



**Episode 784: The Road to Serfdom – What Kids and Adults Can Learn from It**

**Guest: Connor Boyack**

**WOODS:** So you did not take my advice; you did not title the book *The Tuttle Twins Built the Roads*. I still feel like that's a terrible missed opportunity, but all the same, I'm glad that the book is out, and I'm glad that the series continues to do so well. So start off by telling people who don't know, which I hope will be a diminishing fraction of people listening, what the Tuttle Twins series is, what it's all about, and what you're doing in it.

**BOYACK:** Yeah, I think you have so many repeat listeners, I'll brief, because they've probably heard it before, but the Tuttle Twins series is us bringing the classic free market, libertarian texts in our movement down to a child's level, or as I'm saying these days, a congressman's level. The age range is like five to ten, and so every book takes a classic text. We boil down the principles that the book teaches about; we wrap it in a fun story. It's beautifully illustrated. And so the kids end up learning these ideas from a young age, along with their siblings, and even their parents, many of whom have never of course read these original books. So we're basically trying to teach the principles of liberty to young kids around the country, and then through translating the books, which we're doing now, the entire world.

**WOODS:** And for each book, you've based it on some great classic work. So in the case of the current title, which is *The Tuttle Twins and the Road to Serfdom*, I guess it's obvious enough which book you're talking about here.

**BOYACK:** Yeah, so this is based on F.A. Hayek's classic book written in the early 1940s, *The Road to Serfdom*; of course he spelled it with a U. He in fact based that on

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**WOODS:** He spelled it with an E; you spelled it with a U.

**BOYACK:** Oh, did I say that backwards?

**WOODS:** Yeah, that's okay; I'm sure everybody knew.

**BOYACK:** Yeah, he spelled it with an E; I apologize. So he was actually taking that from a line in Alexis de Tocqueville's writings, where de Tocqueville talked about the "road to servitude," and so Hayek kind of played that up. He was in Britain at the time talking about the rise of fascism as a response to socialism and how this central planning would kind of leave the country or other countries that applied it in the

wrong direction. And that was such a well thought out book, but it's a dense book. I struggle to find people who read that and are like, Yeah, I want to recommend this to everyone. For a lot of people it's tough to get through, but the ideas of central planning and collectivism and the dangers he had were so important, so we wanted to do a book based on that.

**WOODS:** All right, so let's get into the weeds here. It's the Tuttle Twins, as always, and they're always having some adventure. What does it have to do with – I mean, of course I know it has something to do with the Hayek book and the themes in the Hayek book, but it does also have to do with a road, because you want to have that title make sense in this context.

**BOYACK:** Right.

**WOODS:** So lay out the storyline, and then we'll get into the themes.

**BOYACK:** Well, those who listened to the last episode I was on might remember that we did an April Fools' kind of gag, where Elijah, our illustrator, created a fake cover for April Fools earlier this year, 2016, and it was *The Tuttle Twins Built the Roads*, this standard libertarian, the fundamental question we all have to grapple with of who will build the roads. And we just put that out on April Fools, and so many people responded so well to it, like, Hey, you need to turn this into an actual book. So Elijah and I were chatting on Messenger, like, Holy cow, this is blowing up, getting all these shares and likes, and maybe there's something there.

And so I thought a lot about it, and I think it's challenging to say how private roads will actually be built. You have to go really deep in the weeds and talk policy and –

**WOODS:** Yeah, I know. That probably was asking a lot. I get that. But man, you had the proof of concept –

**BOYACK:** Exactly.

**WOODS:** – right there with the people supporting it.

**BOYACK:** In fact, on your last episode we had a lot of people email us, and the vote was actually rather split between *The Tuttle Twins Build the Roads* and this concept of *The Road to Surfdom*, and I thought the title itself has the word "road" in it; it's just begging to be used that way, so we went that route. But actually, the story developed really nicely once we decided to go the route of *The Road to Surfdom*.

So at a high level, what this story involves is there's a beach named Surfdom, and so it's this fancy new beach kind of resort, where the government has created all these attractions and everything, and then they have this master transportation plan, where they've decided to build an actual road, a new road that takes people more easily to Surfdom. And so this book is a little different than the others, where in some of the other books it's been a little bit more lecture format, where Grandpa is kind of explaining the Federal Reserve, or their neighbor Fred is explaining the proper role of government and where our rights come from. This one we wanted to be a little bit

more observational or experiential, where, rather than just being taught by a wise adult, the twins are experiencing firsthand, they're observing all of the effects that this road is having on the community around them.

And so they have an uncle – They're at this family reunion at the beach, and they have an uncle who's a reporter. We actually modeled this after Ben Swann. So Ben and his family have a very prominent role in this book, and that was fun. He's really excited. And so Ben helps Ethan and Emily, the twins, kind of figure this out, and so they go around and they're observing all the effects that this road is having in causing – For example, the road, they use eminent domain. The government steals the land, right? So they use eminent domain. Well, what's that? We explain it. And it goes straight through this old dairy farm, because that's where the government wanted to build the road.

And so what does that cause to happen? Well, the dairy farmer suddenly can't graze his cattle as well, so he ends up selling the property. Well, because there's no more dairy farm, the historic creamery on the other side of town has to shut down, because they're not getting the local supply they want. It's more economical for them to move. And so all these people that can't move are out of jobs, and so on and so forth.

And so the twins go through the story seeing the effects, and through observation realize that the unintended consequences of central planning are numerous. They're rarely anticipated, but they're very real to the people who are affected by them, including the very people who supported the original central planning. So we include at least one guy who voted for the transportation plan. He really liked the idea, but now he's being affected by it once it's being put in action, and suddenly his eyes are opened to the negativity of that central planning.

So this is more a book where the twins are going through the actions, going through the story, rather than just being talked to by a wise adult. We wanted to toy with this different model, where I think that's important with central planning, is that we learn to observe its effects. Bastiat talked about how a good economist can foresee not only visible and intended consequences, but also the unintended consequences, so helping kids recognize that and develop that skill.

**WOODS:** And I like the fact that the book actually uses the term central planning. You think, How are they going to understand that? But I like the way the book defines central planning for kids: it's when a few people make decisions for everybody. In a way I think that's a pretty technically rigorous definition of central planning. That's actually pretty darn good. So that means that not only will they get the story and they'll get the idea that there are all these – I hate to say unintended consequences, because I think sometimes these jerks do intend the consequences –

**BOYACK:** Exactly, right.

**WOODS:** But you know what I mean. They'll recognize all the different unexpected ways that one example of central planning can affect a whole lot of people, but they'll also be familiar with the important term, central planning. So it's all very good from the point of view of getting children aware of stuff like this, without bashing them over the head, without making them read John Galt's speech for 40 pages. You talk

about another term that basically no kid, unless it's one of my kids, has ever heard, and that's eminent domain.

**BOYACK:** Right.

**WOODS:** And that principle is described here too. So we don't want to scare kids that at any moment the government can just come and take your house, so how are you handling that?

**BOYACK:** Yeah, no, I mean, obviously this is a special case where this guy had a lot of land, and it stood right in the way of where they wanted to build the road. The likelihood that it happens to any one person is wrong. But what we're really trying to provoke here is the inherent sense of justice that kids have. Like, all children have been taught from a young age that stealing is wrong or that you shouldn't hurt people and so forth. And so when you present them at a young age real world examples of how stealing has been "legitimized," what I've found with the earlier books in the series, when I read this book with my own kids as I was working on it, it definitely resonates with them at a very raw level that they can understand. Like, why is that okay? How is that acceptable? Why is it that you guys as adults teach us that we can't steal, but suddenly the government can? That just doesn't make any sense.

And obviously there are many arguments that adults have made up to try and justify the legalization of that theft, but it's fun to give these examples to kids, because they can see from a very basic level at least how complex the world, or nuanced, the world is. It's not just, hey, everything we teach you as kids applies as adults. It's rainbows and unicorns, and these simple moral lessons we teach you, everyone follows as adults. Well, no.

And so it begins to open their eyes to exceptions that adults make, provoke conversations in families over dinner about these concepts, even with young kids. It's so fun for us to get emails from readers talking about the conversations they're having with their 8-year-old kid about something like eminent domain. And then not only that, but they relate often how that spins out into kind of tertiary or tangential issues closely related, where the adults find themselves having these substantive conversations about interesting policies and principles with their kids that they never would have had.

And so this is more – I mean, it's not like we're trying to teach them "Eminent Domain for Dummies" or trying to be so conclusive about it. Our goal is to really just provoke those conversations and give parents an opportunity to expose their children to these ideas. Like you say, these kids wouldn't have been getting it anywhere else. So we're not trying to be so definitive and conclusive about everything, that if they read the book all of a sudden they know everything there is to know. This is just a way to kind of get a foot in the door, for parents to start to have these discussions with their kids, and provide them a prospective that those kids probably would not have gotten anywhere else.

**WOODS:** And you can take the story in this book and apply it to current events, of course really just drawn right from the day's headlines. You can even have generated a discussion about the recent election. Of course we're talking eight days after the 2016

election, so this – Remember, everybody, this is the official release date of this book. It is available as of today. You are hearing about it – You are among the first people to hear about it, let's say, and you could easily say that the people running for president, the two major party candidates, are an example of exactly the sort of phenomenon that this book is warning about.

**BOYACK:** Yeah, that's right. I mean, so often parents feel – in my conversations at least, parents feel helpless, like, what can they do, how have we come to this point. And I think it's a fair characterization, a fair conclusion, to say that so much of our problem stems from the education that today's voters have received, or the lack thereof. I'm very critical of our modern government education system, and especially when you look at –

I'm a big fan of collecting textbooks over time. I always try to find at used book stores, what did a high school economics or history class used to talk about compared to today. And when you see how dumbed down things have become and how many important things are being completely omitted and how books and textbooks and the like are being used for agendas in today's schools, parents have been so appreciative to us to try and push back against that, because, you know, maybe they can't homeschool or they're not well off enough to do a private school or whatever, and so out of necessity so many parents are putting their kids in these schools, but they're free-market-minded, liberty-minded, conservative, whatever, and they're very frustrated and scared that their kids are going to get, for lack of a better word, indoctrinated and be part of the trend that we see today with how voters are tending to behave.

And so this is our attempt to try and – we like to use the term, give kids a foundation of freedom, so that they have kind of a foundation against which they can check a lot of those contrasting ideas that they're getting exposed to, whether they're in public school or just out with friends or in the different circles that they go through throughout life. But yeah, I think today's problems are just symptoms of a much bigger underlying problem that we have to address through education.

**WOODS:** What do you think the relevance of *The Road to Serfdom* is today? And I preface this with my own view – and I hope I'm not undermining your book, because the children's book I think is really, those are the themes everybody needs. I think the original *Road to Serfdom* has a lot of material in it that's really out of date today, that's not relevant. We don't have anybody really calling for the state ownership of the means of production, so all that stuff is not really relevant. So what you've done is actually distill what is relevant out of that book and put it into your children's book. Now, do you want to make some kind of defense of *The Road to Serfdom* against me? Because I honestly don't – I wouldn't recommend it as one of my top hundred books for people to read, but I would recommend *The Tuttle Twins and the Road to Surfdom* as one of the books I would want kids to read, and my own kids are going to read it as soon as we get a hardcopy.

**BOYACK:** Yeah, I think you're right, and I think part of the reason is the same critique I have of Frederic Bastiat's *The Law*, for example, where I recommended that book, sometimes people struggle with all the stuff he puts in there about France. We just don't have the context, and we don't know who Monsieur So-and-So is, and Bastiat is

critiquing these various different programs that were going on. And so rather than being a more abstracted discussion of principles and ideas, in his case only a little bit, he's addressing very specific things.

And Hayek to a large degree is addressing very specific things in his day. Again, he's writing in the early 1940s; he's in Britain; he's seeing a very specific problem in his country, where many people were believing that the rise of fascism was a capitalist response to socialism. He's addressing very specific legislative proposals, acts of Parliament. And so it definitely is couched in his world, his day, and the things that were happening. And so for that reason, I've found it's tough to recommend it, because people have to first learn the history before they can really understand his application of principles.

But that book I think he has so many good one-liners and good prescriptions to the issues that were going on that, if they can be abstracted and pulled out of there, it becomes a very useful and important thing. Of course for those who don't know, Hayek won the Nobel Prize for economics. He's got a good name ID outside of our movement; he just gets that aura of respectability. And so we really try to abstract out of that book the key principles that certainly do apply to our day, where someone doesn't have to go read history and understand what Britain in the 1940s was like, to really slog through a book written by this esteemed economist. We can begin to understand those principles and think more appropriately or without as much mental energy how they apply to our world today, which they definitely do.

And so that's kind of the approach we tried to take with this book, is take the key ideas, give a little throwback to Hayek, because it was an important work. You know, millions of copies have been printed. It was impactful in its day. But we can definitely learn from what he was talking about and apply it to our world.

**WOODS:** Let's talk about your series in general. This is the fifth book in the series —

**BOYACK:** Right.

**WOODS:** — so let's just recap. You've covered The Law by Bastiat. You've covered "I, Pencil," the great essay by Leonard Read. You've covered — and this is a huge distillation. You've covered The Creature from Jekyll Island and made that into a book. What's the one I'm forgetting?

**BOYACK:** Henry Hazlitt was our fourth, Economics in One Lesson. And that one's harder to remember, because we didn't incorporate it into the title. That's the one book in our series so far where we haven't —

**WOODS:** What was the title of that one?

**BOYACK:** That was The Tuttle Twins and the Food Truck Fiasco.

**WOODS:** That's right; that's right. Okay, yeah, yeah, so we talked about that.

**BOYACK:** Yeah, it's all about protectionism.

**WOODS:** Right, so we talked about that. And now this fifth title, *The Tuttle Twins and the Road to Surfdom*. My understanding is there is a sixth title that is rolling around in your head, and last time you were on to talk about one of these books you spilled the beans about book number five on the show, and so I'd like to see if we can continue that tradition here, if I can twist your arm.

**BOYACK:** (laughing)

**WOODS:** So what's the sixth book? I actually don't even know, myself, what the sixth book is, so do you feel like telling me on the air?

**BOYACK:** Yeah, you know, Tom, you've been very good for me over the years, helping spread the word of the series, and so I'm definitely excited to share that first with your listeners and with you. We plan ten books in the whole series. That's been our plan from the outset. Once we published the first book, which was just a test – you know, we had no clue what the response would be. We thought perhaps we would only do one book, and that's why we chose *The Law*, because for Elijah, the illustrator, and myself, that was like the most important book in our own education and progression in this movement, so we said, you know, if nothing else, let's produce this book. But the response has been great, so we decided to continue. We're going to do ten books total.

As you say, this is the fifth book that just comes out today. The sixth book is one that I imagine many people haven't read, but for me it was my introduction into the liberty movement. I was watching a documentary in 2005. It was a private screening. The documentary was *America: Freedom to Fascism* by Aaron Russo – the late Aaron Russo, I should say. And I was not in our movement; I didn't understand these ideas, but I was invited there. And I watched that documentary, and it was kind of a review of the decline of America.

And there was this guy in there who made a lot of sense, this old guy, and I thought, I'm going to go look that guy up. Well, that guy was Ron Paul. And I was heading to Africa on a service trip that summer. Right before I left, I bought a book. I bought one of Ron Paul's books. It's actually a compilation of his speeches. It's called *A Foreign Policy of Freedom*. And it's a brown book; it's a compilation of speeches he's given in Congress over the years on the issue of foreign policy and nonintervention and so forth. And I read that on the plane ride over to Africa and underlined the heck out of that thing. I mean, I was just blown away. I was a newcomer to these ideas, and just got back, watched every YouTube video I could find of this guy and supported his campaign and the rest is history.

So that book, we're basing our Tuttle Twins book on *The Foreign Policy of Freedom*, but really we're pulling out of there the key ideas. And so this is going to be a book to teach kids about the nonaggression principle and the Golden Rule, and then we're going to couch it a little bit in terms of foreign policy as well to talk about nonintervention as just an extension of the nonaggression principle. So fundamentally, this book is going to be teaching kids about the NAP – not the kind that they've known for years, but the other kind. And so we really wanted to include those principles.

There hasn't been a really good book in our movement that just talks about the nonaggression principle. In fact, you may remember, Tom, I reached out to you a couple months ago. I talked to several other folks as well, trying to say, Hey guys, is there just a book on the nonaggression principle, like a really good book that I'm just not aware of, that I haven't come across? And everyone kind of collectively shrugged their shoulders. You know, Oh, a little bit here and a little bit there, and, Rothbard talks about it in this chapter of this book or whatever. And the more I thought about it I realized Ron Paul's book, and frankly his whole career, is one of educating people about the nonaggression principle. That book has huge personal value for me, and anyone who reads it is going to be very well educated. Those issues, unlike Hayek's book, are definitely still relevant to our day. And so that's Tuttle Twins VI, tentatively titled *The Tuttle Twins and the Golden Rule*.

**WOODS:** Wow, that is excellent. Holy cow, that is really, really important and good. Well, I can't wait. Do you have an estimate as to when it'll be done?

**BOYACK:** Yeah, current timing we're thinking probably April of 2017.

**WOODS:** All right, take one minute to tell us about your initiative with schools, which is very interesting.

**BOYACK:** Oh yeah, thanks for bringing that up. So Tuttle Twins, the series has spread very well through word of mouth, and we do conventions and some social media campaigns. But as we've sat back, we've realized there's a huge market and a huge missed opportunity if we're not in the schools, and so we're deciding to take *The Tuttle Twins and the Miraculous Pencil*, the book about the free market, which is politically benign, and we're going to start placing that directly into schools.

And so if any of your listeners are teachers of elementary school-aged students, or if you know any teachers that teach kids maybe grades 2 to 5, roughly, send them to [TuttleTwins.com/school](http://TuttleTwins.com/school), and that's where we have a landing page where teachers can sign up. We will give teachers a free lesson plan. More importantly, we will send free copies of *The Tuttle Twins and the Miraculous Pencil*, one for every single student. Oftentimes programs like this, they'll send like a classroom set that's designed to just stay in the classroom so that kids, as they progress through that class over the years, will get it. We're not doing that. These books are designed for the kids to take home, to keep reading, keep learning.

And then of course the benefit for us is that the parents will learn about the book, they'll learn about the whole series, we'll give them some information on how they can get the rest of the series, and so that's how we'll expose a lot more kids to these ideas. But we're going to be providing thousands and thousands of copies of *The Tuttle Twins and the Miraculous Pencil* for free around the country, so all teachers need to be pointed to [TuttleTwins.com/school](http://TuttleTwins.com/school). There is no curriculum that teaches about the free market, spontaneous order, economic harmony, collaboration, competition, nothing like that. It's not in Common Core; it's not in textbooks. And so we've done some early testing with some teachers who are phenomenally excited about this, and so it's a great opportunity for us to begin to insert ourselves in a process where kids are not only being taught this stuff, but they're being taught contrary ideas. And so [TuttleTwins.com/school](http://TuttleTwins.com/school) is where anyone can find out more information.

And then for this book we've talked about today, *The Road to Surfdom*, our brand new book that comes out today, that is at [TuttleTwins.com/surfdom](https://TuttleTwins.com/surfdom), and whether you spell it with a U or an E, it'll take you to the same book. [TuttleTwins.com/surfdom](https://TuttleTwins.com/surfdom). And by the way, if you use coupon code WOODS, we'll give you 25% off that book through the end of the week.

**WOODS:** Wow, that is really good. All right, so definitely make sure and use that coupon code, [TuttleTwins.com](https://TuttleTwins.com). I'll link to all this at [TomWoods.com/784](https://TomWoods.com/784). Well, good luck with the book, Connor, as always, and congratulations.

**BOYACK:** Thanks very much, Tom. I appreciate it, as always.