



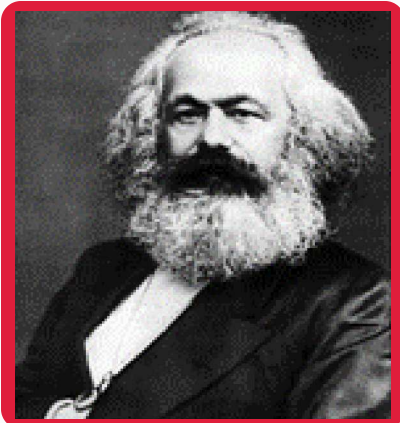
CIVICS IN REAL LIFE

Civics is all around us. There is a lot to know about the government and how "We the People" interact with the government and each other. Let's help each other expand our civic literacy.

Remembering the Victims of Communism

The principles and values of communism are vastly different from the [founding principles and values of the United States](#). Wherever it has been implemented, it has challenged the concept of natural rights and the freedoms and liberties of citizens.

In plain language, [communism](#) is both an economic system and a government system. [In this system](#), there is no personal property and individual people do not own land, factories, businesses, or machinery. Instead, everything is owned by the government or the community. Theoretically, this means that everyone gets a share of what is created. [Karl Marx](#), one of the founders of communism, believed that it should be "From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs." What this means is that you would contribute what you could, and you would get what you needed. However, it is important to note that Marx's idea here was a theory. When societies actually try to implement communism, it instead leads to massive corruption, poverty, suffering, and violations of natural rights.



The first country to implement communism was Russia. In 1917, there was [a massive revolution](#) in that country. The people of Russia were exhausted by the massive suffering of [World War One](#) and the ongoing oppression imposed by [the czar](#), or king. Led by [VI Lenin](#), the [Bolsheviks](#) overthrew the czar and imposed the system of communism on the Russian Empire. Shortly thereafter, it became known as the [Union of Soviet Socialist Republics](#). Over the [next 70 years](#), the Soviet Union became the most important rival of the United



States. During this time, efforts were made by the communists to extoll the virtues of the so called "worker's paradise" of the Soviet Union in an effort to undermine American democracy by highlighting the [economic](#) and social problems the United States was experiencing under its capitalist system. However, no such "worker's paradise" ever existed; the Soviet Union imposed [a great deal of suffering](#) on its people in the name of communism. This included [massive prison camps](#) and forced relocations, limited rights, the starvation of the Ukrainian people (known today as the [Holodomor](#)), and a great deal of poverty and deprivation as the government struggled to meet the needs of the people. The communist system eventually collapsed, and [the Soviet Union lowered its last flag in 1991](#). Today, Russia and many of the former republics of the Soviet Union continue to struggle with economic and political problems as a consequence of the communist era.

Other countries have imposed communism on their people as well, and unlike the former Soviet Union, the people in these countries continue to suffer under some form of communism. China is the largest, and while economically the nation has moved away from the principles and ideas of communism (private property and business is allowed, for example, with some restrictions), [politically it remains incredibly repressive and the Communist Party is the only authorized political force](#). Cuba is another country that continues to proclaim itself a communist nation. While Cuba was once an ally of the United States, Cuban revolutionaries, led by the brothers [Fidel](#) and [Raul Castro](#) and [Che Guevara](#), overthrew the dictatorship that ruled the island and [imposed communism on the people](#). As in the Soviet Union, it caused a great deal of suffering, and many Cubans left the island to come to the United States just 90 miles away. Even with the Castros out of power, Cuba remains communist, and [its people continue to suffer](#).

It is important to remember that while the United States may have some issues, [our founding principles](#) in the Declaration of Independence and our Constitution continue to guide us. We must continue to stick to these principles, to ensure that we do achieve liberty and justice for all. And perhaps we can continue to serve as [a shining city upon a hill](#) for those suffering under communist systems, a place where they can one day find hope and freedom.

To Think and To Do:

By understanding the atrocities people of the world continue to suffer under communist regimes we deepen our understanding and appreciation of the role natural rights play in our Constitutional Republic. The words "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness" is more than just a phrase found in the Declaration of Independence. The words are the foundation of what makes our Constitutional Republic work. On this Victims of Communism Day, read the [Declaration of Independence](#), and reflect on how its promise has helped secure your "blessings of liberty."

LEARN MORE

[Communism](#), from the Library of Congress
[The Gulag](#), from George Mason University
[Operation Pedro Pan](#), from National Public Radio



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