
Megan Stoffer

Title: “Four Conditional Freedoms”
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Paper written for: History H106: United States History 1877 to Present (Spring 2014)

Megan Stoffer’s current research is split between two projects. The first paper seeks to evaluate the portrayal of the 1911 Triangle Shirtwaist Fire in three New York newspapers, focusing on the initial response to the tragedy, the language used in describing the fire itself, and the where the blame is placed. Her second paper explores the nature of Islamic controlled Spain in the early 8th century and whether the cultural cohabitation was as peaceful as purported, as well as emphasizing the cultural changes that originated from Muslim influences intermingling with the Spanish population.

Abstract

Times of crisis serve to challenge a nation’s core values and principles. Roosevelt entered World War II with his “Four Freedoms” speech justifying American involvement in the fight against Fascism. These freedoms were the freedom of speech, religion, want, and fear. These freedoms, he declared, were inalienable to all people, but when looking at the state of America it is obvious to see that minority groups were not living with these freedoms, or even true citizenship. Victims of war-time paranoia, such as Mexican Americans, African Americans, and Japanese Americans, were all denied the basic four freedoms Roosevelt promised to champion.

This paper will draw upon four primary sources as evidence of minority groups being denied true citizenship within America. Roosevelt’s “Four Freedoms” speech provides the basis for the paper’s arguments. These four freedoms served as Roosevelt’s justification for entering World War II but fell short within America’s own domestic borders. The League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) demonstrated how Mexican Americans faced discrimination and exclusion despite their military contributions during the war. Charles Wesley explained how African Americans suffered under the same state of prejudice, with segregation and fear preventing them from gaining any semblance of the citizenship given to the white majority. Justice Robert A. Jackson justified his disagreement with the ruling in Korematsu v. United States. The clear presence of racial discrimination against minority groups during World War II effectively drew into question to applicability of Roosevelt’s “Four Freedoms” to the United States itself.

Bibliography

