

Coronavirus and the Constitution: Entering the Not-So-Brave New World

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Two months have passed since the lockdown began, and statistics indicate that the coronavirus death toll hasn't risen as high as we might have supposed. Yet already we hear rhetoric of a "post-COVID world," hauntingly reminiscent of the "post-9/11 world." However, unlike the tangible event of 9/11, COVID is a threat of an entirely different nature, an "invisible enemy."

The enemy isn't "out there" to defeat in the old-fashioned way, with bombs and machine guns. But all the same, its pervasiveness renders us into a constant state of paranoia. Even our loved ones become potential threats; we all pose a risk to those around us, therefore perpetrating the omnipresent danger.

To use the post-9/11 term, we are all *terrorists*. That's why we must stay under house arrest until a treatment is produced to save us from ourselves. The alphabet agencies even gave us a script: we're supposed to play the part of Sleeping Beauty as we await Prince Charming's cure for our mysterious ailment.

But the problem with fairytales is they fall apart under scrutiny; we struggle to believe in the knight in shining armor because experience has taught us again and again that he doesn't exist.

So it is with tales spun by government officials. The real Sleeping Beauty still needs to pay the bills, and a check of \$1200 simply won't do. She doesn't have time to wait around for Bill Gates to unveil the miracle vaccine.

And by the time he does, who will still believe the fairytale? As fatalities continue not to skyrocket and hospitals are underwhelmed, life goes on....Everyday events begin to overshadow media induced hysteria. The spell breaks; the masquerade ends.

Yet the question remains: will the sociopolitical climate restabilize after the invisible enemy's defeat? We've entered a Brave New Normal, we are repeatedly told. Life so eerily resembles the flick *Contagion* that we might be tempted to fast-forward and spoil the ending.

Is the final solution portrayed there a realistic possibility? Imagine — a cashless economy (since cash is germ-ridden), centralized global government, and militarized police force guiding the frightened masses like shepherds watching over their flock! The CDC's contribution to that particular film production suggests *they* think it could solve the problem. The cure therefore must not only be physical, but socioeconomic.

So, suddenly the government cares more intensely about citizen health than most citizens care about their own health. The TRACE Act permits contact tracers to keep an eye on whether we've crossed paths with the invisible enemy; with Operation Warp Speed, troops will administer vaccines door to door.

But all of this reveals the patronizing mindset of our benevolent shepherds. We are no longer to trust our own research and direct experience — after all, unlike other flus, this one has the curious tendency of manifesting no symptoms. Instead we are to place our wellbeing into the hands of contact tracers, the WHO, the military, anyone other than ourselves.

In other words, we're allowing authority to dictate reality, and furthermore our every movement.

But if we ignore all of this and go about our business, aren't we at risk of spreading The Virus? Doubtfully — but if we allow the Naziesque strategies of "flattening the curve" to escalate, we certainly put our liberties at risk. Our Constitutional rights — freedom of speech, religion, and assembly to name a few — have come under fire behind the veneer of "health and safety" measures against the seemingly almighty Virus.

Meanwhile, many of us suspect that if we defend our God-given rights, the invisible enemy will fade like smoke — or like any other virus.

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