

The Emergence of Orwellian Newspeak and the Death of Free Speech

By [John W. Whitehead](#)

Global Research, July 01, 2015

[The Rutherford Institute](#) 29 June 2015

Region: [USA](#)

Theme: [Police State & Civil Rights](#)

If you don't want a man unhappy politically, don't give him two sides to a question to worry him; give him one. Better yet, give him none. Let him forget there is such a thing as war. If the government is inefficient, top-heavy, and tax-mad, better it be all those than that people worry over it....

Give the people contests they win by remembering the words to more popular songs or the names of state capitals or how much corn Iowa grew last year. Cram them full of noncombustible data, chock them so damned full of 'facts' they feel stuffed, but absolutely 'brilliant' with information. Then they'll feel they're thinking, they'll get a sense of motion without moving. And they'll be happy, because facts of that sort don't change. — Ray Bradbury, Fahrenheit 451

How do you change the way people think? You start by changing the words they use.

In totalitarian regimes—a.k.a. police states—where conformity and compliance are enforced at the end of a loaded gun, the government dictates what words can and cannot be used. In countries where the police state hides behind a benevolent mask and disguises itself as tolerance, the citizens censor themselves, policing their words and thoughts to conform to the dictates of the mass mind.

Even when the motives behind this rigidly calibrated reorientation of societal language appear well-intentioned—discouraging racism, condemning violence, denouncing discrimination and hatred—inevitably, the end result is the same: intolerance, indoctrination and infantilism.

It's political correctness disguised as tolerance, civility and love, but what it really amounts to is the chilling of free speech and the demonizing of viewpoints that run counter to the cultural elite.

As a society, we've become fearfully polite, careful to avoid offense, and largely unwilling to be labeled intolerant, hateful, closed-minded or any of the other toxic labels that carry a badge of shame today. The result is a nation where no one says what they really think anymore, at least if it runs counter to the prevailing views. Intolerance is the new scarlet letter of our day, a badge to be worn in shame and humiliation, deserving of society's fear, loathing and utter banishment from society.

For those "haters" who dare to voice a different opinion, retribution is swift: they will be shamed, shouted down, silenced, censored, fired, cast out and generally relegated to the dust heap of ignorant, mean-spirited bullies who are guilty of various "word crimes."

We have entered a new age where, as commentator Mark Steyn [notes](#), “we have to tiptoe around on ever thinner eggshells” and “the forces of ‘tolerance’ are intolerant of anything less than full-blown celebratory approval.”

In such a climate of intolerance, there can be no freedom speech, expression or thought.

Yet what the forces of political correctness fail to realize is that they owe a debt to the so-called “haters” who have kept the First Amendment robust. From [swastika-wearing Neo-Nazis](#) marching through Skokie, Illinois, and underaged [cross burners](#) to [“God hates fags” protesters assembled near military funerals](#), those who have inadvertently done the most to preserve the right to freedom of speech for all have espoused views that were downright unpopular, if not hateful.

Until recently, the U.S. Supreme Court has reiterated that the First Amendment prevents the government from proscribing speech, or even expressive conduct, because it disapproves of the ideas expressed. However, that long-vaunted, Court-enforced tolerance for “intolerant” speech has now given way to a paradigm in which the government can discriminate freely against First Amendment activity that takes place within a government forum. Justifying such discrimination as “government speech,” the Court ruled that the [Texas Dept. of Motor Vehicles could refuse to issue specialty license plate designs featuring a Confederate battle flag](#). Why? Because it was deemed offensive.

The Court’s ruling came on the heels of a shooting in which a [21-year-old white gunman killed nine African-Americans during a Wednesday night Bible study](#) at a church in Charleston, N.C. The two events, coupled with the fact that gunman Dylann Roof was reportedly pictured on several social media sites with a Confederate flag, have resulted in an emotionally charged stampede to sanitize the nation’s public places of anything that smacks of racism, [starting with the Confederate flag and ballooning into a list that includes the removal of various Civil War monuments](#).

These tactics are nothing new. This nation, birthed from puritanical roots, has always struggled to balance its love of liberty with its moralistic need to censor books, music, art, language, symbols etc. As author Ray Bradbury notes, “There is more than one way to burn a book. And the world is full of people running about with lit matches.”

Indeed, thanks to the rise of political correctness, the population of book burners, censors, and judges has greatly expanded over the years so that they run the gamut from left-leaning to right-leaning and everything in between. By eliminating words, phrases and symbols from public discourse, the powers-that-be are sowing hate, distrust and paranoia. In this way, by bottling up dissent, they are creating a pressure cooker of stifled misery that will eventually blow.

For instance, the word “Christmas” is now taboo in the public schools, as is the word “gun.” Even childish drawings of soldiers result in detention or suspension under rigid zero tolerance policies. On college campuses, trigger warnings are being used to alert students to any material they might read, see or hear that might upset them, while free speech zones restrict anyone wishing to communicate a particular viewpoint to a specially designated area on campus. Things have gotten so bad that comedians such as Chris Rock and Jerry Seinfeld refuse to perform stand-up routines to college crowds anymore.

Clearly, the country is undergoing a nervous breakdown, and the news media is helping to

push us to the brink of insanity by bombarding us with wall-to-wall news coverage and news cycles that change every few days.

In this way, it's difficult to think or debate, let alone stay focused on one thing—namely, holding the government accountable to abiding by the rule of law—and the powers-that-be understand this.

As I document in my book [*Battlefield America: The War on the American People*](#), regularly scheduled trivia and/or distractions keep the citizenry tuned into the various breaking news headlines and entertainment spectacles and tuned out to the government's steady encroachments on our freedoms. These sleight-of-hand distractions and diversions are how you control a population, either inadvertently or intentionally, advancing a political agenda without much opposition from the citizenry.

Professor Jacques Ellul studied this phenomenon of overwhelming news, short memories and the use of propaganda to advance hidden agendas. "One thought drives away another; old facts are chased by new ones," wrote Ellul.

Under these conditions there can be no thought. And, in fact, modern man does not think about current problems; he feels them. He reacts, but he does not understand them any more than he takes responsibility for them. He is even less capable of spotting any inconsistency between successive facts; man's capacity to forget is unlimited. This is one of the most important and useful points for the propagandists, who can always be sure that a particular propaganda theme, statement, or event will be forgotten within a few weeks.

Already, the outrage over the Charleston shooting and racism are fading from the news headlines, yet the determination to censor the Confederate symbol remains. Before long, we will censor it from our thoughts, sanitize it from our history books, and eradicate it from our monuments without even recalling why. The question, of course, is what's next on the list to be banned?

It was for the sake of preserving individuality and independence that James Madison, the author of the Bill of Rights, fought for a First Amendment that protected the "minority" against the majority, ensuring that even in the face of overwhelming pressure, a minority of one—even one who espouses distasteful viewpoints—would still have the right to speak freely, pray freely, assemble freely, challenge the government freely, and broadcast his views in the press freely.

This freedom for those in the unpopular minority constitutes the ultimate tolerance in a free society. Conversely, when we fail to abide by Madison's dictates about greater tolerance for all viewpoints, no matter how distasteful, the end result is always the same: an indoctrinated, infantilized citizenry that marches in lockstep with the governmental regime.

Some of this past century's greatest dystopian literature shows what happens when the populace is transformed into mindless automatons. In [*Ray Bradbury's Fahrenheit 451*](#), reading is banned and books are burned in order to suppress dissenting ideas, while televised entertainment is used to anesthetize the populace and render them easily pacified, distracted and controlled.

In [*Aldous Huxley's Brave New World*](#), serious literature, scientific thinking and experimentation are banned as subversive, while critical thinking is discouraged through the

use of conditioning, social taboos and inferior education. Likewise, expressions of individuality, independence and morality are viewed as vulgar and abnormal.

And in [George Orwell's 1984](#), Big Brother does away with all undesirable and unnecessary words and meanings, even going so far as to routinely rewrite history and punish "thoughtcrimes." In this dystopian vision of the future, the Thought Police serve as the eyes and ears of Big Brother, while the Ministry of Peace deals with war and defense, the Ministry of Plenty deals with economic affairs (rationing and starvation), the Ministry of Love deals with law and order (torture and brainwashing), and the Ministry of Truth deals with news, entertainment, education and art (propaganda). The mottos of Oceania: WAR IS PEACE, FREEDOM IS SLAVERY, and IGNORANCE IS STRENGTH.

All three—Bradbury, Huxley and Orwell—had an uncanny knack for realizing the future, yet it is Orwell who best understood the power of language to manipulate the masses. Orwell's Big Brother relied on Newspeak to eliminate undesirable words, strip such words as remained of unorthodox meanings and make independent, non-government-approved thought altogether unnecessary. To give a single example, as psychologist Erich Fromm illustrates in his afterword to *1984*:

The word *free* still existed in Newspeak, but it could only be used in such statements as "This dog is free from lice" or "This field is free from weeds." It could not be used in its old sense of "politically free" or "intellectually free," since political and intellectual freedom no longer existed as concepts....

Where we stand now is at the juncture of OldSpeak (where words have meanings, and ideas can be dangerous) and Newspeak (where only that which is "safe" and "accepted" by the majority is permitted). The power elite has made their intentions clear: they will pursue and prosecute any and all words, thoughts and expressions that challenge their authority.

This is the final link in the police state chain.

Having been reduced to a cowering citizenry—mute in the face of elected officials who refuse to represent us, helpless in the face of police brutality, powerless in the face of militarized tactics and technology that treat us like enemy combatants on a battlefield, and naked in the face of government surveillance that sees and hears all—we have nowhere left to go. Our backs are to the walls. From this point on, we have only two options: go down fighting, or capitulate and betray our loved ones, our friends and our selves by insisting that, as a brainwashed Winston Smith does at the end of Orwell's *1984*, yes, 2+2 does equal 5.

The original source of this article is [The Rutherford Institute](#)
Copyright © [John W. Whitehead](#), [The Rutherford Institute](#), 2015

[Comment on Global Research Articles on our Facebook page](#)

[Become a Member of Global Research](#)

Articles by: [John W. Whitehead](#)

Disclaimer: The contents of this article are of sole responsibility of the author(s). The Centre for Research on Globalization will not be responsible for any inaccurate or incorrect statement in this article. The Centre of Research on Globalization grants permission to cross-post Global Research articles on community internet sites as long the source and copyright are acknowledged together with a hyperlink to the original Global Research article. For publication of Global Research articles in print or other forms including commercial internet sites, contact: publications@globalresearch.ca

www.globalresearch.ca contains copyrighted material the use of which has not always been specifically authorized by the copyright owner. We are making such material available to our readers under the provisions of "fair use" in an effort to advance a better understanding of political, economic and social issues. The material on this site is distributed without profit to those who have expressed a prior interest in receiving it for research and educational purposes. If you wish to use copyrighted material for purposes other than "fair use" you must request permission from the copyright owner.

For media inquiries: publications@globalresearch.ca