

The Mindless American: A Tragedy In The Making

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Region: [USA](#)

Global Research, October 24, 2005

Theme: [Police State & Civil Rights](#)

[Civil Libertarian Blogspot and Information](#)

[Clearing House](#) 24 October 2005

As a result of nine-eleven's jarring impact upon our nation, journalists have discovered a near paranoid rise in retaliation against individuals attempting to expose governmental malfeasance. Increasingly government officials have begun punishing individuals for nothing more than reasoned attempts to inform the American public concerning: How the military has systematically abused (tortured) foreign detainees; How the government intentionally withheld evidence suggesting that an attack upon the United States by Al Qaeda had been eminent; How the military has begun to wage war upon soldiers who, in good conscience, have come to believe that it is wrong for them to kill in a war that, according to international law, is illegal, one that, the reasons for going to war, were fabricated by the President of the United States; How the United States has a sixty-year history (1945- 2005) of assassinating foreign leaders who have chosen not to support the government's foreign policy goals, initiating the overthrow of duly-elected foreign democracies, while simultaneously supporting brutal authoritarian dictatorships all in order to fill the coffers of America's military-industrial complex, an egregious imperialistic force with but one goal: To take command of the world economy.

As a result, many of these individuals have been incarcerated, accused of being a traitor, of having sided with the enemy, told that their career will be destroyed, and threatened with extended imprisonment. Accordingly, on September 21, 2005, U.S. immigration officials banned Robert Fisk, an internationally renowned British journalist, on his way to deliver a speech in Santa Fe, New Mexico, from entering the United States of America due to incisive criticism of the Bush administration's handling of the Iraq war. No doubt such a scenario has, and is, being repeated many times over in our country. A rather sad fact for a president who has chosen to make such a big deal about the oft-quoted ideals of "freedom and democracy!"

But even more shameful is the fact that there are people who seem not to care that such things are taking place in our country; a rather ignorant crowd of jingoes more comfortable choosing to sit back pretending that everything will be just fine, a people with apparently little regard for the facts. As a behavioral scientist, I am grieved at what appears to be a near pandemic of disinterest in what is happening to our country.

Given the election of George Walker Bush as our president, our country made it quite clear that it is pleased to have as its president a scoundrel, a true terrorist, one more than willing to bully the rest of the world, as opposed to having chosen a real man, one that humanity might embrace as a man of true character (someone like Jimmy Carter), an individual committed to doing what is best for the world (rather than what is most profitable for those running the petrol, armament, pharmaceutical, and construction industries), one with a desire to do what must be done in order to create a more humane world, one of peace,

justice, and love. Although we claim to be a Christian nation, having chosen George Walker Bush to be the leader of our nation is a scandal beyond belief, one that mocks the very name of one whose life embodies that which we have been said to believe.

However, now that I am well into my seventh decade of life and very near retirement, I have come to the conclusion that the world basically sucks, that there are few who seem to have the investigative courage to take a good hard look at things that, if discovered, would no doubt destroy one's image of a land that can do no wrong, one that they believe has somehow received the eternal blessing of God. So I must ask: How is it that we have become such a mindless nation, a society populated by deadheads, folks who seem to have little desire to look beyond the thinly-veneered surface of life?

As a behavioral scientist, it appears that a vast share of folks in our nation have chosen to relinquish a quality no doubt essential to authentic human life..... an existential responsibility to think for themselves, an ontological need to discount the petty concerns that drive the minds of those directed by triviality. It seems that such individuals have become so fantastically preoccupied with, essentially enamored by, the norm of what others think, they have effectively relinquished, through a process of cognitive foreclosure, the capacity to think for themselves. Having become so extremely alienated from the core of their own being, they have little choice but to follow the crowd's madding need to forge a symbiotic attachment to, in essence relationship with, a society, that for all practical purposes has become the basis of their own identity, the bedrock of their very being. Having done so, the image they have forged for themselves (who they believe themselves to be) has become every bit as fabricated, every bit as disconnected from reality, as their image of society. So in wanting to have at their disposal a more a positive image of themselves, they have been left with little choice but to construct a glorified image of society; an image of what they wish society would have been rather than what it has, in fact, turned out to be. Something like having chosen to have built an ego-incased frame constructed upon the shifting sands of inane social rumor and outright public lies..... truly a flight of fancy bordering on the absurd!

Very few would disagree with the proposition that in Hitler's Germany there was a determined effort to brainwash the people so they might support Mein Fuhrer's efforts to conquer the world. However, what if one were to suggest that much the same is occurring in the United States of America, that there has been a determined effort through the socializing influence of our schools, the government, the mass media, the churches we attend, even that of our own parents, to pressure us into believing (just as Hitler) that our country has received the blessing of God, and because of this, we therefore have not only the right, but more importantly, through the use of military weapons, a divine responsibility to see that the world acquiesces to our needs and expectations. Just as Hitler in the 1930's prepared his countrymen to accept the authoritarian control of the Nazi government, much the same may well be occurring in the United States. Just as Hitler indoctrinated his people to believe that Germany had the right to conquer the world, George Walker Bush "in the name of freedom and democracy" may well be doing the same (preparing the American people to support his administration's imperialistic drive to dominate the world).

Behaviorally, it is clear that citizens, from cradle to grave, are primed to conform to the dictates of those in power, instructed never to question the validity of what those who would like to take control of our lives have to say. Most Americans have no idea; that what we are fed by the news media (televised and paper-print news) is nothing more than a portrayal of

what powerful corporations (those who pay the salaries of those who run mass media) want us to believe, that what happens to pass as education is as often as not mere propaganda (e.g. that Americans are the good guys and their enemies are, without exception, always the bad guys), that what we learn in church may have very little or nothing to do with the truth, that what our parents teach us may be nothing more than an accumulation of their own personal biases..... no doubt a rather subtle modification of what they were taught by their parents. And through such a process, governments and nations around the world wield control as to what their citizens, believe, value, and do.

And, of course, in our own society, the primary way most of us are controlled, the way the vast majority of us are forced "to tow the line," is through the ominous threat of being fired. Something like this: If you are interested in keeping your career on track, that you would like to keep your job, then you ought to consider the following in order to assure your employer that you deserve the right to keep your job; get married and have a couple of kids, become a member of a social club (such as the Lions Club, the Kiwanis Club, or the Rotarians), be a good capitalist, be a patriotic citizen who loves his country, and make sure that you attend a local church so that everybody will know that you believe in God almighty. However, if, for whatever reason, you decide that you would like to become a rebel, that you would like to begin thinking for yourself, then you'd better brace yourself for trouble, because there is a reasonable likelihood that you will be fired! You see, in America, there is a rule of thumb concerning the working world which basically says that those who do what they are told to do are likely to keep their jobs, whereas those who tend to think for themselves, tend to buck the system, (tend not to do what they have been told to do) end up jobless, powerless, and left to fend for themselves on the mean streets of society.

But why? Why does such a thing occur? Why would America the beautiful, land of the free, do such a horrible thing to its own citizens? The answer is quite simple: Knowing that knowledge is power; the secret is control, controlling the out flow of information, making sure that citizens know no more than they "are supposed to know," making sure that they remain relatively uninformed, making sure that they are given "just enough" that they will go along with, peacefully accept, the premise that they are well informed, that they have a good idea of what is going on. It is necessary then that the government keep the people from learning the truth. Keep them from even wanting to know the truth. Put the fear of God into them to the extent that they will never question what they have been told to believe. You see, those in power may say that they want their citizens to be educated, to be well informed as to what is going on, however, such is simply not the case. Ask yourself this question: What happens to those of us (teachers, preachers, philosophers, writers, journalists) who do not "tow the line," those intent upon proposing alternate ways of looking at the world? Look at what happened to Jesus Christ, Martin Luther King, Mohandas Gandhi, even Socrates. I mean, really now, who among us wants to be crucified, assassinated, forced to drink hemlock..... wants to risk the possibility of losing one's job, the ability to put food on the table for one's family? However, just in case you do not believe me, try this on for size..... the next time you go to work tell the boss that you are an infidel (that you have grown up and no longer believe in God), that you have decided to become a socialist (that capitalism essentially sucks), that you no longer give a shit about your country (that you have decided to become a rebel, an actively-participating antiwar protestor), and then see what happens. Do you get the point?

There are many (Robert Fisk, Cindy Sheehan, Sybil Edmunds, Bunnatine Greenhouse, Coleen Rowley, Captain Ian Fishback, Col. Anthony Shaffer, Kevin Benderman, Jeremy

Hinzman, Brandon Hughey, Camilo Mejia, among others) who have illustrated the courage to risk their jobs, their careers, their reputations, their marriages, their wealth, imprisonment, and, in some cases, even that of their own sanity. But the sad fact is that for every hero out there, there are literally thousands of citizens (each who no doubt consider themselves to be conscientious, hard-working individuals who have a sincere belief in God and a loyal commitment to their country) who yet, for whatever reason, detest men and woman such as these who have shown the moral gumption to put their lives on the line for no other reason than to make a stand for that which is right, a willingness to tell anyone, everyone who is willing to listen, that it is a far better thing for one to have sacrificed his own life so that others might see, than to have chosen to remain silent ensuring the blind pretense that all is well, that there is nothing to worry about, that Big Brother will no doubt take good care of us as long as we simply keep our mouths shut and do exactly as we are told.

Postscript: The most dangerous thing one can do is to tell the truth..... the sentence for which, one way or the other, is always death!

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