

The Fall of the New Rome

by

R. Joseph Reece

15JUN04

The Fall of the New Rome

R. Joseph Reece

As the Roman Empire enjoyed strength, power, and glory for many years, the fall, that was inevitable, was ignored. In the bleak novel that is George Orwell's 1984 (1949), we see the effects of a totalitarian government on its people; a people too consumed with their everyday lives, to be concerned about ever increasing infringements on their rights. In the fast paced 21st century that has just begun, the question must be asked about how soon will this country be brought to its knees because of itself. Although not one thing will be its downfall, the mounting situations that have been arising can only demean it. Losing freedoms, and ignoring the fact of diminishing rights is just the tip of an ever-growing iceberg. Though events may not lead up to what Orwell envisioned, the decay of what made this country great is there, just the same.

It seems that, as a society, our culture is changing: From the 1980's and the "Me" decade to the 1990's and the "Don't Blame Me" decade. While many refuse to take responsibility for their own actions, they feel that they must intrude into other's lives and make the choices for these people.

Big Brother:

Technology is making it easier to track people's movements without their knowledge. Camera phones, video recorders, and mobile tracking devices are but a few of the many ways one's privacy can be intruded upon. Cloaked in the guise of security or for financial reasons, our own government has started using technology to peer into our everyday lives.

The state of Illinois has adopted "I-Pass" for drivers to use on the Illinois Toll-way system. Not only does this insure the long-term plans of the toll-way system, – A system that was meant to be temporary until the costs of building these roads were paid – but it causes more individuals to be dependent on our government to handle, even the management and keeping track of, our personal toll-way budget. This new tracking device is being promoted as a way to alleviate 'back ups' at toll-booths. Another, lesser-known, reason for this has been quietly admitted by the Illinois State Police. With the use of the I-Pass box in a person's vehicle, state police can monitor the rate it takes that said vehicle to travel from one tollbooth to the next. In theory, if the time is too short, a citation for speeding will be issued to the registered driver of the I-Pass box.

This has been the case for all vehicles, for years, traveling on the Pennsylvania Turnpike. When a motorist enters, he is given a time stamped ticket. When the driver reaches the end of the turnpike, another time stamp is added to the ticket. If the times are too close, a citation is issued.

Political Actions:

Where has the responsible politician gone? If ever there was a need for term limits in all forms of government, now is that time. Today, politicians are increasingly

focussing their time on special interests for campaign contributions, and are more focused on getting reelected, than to worry about the concerns of their constituents. In Texas, all the congressmen of one particular political party left the state to avoid a new rezoning vote that is needed since the latest census count. How is running and hiding helping the state?

A Suburban Chicago area mayor, whose late husband was a mob boss, was sentenced to prison for embezzling hundreds of thousands of tax dollars. She, and other counsel members that have also been charged or convicted, demands that she does not deserve jail time (“Cicero Mayor Indicted”). What is amazing to some is the fact that she still has support from some in her town. (As cited above) “There is nothing they can say about her that will turn me against her,” said Dorothy Harps, 80. “She has done a lot of good for this community.”

Although many governmental examples could be made to fill anthologies, the focus of all of us is to make sure that the government does not become too strong. Our officials must remember that the money they seem to always fight over is OURS not theirs. - A deficit means that they have spent too much of our money. A surplus simply means that we have been overtaxed - Their power is becoming too controlling: causing us to lose increasingly more freedoms and rights. But during this time of confusion in our government, across the country things are getting out of control.

Campus Behavior:

For years, students have voiced their opinions on campus. The troubling aspect of this is that many students are taught their political, environmental, and social views by their professors. Instead of teaching without opinion, it has been shown recently, that

many high ranking college and university professors will not even grade a student who disagrees with the professor's political views. If grades come, these same students risk failing.

In some cases, professors are allowed to do whatever they feel they want, without any repercussions. In one case, there is a professor "teaching" at Kansas University. His human development class is repeatedly shown porn sex videos. These videos include homosexual acts as well as a handicapped "Wheelchair Sex" tape (All acceptable, according to Kansas University because there was no audio or commentary with these videos.) When a female student walked out of the class, this professor badmouthed her and commented about "Her time of the month". As long as it is disguised as aides, campus officials turn a blind eye and refuse to stop these activities.

According to Kansas University, Provost and Executive Chancellor David Shulenburg investigated these allegations after a complaint was filed by Senator Susan Wagle, on 6APR03. His findings, although somewhat biased, on 9MAY03 were, in part, "...I have concluded that the preponderance of evidence does not support Sen. Wagle's allegations, particularly those alleging that his (Professor Dennis Dailey) classes are obscene or contain obscenity or that students in the class experience sexual harassment... His teaching methods are not obscene but rather are very similar to those used in other major universities..." ("Wagle Investigation").

In late September to early October of 2003, at Indiana University, a film crew came onto campus and filmed a pornographic movie in the dorms. A few students were reported as being actual participants in the filming of this film. Again, campus officials claim that they had no knowledge of this activity, although it was advertised for weeks

beforehand on the campus radio. Campus police were notified twice while the film crew was working, and on 3OCT02, a report was filed by a dorm resident manager.

While not being able to explain why information was being broadcast on the university radio station, campus officials denied any knowledge of the activities for weeks afterwards. It wasn't until 22OCT02, and growing national media attention, did Indiana University ask law enforcement authorities to investigate ("Students say dorm room was site for porn film shoot"). (Chancellor Sharon Stephens) Brehm said, "Such filming would be inconsistent with the values of the university."

These are two examples of how our youth are being guarded in these learning facilities. But instead of trying to reign in these radical ways of education, the focus is turned the other way.

Politically Correct In the Classroom:

The latest fad of 'political correctness' has now entered our children's classrooms. While our schools, should remain untouched, the focus on educating our children is being fogged over by groups, spouting their beliefs. In California, Texas, and a growing number of other states, new school textbooks for our children are being rewritten to make the "P.C. police" happy. In these books "The Founding Fathers" are no longer spoken of. They have been replaced with "The Framers". This has happened, thanks to N.O.W. (National Organization of Women), claiming that girls in the classroom are being offended by these events of history, due to women not being mentioned in the forming of this nation.

Along with this, a snowman is now a "Snowperson". The words "Yacht" and "Polo" are no longer used because it speaks of an "Elitist" lifestyle. Other exclusions in

new textbooks include hot dogs, hamburgers, or other fast or junk foods. Because these foods, and some others, are not high enough of a nutritional benefit, nutritionists decided to put in their two cents worth. “That’s because school kids are caught in the middle of a fight between two powerful lobbying groups: the liberal left and the conservative right. And while there may be a winner on paper, the real losers are going to be our kids.” Says Lucio Guerrero, staff reporter for the Chicago Sun Times. Guerrero also quotes Diane Ravitch, author of *The Language Police: How Pressure Groups Restrict What Students Learn* (Knoph, 2003), when adding, “... “The left wants schools to teach an idealized vision of the future. The right wants schools to teach an idealized view of the past.”...” (“What’s wrong with these pictures?”).

As appalling as it may seem that interest groups can manipulate children’s textbooks, now, in what seems to be right out of Orwell’s 1984, history is actually being erased. With these new books, the history of Mt. Rushmore has been removed from textbooks in the classroom. The P.C. police claim that Native Americans are offended by the events that led up to, and built one of this country’s greatest national monuments. These groups know this and are using our children’s educational system. While mixing this in with our education’s other curriculum, our children and parents are none the wiser. These are only a few examples of how our children’s textbooks are changing and being censored.

Attorneys and Lawsuits:

Frivolous lawsuits have become out of control. Awards in unbelievable amounts are being awarded because individuals refuse to take responsibility for their own actions. Instead, they feel they need to blame others and get as much as they can. Common sense

is being ripped out of our society. Hot coffee is called “hot” for a reason. If you spill it on your lap, you should realize that it was your hand that spilled it. You bought it. It was YOUR coffee.

Lately, multi-million dollar settlements have been given to people who have smoked for years, knew the risks, but feel, now, that they could get a ‘buck’ from another big business. There has never, once, been a documented situation where anyone from a major tobacco company has forced someone to buy, light, and inhale a cigarette. Common sense would tell you that breathing smoke into your body is bad for you. As mentioned before, this comes down to personal responsibility.

But attorneys must face up to this also. How much more of a waste of time can a frivolous lawsuit be when it deals with persons getting fat from eating fast food, or trying to ban Oreo cookies in the state of California? Recently, a lawyer took a case that involved a parent who was suing his child’s baseball coach because the child didn’t play up to the parent’s expectations. The parent blames the coach. How much more frivolous can this be? What kind of lawyer would take this case? Where has common sense gone in our courts?

Another example is a lawsuit in the court system at this time, where the attorneys are seeking 42 million dollars. The claim? James Metcalf (one of three attorneys who filed the lawsuit) is suing on behalf of 14 families of illegal aliens that have died trying to cross the border from Mexico into Arizona. This attorney claims that the U.S. has made it too difficult for people to cross the border illegally and that water stations should be placed in the desert to help the illegals. Lawyers have become almost, in their thinking, above all controversy: above the rest of us. It seems that they would rather help someone

who is breaking the law, than in prevention. Actions of illegal aliens crossing into the U.S. include drug running and have reached as high as the shooting death of a park ranger in Arizona's Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument ("U.S. liable for border-crosser deaths?").

When our country was born, our court system was set up to ensure that every citizen who is charged with an offense would receive a fair trial. Defense lawyers, today, have somehow forgotten this. Instead of giving a defendant a fair defense, the defense attorney, instead, tries everything he or she can find, to get their client released: No matter if the defendant is guilty or not. Again, the attorney's job is to make sure a defendant gets a fair trial. If the defendant is innocent, the truth should come out. But for a defense attorney that decides to attempt trickery to get his client released or look for even the smallest clerical errors in paperwork, even if the defendant is guilty, degrades our country that much more.

Home Owners Associations:

New homebuyers are being trapped into mounting restrictions when they purchase new homes or move into certain neighborhoods. Homeowners Associations are taking basic rights away from homeowners. Many homeowners can only paint the property that they own and pay taxes on with certain colors, authorized by their neighbors. In the fall of 2001, in a southwest suburb of Chicago, Donna Guinta, a proud mother of a U.S. serviceman wanted to fly the flag of the U.S. Air Force on her "Association approved" flag pole. The Association took her to court to try and have the flag removed. Guinta's lawyer, IL State Rep. Tom Cross, R-Oswego, took the association to court in 2002. Thanks to a judge with common sense, the flag still flies today. This is HER property, but

she had to fight for her own right for freedom of expression (“Winnie yes, Mickey yes – Flag no? | Judge to decide”).

Another instance involves a man in Florida that has paid over \$10,000 in court and attorney fees because his homeowners association wanted him to remove his American flag from his home. The end result was when Governor Jeb Bush signed a bill allowing the US flag to be flown from a person’s property (“Governor Bush Signs Bill Guaranteeing Right to Fly U.S. Flag”).

Some associations mandate that lawns must be maintained a certain way: only certain, Association approved lawn ornaments can be displayed, or how many cars, and their condition are allowed. Some associations will not allow vehicles that are more than twelve years old, parked in the neighborhood, no matter what condition they are in.

Those with high status are not immune from tyrants acting as H.O.A.’s or housing covenants. Donald Lamb, of Omaha, NB, who’s daughter not only works for the Heritage Foundation, a think tank in Washington, DC, but is married to Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas, is being ‘strong-armed’ into removing the American flag that he has proudly displayed every morning since 9/11 (2001). Even though, neighbors on either side of his residence do not mind the flag, waving every morning, Cathy McGrath, the community’s general manager said that the Arboretum’s board set the policy forbidding outdoor hangings such as windsocks, wind chimes, planters, and flags when the community opened in 1998. “The board didn’t want this very expensive property to end up looking like a frat house,” she said (“Nebraska Retiree Fights to Hang American Flag”). Where are the town governments in all of this? Why are associations being allowed to act as tyrants over home owner/tax payers?

Unions:

In years past, unions did great things for this country. Working conditions were horrendous. During the construction of the Golden Gate Bridge and Hoover (Boulder) dam, the human death rate was factored into the building construction. This was part of our culture. But with the advent of OSHA, companies offering incentives to stay (Benefits), and the competition of other businesses, unions have turned from focusing on workers rights, and now spend many hours protecting the “trouble” employees. These employees, who would be terminated for fighting, consistently being late, missing numerous days, or refusing to work, are now retained after union intervention. – This is from the author’s personal experience in dealing with the UAW (United Auto Workers) - Many unions today demand higher wages while working fewer hours or not as hard. Because of this, more and more unions are being accused of being lazy and have low productivity values.

Across the country, teacher’s unions hold our children hostage every fall, demanding higher wages for our educators. At the same time, these unions refuse any type of testing of teachers to ensure the education being passed down to our children is accurate. Why shouldn’t each individual teacher be considered for a raise because of his or her ability to teach and knowledge, and not given a blanket wage increase for all teachers that only cause our tax dollars to rise? The U.S. standard of excellence is getting lower and lower while the demands of higher pay is ever increasing with union backing.

Parental Responsibility:

School hazings are just the latest example of how the lack of correct, parental influence has taken its toll. In the Chicago suburb of Northbrook, senior girls were video

taped beating junior girls in what they described as a “Powder Puff” football game. After broken ankles, cuts, scratches, bruises, and other injuries led to battery charges against these high school seniors, they were suspended from school and recommended for expulsion. Where were the parents? They were backing their children, instead of punishing them, demanding authorities and school officials to drop everything. This is not a very good example to set for their children. Now, it is known that adults were responsible for supplying the kegs of beer for these teen-agers. According to a release from the Associated Press, “...Northbrook Deputy Chief Michael Green said that police were investigating whether parents provided alcohol. According to school board member Tom Shaer, two parents might have supplied kegs of beer. Police were also investigating whether a parent helped gather some of the feces, Shaer said...” (“Parents Probed in ‘Powder Puff’ Hazing Incident”). Not only does this degrade our culture, but it also reinforces the notion to these children that crime is ‘O.K.’

This is not the first case of parents having no idea of what their children are doing. Before the terrible school shooting at Columbine High School in Colorado, the parents of Dylan Klebold and Eric Harris, the two shooters, were so oblivious, that at least charges of child endangerment should have been brought against them.

These two children had weapons, plans, and other “Red Flags” in plain site in their bedrooms, but the parents turned a blind eye to their actions. Had these parents actually ‘parented’, how many other students of Columbine would be alive today? But instead, these parents show no remorse for the deaths that were caused by the actions of their children. In response to this, parents of the slain children felt offended. “...Brian Rohrbough, father of victim Daniel Rohrbough, said he was outraged that the Klebolds

‘likened the day of the shootings to a natural disaster’ in an interview with (New York Times) Brooks (David) (“Columbine killers’ parents: Don’t need forgiveness”).

The Mainstream Press:

Even if these parents tried to make a difference, would the press care? It seems that the mainstream press is only looking for the story that is more outrageous than the next channel. Many television news organizations (NBC, CBS, ABC, CNN, CNBC, and MSNBC) slant a majority of their reporting to give the message they want to relay, instead of giving the entire story and letting you, the viewer, decide. Many of these organizations have a biased slant to their news coverage.

While some may say that the mass media has been easy on the current administration, it is very well evident how many of these news outlets show propaganda to help the anti-war activists. Daily showing of the few American military individuals at a Baghdad prison, putting bags over prisoner’s heads or making these prisoners (Who, just days or weeks before were shooting at our soldiers) pose and humiliate them. These ‘news’ stories are shown in an attempt to minimize support for the war in Iraq. These media outlets never remind the viewer that these soldiers were relieved of their duties months ago, and that the military had been investigating the problem since early February, 2004. Instead CBS broadcast these photos while an investigation was still ongoing: A felony.

But if these media outlets were to show both sides of prisoner abuse, we’d also see daily photo’s of journalist Daniel Pearl having his throat cut, or the mutilation and hanging of dead American contractors from bridges. If the mass media is being used as a tool to create support for the war effort, one would think that the news programs would

show American contractor Nick Berg being decapitated nightly, or any other outrageous, terrorist act to remind the public why we are fighting this ‘War on Terror’.

But instead, we are shown ‘sound bites’. These little clips are used by people to turn a comment into something useful for themselves. A very common sound bite, used today is “Either you are with us, or you are against us”. Alone, this sounds very definitive. But in context with the rest of what the speaker said, the meaning becomes clear: As in, “. . . And we will pursue nations that provide aid or safe haven to terrorism. Every nation, in every region, now has a decision to make. Either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists. From this day forward, any nation that continues to harbor or support terrorism will be regarded by the United States as a hostile regime. . . .” (“Address to a Joint Session of Congress and the American People”). But as stated before, and as exemplified in 1984, the rewriting of history, and reworking it to your own, or your party’s benefit, revising it, so to speak, only leads to a further spin on history.

This activity is not restricted to television. The print media is not much better. To get the bigger and better story, editor’s eyes are turned blind when stories are slanted, embellished, or created entirely by the reporter. A prime example of this is with the facts behind the New York Times, the Washington Post, the New Republic and the Boston Globe who had reporters (Jayson Blair, Janet Cooke, Stephen Glass, and Patricia Smith) that embellished stories on a weekly basis (“The Jayson Blair Project”). In Blair’s case, speculation of why N.Y.T. didn’t release him sooner was due to his skin color. The responsibility of this paper was forgotten so they could appear “Politically Correct”. But in Blair’s defense, he claims that he felt he was pushed into a position he was not ready for.

People start to accept this as a way of life: Just as some accept cameras at intersections, or in school classrooms, as “added safety” to themselves or loved ones. But as described with the ignorance of 1984’s mass population, it only increases the strength of the governing ‘Party’. And although many may see these incidents as harmless acts by irresponsible humans, the mounting reoccurrences, and many being overlooked, are causing the crumbling too ever increase. How can one not feel that the days of this new Rome are numbered?

Works Cited

Bush, George W. "Address to a joint session of Congress and the American People".

www.whitehouse.gov. 20SEP01. 27AMY04.

<<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/09/print/20010920-8.html>.>

"Columbine killers' parents: Don't need forgiveness". [CNN.com](http://www.cnn.com) (AP). 17MAY04.

29MAY04.

<<http://cnn.esnews.printthis.clickability.com/pt/cpt?action+cpt&title+CNN.com+Columbine.parents.ap/>.>

Guerrero, Lucio. "What's wrong with these pictures?". [Chicago Sun Times](http://www.chicagosuntimes.com). 6NOV03: 2+

Hirst, Elizabeth. "Governor Bush Signs Bill Guaranteeing Right to Fly U.S. Flag".

[Governor's Office – MyFlorida.com](http://www.governor.state.fl.us). 18APR02. 5APR04.

<http://www.state.fl.us/eog_new/eog/library/releases/2002/april/flag-04-18-02.html.>

"Nebraska Retiree Fights to Hang American Flag". [FOXnews.com](http://www.foxnews.com). 28MAY04.

29MAY04

<http://www.foxnews.com/printer_friendly_story/0,3566,121255,00.html.>

O'Connor and Gibson. "Cicero Mayor Indicted". [Chicago Tribune](http://www.chicagotribune.com) 16JUN01: 1+.

Orwell, George. 1984. Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1949.

"Parents Probed in 'Powder Puff' Hazing Incident". [FOXnews.com](http://www.foxnews.com) (AP). 8MAY03.

28MAY04.

<http://www.foxnews.com/printer_friendly_story/0,3566,86362,00.00.html.>

Ravitch, Diane. The Language Police: How Pressure Groups Restrict What Students

Learn. Knoph, 2003.

Shafer, Jack. "The Jayson Blair Project". Slate.com. 8MAY03. 25MAY04.

<<http://slate.msn.com/toolbar.aspx?action=print&id2082741>.>

"Student say dorm room was site for porn shoot". SFGate.com (AP). 23OCT02.

27MAY04. <[http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-](http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?file=/news/archive/2002/10/23/state2023EDT018.dtl)

[bin/article.cgi?file=/news/archive/2002/10/23/state2023EDT018.dtl](http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?file=/news/archive/2002/10/23/state2023EDT018.dtl).>

"U.S. liable for border-crosser deaths?". WorldNetDaily.com. 29MAY04.

<http://.wnd.com/news/printer-friendly.asp?ARTICLE_ID=32470.>

"Wagle Investigation". The University of Kansas. 12MAY03. 26MAY04

<<http://www.ur.ku.edu/News/sw303/report.html>.>

Warren, Stewart. "Winnie yes, Mickey yes – Flag no? | Judge to decide". Herald News

(Joliet). 5APR03. A3