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# Fire Down Talk™

TEXAS J6 DEFENDANT SAYS FEDERAL ARRESTS VIOLATED US CONSTITUTION  
REPARATIONS FOR THE BUSINESS VICTIMS OF LOCKDOWNS

## Good + Evil

NATURE AND OUR MEDDLING INTELLECT

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# EDITORIAL: Do We Still Believe in Good & Evil?

Kelly J. Walker, M.S. Editor-in-Chief



As I was contemplating the strange and stressful times we have been living in since late 2019, a sobering question came to my mind.

Do we still believe in *evil*?

In our postmodern world, the once-universal concepts of good and evil, right and wrong, have been relegated to the trash heap in favor of a “your truth/my truth” subjectivism. American and British laws were built on a Judeo-Christian foundation, as were the principles expounded in the American Constitution, Declaration of Independence, and the Bill of Rights. Today, the foundation of our Liberty is labeled “patriarchal” and falsely vilified as designed to protect the interests of rich, white people at the expense of everyone else.

Long before the stylish obsession with “social justice” came into vogue, earthly justice was considered an extension of Divine justice, predicated on the concepts of good and evil. We lost our innocence in a Garden—or so the story goes—and the knowledge of good and evil made necessary the imposition of laws to define acceptable behavior. If evil was defined as the transgression of the Law, legalism came to be seen as the apogee of good. In other words, if I *do* good by keeping the Law, I *am* good.

But, as Benjamin Rush, signer of the Declaration of Independence wrote, the Law falls short: “If moral precepts alone could have reformed mankind, the mission of the Son of God into all the world would have been unnecessary.”

About 2,000 years ago, a Semitic carpenter challenged the legalistic paradigm with the bold assertion that the *intents* of the heart, and the motivations of the mind mattered as well. Good and evil are not defined by actions, or one’s ability to keep the Law, He insisted; they reside in the heart and mind. While you might know a tree by its fruit, evil is rooted in bitterness. It was certainly evil to commit adultery, but He taught that even the desire itself was evil. The lusts of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life are all intangible but weighty nonetheless.

How foreign the concepts of good and evil, virtue and vice are to the modern psyche. As transsexual former pornography actor Buck Angel told Turning Point USA’s Charlie Kirk in a March 24 debate, lust is harmless and pornography is a matter of choice.

“Should you do what you feel is right?” asks Charlie.

“I think if you’re an adult, you should be able to make choices that really reflect your own space,” replies Buck.

“You know what we call civilization?” asks Charlie. “Restraining ourselves from the things we always want to do.”

“Okay, that’s fair, replies Buck. “But at the same time, pornography makes some people happy.”

But is this a standard to live by? “If it makes you happy,” sang Sheryl Crow, “it can’t be that bad.” Really?

Exterminating Jews made Hitler happy. Some people derive happiness from torturing small animals (cough, Fauci beagle puppies, cough). Abortion is justified by the happiness of the mother, and the ethos of personal gratification is opening a door for acceptance of pedophilia. Where does it stop? Is there a line, and if so, who defines it?

To be a functional society, we must have a higher standard than mere happiness—and we *do*. Ultimately, evil is inward facing; it is the way of “get.” It seeks its own happiness without regard

to, and sometimes at the expense of, others. Evil is selfishness and selfishness is evil.

And you might think that good is the opposite of evil, but it is more accurate to say that *love* is the opposite of evil. Love is the fulfillment and intent of the Law. It is the highest possible good, the way of “give.”

Note how First Century scholar, Paul of Tarsus defines love:

Love suffers long *and* is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

Love “does not seek its own.” And while evil *can* include intent, love must be put into action or it is empty sentiment. Love is not just a feeling; it is considering others as important as yourself and in its highest form, it is expressed in sacrificing your own wants, your desires and—yes, even your momentary happiness—for the good of another.

Think of the parent who pushes their child out from in front of a speeding car and takes the hit for her. Contrast that with the parent who would kill their child for their own sense of happiness. Which is good? Which is loving? Which might qualify as evil. If we distinguish good vs. evil through the lens of narcissism vs. altruism, we are getting to the core of good vs. evil.

Birth gives life; abortion takes it.

Marital love gives pleasure to a beloved; pornography takes it from a stranger.

Parenting gives security, provision and love to a child; pedophilia takes a child’s innocence.

Health freedom gives a person the opportunity to choose the best options for their unique needs; health tyranny (ex. forced vaccination) takes away a person’s Natural Right to exercise their conscience.

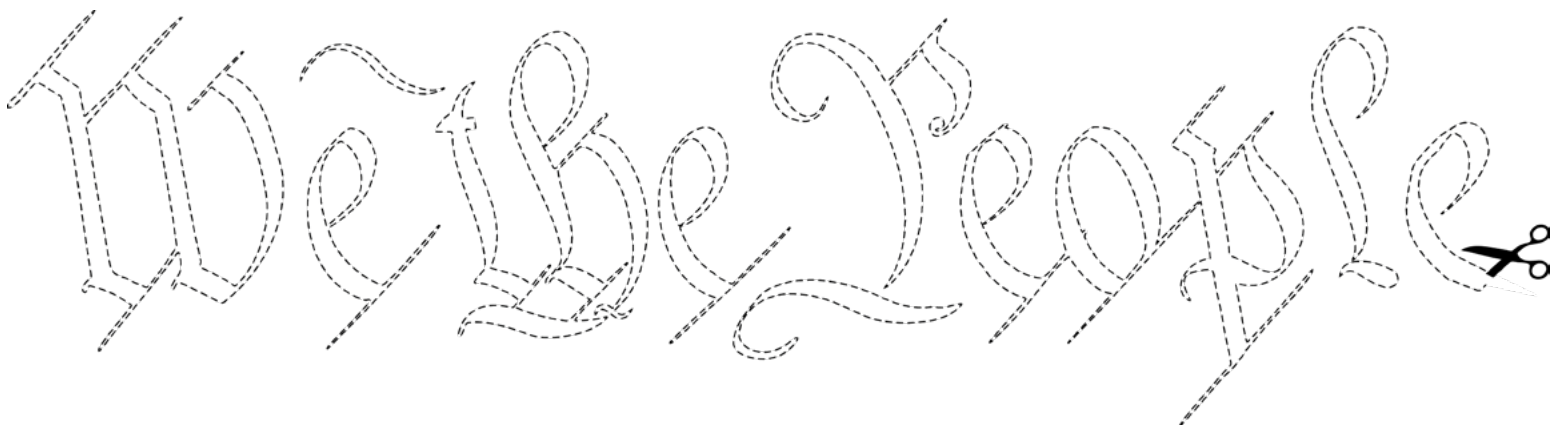
We often hear, “follow your heart,” but the prophet Jeremiah said, “the heart is more deceitful than all else, and is desperately wicked.”

The Founders of our uniquely American form of government understood that only a *virtuous* people can be free—those capable of governing their own passions and proclivities need only minimal government imposed upon them. They had a realistic view of human nature, that we have the free will to choose both good and evil. They knew that the heart (our desires) must be managed with the mind and that “pursuit of happiness” cannot be at another’s expense.

“Human rights can only be assured among a *virtuous* people,” wrote George Washington. “The general government can never be in danger of degenerating into any despotic or oppressive form so long as there is any virtue in the body of the people.”

Yet, the Founders identified a counterpoint to self-governing virtue: “Society in every state is a blessing, but Government, even in its best state, is but a necessary evil; in its worst state, an intolerable one,” as Thomas Paine put it.

Government exists because, unfortunately, people reject good, and laws exist primarily because people can be selfish to the point of evil. If everyone lived in perfect love, with outgoing concern, there would be no need for government. Love is the *fulfillment* of the Law.



# TEXAS J6 DEFENDANT SAYS FEDERAL ARRESTS VIOLATED US CONSTITUTION

By Shawn Bradley Witzemann (TMI)



According to Trennis Evans, Americans have been illegally abducted by the federal government.

He, along with Weston Martinez, met with the Texas Attorney General's Office on April 14, 2022, to discuss what Evans has described as a "usurpation of state's rights," and a "clear violation of Constitutional law."

As the US Department of Justice moves forward in its increasingly gargantuan effort to seek out and prosecute those who walked into (and sometimes within the vicinity of) the Capitol on January 6, Evans' battle has the potential to have far-reaching consequences in hundreds of already-filed cases, as well as for the future of federal law enforcement itself.

The crux of his argument lies in the idea that absolute authority to make arrests was never specifically granted to the federal government by the Constitution, rendering arrests made by federal agents in J6 cases illegal.

"The states never provided plenary power to the federal government to operate arrests in the states," Weston explained in a phone interview on Tuesday. "The way it's supposed to work, and the way it typically works is you want somebody in the FBI to contact local law enforcement."

Weston further explained how it's typical for local authorities to make arrests in federal cases before taking them before a magistrate, or another representative from their state, who then makes a ruling as to whether or not to release them into federal custody.

"That's how it is supposed to work. It's clearly stated in the constitution," he explained. "In hundreds of years, these cases have been brought before the Supreme Court and not one time has the Supreme court ever said, 'Okay. Yep. You're right. The states don't have control over this. The Feds have that right, to just come in and do whatever they want.'"

Weston, who was himself charged with crimes related to January 6th, plans to continue his fight for justice by filing sworn affidavits, and he hopes he has found a strong ally in Texas AG Ken Paxton.

"Interestingly enough, Ken Paxton will find himself in a conjoined position with this because (if you know) the FBI actually conducted an investigation into Ken Paxton's office," he reasoned. "Show me

where the FBI has power to conduct an investigation into a state attorney general's office. They have none. They've actually tainted an investigation that should have been handled by the state police. These are the legal facts."

In his own case, Weston has already entered a guilty plea to a misdemeanor charge of "Entering and Remaining in a Restricted Building or Grounds," but he says he won't hesitate to voice his concerns about the constitutionality of his arrest.

He remains thankful for an unnamed "legal expert" who brought the matter to his attention.

"I didn't go out and study this and find this," he said. "A legal expert came to us, but pointed us in the right direction, and says 'here's the law. Here's how it lays out. These are the realities.' And I'm so thankful for this man—who shall remain unnamed at this time—because he doesn't want more fallout in his life. He doesn't need it...but those of us who are already in this—and I'm already at the world caving in on me—I'm willing to say it. I'm willing to stand up. I'm willing to ask the judge why this happened."

With his sentencing scheduled to take place on May 31, Weston is encouraged by the activism he's seen so far, but is calling on more Americans to take a stand for their rights.

"I want to give them hope that we can still do this," he said. "That our constitution still means something; that the oath of office still means something; that due process still means something; that our criminal justice system still works."

Stophate.com will be following this story as it develops, so be sure to follow them by logging onto their website and following their social media feeds.

More about Treniss Evans can be found at [condemnedusa.com](https://condemnedusa.com) <https://www.justice.gov/usao-dc/defendants/evans-iii-treniss-jewel>



# Sometimes You Eat the Bear, and Sometimes the Bear Eats You

Excerpt from Mark Lamb's book, *American Sheriff*

Many years ago, when I was a teenager working the summer in Panama, I was dealing with something that had not worked out in my favor, and my dad imparted one of his best gifts of knowledge to me. As I told him about how things weren't working out for me, he said with a sense of certainty that things would work out in the end, "You know, Mark, sometimes you eat the bear, and sometimes the bear eats you." He passed away years later from complications of diabetes, but that is one of the many gems of wisdom he imparted to me. My dad was a farm/dairy kid, and he had many funny and true sayings; this is one that really stuck with me and helped me get through many good times and tough times.

The truth of the matter is that there are those beautiful times in our life where it does seem like every putt drops: we get the job, the promotion, the hard work pays off, and we are really eating that bear. When we are blessed with these times, it's important to be grateful and appreciate the blessings. I remember a few years into my law enforcement career I was in one of those bear-eating times. I was on a good squad, getting plenty of overtime, the kids were doing well, we purchased a new house, and there were many more blessings. Be careful because when you are constantly eating the bear, it is easy to get fat and happy and content. As humans, we have an innate desire to keep hunting and pushing ourselves to be better.

Just as true as there are those good times where we are eating the bear, it is also true that there are the dark times, the times where things are not flowing, nothing is working, a black cloud seems to hang around, and you are definitely feeling like the one being eaten. I remember a few years ago watching the movie *The Revenant*. Great movie, by the way. The movie is based on the true-life events of the mountain man and trapper, Hugh Glass, played by the actor Leonardo DiCaprio. In the movie there is a graphic scene where Leonardo DiCaprio's character is being viciously attacked by a huge angry bear. His character can sense something is coming but just can't quite see it until it's too late. Before he knows it, the bear is on him and attacking him. It's honestly painful to watch. The sound of breaking bones, the screams of pain as the bear rips his back and body with its huge paws and claws as the bear tears him to shreds. Then the bear stops, sniffs him, licks him and walks away. It's a moment of relief. And then just when you think the attack is over, the bear comes charging back. Just before the bear reaches Leonardo DiCaprio, he manages to shoot the bear, only angering it more. The bear goes back to thrashing, tossing, biting, crushing and ripping him to pieces in what seems like a very personal attack. In the end the bear appears to have taken the life out of the man, but in a twist of fate, the shot he was able to get off between the attacks and the defensive knife wounds he delivered during the attack enabled him to kill the bear. Both the bear and the man rolled down the side of the hill and came to rest at the bottom with the huge and heavy dead bear lying on the nearly dead man.

The title of this movie is spot-on, the definition of *The Revenant* is: one who has returned, as if from the dead.

This movie scene, as graphic as it was, has so many parallels to life. Sometimes we can sense those hard times or attacks coming, but all too often they sneak up on us. In the movie, even if he had seen the bear attack coming, would he have been able to stop it? Not likely. Life's "bear

attacks" or challenges usually catch us off guard. Every now and then we see them coming, but we still can't stop them. We can make those bear attacks of life come more often with a series of bad decisions, but you can also do everything right and still suffer the bear attacks of life. Those bear attacks of life can be vicious and brutal and seem like they will never end. I can only imagine that in the real-life attack of Hugh Glass, the bear attack must have felt like an eternity. I speak as a survivor of many of life's "bear" attacks that, as bad as some of them are, I can assure you they won't last forever.

This scene also teaches us never to give up. Had Leonardo DiCaprio's character given up after the first attack, he may not have survived at all. Instead, he reached for his gun and prepared himself for a second attack. So, this time when the bear came back at him, he was ready. It still didn't save him from a second attack, but it did save his life. In life people will give up when they are attacked by life's many challenges, but the ones who truly succeed in life are the ones don't give up and who prepare themselves for the next attack. The more times we are attacked in life, the more we know that we can survive. We are stronger and more prepared for what life brings us the next time. You have to keep fighting during these attacks of life.

One thing that life's attacks are sure to bring are wounds and scars. Not to spoil the movie for you if you haven't seen it, but in the movie and in real life, Hugh Glass survives the awful bear attack. Barely holding on to life, men attended to him in the rough terrain for nearly five days before they finally decided he probably wasn't going to make it and their best chance of survival was to leave Hugh behind. Little did they know his fight for life was intense, and he did not die. Maybe it was driven by revenge on those who left him to die, but whatever it was, he survived. When the other men left Hugh behind, believing a dead man would have no use for supplies, they took his gun, knife and fire-making supplies, putting him at even more of a disadvantage. He kept fighting and managed to crawl and stumble nearly 200 miles to the nearest camp, all while nursing his severe wounds. Even though his wounds eventually healed, he was still left with lifelong scars from the bear attack.

Life does the same to us. Some of life's attacks are minor, and sometimes we feel like we barely survive, but what is for sure is those attacks leave scars. Whether physical or emotional, those scars are permanent and part of our lives. Over time some scars heal to where you can hardly see them, but the scars are still there. I run into people all the time who are ashamed of the scars that life has given them. I'm here to tell you that those scars are to be worn with honor! They are proof you survived the attack. I have a shirt that I love to wear from a local company here in Arizona. It's a black shirt with only one word in bold red writing: SCARS. The whole idea behind the shirt is to say that we all have them, and it's okay to display them and wear them proudly.

I have survived *all* of life's attacks. When I speak to different groups about life and overcoming challenges, I say to them, "The fact that you are here today says that you have a 100 percent survival rate of life's trials and attacks." We are never the same, but if we have the right attitude, we are better because of those trials and attacks.

A few years before I became a police officer, I was going through one of those times where the bear eats you. I owned a paintball store and paintball field in Payson, Utah. For a year and a half, the business did pretty well, and





we were excited about the future. Slowly we started to see a decline in business and could see it was because of the rise in the online paintball business and sales. Then came the kiss of death for my little business, which came in the form of the opening of the Walmart in that little town of Payson. Overnight our sales dropped substantially, and we were no longer able to compete, forcing me to close the doors of my business. The perception I had of falling at my business put me in a major funk. My wife and I decided to make a move back to Arizona and start again. The bear of life had done a number on me. I was in my early thirties with five small children, ranging in age from seven years old to a recently born baby, and I felt like a complete failure. I was coming to terms with the fact that the only way out financially was to declare bankruptcy. We also had no money and no place to stay, so I asked my recently divorced mother if we could stay with her in her three-bedroom condo.

I came back first and started working on a new business with a cousin. It wasn't a good time, and I think I hit my all-time low one Sunday. I was feeling pretty sorry for myself about my recent failures and my inability to support my family. I was separated from my wife and kids, and it was taking its toll on me. On that Sunday morning I remember I had gotten ready for church and was downstairs waiting for my mom. When I went to sit down, I ripped my pants. It seemed like a small thing, but it was the straw that broke the camel's back. I told my mom to go to church without me, and I sat down in the chair and sulked. I had hit my all-time low. It was on that day that I realized it was my attitude that was compounding life's attack on me. I realized I needed to change my attitude, and I did it that day.

Immediately I started to see the circumstances in my life begin to change. I started to see the opportunities life was trying to give me. I started eating the bear. I could only eat one bite at a time, but I started eating. Instead of complaining about having my wife and my five kids in two of the three rooms of my mom's three-bedroom condo, I started counting my blessings for having a roof over my head and a chance to reduce our expenses while we recouped and built our lives and business. It's crazy because there were no major life-changing things that happened, I just changed my attitude and perception. I decided to not be a victim of life's attacks. It truly was a defining moment when I made a conscious decision not to let the attacks bring me down, but to use those attacks as fuel and proof that better times were coming.

I now know that sometimes life is good and sometimes it's hard, sometimes you eat the bear and sometimes the bear eats you. It's important that your mind is right so that you enjoy the good times in life and you weather the attacks. You must also know that when the bear is eating you, that's when you are truly being changed for the better. You just have to survive it and keep crawling and stumbling.

On my path to becoming sheriff and over the last several years as sheriff, I have been through a lot. I have been through some personal, family and work things that were major attacks and life experiences. The bear of life has definitely feasted on me. My wife and I have asked ourselves many times in the last few years, "Are we going survive this?" We've been through experiences that I wouldn't wish on my worst enemies. But guess what—I'm still here, so we have a 100 percent survival rate. We also have the SCARS to prove what we've been through and we wear them with honor.

These last few years have had us feasting on the bear of life too. We have met so many great people and have had some *amazing* experiences that most likely we would never have been able to experience. All of these experiences have allowed me to become a better sheriff with a clearer view and a better understanding of the crazy things that come along with this job.

Learning to surrender the outcome and understanding that there is a give and take, a yin and yang, a good and bad, an up and down, and ebb and flow to life will help you realize that it's all just experiences. The great poet Rudyard Kipling has a poem called "If", and in that poem he has a line where he says, "If you can meet with Triumph and Disaster and treat those two imposters just the same." This is truth! Life is full of triumph and disaster, and they are both imposters. You might be saying, "How can that be, Sheriff?" First off, neither triumph nor disaster are permanent. You can win today, but tomorrow is a new day. You can lose today, and tomorrow is a new day. Consistent triumph can make us complacent and soft. Consistent disaster can make us hungry and seek change. How many times have you heard an athlete or a fighter say they learned more from a loss? It's the truth, life's lessons can be found in triumph, but the truest and most life-changing lessons are in the disasters or the losses.

When I was running for sheriff the first time, I was a major underdog. People would say, "I can't believe you're running for sheriff", and I would say, "What's the worst that can happen? I win, right?" That is the truth. Triumph requires more and more. Some people think that once you make it to the top of the hill or when you achieve a major life goal, everything will be okay. I'm here to tell you that's not the case. You're only as good as your last win. You have to keep striving for new goals and pushing yourself higher. There are days when being the sheriff is hard, and I think of the saying that triumph is an imposter. I've also had some disasters that because I saw them as imposters, I was able to see the opportunity and turn them into good. I've also seen how quickly people will forget the good things you've accomplished and how quickly they forget the disastrous things that happen as well.

Just like Triumph and Disaster are both imposters, eating the bear and having the bear eat you are also imposters. This is life! It's all just experiences we learn from and we grow from.

So just like my dad told me over thirty years ago, I'm now telling you, and I hope it helps carry you through the good and bad times of life: "Sometimes you eat the bear, and sometimes the bear eats you."

Purchase Sheriff Lamb's book at [Americansheriff.com/store](http://Americansheriff.com/store)











***Nature and our Meddling Intellect***  
By Kelly Walker

We're not so clever as we think we are, and in taking shortcuts to solve what we perceive as problems nature puts in the way of "progress," we have created unnatural and virtually irreversible consequences...Sometimes so-called problems are simply mysteries of nature for which nature also holds the answers.

Read the rest of this article at  
<https://tinyurl.com/FTNature>

## Theodore Roosevelt

*Freedom Talk*



# REPARATIONS FOR THE BUSINESS VICTIMS OF LOCKDOWNS

*Why separating blue & red states would be a colossal mistake*

By Jeffrey A. Tucker

With pandemic controls gradually ending, many people have called for some kind of justice to be realized: investigations on the origin and implementation of lockdowns and mandates, punishment for the perpetrators, and compensation for the victims. How wonderful it would be! And yet I tend to agree with Clarence Darrow who wrote that the state has no means to dispense pure justice in the Aristotelian sense. It cannot undo wrongs, repay costs sufficient to restore what it has destroyed, or punish people enough to alleviate the suffering it wrought. It's also the worst possible institution to be charged with such a task: it is implausible to believe that the perpetrator can be trusted with the task of restitution.

There is no making up for two years of lost education and art, no means to revive the hundreds of thousands of businesses (1/3 of all small businesses) that were forced to close, and no path to restore the life hopes of millions that were so cruelly shattered. There is no fixing those whose cancers were not treated when hospitals were closed to routine screenings and no way to bring back those who died alone without friends or family because their loved ones had to comply with stay-at-home orders.

The damage is done. The carnage is around us all. Nothing can change that. We can hope for truth and honesty but longing for pure justice is futile. That realization makes the pandemic response even more morally objectionable.

If, however, we think of lockdown reparations as consisting of some form of compensation, there could be a path for a new crop of political leaders to pursue.

There is precedent for this: the US government did pay reparations to those victimized in Japanese internment camps during World War II. Germany was forced to pay reparations after World War I (that did not end well).

And the very idea is baked into the 5th Amendment of the US Constitution, which says “nor shall private property be taken for public use, without just compensation.”

Lockdowns seem like a “taking” as described by the Constitution. Governments took private property from millions of business owners, churches, schools, and families.

They took control of hospitals, gyms, recreational centers, meeting locations, skating rinks, movie theaters, libraries, and just about every other business, except the big box stores that were deemed essential and non-disease spreading. This was clearly unjust. That the feds doled out low-interest loans and so on to sustain many hardly makes up for taking away the right to do business.

Even if you believe that all this taking was necessary for “public use,” there is still the job of compensation. The trouble is that the payer, namely government, has no resources of its own. Everything it pays it gets from taxing, borrowing, or inflating, all of which comes out of the productivity of others, which means even more taking. It also doesn't seem right to take the compensation fund even from the big businesses that got rich during the lockdowns simply because they did in fact provide a valuable service.

As Richard Epstein, author of *Takings: Private Property and the Power of Eminent Domain*, points out, the core idea behind the takings clause is that the state can seize private property only when doing so solves some market failure such as a free-rider or holdout problem. This supposedly generates a surplus of wealth from which the expropriated victims can be compensated, so that the act of taking, at least in theory, makes everyone better off or at least no worse off.

But the lockdowns and related mandates did not create wealth or solve any market failures; they were pure acts of destruction. The lockdowns only did damage; they did not generate any surplus wealth from which the victims can be compensated. This is, in fact, one reason Epstein would strictly limit the state's power of eminent domain to situations where there are clear gains, such as highways and the like.

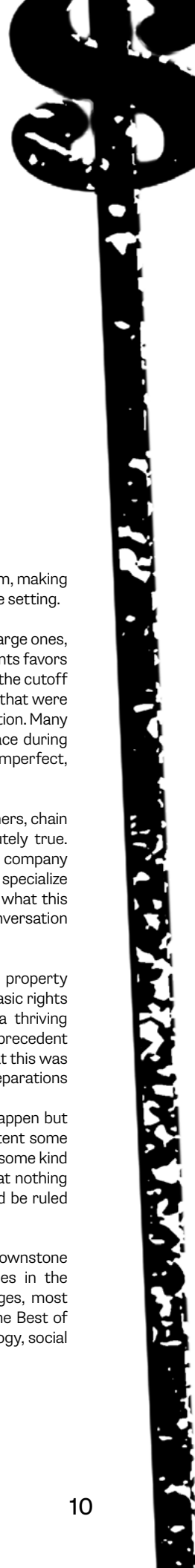
My suggestion, then, is to let the compensation—the reparations—take the form of relief from continued impositions of high taxes, mandates, and regulations particularly as they affect small businesses, which were the hardest hit from pandemic lockdowns. In other words, to make up for the wrongs done and to rebuild a vibrant small-business sector; the owners need to be emancipated from the bureaucratic tangles, taxes, and demands that have tightened over the decades.

The burden of government, according to the American Action Forum, five years ago cost small business 3.3 billion hours and \$64.6 billion per year: “small businesses must comply with more than 379 hours of paperwork annually, or nearly the equivalent of ten full-time workweeks.” The numbers are undoubtedly higher now, as any small business owner can tell you.

Highly capitalized and larger companies can bear these burdens much easier—which is one reason they exist in the first place. Such interventions forestall the realization of genuine competition and entrench an elite class within enterprise. This was made vastly worse during lockdowns, where the privilege of staying open was allocated to those with political connections while independent businesses were slammed shut.

How to compensate? My proposal in short: all businesses with fewer than 1,000 employees should be exempt from all federal corporate





taxes (21%), FICA taxes, and all other expensive and arduous mandated benefits (including health care mandates) for a period of 10 years.

Ideally I would make it longer but I'm trying here to think about political viability. This would not restore what was lost. But it could provide some compensation for those that managed to survive, and provide an excellent and fertile ground for new businesses.

This would also have symbolic value: clearly showing an awareness of the egregious attack on small business that took place over two years. Small businesses are the 99% that employ nearly half the workers in America. A healthy and thriving small business sector is evidence of a society committed to genuine free enterprise versus a cartelized system that favors only large and politically connected corporations.

Reparations for them seems like a moderate but essential step.

Consider the objections:

**1.** The lockdowns were mostly imposed by States, not the federal government. That's technically true only because the federal government doesn't have the means to enact a lockdown. From March 13, 2020, and onward, the federal government clearly encouraged them, pressed the states into service, and the CDC/NIH put massive pressure on every state health official to enact emergency edicts that had the force of law. States should also consider compensation.

**2.** FICA taxes (social security, unemployment, etc.) help the worker and removing the mandate that small business pays only hurts workers. Actually, workers pay the whole bill in an economic sense, so eliminating these taxes could end up boosting wages and helping millions of people make the transition to private savings as opposed to the pathetic Social Security System. Eliminating the federal corporate tax will also translate into higher wages and great profitability all around.

**3.** Eliminating the health-care mandate will harm workers. Actually, it is workers who pay the premiums out of their wages and salaries, despite the illusion. Allowing businesses to opt out would allow each worker to make a decision about what kind of package they want to purchase if they want to do so at all. The lockdowns made telemedicine far more viable and there are ever more doctors' consortiums that are operating on a cash basis. Perhaps the new party in power will

finally address the crying need for health-insurance reform, making it available to people more readily outside of the corporate setting.

**4.** It's not fair to offer this to small businesses but not to large ones, plus it punishes businesses with 1,500 employees and grants favors to those with 1,000 or fewer employees. That is true. But the cutoff has to be somewhere, and because it is small businesses that were harmed the most, they should be first in line for compensation. Many large companies did gain an advantage in the marketplace during lockdowns, so this discriminatory approach, while very imperfect, at least seems to recognize that.

**5.** Many large businesses were hurt too, such as cruise liners, chain restaurants, movie theaters, and others. This is absolutely true. Perhaps vast tax breaks should also be available for any company that can show harm done during 2020-21. People who specialize in such legislative issues can hammer out the details of what this would look like. My main point here is to urge a serious conversation about this.

The lockdowns were and are an intolerable attack on property rights, the freedom of association, free enterprise, and basic rights of trade and exchange that have been a bedrock of a thriving economy since the ancient world. They were also without precedent on this scale. We need a clear statement from the top that this was wrong, and did not achieve the aims. A well-constructed reparations package would make the point.

We should be under no illusions that this is likely to happen but it is still interesting to consider whether and to what extent some degree of justice is realizable. Reparations aside, we need some kind of universal guarantee, embedded in enforceable law, that nothing like these lockdowns can ever happen again. They should be ruled out in any society that considers itself free.

**Jeffrey A. Tucker** is Founder and President of the Brownstone Institute and the author of many thousands of articles in the scholarly and popular press and ten books in 5 languages, most recently *Liberty or Lockdown*. He is also the editor of *The Best of Mises*. He speaks widely on topics of economics, technology, social philosophy, and culture.

# TONIC MASCULINITY

*Weakness is not a virtue*

By Kelly John Walker

How far we have fallen. Western society has embraced the antithesis of true manhood, encouraging males to be easily offended, embrace dependency, and identify with their weaknesses rather than overcoming them. It has attacked masculinity and manliness as something dangerous, harmful, and toxic.

A March 12, 2021 article in *Psychology Today* by Silva Neves encourages readers to “confront the roots of ‘toxic masculinity.’” He attributes this “toxicity” to a “strict set of rules that prescribe what being a man should be.” Neves then conjures up a banal list of “man rules” seemingly out of thin air, without explaining how he came up with them.

**1. A man should suffer physical and emotional pain in silence.**

Are whining and complaining better options, regardless of gender? Authentic men do talk about their challenges, and—depending on personality—many share their feelings to various degrees. But they don’t dwell on them. Being men, we pick ourselves up and seek a solution, knowing that ultimately only we can face it and allow it to transform us. We turn pain to power, growing stronger from adversity. That’s *healthy*.

“Bless you prison, bless you for being in my life,” wrote Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, in *The Gulag Archipelago*. “For there, lying upon the rotting prison straw, I came to realize that the object of life is not prosperity as we are made to believe, but the maturity of the human soul.”

Whenever my sons fell off a bike and skinned their knee, I’d hug them, check to make sure they weren’t seriously injured, and then tell them, “Get back on the bike, son.” This is a quality that they will need for life. When you lose a job, take a break to catch your breath, and then find a new one. If you get a leg blown off serving overseas, mourn, heal, and then learn to walk with an artificial leg. Get back into life.

**Because life can be hard, a man seeks to become harder than it...life requires strength training.**

**2. A man shouldn’t seek warmth, comfort, or tenderness.**

A man can and will enjoy these things. But he doesn’t “seek” them. He is more likely to seek challenges, opportunities to grow, and ways to get stronger. It’s easy to enjoy warmth, comfort, and tenderness, but life requires strength training. Because life can be

hard, a man seeks to become harder than it so he will prevail against whatever it throws his way.

**3. A man should only have the emotions of bravery and anger. Any other emotions are weaknesses. Weakness is unacceptable.**

This parody hardly merits a response. It would be insulting if it weren’t so dumb. I know exactly zero men like this. Weakness isn’t “unacceptable,” but it’s certainly not a virtue. What many men consider unacceptable is embracing weakness, or turning away from challenges that can make us stronger. As I told my sons, “it’s okay to feel discouraged or sad; it’s not okay to stay there!”

**Every society needs strong men to protect and defend against evil men.**

Because evil exists in the world, there will always be predators willing to exploit weakness to prey on the weak. For this reason, among a multitude of others, every society needs *strong* men to protect and defend against evil men. (It’s not that women can’t join in this protection, but men are physiologically stronger, as biologically male swimmer Lia Thomas is currently demonstrating by helping destroy women’s sports.)

**4. A man shouldn’t depend on anyone. Asking for help is also weak.**

Self-reliance is a core principle upon which this country was founded. But that doesn’t mean we don’t ask for help; men do it all the time. It’s healthy to know you can depend on others to help when you’ve done all you can. But *relying on others to do what we can do ourselves* conditions a man to become *dependent* on others... and that’s not healthy. I taught my sons to try and figure things out for themselves before asking for help—this is an innate trait of men as they famously don’t like to ask for directions! Life presents many occasions when help is not available—like getting a flat tire on a lonely road or finding oneself lost in the woods—self-reliance is a virtue.

Theodore Roosevelt overcame respiratory illness and an atrophied body, largely thanks to the support and encouragement of his father. Young Teddy needed his father’s help, but he did not *depend* on Theodore Sr. to be strong for him. His father didn’t put him through hours of counseling, but he spent time with his son and taught him to be a man of strength. Theodore Sr. didn’t attempt to take all life’s obstacles out of Teddy’s way, he taught his son to *overcome* them.



Theodore went on to say things that have inspired generations of men like, "We do not admire the man of timid peace. We admire the man who embodies victorious effort; the man who never wrongs his neighbor, who is prompt to help a friend, but who has those virile qualities necessary to win in the stern strife of actual life."

5. A man should always want to win, whether in sports, work, relationships, or sex.

Well, we certainly don't want to lose! Men don't play not to lose; we play to win, but we also know the importance of sportsmanship and losing with grace—that's why we shake hands with the opposing team post-game. We know our biggest opponent is ourselves and if we've given it our very best effort, we can live with "you can't win them all." What we cannot accept is losing *because* we didn't give our best effort to win. The great Vince Lombardi said, "I firmly believe that any man's finest hour, the greatest fulfillment of all that he holds dear, is that moment when he has worked his heart out in a good cause and lies exhausted on the field of battle—victorious."

### Competition is essential to our survival.

Life requires winning when it matters—against illness, the elements, adversarial people, economic hardship, our own laziness—competition is essential to our survival.

In the 2006 movie, *Rocky Balboa*, Rocky responds to his son complaining that, "living with you hasn't been easy...I start to get a little ahead, to get a little something for myself, and then *this* happens..."

Rocky doesn't respond by giving his son some chamomile tea, calling his therapist, and driving him to his safe space; he gives him an epic dad-style motivational speech:

*Let me tell you something you already know. The world ain't all sunshine and rainbows. It's a very mean and nasty place and I don't care how tough you are it will beat you to your knees and keep you there permanently if you let it. You, me, or nobody is gonna hit as hard as life. But it ain't about how hard ya hit. It's about how hard you can get hit and keep moving forward. How much you can take and keep moving forward. That's how winning is done! Now if you know what you're worth then go out and get*

*what you're worth. But ya gotta be willing to take the hits, and not pointing fingers saying you ain't where you wanna be because of him, or her, or anybody! Cowards do that and that ain't you! You're better than that! I'm always gonna love you no matter what. No matter what happens. You're my son and you're my blood. You're the best thing in my life. But until you start believing in yourself, ya ain't gonna have a life.*

Multiple cultures across time have celebrated the strength of men. Challenge, hardship, and pain were viewed as necessary catalysts to grow a boy into a man—and men were *expected* to become *tough*. For millennia, men have been celebrated as protectors and providers.

"Grandfather impressed upon me that every struggle, whether won or lost, strengthens us for the next to come," as James Kaywaykla dictated to Eve Ball in her fascinating book, *In the Days of Victorio: Recollections of a Warm Springs Apache*. "It is not good for people to have an easy life. They become weak, and inefficient when they cease to struggle."

Founding Father and Virginia's first Governor Patrick Henry said, "Adversity toughens manhood, and the characteristic of the good or the great man is not that he has been exempt from the evils of life, but that he has surmounted them."

Real masculinity isn't toxic, and it certainly isn't the ridiculous one-dimensional straw man the Left beats like a cheap piñata from Walmart. Men are multifaceted. Yes, real men are tough, willing to take the hits; we are able to endure suffering and hardship because that's what life often demands. But that strength and the ability to overcome suffering also help us become compassionate, chivalrous, and caring. It makes us excellent fathers, coaches, husbands, and lovers.

What is truly toxic is a weak, dependent man with no aspirations or initiative, adding little to the world except criticism of the strong...and in this case, a poorly written little parody of manhood in *Psychology Today* that offers nothing of value and that no one should take seriously.

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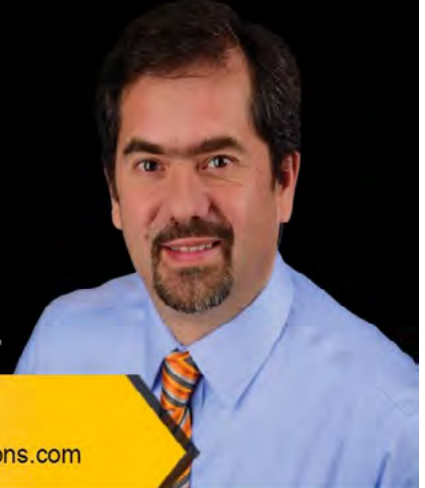
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