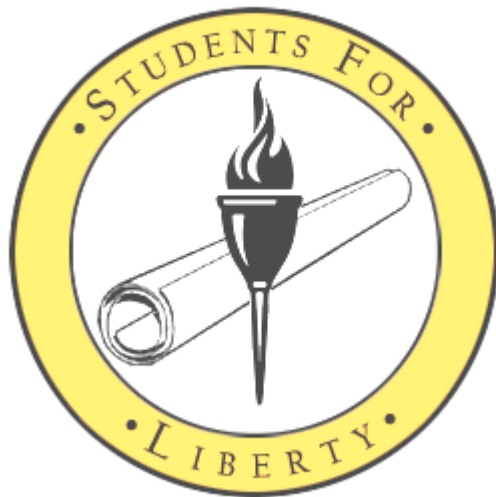


# 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Fall of the Berlin Wall

## Student Activism Handbook



© Students For Liberty, 2009

*A Free Academy, A Free Society*



# Students For Liberty

## I. Remember The Wall

On November 9<sup>th</sup>, 1989, the Berlin Wall was torn down. Created to prevent people in Berlin from fleeing the USSR to Western Europe and capitalism, the Berlin Wall was one of the greatest and most terrible symbols of communism in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Likewise, the tearing down of the Wall represented a momentous victory for liberty, representative government, and capitalism. No longer were people caged into a communist regime they did not support. Instead, people became free to cross between one side and another.

On November 9<sup>th</sup>, 2009, you have the opportunity to join students around the world in celebrating the destruction of this symbol of tyranny and oppression by hosting an event on your campus honoring the past and relating the lessons the world should have learned to prevent the wall from being constructed again in the future. It's important to emphasize both the historical importance of this date and the implications of the Berlin Wall in today's world where government expansion and oppressive authoritarian regimes threaten to bring back the horrors of communism.

On November 9<sup>th</sup>, students around the world will honor the past and protect the future by commemorating this historic occasion. For many of today's students, the Berlin Wall is something we have no memory of or perhaps were not even alive to live through. We should be and are glad for that. If we do not want to see another wall erected, it is up to us to prevent it from happening. Let's remind our fellow students, our professors, our communities, and our world that we remember and we won't let it happen again!





# **Students For Liberty**

## **II. Recommended Events**

### **Event 1 – Construct a Fake Wall to Tear Down**

The Berlin Wall was a powerful symbol in large part because of its image. It's difficult for many of us to imagine a wall literally dividing a city in half, keeping you on one side and preventing you from visiting the other. The image of a wall has powerful connotations that only come from seeing a wall. This date offers you the opportunity to construct a replica wall on your own campus to portray that image to your campus. And at the end of the day, you can destroy the wall to watch the glory of tearing down tyranny.

So how can you build this wall? There are several means:

- 1) Shoeboxes – The advantage of building a wall out of many shoeboxes is that you can write names on each of the boxes representing the evils that caused the first wall to be built or the policies that are rebuilding the wall today.
- 2) Cardboard Boxes – Similar to shoeboxes, these are relatively easy to collect and allow you to build the wall with different messages.
- 3) Styrafoam – This may be more difficult to obtain, but can look very good if you are able to get enough styrafoam to create a large wall.

Here are a few tips about creating a replica Wall that you should keep in mind:

- 1) Make sure it's big. Having a 3 foot wall will do little to make an impact on people. In fact, they may just laugh at it. You need to make sure the wall is at least 5 feet tall and impressive for people to care about it.
- 2) Make sure the wall doesn't fall down on its own. It'd be pretty embarrassing to have a gust of wind knock over your wall before you can symbolically destroy it. Try putting weights on the bottom or taping the structure to the ground.

### **Event 2 – Create a Wall of Art (the Berlin Method)**

The anniversary of this event is being specially celebrated in Berlin, Germany, for obvious reasons. After a long time of deliberation, Berlin chose to celebrate the destruction of the Berlin Wall by creating a wall of art, recreating something where people can spray paint messages, pictures, and anything else they want to include as a means of expressing their thoughts about the anniversary. When the Berlin Wall was standing, people covered it in graffiti with all kinds of political and non-political messages. It served as a way for people to express their anger and disgust with the Wall. Creating a wall of art on your own campus can be a tremendous means of replicating this same effort.



## **Students For Liberty**

### **Event 3 – Host a Survivor of Communism**

Personal stories are some of the most powerful tools available to express the horrors of an unjust system. By hosting someone who lived under the USSR to speak on campus, you are providing one of the most emotional and compelling narratives of why communism is not only flawed, but evil.

Finding a USSR survivor is a difficult task. There is no single list of individuals who lived under the USSR (that's probably a good thing, though), and it's not as though you can just place an ad in the paper for someone to come forward. The way you will be able to find someone who lived in the USSR is to contact pro-liberty groups in your area and ask for personal referrals. The heads of organizations will likely know if anyone is in the area who survived the USSR, but may not be willing to give you their names. You need to have a strong relationship with these organizations and make clear your intentions with the event.

*Note:* If you plan to host a speaker on the evils of communism or someone who lived under the USSR, make sure to do so in a respectful manner. This topic could very well be an emotional troubling one for the speaker, so make sure they are comfortable with the talk and that you and the speaker are on the same page with what you want to accomplish with the talk.

### **Event 4 – Host a Speaker about Communism**

You don't need to have a USSR survivor to have a speaker on November 9<sup>th</sup>, though. Hosting any speaker who can talk about the impact of communism or the history of the USSR would be a valuable talk. This could be an economist who can talk about the problems of communist economic policy. This could be a historian who has documented what occurred under the USSR and can speak to the atrocities committed by the government. This could be a political theorist who can speak on the oppressive nature of communism.

### **Event 5 – Screen a Movie**

If you want to bring in the cinematic element to this date, consider playing a movie about the evils of the USSR. Unfortunately, there are not many available that do this, but several great works are widely available for you to play:

- *The Lives of Others* – A beautiful portrayal of one member of the KGB recognizing his own humanity and the evils of the USSR by monitoring a dissident artist in East Berlin.
- *The Soviet Story* – A powerful new movie documenting the horrors of the USSR. Visit [www.SovietStory.com](http://www.SovietStory.com) to learn more.



## **Students For Liberty**

### **Event 6 – Create a Graveyard for the Victims of Communism**

You've likely seen the graveyards representing the number of people who have died because of the War in Iraq. While these deaths are certainly travesties, their numbers are only in the thousands compared to the tens of millions of people who were intentionally killed by the USSR thanks to the philosophy of communism. These deaths deserve as much recognition and should be highlighted on your campus.

How to do this:

- 1) Get materials for mini graves – No matter what religion you are, the easy thing to do is buy or build mini-crosses to place in the ground. To save money, consider getting popsicle sticks and glue to create the crosses. You will need several hundred to properly represent the number of deaths caused by communism (if each grave you place represents several thousand deaths).
- 2) Get university permission – For the graveyard to have any impact, it needs to be in the middle of campus. This will likely require approval from the administration, so you need to get on top of this ASAP.
- 3) Place the graves the night before – This is going to take several hours, so get volunteers to help do this.
- 4) Hand out literature during the day – People will not get the meaning of your graveyard of communism unless you are standing beside it handing out fliers explaining that each grave represents thousands, if not hundreds of thousands of deaths caused by communism since its conception.
- 5) Optional: Create signs describing the event and stake them in the ground next to the graveyard.
- 6) You can also make a sign(s) describing the event and stake them in the ground next to the graveyard.

### **Event 7 – Throw a Party**

If you'd rather not have a depressing event, but want to use this date to be merry, then consider throwing a celebration for the victory of capitalism! Have a small party where you cheer on the fight for freedom. This doesn't require much of an explanation, but make sure that your message with this party is that the world is better for no longer having a wall dividing a city in half.



## Students For Liberty

### III. Tips

**Tip 1** – When the Berlin Wall was actually being torn down in 1989, Pink Floyd played a concert in Berlin featuring their album, “The Wall”. It could be fun to play this album throughout your event to attract more attention and lighten the mood.

**Tip 2** – Hand Out Literature. People won’t understand the event if you don’t give them a flier of some kind to take home and read. Make sure you have something to put in their hands and explain the importance of this date.

**Tip 3** – Have Signs. Handing out flyers is not enough because people are likely to throw them away. You need to catch their attention before you give them a flier to entice them to take the flier and *WANT* to read it. Big signs with catchy slogans can help accomplish this.

**Tip 4** – Have a Sign-Up Form. When you host an activist event like this, you want to make sure you can follow up with people. You’re not going to change their minds from being raging socialists to libertarians just from seeing a fake wall. You need to make sure you can send messages to them about the event once it’s done, about upcoming events, about the flaws with new government policies, etc. Whenever someone shows an interest in your group, sign them up to the list-serve!

**Tip 5** – Document the Event! If you don’t have documentation that the event happened, it didn’t happen. Take lots of pictures. Get video clips of the event. Write up a summary of it afterward that you can send out to your list-serve and other organizations. Make sure you have some kind of record to take pride in your accomplishments!

**Tip 6** – Stay on Message! Don’t stray away from the message of the day, relating the past atrocities that humanity was able to overcome, to the potential atrocities coming back today. People will only remember the main message and talking points you use, so stick to the talking points you want them to take away.

**Tip 7** – Tell SFL about your event so we can promote it! Email Clark Ruper at [cruper@studentsforliberty.org](mailto:cruper@studentsforliberty.org) with your group’s name and a description of your event so we can add it to the database of events student groups are hosting around the world. Once your event is done, tell us how it went so we can report your success!

**Tip 8** – Apply for a Student Protest Grant at [www.studentsforliberty.org/college/groups/protests/](http://www.studentsforliberty.org/college/groups/protests/) to receive financial or in-kind support from SFL and Bureaucrash for your event!

**Tip 9** – Have Fun! There’s no reason to host events like this if you’re not enjoying it. This is supposed to be a really fun day where you can celebrate one of the greatest victories for freedom in the history of the world and help avoid repeating the same mistake in the future. So have fun with the event! Go forth and spread liberty!