

Rockwell, Roosevelt and Freedom **B1**

Norman Rockwell (1894-1978), Le problème qui nous concerne tous, 1963. Huile sur toile, 91,4x148,1 cm. Illustration pour Look du 14 janvier 1964. Collection du Norman Rockwell Museum.



"The Problem We All Live With 1963"

Rockwell and Roosevelt: the Four Freedoms

To commemorate the 75th anniversary the D-Day landings, the Mémorial de Caen is hosting a touring exhibition dedicated to Norman Rockwell's depictions of President Roosevelt's Four Freedoms, and his later work.

4 June-27 October 2019

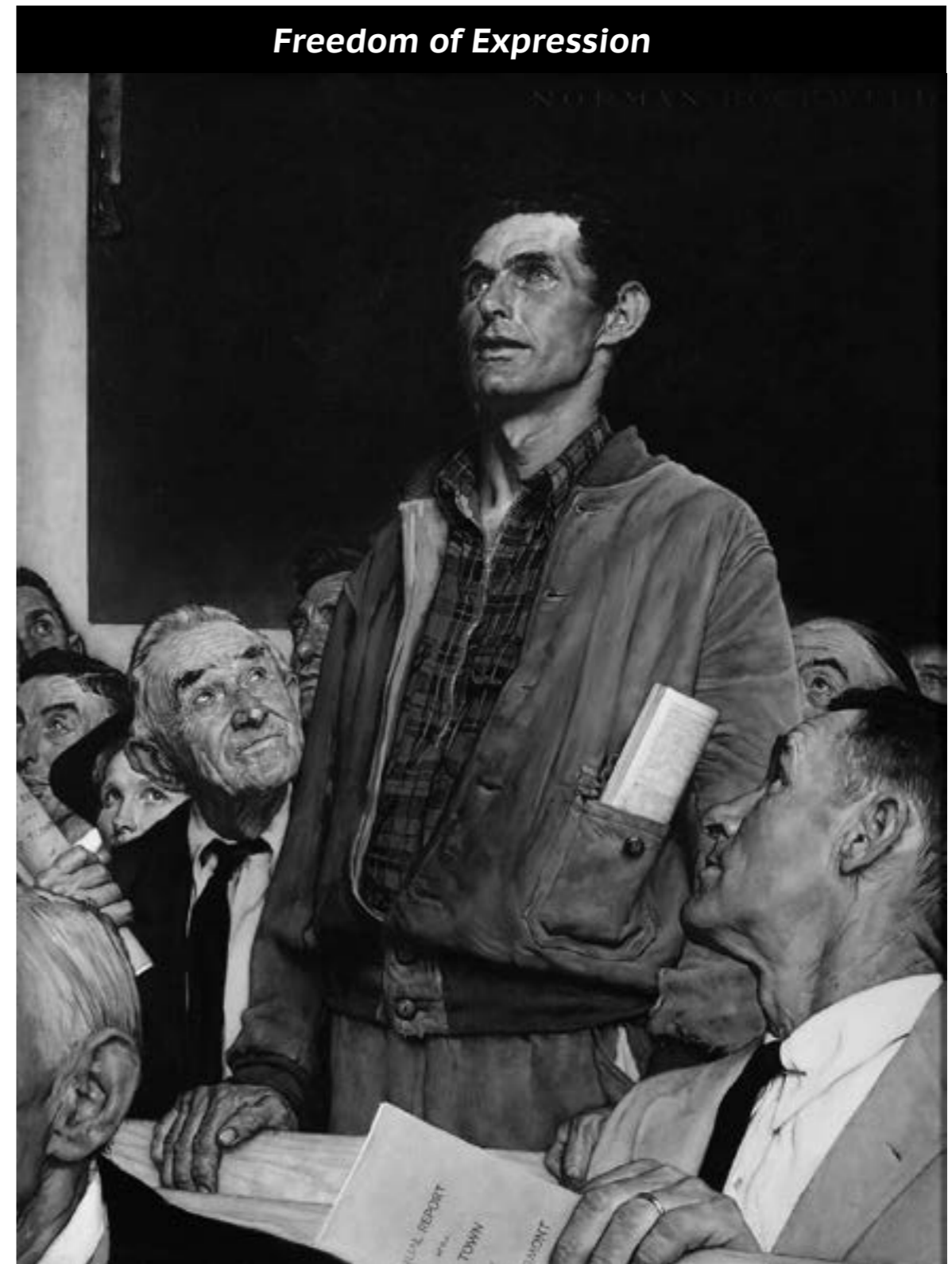
[http://normandy.
memorial-caen.com](http://normandy.memorial-caen.com)

How did a speech and four paintings influence American participation in World War II, and the peace which followed?

In 1940, the U.S.A. was slowly recovering from the First World War and the terrible economic Depression of the 1930s. The last thing most Americans wanted was to get involved in the new World War that was raging in Europe and Asia. President Franklin D. Roosevelt foresaw that American participation was inevitable. The country couldn't stand by while its allies and trade partners were decimated by war. Roosevelt was popular since he had helped relieve the worst of the Depression with his New Deal. But even he would find it difficult to raise enthusiasm for joining the war.

In January, 1941, he started to pave the way. In his annual State of the Union speech to the two houses of Congress, he described the four "freedoms" he believed were the pillars of a peaceful, democratic world: Freedom of Speech, Freedom of Worship, Freedom from Fear and Freedom from Want. Citizens, he said, should be free to express their opinions, and to practise the religion they chose. They should be able to live in peace and security, and in an economy that met their basic needs.

Newspaper reports of the speech barely mentioned this section. The mood of the country wasn't ready.



Help

foresee (v) anticipate

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Freedom of Worship



Promoting the Four Freedoms

The Presidency set out to promote the Four Freedoms. Artists in all fields were commissioned to depict them. But they didn't really inspire public enthusiasm. The U.S.A. joined the War in December 1941 because the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor, not because there was a great wave of public belief in the need to defend freedom.

In the end, it was an illustrator who would bring the Freedoms to life and into the public's heart.

Norman Rockwell was an enormously popular illustrator. He started working regularly for *The Saturday Evening Post* in 1916. It was a very popular weekly magazine, and his cover illustrations became famous. Rockwell, like many other artists, collaborated with the government in producing propaganda images. In 1942, he came up with an idea to illustrate the Four Freedoms. *The Saturday Evening Post* commissioned four covers.

Rockwell's intuition was to depict these abstract concepts anchored in everyday, small-town life. His inspiration for Freedom of Speech came after he saw a man stand up in a town hall meeting and make a point no one else agreed with. Yet they listened respectfully to his opinion. Freedom from Want shows a family about to eat a Thanksgiving meal, the grandparents placing an enormous roast turkey on the table. Freedom of Worship is an almost monochrome image of people in close-up, praying. And Freedom from Fear shows parents putting their two children to bed. The father is holding a newspaper reporting on the Blitz bombings of London.

The paintings were published in February and March 1943,

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and were immediately popular. The originals were sent on a 16-city tour to encourage people to buy war bonds, collecting \$132 million, an enormous sum.

United Nations and Human Rights

Franklin Roosevelt died in April 1945, just before the end of the War. But the legacy of his Four Freedoms continued into the post-war period with the foundation of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. His widow, Eleanor Roosevelt, devoted herself to having the freedoms enshrined in the founding document of international relations, in the belief that respecting them would help avoid another global conflict.

Norman Rockwell, as he aged, became more militant in the subjects he tackled. His early, enormously popular work, is often very consensual, depicting a vision of America as country of small towns where people happily went about quiet lives. It was a world that was probably already disappearing in the 1940s, if it ever really existed. In 1963, Rockwell moved to *Look* magazine, and there he took on the troubled issues of his age, from civil rights to the Vietnam war.

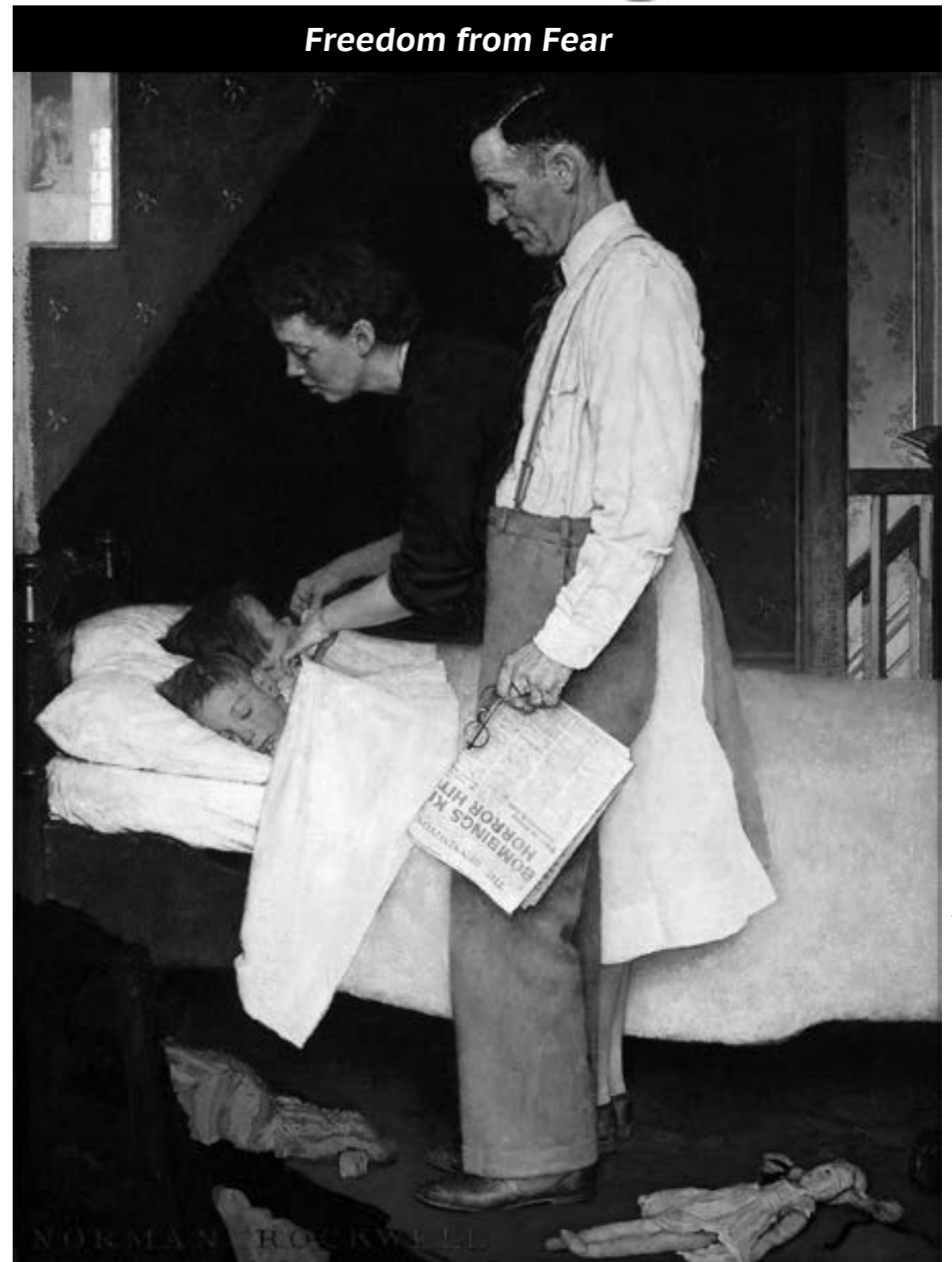
Perhaps the most famous painting of that period was "*The Problem We All Live With*". It shows six-year-old Ruby Bridges, the first African-American child to attend a white primary school in New Orleans, in 1960. The small girl is being escorted into school by four large men, wearing armbands

Help

enshrine (v) keep, secure

tackle (v) deal with, illustrate

Freedom from Fear



Norman Rockwell (1894-1978), Liberté d'être protégé, 1943. Huile sur toile, 116,2x90,2 cm. Illustration pour The Saturday Evening Post du 13 mars 1943. Collection du Norman Rockwell Museum. ©SEPS: Curtis Licensing, Indianapolis, IN. Tous droits réservés. www.curtislicensing.com

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that say, "Deputy U.S. Marshal". The wall behind her is splashed with tomato juice and has an offensive word written on it. It doesn't show the screaming white protestors that Ruby had to pass every day for a year, but the violence of the situation is nonetheless clear. It is a painting that still shocks today, and at the time it appeared on the cover of *Look* magazine, brought the uncomfortable truth of segregation into people's homes. ■



■ Franklin Delano Roosevelt 1882-1945

FDR was the only American President elected to four terms. He served from 1933 till his death in 1945.

Previous presidents had respected the precedent set by the first President, George Washington, of only serving two terms. Since 1951, the Constitution prevents a President serving more than two terms.

During the Depression in the 1930s, he championed the New Deal, launching public construction projects to provide work for the unemployed.



Freedom from Want

Norman Rockwell (1894-1978), Liberté de vivre à l'abri du besoin, 1943. Huile sur toile, 116,2x90,2 cm. Illustration pour The Saturday Evening Post du 6 mars 1943. Collection du Norman Rockwell Museum. ©SEPS: Curtis Licensing, Indianapolis, IN. Tous droits réservés. www.curtislicensing.com

■ EXTRACT:

President Franklin D Roosevelt's State of the Union Speech, 6 January 1941

■ In the future days, which we seek to make secure, we look forward to a world founded upon four essential human freedoms.

■ The first is freedom of speech and expression—everywhere in the world.

■ The second is freedom of every person to worship God in his own way—everywhere in the world.

■ The third is freedom from want—which, translated into world terms, means economic understanding which will secure to every nation a healthy peacetime life for its inhabitants—everywhere in the world.

■ The fourth is freedom from fear—which, translated into world terms, means a world-wide reduction of armaments to such a point and in such a thorough fashion that no nation will be in a position to commit an act of physical aggression against any neighbor—anywhere in the world.

Eleanor Roosevelt holding a giant print on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights

