

The Worst Is Yet To Come, America

by John W. Whitehead via claire - ICH *Wednesday, Nov 16 2016, 9:37pm*

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“Those who do not remember the past are condemned to repeat it.” — George Santayana

Stay alert, America.

This is not the time to drop our guards, even for a moment.

Nothing has changed since the election to alter the immediate and very real dangers of roadside strip searches, government surveillance, biometric databases, citizens being treated like terrorists, imprisonments for criticizing the government, national ID cards, SWAT team raids, censorship, forcible blood draws and DNA extractions, private prisons, weaponized drones, red light cameras, tasers, active shooter drills, police misconduct and government corruption.

Time alone will tell whether those who put their hopes in a political savior will find that trust rewarded or betrayed.

Personally, I'm not holding my breath.

I've been down this road before.

I've studied history.

I know what comes next.

It's early days yet, but President-elect Trump —[like his predecessors](#)— has already begun to dial back many of the campaign promises that pledged to reform a broken system of government.

The candidate who railed against big government and vowed to “[drain the swamp](#)” of lobbyists and special interest donors has already given lobbyists, corporate donors and members of the governmental elite starring roles in his new administration.

America, you've been played.

This is what happens when you play politics with matters of life, death and liberty.

You lose every time.

Unfortunately, in this instance, we all lose because of the deluded hypocrisy of the Left and the Right, both of which sanctioned the expansion of the police state as long as it was their party at the helm.

For the past eight years, the Left—stridently outspoken and adversarial while George W. Bush was president—has been unusually quiet about things like torture, endless wars, drone strikes, executive orders, government overreach and fascism.

As Glenn Greenwald [points out](#) for The Washington Post:

Beginning in his first month in office and continuing through today, Obama not only continued many of the most extreme executive-power policies he once condemned, but in many cases strengthened and extended them. His administration detained terrorism suspects without due process, proposed new frameworks to keep them locked up without trial, targeted thousands of individuals (including a U.S. citizen) for execution by drone, invoked secrecy doctrines to shield torture and eavesdropping programs from judicial review, and covertly expanded the nation's mass electronic surveillance...

Liberals vehemently denounced these abuses during the Bush presidency... But after Obama took office, many liberals often tolerated — and even praised — his aggressive assertions of executive authority. It is hard to overstate how complete the Democrats' [about-face](#) on these questions was once their own leader controlled the levers of power... After just three years of the Obama presidency, liberals sanctioned a system that allowed the president to imprison people without any trial or an ounce of due process.

Suddenly, with Trump in the White House for the next four years, it's all fair game again.

As The Federalist declares with a tongue-in-cheek approach, "Dissent, executive restraint, gridlock, you name it. Now that Donald Trump will be president, stuff that used to be [treason is suddenly cool again.](#)"

Yet as Greenwald makes clear, if Trump is about to inherit [vast presidential powers](#), he has the Democrats to thank for them.

A military empire that polices the globe. Secret courts, secret wars and secret budgets. Unconstitutional mass surveillance. Unchecked presidential power. Indefinite detention. Executive signing statements.

These are just a small sampling of the abusive powers that have been used liberally by Obama and will be used again and again by future presidents.

After all, presidents are just puppets on a string, made to dance to the tune of the powers-that-be. And the powers-that-be want war. They want totalitarianism. They want a monied oligarchy to run the show. They want bureaucracy and sprawl and government leaders that march in lockstep with their dictates. Most of all, they want a gullible, distracted, easily led populace that can be manipulated, maneuvered and made to fear whatever phantom menace the government chooses to make the bogeyman of the month.

Unless Trump does another about-face, rest assured that the policies of a Trump Administration will be no different from an Obama Administration or a Bush Administration, at least not where it really counts.

For that matter, a Clinton Administration would have been no different.

In other words, Democrats by any other name would be Republicans, and vice versa.

This is the terrible power of the shadow government: to maintain the status quo, no matter which candidate gets elected.

War will continue. Surveillance will continue. Drone killings will continue. Police shootings will continue. Highway robbery meted out by government officials will continue. Corrupt government will continue. Profit-driven prisons will continue. Censorship and persecution of anyone who criticizes the government will continue. The militarization of the police will continue. The government's efforts to label dissidents as extremists and terrorists will continue.

In such a climate, the police state will thrive.

The more things change, the more they will stay the same.

We've been stuck in this political Groundhog's Day for so long that minor deviations appear to be major developments while obscuring the fact that we're stuck on repeat, unable to see the forest for the trees.

This is what is referred to as creeping normality, or a death by a thousand cuts.

It's a concept invoked by Pulitzer Prize-winning scientist Jared Diamond to describe how major changes, if implemented slowly in small stages over time, can be accepted as normal without the shock and resistance that might greet a sudden upheaval.

Diamond's concerns are environmental in nature, but they are no less relevant to our understanding of how a once-free nation could willingly bind itself with the chains of dictatorship.

Writing about Easter Island's now-vanished civilization and the societal decline and environmental degradation that contributed to it, Diamond explains, "In just a few centuries, the people of Easter Island wiped out their forest, drove their plants and animals to extinction, and saw their complex society spiral into chaos and cannibalism... Why didn't they look around, realize what they were doing, and stop before it was [too late](#)? What were they thinking when they cut down the last palm tree?"

His answer: "I suspect that the disaster happened not with a bang but with a whimper."

Much like America's own colonists, Easter Island's early colonists discovered a new world—"a pristine paradise"—teeming with life. Almost 2000 years after its first settlers arrived, Easter Island was reduced to a barren graveyard by a populace so focused on their immediate needs that they failed to preserve paradise for future generations.

To quote Joni Mitchell, they paved over paradise to put up a parking lot.

In Easter Island's case, as Diamond speculates:

The forest...vanished slowly, over decades. Perhaps war interrupted the moving teams; perhaps by the time the carvers had finished their work, the last rope snapped. In the meantime, any islander who tried to warn about the dangers of progressive deforestation would have been overridden by vested interests of carvers, bureaucrats, and chiefs, whose jobs depended on continued deforestation... The changes in forest cover from year to year would have been hard to detect... Only older people, recollecting their childhoods decades earlier, could have recognized a difference.

Sound painfully familiar yet?

Substitute Easter Island's trees for America's republic and the trees being decimated for our freedoms, and the arrow hits the mark.

Diamond observes, "Gradually trees became fewer, smaller, and less important. By the time the last fruit-bearing adult palm tree was cut, palms had long since ceased to be of economic significance. That left only smaller and smaller palm saplings to clear each year, along with other bushes and treelets. No one would have noticed the felling of the last small palm."

We've already torn down the rich forest of liberties established by our founders. They don't teach freedom in the schools. Few Americans know their history. And even fewer seem to care that their fellow Americans are being jailed, muzzled, shot, tasered, and treated as if they have no rights at all. They don't care, that is, until it happens to them—at which point it's almost too late.

This is how the police state wins. This is how tyranny rises. This is how freedom falls.

A thousand cuts, each one justified or ignored or shrugged over as inconsequential enough by itself to bother. But they add up.

As I make clear in my book *Battlefield America: The War on the American People*, each cut, each attempt to undermine our freedoms, each loss of some critical right—to think freely, to assemble, to speak without fear of being shamed or censored, to raise our children as we see fit, to worship or not worship as our conscience dictates, to eat what we want and love who we want, to live as we want—they add up to an immeasurable failure on the part of each and every one of us to stop the descent down that slippery slope.

It's taken us 200 short years to destroy the freedoms our founders worked so hard to secure, and it's happened with barely a whimper of protest from "we the people."

So when I read about demonstrations breaking out in cities across the country and thousands taking to the streets to protest the threat of fascism from a Trump presidency, I have to wonder where were the concerns when access to Obama came easily to any special interest groups and donors willing and able to pay the admissions price?

When I see celebrities threatening to leave the country in droves, I have to ask myself, where was the outcry when the government's efforts to transform local police into extensions of the military went into overdrive under the Obama administration?

When my newsfeed is overflowing with people wishing they could keep the Obamas in office because they are so cool, I shake my head in disgust over this "cool" president's use of targeted drone strikes to assassinate American citizens without any due process.

When legal think tanks are threatening lawsuits over the possibility of Trump muzzling free expression, I can't help but wonder where the outrage was over the Obama administration's demonizing and criminalization of those who criticized the government.

And when commentators who previously dismissed as fear-mongering and hateful any comparison of the government's tactics to Nazi Germany are suddenly comparing Trump to Hitler, I have to wonder if perhaps we've been living in different countries all along, because none of this is new.

Indeed, if we're repeating history, the worst is yet to come.

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Jungle Drum Prose/Poetry. <http://jungledrum.lingama.net/news/story-2417.html>