

[Guest Post] Freedom Fighter Interview #3 - White Collar Freedom

Today we have the 3rd in a series of interviews. During this series we will be showcasing other [Freedom Fighters](#) from around the world. I am excited to introduce you to our third guest, Josh from [White Collar Freedom](#). Read Josh's awesome story below. And if you would like to be featured in the Freedom Fighter interview series then be sure to check out the [Guest Posting](#) page for more information (it's open to anyone that is willing to share their fight for freedom: Time Freedom, Location Freedom, and Financial Freedom).

Now I will turn it over to Josh...



1. Who are you and what do you do? What is your story? How are you fighting for your Freedom? Where did you start, where in the journey are you, and where do you ultimately want to end up?

It all started about 1.5 years ago in front of the ATM machine. I punched in my 6-digit PIN and the flickering screen displayed my balance: \$72.00. That was all I had, about halfway into the month. Honestly, till today, I have no idea how I pulled through those remaining 15 days.

23 years old and naive, I landed a rather cushy job that paid slightly above average - which was the promise of achieving above average grades. I still remember receiving my first paycheck in cash and was amazed at how thick the stack of notes were.

Everything could only go upwards from there, or so I thought.

Without much hesitation, I decided to pamper myself a little. I ate whatever I wanted, bought whatever I wanted, saw advertisements in the mall with the tagline: You Only Live Once and I went "Amen! That's right!". So, I ended up with a closet full of clothes, a drawer full of gadgets - earphones, cameras, lenses and all that shit.

I worked hard, so I deserved all that stuff. That's what I really thought and I'm sure there are lots of people out there who still think the same way. Little did I know that I also deserved all the credit card debt that I racked up on myself. It wasn't much - probably in the range of \$5,000 to \$6,000, but that was only after 6 months on the corporate treadmill. For close to a year, I was the perfect, living, breathing definition of a paycheck-to-paycheck guy.

Then life in the rat cage (also known as the office) started to suck. It sucked really bad and all I wanted was to look for another rat cage (hoping that things will change). But here's the thing, I couldn't afford to lose the paycheck. I mean, who's going to pay my bills if I lost the constant stream of paychecks - I had ZERO savings and a neat little sum of debt that worked like chains around my ankle, securely strapping me to the office chair.

To make matters worse, I was working in a foreign country, one that was quite far from home and had a long distance relationship at that time. If you have been in one, you'll know that it's as good as having a relationship with a screen.

So there I was, standing in front of the ATM, looking at that miserable amount and I thought to myself, "I've placed myself away from my family, loved ones and friends for what? \$72 dollars in savings, \$5,000 in debt, a crap load of stuff in the closet and a job that I barely enjoy?".

That revelation was like a firm, tight slap to my face - one that I really needed. It was long overdue. Looking back, it all sounds silly but you'll be surprised to find out how many out there are living life from paycheck-to-paycheck.

I was keen to get myself out of that self-imposed slavery, started reading *The Minimalists* and plenty of other resources on the net – most of them costs nothing. Then I chanced upon [Dividend Mantra](#), [Mr. Money Mustache](#) and opened up an undiscovered part of the Internet.

These were people who understood the whole corporate treadmill/paycheck-to-paycheck conundrum and they had a plan. I was sold – it all made sense.

On a cold Saturday morning in December, I started *White Collar Freedom* to document my journey out of debt and into freedom. I've made pretty significant progress over the past 1.5 years – zero debt, about 18 months worth of freedom, a growing dividend stream and most of all – a saved relationship. We are now engaged.

2. What is your favorite Quote or Mantra that you live by?

I have a few that I really like:

“We’re like the princess who keeps kissing toads, hoping one day to find herself hugging a handsome prince. Our jobs are our toads” – Vicki Robin & Joe Dominguez

“It’s true that people often complain about working twelve-hour days, balancing two jobs, or suffering through double shifts, but it seems our complaints are often just thinly veiled boasts about how busy our lives are, as if having no time for leisure, for a good night’s sleep, or to do the things we actually want to do is some virtuous sacrifice we should all strive to make.” – Ken Ilgunas

“You need to OWN your future” – J. Money

3. Where in the world are you from?

I’m currently living and working in one of the tiniest cities in Asia – it’s GDP however, grows at a rate that trumps that of the U.S. Go figure...

4. What is the worst financial decision you have ever made?

Too many – all that stuff in my closet (most of them have been donated), and gadgets in my drawers. All of that were bad financial decisions. The worst decision, however, was paying for all that stuff on credit.

5. What is the best financial decision you have ever made?

Starting White Collar Freedom - costs me about \$30 to set everything up and in many ways was the commitment I needed to turn things around.

6. Are you a morning or a night person? What time do you wake up and go to sleep?

Definitely a nocturnal creature by birth. But I have to show up at 9am at the rat cage, so I've artificially changed my body clock to adapt to that of corporate rats.

7. What is your definition of Financial Freedom? And what is your FREEDOM number?

Being able to wake up and do whatever it is that I feel like doing without having to think about the financial means to make it happen. I'm an aspiring minimalist and I've stopped chasing numbers, because they never end. But I'd measure my FREEDOM by having about \$25,000 - \$30,000 in passive income per year. I plan to achieve that by 35 as I no longer need much to be happy.

8. What is your favorite Asset Class to invest in (i.e Real Estate, Stocks, Bonds, Peer to Peer lending, etc)? Why? And what platforms do you use (i.e TD Ameritrade for stocks, Realty Shares for Real Estate, Prosper for Peer to Peer lending, etc.).

Dividend growth stocks (this strategy suits me and I'm able to sleep at night. It's also a good measure of early retirement) and real estate (due to the leverage advantage) in the near future. Where I'm living right now, there are no taxes on capital gains and dividends. So, that explains why both asset classes make total sense in relation to what I'm trying to achieve. I trade through my bank's online platform...commissions and fees are insignificant because I do not go into and out of a position frequently.

9. What is your favorite online financial resource, paid or free (i.e. Mint, Personal Capital, blogs, podcasts, Tasty Trade, etc.)?

The only thing I'll pay for are e-books and the rest are from the 30-40 blogs that I follow everyday.

10. When it comes to building wealth, do you spend more time figuring out

how to cut expenses or increase income? Why?

I think it's all about widening the gap between income and expense. As a start I think that we should focus on getting our expenses down as far as we're comfortable with and maintain it at that range. After that, it's all about hustling and finding ways to increase our income.

It's what I call the [Third Option](#)

11. How many hours a week do you watch TV? What's your favorite show?

I've not watched TV for the past 7 years. Don't give me that face....no I don't live in a cave but I'd rather watch movies and TV series on demand. Life's too short to be sitting through advertisements that encourage you to spend more.

12. If you had to recommend 1 book, what would it be? And why?

[Walden on Wheels](#) by Ken Ilgunas. It's not your typical finance book but it has loads of wisdom inside. Also, the writing is highly entertaining and raw.

13. What is the best piece of advice you have ever received or what advice would you give to the readers?

Stop trying to be like the majority. The most successful people are aberrations in society, they don't fit it, they don't conform to what others are doing. Why blend in when you can stand out?

14. What does living life by design look like to you? A typical day, week, month, year, or whatever?

After achieving FI, a typical day would be waking up without an alarm clock, then strolling down to get some groceries, cooking my own meals, writing music, hitting the gym and working on projects that will generate relatively passive income. Also, traveling with friends and family.

Dude, that beats rushing to the rat cage every morning, staring at excel spreadsheets and trying to fix the horrible formatting in Microsoft Word (ugh, words can't describe how much I hate this software) any time. Every time.

15. What is holding you back from living life by design?

Life is non-linear. Things happen, events happen, the unpredictable can catch you if

you're not alert. As I'm writing this, I'm also preparing for my wedding which will eat into my freedom fund. But I'm confident that if I stay the course, things will work out in the end.

16. Where can we find you online? If you're a blogger, this is the perfect plug to talk about your blog and why it's great ☐

White Collar Freedom (www.whitecollarfreedom.com)

If you've read this far, why not go further and check out the site. People tend to perceive the word 'finance' as foreign and cold. I don't write about how to save money and tactics that you can employ to save \$10 a month.

I try to hit you where it hurts the most through my short essays. I'll show you why corporate slavery sucks and I'll make you see that there's definitely a way out.

If you need a reason to start working towards freedom, you'll find it there.



Gen Y Finance Guy

Hey, I'm Dom - the man behind the cartoon. You'll notice that I sign off as "Gen Y Finance Guy" on all my posts, due to the fact that I write this blog anonymously (at least for now). I like to think of myself as the *Chief Freedom Officer* here of my little corner of the internet. In the real world, I'm a 30-something former C-Suite executive turned entrepreneur turned capital allocator. I am trying to humanize finance by sharing my own journey to Financial Freedom. I believe in total *honesty* and *transparency*. That is why before I ever started blogging, I decided that I would share all of my own [financial stats](#). I do this not to brag, but instead to inspire motivate, and also to hold myself accountable. My goal is to be a beacon of hope, motivation, and inspiration for *you*, the reader, by living life by example and sharing it **all** here on the blog. My sincere hope is that you will be able to learn from me - both from my successes and my failures! [Read More](#)