

The Worst Is Yet to Come: Contact Tracing, Immunity Cards and Mass Testing

[The Worst Is Yet to Come: Contact Tracing, Immunity Cards and Mass Testing](#)

by [John W. Whitehead, The Rutherford Institute](#)

May 12, 2020

[“The things we were worried would happen are happening.”](#)—Angus Johnston, professor at the City University of New York

No one is safe.

No one is immune.

No one gets spared the anguish, fear and heartache of living under the shadow of an authoritarian police state.

That's the message being broadcast 24/7 with every new piece of government propaganda, every new law that criminalizes otherwise lawful activity, every new policeman on the beat, every new surveillance camera casting a watchful eye, every sensationalist news story that titillates and distracts, every new prison or detention center built to house troublemakers and other undesirables, every new court ruling that gives government agents a green light to strip and steal and rape and ravage the citizenry, every school that opts to indoctrinate rather than educate, and every new justification for why Americans should comply with the government's attempts to trample the Constitution underfoot.

Yes, COVID-19 has taken a significant toll on the nation emotionally, physically, and economically, but there are still greater dangers on the horizon.

As long as “we the people” continue to allow the government to trample our rights in the so-called name of national security, things will get worse, not better.

It's already worse.

Now there's talk of [mass testing](#) for COVID-19 antibodies, screening checkpoints, contact tracing, [immunity passports](#) to allow those who have recovered from the virus to move around more freely, and [snitch tip lines](#) for reporting “rule breakers” to the authorities.

If you can't read the writing on the wall, you need to pay better attention.

These may seem like small, *necessary* steps in the war against the COVID-19 virus, but they're only necessary to the police state in its efforts to further undermine the Constitution, extend its control over the populace, and feed its insatiable appetite for ever-greater powers.

Nothing is ever as simple as the government claims it is.

Whatever dangerous practices you allow the government to carry out now—whether it's in the name of national security or protecting America's borders or making America healthy again—rest assured, these same practices can and will be used against you when the government decides to set its sights on you.

The war on drugs turned out to be a war on the American people, waged with SWAT teams and militarized police.

The war on terror turned out to be a war on the American people, waged with warrantless surveillance and indefinite detention.

The war on immigration turned out to be a war on the American people, waged with roving government agents demanding “papers, please.”

This war on COVID-19 will be yet another war on the American people, waged with all of the surveillance weaponry at the government’s disposal: thermal imaging cameras, drones, contact tracing, biometric databases, etc.

So you see, when you talk about empowering government agents to screen the populace in order to control and prevent spread of this virus, what you’re really talking about is creating a society in which ID cards, round ups, checkpoints and detention centers become routine weapons used by the government to control and suppress the populace, *no matter the threat*.

This is also how you pave the way for a national identification system of epic proportions.

Imagine it: a national classification system that not only categorizes you according to your health status but also allows the government to sort you in a hundred other ways: by gender, orientation, wealth, medical condition, religious beliefs, political viewpoint, legal status, etc.

Are you starting to get the bigger picture yet?

This is just another wolf in sheep’s clothing, a “show me your papers” scheme disguised as a means of fighting a virus.

Don’t fall for it.

The ramifications of such a “show me your papers” society in which government officials are empowered to stop individuals, demand they identify themselves, and subject them to patdowns, warrantless screenings, searches, and interrogations are beyond chilling.

By allowing government agents to establish a litmus test for

individuals to be able to exit a state of lockdown and engage in commerce, movement and any other right that corresponds to life in a supposedly free society, it lays the groundwork for a society in which you are [required to identify yourself](#) at *any* time to *any* government worker who demands it for *any* reason.

Such tactics quickly lead one down a slippery slope that ends with government agents empowered to force anyone and everyone to prove they are in compliance with every statute and regulation on the books.

It used to be that unless police had a reasonable suspicion that a person was guilty of wrongdoing, they had no legal authority to stop the person and require identification. In other words, “we the people” had [the right to come and go as we please](#) without the fear of being questioned by police or forced to identify ourselves.

Unfortunately, in this age of COVID-19, that unrestricted right to move about freely is being pitted against the government’s power to lock down communities at a moment’s notice. And in this tug-of-war between individual freedoms and government power, “we the people” have been on the losing end of the deal.

Curiously enough, these COVID-19 restrictions dovetail conveniently with a national timeline for states to comply with the Real ID Act, which imposes federal standards on identity documents such as state drivers’ licenses, a [prelude to this national identification system](#).

Talk about a perfect storm for bringing about a national ID card, the ultimate human tracking device.

Granted, in the absence of a national ID card, which would make the police state’s task of monitoring, tracking and singling out individual suspects far simpler, “we the people” are already tracked in a myriad of ways: through our state

driver's licenses, Social Security numbers, bank accounts, purchases and electronic transactions; by way of our correspondence and communication devices—email, phone calls and mobile phones; through chips implanted in our vehicles, identification documents, even our clothing.

Add to this the fact that businesses, schools and other facilities are relying more and more on fingerprints and facial recognition to identify us. All the while, data companies such as Acxiom are [capturing vast caches of personal information](#) to help airports, retailers, police and other government authorities instantly determine whether someone is the person he or she claims to be.

This informational glut—used to great advantage by both the government and corporate sectors—has converged into a mandate for “an internal passport,” a.k.a., a national ID card that would store information as basic as a person's name, birth date and place of birth, as well as private information, including a Social Security number, fingerprint, retinal scan and personal, criminal and financial records.

A federalized, computerized, cross-referenced, databased system of identification policed by government agents would be the final nail in the coffin for privacy (not to mention a [logistical security nightmare](#) that would leave Americans even more vulnerable to every hacker in the cybersphere).

Americans have always resisted adopting a national ID card for good reason: it gives the government and its agents the ultimate power to target, track and terrorize the populace according to the government's own nefarious purposes.

National ID card systems have been used before, by other oppressive governments, in the name of national security, invariably with horrifying results.

For instance, in Germany, the Nazis required all Jews to carry special [stamped ID cards](#) for travel within the country. A

prelude to the yellow Star of David badges, these stamped cards were instrumental in identifying Jews for deportation to death camps in Poland.

Author Raul Hilberg summarizes the impact that such a system had on the Jews:

The whole identification system, with its personal documents, specially assigned names, and conspicuous tagging in public, was [a powerful weapon in the hands of the police](#). First, the system was an auxiliary device that facilitated the enforcement of residence and movement restrictions. Second, it was an independent control measure in that it enabled the police to pick up any Jew, anywhere, anytime. Third, and perhaps most important, identification had a paralyzing effect on its victims.

In South Africa during apartheid, pass books were used to regulate the movement of black citizens and segregate the population. The Pass Laws Act of 1952 stipulated where, when and for how long a black African could remain in certain areas. [Any government employee could strike out entries](#), which cancelled the permission to remain in an area. A pass book that did not have a valid entry resulted in the arrest and imprisonment of the bearer.

[Identity cards played a crucial role in the genocide of the Tutsis](#) in the central African country of Rwanda. The assault, carried out by extremist Hutu militia groups, lasted around 100 days and resulted in close to a million deaths. While the ID cards were not a precondition to the genocide, they were a facilitating factor. Once the genocide began, the production of [an identity card with the designation "Tutsi" spelled a death sentence at any roadblock](#).

Identity cards have also helped oppressive regimes carry out [eliminationist policies such as mass expulsion, forced relocation and group denationalization](#). Through the use of

identity cards, Ethiopian authorities were able to identify people with Eritrean affiliation during the mass expulsion of 1998. The Vietnamese government was able to locate ethnic Chinese more easily during their 1978-79 expulsion. The USSR used identity cards to force the relocation of ethnic Koreans (1937), Volga Germans (1941), Kamyks and Karachai (1943), Crimean Tartars, Meshkhetian Turks, Chechens, Ingush and Balkars (1944) and ethnic Greeks (1949). And ethnic Vietnamese were identified for group denationalization through identity cards in Cambodia in 1993, as were the Kurds in Syria in 1962.

And in the United States, post-9/11, [more than 750 Muslim men were rounded up on the basis of their religion and ethnicity](#) and detained for up to eight months. Their experiences echo those of 120,000 Japanese-Americans who were similarly detained 75 years ago following the attack on Pearl Harbor.

Despite a belated apology and monetary issuance by the U.S. government, the [U.S. Supreme Court has yet to declare such a practice illegal](#). Moreover, laws such as the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) empower the government to arrest and detain indefinitely anyone they “suspect” of being an enemy of the state.

You see, you may be innocent of wrongdoing now, but when the standard for innocence is set by the government, no one is safe.

Everyone is a suspect.

And anyone can be a criminal when it's the government determining what is a crime.

It's no longer a matter of if, but when.

Remember, the police state does not discriminate.

At some point, it will not matter whether your skin is black

or yellow or brown or white. It will not matter whether you're an immigrant or a citizen. It will not matter whether you're rich or poor. It won't even matter whether you're driving, flying or walking.

After all, government-issued bullets will kill you just as easily whether you're a law-abiding citizen or a hardened criminal. Government jails will hold you just as easily whether you've obeyed every law or broken a dozen. And whether or not you've done anything wrong, government agents will treat you like a suspect simply because they have been trained to view and treat everyone like potential criminals.

Eventually, when the police state has turned that final screw and slammed that final door, all that will matter is whether some government agent—poorly trained, utterly ignorant and dismissive of the Constitution, way too hyped up on the power of their badges, and authorized to detain, search, interrogate, threaten and generally harass anyone they see fit—chooses to single you out for special treatment.

We've been having this same debate about the perils of government overreach for the past 50-plus years, and still we don't seem to learn, or if we learn, we learn too late.

All of the excessive, abusive tactics employed by the government today—warrantless surveillance, stop and frisk searches, SWAT team raids, roadside strip searches, asset forfeiture schemes, private prisons, indefinite detention, militarized police, etc.—started out as a seemingly well-meaning plan to address some problem in society that needed a little extra help.

Be careful what you wish for: you *will* get more than you bargained for, especially when the government's involved.

In the case of a national identification system, it might start off as a means of tracking COVID-19 cases in order to "safely" re-open the nation, but it will end up as a means of

controlling the American people.

For those tempted to justify these draconian measures for whatever reason—for the sake of their health, the economy, or national security—remember, you can't have it both ways.

You can't live in a constitutional republic if you allow the government to act like a police state.

You can't claim to value freedom if you allow the government to operate like a dictatorship.

You can't expect to have your rights respected if you allow the government to treat whomever it pleases with disrespect and an utter disregard for the rule of law.

As I make clear in my book [*Battlefield America: The War on the American People*](#), if you're inclined to advance this double standard because you believe you have done nothing wrong and have nothing to hide, beware: *there's always a boomerang effect*.