping them into doing so is utterly repugnant, especially if the money is ultimately funneled towards something else entirely.

An explication about jury nullification is warranted here. Out of all the reformist techniques, jury nullification is, by far, my favorite of the bunch; yet, [unlike Larken Rose](#), I am not at all convinced of its efficacy in securing liberty, as well as the fact that unlike every other single method I've written about, it's the only one that's **coercive**, mainly because of what statists call "jury duty," which uses initiatory force in fabricating a

sense of legitimacy towards either condemning humans who have harmed no one, or in excessively punishing those who have committed an injury to another.

If Shane Radliff's experience in being coerced by the Illinoisan McLean County government into [serving as a juror](#), just so he could be forced to convict a woman of "[felony scratching](#)," for which she is currently rotting away in a government dungeon for the [next 4 years](#), tells us anything about the power of jury nullification, it would be that nullification was immaterial to her case, yet, it made Shane complicit in giving a sense of legitimacy to [the State](#), above and beyond his objections to the whole freakshow. In light of this, what value does jury nullification have to offer us in terms of shrinking the power of the State? I'd say about as much as a [habeas corpus ad subjiciendum](#), at this point.

Pragmatism is often touted by reformists as the sole justification for their failed methodology. Larken Rose already debunked this [nearly two years ago](#):

*"Most 'activism' is completely worthless; in fact, it's worse than completely worthless [because] it accomplishes more harm than good...I speak from experience. Many, many years ago, when I still believed in statism, I was politically active, and I campaigned, and I played those games, and I wrote my congressman, and did all that stuff (I'm kinda embarrassed to admit it now), but, yeah, I did that too. At the time, I really and truly believed that I was 'fighting the right fight,' [that] I was fighting against the beast. It only occurred to me many years later that I was actually **feeding** the beast lots and lots of fuel."*

He's absolutely correct, particularly when you consider that reformists *never* measure the efficacy of their own "solutions." For all of their talk about the virtues of "playing the game," consider then how many elections have been won, how many unjust laws have been repealed, and how many cops and bureaucrats have been **personally** impoverished (or even fired) for their abusive corruption? I believe the right adage here would be, [the silence is deafening](#).

The vainglory permeating reformist sophistry grows the misconceptions they perpetuate. Legal remedies such as [reclaiming unclaimed property](#), or expatriation, are *not* reformist, simply because their goal is to assist dissidents in avoiding or escaping the State, as opposed to "infiltrating" it in order to remake it in their own image. Special interests (like secret societies, various flavors on the demographic kaleidoscope, "the corporations," etc.) are the [convenient bogeymen](#) touted by reformists to be the problem, instead of understanding that the *real* problem standing against human freedom is the idea of "authority" itself; perhaps this will make sense to you once you comprehend the fact that most [conspiracists](#) are reformists.

Contrarily, [not all minarchists are reformists](#), yet, too many of the anarchic philosophical schools tolerate reformism. Direct action, that is, the economic means of making money, is lambasted by reformists as either impractical or *dangerous*. If anybody is to [be accused of being limited hangouts](#), it would be the reformists themselves, as evidenced by Naomi Wolf's proclamation to the Free Staters during the 2014 New Hampshire Liberty Forum that, "[We need the State...we need to become the State](#)."

Everything I've done to free myself has either been done alone, or in concert with other individuals in fluid [affinity groups](#). The best repudiation of reformism I can figure, at least in terms of a legalistic solution, would be to [cancel your voter registration](#). [I proved it worked in Texas](#), and [Shane proved it worked in Illinois](#), so it is possible to revoke your individual consent to be governed, at least to that extent.

Reformism is a negative externality itself, mainly because it unduly increases [opportunity costs](#) by tricking people into thinking that the political means of making money is *somehow* inexplicably viable for securing individual liberty. This foundational basis for reformism ought to be met with public ridicule, open scorn, and widespread contempt by both patriots and libertarians. At this juncture, the term “activist” might as well mean reformist. Might I suggest that, in order to distinguish ourselves from reformists, patriots and libertarians henceforth describe themselves as [freedom outlaws](#)?