

THE RIGHT TO STUPIDITY

A Conspiracy Against Truth

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The First Amendment of the Constitution of the United States, in the clause that guarantees free speech, implicitly grants every citizen the right to be stupid in thought and in word. And recent public demonstrations and speeches and news interviews have shown that more Americans than ever—at last count, 74 million of our fellow citizens—have decided to exercise that Right to Stupidity to a maximal extent.

The clearest indicator that this is the case is the deterioration over the past several years of our national understanding of what it takes for a statement to be true. In decades past, people understood that in order for a statement to be true, it must be backed up by factual evidence. For example, if my friend Mr. Wizard says, “When liquid water reaches a temperature of 212 degrees Fahrenheit, it changes state and becomes a gas: steam,” I might say, “I don’t believe you. Prove it.” And my friend could bring out his boyhood chemistry set and arrange a beaker of tap water above a heat source, with a thermometer suspended in the water. Then he could turn on the heat source, and together we would watch the water temperature rise until at 212 degrees the water began to boil and turn into billows of steam. -- Anyone who still has their childhood chemistry set can prove, in the same way, that liquid water becomes a gas at 212 degrees Fahrenheit.

And that’s how we used to distinguish true statements from speculations. If we were shown the “hard evidence,” then there was no argument whether the statement was true or not.

That’s not the way it works any more in post-Trump America. Americans, by the millions, are tired of demanding the evidence and of having to think about whether what is

claimed is actually supported by what is offered as evidence. For example, the most debated issue in today's political discourse is Donald Trump's claim that he indeed was elected President by a majority of the votes cast in the popular election and therefore should have been declared President by the Electoral College and then by the Congress. Tens of millions of Americans have taken Trump's claim to be true and have responded to it by rioting against what they call the "deep state" government of Democratic socialists and Radical Leftists whom they claim manipulated the vote counts in at least six states. And this claim was being forecast repeatedly in the press and on social media a year before the 2020 presidential campaign even got under way.

Has Donald Trump or any of his defenders in this claim, such as Mr. Giuliani or D. Trump Junior, ever publicly revealed the evidence on which this claim is said to be based? The simple answer is NO. No evidence of large-scale vote manipulation, significant enough to affect the outcome of the election, has ever been offered by those who defend Donald Trump's claim to victory in the 2020 election. (Trump lost the election officially by just under 7,000,000 votes. The best he could muster up as evidence of "rigging" were less than 1,000 mis-handled or fraudulent ballots.)

Blood was shed in the nation's Capitol building—and lives were lost, leaving families and children behind in grief—on January 6, 2021, when rioters, who said that they were protesting Trump's election loss at the hands of the "deep state" manipulators, attacked and ransacked the Capitol. And why were these human lives destroyed? Because the rioters *believed that they knew the "truth"*—that "the election was rigged"—even though neither Donald Trump nor his defenders have ever offered a shred of evidence to support that claim.

There's the issue in a nutshell. The Trump supporters *believe* Trump, even though neither he nor his defenders have offered them any evidence that they are speaking the truth. (President Eisenhower was not as lucky in 1960 when the Soviet president, Nikita Khrushchev, proved to the United Nations that the United States was illegally spying on the Soviet Union. The evidence he offered was convincing: he displayed the captured pilot, Gary Powers, and pieces of the shot-down U-2 spy plane itself.)

The conclusion to be drawn from this is that *belief* has replaced substantiated *truth*. It seems that millions of our citizens have either not received or not been interested in absorbing a

public education in which critical thinking is an achievable goal. They do not desire to think and are therefore comfortable in their stupidity, simply endorsing whatever unsubstantiated drivel spouts from the mouths of the leaders they admire. For, *belief* means placing your confidence in what someone says simply on the basis of that person's reputation or of your liking that person or your agreeing with their viewpoint.

In other words, the difference between *truth* and *belief* is in the factual evidence that demonstrates the veracity of a statement. You can *believe* whatever you want. That's your Constitutionally guaranteed right. So, if your leader tells you that masks are not necessary in our COVID-filled world, you can believe that person simply on the basis that he wears a power-man's demeanor. But his demeanor and your conviction that he's speaking the truth does not mean that he *is* talking truth. He hasn't produced any evidence to show that people survive COVID as well when they don't wear masks as when they do. In fact, if you study the data—mortality rates, and the rate of control of COVID infection in mask-wearing populations vs populations of non-mask wearers—you will see that the evidence is overwhelmingly on the side of the claim that wearing a mask is effective against the spread of the disease.

Knowing that information, it's still your right to say either "The evidence shows that it's truly better to wear a mask to avoid COVID infection," which is the truth, borne out by the factual data, or to say, "I don't believe the data. The 'deep state' is making the data up," which is an assertion of your right to be stupid, and perhaps to die of COVID infection.

Go ahead. Die. The world *needs* less stupidity and more substantiated truth.

In brief, **believing something does not make it true**, except in the brain-benighted fantasy world of cartoon characters, fantasy football, pornography, and politicians trying to make political power out of your right to be stupid. For testimony to this, just ask the "flat-earth" guys who warned Columbus that he would sail off the edge of the planet if he ventured too far west.

Believing it does not make it true.

"So?," you might respond, "Who made you the authority on what's true?" And you'd be right. I have no authority to tell you when you're thinking stupidly. Go ahead. Don't believe me and play whatever games you want. In fact, believe the whole array of power-seeking

mongrels in federal and state elected offices who are straight-faced lying to you, as you nod your empty head in agreement with them, if you want. “What difference does it make whether I believe them or not? Your version of the truth is no better than mine, and my guys—Trump, Cruz, Hawley, McConnell, Marjorie Taylor Greene, Florida’s DeSatan—I mean, DeSantis—Abbott from Texas, and the governments of red states across the nation, like Georgia—are blowing the cover right off your deep-state socialist, anarchist, power-grabbing governmental conspiracy.”

Hee, hee! The joke’s on you. While you’re nodding your empty head in agreement with the Right’s unsubstantiated allegations about a “Radical Left,” Marxist-socialist conspiracy in the halls of governmental power, you’re being led by your heroic leaders straight into white-supremacist Nazism.

I won’t ask you to “think about it,” because that’s apparently a lost cause, but I’ll present some evidence that’s cropping up in the recent news that leads to the conclusion that the democracy which you claim to prize so highly is currently being perverted by conspiratorial Trump-Republican politicians into fascist state governments.

1. **Suppression of the Right to Vote.** In the wake of this nation’s majority’s clear rejection of Trump’s policies and tactics in 2020, several states, including Florida and Georgia, for example, have passed or are in the process of passing new laws to place obstacles in the public’s right to vote. In 2018, the citizens of Florida approved a referendum which returned the right to vote to 1.1 million Florida ex-felons who had completed their prison sentences and had returned to ordinary citizenship.

In response to this referendum, the Florida legislature restricted the voting rights of these people by demanding that all money obligations which these ex-felons had incurred in the process of their original convictions had to be paid in full before they could exercise their right to vote—an impossibility for most former inmates because of the stigma attached by virtually all employers to their status as ex-offenders, and the resulting inability of these people, who have paid their “debt to society” for their convictions, to get work. In this way, Florida’s majority Republican legislature obstructed the will of the voters, who had approved the referendum by an 65% majority. So much for “democracy” in Florida.

[[https://ballotpedia.org/Florida_Amendment_4,_Voting_Rights_Restoration_for_Felons_Initiative_\(2018\)](https://ballotpedia.org/Florida_Amendment_4,_Voting_Rights_Restoration_for_Felons_Initiative_(2018)).]

And recently in Georgia, the state legislature passed a law placing inhumane regulations on citizens waiting to vote in long lines under the hot sun, including a ban on the distribution of drinking water to those in line by “electioneers” (political operatives)—without imposing a requirement that state polling place workers provide water to the voters in line—an inhumane way of solving the problem of “electioneering,” which could have been resolved in more decent ways. [<https://www.cnn.com/2021/03/26/politics/georgia-voting-law-food-drink-ban-trnd/index.html>.]

- 2. Suppression of the Right to Assemble in Peaceful Protest.** New laws target peaceful protestors of government actions. These laws target the First Amendment rights of citizens both to assemble peaceably and to petition the government for redress of their grievances. In Florida, a law was recently passed and signed which makes the penalty for “violent protests” which include vandalism to public property, including statues of historical persons, a misdemeanor, punishable by up to one year in the county jail. The law also increases the penalty for leading or participating in a “violent protest.” [<https://www.npr.org/2021/04/19/988791175/florida-adopts-nations-toughest-restrictions-on-protests>.]

In addition, both Florida and Oklahoma have created new laws which protect motorists from criminal and civil penalties for injuring—and even for killing—protesters if the motorists are “fleeing the scene” of a protest. (In Oklahoma, the injuries must be “unintentional” on the driver’s part.) – Other Republican-majority state houses are also considering these measures.

The victims of these new laws are not stupid. Representatives of the Black Lives Matter movement assert that these restrictions are aimed particularly at the protests of police killings of unarmed Black citizens by White Supremacist police officers or by cooperative or submissive officers of color. [<https://news.yahoo.com/critics-decry-new-oklahoma-law-that-protects-drivers-who-unintentionally-run-over-or-kill-protesters-212737749.html>.]

If there's going to be a race war in this country after the 2024 elections, between the White Supremacists among us and our people of color, then the opening salvo has already been fired—by White police officers firing on, and killing, unarmed Black civilians—so many of them recently that we can't keep the names or even the cities straight. There were two such killings over the course of the two days that it took the jury to convict Derek Chauvin of murdering George Floyd.

Such a second civil war will be horrendous because there will be no battlefield. Our cities will be the places of combat, and many innocents on both sides will be slaughtered.

That is the direction in which the Trump Republicans are leading you—all of you: you from the rural areas and farmlands, you from the city streets, and you idealists from the university towns, who will die first.

Maybe you might ask yourself what it is exactly that you've gotten from Trump that calls you to owe him your loyalty. A tax cut? He bought you for a few hundred dollars a year? And you're satisfied with that?

What else did Trump give you? A way to vent your anger at not being respected by government? That's exactly how the Black population feels about police who disrespect them.

Really, Trump didn't give you much except his permission for you to hate and to blame others and a way to feel sorry for yourself. Meanwhile, he put all the money you sent him into his own pockets (likely to pay off his debts to Russia and Ukraine.)

Will Cruz or Hawley be any better than Trump? (Here, you laugh, and so do I.) The whole gang of them is in it simply for the money, power, and the glory of being the tough guy.

I hope they don't turn on you or abandon you like they did the Kurds in Syria. Can you really trust them?

I know. I know. You're White and privileged. You're a member of the Master Race. Nobody's going to be ambushing you. You've got friends in high places. Besides, you've spent six months' salary arming and equipping yourself for the fight.

And I suspect you won't spend a minute mourning the deaths of all those opponents who will have died in the battle. After all, Americans don't mourn—or even accept responsibility for—the quarter million innocent civilians whose lives we snuffed out at Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

Well, just keep Forrest Gump's wisdom in mind when you join the fray:

“Stupid is as stupid does.”

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