



## Episode 532: Adam Kokesh on Freedom

Guest: Adam Kokesh

**WOODS:** It has been quite a long time, and I was thinking the other day of just how long it's been. Obviously I met you through the whole Ron Paul thing, but I can't remember if it was maybe the Revolution March in 2008 that we first met in person?

**KOKESH:** Probably like in passing, but I'm pretty sure the first time we got to hang out was St. Louis, Missouri, Campaign for Liberty Conference.

**WOODS:** Oh, geez. I don't even remember that one. I remember being out in Phoenix, Arizona for Ernie Hancock's conference —

**KOKESH:** Yeah.

**WOODS:** — and that was the one where we all went out to Denny's; do you remember?

**KOKESH:** Yeah, there was that too, and all we got to do was make fun of you for the Austrian Slam that you ordered.

**WOODS:** And also I told an extremely embarrassing story that you recorded.

**KOKESH:** I remember that when we were in St. Louis you were promoting — you were the big headliner, intro speaker for Dr. Paul, and it was when *Meltdown* was still a fresh —

**WOODS:** Oh yeah, that's right; that's right. Well, yeah, as a matter of fact, maybe the Revolution March, I saw you, but I don't think — and remember, it was like 138 degrees and it was unbelievable at that thing.

**KOKESH:** (laughing)

**WOODS:** Now, for the youngsters listening, they might not even know what we're talking about. This was an event right —

**KOKESH:** Am I old in the movement already?

**WOODS:** Yeah, can you believe we're some of the — well, not quite elder statesmen, but we're not the young whippersnappers we used to be. But this was with the Capitol Building at our back; we had this big event that Dr. Paul had more or less kind of asked for, and then people organized it. And it was great. I think maybe one of your more memorable and iconic speeches was delivered right there at that event, wouldn't you say?

**KOKESH:** Well, it was really the one that put me on the map, if you will, with the movement.

**WOODS:** Yeah.

**KOKESH:** And I was there because I was representing, in a sense, Iraq Veterans against the War and Veterans for Peace.

**WOODS:** Yeah.

**KOKESH:** And that was how I really got started as a full time activist. And I thought when Dr. Paul was running the most important thing I could do to support him was represent the message within the anti-war movement. I think we won a lot of converts that way. I think we brought in a lot of new people. And it's funny, because right now I am in my trailer where I live in Ernie Hancock's driveway, who was emceeding that event, and he's the only reason I got to speak.

And man, this is really like taking it back to the — you know, making me feel like old movement, old hand activist here, but if it wasn't for Ernie standing up to Ron Paul's handlers saying, no, we're going to let Adam on stage, even though Michael Scheuer just took 20 minutes more than his allotted time, and I remember standing there on the side of the stage being so ready for this. I mean, I wrote that speech — started as soon as I found out I was booked for this event, and I worked on it every single day. I heard strangers on the subway in D.C.; I looked up every single word of that speech in the thesaurus; I had it totally memorized. And then it was like, really? Because Michael Scheuer wants to take a little extra time, I'm just going to get cut?

And then Ernie stepped in, and the energy was amazing. There were at least, you know — the crowd was incredible. I think I lost track while I was giving my speech — I mean, it was only 10 minutes long; I was trying to count the crowd — and some people said it was 150-something thousand. I lost track at a 148,736, and then my speech was over, but it really was an amazing day.

**WOODS:** Oh yeah, I'll never forget; there are a lot of things from those years that I'll just never forget, and I remember I also saw you at the Rally for the Republic, which was a big thing. I mean, basically nobody had ever done anything quite like that, that kind of political theater with the McCain nomination going on that very week right down the street; to have in in-your-face event like that was so memorable.

**KOKESH:** Absolutely. Maybe a footnote historically, but absolutely unique in its historical uniqueness — like whatever tautology. You're absolutely right, and it was really — for being there, you know, it wasn't like history was being made in and of itself with the event, but for the people that were brought together by it, you could look around and be like, wow, this is a new age. This is a new era. It wasn't history so much in and of itself, but it was a marking of a shift that was really starting to occur on a larger scale than ever before, and I think since then — and maybe this is the lesson for all the whippersnappers in the movement listening in today — that there was a time not so long ago, and you really could mark it more or less as before the 2008 campaign, that those of us who felt this way, however you want to define that, really felt alone. And then all of a sudden, there was this awareness — wait a second, this is a movement now. And that was really critical, and I think people coming in now — you know, you can appreciate that easily with a little historical perspective, but I don't think anybody today gets to experience it the same way that we did.

**WOODS:** Yeah, it really is true, and you're right that it was maybe more significant for us than for the pages of history, because for us we were kind of demoralized at that moment, because the numbers hadn't been as strong as we wanted, but then we go to this thing, and not only do we look around and see all these many, many thousands of people, but you realize that given that every rental car, every hotel room had been booked for months because of the GOP convention, how the heck did these people get there?

**KOKESH:** (laughing)

**WOODS:** You know, every person has some story or there was somebody who had some extra floor space and let people sleep. We knew as soon as he decided to do it — and we knew the logistics would be difficult — we knew it would happen one way or the other. We knew people were going to move mountains to make this thing happen. I want to go all the way back to your beginnings —

**KOKESH:** I think six or seven documentaries have already been made about how people got there (laughing).

**WOODS:** (laughing) Yeah, I know, really. And the thing is I keep watching them. Like, I absolutely love reliving that, and now I get to relive it a little bit as my kids get older and they kind of understand who Ron Paul was and what we were all up to, well, they get excited about it too. It's like showing them the Berlin Wall coming down. It's like a really, really extraordinary thing. Even though I've talked to you quite a bit and we've been at a lot of the same events, I actually know — and I supported your congressional campaign — I know surprisingly little about your initial story. Obviously you fought in Iraq, and then something changed. So who were you on the eve of that war? What was going on in Adam Kokesh's mind?

**KOKESH:** We've kept my story as much of a blank slate as possible for obvious political purposes. (laughing) No, I appreciate that, and I think in my activism I really have done my best to make it not about me, and I think it's an important part of our

movement's mentality, the paradigm shift, is that it's really not so much about worshipping personalities or appeals to authority; you know, it's about finding that truth for yourself. So I just present myself and my story in a way to be the most effective guide in this.

But if you want to peak under the hood and really get the backstory on me, it's not that complicated. I was born in California in the Bay Area, grew up upper middle class in a nice neighborhood, went to good schools, and my parents went through a really nasty divorce when I was 10 and my brother was 8. And it was the sort of defining event of my childhood, I suppose, you know, orienting me towards authority as so many of us are through our experience with our parents. But also my parents, you know, gave me a good, healthy intellectual disdain for authority as well. With my mom growing up driving to school and wherever every day, the choice in the car for music was either oldies or classical, and I always chose oldies, and I think I really grew up with the spirit of the '60s, if you will, you know, through the lyrics, through especially listening to Beatles songs, really engrained in who I am.

And she taught me about the 80-20 rule, and you know, really just sort of — she's a former Canadian, has dual citizenship now. My parents met in college; she was at Wellesley; he was at Harvard, and she had a green card for a long time and now dual citizenship. And it's funny, because she had to pass a test, you know — and this was only a few years ago — to get her full U.S. citizenship, and it's questions that most Americans on the street don't know about America that she had to answer for this thing.

But anyway, my father grew up on a ranch in Wyoming, and he just always told me about how he was able to be smarter than the school system and had a deal with his teachers where he could just sit in the back of the classroom and read books as long as he passed the tests, and you know, it was just — he graduated from Harvard in three years. My dad is a super smart guy, just a ridiculous amount of horsepower, and he graduated Harvard in three years, had a full ride before that, full ride to Culver Military Academy, and then Harvard Business and then Boalt Law, which is the law school at Berkeley, which at the time was number four in the country — it's still up there now. But for people who don't know law school rankings, Boalt Law is really renowned up there. And you know, he started a venture capital firm and just seeing how he managed that and how he managed the relationship with government certainly informed me.

He was vaguely conservative; my mom was vaguely liberal, but both in ways that they've been easy to convert, if you will, to bring to libertarianism, where it was more of a subtle intellectual process for them than any kind of psychological divorcing from authoritarianism or authoritarian personality. They definitely got raising me by the enlightened standards of the age; you know, I wasn't spanked or anything. I was reasoned with as a kid; I think that was essential.

I got kicked out of a high school; I got kicked out of a boarding school in Colorado, Fountain Valley School in Colorado Springs, and that was for possession of alcohol. And

I ended up at Native American Prep School, and it was partly because my dad knew the headmaster and thought it would be a good experience for me. With 63 students, I was the only white kid to have ever attended the school that is now shut down, and the experience of being a true minority there was a really good informative one for me that I think helped me out.

But one of the counselors at the school was a former Marine who was very oorah, Semper Fi, and he went on to be Major Mike Brown — funny how I ran into him at Camp Pendleton after we had both been to Iraq so many years later. But he motivated me to join the Marines. I was enlisted in the reserves, because I was expected to go to college. I went to college, volunteered to go to Iraq, and I guess you know where the rest goes from there, huh?

**WOODS:** Did you get a Master's degree? Am I remembering that right?

**KOKESH:** Most of one. It's never too late to drop out. You know, don't let your schooling get in the way of your education.

**WOODS:** (laughing)

**KOKESH:** After the Marines, after I got in trouble there and spent a year at Camp Pendleton for bringing a pistol back from Fallujah in 2004, I moved to D.C. to get a Master's in political management. I had originally been majoring in government. The school I went to for undergrad is Claremont McKenna College, CMC, in Claremont, California. It's funny, when I say that fast, I wonder if I have a speech impediment, because a lot of people go, "Oh, 'Claremont Mc —' where —?"

**WOODS:** I've actually been to Claremont McKenna; I know what you're talking about.

**KOKESH:** Yeah, I know, so they have this reverse snobbery of — they have one of the best political science departments in the country, so they call it the Government Department. And I kind of wimped out. I got really interested in psychology. I went to Iraq and came back, and you know, I didn't want to — I was like intimidated out of politics in a really weird way. And then after enough of, you know, my personal experiences, getting in trouble with the police, bringing a pistol back, everything I went through with the Marines, like, I guess I was in a different mindset, and I was ready to — I hate to use the cliché "take the bull by the horns," but I think that's what we are doing as a movement, in a sense. What we do as activists when we see a potential better way forward for society, it's really easy to sit on the sidelines and say, well, someone else will take care of that; well, someone else can deal with that; well, we'll figure it out eventually. And it's like, no.

From a purely capitalist, self-interest perspective, like, you have an opportunity to provide value to the world, and maybe it comes with certain risks, but if anything, it makes it all the more incumbent on you to analyze those risks coolly and objectively without any of the emotional pressures that others would have exercised upon you by the state or the status quo or the momentum of society itself to keep you in line.

**WOODS:** What would you say was the effect on your life over the long haul of having been in the military? How did it change the way you think about the world, or how did it open your eyes?

**KOKESH:** My zip line always goes straight from my collar to my zipper.

**WOODS:** (laughing)

**KOKESH:** That's only a bad Pauly Shore movie reference, as well as a bad proxy for what I'm really trying to say here, in that I did learn, at least in one of the more petty effects, a certain sense of composure and self discipline and attention to detail that I think has served me really well, and I think it's been really good to have that, and I think it's very sad that the military pretends to have a monopoly on developing a certain skillset. And I mean, I always have to tell people, as amazing as my experience in the military was as a challenge, it was fundamentally criminal and unethical. And there's not a single thing that you can get through the military experience that you can't get better through freedom, through finding it for yourself, and it is fundamentally cowardly to think that all you have to do is sign on the dotted line and do what someone else tells you in order to improve your life when you know that the truly natural, courageous thing that is the right way to serve your own best interest is to take charge of your life for yourself, to make your own destiny. And I think getting that perspective might have been the most important long-term impact of my experience in the military.

**WOODS:** Yeah, that was what I was thinking, that being in that kind of environment, somebody with an open mind like yours might draw certain conclusions about his life, about how society ought to be run, about the nature of the state. I mean, you're in the crucible of — you know, you're in the state's most important institution.

**KOKESH:** Yeah.

**WOODS:** It can teach you stuff if you're paying attention.

**KOKESH:** Yeah, well, as you can tell from the stupid look on my face, I like to learn the hard way, the Marine Corps way.

**WOODS:** It is a hard — and then you came back and — Iraq Veterans against the War — did you have any hand in starting that, or did you just join that as a preexisting thing?

**KOKESH:** Yeah, it's funny; I get a lot of credit for being a founder or a cofounder, usually by people attacking me who want to blow me up into a bigger punching bag. But no, I was a relative latecomer. I mean, the organization was founded a couple years before I got out of the military even, and I just became one of the most prominent members very quickly with my case with the Marine Corps Reserves for so-called protesting in uniform, which is the caricature of what happened. But for all my civil disobedience, activism around D.C. when I was getting started and then that case, which made me a national story for a week or so, and then you know, everything

I did in becoming a board member and being a committed, prominent part of the anti-war movement.

And you know, if I may, it's really sad to see now how — and maybe now it's an old thing to harp on — how the anti-war movement was revealed to be more of an anti-Bush movement and ideological movement than a truly principled movement, even for the people who I know and got arrested with and some of the women in Code Pink who are really, really great people and are really doing amazing things beyond the average member of society, so to speak — but it was that it revealed as such was a major disappointment for me.

And similarly, and maybe this would be more interesting to share our historical perspectives on, with our movement is that there was that time around Dr. Paul's 2008 campaign and not so much in 2012, where the movement was surging. And now I describe the movement as people who can articulate freedom as a principle and at least attempt to apply it consistently, and that in America of 320-something million Americans, there are about a million of us. And so maybe — and I think we've been growing at least as fast, and I think that our growth rate is accelerating.

But when it was Ron Paul, we had numbers in the tens of millions at different times and it was really exciting, and there was this misguided belief by those of us who really are the core of this movement that everybody supporting Ron Paul got the message. And then after the campaign and everybody disappears, it was like wait, wait; you don't really see that there's more to this than Ron Paul's candidacy? And as great as that was, I think what these experiences as an activist have given me is a perspective on the growth of the movement now and the timeline that we see before us and how this actually unfolds as a paradigm shift. And I still am among I think the most optimistic of our cause.

**WOODS:** I want to skip way ahead and then maybe go back to some earlier things, but I saw a video of you not that long ago, and I don't know if you were at a bar or you were out somewhere, and I think you know exactly what I'm driving at —

**KOKESH:** Yeah, New Jersey; Linden, New Jersey, the stop on the American Campfire Freedom with the former cop and soldier.

**WOODS:** Yeah, so in fact, you said — and now you tell people, and I'm going to link to it. I want you to watch this video. It's going to be at [TomWoods.com/532](http://TomWoods.com/532). I bet there are people who would have thought that you would blow your top in that situation, and you were cool as a cucumber, and I'm not even going to take away the awesome ending. I want you to tell it.

**KOKESH:** Well, when a dude has 80 pounds of muscle on you, it's really easy to keep your cool.

**WOODS:** (laughing) Well, that's true.

**KOKESH:** But that was the case, and it was a speech I was giving on this tour, and I don't pull any punches obviously, but what I say is always in line with my — I should say, at least generally in line with my principles of not judging people and communicating precisely and very deliberately. And I've been studying Nonviolent Communication in the last couple years, and it's been a very important development for me, and a lot of libertarians when they hear "Nonviolent Communication," they go, wait a second; it's communication; of course it's non-violent — screw you! And you go, hmm... maybe that's part of the problem, and obviously here violence is a metaphor, but it's really based on judgment and are you judging someone else rather than reflecting on your own needs and feelings and whether those are being met by someone else's actions.

And so I said something in my speech like — I don't even remember what it was now, but it was relatively mild, you know? It wasn't like, ah, they're all baby killers; it was that the military's a fundamentally immoral institution. I mean, it was something relatively academic like that. And this guy who was a server at the bar was coming down and delivering food to people who were listening to my speech, and he goes back upstairs after hearing this one line, obviously — I don't want to say out of context, because it was entirely true in what it was, but without a bigger understanding of the points being made here. And he goes upstairs and tells his buddy, and he comes down at the end of the speech and just says, you know, if you have anything bad to say about the military, we need to talk outside. And I just said no, we can talk here.

And the conversation starts with me saying, "Are you angry?" which is one of the lessons from Nonviolent Communication, that when you're in a conflict and someone is upset with you, you can never — if they're talking to you, if you are in a conversation with someone, you can never go wrong turning attention to the other person's needs and feelings. And in this context, it comes across as a little awkward and pretty humorous, when there's a guy who's trying to put you in a position to get your face beaten in, and you say, "Are you angry? You seem very angry." You know, and it can come across as somewhat patronizing, but I just kept going with it, because, like, I said, "Does that feel good? You obviously don't feel good right now, do you?" And he's like, "No! I don't feel good!" Like, well, let's do something about that then, shall we? And then the conversation proceeded from there.

And you know, there's [inaudible] I'll throw this one on as a teaser — and I've probably spent more time talking about this than I think the video is long at this point, but you know when you come up with a nice comeback, and you think of it like a day later? Well, this is one that I thought of in middle school and was like, ah man, if I only someday have a chance to use it!

**WOODS:** And here it was.

**KOKESH:** And here it was, like 18 years later, this guy starts telling me like, ah, man, I bet you never even saw combat, blah, blah, blah, blah — I had already laid out my credentials. And I was like, dude, this isn't a big dick contest, and he was just like, ah,



damn. And at that point the conversation turned, and I gave him — he ended up taking a copy of the book and a sticker, and I think what I told him — the issue was something about the military being cowardly, and that it's fundamentally cowardly I think in the way that I described earlier. And I told him, you know, I can't judge you; there's nothing wrong with doing something out of ignorance, but it is cowardly now that the truth is in your face to not face up to it and do something about it. And that was what got him to take a copy of the book, which he had initially refused.

**WOODS:** That is really tremendous. It really is — it is such a video worth watching, and I really want people to watch it. I want to know all about the things that you're doing right now; I want to tell people about your book in a few minutes, because it's really great, and two people whose opinions I really, really, really value — one of whom is Bob Murphy, by the way — were telling me not long ago that your book is just top notch. It's short; I mean, it's barely 100 pages, so you think, well, how much could it convey? But it packs such a punch, and it's called *Freedom*, and we'll get to it in a minute.

But I want to go back in time a little bit. I want to talk about what happened — you've actually been to jail a number of times, but you were actually incarcerated for an extended period. What happened there? What put you in there, and what happened while you were in there? What happened to Adam Kokesh while he was in there?

**KOKESH:** Well, I can't believe I let us go this long without mentioning the book (laughing). When you say "an extended period," it was just four months, and I've been arrested at least three dozen times if you're really inclusive about cite and release —

**WOODS:** Yeah, but how long were in there at a time, though?

**KOKESH:** Yeah, so before this, the longest I'd been in jail was a week and, you know, a handful of extended weekends and things like that. So yeah, four months was a major departure from that for me, and it was for making a YouTube video, for loading a shotgun outside of the White House — not even outside of the White House; two blocks away at ironically named Freedom Plaza. And this came out of the proposal for an armed march on D.C. that I had proposed for Independence Day and decided to pull the plug on when we didn't have the support of the organization to do it responsibly and safely.

And a major part of the motivation for me was to simply avoid the charge that it was because of my own cowardice that I was avoiding taking the risk of this act of civil disobedience, and so I went ahead and made a simple YouTube video and put that on my channel. And I didn't really think it through, honestly. I knew that there was a significant risk; I knew that it was a five-year felony, but I did not expect what happened. There was a ridiculous SWAT team raid on my home, which was the second time they'd spent more men after me than bin Laden. The first time was for smoking a joint in front of the White House at our Joint Summit with President Choom. Unfortunately President Choom was unable to attend that one.

But the police response to this was insane, and I really think it had something to do with a bit of a personal vendetta that some agents of the United States Park Police have for me based on ways that I've embarrassed them in the past, you know, going back to the Thomas Jefferson Dance Party in 2011. And they had two helicopters over my home. They had an armored vehicle, battering rams knock the door down. They came in and through a flashbang grenade as soon as the door was open, and it went off right under my dog's butt. Baloo, who's been traveling with us, is himself a survivor of police brutality.

And the flashbang grenade actually saved his life, because he was going to the door, and you know, when a dog goes to the door when a SWAT raid is happening, the dog doesn't usually attack the officers; the dog gets shot. And in this case, the flashbang grenade went off right under his butt, and it scared him so bad he ran upstairs and my girlfriend at the time, whom I'm sure you know, Carey Wedler, who has an amazing YouTube channel and is doing great work with Anti-Media right now, is like, just, "Baloo, Baloo, bed, bed," and she put him in his crate. And by then I had two green laser sights on my chest.

And it was a pretty interesting situation, five-hour raid, and I ended up just being denied bail for four months. One of the judges actually said that because I had an "arsenal of weapons" — you know, I had a little gun safe with about a dozen guns in it, most of which I didn't even have ammunition for — and he described me as the next Adam Lanza, who, if you don't know, for anybody listening was the Newtown, Connecticut shooter who killed his mother and 30 students in I think it was an elementary school. And so based on that, they denied me bail for four months, and I ended up getting bullied into a corner. Instead of getting the fantasy of the dream trial of putting the law on the stand and so on, I got bullied into a corner and threatened with a bunch of other charges, and I ended up having to take a plea deal.

**WOODS:** All right, so you spent four months, though. How were you treated there? What was the experience like? I mean, most of us are never going to experience this.

**KOKESH:** Well, the first three days I refused to cooperate. I mean, I refused to cooperate in various ways the entire time I was in jail, but I didn't submit to fingerprinting or DNA testing or having my photograph taken and was kind of put in a torture cell. It was like a holding cell where I didn't have a mattress; the lights were on 24 hours a day; they took all of my clothes, except I had my cargo shorts, and then they gave me a little jail T-shirt. And it was too cold to sleep. I got what for me, as a 200+ pound dude, was a starvation diet of three bologna sandwiches a day. And they were like begging me to cooperate, and I was just like, no, I'm not going to cooperate with my own punishment; this is insane.

And finally they were like, "Is there some other way we could do this?" And I said, "Are you insane? I won't cooperate. That doesn't mean I'm going to resist." And so they went, "Ohh, okay," and they actually handcuffed me to a wheelchair and then took me out and took my picture and my fingerprints and the DNA swab. They have to give you a shot every time you go to jail to see if you have — I forget — like pneumonia or

something? And some other — do you know what I'm talking about? They give you a shot; it leaves like a little blister under your skin, and then if it's red or something, then you're positive?

**WOODS:** Yeah, like a — I know what you mean; I don't know what it's called, but I've had it. Yeah.

**KOKESH:** Yeah, I forget what it was. How many times have you been to jail?

**WOODS:** Yeah, I was going to say, I haven't had them in jail. I know what you're talking about.

**KOKESH:** Okay. Well, it's funny; they do it every time you get fully processed. At least, every time I've gotten — when I did a week, when I did a full weekend, I got all that treatment. And so then I was in the Fairfax County jail for 17 days total, and when that was resolved and I was released there, I was transferred to federal, or I guess D.C. — technically not federal — custody with the Park Police and transported there. And I thought, okay, this is just going to be another process, and then I'm going to get out in a week or two, and everything will be like normal.

But they just kept denying me bail, hearing after hearing. And at the first one, you expect, like, okay, they're going to hold you over the weekend; okay, they're going to have a proper hearing. But you know, like out of a movie scene, just some really, old, cantankerous judge who just had a really negative, dismissive attitude and was like you might be the next Adam Lanza; we've got to deny you bail, sorry — he didn't even say it like that — and then it was then one hearing after another like that, and then oh, I take a plea deal, and now I'm okay. All of sudden, I take a plea deal and admit that I'm wrong, oh, now I must not be crazy. Now I'm safe for society to be exposed to. You know, just the logical inconsistencies of our legal system when you see them up front and you experience them in your own life are something else.

You know, now even it does give me a better perspective every time you hear about someone's life getting ruined, reading the news, and everybody knows about this to one degree or another; you know, you got the parking ticket that was one less load of groceries for your family this month or whatever the case may be, that so many people are sort of ashamed of, we see now just as part of the texture of modern statism that everybody has some story. And everybody has something maybe to a different degree, but there's something about suffering under arbitrary authority that is starting to bring people together and really changing the awareness.

So for me, after two months in solitary — the whole first two months was in solitary for my own protection, because this was a high profile case. They — I don't want to say "they" — but repeatedly asked the counselor in the jail there to transfer me to general population, and when I finally was transferred to general population, I was mobbed the first day of guys with their hands out saying, hey, I saw you on TV, loved your stuff, you know, and that little shotgun clip was getting played over and over again on

local TV news, and they always got that in jail, and they all knew who I was by the time I got there.

And generally, except for the legal uncertainty and the back and forth and being in solitary — which I really didn't mind that much; I refer to my time as a government-induced, taxpayer-funded, spiritual retreat — I enjoyed the challenge of it, but it really wasn't that much of a challenge, you know? When I was getting piles of fan mail everyday, like once I got settled in after a couple of weeks and my address got out there, every time the guards would come by my cell, it was like, wait a second, who's this guy? So the guards all knew who I was, and they at least tend to follow the rules around a guy like me who's recording podcasts over the jail phone when they all wear nametags.

And every chance I got, I would call the guards over to my cell, you know, when they were doing mail delivery or walking through for checks or meals or just to flip the lights on and off to bug people in the middle of the night, and I would just say, "Hey, I have something important to tell you. Can you come here please?" And I would call them over to the little window slit in my cell door, and I would say, "You're a free, beautiful, independent human being. You should never let anyone tell you otherwise. Have a great day." And some of them you know appreciated it, but most of them you could predict the response, and for them to go, *How the heck is this guy on the inside of the cell happier than I am on the outside?*, you know, just to feel that contrast and realize the importance of mental freedom and emotional freedom.

And this is something that's included in the book that I was a little apprehensive to include at first, because I wanted the book to be absolutely irrefutable and to be the most concise way to get people passionately onboard with the message and see the objective of a stateless society as clearly as you and I do. And we talk a lot in this movement, or at least in the past, we've talked a lot about the negative effects of government propaganda, and we seem to be very comfortable and open talking about how government wants us to be afraid. They want us to fear outsiders; they want us to fear our neighbors; they want us to see government as, you know, this all-savior, parental figure.

And it seems that, until recently at least, we've been much more uncomfortable talking about the flip side of this, and it's very important as it relates to Nonviolent Communication and respecting our own will, our own feelings and needs and desires and what it means to be a fully actualized human being, to be emotionally free, to be able to live by our own guide, our own intellect, rather than by the bullying or the expectations or whatever other external manipulations from others there may be. And as much as we will fail always to perfectly control our external environment, our internal environment is entirely our choice, and when we sacrifice our freedom, we voluntarily give it up when we submit to the emotional manipulations of others — any time we allow someone to choose for us how we are going to be. And when you realize that freedom isn't something to be pursued and beaten over the head with a club and dragged home to your cave to enjoy forever and ever.

We seem to have been misled by the very phrase, "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." No, emotional freedom comes with a choice of happiness. Happiness is a choice, and to really get to experience that through my time in jail was an important shift for me. But really, even more important than that, if you will, for at least I think other people and where this is going right now was the idea to write the book, *Freedom*, that came to me while I was in there.

**WOODS:** So you're behind bars, and you're writing a book. I mean, I think I would probably do the same thing. You've got to do something. But most people don't.

**KOKESH:** Tom, in four months, towards the end I came up with the idea for the book. I wrote a couple sections. I started working on the table of contents. During that time, you would have written three *New York Times* bestsellers.

**WOODS:** Oh, get out of town. No, no, no.

**KOKESH:** Let's be fair here. I had an idea for a pamphlet compared to what you do. But it is an important idea, and I don't mean to downplay it at all.

**WOODS:** Yeah.

**KOKESH:** But I was voted like in high school Least Likely to Ever Finish Reading a Book, let alone ever come to the point of writing and having my own book, publishing my own book, and being as successful as it is. Right now we just ordered our third printing of 10,000 copies. We've had about a million downloads. I've got to add everything up precisely. But what's blown me away, the Android application downloads are over 400,000 right now. The audiobook has been a huge success, and it's getting translated into — we have at least people working, we know, on Polish and Russian and Spanish right now and a lot of volunteers for other languages.

So I'm not so sure about coming through on, but what I was able to do while I was in jail was do a survey of the literature of our movement, somewhat in my head, somewhat from books that people sent me that I had a lot of time to read. And by the way, I'll tell you this time to brag on the book as a little aside here, the one place that Americans still consistently make time to read is in jail, and when I was — we actually tried to send a copy of this book, and we've gotten a number of copies into jails, and when it goes into jails, it's very popular from what we understand. It gets passed around, and they have to have a waiting list of people's names written on the inside of the front cover. And we got a letter from the United States Department of Justice Bureau of Prisons saying that this book was banned in jails.

**WOODS:** Get out.

**KOKESH:** We have the letter; it's on our website. It is "a threat to the good order, security, and discipline of the institution." And it has to say, according to their regulation, what part of it. They just wrote "entire publication." Obviously it has

nothing to do with violence — it's an entirely anti-violence track — and nothing to do with how to make weapons in a jail cell or how to escape, so —

**WOODS:** No, just look at the table of contents.

**KOKESH:** Yeah, well, I think they looked at the cover, and that was enough. It really — and it's funny, because I was able to read *Mein Kampf* when I was in jail, but you know —

**WOODS:** But you can't read *Freedom* by Adam Kokesh.

**KOKESH:** Right, and considering this comes, you know, on Department of Justice letterhead, I consider it an endorsement of the highest degree. So I'm very proud of this, that we've reached this particular banned book status. But anyway, as I think you and your audience would appreciate is really the motive for this book in coming together and seeing, you know, I think of all the people in the movement right now who are active, there are hardly any — maybe a handful, and maybe you're among them for as much as you've gotten around and talking to people — who have the kind of, if only anecdotal, body of data — and that's all that exists right now, unfortunately; I wish we had more concrete statistics on this — of how people come to this movement, how people's paradigms shift, how they come to realize the fundamental truths of voluntarism, of freedom as a philosophy of ethics and the morality behind it and the principles that you and I hold dear.

And one thing that I've learned for certain is that it never comes from being yelled at at a bar. You know, it never comes from losing a Facebook flame war. Nobody ever was converted by that kind of conversation. It always happens — now, sometimes it happens with someone in conversation over a long period of time, but really what leads people to change their perspective is the ability to quietly contemplate these ideas and this truth and come to accept it and square it against their experience.

And a lot of people come to me and tell me that my YouTube videos woke people up. You know the Thomas Jefferson Dance Party video. People come to me even now and say, hey Adam, that video woke me up. And they're lying. Nobody watches me get choke slammed by a cop and goes, "Yeah, end the Fed!" There's a bit of a leap there. There's a process and an understanding that has to sink in. So what I wanted to create with this book, because I noticed that for most people that quiet contemplation, maybe it comes from YouTube videos, and there's the joke, "What's the difference between a statist and a libertarian?" "About six months." Well, it's accelerating, and now you could say it's maybe a weekend of watching YouTube videos and reading Wikipedia articles.

But even then, for most people it's not that efficient. It takes them a little longer. And what I wanted to do was present what to me was the entire message as succinctly as possible, as true to the principles of Nonviolent Communication as — well, completely true to the principles of Nonviolent Communication. The book has no judgment, no opinion, no conjecture, no wishful thinking, no imposition of my own preference even.

My name's not in it. I don't use a first person pronoun even until the very end of the book and the part about me in a paragraph buried in the back. It's all of the things that I saw in — I'm just the best rip-off artist in the movement, basically. I took all of your best status updates on Facebook, organized them into chapters, and called it a book.

**WOODS:** Oh no, now that I will not allow. And incidentally, we all are standing on the shoulders of giants, but that helps us to become even taller giants. We all build on what we learn. But to be able to do that — and first of all, number one, you are selling yourself short in terms of the original stuff that's in here. But also the ability to take all these topics — I mean, there's a ton of topics in here and present them in 100 pages; it's amazing.

**KOKESH:** There's nothing original in there, Tom. I think it's very important to point that out, and you know, it's not just in terms of the intellectual property proposition, but it really is important that these ideas belong to humanity. And my presentation is original; my packaging is original; my wording, my application of principles, my ideas — if I had given you the idea for this book and paid you enough, I could have gotten you to write it, and you probably would have done a better job.

But I invited 300 people to edit the first rough draft I had as a Google Drive doc, so everybody could see the latest version, and about 100 of them actually read it. And Bob Murphy, as you mentioned, was one of the people I invited; he was one of the best, because I invited him to — I said poke holes in this; I want this to stand up to the most extreme scrutiny possible. I want you to like — every word has to be precise and irrefutable, so that people can pass this on and stand behind this. And Bob, he had 12 things that he pointed out, and I was like, to two of them, no, nope, that's precise, that's what he meant, and he was like, oh, yes. So it was a really cool process going through and bringing that collective wisdom to bear to make this book everything that it can be.

And so far it seems like it really has, and it's — and you're one of the few people who can do this through your work and step back and go okay, well, there's about a million people in this movement; how many tens of thousands am I responsible for bringing in? And I know now from my YouTube channel, you know, I can kind of guess from that, but really from this book I know that you can't read this as a mainstream statist and not at least come to as equally divergent a worldview from the mainstream as what we've embraced and just fundamentally switch your perspective.

It is everything that we wanted it to be, and right now we're just working on building the mass distribution. We've got some ideas for some book drops. We might be trying to hit an entire city all at once. I'm working on with some really talented people, including a director, David Kirk West, doing a video series from the audiobook. For a while I wanted to write more books; I wanted to be more like Tom, but I realized that for me, I don't need to be the intellectual anchor. I want to focus on getting this one message out there and winning converts as efficiently as possible.

**WOODS:** We definitely have some shorter books, but we don't have any shorter books that cover this much ground, so that's very important, because we think, oh, if everybody would just read this — even 300-page book — is not reasonable.

**KOKESH:** No.

**WOODS:** But also because you devote relatively small chunks of time to each particular topic, it just goes quickly. It's just boom, boom, boom. Now, I want to ask you two quick things before I let you go. First of all, of course we're going to link to the book in the various formats at [TomWoods.com/532](http://TomWoods.com/532), but tell everybody your website, so they can go to you directly.

**KOKESH:** Thanks, yeah, it's [TheFreedomLine.com](http://TheFreedomLine.com). It's the project of our new nonprofit. We have an approved 501(c)(3), so we can help you pay a little bit less in taxes if you want — yeah? And it's been — I just want to say one more thing about the distribution of this book, because it really is important that you see the way someone handles their business being in line with their principles. So this book is entirely free in every digital format possible. We give away paper copies whenever we can, whenever we have the donations to support it. We sell them in bulk online, and it is in the book very explicitly that you are welcome to do whatever you want with this.

If you can put your name on the cover and sell more copies, do it. We have someone already on Amazon who's put together their own version that makes the print a little denser, and it's only 60 pages long. You can get that for 6.95 on Amazon, but you know, like it says everywhere, we even put it in the description, "Get it for free here." And it's just been amazing to see how people have really taken that and how that has allowed the book to travel that much more freely.

So [TheFreedomLine.com](http://TheFreedomLine.com); you can check out my YouTube channel. We're going to be restarting the podcast here in a couple months. I'm actually in the process of moving to Arizona. Well, I'm in Phoenix right now in Ernie's driveway, living in the trailer with my fiancé. We've been living together for the last year; it's been really amazing, and we just got engaged a couple months ago. So I've got to take care of her and actually build us a house now. I actually just went to the Earthship Academy in Taos, New Mexico, if anybody wants to check that out. I think homesteading is a very important direction for this movement, for people taking charge of their lives from the ground up and living as consistently as possible by these values.

So I'm working on a house that's going to be completely off the grid, self-sustaining, and I think we need — part of what we're doing now is showing people the way forward, and if you have a truth that doesn't make you happier, that doesn't make your life better, then what business do you have sharing it with other people? And I think right now we see this beautiful evolution within our movement of people taking this message and being happier. It's no longer about being angry or being against something, and that was a very important reason to make the title of the book just "Freedom." Who could be against freedom? Who could be against happiness? And it's sad that there still are and there are people who will need therapy before they



embrace this message, but everyone is capable of getting it, and it's an amazing time to be alive, to be a part of this, to see this happening. So if you want to check it out, Earthship.com, highly recommended. But really homesteading, you know, having the courage to take charge of your life from the bottom up.

But one other thing I should say before I go after we restart the podcast, I will be announcing, at least as things keep building, we're gathering the resources, we're making the plans, I intend to run for president in 2020 on the Libertarian ticket on the platform of a peaceful, orderly dissolution of the entire United States federal government over four years, and we're going to be getting a big head start on this next February. We're hoping to announce after the new president is sworn in. I should say the February after next. And you'd be surprised how receptive people are to this message, especially the typical, average, nonvoters who understand that government is largely a racket if they have it as easy as put to them as, hey, would you be better off with or without the entire federal government, most of them say yes, we'd be better off without it.

We're on the verge of a major phase shift one way or another, and I have pledged my life, because I know it is what I enjoy the most, and it is how I provide the most value to the world to ensure that we are able to peacefully evolve past this phase of human evolution known as statism, because the end is near and we get to be a part of this beautiful dance floor for humanity. So Tom, for all of your work and for everybody who makes your show possible, who makes what I do possible and who makes this movement what it is, thank you so much.

**WOODS:** Well, indeed. I share that message of thanks. I do want to ask before you go, tell me in 60 seconds how is the Adam Kokesh after those four months of incarceration, how is he different from the man who entered?

**KOKESH:** A little wiser and a little more at peace.

**WOODS:** Well, how about that? So let's just say you made tremendous lemonade out of the lemons that you were dealt.

**KOKESH:** (laughing) I never even thought of it as lemons.

**WOODS:** Well, all the better. All the better.

**KOKESH:** When you do street theater as I do, it is so wonderful when government agents willingly enlist themselves in your task.

**WOODS:** Yeah, indeed. Indeed. Well, listen, it's been great to catch up with you. TomWoods.com/532 is where I'm going to link to everything we talked about, including that video, but people should also go right to TheFreedomLine.com and also sign up for your newsletter, because you'll be keeping people on top of what you're doing and I'm on your mailing list, and I can tell everybody he doesn't email me every day —

**KOKESH:** I'm working on it. I've been too lazy; I've been distracted with enjoying life, and I haven't been sending enough emails.

**WOODS:** Okay, there. Okay? So you're not going to be getting an email every five minutes if you — get on that mailing list, find out what Adam's up to. Adam, thanks again for your time today.

**KOKESH:** Thank you.