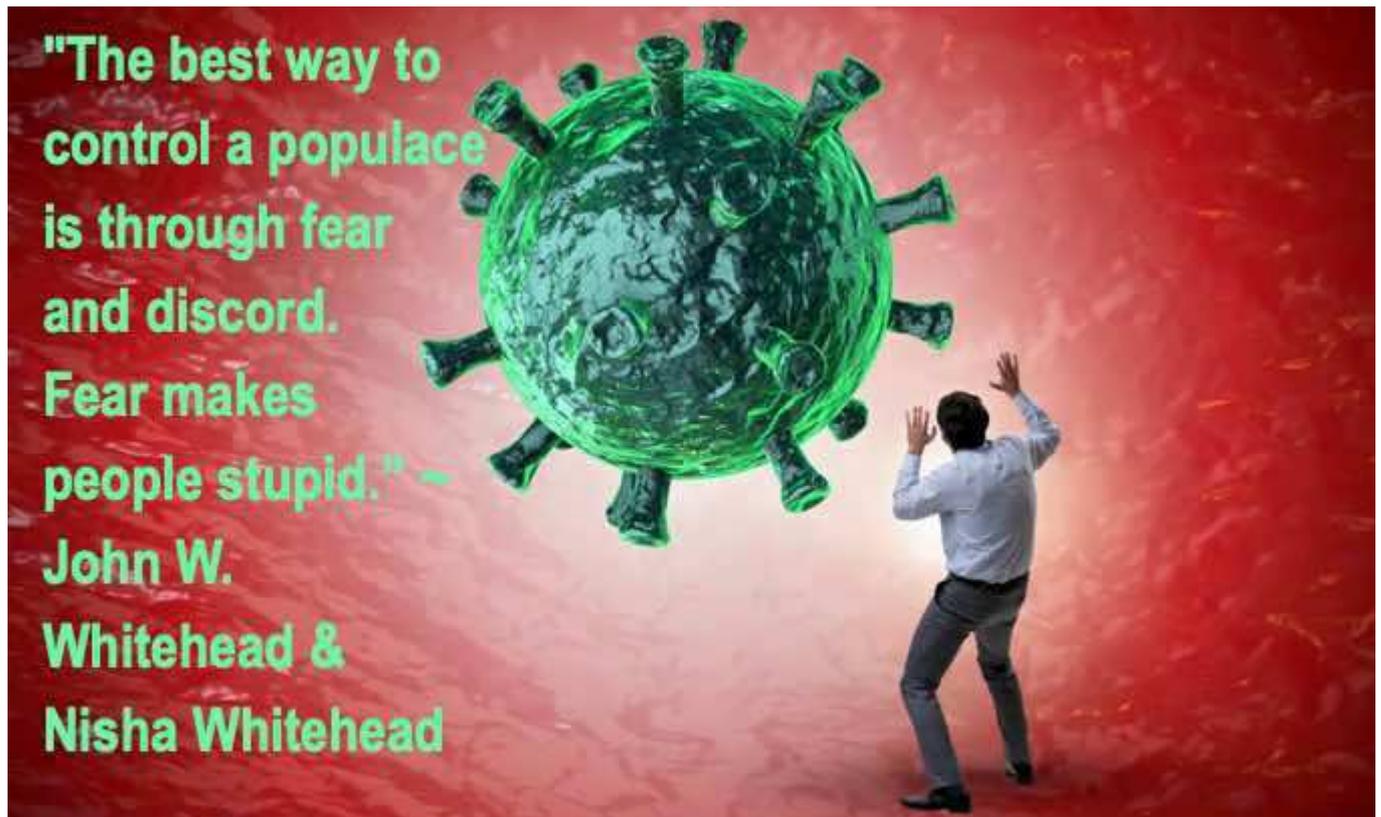


Freedom from Fear: Stop Playing the Government's Mind Games | John W. Whitehead & Nisha Whitehead



[The Rutherford Institute](#)

["No one can terrorize a whole nation, unless we are all his accomplices."](#)—Edward R. Murrow, broadcast journalist

America is in the midst of an epidemic of historic proportions.

The contagion being spread like wildfire is turning communities into battlegrounds and setting Americans one against the other.

Normally mild-mannered individuals caught up in the throes of

this disease have been transformed into belligerent zealots, while others inclined to pacifism have taken to stockpiling weapons and practicing defensive drills.

This plague on our nation—one that has been spreading like wildfire—is a potent mix of fear coupled with unhealthy doses of paranoia and intolerance, tragic hallmarks of the post-9/11 America in which we live, and the constantly shifting crises that keep the populace in a state of high alert.

Everywhere you turn, those on both the left- and right-wing are fomenting distrust and division. You can't escape it.

We're being fed a constant diet of fear: fear of a virus, fear of the unmasked, fear of terrorists, fear of illegal immigrants, fear of people who are too religious, fear of people who are not religious enough, fear of extremists, fear of the government, fear of those who fear the government. The list goes on and on.

The strategy is simple yet effective: the best way to control a populace is through fear and discord.

Fear makes people [stupid](#).

Confound them, distract them with mindless news chatter and entertainment, pit them against one another by turning minor disagreements into major skirmishes, and tie them up in knots over matters lacking in national significance.

Most importantly, divide the people into factions, persuade them to see each other as the enemy, and keep them screaming at each other so that they drown out all other sounds. In this way, they will never reach a consensus about anything and will be too distracted to notice the police state closing in on them until the final crushing curtain falls.

This is how free people enslave themselves and allow tyrants to prevail.

This Machiavellian scheme has so ensnared the nation that few Americans even realize they are being manipulated into adopting an “us” against “them” mindset. Instead, fueled with fear and loathing for phantom opponents, they agree to pour millions of dollars and resources into political elections, militarized police, spy technology, endless wars, COVID-19 mandates, etc., hoping for a guarantee of safety that never comes.

All the while, those in power—bought and paid for by lobbyists and corporations—move their costly agendas forward, and “we the suckers” get saddled with the tax bills and subjected to pat-downs, police raids, and round-the-clock surveillance.

Turn on the TV or flip open the newspaper on any given day, and you will find yourself accosted by reports of government corruption, corporate malfeasance, militarized police, marauding SWAT teams, and egregious assaults on the rights of the citizenry.

America has already entered a new phase, one in which communities are locked down, employees are forced to choose between keeping their jobs or exercising their freedoms, children are arrested in schools, military veterans are forcibly detained by government agents, and law-abiding Americans are finding their movements tracked, their financial transactions documented and their communications monitored.

These threats are not to be underestimated.

Yet even more dangerous than these violations of our basic rights is the language in which they have couched: the language of fear. It is a language spoken effectively by politicians on both sides of the aisle, shouted by media pundits from their cable TV pulpits, marketed by corporations, and codified into bureaucratic laws that do little to make our lives safer or more secure.

Fear, as history shows, is the method most often used by

politicians to increase the power of government.

So far, these tactics are working.

An atmosphere of fear permeates modern America.

Each successive crisis in recent years (a COVID-19 pandemic, terrorism, etc.)—manufactured or legitimate—has succeeded in reducing the American people to what [commentator Dan Sanchez](#) refers to as “[herd-minded](#) hundreds of millions [who] will stampede to the State for security, bleating to *please, please* be shorn of their remaining liberties.”

Sanchez [continues](#):

“I am not terrified of the terrorists; i.e., I am not, myself, terrorized. Rather, I am terrified of the terrorized; terrified of the bovine masses who are so easily manipulated by terrorists, governments, and the [terror-amplifying media](#) into allowing our country to slip toward totalitarianism and total war...

“I do not irrationally and disproportionately fear Muslim bomb-wielding jihadists or white, gun-toting nutcases. But I rationally and proportionately fear those who do, and the regimes such terror empowers. [History demonstrates](#) that governments are capable of mass murder and enslavement far beyond what rogue militants can muster. Industrial-scale terrorists are the ones who wear ties, chevrons, and badges. But such terrorists are a [powerless few](#) without the [supine acquiescence](#) of the terrorized many. There is nothing to fear but the fearful themselves...

“Stop swallowing the overblown scaremongering of the government and its corporate media cronies. Stop letting them use hysteria over small menaces to drive you into the arms of tyranny, which is the greatest menace of all.”

As history makes clear, fear leads to fascistic, totalitarian

regimes.

It's a simple enough formula. National crises, global pandemics, reported terrorist attacks, and sporadic shootings leave us in a constant state of fear. Fear prevents us from thinking. The emotional panic that accompanies fear actually shuts down the prefrontal cortex or the rational thinking part of our brains. In other words, [when we are consumed by fear, we stop thinking.](#)

A populace that stops thinking for themselves is a populace that is easily led, easily manipulated and easily controlled.

The following are a few of the [necessary ingredients for a fascist state:](#)

- *The government is managed by a powerful leader (even if he or she assumes office by way of the electoral process). This is the fascistic leadership principle (or father figure).*
- *The government assumes it is not restrained in its power. This is authoritarianism, which eventually evolves into totalitarianism.*
- *The government ostensibly operates under a capitalist system while being undergirded by an immense bureaucracy.*
- *The government through its politicians emits powerful and continuing expressions of nationalism.*
- *The government has an obsession with national security while constantly invoking terrifying internal and external enemies.*
- *The government establishes a domestic and invasive surveillance system and develops a paramilitary force that is not answerable to the citizenry.*
- *The government and its various agencies (federal,*

state, and local) develop an obsession with crime and punishment. This is overcriminalization.

- The government becomes increasingly centralized while aligning closely with corporate powers to control all aspects of the country's social, economic, military, and governmental structures.*

- The government uses militarism as a center point of its economic and taxing structure.*

- The government is increasingly imperialistic in order to maintain the military-industrial corporate forces.*

The parallels to modern America are impossible to ignore.

“Every industry is regulated. Every profession is classified and organized,” [writes](#) Jeffrey Tucker. “Every good or service is taxed. Endless debt accumulation is preserved. Immense doesn't begin to describe the bureaucracy. Military preparedness never stops, and war with some evil foreign foe remains a daily prospect.”

For the final hammer of fascism to fall, it will require the most crucial ingredient: the majority of the people will have to agree that it's not only expedient but necessary. In times of “crisis,” expediency is upheld as the central principle—that is, in order to keep us safe and secure, the government must militarize the police, strip us of basic constitutional rights and criminalize virtually every form of behavior.

Not only does fear grease the wheels of the transition to fascism by cultivating fearful, controlled, pacified, cowed citizens, but it also embeds itself in our very DNA so that we pass on our fear and compliance to our offspring.

It's called epigenetic inheritance, the transmission through DNA of traumatic experiences.

For example, neuroscientists have observed how quickly fear can travel through generations of mice DNA. As *The Washington Post* [reports](#):

In the experiment, researchers taught male mice to fear the smell of cherry blossoms by associating the scent with mild foot shocks. Two weeks later, they bred with females. The resulting pups were raised to adulthood having never been exposed to the smell. Yet when the critters caught a whiff of it for the first time, they suddenly became anxious and fearful. They were even born with more cherry-blossom-detecting neurons in their noses and more brain space devoted to cherry-blossom-smelling.

The conclusion? “A newborn mouse pup, seemingly innocent to the workings of the world, may actually harbor [generations’ worth of information passed down by its ancestors.](#)”

Now consider the ramifications of inherited generations of fears and experiences on human beings. As the *Post* [reports](#), “Studies on humans suggest that children and grandchildren may have felt the epigenetic impact of such traumatic events such as famine, the Holocaust and the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks.”

As I make clear in my book [Battlefield America: The War on the American People](#) and in its fictional counterpart [The Erik Blair Diaries](#), fear, trauma, and compliance can be passed down through the generations.

Fear has been a critical tool in past fascistic regimes, and it now operates in our contemporary world—all of which raises fundamental questions about us as human beings and what we will give up in order to perpetuate the illusions of safety and security.

In the words of psychologist Erich Fromm:

[C]an human nature be changed in such a way that man will forget his longing for freedom, for dignity, for integrity, for love—that is to say, can man forget he is human? Or does human nature have a dynamism which will react to the violation of these basic human needs by attempting to change an inhuman society into a human one?

ABOUT JOHN W. WHITEHEAD

Constitutional attorney and author John W. Whitehead is the founder and president [The Rutherford Institute](#). His books [Battlefield America: The War on the American People](#) and [A Government of Wolves: The Emerging American Police State](#) are available at www.amazon.com. He can be contacted at johnw@rutherford.org. Nisha Whitehead is the Executive Director of The Rutherford Institute. Information about The Rutherford Institute is available at www.rutherford.org.