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What I Don't Like About Post-9/11 America



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“A patriot must always be ready to defend his country against his government.”

—Edward Abbey

Life in a post-9/11 America increasingly feels like an endless free fall down a rabbit hole into a terrifying, dystopian alternative reality in which the citizenry has no rights, the government is no friend to freedom, and everything we ever knew and loved about the values and principles that once made this country great has been turned on its head.

We've walked a strange and harrowing road since September 11, 2001, littered with the debris of our once-vaunted liberties.

We have gone from a nation that took great pride in being a model of a representative democracy to being a model of how to persuade the citizenry to march in lockstep with a police state.

Osama Bin Laden right warned that “[freedom and human rights in America are doomed](#). The U.S. government will lead the American people in — and the West in general — into an unbearable hell and a choking life.”

These past 17 years have proven Bin Laden right in his prediction.

What began with the [passage of the USA Patriot Act](#) in October 2001 has snowballed into the eradication of every vital safeguard against government overreach, corruption and abuse.

The citizenry’s unquestioning acquiescence to anything the government wants to do in exchange for the [phantom promise of safety and security](#) has resulted in a society where the nation is being locked down into a militarized, mechanized, hypersensitive, legalistic, self-righteous, goose-stepping antithesis of every principle upon which this nation was founded.

This is not freedom.

This is a jail cell.

Set against a backdrop of government surveillance, militarized police, SWAT team raids, asset forfeiture, eminent domain, overcriminalization, armed surveillance drones, whole body scanners, stop and frisk searches, roving VIPR raids and the like—all of which have been sanctioned by Congress, the White House and the courts—our constitutional freedoms have been steadily chipped away at, undermined, eroded, whittled down, and generally discarded.

Our losses are mounting with every passing day.

Free speech, the right to protest, the right to challenge government wrongdoing, due process, a presumption of innocence, the right to self-defense, accountability and transparency in government, privacy, press, sovereignty, assembly, bodily integrity, representative government: all of these and more have become casualties in the government’s war on the American people, a war that has grown more pronounced since 9/11.

Since the towers fell on 9/11, the American people have been treated like enemy combatants, to be spied on, tracked, scanned, frisked, searched, subjected to all manner of intrusions, intimidated, invaded, raided, manhandled, censored, silenced, shot at, locked up, and denied due process.

In allowing ourselves to be distracted by terror drills, foreign wars, color-coded warnings, underwear bombers and other carefully constructed exercises in propaganda, sleight of hand, and obfuscation, we failed to recognize that the true enemy to freedom was lurking among us all the while.

The U.S. government now poses a greater threat to our freedoms than any terrorist, extremist or foreign entity ever could.

While nearly 3,000 people died in the 9/11 attacks, the U.S. government and its agents have easily killed at least ten times that number of civilians in the U.S. and abroad since 9/11 through its police shootings, SWAT team raids, drone strikes and profit-driven efforts to police the globe, sell weapons to foreign nations, and foment civil unrest in order to keep the military industrial complex gainfully employed.

No, the U.S. government is not the citizenry's friend, nor is it our protector, and life in the United States of America post-9/11 is no picnic.

In the interest of full disclosure, here are some of the things I don't like about life in a post-9/11 America:

I don't like being treated as if my only value to the government is as a source of labor and funds.

I don't like being [viewed as a consumer and bits of data.](#)

I don't like being [spied on and treated as if I have no right to privacy,](#) especially in my own home.

I don't like government officials who lobby for my vote only to ignore me once elected. I don't like having representatives incapable of and [unwilling to represent me.](#) I don't like taxation without representation.

I don't like being bullied by government bureaucrats, [vigilantes masquerading as cops,](#) or faceless technicians.

I don't like being railroaded into financing government programs whose only purpose is to increase the power and wealth of the corporate elite.

I don't like being forced to pay for wars abroad that serve [no other purpose except to expand the reach of the military industrial complex.](#)

I don't like being subjected to [scans, searches, pat downs and other indignities by the TSA.](#)

I don't like [VIPR raids on so-called "soft" targets](#) like shopping malls and bus depots by black-clad, Darth Vader look-alikes.

I don't like [fusion centers](#), which represent the combined surveillance efforts of federal, state and local law enforcement.

I don't like being treated like an underling by government agents who are supposed to be working for me. I don't like being threatened, intimidated, bribed, beaten and robbed by individuals entrusted with safeguarding my rights. I don't like being silenced, censored and marginalized. I don't like my [movements being tracked](#), my conversations being recorded, and my transactions being catalogued.

I don't like [free speech zones, roving bubble zones and trespass laws](#) that restrict Americans' First Amendment rights.

I don't like laws that criminalize Americans for otherwise lawful activities such as [holding religious studies at home](#), [growing vegetables](#) in their yard, and [collecting rainwater](#).

I don't like the [NDAA](#), which allows the president and the military to arrest and detain American citizens indefinitely.

I don't like the Patriot Act, which opened the door to all manner of government abuses and intrusions on our privacy.

I don't like the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), which has become [America's standing army](#) in direct opposition to the dire warnings of those who founded our country.

I don't like military weapons such as armored vehicles, sound cannons and the like being used against the American citizens.

I don't like government agencies such as the DHS, Post Office, Social Security Administration and Wildlife stocking up on hollow-point bullets. And I definitely don't like the implications of detention centers being built that could house American citizens.

I don't like the fact that police departments across the country "have received [tens of thousands of machine guns](#); nearly 200,000 ammunition magazines; thousands of pieces of camouflage and night-vision equipment; and hundreds of silencers, armored cars and aircraft."

I don't like America's [infatuation with locking people up for life for non-violent crimes](#). There are thousands of people in America serving life sentences for non-violent crimes, including theft of a jacket, siphoning gasoline from a truck, stealing tools, and attempting to cash a stolen check.

I don't like paying [roughly \\$29,000 a year per inmate](#) just to keep these nonviolent offenders in prison.

I don't like having my hard-earned taxpayer dollars used against me.

I don't like the partisan nature of politics today, which has so polarized Americans that they are incapable of standing in unity against the government's abuses.

I don't like the entertainment drivel that passes for news coverage today.

I don't like the fact that those within a 25-mile range of the border are getting a front row seat to the American police state, as Border Patrol agents are now allowed to search people's homes, intimately probe their bodies, and rifle through their belongings, all without a warrant.

I don't like public schools that treat students as if they were prison inmates. I don't like zero tolerance laws that criminalize childish behavior. I don't like a public educational system that emphasizes rote memorization and test-taking over learning, synthesizing and critical thinking.

I don't like police precincts whose primary purpose—whether through the use of asset forfeiture laws, speed traps, or red light cameras—is making a profit at the expense of those they have sworn to protect. I don't like militarized police and their onerous SWAT team raids.

I don't like Department of Defense and DHS programs that transfer surplus military hardware to local and state police. I don't like local police dressing and acting as if they were the military while viewing me as an enemy combatant.

I don't like government programs that reward cops for raiding homes and terrorizing homeowners.

I don't like being treated as if I have no rights.

I don't like cash-strapped states cutting deals with private corporations to run the prisons in exchange for maintaining 90% occupancy rates for at least 20 years. I don't like the fact that American prisons have become the source of cheap labor for Corporate America.

I don't like answering to an imperial president who operates above the law.

I don't like the injustice that passes for justice in the courts.

I don't like prosecutors so hell bent on winning that they allow innocent people to suffer for crimes they didn't commit.

I don't like the double standards that allow government officials to break laws with immunity, while average Americans get the book thrown at them.

I don't like cops who shoot first and ask questions later.

I don't like police dogs being treated with more respect and afforded more rights than American citizens.

I don't like living in a suspect society.

I don't like Americans being assumed guilty until they prove their innocence.

I don't like technology being used as a double-edged sword against us.

Most of all, I don't like feeling as if there's no hope for turning things around.

Now there are those who would suggest that if I don't like things about this country, I should leave and go elsewhere. Certainly, there are those among my fellow citizens who are leaving for friendlier shores.

However, I'm not giving up on this country without a fight.

I plan to keep fighting, writing, speaking up, speaking out, shouting if necessary, filing lawsuits, challenging the status quo, writing letters to the editor, holding my representatives accountable, thinking nationally but acting locally, and generally raising a ruckus anytime the government attempts to undermine the Constitution and ride roughshod over the rights of the citizenry.

Our country may be in deep trouble, but all is not yet lost.

The first step begins with you.

Get educated. Know your rights. Take time to read the Constitution. Study and understand history because the tales of those who seek power and those who resist them is an age-old one. The Declaration of Independence is a testament to this struggle and the revolutionary spirit that overcame tyranny. Understand the vital issues of the day so that you can be cognizant of the threats to freedom. Stay informed about current events and legislation.

Get involved. Become actively involved in local community affairs, politics and legal battles. As the adage goes, "Think nationally, act locally." America was meant to be primarily a system of local governments, which is a far cry from the colossal federal bureaucracy we have today. Yet if our freedoms are to be restored, understanding what is transpiring practically in your own backyard—in one's home, neighborhood, school district, town council—and taking action at that local level must be the starting point. Responding to unmet local needs and reacting to injustices is what grassroots activism is all about. Getting involved in local politics is one way to bring about change.

Get organized. Understand your strengths and weaknesses and tap into your resources. Play to your strengths and assets. Conduct strategy sessions to develop both the methods and ways to attack the problem. Prioritize your issues and battles. Don't limit yourself to protests and paper petitions. Think outside the box. Time is short, and resources are limited, so use your resources in the way they count the most.

Be creative. Be bold and imaginative, for this is guerilla warfare—not to be fought with tanks and guns but through creative methods of dissent and resistance. Creatively

responding to circumstances will often be one of your few resources if you are to be an effective agent of change. Every creative effort, no matter how small, is significant.

Use the media. Effective use of the media is essential. Attracting media coverage not only enhances and magnifies your efforts, it is also a valuable education tool. It publicizes your message to a much wider audience.

Start brushfires for freedom. Take heart that you are not alone. You come from a long, historic line of individuals who have put their beliefs and lives on the line to keep freedom alive. Engage those around you in discussions about issues of importance. Challenge them to be part of a national dialogue. As I have often said, one person at a city planning meeting with a protest sign is an irritant. Three individuals at the same meeting with the same sign are a movement. You will find that those in power fear and respect numbers. This is not to say that lone crusaders are not important. There are times when you will find yourself totally alone in the stand you take. However, there is power in numbers. Politicians understand this. So get out there and start drumming up support for your cause.

Take action. Be prepared to mobilize at a moment's notice. It doesn't matter who you are, where you're located or what resources are at your disposal. What matters is that you recognize the problems and care enough to do something about them. Whether you're 8, 28 or 88 years old, you have something unique to contribute. You don't have to be a hero. You just have to show up and be ready to take action.

Be forward-looking. Beware of being so "in the moment" that you neglect to think of the bigger picture. Develop a vision for the future. Is what you're hoping to achieve enduring? Have you developed a plan to continue to educate others about the problems you're hoping to tackle and ensure that others will continue in your stead? Take the time to impart the value of freedom to younger generations, for they will be at the vanguard of these battles someday.

Develop fortitude. What is it that led to the successful protest movements of the past headed by people such as Martin Luther King Jr.? Resolve. King refused to be put off. And when the time came, he was willing to take to the streets for what he believed and even go to jail if necessary. King risked having an arrest record by committing acts of nonviolent civil disobedience. A *caveat* is appropriate here. Before resorting to nonviolent civil disobedience, *all* reasonable alternatives should be exhausted. If there is an opportunity to alter the course of events through normal channels (for example, negotiation, legal action or legislation), they should be attempted.

Be selfless and sacrificial. Freedom is not free—there is always a price to be paid and a sacrifice to be made. If any movement is to be truly successful, it must be manned by individuals who seek a greater good and do not waver from their purposes. It will take boldness, courage and great sacrifice. Rarely will fame, power and riches be found at the end of this particular road. Those who travel it inevitably find the way marked by hardship, persecution and strife. Yet there is no easy way.

Remain optimistic and keep hope alive. Although our rights are increasingly coming under attack, we still have certain freedoms. As I make clear in my book [*Battlefield America: The War on the American People*](#), we can still fight back. We have the right to dissent, to protest and even to vigorously criticize or oppose the government and its laws. The Constitution guarantees us these rights. In a country such as the United States, a citizen armed with a knowledge of the Bill of Rights and the fortitude to stand and fight can still be a force to be reckoned with, but it will mean speaking out when others are silent.

Practice persistence, along with perseverance, and the possibilities are endless. You can be the voice of reason. Use your voice to encourage others. Much can be accomplished by merely speaking out. Oftentimes, all it takes is one lone voice to get things started. So if you really care and you're serious and want to help change things for the better, dust off your First Amendment tools and take a stand—even if it means being ostracized by those who would otherwise support you.

It won't be easy, but take heart. And don't give up.