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Should individual freedom be restricted in order to preserve social order?

Society needs rules to remain stable, but rules become a problem when they take away a person's ability to make their own decisions. Individual freedoms allow people to express their beliefs, whom they can love, and what choices they want to make with their lives. But society must step in when those choices can cause harm to others.

In Alejandro Rodriguez's play, *Alba,* this dispute is shown by how Alba, the mother of three grown daughters, strictly controls her children's lives. Alba believes that she is protecting and stabilizing her family by controlling them, but this creates secrecy and rebellion. The play shows how individual freedom should not be completely restricted to preserve social order because complete control does not create contentment. Instead, it forces people to hide their true choices and they eventually rebel.

Throughout the play, Alba tries to preserve order by domineering her daughters. She expects them to follow the rules she sets, take on many responsibilities, and behave according to the standards she believes are appropriate. Her daughters get very little chance to make independent decisions without facing consequences or criticism. This is especially shown in the constant arguments between Adela and her mother. Adela wants to express herself through dancing, her relationship with her boy friend, and how she dresses; Alba sees these behaviors as threats to the family's reputation. But instead of learning how to make responsible decisions, Adela and her sisters learn to hide their decisions from their mother.

Alba shows how restricted freedom creates secrecy rather than preventing problems. Alba's daughters do not openly communicate with her because they fear what she will say. Her two other daughters, Amelia and Angie illustrate this when Amelia investigates a neighborhood boy, Roman, because she believes that she is helping Angie. The situation escalates when it could have been resolved if the family members did not sneak behind each other's backs. Alba's control does not stop problems; it causes more. From an outside perspective the house seems in order, but internally it harbors resentment and secrets. This shows how social order that functions only through fear will not work.

Adela symbolizes the argument for individual freedom. She sees the life her grandmother lives as an example of someone who has given up her own future. She believes that her grandmother loved Cuba and wanted to study ballet, but lost the chance because of her life circumstances. She feels scared that she will also live a life without freedom. She is determined to choose her own life. This explains why she refuses to obey Alba. When she is ordered by Alba to go to her room, she replies,“ I’m free.” This moment shows the boundary between forced social order and individual freedom.

On the other hand, Alba represents the idea that freedom should have limits. She shows how individual choices affect other people, and believes that to be free, people need to recognize those consequences. Her approach is to rule over everyone instead of communicating her concerns. Because she is the mother she believes what she says is final in her children’s lives. Her attitude comes from wanting to protect her family, notably because of what she experienced as an immigrant and mother. Amelia says it was not Alba’s choice to leave Cuba and move to a foreign place. This makes how Alba acts more understandable, but it does not make her decisions right or effective.

In the end, this play asserts that social order should be made through trust, conversation, and accountability rather than forced obligation. Alba tries to control her children for more stability, but ends up creating anger and rebellions. Adela's rejection of Alba’s authority shows that everyone cannot be controlled forever without a rift being created. A healthy community needs structure, but should be there to protect the people, not strip them of their rights. Thus, an individual's freedom should not be restricted to maintain peace more easily. Real order comes from when people are given freedom to make choices while still being held accountable for how those choices affect others.

Reference: *Alba*. By Alejandro Rodriguez. Palm Beach Dramaworks, Oct.2026.