

<http://newiprogressive.com/images/stories/S5/franklin-delano-roosevelt-tva-s5.jpg>



FDR and the greatest generation of WWII had the courage to expect freedom of speech and expression, freedom of worship, freedom from want, and freedom from fear for the whole world. Today's Americans are just afraid.

ALTOONA, WI - In his [first inaugural address](#) , **Franklin Delano Roosevelt** famously told a nation facing one of America's darkest moments that the only thing we have to fear is fear itself.

The resolve and emotional toughness Roosevelt called upon as the country descended into a Great Depression is conspicuously missing today. America is full of fear, largely because the nation's very un-Roosevelt-like leaders and the mass media keep feeding us reasons to be afraid. We are told to fear for our safety. We are told to fear foreigners. We are told to fear people we think look like foreigners. We are constantly warned of predators in our midst who aim to scam us or rob us or do us physical harm. Republicans tell us to fear Democrats. Democrats tell us to fear Republicans.

For all practical purposes, our true national motto is no longer *E Pluribus Unum* ("Out of Many, One") or *In God We Trust* . It's more like *Be Afraid, Be Very Afraid* .

We are better than this. Or at least we could be.



In a [1941 speech](#) to Congress, Roosevelt spelled out four essential freedoms. The first was **freedom of speech and expression**

, not just in America but “everywhere in the world.” Second, FDR spoke of the **freedom of worship**

. He emphasized the importance of allowing every person to worship God “in his own way” and again emphasized such freedom needs to be guaranteed *everywhere in the world*

. He chose his words carefully. To FDR’s way of thinking, religious freedom and religious tolerance went hand in hand. They were, in fact, inseparable. And for anyone to be free, everyone must be free.

Roosevelt’s third freedom was **freedom from want**. Roosevelt said that meant “economic understandings which will secure to every nation a healthy peacetime life for its inhabitants *everywhere in the world*

.” Last but certainly not least was

freedom from fear

. He dreamed out loud of curtailing war-making capacity so that no nation would be in a position to commit an act of physical aggression against any neighbor *anywhere in the world*

. But his words also are a timely reminder about the importance of dealing with the countless other fears and insecurities that have Americans so spooked today.

Earlier in that speech, FDR spoke of “basic things expected by our people of their political and economic systems,” including “equality of opportunity for youth and for others, jobs for those who can work, security for those who need it, the ending of special privilege for the few, the preservation of civil liberties for all, and the enjoyment of the fruits of scientific progress in a wider and constantly rising standard of living.”

In our own time, this is not too much to expect. This is not too much to aspire to. This is nothing to be afraid of.

— *Mike McCabe*