



**Live Free**  
**Guest: Amanda BillyRock**  
**March 25, 2014**

***Amanda BillyRock is a libertarian blogger and a member of the Free State Project.***

**WOODS:** Let's start off with the most pressing issue of all, which is: what's the deal with your last name?

**BILLYROCK:** [Laughter] Oh, good point! When I started on YouTube like a super-long time ago, I just wanted to create an account to leave a comment on a video, so I just chose a random name. Then fast-forward to two years later, when I released my own first video I never remembered to change it, and so after a few videos came out, I figured it would be silly to change a name that a few people have become accustomed to, so I left it.

**WOODS:** Nice! Okay. I have always to ask because I thought there's no way that's a real name, but I am afraid to find out what the deal is. All right, that's good. You could be like half the people in New Hampshire and call yourself Amanda Freeman, but it's too late. Now you've got BillyRock and that's what it is.

**BILLYROCK:** I guess so!

**WOODS:** Since I did mention New Hampshire, maybe we can talk about how the Free State Project has been going. How long ago did you move to New Hampshire?

**BILLYROCK:** It's been almost seven months now, and it's truly the time of my life. This is the best decision I could have made as an adult, where I am right now, doing what I want to do.

**WOODS:** Wow, that's great. And you find that, generally speaking, the Free State community has been very welcoming. They helped you as you were arriving, or whatever. I mean, you had friends there to start with, I assume?

**BILLYROCK:** I have had just a few acquaintances that I had at PorcFest, and they have been—welcoming is an understatement. To use the words of Stefan Molyneux, I feel like I found my tribe. And so you know, for the first time in my life I am like hanging out with people, with groups of friends, and I have things to do on the weekends and whatnot. This is the opposite of me in high school. In high school I stayed home on the weekends. We were moving around all the time, so I was lucky if I had *a* friend.

**WOODS:** Wow.

**BILLYROCK:** And so, yeah, I am kind of like a decade late on this whole being social thing, and so I was glad that it happened for me eventually.

**WOODS:** That's so funny. That's the opposite of what I would have thought.

**BILLYROCK:** Yeah, it's true.

**WOODS:** Well, now in New Hampshire, before we get any further on this, I want to know if you can tell people what the Free State Project is. Probably 90 percent of the people who listen to this program know what the Free State Project is, but I have newbies all the time, and I don't want to talk in a different language from them. So just give us the three-sentence overview of what you're trying to do in the Free

State Project.

**BILLYROCK:** Sure, well, it was based on an academic paper that was written in 2001 by a doctoral student whose thesis was how liberty can be achieved in our lifetime. He theorized that if enough like-minded people could congregate in one geographical area, that they could influence local politics and culture enough that an almost sort of secession, however you want to think about that, could take place. And so far, over 1500 of us have made the move early. Once 20,000 signers are reached, everyone will move within five years. Right now we're at almost 16,000 signers.

**WOODS:** Well, you have already told me something I didn't know. I didn't know that this doctoral thesis was the origin of the Free State Project. So that's great. I am glad I asked you the question. Now, I have gotten a lot of requests from people wanting to know why I don't move to New Hampshire, and the problem is we just have a lot of roots right now in terms of my kids and family in Kansas. I don't ultimately have roots in Kansas. My roots are in Massachusetts and New Hampshire would be no problem for me culturally or any other way. But unfortunately we're kind of stuck here—and the idea that in New Hampshire you get to hang around with big groups of friends is so alien to me because in Kansas I am living basically in Huckabee country. This is not Ron Paul Central. This is not a state where if I have an event, I get a big crowd. If I go to Utah—I have already got a big crowd lined up for an event that I am doing in May. But in Kansas I could give them five years' notice and it wouldn't make any difference. So I am deeply envious of what you've done.

Now, I first got to know about you from your YouTube channel, and then we met when you came to the Mises Institute. So I wonder if you can talk about starting a YouTube channel, what made you decide to do it, and how did you do it, because you've been very effective. You've built up something of a fan base. People know who you are just because you got a camera and you're effective in front of the camera, and you talk about things that matter to people. How did that get started? How does somebody think to himself: you know, I think I'll start up a YouTube channel? It seems like rather an undertaking.

**BILLYROCK:** You know, it is, and it's not an undertaking that I undertook. It was an accident almost. I was just getting super into the Ron Paul campaign and the Iowa primaries were coming up. It was December of 2011, and there was a contest being hosted to give a stump speech for Ron Paul in the Iowa primaries.

**WOODS:** Oh, yeah!

**BILLYROCK:** Yeah, and so they wanted people to post sample speeches of themselves so that they could judge and choose a winner, and so my YouTube channel was started just because I was entering a contest.

**WOODS:** And now how many videos do you have, roughly?

**BILLYROCK:** About 75 now.

**WOODS:** Wow, okay. And they are about how many minutes each?

**BILLYROCK:** I try to stay between two and three.

**WOODS:** Well, that is perfect. I wish I could follow your advice. I say to myself, I am going to keep this video short, and it winds up 15 minutes. Nobody watches a 15-minute video. But two to three minutes is absolutely excellent. Have you been continuing to update it or are you busy with other things now?

**BILLYROCK:** I probably post a new video like once a month now, and it's always something new, like what's going on here in the Free State, like, recently we went out at night and found ourselves in a situation where there was some inappropriateness going on in the street. The police just kind of camping out in an area where they really weren't welcome. My friend approached this police vehicle and started asking the officer for his identification and telling him that they could smell alcohol on his breath and saying, well, if you don't have anything to hide, why won't you let us search your trunk?

**WOODS:** Oh!

**BILLYROCK:** And Tom, I tell you what. These cops, they got a bit puffed up for a bit, but then they left, and it's my most highly viewed video I have ever posted.

**WOODS:** Wow!

**BILLYROCK:** And so yeah, when interesting things happen in here, that's what gets posted these days.

**WOODS:** Tell us a little bit about the circumstances behind your arrest not long ago. Were you in New Hampshire already when that happened?

**BILLYROCK:** That was in New Hampshire, yes. That was in December, and I was arrested for what they called "contempt of cop." Basically if someone is shouting orders at you and it's very important to his ego that you obey and he's a member of the monopoly on violence, he's just going to put you in the cage for a night because he can, and so that's what happened.

**WOODS:** But maybe you were asking for it. That's what the typical law-and-order person would say. You must have been up to no good, right? Cops don't just arbitrarily go up to people and put them in cages, or do they?

**BILLYROCK:** You know, it's crazy. The headlines the next day said, "Billyrock Arrested for DUI," blah, blah, blah. Because that is what the police department—they can say whatever they want, but then once the headlines die down about a month later, then I have to tell people, oh, by the way, I wasn't driving under the influence and they know it, which is why they just dropped that charge.

**WOODS:** So what did you do that was contemptuous of them? Were you screaming at them? Were you calling them names? Were you physically harming them? What was it that amounted to contempt of cop? I would love to know.

**BILLYROCK:** It was actually the opposite of that. I actually refused to speak at all at the traffic stop. I was pulled over. I don't know why. I was never told why. I provided my papers just like I was asked. Updated, legal, valid papers. But I didn't answer questions, and within 30 seconds of it being clear that I wasn't going to answer questions, Michael Armstrong, an officer in Laconia, New Hampshire, threatened to break in my car window.

**WOODS:** Wow!

**BILLYROCK:** Yeah.

**WOODS:** So at that point did they pull you out of the car? What happened next?

**BILLYROCK:** My passenger chose to get out of the car because she believed that she could reason with them by stepping out of the car, and she left the car door open, which gave them opportunity to reach in and unlock my driver's side door from the inside and unbuckle me and physically pull me out.

**WOODS:** Wow!

**BILLYROCK:** And so these two men who were twice my size, right? Pulling me out of the car.

**WOODS:** And you're still not speaking at this point?

**BILLYROCK:** No, no, no. I am not speaking. One of the charges they tried to throw at me later was resisting arrest, as though I am going to try to muscle my way out of this situation with two men who are twice my size. This whole situation was so revelatory for me of how these thugs operate—"road pirates" is one of my favorite terms, actually.

**WOODS:** But did anybody say to you in the wake of this, look, Amanda, you've got to pick your battles. We know the cops are jerks. But we have the whole world against us. We have every battle under the sun to go fight. Wouldn't it be better for the sake of convenience and your own comfort to just answer their questions and drive on?

**BILLYROCK:** I have had some of that, yes, and you know, maybe that's something, maybe in the future I would speak. I think it's a situational thing. That night, Tom, I had been hanging out with Ademo Freeman and Silver Dave, and they have kind of this running joke going that they call "slave world," which is basically

that we live as slaves in a slave world when it comes down to it. So after having spent a righteous evening with them talking about slave world. Having that told to me on the way home.

**WOODS:** Yeah, you were ready to go.

**BILLYROCK:** I was not about to be a slave, not that night.

**WOODS:** Well, I do know Ademo Freeman, and I can imagine how that conversation would have gone, so okay, great.

Here's something I wanted to ask when we were talking about your YouTube channel, but I have so many ideas in my head, and it's incredible I am able to function at all given the week we've had. We had a baby last week, and then my wife had a C-section and she's still recovering, and then they won't let the baby out of the neo-natal intensive care even though there's nothing wrong with her, and we've got to keep going to the hospital. It's totally crazy. So if I ask questions out of order, it's a miracle I am asking them at all. But I did want to ask, somebody told me that you used your YouTube channel in order to get a response from a company. What's that all about?

**BILLYROCK:** I did. I signed up for a VPN service a couple of months ago, a virtual private network. They basically give you an IP address that's different from your actual IP address so it lends some privacy to your web surfing. I specifically chose this company because they took Bitcoin, because I am unbanked, and so any online purchases I do these days are all with Bitcoin. So I paid for the service, and out of nowhere this company sends me an email asking for my identity, saying it is to prevent payment fraud, and I responded to them, "You really don't understand Bitcoin. There is no such thing as a fraudulent payment. You have the coin. There's no way that transaction can be reversed. And they refused to refund me my money, and so I made a video about it to help protect other Bitcoiners who would also be attracted to them for their VPN service. Within a couple of days, the video had 5,000-6,000 hits, and the company surprisingly, or not so surprisingly, emailed me and said, "Oh, just kidding. We'll totally give you a refund. Sorry about that."

**WOODS:** That is great! I have never used my YouTube channel for something quite like that, but I used my blog once when there was a rental car company—I won't mention their name because they did actually make good on it. But when we got to Tampa for the Paul Festival in 2012, I had reserved a car. And we got there and there was no rental car. "We're all out of cars." And I thought, I don't know if you ever saw the Seinfeld episode where he's rented a car; he goes up to make good on his reservation, and they say, "Sorry, we're out of cars." And he says, "Well, I had a reservation." Yeah, sorry, but we're out of cars. He says, "Do you know what a reservation is?" She says, "I do," and he says, "I don't think you do." The reservation is supposed to keep the car here! So there we are in the middle of Tampa. It's late at night. We have no car. It's the Republican Convention, so all of the cars are rented. It was just awful.

I posted this on my blog, and I really pushed it around, and sure enough, they refunded me— well, they refunded the difference between what I would have had to pay them for a car, and the hugely inflated car price I wound up having to pay from another place that night. They sent me a check. So the Internet really is the great equalizer. Remember that guy who, there was some airline that broke his guitar, so he made a video that had like a million views, and the airline was practically begging him to take a check from them and he doesn't even want it anymore after the way they treated him.

All right, let's talk about crypto-currency. Let's talk about Bitcoin because I have been interested in that, and apparently you're interested in it as well. My key question would be: in the wake of this fiasco at Mt. Gox, is Bitcoin going to have an appeal beyond just people who have an ideological investment in the working of a non-government money? A lot of people like the idea that their dollars are safe in a bank that's insured by the FDIC. They don't want to be told, okay, your money is really not safe, and it's actually been gradually stolen over the course of a few years, but hey, the government wasn't involved, so you can comfort yourself in that way. A lot of people wouldn't take comfort from that. So is this not the beginning of the end for Bitcoin?

**BILLYROCK:** Well, I can't see how anyone wouldn't see the death of Mt. Gox as a huge plus, because if Bitcoin were centrally run and issued, Mt. Gox could have been bailed out at the expense of all of us. I think

it's just so reassuring to see that Bitcoin is a money market in which the bad players actually do fail, so that the capital that they were using poorly can be reallocated to more effective usage. I would think that the death of Mt. Gox would make Bitcoin even more attractive than the dollar.

**WOODS:** Do you think it also teaches a lesson about storing your Bitcoins, keeping them in your own wallet instead of at an exchange?

**BILLYROCK:** Yes. I never used an exchange. I have always taken care of my own storage, and if I were to use—I understand the plight of the trader, right? Because if you're wanting to make large trades, you need to leave large amounts on exchanges, and so I can't speak to that, but I am told by traders that the signs that Mt. Gox was not doing what they were supposed to be doing were evident many, many months, if not over a year, before their death. And so from what I am told, this was seen coming.

**WOODS:** Indeed by many people, but unfortunately many others suffered tremendously, and the thing is that every time I have Erik Voorhees on this program—whom I met in New Hampshire, as a matter of fact—he is always careful to tell people, “Don't put money into Bitcoin that you need to live on,” in other words, money that you can't afford to lose. This is still experimental and to put your entire life's savings in it could be a mistake, particularly if you're going to put it—certainly with Mt. Gox, that would have been a horrifyingly bad mistake.

Now, when you say “unbanked,” I feel like a square. I assume that means that you're not involved in the traditional banking system. I am sorry for being so out of it.

**BILLYROCK:** You're not a square. You got it right on the head there, Tom.

**WOODS:** Is this a term that's now in general use, and I am so out of the loop that I don't know about it?

**BILLYROCK:** No, and you know why? It's only used by squares, I think. I think it's a term that establishment people like to throw around, and they use it in a negative connotation saying, you know, that the millions of unbanked Americans, you know?

**WOODS:** I see.

**BILLYROCK:** And they should get themselves down to the Bank of America today. I use it in a positive sense. I am happy to be unbanked. No more late fees. No more fears that my debit card will be stolen. No more fears that in a Cyprus-like situation the government will just seize the content of my bank account. None of that.

**WOODS:** I can't help asking, Amanda, if you don't mind—and I am sorry that you probably get this question a lot—about your thoughts on the general question of women in libertarianism. It does come up. I have had Julie Borowski on this program, who got into some trouble for her video on that. She makes videos partly that are very informative, and sometimes she just wants to get people's attention and be funny and whatever, and a lot of times not everybody has a sense of humor. But what is your take? Sometimes we get told that the reason there aren't more women is that the men are just creeps, or they are not welcoming, or they are belligerently sexist or whatever, and they don't make it welcoming for women. Is that your experience?

**BILLYROCK:** Not at all, really. And I don't think that liberty is a community before it's an idea. I think that anyone, women included, will or will not be attracted to an idea based on the merits of that idea. I don't think that who hangs out the local libertarian meetup so much has an influence as to how someone feels about an entire ideology. So if the question is, why aren't there more women who have embraced this ideology, through my surfings on Facebook, I will have to tell you there actually are a lot, but they are just not very vocal. A lot of women aren't the kind who are going to go out and you know, go to a protest or write a blog or make a video, or really be very vocal at all. But when you start talking to a lot of these women like, hey, you know, “Do you think there need to be police on every corner?” No. “Do you think there needs to be a federal income tax?” Not particularly. So on and so forth, and so I think that as the movement continues to grow, more women may find that they want to become more vocal and it's not, I don't see that as a problem.

**WOODS:** Well, I don't like the idea in general that we should obsess over percentages of different demographic groups represented in the movement. I think it's just a matter of teaching what we believe and just continuing on, and whoever wants to join is free to join. There's no other institution in American life, or very few, that obsess over this. If I look at baseball games, if I look at opera houses, if I look at museums, I am going to find all different groups there—men, women, racial groups, generational groups. And you know, it is what it is. My audience tends to be younger, but that's not because I am actively discriminating against older people. Anybody can listen to my program. I want everybody. I want the whole world to listen to the program, but I am just going to be me and let the chips fall where they may. I think that's where libertarians have to be. Be who you are, say what you believe, and let the chips fall where they may.

**BILLYROCK:** I like that.

**WOODS:** All right, is there anything we want to close with? What else do you want to tell the world before we say goodbye today?

**BILLYROCK:** Happy second day of spring.

**WOODS:** That's nice. Amanda, I really appreciate your time today, and I know that you and I have crazy schedules, and somehow we were able to make this work. I appreciate that. I hope to see you in your now natural habitat of New Hampshire one of these days soon.

**BILLYROCK:** You will.

**WOODS:** All right, thanks again.