

# A Nation of Non-Compliers

## [A Nation of Non-Compliers](#)

by [Jeffrey A. Tucker](#), [Brownstone Institute](#)

January 6, 2024

The train wasn't scheduled for another 20 minutes, so I had a chance to contemplate the official sign on the door of the huge elevator leading to the platform. It said that only four people are allowed in because we must all practice social distancing. There was a helpful map of the interior of the elevator with stick figures telling people exactly where to stand.

Yes, these stickers are still everywhere. I recall when they first went up, sometime in April 2020. They seemed oddly uniform and appeared even permanent. At the time I thought, oh, this is a huge error because within a few weeks, the error of the whole of this idiocy is going to be known by all. Sadly, my worst fears came true: it was designed to be a permanent feature of our lives.

Same with the strange arrows on the ground telling us which way to walk. They are still everywhere, stuck on the floor, an integral part of the linoleum. If you walk this way, you will infect people, which is why you have to walk that way, which is safe. As for masks, the mandates keep popping up in strange places and strange ways. My inbox fills with pleas for how people can fight this stuff.

The essential message of all these edicts: you are pathogenic, a carrier, poisonous, dangerous, and so is everyone else. Every human person is a disease vector. While it's fine you are out and about, you must always create a little isolation zone around you such that you have no contact with other human

beings.

It's so odd that no dystopian book or novel ever imagined a plot centered on such a stupid and evil concept. Not even in [1984](#) or *The Hunger Games*, or *The Matrix* or *Equilibrium*, or [Brave New World](#) or [Anthem](#), was it ever imagined that a government would institute a rule that all people in public spaces must stand six feet away in all directions from any other person.

That some government would insist on this was too crazy for even the darkest imaginings of the most pessimistic prognosticator. That 200 governments in the world, at roughly the same time, would go there was unimaginable.

And yet here we are, years after the supposed emergency, and while governments are not enforcing it, for the most part, many are still pushing the practice as the ideal form of human engagement.

Except that we are not doing it. In this train station, no one paid any attention to any of the signage. The exhortations were entirely ignored, even by those who are still masked up (and, one presumes, boosted seven times).

When the moment arrived for people to get into the elevator, a crowd began to pour in, quickly beyond four, then eight, then 12. I stood there shoulder to shoulder with fully 25 other people in one elevator with a sign that demanded only four people get in at any one time.

I sort of wanted to ask the crowd if they saw the sign and what did they think. But that would have been absurd, because, actually, no one even cares. In any case, one guy asking a crowded elevator such a question would have raised suspicions that I was deep state or something.

It was never clear in any case who was enforcing this. Who issued the rule? What are the penalties for not complying? No

one ever said. Sure, there was in the past usually some flunky bureaucrat or Karen who yelled at people and said do this and don't do that. But those people seem long ago to have given up.

It's not even a thing anymore. And yet the signs still exist. Probably they will stay forever.

There is an enormous disjunction that still persists between what we are told to do and what we actually do. It's as if incredulity toward official diktat is now baked into our daily lives. My first thought is that it doesn't make much sense at all, even from the point of view of those who aspire to control our lives, to issue commands to which no one listens or obeys. On the other hand, there might be some meta-rationale for this, as if to say, "We are nuts, you know we are nuts, we know you know we are nuts, but we are in charge and can continue to do this anyway."

In other words, edicts to which no one complies serve a certain purpose. They are a visual reminder of who is in charge, what those people believe, and the presence of a Sword of Damocles hanging above the whole population: at any point, anyone can be snatched away from normal life, made a criminal, and be forced to pay a price.

The nuttier the edicts, the more effective the message.

Thus do we live in insane times. There seems to be a huge and widening gulf separating the rulers from the ruled, and this gulf pertains to values, aims, methods, and even vision for the future. Whereas most of the population aspires to live a better life, we cannot shake the sense that someone out there who has more power than the rest of us aspires for us to be poorer, more miserable, more afraid, more dependent, and more compliant.

After all, we are just barely shaking off the most grandiose experiment in universal human control in the historical

record, the attempt to micromanage the whole of everyone belonging to the human race in the name of gaining control over the microbial kingdom. The effort petered out over time but how in the heck does anyone with ruling-class power expect to maintain any credibility after such a destructive experiment?

And yet there is a reason we have heard precious few concessions that it was all bogus and unworkable, and why there is still a dripping sound of papers telling us that the whole scheme worked pretty well and that people who say otherwise are disseminators of disinformation. There are still publishing opportunities out there to trash repurposed generics and praise the shots and boosters. The power is still with the crazy people, not with those who question them.

And the people who threw themselves into Covid controls as the greatest years of their lives are still at it. Hardly a day goes by when there is not a freshly written hit piece on the resistance and efforts to trash those with enough sagacity to see through all the baloney. Far from being rewarded, those who protested and opposed are still living under a cloud that comes with being an enemy of the state.

We all know that it is not just about these dumb stickers and these virus controls. There is more going on. Coincident with the pandemic restrictions came the triumph of woke ideology, the intense push for EVs, and wild ramp-up in weather paranoia with the discovery that climates change, a rampant gender dysphoria and denial of chromosomal reality, an unprecedented refugee flood that no one in power is willing to mitigate, a continued attack on gas including even stoves, and a host of other inane things that are driving rational people to the brink of despair.

We long ago gave up the hope that all of this is random and coincidental, any more than it so happened that nearly every government in the world decided to plaster social distancing

signs everywhere at the same time. Something is going on, something malevolent. The battle of the future really is between them and us but who or what “them” is remains opaque and too many of “us” are still confused about what the alternative is to what is happening all around us.

Noncompliance is an essential start regardless. That crowded elevator, assembling spontaneously in open defiance to the blasting signage, is a sign that something in the human longing to be free to make our own decisions, still survives. There are cracks in the great edifice of control.

*Jeffrey Tucker is Founder, Author, and President at Brownstone Institute. He is also Senior Economics Columnist for Epoch Times, author of 10 books, including Liberty or Lockdown, and thousands of articles in the scholarly and popular press. He speaks widely on topics of economics, technology, social philosophy, and culture.*

**[Connect with Brownstone Institute](#)**

*Cover image based on creative commons work of [Mohamed\\_hassan](#) & [geralt](#)*