

The Illusion of Freedom: We're Only as Free as the Government Allows

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"Rights aren't rights if someone can take them away. They're privileges. That's all we've ever had in this country, is a bill of temporary privileges. And if you read the news even badly, you know that every year the list gets shorter and shorter. Sooner or later, the people in this country are gonna realize the government ... doesn't care about you, or your children, or your rights, or your welfare or your safety... It's interested in its own power. That's the only thing. Keeping it and expanding it wherever possible."— George Carlin

We're in a national state of denial.

For years now, the government has been playing a cat-and-mouse game with the American people, letting us enjoy just enough freedom to think we are free but not enough to actually allow us to *live* as a free people.

Case in point: on the same day that the U.S. Supreme Court appeared inclined to favor [a high school football coach's right to pray on the field after a game](#), the high court let stand a lower court ruling that [allows police to warrantlessly track people's location and movements through their personal cell phones](#), sweeping Americans up into a massive digital data dragnet that does not distinguish between those who are innocent of wrongdoing, suspects, or criminals.

Likewise, although the Supreme Court [gave the go-ahead for a death row inmate to have his pastor audibly pray and lay hands on him](#) in the execution chamber, it [refused to stop police from using hidden cameras to secretly and warrantlessly record and monitor a person's activities outside their home](#) over an extended period of time.

For those who have been paying attention, there's a curious pattern emerging: the government appears reasonably tolerant of those who want to exercise their First Amendment rights in a manner that doesn't challenge the police state's hold on power, for example, by praying on a football field or in an execution chamber.

On the other hand, dare to disagree with the government about its war crimes, COVID-19, election outcomes or police brutality, and you'll find yourself silenced, cited, shut down and/or branded an extremist.

The U.S. government is particularly intolerant of speech that reveals the government's corruption, exposes the government's lies, and encourages the citizenry to push back against the government's many injustices. For instance, Wikileaks founder Julian Assange, the latest victim of the government's war on dissidents and whistleblowers, is in the process of being [extradited to the U.S. to be tried under the Espionage Act](#) for daring to access and disclose military documents that portray the U.S. government and its endless wars abroad as reckless, irresponsible, immoral and responsible for thousands of civilian deaths.

Even political protests are fair game for prosecution. In Florida, two protesters are being [fined \\$3000 for political signs proclaiming stating "F—k Biden," "F—k Trump," and "F—k Policing 4 Profit"](#) that violate a city ban on "indecent" speech on signs, clothing and other graphic displays.

The trade-off is clear: pray all you want, but don't mess with the U.S. government.

In this way, the government, having appointed itself a Supreme and Sovereign Ruler, allows us to bask in the illusion of religious freedom while stripping us of every other freedom afforded by the Constitution.

We're in trouble, folks.

Freedom no longer means what it once did.

This holds true whether you're talking about the right to criticize the government in word or deed, the right to be free from government surveillance, the right to not have your person or your property subjected to warrantless searches by government agents, the right to due process, the right to be safe from militarized police invading your home, the right to be innocent until proven guilty and every other right that once reinforced the founders' belief that this would be "a government of the people, by the people and for the people."

Not only do we no longer have dominion over our bodies, our families, our property and our lives, but the government continues to chip away at what few rights we still have to speak freely and think for ourselves.

My friends, we're being played for fools.

On paper, we may be technically free.

In reality, however, we are only as free as a government official may allow.

We only think we live in a constitutional republic, governed by just laws created for our benefit.

Truth be told, we live in a dictatorship disguised as a democracy where all that we own, all that we earn, all that we say and do—our very lives—depends on the benevolence of government agents and corporate shareholders for whom profit and power will always trump principle. And now the government is litigating and legislating its way into a new

framework where the dictates of petty bureaucrats carry greater weight than the inalienable rights of the citizenry.

With every court ruling that allows the government to operate above the rule of law, every piece of legislation that limits our freedoms, and every act of government wrongdoing that goes unpunished, we're slowly being conditioned to a society in which we have little real control over our lives.

As Rod Serling, creator of the *Twilight Zone* and an insightful commentator on human nature, once observed, "We're developing a new citizenry. One that will be very selective about cereals and automobiles, but won't be able to think."

Indeed, not only are we developing a new citizenry incapable of thinking for themselves, we're also instilling in them a complete and utter reliance on the government and its corporate partners to do everything for them—tell them what to eat, what to wear, how to think, what to believe, how long to sleep, who to vote for, whom to associate with, and on and on.

In this way, we have created a welfare state, a nanny state, a police state, a surveillance state, an electronic concentration camp—call it what you will, the meaning is the same: in our quest for less personal responsibility, a greater sense of security, and no burdensome obligations to each other or to future generations, we have created a society in which we have no true freedom.

Government surveillance, police abuse, SWAT team raids, economic instability, asset forfeiture schemes, pork barrel legislation, militarized police, drones, endless wars, private prisons, involuntary detentions, biometrics databases, free speech zones, etc.: these are mile markers on the road to a fascist state where citizens are treated like cattle, to be branded and eventually led to the slaughterhouse.

Freedom, or what's left of it, is being threatened from every direction. The threats are of many kinds: political, cultural, educational, media, and psychological. However, as history shows us, freedom is not, on the whole, wrested from a citizenry. It is all too often given over voluntarily and for such a cheap price: safety, security, bread, and circuses.

This is part and parcel of the propaganda churned out by the government machine.

That said, what we face today—mind manipulation and systemic violence—is not new. What is different are the techniques used and the large-scale control of mass humanity, coercive police tactics and pervasive surveillance.

We are overdue for a systemic check on the government's overreaches and power grabs.

By "government," I'm not referring to the highly partisan, two-party bureaucracy of the Republicans and Democrats. Rather, I'm referring to "government" with a capital "G," the entrenched Deep State that is unaffected by elections, unaltered by populist movements, and has set itself beyond the reach of the law.

For years now, we have suffered the injustices, cruelties, corruption and abuse of an entrenched government bureaucracy that has no regard for the Constitution or the rights of the citizenry.

We have lingered too long in this strange twilight zone where ego trumps justice, propaganda perverts truth, and imperial presidents—empowered to indulge their authoritarian tendencies by legalistic courts, corrupt legislatures and a disinterested, distracted populace—rule by fiat rather than by the rule of law.

Where we find ourselves now is in the unenviable position of needing to rein in all three branches of government—the Executive, the Judicial, and the Legislative—that have exceeded their authority and grown drunk on power.

We are the unwitting victims of a system so corrupt that those who stand up for the rule of law and aspire to transparency in government are in the minority. This corruption is so vast it spans all branches of government: from the power-hungry agencies under the executive branch and the corporate puppets within the legislative branch to a judiciary that is, more often than not, elitist and biased towards government entities and corporations.

The predators of the police state are wreaking havoc on our freedoms, our communities, and our lives. The government doesn't listen to the citizenry, it refuses to abide by the Constitution, which is our rule of law, and it treats the citizenry as a source of funding and little else.

The American kleptocracy (a government ruled by thieves) has sucked the American people down a rabbit hole into a parallel universe in which the Constitution is meaningless, the government is all-powerful, and the citizenry is powerless to defend itself against government agents who steal, spy, lie, plunder, kill, abuse and generally inflict mayhem and sow madness on everyone and everything in their sphere.

This dissolution of that sacred covenant between the citizenry and the government—establishing “we the people” as the masters and the government as the servant—didn't happen overnight. It didn't happen because of one particular incident or one particular president. It is a process, one that began long ago and continues in the present day, aided and abetted by politicians who have mastered the polarizing art of how to “divide and conquer.”

Unfortunately, there is no magic spell to transport us back to a place and time where “we the people” weren't merely fodder for a corporate gristmill, operated by government hired hands, whose priorities are money and power.

As I make clear in my book [Battlefield America: The War on the American People](#) and in its fictional counterpart [The Erik Blair Diaries](#), our freedoms have become casualties in an all-out war on the American people.

If we continue down this road, there can be no surprise about what awaits us at the end.

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