
Here is the link to all OMNI newsletters:

http://www.omnicenter.org/newsletter-archive/

Contents #1 Jan. 10, 2012
Characteristics of Fascism
Essence of Fascism
Chomsky: Fascism in USA?
Book to Film: The End of America: 10 Steps to Fascism
Militarism USA
Preparations for Martial Law
US Army vs. Posse Comitatus
Internet Control

Contents of #2
Henry Wallace 1944 on US Fascism
Larson, Rise of Nazis in Germany
Cockburn, Fascism USA
Juan Cole, Pentagon Propaganda
Giroux, US Authoritarianism
Jonathan Schell, US Surveillance State
Snyder, Martial Law Detention List Prepared

The Danger of American Fascism

Henry A. Wallace

An article in the New York Times, April 9, 1944.
4. The obvious types of American fascists are dealt with on the air and in the press. These demagogues and stooges are fronts for others. Dangerous as these people may be, they are not so significant as thousands of other people who have never been mentioned. The really dangerous American fascists are not those who are hooked up directly or indirectly with the Axis. The FBI has its finger on those. The dangerous American fascist is the man who wants to do in the United States in an American way what Hitler did in Germany in a Prussian way. The American fascist would prefer not to use violence. His method is to poison the channels of public information. With a fascist the problem is never how best to present the truth to the public but how best to use the news to deceive the public into giving the fascist and his group more money or more power.

11. The American fascists are most easily recognized by their deliberate perversion of truth and fact. Their newspapers and propaganda carefully cultivate every fissure of disunity, every crack in the common front against fascism. They use every opportunity to impugn democracy. They use isolationism as a slogan to conceal their own selfish imperialism. They cultivate hate and distrust of both Britain and Russia. They claim to be super-patriots, but they would destroy every liberty guaranteed by the Constitution. They demand free enterprise, but are the spokesmen for monopoly and vested interest. Their final objective toward which all their deceit is directed is to capture political power so that, using the power of the state and the power of the market simultaneously, they may keep the common man in eternal subjection.

http://newdeal.feri.org/wallace/haw23.htm

RISE OF NAZIS, YEARS JUST BEFORE WWII

1. **In the Garden of Beasts** by Erik Larson - Book Club Discussion ...

   bestsellers.about.com/.../In-The-Garden-Of-Beasts-By-Erik-Larson-B...Cached

   You +1’d this publicly. Undo

   **In the Garden of Beasts** by Erik Larson is a nonfiction story of that takes place in Germany just before World War II. Use these book club discussion questions on ...

   2. **In the Garden of Beasts** - The Barnes & Noble Review

      bnreview.barnesandnoble.com/t5/A.../In-the-Garden-of-Beasts/.../487...Cached

      You +1’d this publicly. Undo

      May 11, 2011 – The assumption of power by Adolf Hitler, step by malignant step, a progress that was far from inevitable, continues to exercise a grotesque ...
Who are the real fascists: Marine Le Pen - or the United States?

Americans worry about the rise of extremism in Europe, but they aren't overly concerned by their own 'proto-fascist' country.

Column LAST UPDATED AT 07:19 ON Thu 3 May 2012

Recent columns

When half a million Americans died and nobody noticed

It's a dead head as Mitt Romney catches up with Barack Obama

Farewell gastro-porn: is the foodie frenzy finally fizzling out?

AMERICAN discussions of Europe swivel between rationality and hysteria. A discussion of Europe's awful unemployment figures and swelling mutiny against austerity suddenly mutates into tremulous wails about the menace of fascism in France, rancid racism in the Netherlands, the anti-Semitic beast unchained in Germany (in the terrifying form of Günter Grass's new poem).
A lot of this has to do with Marine Le Pen, leader of France's National Front. Now and again I'll mention her in something I've written without the obligatory insults about her family heritage and presumed totalitarian agenda. Furious letters pour in, particularly since she made a strong showing in the first round of the French presidential elections.

Marine Le Pen is a nationalist politician, quite reasonably exploiting the intense social discontent in France amid the imposition of the bankers' austerity programs. As Ambrose Evans-Pritchard put it in The Daily Telegraph recently, she "presents herself as a latterday Jeanne d'Arc, openly comparing France's pro-EU camp with the Burgundians who plotted 'English Annexation' in the 1430s - or indeed 'Les Collabos' who bought peace after 1940. 'Let us break the chains of the French people. Bring on the French Spring,' she tells Front National rallies."

Anti-Semitism? Diana Johnstone, an excellent journalist who has been reporting from France for years, writes to me, "There is absolutely nothing attesting to anti-Semitism on the part of Marine Le Pen. She has actually tried to woo the powerful Jewish organisations, and her anti-Islam stance is also a way to woo such groups. The simple fact is that the best way to destroy someone in this country is to call him or her 'anti-Semitic'."

Marine Le Pen certainly has made some unsavoury comments about immigrants and Islamisation. But she has gone to the heart of the matter, asserting that monetary union cannot be fudged, that it is incompatible with the French nation-state. She has won 18 per cent of the vote by campaigning to pull France out of the euro and smash the whole project. As Johnstone explains, a new poll shows only three per cent of French voters consider immigration the main issue. So logically, Le Pen cannot owe her 18 percent to that issue. The number-one issue is employment.

It's true, things could get ugly. Europe's politics are being refashioned before our eyes. Greece has 21 per cent unemployment, and the socialist Pasok party could face near-extinction in the upcoming elections. In Spain, one-in-four is out of work, and the right-wing prime minister insists on maintaining austerity. As Evans-Pritchard points out, "We forget now, but Germany was heavily indebted to foreigners in 1930, like Spain today. It was the refusal of the creditor powers (US and France) to reliquify the system and slow monetary contraction that pushed Germany over a cliff. The parallels are haunting."

But there's another aspect to this habit of flinging the charge of fascism at Europe, and that's
the simple matter of national hypocrisy. The mobs who flooded into the streets to revel in the execution of Osama bin Laden a year ago were not exulting in America, land of the free and of constitutional propriety. They were lauding brute, lawless, lethal force. In this year of political conventions we'll be hearing a lot of tub-thumping about American freedoms, but if there's any nation in the world that is well on the way to meriting the admittedly vague label of 'fascist', surely it's the United States.

Fascism, among other things, is a system of extreme, methodical state repression, violent in contour and threat, buttressed by ultra-nationalist mythology, a militarist culture and imperial ambition. In the 1980s America started locking up its poor people. Seven million adults were under correctional supervision in 2009. A fascist system uses constant harassment. Last year there were more than 600,000 stop-and-frisks in New York City, overwhelmingly of blacks and Hispanics. Historically, fascist regimes have been particularly cruel toward what is deemed to be sexual deviancy. US sex offender registries doom three-quarters of a million people - many of them convicted on trumpery charges - to pale simulacra of real life. Others endure castration and open-ended incarceration.

Fascist regimes, ultimately the expression of corporate power, repress labour in all efforts to organise. The onslaught here began with Taft-Hartley in 1947 and continued with methodical ferocity during the Reagan and Clinton years. Obama reneged on pledges to make organising easier, froze the wages of federal workers and advanced free trade across the globe. Attacks on collective bargaining are pervasive. Big money's grip on both parties ensures corporate control no matter who's nominally in charge. Fascist regimes show open contempt for democracy while deifying a leader who embodies the national spirit. We salute democracy while suppressing it.

A fascist regime is the sworn foe of the right to assembly, 'unauthorised' marches and encampments. We're sure to see more signs of this around the Nato summit and the national conventions. America is a network of Swat teams and kindred state-employed thugs on permanent red alert.

A fascist regime spies obsessively on its citizens. Study US laws on secret surveillance since the Patriot Act and you will find procedures that would have been the envy of the East Germans.

Ultimately a fascist state claims the right to imprison its victims without term or hope of
redress or legal representation. As the executive power, in the form of the president, it claims the right to kill its enemies, whether citizens (Awlaki) or others (Guantánamo), without judicial review. In other words, rule by decree - which is what Hitler's Enabling Act won him in March 1933.

We live in a fascist country - 'proto-fascist' if you want to allay public disquiet, though there's scant sign that most Americans are disturbed by the trends. So quit beating up on Europe.

Read more: http://www.theweek.co.uk/us/46625/who-are-real-fascists-marine-le-pen-or-united-states#ixzz1uJzOW3OR

[Dick: This essay also appeared in The Nation entitled “So Who’s the Fascist Here?” (May 21, 2012). See the four letters in response June 18, 2012.]

GOP CONGRESS AUTHORIZES LYING TO PUBLIC
Will get vetoed--but that they tried to do it shows where the Repubs are headed.

House NDAA Bill Passed w/Amendment Formally Authorizing Gov’t To Lie To U.S. Citizens
Source: dailykos.com

Juan Cole, “The Creeping Fascism of American Politics”

Informed Comment

Cole writes: "Two congressmen are attempting to insert a provision in the National Defense Authorization Act that would allow the Department of Defense to subject the US domestic public to propaganda."
The Creeping Fascism of American Politics

By Juan Cole, Informed Comment

20 May 12

Two congressmen are attempting to insert a provision in the National Defense Authorization act that would allow the Department of Defense to subject the US domestic public to propaganda. The bipartisan amendment was introduced by Rep. Mac Thornberry from Texas and Rep. Adam Smith from Washington State.

Nothing speaks more urgently to the creeping fascism of American politics than the assertion by our representatives, who apparently have never read a book on Germany in the 1930s-1940s or on the Soviet Union in the Stalin period, that forbidding DoD and the State Department from subjecting us to government propaganda "ties the hands of America's diplomatic officials, military, and others by inhibiting our ability to effectively communicate in a credible way." And mind you, they want to use our own money to wash our brains!

As Will Rogers observed, "This country has come to feel the same when Congress is in session as when the baby gets hold of a hammer."

I love our guys and gals in uniform, but they can be extremely obnoxious in any discussion about US government policy that 'gets off point' or 'doesn't serve the mission.' At Washington think tank events, I've seen them repeatedly close down discussions among e.g. State Department foreign service officers. You don't want most of the DoD types providing information to us, because it won't be in any way balanced.

Of course, having a Pentagon propaganda unit at all is highly anti-democratic. The best defense of the truth is a free press. It should also be remembered that nowadays everything in Washington is outsourced, so government propaganda is often being turned over to Booz Allen or the American Enterprise Institute, which have a rightwing bias.

Doing propaganda abroad has the difficulty that it doesn't stay abroad. False articles placed in the
Arabic press in Iraq were translated into English by wire services, who got stung.

Then, another problem is that the Defense Intelligence Agency analysts *also* read the false articles placed in the Arabic press by *another* Pentagon office, which they did not know about. So the analysts were passing up to the White House false information provided by their own colleagues!

I was told by an insider that one reason Washington analysts often read my blog in the Bush years was that I had a reputation for having an accurate bull crap meter, and thus my judgments on what was likely to be true helped them fight the tendency to believe our own propaganda!

Not only should this amendment be gotten rid of quick, but their constituents should please vote out of office Reps. Thornberry and Smith next November.

Zombie Politics, Democracy, and the Threat of Authoritarianism - Part I

Wednesday, 01 June 2011 09:41 By Henry A Giroux, Peter Lang Publishing Group | Book Excerpt | Book Excerpt
The Rise of Zombie Politics

In the world of popular culture, zombies seem to be everywhere, as evidenced by the relentless slew of books, movies, video games, and comics. >From the haunting Night of the Living Dead to the comic movie Zombieland, the figure of the zombie has captured and touched something unique in the contemporary imagination. But the dark and terrifying image of the zombie with missing body parts, oozing body fluids, and an appetite for fresh, living, human brains does more than feed the mass-marketing machines that prey on the spectacle of the violent, grotesque, and ethically comatose. There is more at work in this wave of fascination with the grotesquely walking hyper-dead than a Hollywood appropriation of the dark recesses and unrestrained urges of the human mind. The zombie phenomenon is now on display nightly on television alongside endless examples of destruction unfolding in real-time. Such a cultural fascination with proliferating images of the living hyper-dead and unrelenting human catastrophes that extend from a global economic meltdown to the earthquake in Haiti to the ecological disaster caused by the oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico signals a shift away from the hope that accompanies the living to a politics of cynicism and despair. The macabre double movement between “the dead that walk” and those who are alive but are dying and suffering cannot be understood outside of the casino capitalism that now shapes every aspect of society in its own image. A casino capitalist zombie politics views competition as a form of social combat, celebrates war as an extension of politics, and legitimates a ruthless Social Darwinism in which particular individuals and groups are considered simply redundant, disposable—nothing more than human waste left to stew in their own misfortune—easy prey for the zombies who have a ravenous appetite for chaos and revel in apocalyptic visions filled with destruction, decay, abandoned houses, burned-out cars, gutted landscapes, and trashed gas stations.

The twenty-first-century zombies no longer emerge from the grave; they now inhabit the rich environs of Wall Street and roam the halls of the gilded monuments of greed such as Goldman Sachs. As an editorial in The New York Times points out, the new zombies of free-market fundamentalism turned “the financial system into a casino. Like gambling, the transactions mostly just shifted paper money around the globe. Unlike gambling, they packed an enormous capacity for collective and economic destruction—hobbling banks that made bad bets, freezing credit and economic activity. Society—not the bankers—bore the cost.” In this way, the zombie—the immoral, sub-Nietzschean, id-driven “other” who is “hyper-dead” but still alive as an avatar of death and cruelty—provides an apt metaphor for a new kind of authoritarianism that has a grip on contemporary politics in the United States. This is an authoritarianism in which mindless self-gratification becomes the sanctioned norm and public issues collapse into the realm of privatized anger and rage. The rule of the market offers the hyper-dead an opportunity to exercise unprecedented power in American society, reconstructing civic and political culture almost entirely in the service of a politics that fuels the friend/enemy divide, even as democracy becomes the scandal of casino capitalism—its ultimate humiliation.

Click below to listen to The Critical Lede's audio interview with Dr. Henry Giroux.

Press play to listen to the interview:
But the new zombies are not only wandering around in the banks, investment houses, and death chambers of high finance, they have an ever-increasing presence in the highest reaches of government and in the forefront of mainstream media. The growing numbers of zombies in the mainstream media have huge financial backing from the corporate elite and represent the new face of the culture of cruelty and hatred in the second Gilded Age. Any mention of the social state, putting limits on casino capitalism, and regulating corporate zombies puts Sarah Palin, Glenn Beck, Rush Limbaugh, and other talking heads into a state of high rage. They disparage any discourse that embraces social justice, social responsibility, and human rights. Appealing to “real” American values such as family, God, and Guns, they are in the forefront of a zombie politics that opposes any legislation or policy designed to lessen human suffering and promote economic and social progress. As Arun Gupta points out, they are insistent in their opposition to “civil rights, school desegregation, women’s rights, labor organizing, the minimum wage, Social Security, LGBT rights, welfare, immigrant rights, public education, reproductive rights, Medicare, [and] Medicaid.”[5] The walking hyper-dead even oppose providing the extension of unemployment benefits to millions of Americans who are out of work, food, and hope. They spectacularize hatred and trade in lies and misinformation. They make populist appeals to the people while legitimating the power of the rich. They appeal to common sense as a way of devaluing a culture of questioning and critical exchange. Unrelenting in their role as archetypes of the hyper-dead, they are misanthropes trading in fear, hatred, and hyper-nationalism.

The human suffering produced by the walking hyper-dead can also be seen in the nativist apoplexy resulting in the racist anti-immigration laws passed in Arizona, the attempts to ban ethnic studies in public schools, the rise of the punishing state, the social dumping of millions of people of color into prisons, and the attempts of Tea Party fanatics and politicians who want to “take back America” from President Barack Obama—described in the new lexicon of right-wing political illiteracy as both an alleged socialist and the new Hitler. Newt Gingrich joins Glenn Beck and other members of the elite squad of the hyper-dead in arguing that Obama is just another version of Joseph Stalin. For Gingrich and the rest of the zombie ideologues, any discourse that advocates for social protections, easing human suffering, or imagining a better future is dismissed by being compared to the horrors of the Nazi holocaust. Dystopian discourse and End Times morbidity rule the collective consciousness of this group.

The “death panels” envisaged by Sarah Palin are not going to emerge from Obama’s health care reform plan but from the toolkits the zombie politicians and talking heads open up every time they are given the opportunity to speak. The death threats, vandalism, and crowds shouting homophobic slurs at openly gay U.S. House Representative Barney Frank already speak to a fixation with images of death, violence, and war that now grips the country. Sarah Palin’s infamous call to a gathering of her followers to “reload” in opposition to President Obama’s policies—soon followed in a nationally televised press conference with a request for the American people to embrace Arizona’s xenophobic laws—makes her one of the most prominent of the political zombies. Not only has she made less-than-vague endorsements of violence in many of her public speeches, she has cheerfully embraced the new face of white supremacy in her recent unapologetic endorsement of racial profiling, stating in a widely reported speech that “It’s time for Americans across this great country to stand up and say, ‘We’re all Arizonians now.’”[6] The current descent into racism, ignorance, corruption, and mob idiocy makes clear the degree to which politics has become a sport for zombies rather than engaged and thoughtful citizens.[7]
The hyper-dead celebrate talk radio haters such as Rush Limbaugh, whose fanaticism appears to pass without criticism in the mainstream media. Limbaugh echoes the fanatics who whipped up racial hatred in Weimar Germany, the ideological zombies who dissolved the line between reason and distortion-laden propaganda. How else to explain his claim “that environmentalist terrorists might have caused the ecological disaster in the gulf”? The ethically frozen zombies that dominate screen culture believe that only an appeal to self-interest motivates people—a convenient counterpart to a culture of cruelty that rebukes, if not disdains, any appeal to the virtues of a moral and just society. They smile at their audiences while collapsing the distinction between opinions and reasoned arguments. They report on Tea Party rallies while feeding the misplaced ideological frenzy that motivates such gatherings but then refuse to comment on rallies all over the country that do not trade in violence or spectacle. They report uncritically on Islam bashers, such as the radical right-wing radio host Michael Savage, as if his ultra-extremist racist views are a legitimate part of the American mainstream. In the age of zombie politics, there is too little public outrage or informed public anger over the pushing of millions of people out of their homes and jobs, the defunding of schools, and the rising tide of homeless families and destitute communities. Instead of organized, massive protests against casino capitalism, the American public is treated to an endless and arrogant display of wealth, greed, and power. Armies of zombies tune in to gossip-laden entertainment, game, and reality TV shows, transfixed by the empty lure of celebrity culture.

The roaming hordes of celebrity zombie intellectuals work hard to fuel a sense of misguided fear and indignation toward democratic politics, the social state, and immigrants—all of which is spewed out in bitter words and comes terribly close to inciting violence. Zombies love death-dealing institutions, which accounts for why they rarely criticize the bloated military budget and the rise of the punishing state and its expanding prison system. They smile with patriotic glee, anxious to further the demands of empire as automated drones kill innocent civilians—conveniently dismissed as collateral damage—and the torture state rolls inexorably along in Afghanistan, Iraq, and in other hidden and unknown sites. The slaughter that inevitably follows catastrophe is not new, but the current politics of death has reached new heights and threatens to transform a weak democracy into a full-fledged authoritarian state.

**A Turn to the Dark Side of Politics**

The American media, large segments of the public, and many educators widely believe that authoritarianism is alien to the political landscape of American society. Authoritarianism is generally associated with tyranny and governments that exercise power in violation of the rule of law. A commonly held perception of the American public is that authoritarianism is always elsewhere. It can be found in other allegedly “less developed/civilized countries,” such as contemporary China or Iran, or it belongs to a fixed moment in modern history, often associated with the rise of twentieth-century totalitarianism in its different forms in Germany, Italy, and the Soviet Union under Stalin. Even as the United States became more disposed to modes of tyrannical power under the second Bush administration—demonstrated, for example, by the existence of secret CIA prisons, warrantless spying on Americans, and state-sanctioned kidnaping—mainstream liberals, intellectuals, journalists, and media pundits argued that any suggestion that the United States was becoming an authoritarian society was simply preposterous. For instance, the journalist James Traub repeated the dominant view that whatever problems the United States faced under the Bush administration had nothing to do with a growing authoritarianism or its more extreme form, totalitarianism. On the
contrary, according to this position, America was simply beholden to a temporary seizure of power by some extremists, who represented a form of political exceptionalism and an annoying growth on the body politic. In other words, as repugnant as many of Bush’s domestic and foreign policies might have been, they neither threatened nor compromised in any substantial way America’s claim to being a democratic society.

Against the notion that the Bush administration had pushed the United States close to the brink of authoritarianism, some pundits have argued that this dark moment in America’s history, while uncharacteristic of a substantive democracy, had to be understood as temporary perversion of American law and democratic ideals that would end when George W. Bush concluded his second term in the White House. In this view, the regime of George W. Bush and its demonstrated contempt for democracy was explained away as the outgrowth of a random act of politics—a corrupt election and the bad-faith act of a conservative court in 2000 or a poorly run election campaign in 2004 by an uncinematic and boring Democratic candidate. According to this narrative, the Bush-Cheney regime exhibited such extreme modes of governance in its embrace of an imperial presidency, its violation of domestic and international laws, and its disdain for human rights and democratic values that it was hard to view such antidemocratic policies as part of a pervasive shift toward a hidden order of authoritarian politics, which historically has existed at the margins of American society. It would be difficult to label such a government other than as shockingly and uniquely extremist, given a political legacy that included the rise of the security and torture state; the creation of legal illegalities in which civil liberties were trampled; the launching of an unjust war in Iraq legitimated through official lies; the passing of legislative policies that drained the federal surplus by giving away more than a trillion dollars in tax cuts to the rich; the enactment of a shameful policy of preemptive war; the endorsement of an inflated military budget at the expense of much-needed social programs; the selling off of as many government functions as possible to corporate interests; the resurrection of an imperial presidency; an incessant attack against unions; support for a muzzled and increasingly corporate-controlled media; the government production of fake news reports to gain consent for regressive policies; the use of an Orwellian vocabulary for disguising monstrous acts such as torture (“enhanced interrogation techniques”); the furtherance of a racist campaign of legal harassment and incarceration of Arabs, Muslims, and immigrants; the advancement of a prison binge through a repressive policy of criminalization; the establishment of an unregulated and ultimately devastating form of casino capitalism; the arrogant celebration and support for the interests and values of big business at the expense of citizens and the common good; and the dismantling of social services and social safety nets as part of a larger campaign of ushering in the corporate state and the reign of finance capital?

**Authoritarianism With a Friendly Face**

In the minds of the American public, the dominant media, and the accommodating pundits and intellectuals, there is no sense of how authoritarianism in its soft and hard forms can manifest itself as anything other than horrible images of concentration camps, goose-stepping storm troopers, rigid modes of censorship, and chilling spectacles of extremist government repression and violence. That is, there is little understanding of how new modes of authoritarian ideology, policy, values, and social relations might manifest themselves in degrees and gradations so as to create the conditions for a distinctly undemocratic and increasingly cruel and oppressive social order. As the late Susan Sontag suggested in another context, there is a willful ignorance of how emerging registers of power and governance “dissolve politics into pathology.”[10] It is generally believed that in a constitutional democracy, power is in the hands of the people, and
that the long legacy of democratic ideals in America, however imperfect, is enough to prevent democracy from being subverted or lost. And yet the lessons of history provide clear examples of how the emergence of reactionary politics, the increasing power of the military, and the power of big business subverted democracy in Argentina, Chile, Germany, and Italy. In spite of these histories, there is no room in the public imagination to entertain what has become the unthinkable—that such an order in its contemporary form might be more nuanced, less theatrical, more cunning, less concerned with repressive modes of control than with manipulative modes of consent—what one might call a mode of authoritarianism with a distinctly American character.[11]

Historical conjunctures produce different forms of authoritarianism, though they all share a hatred for democracy, dissent, and civil liberties. It is too easy to believe in a simplistic binary logic that strictly categorizes a country as either authoritarian or democratic, which leaves no room for entertaining the possibility of a mixture of both systems. American politics today suggests a more updated if not a different form of authoritarianism. In this context, it is worth remembering what Huey Long said in response to the question of whether America could ever become fascist: “Yes, but we will call it anti-fascist.”[12] Long’s reply suggests that fascism is not an ideological apparatus frozen in a particular historical period but a complex and often shifting theoretical and political register for understanding how democracy can be subverted, if not destroyed, from within. This notion of soft or friendly fascism was articulated in 1985 in Bertram Gross’s book Friendly Fascism, in which he argued that if fascism came to the United States it would not embody the same characteristics associated with fascist forms in the historical past. There would be no Nuremberg rallies, doctrines of racial superiority, government-sanctioned book burnings, death camps, genocidal purges, or the abrogation of the U.S. Constitution. In short, fascism would not take the form of an ideological grid from the past simply downloaded onto another country under different historical conditions. Gross believed that fascism was an ongoing danger and had the ability to become relevant under new conditions, taking on familiar forms of thought that resonate with nativist traditions, experiences, and political relations.[13] Similarly, in his Anatomy of Fascism, Robert O. Paxton argued that the texture of American fascism would not mimic traditional European forms but would be rooted in the language, symbols, and culture of everyday life. He writes: “No swastikas in an American fascism, but Stars and Stripes (or Stars and Bars) and Christian crosses. No fascist salute, but mass recitations of the Pledge of Allegiance. These symbols contain no whiff of fascism in themselves, of course, but an American fascism would transform them into obligatory litmus tests for detecting the internal enemy.”[14] It is worth noting that Umberto Eco, in his discussion of “eternal fascism,” also argued that any updated version of fascism would not openly assume the mantle of historical fascism; rather, new forms of authoritarianism would appropriate some of its elements, making it virtually unrecognizable from its traditional forms. Like Gross and Paxton, Eco contended that fascism, if it comes to America, will have a different guise, although it will be no less destructive of democracy. He wrote:

Ur-Fascism [Eternal Fascism] is still around us, sometimes in plainclothes. It would be much easier for us if there appeared on the world scene somebody saying, “I want to reopen Auschwitz, I want the Blackshirts to parade again in the Italian squares.” Life is not that simple. Ur-Fascism can come back under the most innocent of disguises. Our duty is to uncover it and to point our finger at any of its new instances—every day, in every part of the world.[15]

The renowned political theorist Sheldon Wolin, in Democracy Incorporated, updates these views and argues
persuasively that the United States has produced its own unique form of authoritarianism, which he calls “inverted totalitarianism.” Wolin claims that under traditional forms of totalitarianism, there are usually founding texts such as Mein Kampf, rule by a personal demagogue such as Adolf Hitler, political change enacted by a revolutionary movement such as the Bolsheviks, the constitution rewritten or discarded, the political state’s firm control over corporate interests, and an idealized and all-encompassing ideology used to create a unified and totalizing understanding of society. At the same time, the government uses all the power of its cultural and repressive state apparatuses to fashion followers in its own ideological image and collective identity.

In the United States, Wolin argues that an emerging authoritarianism appears to take on a very different form. Instead of a charismatic leader, the government is now governed through the anonymous and largely remote hand of corporate power and finance capital. Political sovereignty is largely replaced by economic sovereignty as corporate power takes over the reins of governance. The dire consequence, as David Harvey points out, is that “raw money power wielded by the few undermines all semblances of democratic governance. The pharmaceutical companies, health insurance and hospital lobbies, for example, spent more than $133 million in the first three months of 2009 to make sure they got their way on health care reform in the United States.” The more money influences politics the more corrupt the political culture becomes. Under such circumstances, holding office is largely dependent on having huge amounts of capital at one’s disposal, while laws and policies at all levels of government are mostly fashioned by lobbyists representing big business corporations and commanding financial institutions. Moreover, as the politics of health care reform indicate, such lobbying, as corrupt and unethical as it may be, is not carried out in the open and displayed by insurance and drug companies as a badge of honor—a kind of open testimonial to the disrespect for democratic governance and a celebration of their power. The subversion of democratic governance in the United States by corporate interests is captured succinctly by Chris Hedges in his observation that

Corporations have 35,000 lobbyists in Washington and thousands more in state capitals that dole out corporate money to shape and write legislation. They use their political action committees to solicit employees and shareholders for donations to fund pliable candidates. The financial sector, for example, spent more than $5 billion on political campaigns, influenc[e] peddling and lobbying during the past decade, which resulted in sweeping deregulation, the gouging of consumers, our global financial meltdown and the subsequent looting of the U.S. Treasury. The Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America spent $26 million last year and drug companies such as Pfizer, Amgen and Eli Lilly kicked in tens of millions more to buy off the two parties. These corporations have made sure our so-called health reform bill will force us to buy their predatory and defective products. The oil and gas industry, the coal industry, defense contractors and telecommunications companies have thwarted the drive for sustainable energy and orchestrated the steady erosion of civil liberties. Politicians do corporate bidding and stage hollow acts of political theater to keep the fiction of the democratic state alive.

Rather than being forced to adhere to a particular state ideology, the general public in the United States is largely depoliticized through the influence of corporations over schools, higher education, and other cultural apparatuses. The deadening of public values, civic consciousness, and critical citizenship is also the result of the work of anti-public intellectuals representing right-wing ideological and financial interests, dominant media that are largely center-right, and a market-driven public pedagogy that reduces the obligations of citizenship to the endless consumption and
discarding of commodities. In addition, a pedagogy of social and political amnesia works through celebrity culture and its counterpart in corporate-driven news, television, radio, and entertainment to produce a culture of stupidity, censorship, and diversionary spectacles.

**Depoliticizing Freedom and Agency**

Agency is now defined by a neoliberal concept of freedom, a notion that is largely organized according to the narrow notions of individual self-interest and limited to the freedom from constraints. Central to this concept is the freedom to pursue one’s self-interests independently of larger social concerns. For individuals in a consumer society, this often means the freedom to shop, own guns, and define rights without regard to the consequences for others or the larger social order. When applied to economic institutions, this notion of freedom often translates into a call for removing government regulation over the market and economic institutions. This notion of a deregulated and privatized freedom is decoupled from the common good and any understanding of individual and social responsibility. It is an unlimited notion of freedom that both refuses to recognize the importance of social costs and social consequences and has no language for an ethic that calls us beyond ourselves, that engages our responsibility to others. Within this discourse of hyper-individualized freedom, individuals are not only “liberated from the constraints imposed by the dense network of social bonds,” but are also “stripped of the protection which had been matter-of-factly offered in the past by that dense network of social bonds.” [21]

Freedom exclusively tied to personal and political rights without also enabling access to economic resources becomes morally empty and politically dysfunctional. The much-heralded notion of choice associated with personal and political freedom is hardly assured when individuals lack the economic resources, knowledge, and social supports to make such choices and freedoms operative and meaningful. As Zygmunt Bauman points out, “The right to vote (and so, obliquely and at least in theory, the right to influence the composition of the ruler and the shape of the rules that bind the ruled) could be meaningfully exercised only by those ‘who possess sufficient economic and cultural resources’ to be ‘safe from the voluntary or involuntary servitude that cuts off any possible autonomy of choice (and/or its delegation) at the root....[Choice] stripped of economic resources and political power hardly assure[s] personal freedoms to the dispossessed, who have no claim on the resources without which personal freedom can neither be won nor in practice enjoyed.” [22] Paul Bigioni has argued that this flawed notion of freedom played a central role in the emerging fascist dictatorships of the early twentieth century. He writes:

It was the liberals of that era who clamored for unfettered personal and economic freedom, no matter what the cost to society. Such untrammeled freedom is not suitable to civilized humans. It is the freedom of the jungle. In other words, the strong have more of it than the weak. It is a notion of freedom that is inherently violent, because it is enjoyed at the expense of others. Such a notion of freedom legitimizes each and every increase in the wealth and power of those who are already powerful, regardless of the misery that will be suffered by others as a result. The use of the state to limit such “freedom” was denounced by the laissez-faire liberals of the early 20th century. The use of the state to protect such “freedom” was fascism. Just as monopoly is the ruin of the free market, fascism is the ultimate degradation of liberal capitalism.[23]

This stripped-down notion of market-based freedom that now dominates American society cancels out any viable
notion of individual and social agency. This market-driven notion of freedom emphasizes choice as an economic function defined largely as the right to buy things while at the same time cancelling out any active understanding of freedom and choice as the right to make rational choices concerning the very structure of power and governance in a society. In embracing a passive attitude toward freedom in which power is viewed as a necessary evil, a conservative notion of freedom reduces politics to the empty ritual of voting and is incapable of understanding freedom as a form of collective, productive power that enables “a notion of political agency and freedom that affirms the equal opportunity of all to exercise political power in order to participate in shaping the most important decisions affecting their lives.”[24] This merging of the market-based understanding of freedom as the freedom to consume and the conservative-based view of freedom as a restriction from all constraints refuses to recognize that the conditions for substantive freedom do not lie in personal and political rights alone; on the contrary, real choices and freedom include the individual and collective ability to actively intervene in and shape both the nature of politics and the myriad forces bearing down on everyday life—a notion of freedom that can only be viable when social rights and economic resources are available to individuals. Of course, this notion of freedom and choice is often dismissed either as a vestige of socialism or simply drowned out in a culture that collapses all social considerations and notions of solidarity into the often cruel and swindle-based discourse of instant gratification and individual gain. Under such conditions, democracy is managed through the empty ritual of elections; citizens are largely rendered passive observers as a result of giving undue influence to corporate power in shaping all of the essential elements of political governance and decision making; and manufactured appeals to fear and personal safety legitimate both the suspension of civil liberties and the expanding powers of an imperial presidency and the policing functions of a militaristic state.

Busy schedule? Click here to keep up with Truthout with free email updates.

I believe that the formative culture necessary to create modes of education, thought, dialogue, critique, and critical agency—the necessary conditions of any aspiring democracy—is largely destroyed through the pacification of intellectuals and the elimination of public spheres capable of creating such a culture. Elements of a depoliticizing and commodifying culture become clear in the shameless propaganda produced by the so-called “embedded” journalists, while a corporate-dominated popular culture largely operates through multiple technologies, screen cultures, and video games that trade endlessly in images of violence, spectacles of consumption, and stultifying modes of (il)literacy. Funded by right-wing ideological, corporate, and militaristic interests, an army of anti-public intellectuals groomed in right-wing think tanks and foundations, such as the American Enterprise Institute and Manhattan Institute, dominate the traditional media, police the universities for any vestige of critical thought and dissent, and endlessly spread their message of privatization, deregulation, and commercialization, exercising a powerful influence in the dismantling of all public spheres not dominated by private and commodifying interests. These “experts in legitimation,” to use Antonio Gramsci’s prescient phrase, peddle civic ignorance just as they renounce any vestige of public accountability for big business, giant media conglomerates, and financial mega corporations. How else to explain that nearly twenty percent of the American people believe incorrectly that Obama is a Muslim!

Under the new authoritarianism, the corporate state and the punishing state merge as economics drives politics, and repression is increasingly used to contain all those individuals and groups caught in an expanding web of destabilizing inequality and powerlessness that touches everything from the need for basic health care, food, and shelter to the
promise of a decent education. As the social state is hollowed out under pressure from free-market advocates, right-wing politicians, and conservative ideologues, the United States has increasingly turned its back on any semblance of social justice, civic responsibility, and democracy itself. This might explain the influential journalist Thomas Friedman’s shameless endorsement of military adventurism in the New York Times article in which he argues that “The hidden hand of the market will never work without a hidden fist—McDonald’s cannot flourish without McDonnell Douglas, the designer of the U.S. Air Force F-15. And the hidden fist that keeps the world safe for Silicon Valley’s technologies to flourish is called the U.S. Army, Air Force, Navy and Marine Corps.”[25] Freedom in this discourse is inextricably wedded to state and military violence and is a far cry from any semblance of a claim to democracy.

**Zombie Politicas and the Culture of Cruelty**

Another characteristic of an emerging authoritarianism in the United States is the correlation between the growing atomization of the individual and the rise of a culture of cruelty, a type of zombie politics in which the living dead engage in forms of rapacious behavior that destroy almost every facet of a substantive democratic polity. There is a mode of terror rooted in a neoliberal market-driven society that numbs many people just as it wipes out the creative faculties of imagination, memory, and critical thought. Under a regime of privatized utopias, hyper-individualism, and ego-centered values, human beings slip into a kind of ethical somnolence, indifferent to the plight and suffering of others. Though writing in a different context, the late Frankfurt School theorist Leo Lowenthal captured this mode of terror in his comments on the deeply sedimented elements of authoritarianism rooted in modern civilization. He wrote:

In a system that reduces life to a chain of disconnected reactions to shock, personal communication tends to lose all meaning....The individual under terrorist conditions is never alone and always alone. He becomes numb and rigid not only in relation to his neighbor but also in relation to himself; fear robs him of the power of spontaneous emotional or mental reaction. Thinking becomes a stupid crime; it endangers his life. The inevitable consequence is that stupidity spreads as a contagious disease among the terrorized population. Human beings live in a state of stupor, in a moral coma.[26]

Implicit in Lowenthal’s commentary is the assumption that as democracy becomes a fiction, the moral mechanisms of language, meaning, and ethics collapse, and a cruel indifference takes over diverse modes of communication and exchange, often as a register of the current paucity of democratic values, identities, and social relations. Surely, this is obvious today as all vestiges of the social compact, social responsibility, and modes of solidarity give way to a form of Social Darwinism with its emphasis on ruthlessness, cruelty, war, violence, hyper modes of masculinity, and a disdain for those considered weak, dependent, alien, or economically unproductive. A poverty of civic ideals is matched not only by a poverty of critical agency but also by the disappearance among the public of the importance of moral and social responsibilities. As public life is commercialized and commodified, the pathology of individual entitlement and narcissism erodes those public spaces in which the conditions for conscience, decency, self-respect, and dignity take root. The delusion of endless growth coupled with an “obsession with wealth creation, the cult of privatization [and] uncritical admiration for unfettered markets, and disdain for the public sector” has produced a culture that seems “consumed by locusts” in “an age of pygmies.”[27]
This culture of cruelty is especially evident in the hardships and deprivations now visited upon many young people in the United States. We have 13.3 million homeless children; one child in five lives in poverty; too many are now under the supervision of the criminal justice system, and many more young adults are unemployed and lack any hope for the future. Moreover, we are subjecting more and more children to psychiatric drugs as a way of controlling their alleged unruly behavior while providing huge profits for drug companies. As Evelyn Pringle points out, “in 2006 more money was spent on treating mental disorders in children aged 0 to 17 than for any other medical condition, with a total of $8.9 billion.” Needless to say, the drugging of American children is less about treating genuine mental disorders than it is about punishing so-called unruly children, largely children of the poor, while creating “lifelong patients and repeat customers for Pharma!” Stories abound about poor young people being raped, beaten, and dying in juvenile detention centers, needlessly trafficked into the criminal justice system as part of a profit-making scheme cooked up by corrupt judges and private correction facilities administrators, and being given powerful antipsychotic medicines in schools and other state facilities. Unfortunately, this regression to sheer Economic Darwinism is not only evident in increasing violence against young people, cutthroat reality TV shows, hate radio, and the Internet, it is also on full display in the discourse of government officials and politicians and serves as a register of the prominence of both a kind of political infantilism and a culture of cruelty. For instance, the Secretary of Education, Arne Duncan, recently stated in an interview in February 2010 that “the best thing that happened to the education system in New Orleans was Hurricane Katrina.” Duncan’s point, beyond the incredible inhumanity reflected in such a comment, was that it took a disaster that uprooted thousands of individuals and families and caused enormous amounts of suffering to enable the Obama administration to implement a massive educational system pushing charter schools based on market-driven principles that disdain public values, if not public schooling itself. This is the language of cruelty and zombie politicians, a language indifferent to the ways in which people who suffer great tragedies are expelled from their histories, narratives, and right to be human. Horrible tragedies caused in part by government indifference are now covered up in the discourse and ideals inspired by the logic of the market. This mean and merciless streak was also on display recently when Lieutenant Governor Andre Bauer, who is running for the Republican nomination for governor in South Carolina, stated that giving people government assistance was comparable to “feeding stray animals.” The utterly derogatory and implicitly racist nature of his remark became obvious in the statement that followed: “You know why? Because they breed. You’re facilitating the problem if you give an animal or a person ample food supply. They will reproduce, especially ones that don’t think too much further than that. And so what you’ve got to do is you’ve got to curtail that type of behavior. They don’t know any better.” Lowenthal’s argument that in an authoritarian society “stupidity spreads as a contagious disease” is evident in a statement made by Michele Bachmann, a Republican congresswoman, who recently argued that “Americans should purchase [health] insurance with their own tax-free money.” That 43 million Americans are without health insurance because they cannot afford it seems lost on Bachmann, whose comments suggest that these uninsured individuals, families, unemployed workers, and children are not simply a disposable surplus but actually invisible and therefore unworthy of any acknowledgment.

The regressive politics and moral stupidity are also evident in the emergence of right-wing extremists now taking over the Republican Party. This new and aggressive political formation calls for decoupling market-driven financial
institutions from any vestige of political and governmental constraint, celebrates emotion over reason, treats critical intelligence as a toxin possessed largely by elites, wraps its sophomoric misrepresentations in an air of beyond-interrogation “we’re just folks” insularity, and calls for the restoration of a traditional, white, Christian, male-dominated America.[35] Such calls embody elements of a racial panic that are evident in all authoritarian movements and have increasingly become a defining feature of a Republican Party that has sided with far-right-wing thugs and goon squads intent on disrupting any vestige of the democratic process. This emerging authoritarian element in American political culture is embodied in the wildly popular media presence of Rush Limbaugh and Glenn Beck—right-wing extremists who share a contempt for reason and believe in organizing politics on the model of war, unconditional surrender, personal insults, hyper-masculine spectacles, and the complete destruction of one’s opponent.

The culture of cruelty, violence, and slander was on full display as the Obama administration successfully passed a weak version of health care reform in 2010. Stoked by a Republican Party that has either looked away or in some cases supported the coded language of racism and violence, it was no surprise that there was barely a peep out of Republican Party leaders when racial and homophobic slurs were hurled by Tea Party demonstrators at civil rights legend Jon Lewis and openly gay Barney Frank, both firm supporters of the Obama health policies. Even worse is the nod to trigger-happy right-wing advocates of violence that conservatives such as Sarah Palin have suggested in their response to the passage of the health care bill. For instance, Frank Rich argues that this bill that inspired G.O.P. congressmen on the House floor to egg on disruptive protesters even as they were being evicted from the gallery by the Capitol Police last Sunday. It’s this bill that prompted a congressman to shout “baby killer” at Bart Stupak, a staunch anti-abortion Democrat. It’s this bill that drove a demonstrator to spit on Emanuel Cleaver, a black representative from Missouri. And it’s this “middle-of-the-road” bill, as Obama accurately calls it, that has incited an unglued firestorm of homicidal rhetoric, from “Kill the bill!” to Sarah Palin’s cry for her followers to “reload.” At least four of the House members hit with death threats or vandalism are among the 20 political targets Palin marks with rifle crosshairs on a map on her Facebook page.[36]

There is more at work here than the usual right-wing promotion of bigotry and ignorance; there is the use of violent rhetoric and imagery that mimics the discourse of terrorism reminiscent of Oklahoma bomber Timothy McVeigh, dangerous right-wing militia groups, and other American-style fascists. As Chris Hedges insists, “The language of violence always presages violence”[37] and fuels an authoritarianism that feeds on such excesses and the moral coma that accompanies the inability of a society to both question itself and imagine an alternative democratic order. How else can one read the “homicidal rhetoric” that is growing in America as anything other than an obituary for dialogue, democratic values, and civic courage? What does it mean for a democracy when the general public either supports or is silent in the face of widely publicized events such as black and gay members of Congress being subjected to racist and homophobic taunts, a black congressman being spit on, and the throwing of bricks through the office windows of some legislators who supported the health care bill? What does it mean for a democracy when there is little collective outrage when Sarah Palin, a leading voice in the Republican Party, mimics the tactics of vigilantes by posting a map with crosshairs on the districts of Democrats and urges her supporters on with the shameful slogan “Don’t Retreat. Instead—RELOAD!” Under such circumstances, the brandishing of assault weapons at right-wing political rallies, the posters and signs comparing Obama to Hitler, and the ever-increasing chants to “Take Our Country Back” echoes
what Frank Rich calls a “small-scale mimicry of Kristallnacht.”[38] Violence and aggression are now openly tolerated and in some cases promoted. The chants, insults, violence, and mob hysteria all portend a dark period in American history—an historical conjuncture in the death knell for democracy is being written as the media turn such events into spectacles rather than treat them as morally and politically repugnant acts more akin to the legacy of fascism than the ideals of an aspiring democracy. All the while the public yawns or, more troubling, engages fantasies of reloading.

Unfortunately, the problems now facing the United States are legion and further the erosion of a civic and democratic culture. Some of the most glaring issues are massive unemployment; a rotting infrastructure; the erosion of vital public services; the dismantling of the social safety net; expanding levels of poverty, especially for children; and an imprisonment binge largely affecting poor minorities of color. But such a list barely scratches the surface. In addition, we have witnessed in the last thirty years the restructuring of public education as either a source of profit for corporations or an updated version of control modeled after prison culture coupled with an increasing culture of lying, cruelty, and corruption, all of which belie a democratic vision of America that now seems imaginable only as a nostalgic rendering of the founding ideals of democracy.

NOTES


2. I have taken this term from Stephen Jones, ed., The Dead That Walk (Berkeley, CA: Ulysses Press, 2010).


11. This case for an American version of authoritarianism was updated and made more visible in a number of interesting books and articles. See, for instance, Chris Hedges, American Fascists: The Christian Right and the War on America (New York: Free Press, 2006); Henry A. Giroux, Against the Terror of Neoliberalism: Politics Beyond the


22. Ibid., p. 64.

23. Bigioni, “Fascism Then, Fascism Now.”


28. I have taken up this issue in my Youth in a Suspect Society: Democracy or Disposability? (New York: Palgrave, 2009). For a series of brilliant commentaries on youth in America, see the work of Tolu Olorunda in The Black Commentator, Truthout, and other online journals.


30. Ibid.


35. See, for example, Patrick J. Buchanan, “Traditional Americans Are Losing Their Nation,” WorldNetDaily (January 24, 2010).


This article may not be published or reproduced without specific permission from Peter Lang Publishing.

HENRY A. GIROUX

Henry A. Giroux currently holds the Global TV Network Chair Professorship at McMaster University in the English and Cultural Studies Department. His most recent books include: Youth in a Suspect Society (Palgrave, 2009); Politics After Hope: Obama and the Crisis of Youth, Race, and Democracy (Paradigm, 2010); Hearts of Darkness: Torturing Children in the War on Terror (Paradigm, 2010); The Mouse that Roared: Disney and the End of Innocence (co-authored with Grace Pollock, Rowman and Littlefield, 2010); Zombie Politics and Culture in the Age of Casino Capitalism (Peter Lang, 2011); Henry Giroux on Critical Pedagogy (Continuum, 2011). His newest books: Education and the Crisis of Public Values (Peter Lang) and Twilight of the Social: Resurgent Publics in the Age of Disposability (Paradigm Publishers) will be published in 2012. Giroux is also a member of Truthout’s Board of Directors. His website is www.henryagiroux.com.

RELATED STORIES

Left Behind? American Youth and the Global Fight for Democracy

By Henry A Giroux, Truthout | Op-Ed

Beyond the Swindle of the Corporate University: Higher Education in the Service of Democracy
America's Surveillance Net - TheNation

Jonathan Schell - TheNation

America’s Surveillance Net
There is a revolution afoot—one that is being carried out by the government against the fundamental law of the land.

http://www.thenation.com/article/174889/americas-surveillance-net#axzz2XBlcJHyg
A school of fish swims peacefully in the ocean. Out of sight, a net is spread beneath it. At the edges of the net is a circle of fishing boats. Suddenly, the fishermen yank up the edges of the net, and in an instant the calm, open ocean becomes a boiling caldron, an exitless, rapidly shrinking prison in which the fish thrash in vain for freedom and life.

Increasingly, the American people are like this school of fish in the moments before the net is pulled up. The net in question is of course the Internet and associated instruments of data collection, and the fishermen are corporations and the government. That is, to use the more common metaphor, we have come to live alongside the machinery of a turnkey tyranny. As we now know, thanks to the courageous whistleblower Edward Snowden, the National Security Agency has been secretly ordering Verizon to sweep up and hand over all the metadata from the phone calls of millions of its customers: phone numbers, duration of calls, routing information and sometimes the location of the callers. Thanks to Snowden, we also know that unknown volumes of like information are being extracted from Internet and computer companies, including Microsoft, Yahoo, Google, Facebook, PalTalk, AOL, Skype, YouTube and Apple.

The first thing to note about these data is that a mere generation ago, they did not exist. They are a new power in our midst, flowing from new technology, waiting to be picked up; and power, as always, creates temptation, especially for the already powerful. Our cellphones track our whereabouts. Our communications pass through centralized servers and are saved and kept for a potential eternity in storage banks, from which they can be recovered and examined. Our purchases and contacts and illnesses and entertainments are tracked and agglomerated. If we are arrested, even our DNA can be taken and stored by the state. Today, alongside each one of us, there exists a second, electronic self,
created in part by us, in part by others. This other self has become de facto public property, owned chiefly by immense data-crunching corporations, which use it for commercial purposes. Now government is reaching its hand into those corporations for its own purposes, creating a brand-new domain of the state-corporate complex.

**Surveillance of people on this scale turns basic liberties—above all the Fourth Amendment, which protects citizens against unreasonable search and seizure—into a dead letter.** Government officials, it is true, assure us that they will never pull the edges of the net tight. They tell us that although they could know everything about us, they won’t decide to. They’ll let the information sit unexamined in the electronic vaults. But history, whether of our country or others, teaches that only a fool would place faith in such assurances. What one president refrains from doing the next will do; what is left undone in peacetime is done when a crisis comes.

The executive branch offers a similar assurance about its claimed right to kill American and foreign citizens at its sole discretion. But to accept such assurances as the guarantee of basic liberties would be to throw away bedrock principles of our constitutional order. If there is any single political idea that deserves to be called quintessentially American, it is the principle that **government power must be balanced and checked** by other government power, which is why federal power is balanced by state power and is itself divided into three branches.

The officials—most notably **President Obama**—have assured us that this system is intact, that the surveillance programs are “under very strict supervision by all three branches of government,” in Obama’s words. But the briefest examination of the record rebuts the claim. In this matter, the interactions of the three branches are a cause not for reassurance but for deeper alarm. It’s not that the legislative and judicial branches are not involved; it’s that each, in its own way, has abandoned its appointed constitutional role.

The story arguably begins with **George W. Bush**’s end run around the legal system after the terrorist attacks of 2001, when, in complete disregard of the law, he initiated warrantless domestic surveillance by the NSA. So clearly illegal and extreme was this program that high-ranking officials of his administration, including James Comey, deputy attorney general, and Robert Mueller, director of the FBI, threatened to resign. Bush backed off some of the measures, and the confrontation did not become known until much later.

What happened then? Did **Congress** check this executive usurpation? Did it castigate Bush, forbid the crimes, hold his officials accountable? It did not. It adopted the worst features of the Bush program as law, in the Protect America Act of 2007 and the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Amendments Act of 2008; it also immunized from legal repercussions corporations that had secretly knuckled under to Bush’s wrongdoing. Far from correcting the abuses, Congress institutionalized them. At the same time, it supported the executive branch’s cloak of secrecy over those abuses and the classification of the legal opinions of the FISA court, whose rulings have given legal protection to the new surveillance programs. The Obama administration’s legal opinions on the practices are also classified.
As for the **judicial branch**, it happens that in 1979, the Supreme Court ruled that the sort of metadata collected from Verizon is not covered by the Fourth Amendment. (In fairness, there is no sign that the Court anticipated or meant to approve the sort of indiscriminate dragnet of metadata now under way. Thus, a lawsuit recently brought by the ACLU to stop this has a chance of succeeding.) The FISA court almost never refuses government requests. James Bamford, an expert on NSA surveillance, has characterized this institution as “a super hush-hush surveillance court that is virtually impotent.”

**Our system of checks and balances has gone into reverse.** The three branches, far from checking one another’s power or protecting the rights of Americans, entered one after another into collusion to violate them, even to the extent of immunizing the wrongdoers. Balanced, checked power has become fused power—exactly what the founders of this country feared above all else. The political parties have been no more useful as checks than the branches of government; their leaderships stand together protecting the abuses, though individual senators, including Jeff Merkley and Ron Wyden, have proposed sensible reforms.

Finally, **even elections** have proven ineffective: the voters chose a president who taught constitutional law running on a platform of stopping civil liberties abuses; but he has become the author of new abuses. Even now, his soothing demeanor and reputation for liberalism (“Change we can believe in”) confuses and thwarts those who otherwise would be reacting with anger.

*Please support our journalism. Get a digital subscription for just $9.50!*

**What should Americans do** when all official channels are unresponsive or dysfunctional? Are we, as people used to say, in a revolutionary situation? Shall we man the barricades? The situation is a little more peculiar than that. There is **a revolution afoot, but it is not one in the streets; it is one that is being carried out by the government against the fundamental law of the land.** That this **insurrection** against the constitutional order by officials sworn to uphold it includes legal opinions and legislation only makes it the more radical and dangerous. In other words, the government is in stealthy insurrection against the letter and the spirit of the law.

What's needed is counterrevolution—an American restoration, returning to and reaffirming the principles on which the Republic was founded. Edward Snowden, for one, knew what to do. He saw that when government as a whole goes rogue, the only force with a chance of bringing it back into line is **the public.** He has helped make this possible by letting the public know the abuses that are being carried out in its name. Civil disobedients are of two kinds: those inspired by universal principles, and those inspired by national traditions. Each has its strengths. **Julian Assange** of WikiLeaks is the first kind; Snowden, the second. Asked why he had done what he did, **Snowden** replied, “I am neither traitor nor hero. I am an American.” He
based his actions on the finest traditions of this country, which its current leaders have abandoned but which, he hopes, the current generation of Americans still share. In the weeks and months ahead, we'll find out whether he was right. Jonathan Schell

*More coverage of the NSA spying scandal from this week’s Nation can be viewed [here](http://www.thenation.com/article/174889/americas-surveillance-net#ixzz2YBGEu6yK) and [here](http://www.thenation.com/article/174889/americas-surveillance-net#ixzz2YBGEu6yK).*

**Jonathan Schell**


**Main Core: A List Of Millions Of Americans That Will Be Subject To Detention During Martial Law By Michael Snyder**

June 15, 2013 "[Information Clearing House](http://www.informationclearinghouse.info) - Are you on the list? Are you one of the millions of Americans that have been designated a threat to national security by the U.S. government? Will you be subject to detention when martial law is imposed during a major national emergency? As you will see below, there is actually a list that contains the names of at least 8 million Americans known as **Main Core** that the U.S. intelligence community has been compiling since the 1980s. A recent article on [Washington’s Blog](http://www.washingtonsblog.com) quoted a couple of old magazine articles that mentioned this program, and I was intrigued because I didn’t know what it was. So I decided to look into **Main Core**, and what I found out was absolutely stunning – especially in light of what [Edward Snowden](https://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/jun/06/edward-snowden-interview) has just revealed to the world. It turns out that the U.S. government is not just gathering information on all of us. The truth is that the U.S. government has used this information to create a list of threats to national security that the government would potentially watch, question or even detain during a national crisis. If you have ever been publicly critical of the government, there is a very good chance that you are on that list.

The following is how [Wikipedia](https://en.wikipedia.org) describes Main Core…

**Main Core** is the code name of a database maintained since the 1980s by the federal government of the
United States. Main Core contains personal and financial data of millions of U.S. citizens believed to be threats to national security. The data, which comes from the NSA, FBI, CIA, and other sources, is collected and stored without warrants or court orders. The database’s name derives from the fact that it contains “copies of the ‘main core’ or essence of each item of intelligence information on Americans produced by the FBI and the other agencies of the U.S. intelligence community.”

It was **Christopher Ketchum of Radar Magazine** that first reported on the existence of Main Core. At the time, the shocking information that he revealed did not get that much attention. That is quite a shame, because it should have sent shockwaves across the nation…

According to a senior government official who served with high-level security clearances in five administrations, “There exists a database of Americans, who, often for the slightest and most trivial reason, are considered unfriendly, and who, in a time of panic, might be incarcerated. The database can identify and locate perceived ‘enemies of the state’ almost instantaneously.” He and other sources tell Radar that the database is sometimes referred to by the code name Main Core. One knowledgeable source claims that 8 million Americans are now listed in Main Core as potentially suspect. In the event of a national emergency, these people could be subject to everything from heightened surveillance and tracking to direct questioning and possibly even detention.

Of course, federal law is somewhat vague as to what might constitute a “national emergency.” Executive orders issued over the last three decades define it as a “natural disaster, military attack, [or] technological or other emergency,” while Department of Defense documents include eventualities like “riots, acts of violence, insurrections, unlawful obstructions or assemblages, [and] disorder prejudicial to public law and order.” According to one news report, even “national opposition to U.S. military invasion abroad” could be a trigger.

So if that list contained 8 million names all the way back in 2008, how big might it be today?

That is a very frightening thing to think about.

Later on in 2008, **Tim Shorrock of Salon.com** also reported on Main Core…

Dating back to the 1980s and known to government insiders as “Main Core,” the database reportedly collects and stores — without warrants or court orders — the names and detailed data of Americans considered to be threats to national security. According to several former U.S. government officials with extensive knowledge of intelligence operations, Main Core in its current incarnation apparently contains a vast amount of personal data on Americans, including NSA intercepts of bank and credit card transactions and the results of surveillance efforts by the FBI, the CIA and other agencies. One former intelligence official described Main Core as “an emergency internal security database system” designed for use by the military in the event of a national catastrophe, a suspension of the Constitution or the imposition of martial law.

So why didn’t this information get more attention at the time?

Well, if Obama had lost the 2008 election it might have. But Obama won in 2008 and the liberal media assumed that he would end many of the abuses that were happening under Bush. Of course that has not happened at all. In fact, Obama has steadily moved the police state agenda ahead aggressively. **Edward**
Snowden has just made that abundantly clear to the entire world.

After 2008, it is unclear exactly what happened to Main Core. Did it expand, change names, merge with other programs or get superseded by a new program? It appears extremely unlikely that it simply faded away. In light of what we have just learned about NSA snooping, someone should ask our politicians some very hard questions about Main Core. According to Christopher Ketchum, the exact kind of NSA snooping that Edward Snowden has just described was being used to feed data into the Main Core database...

A host of publicly disclosed programs, sources say, now supply data to Main Core. Most notable are the NSA domestic surveillance programs, initiated in the wake of 9/11, typically referred to in press reports as “warrantless wiretapping.” In March, a front-page article in the Wall Street Journal shed further light onto the extraordinarily invasive scope of the NSA efforts: According to the Journal, the government can now electronically monitor “huge volumes of records of domestic e-mails and Internet searches, as well as bank transfers, credit card transactions, travel, and telephone records.” Authorities employ “sophisticated software programs” to sift through the data, searching for “suspicious patterns.” In effect, the program is a mass catalog of the private lives of Americans. And it’s notable that the article hints at the possibility of programs like Main Core. “The [NSA] effort also ties into data from an ad-hoc collection of so-called black programs whose existence is undisclosed,” the Journal reported, quoting unnamed officials. “Many of the programs in various agencies began years before the 9/11 attacks but have since been given greater reach.”

The following information seems to be fair game for collection without a warrant: the e-mail addresses you send to and receive from, and the subject lines of those messages; the phone numbers you dial, the numbers that dial in to your line, and the durations of the calls; the Internet sites you visit and the keywords in your Web searches; the destinations of the airline tickets you buy; the amounts and locations of your ATM withdrawals; and the goods and services you purchase on credit cards. All of this information is archived on government supercomputers and, according to sources, also fed into the Main Core database.

This stuff is absolutely chilling.

And there have been hints that such a list still exists today.

For example, the testimony of an anonymous government insider that was recently posted on shtfplan.com alluded to such a list...

“We know all this already,” I stated. He looked at me, giving me a look like I’ve never seen, and actually pushed his finger into my chest. “You don’t know jack,” he said, “this is bigger than you can imagine, bigger than anyone can imagine. **This administration is collecting names of sources, whistle blowers and their families, names of media sources and everybody they talk to and they have talked to, and they already have a huge list.** If you’re not working for MSNBC or CNN, you’re probably on that list. **If you are a website owner with a brisk readership and a conservative bent, you’re on that list. It’s a political dissident list, not an enemy threat list.**” he stated.

What in the world is happening to America?

What in the world are we turning into?

As I mentioned in a previous article, the NSA gathers **2.1 million gigabytes of data** on all of us **every**
single hour. The NSA is currently constructing a 2 billion dollar data center out in Utah to store all of this data.

If you are disturbed by all of this, now is the time to stand up and say something. If this crisis blows over and people forget about all of this stuff again, the Big Brother surveillance grid that is being constructed all around us will just continue to grow and continue to become even more oppressive.

America is dying right in front of your eyes and time is running out. Please stand up and be counted while you still can.

This article was originally published at American Dream

Main Core - Big Brother

END FASCISM NEWSLETTER #2

--
Dick Bennett
My blog:
War Department/Peace Department
http://jamesricharbennett.blogspot.com/
Newsletters
http://www.omnicenter.org/newsletter-archive/
Index:
http://www.omnicenter.org/omni-newsletter-general-index/
National/International Days
See Newsletters
Peace, Justice, Ecology Birthdays
See INMOtion
jbennet@uark.edu
(479) 442-4600
2582 Jimmie Ave.
Fayetteville, AR 72703