



Written by [John and Nisha Whitehead](#) on September 10, 2025

How Tyranny Becomes Entrenched: 9/11 and the Police State's Endless Power Grabs

They said it was for safety.

They said it was for order.

They said it was for the good of the nation.

They always say it's for something good... until it isn't.

Nearly a quarter-century after 9/11, we are still living with the consequences of fear-driven government power grabs. What began as "temporary" measures for our security have hardened into a permanent architecture of control.

The bipartisan police-state architecture that began with 9/11 has been passed from president to president and party to party, each recycling the same justifications — safety, security, patriotism — to expand its powers at the expense of the citizenry.

So they locked down the country "for our safety."

They expanded surveillance "for our security."

They rounded up anyone who challenged the narrative "for the common good."

They erased names, ideas, and histories "to prevent offense."

They forced schools to teach only what was politically correct "for the children."

They censored speech "for our protection."

They targeted dissenters "to preserve peace."

They militarized the streets and called it "law and order."

These very abuses — once denounced when carried out by the Left — are now cheered, defended, and excused when carried out by the Right.

People who once spoke passionately about truth, freedom, and faith have now fallen silent in the face of injustice, or worse, convinced themselves that nothing is wrong. The very voices that should be warning against tyranny are instead excusing it or looking away.

This is the danger of double standards in politics: every tyranny is rationalized in the moment by its chorus of defenders.

But history teaches that what goes around comes around. If you justify it now, you'll have no defense when the tables turn.

And yet, time and again, the lies we tell ourselves make it possible. The cult of personality. The blind



John Whitehead
John Whitehead



Written by [John and Nisha Whitehead](#) on September 10, 2025

loyalty to party. The belief that “our side” can’t be the villain.

It never ceases to amaze how far people will go to excuse the actions of their favorite tyrant, even when those actions are the very things they once swore to oppose.

The pattern of justifying tyranny is as old as power itself. Every abuse comes wrapped in the same excuse: *we had to do it*.

After 9/11, Americans were told the Patriot Act and mass surveillance were “necessary to prevent terrorism.” The result was a sprawling security state that tracks every phone call, every online search, every purchase. *The justification was security. The cost was freedom.*

Under Obama, drone warfare and the prosecution of whistleblowers were defended as “keeping America safe.” The president even claimed the power to assassinate U.S. citizens abroad without trial. The result was an unaccountable government acting as judge, jury and executioner. *The justification was safety. The cost was due process.*

During the COVID-19 pandemic, lockdowns and mandates were imposed in the name of “public health,” laying the groundwork for a Nanny State empowered to micromanage every aspect of our lives — where we go, what we buy, who we see. The result was government claiming control over every aspect of daily life. *The justification was saving lives. The cost was the right to govern our bodies.*

Under Trump, the script is familiar.

National Guard deployments in American cities are justified as “restoring order.” Sweeping surveillance is framed as “protecting communities.” Crackdowns on dissent are defended as “stopping criminals.” Mental health round-ups of the homeless are justified as “helping the vulnerable.” Militarized patrols on city streets are justified as “cleaning up the streets.” Turning ICE into a roving army of lawless thugs is justified as “protecting citizenship.” Censorship and efforts to sanitize American history are now being lauded by the same voices that railed against “cancel culture.”

That same logic has taken a deadly turn abroad. At Trump’s direction, the U.S. carried out a series of preemptive military strikes this year — against Iran’s nuclear sites, against the Houthis in Yemen, and most recently against what the administration claimed was a drug-trafficking boat off the coast of Venezuela. The White House has justified these deadly attacks — carried out without congressional approval or constitutional authorization — as part of the president’s unilateral war-making authority.

This, too, is part of the bipartisan police-state architecture built after 9/11, when presidents claimed open-ended authority to wage preemptive war without meaningful congressional oversight.

As always, the justification is order, safety, and patriotism. The cost is truth, justice and freedom.

What makes Trump and those who came before him especially dangerous is not merely their willingness to wield power but the eagerness of their enablers to excuse and defend it at every turn.

History shows that bullies and strongmen can only rise when mobs rally to their side. A tyrant’s greatest weapon is not his fist, but the crowd that cheers him on, intimidates his critics, and convinces itself that might makes right.

The machinery of authoritarianism always needs a chorus of defenders, and today that chorus is louder, more organized, and more dismissive of constitutional limits than ever before.

People imagine tyranny is only tyranny when the other side does it. When their side does it, they call it leadership. They call it patriotism. They call it protection. But the abuse doesn’t change when the party



Written by [John and Nisha Whitehead](#) on September 10, 2025

label does. Wrong is wrong.

Every new regime that seizes power promises it will use extraordinary authority only for good. And every regime — without exception — uses it to entrench itself at the expense of liberty.

Every generation tells itself the same lies to excuse the same abuses.

The double standard is breathtaking.

Tyranny doesn't change depending on who carries it out. Yet partisans convince themselves it does. They say: *It's different this time. It's necessary. It's for us.*

In truth, the only difference is who holds the whip.

You cannot defend freedom by defending tyranny when your side is in power. You cannot preserve liberty by cheering for its destruction. You cannot expect constitutional limits to shield you tomorrow if you discard them today.

If you want liberty, you must defend it consistently — even when it restrains your own party, your own leader, your own side. *Especially then.*

What you excuse today will be used against you tomorrow.

As I make clear in my book [Battlefield America: The War on the American People](#) and in its fictional counterpart [The Erik Blair Diaries](#), it does not matter whether the abuse comes draped in red or blue. It does not matter whether it is cheered by the Right or justified by the Left.

Tyranny, once excused, becomes entrenched.

About John & Nisha Whitehead:

Constitutional attorney and author John W. Whitehead is founder and president of The Rutherford Institute. His latest books [The Erik Blair Diaries](#) and [Battlefield America: The War on the American People](#) are available at www.amazon.com. Whitehead can be contacted at johnw@rutherford.org. Nisha Whitehead is the Executive Director of The Rutherford Institute. Information about The Rutherford Institute is available at www.rutherford.org.



Subscribe to the New American

Get exclusive digital access to the most informative,
non-partisan truthful news source for patriotic Americans!

Discover a refreshing blend of time-honored values, principles and insightful perspectives within the pages of "The New American" magazine. Delve into a world where tradition is the foundation, and exploration knows no bounds.

From politics and finance to foreign affairs, environment, culture, and technology, we bring you an unparalleled array of topics that matter most.



Subscribe

What's Included?

- 24 Issues Per Year
- Optional Print Edition
- Digital Edition Access
- Exclusive Subscriber Content
- Audio provided for all articles
- Unlimited access to past issues
- Coming Soon! Ad FREE
- 60-Day money back guarantee!
- Cancel anytime.