

Whose Freedom?

WHOSE FREEDOM?

The
Battle over
America's Most
Important Idea

GEORGE LAKOFF

Author of Don't Think of an Elephant!

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Since September 11, 2001, the Bush administration has relentlessly invoked the word “freedom.” The United States can strike preemptively because “freedom is on the march.” Social security should be privatized in order to protect individual freedoms. In the 2005 presidential inaugural speech, the words “freedom,” “free,” and “liberty” were used forty-nine times. “Freedom” is one of the most contested words in American political discourse, the keystone to the domestic and foreign policy battles that are racking this polarized nation. For many Democrats, it seems that President Bush’s use of the word is meaningless and contradictory—deployed opportunistically to justify American military action abroad and the curtailing of civil liberties at home. But in *Whose Freedom?*, George Lakoff, an adviser to the Democratic party, shows that in fact the right has effected a devastatingly coherent and ideological redefinition of freedom. The conservative revolution has remade freedom in its own image and deployed it as a central weapon on the front lines of everything from the war on terror to the battles over religion in the classroom and abortion. In a deep and alarming analysis, Lakoff explains the mechanisms behind this hijacking of our most cherished political idea—and shows how progressives have not only failed to counter the right-wing attack on freedom but have failed to recognize its nature. *Whose Freedom?* argues forcefully what progressives must do to take back ground in this high-stakes war over the most central idea in American life.

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