

The American Gulag: Brick by Brick, Our Prison Walls Get More Oppressive by the Day



John W. Whitehead | [The Rutherford](#)

*"The exile of prisoners to a distant place, where they can 'pay their debt to society,' make themselves useful, and not contaminate others with their ideas or their criminal acts, is a practice as old as civilization itself. The rulers of ancient Rome and Greece sent their dissidents off to distant colonies. Socrates chose death over the torment of exile from Athens. The poet Ovid was exiled to a fetid port on the Black Sea."— Anne Applebaum, *Gulag: A History**

This is how freedom dies.

This is how you condition a populace to life as prisoners in a police state: by brainwashing them into *believing* they are

free so that they will march in lockstep with the state and be incapable of recognizing the prison walls that surround them.

Face the facts: we are no longer free.

We in the American Police State may enjoy the illusion of freedom, but that is all it is: an elaborate deception, rooted in denial and delusion, that hides the grasping, greedy, power-hungry, megalomaniacal force that lurks beneath the surface.

Brick by brick, the prison walls being erected around us by the government and its corporate partners-in-crime grow more oppressive and more pervasive by the day.

Brick by brick, we are finding there is nowhere to run and nowhere to hide.

Brick by brick, we are being walled in, locked down and locked up.

That's the curious thing about walls: they not only keep those on the outside from getting in, they also keep those on the inside from getting out.

Consider, if you will, some of the "bricks" in the police state's wall that serve to imprison the citizenry: [Red flag gun laws](#) that strip citizens of their rights based on the flimsiest of pretexts concocted by self-serving politicians. Overcriminalization resulting in jail time for nonviolent offenses such as feeding stray cats and [buying foreign honey](#). Military training drills—showy exercises in armed intimidation—and [live action "role playing" between soldiers and "freedom fighters"](#) staged in small rural communities throughout the country. Profit-driven speed and red light cameras that do little for safety while [padding the pockets of government agencies](#). Overt [surveillance](#) that turns citizens into suspects.

Police-run facial recognition software that mistakenly [labels law-abiding citizens as criminals](#). Punitive programs that [strip citizens of their passports](#) and right to travel over unpaid taxes. Government agents that [view segments of the populace as “subhuman”](#) and treat them accordingly. A social credit system (similar to China’s) that rewards behavior deemed “acceptable” and [punishes behavior the government and its corporate allies find offensive, illegal or inappropriate](#).

These are just a small sampling of the oppressive measures used by the government to control and constrict the American people.

What these despotic tactics add up to is an authoritarian prison in every sense of the word.

Granted this prison may not appear as overtly bleak as the soul-destroying gulags described by [Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn](#) in his masterpiece *The Gulag Archipelago*, but that’s just a matter of aesthetics.

Strip away the surface embellishments and you’ll find the core is no less sinister than that of the gulags of the Cold War-era Soviet Union.

Those gulags, according to historian Anne Applebaum, used as a form of “administrative exile—which required no trial and no sentencing procedure—was an [ideal punishment not only for troublemakers as such, but also for political opponents of the regime](#).”

The word “gulag” refers to a labor or concentration camp where prisoners (oftentimes political prisoners or so-called “enemies of the state,” real or imagined) were imprisoned as punishment for their crimes against the state. As Applebaum explains:

Over time, the word “Gulag” has also come to signify not only the administration of the concentration camps but also the

system of Soviet slave labor itself, in all its forms and varieties: labor camps, punishment camps, criminal and political camps, women's camps, children's camps, transit camps. Even more broadly, ["Gulag" has come to mean the Soviet repressive system itself](#), the set of procedures that prisoners once called the "meat-grinder": the arrests, the interrogations, the transport in unheated cattle cars, the forced labor, the destruction of families, the years spent in exile, the early and unnecessary deaths.

Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn was such a political prisoner.

For the crime of daring to criticize Stalin in a private letter to a school friend, Solzhenitsyn was arrested and sentenced to eight years in exile in a labor camp.

That was before psychiatry paved the way for totalitarian regimes such as the Soviet Union to declare dissidents mentally ill and consign political prisoners to prisons disguised as psychiatric hospitals, where they could be isolated from the rest of society, their ideas discredited, and subjected to electric shocks, drugs and various medical procedures to break them physically and mentally.

In addition to declaring political dissidents mentally unsound, government officials in the Cold War-era Soviet Union also made use of an administrative process for dealing with individuals who were considered a bad influence on others or troublemakers. Author George Kennan describes a process in which:

The obnoxious person may not be guilty of any crime . . . but if, in the opinion of the local authorities, his presence in a particular place is "prejudicial to public order" or "incompatible with public tranquility," he may be arrested without warrant, may be held from two weeks to two years in prison, and may then be removed by force to any other place within the limits of the empire and there be [put under police](#)

[surveillance for a period of from one to ten years.](#)

Warrantless seizures, surveillance, indefinite detention, isolation, exile... sound familiar?

It should.

The age-old practice by which despotic regimes eliminate their critics or potential adversaries by making them disappear—or forcing them to flee—or exiling them literally or figuratively or virtually from their fellow citizens—is happening with increasing frequency in America.

We saw it happen with Julian Assange. With Edward Snowden. With Bradley Manning.

They, too, were exiled for daring to challenge the powers-that-be.

It happened to [26-year-old decorated Marine Brandon Raub](#), who was targeted because of his Facebook posts, interrogated by government agents about his views on government corruption, arrested with no warning, labeled mentally ill for subscribing to so-called “conspiratorial” views about the government, detained against his will in a psych ward for standing by his views, and isolated from his family, friends and attorneys.

Raub’s case exposed the seedy underbelly of a governmental system that is targeting Americans—[especially military veterans](#)—for expressing their discontent over America’s rapid transition to a police state.

Now, through the use of [red flag laws](#), [behavioral threat assessments](#), and [pre-crime policing prevention programs](#), the government is laying the groundwork that would allow it to weaponize the label of mental illness as a means of exiling those whistleblowers, dissidents and freedom fighters who refuse to march in lockstep with its dictates.

That the government is using the charge of mental illness as the means by which to immobilize (and disarm) its critics is diabolically brilliant. With one stroke of a magistrate's pen, these individuals are declared mentally ill, locked away against their will, and stripped of their constitutional rights.

These developments are merely the realization of various U.S. government initiatives dating back to 2009, including one dubbed [Operation Vigilant Eagle](#) which calls for surveillance of military veterans returning from Iraq and Afghanistan, characterizing them as extremists and potential domestic terrorist threats because they may be "disgruntled, disillusioned or suffering from the psychological effects of war."

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