

## Introduction

### **It's One Minute to Midnight**

A book like this is a hard one to bring to a conclusion, if only because current events right up to the moment of printing keep vindicating the need for the arguments made here. As we were making final checks to the manuscript, a staggering abuse of power emerged by the governor of a U.S. state—directly linked to the central thesis here: That American elites have adopted a dehumanizing, post Christian view of the human person which undermines all our rights, especially our most basic right of self-defense against violence and tyranny recognized in the Second Amendment. The most effective practical tool these elites are using is a weaponized perversion of the concept of “public health.” The vast abuses of individual liberties that were broadly accepted, even by many conservatives and church leaders, during the COVID panic set the precedent for the wholesale confiscation of our liberties, and with them, the guns our forefathers knew that we would need to protect them. The latest outrage (another will likely have edged this one from the headlines by the time you’re reading these words): The governor of New Mexico is using her executive power to strip some citizens in her state of their Second Amendment rights. She’s not signing an unconstitutional law with the approval of the legislature. No, she’s issuing an order, and expecting law enforcement personnel to enforce it without question. She’s hoping that politically sympathetic judges will wink at the obviously unconstitutional nature of her order, based on COVID precedents—and that if she gets away with doing this, that her actions will set a precedent for governors of other states. As George Washington University constitutional scholar (and proud liberal Democrat) Prof. Jonathan Tooley wrote on September 9, 2023:

New Mexico Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham on Friday suspended laws that allow open and concealed carry of firearms in Albuquerque for 30 days after declaring a public health emergency. The order, in my view, is flagrantly unconstitutional under existing Second Amendment precedent. It could also be a calculated effort to evade a ruling by making the period of suspension so short that it becomes moot before any final decision is reached by a court. Democratic leaders have increasingly

turned to a claim used successfully during the pandemic in declaring a health emergency to maximize unilateral authority of governors. There have also been calls to declare racism a public health emergency, supported by groups like the American Public Health Association. Transgender programs have also been declared a public health emergency by some groups. ... As the list of claimed health emergencies grow, even state Democratic judges may begin to balk at the obvious end run around constitutional rights.<sup>1</sup>

Mercifully, some local law enforcement balked, too. As the Post-Millennial reported: On Friday, Bernalillo County, New Mexico, Sheriff John Allen announced that he has “reservations” regarding an order from Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham to suspend firearm laws for 30 days ... . “While I understand and appreciate the urgency, the temporary ban challenges the foundation of our Constitution, which I swore an oath to uphold” [Allen said].<sup>2</sup>

How are political leaders like Grisham even contemplate unilaterally annulling constitutional rights? How are Americans tolerating such outrageous abuses of power? And why are our churches—at the time of our nation’s founding the very hotbed of the fight for liberty—silent or even complicit? (The local Catholic archbishop, John Wester, came out in support of Grisham’s order.) This book tries to answer those questions by drilling down to the core of the collapse of the Christian worldview in our country, without which (as our founders from Washington and Adams to Jefferson and Madison all said) ordered liberty is simply impossible.

You probably remember Kyle Rittenhouse. He was the seventeen-year-old who, in August 2020, went to Kenosha, Wisconsin, to defend property being destroyed during anti-police riots dubbed by our media “mostly peaceful protests.” Rittenhouse shot three rioters, killing two. Prosecutors almost immediately charged him with homicide and attempted homicide.

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<sup>11</sup>“New Mexico Governor Suspends Gun Rights in Albuquerque for “Public Health Emergency,” <https://jonathanturley.org/2023/09/09/new-mexico-governor-suspends-gun-rights-in-albuquerque-for-public-health-emergency/>

<sup>22</sup>“New Mexico sheriff REFUSES to enforce governor’s ban on carrying guns, says it’s unconstitutional,” Post-Millennial, September 9, 2023, <https://thepostmillennial.com/new-mexico-sheriff-refuses-to-enforce-governors-ban-on-carrying-guns-says-its-unconstitutional>

<sup>3</sup> Politicians, pundits, and the press called Rittenhouse a “vigilante” and a “white supremacist.”<sup>4</sup>

But none of it was true. As should have been clear to any rational person—including the prosecutors—Rittenhouse acted in self-defense. He discharged his AR-15-style weapon responsibly and only as the last resort. Plenty of videos of the events emerged. From the raw footage, you can see a rioter chasing Rittenhouse into a parking lot and throwing something at him. You can see a mob chasing Rittenhouse down the street, sending him to the ground. You can see an assailant beating Rittenhouse with a skateboard and grabbing for his rifle. You can see another kicking him. You can see still another pulling a gun on the young man and firing.<sup>5</sup>

A jury confirmed the obvious when it found Rittenhouse not guilty on all charges in November 2021. He was lucky that it wasn't a jury in Washington, D.C. or New York City.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Sarah Volpenhein, “Kyle Rittenhouse Was Charged with Intentional and Reckless Homicide in Kenosha Protest Shootings,” *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, August 27, 2020, <https://www.jsonline.com/story/news/2020/08/26/kyle-rittenhouse-charged-kenosha-protest-shootings-militia/5634532002/>.

<sup>4</sup> Among many other examples, see Jessica Chasmar, “Psaki Slams ‘Vigilantes’ with ‘Assault Weapons’ After Saying She Can’t Comment on Rittenhouse Trial,” Fox News, November 15, 2021, <https://www.foxnews.com/politics/psaki-vigilantes-assault-weapons-rittenhouse-trial>; Charles M. Blow, “Rittenhouse and the Right’s White Vigilante Heroes,” *New York Times*, November 19, 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/11/19/opinion/kyle-rittenhouse-not-guilty-vigilantes.html>; Paige Williams, “Kyle Rittenhouse, American Vigilante,” *New Yorker*, June 28, 2021, <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2021/07/05/kyle-rittenhouse-american-vigilante>; Congresswoman Ayanna Pressley (D-MA), Twitter, August 26, 2020, [https://twitter.com/AyannaPressley/status/1298780540431224832?ref\\_src=twsrc](https://twitter.com/AyannaPressley/status/1298780540431224832?ref_src=twsrc) (“white supremacist domestic terrorist”); Brittany Bernstein, “Psaki Defends Biden Campaign Video Labeling Rittenhouse ‘White Supremacist,’” *National Review*, November 23, 2021, <https://www.nationalreview.com/news/psaki-on-biden-calling-rittenhouse-a-white-supremacist-the-president-believes-in-condemning-hatred-divison-violence/>; Erin Snodgrass and Michelle Mark, “Kyle Rittenhouse Didn’t Illegally Bring a Gun Across State Lines and 5 Other Myths Surrounding the Trial Debunked,” *Insider*, November 19, 2021, <https://www.insider.com/6-myths-surrounding-the-kyle-rittenhouse-trial-debunked-2021-11>.

<sup>5</sup> “A Look Back at How the Kyle Rittenhouse Shooting Unfolded in Kenosha,” NBC 5 Chicago, November 1, 2021, <https://www.nbcchicago.com/news/local/a-look-back-at-how-the-kyle-rittenhouse-shooting-unfolded-in-kenosha/2665888/>; Christina Maxouris, “More Than a Dozen Video Clips Were Played During Kyle Rittenhouse’s Trial Last Week. Here’s What They Showed,” CNN, November 8, 2021, <https://www.cnn.com/2021/11/07/us/kyle-rittenhouse-trial-what-video-evidence-shows/index.html>.

<sup>6</sup> Michael Tarm, Scott Bauer, and Amy Forliti, “Jury Finds Rittenhouse Not Guilty in Kenosha Shootings,” Associated Press, November 19, 2021, <https://apnews.com/article/jury-finds-kyle-rittenhouse-not-guilty-in-kenosha-shootings-27f812ba532d65c044617483c915e4de>.

The media made a scapegoat of Kyle Rittenhouse even as we watched armed political gangs take over our cities. Blue-state mayors and governors let Antifa and its Marxist allies in Black Lives Matter (BLM) run rampant, causing billions of dollars in damage<sup>7</sup> and killing at least twenty-five Americans.<sup>8</sup> The media vilified the young man, simply because he was one of the few Americans to stand up and say “No.” And prosecutors charged him with homicide even as thousands of arsonists and looters ran free.

Kyle Rittenhouse should never have been charged with a crime of any kind. He shouldn’t have had to raise money for bail. He ought not to have had his name dragged through the muck. None of that would have happened in a country still connected to its founding principles.

But do you know what may be most remarkable about Kyle Rittenhouse’s story? That the truth did ultimately come out. If you want a true gauge of the state not just of the constitutional right to keep and bear arms but of freedom in general in our country, consider the far lesser-known story of Omaha bar owner Jake Gardner.

Gardner used his own legal gun in an even more obvious instance of self-defense, which was also caught on video. But Gardner never got a fair trial, or a fair shake, from America. On May 30, 2020, he tried to save his elderly father and his own small business from the looting BLM mobs that were pillaging small businesses. Ann Coulter, one of the only journalists to report what really happened, wrote:

During a BLM “peaceful protest” in Omaha, Nebraska, on May 30 (over George Floyd’s dying of a heart attack while in police custody in Minneapolis), James Scurlock was peacefully protesting by breaking into an architecture firm—hoisting an office chair and hurling it into two

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<sup>7</sup> Brad Polumbo, “George Floyd Riots Caused Record-Setting \$2 Billion in Damage, New Report Says. Here’s Why the True Cost Is Even Higher,” Foundation for Economic Education, September 16, 2020, <https://fee.org/articles/george-floyd-riots-caused-record-setting-2-billion-in-damage-new-report-says-here-s-why-the-true-cost-is-even-higher/>.

<sup>8</sup> Lois Beckett, “At Least 25 Americans Were killed During Protests and Political Unrest in 2020,” *The Guardian* (UK), October 31, 2020, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/oct/31/americans-killed-protests-political-unrest-acled>.

computer monitors, then ripping a phone from a desk and throwing it against the wall, as his friend shattered another monitor—all of which was captured on video.

Nearby, Jake Gardner, an Iraq War veteran and Trump supporter, was keeping watch over the two bars he owned, The Hive and The Gatsby, aided by his 68-year-old father and a security guard. The peaceful protesters soon made their way to Jake's bar, where they hurled a street sign through The Hive's plate-glass window. He and his father rushed outside to prevent the peaceful protesters from storming his bar.<sup>9</sup>

Everything that followed was caught on tape as well. One protester charged at Gardner's father, sending him hurtling to the sidewalk. Gardner rushed over toward his father and urged the protesters to desist. He lifted his shirt to show he was armed. But a protester assaulted Gardner from behind, knocking him to the ground, and a second protester jumped on the bar owner too. Gardner fired two warning shots, sending his attackers away. But seconds later, a third assailant, James Scurlock, jumped on Gardner's back and put him in a chokehold. A desperate Gardner screamed, "Get off me! Get off me!" They wrestled and Scurlock reached for the gun. Finally, Gardner shot over his shoulder, hitting Scurlock in the collarbone. Scurlock later died from his injury.<sup>10</sup>

This was such an obvious case of self-defense that the county attorney, Don Kleine, declined to prosecute. Moreover, as Coulter notes, "At 22, Scurlock already had a rap sheet a mile long, including home invasion, assault and battery, domestic violence—and, of course, he was in the middle of a crime spree that very night. Methamphetamine and cocaine were found in his urine."<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Ann Coulter, "Ann Coulter: Innocent Until Proven Trump Supporter," *Townhall*, September 23, 2020, <https://townhall.com/columnists/anncoulter/2020/09/23/innocent-until-proven-trump-supporter-n2576797>.

<sup>10</sup> Ben Kessler, "Nebraska Bar Owner Charged in Killing of Black Man During George Floyd Protests Dies by Suicide," NBC News, September 21, 2020, <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/nebraska-bar-owner-charged-killing-black-man-during-george-floyd-n1240596>.

<sup>11</sup> Coulter, "Innocent Until Proven Trump Supporter."

But then the activists took over. A Democrat congressional candidate rushed to call Scurlock's death "cold-blooded murder."<sup>12</sup> Plenty of people smeared Gardner baselessly as a "white supremacist."<sup>13</sup> Local politicians, including Omaha's mayor, began pressuring Kleine. The county attorney caved. Although he insisted he wasn't "wavering in any way in the decision," Kleine agreed to ask a grand jury to review the case.<sup>14</sup> This time a special prosecutor, Frederick Franklin, would handle the case. Franklin, who is black, delivered the indictments that so many activists demanded. The grand jury indicted Gardner for manslaughter, among other charges. Don Kleine called a press conference to say that he hadn't seen any new evidence presented in Franklin's case and that he stood by his original decision not to press charges.<sup>15</sup>

That didn't matter, though. Gardner faced up to 95 years behind bars if he was convicted, thanks to prosecutors who had bowed to activists' demands to charge him.<sup>16</sup> He was widely condemned as a racist and a murderer. Even before the indictments came down, the owner of the building where Gardner had his two bars evicted him, forcing him to close down his family's business.<sup>17</sup> The landlord even issued an anguished statement to James Scurlock's family, extending his "deepest sympathy" for their "pain and suffering" and apologizing "for this horrible incident that happened near our building."<sup>18</sup> Gardner's supporters had set up a

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<sup>12</sup> Kara Eastman, Twitter, May 31, 2020, [https://twitter.com/\\_karaeastman/status/1267099716359241735](https://twitter.com/_karaeastman/status/1267099716359241735).

<sup>13</sup> See Michelle Bandur, "He Lost His Faith in the Justice System?: Jake Gardner's Best Friend Speaks About His Suicide," KETV 7 Omaha, October 5, 2020, <https://www.ketv.com/article/he-lost-his-faith-in-the-justice-system-jake-gardners-best-friend-speaks-about-his-suicide/34211653#>; Coulter, "Innocent Until Proven Trump Supporter."

<sup>14</sup> Margery A. Beck and Josh Funk, "Prosecutor to Call for Grand Jury Review of Protest Killing," Associated Press, June 3, 2020, <https://apnews.com/article/ded4cef9f4dc05c6aeefeabc19d554830>.

<sup>15</sup> "Don Kleine Stands by His Decision Not to Charge Jake Gardner," KMTV 3 News Now, September 23, 2020, <https://www.3newsnow.com/news/local-news/don-kleine-and-gardners-lawyers-comment-on-prosecutors-briefing>.

<sup>16</sup> Khaleda Rahman, "Jake Gardner, Bar Owner Indicted in Killing of Black Protester, Dies by Suicide," *Newsweek*, September 21, 2020, <https://www.newsweek.com/jake-gardner-james-scurlock-bar-owner-indicted-killing-black-protester-suicide-1533192>.

<sup>17</sup> "Property Owner Says Hive, Gatsby Will Not Be Allowed to Reopen," KETV 7 Omaha, June 2, 2020, <https://www.ketv.com/article/property-owner-says-hive-gatsby-will-not-be-allowed-to-reopen/32746123>.

<sup>18</sup> Teia Goodwin, "Property Owner Where Black Protester Was Killed Issues Statement," Fox 42 KPTM, June 3, 2020, <https://fox42kptm.com/news/local/property-owner-where-black-protester-was-killed-issues-statement>.

GoFundMe page to raise funds for his defense, but the page sparked such a backlash on social media that the page had to be taken down.<sup>19</sup>

Jake Gardner saw no way out. This decorated U.S. Marine combat veteran took his own life. He could face down jihadists in Iraq but not Antifa thugs and politicized prosecutors in America.

There were no candlelight vigils for Jake Gardner. It's not as if he'd been a felon shot while menacing a cop. No murals depicted him as a Christ figure. No rioters chanted his name before looting liquor stores. In fact, a Nebraska Democrat state senator, Megan Hunt, went on Twitter to gloat about his death:

The indictment of Jake Gardner would never have happened without the community, the people, who stood up for justice and demanded action from city officials. Jake Gardner is gone, but the white supremacist attitudes that emboldened him are still with us today.<sup>20</sup>

Our system broke Jake Gardner—and then, in a brutal irony, gave him a hero's grave in Arlington National Cemetery for his combat service abroad.

### **They Want to Hang All the Kulaks**

Now, maybe you don't own a gun. Maybe you don't think Jake Gardner or Kyle Rittenhouse, or the right to keep and bear arms, has much to do with you.

I wrote this book to show you how much all these things matter—to you, to me, and to every other American—and how closely they're connected.

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<sup>19</sup> Mia Cathell, "Friend of Jake Gardner Reveals His Last Messages Before His Suicide, Calls Out Left-Wing Mob Who Doxxed and Defamed Him," *Post Millennial*, September 21, 2020, <https://thepostmillennial.com/exclusive-jake-gardners-friend-speaks-out>

<sup>20</sup> Senator Megan Hunt, Twitter, September 20, 2020, <https://twitter.com/nebraskamegan/status/1307882695687581697>.

The image of human dignity that emerged from Judeo-Christian revelation and classical philosophy directly implies the right of self-defense and resistance to tyranny. In fact, the same human dignity that tells us not to tolerate slavery or racial segregation tells us that we must not let the state disarm citizens wholesale or leave the defense of their lives, liberty, and pursuit of happiness to the agents of a state with a monopoly on violence.

The right to self-defense must be zealously guarded. It protects the most fundamental right of all: the right to life. And it protects all our other rights and freedoms. Put it this way: If you have no Second Amendment, you have no First Amendment.

Of course, gun-control crusaders want you to believe the Second Amendment is a relic. They scoff at the idea that the right to keep and bear arms allows you to resist tyranny. President Joe Biden goes out of his way to mock that thinking. In 2022, for example, he said: “For those brave right-wing Americans who say [the Second Amendment is] all about keeping America independent and safe, if you want to fight against the country, you need an F-15. You need something a little more than a gun.”<sup>21</sup> Biden has used that line (or something similar) a number of times.<sup>22</sup>

If the right to keep and bear arms is useless against tyranny, why have tyrants throughout history been so quick to disarm the people? Three legal scholars who did an in-depth study concluded: “The historical record shows that, almost without exception, genocide is preceded by a very careful government program that disarms the future victims. Genocide is almost never attempted against an armed population.”<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Lindsay Kornick, “Biden Blasted for Mocking ‘Brave’ Second Amendment Defenders: ‘You Need an F-15’ to Fight America, Not a Gun,” Fox News, August 30, 2022, <https://www.foxnews.com/media/biden-blasted-mocking-brave-second-amendment-defenders-you-need-f-15-fight-america-not-gun>.

<sup>22</sup> See, e.g., “Remarks by President Biden After Marine One Arrival,” White House, May 30, 2022, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/speeches-remarks/2022/05/30/remarks-by-president-biden-after-marine-one-arrival-10/>; Sinéad Baker, “Biden Mocked Gun-Rights Advocates Who Say They Need Assault Weapons to Fight the Government: ‘You Need F-15s and Maybe Some Nuclear Weapons,’” *Business Insider*, June 24, 2021, <https://www.businessinsider.com/biden-mocks-gun-right-advocates-who-say-assault-weapons-needed-fight-government-2021-6>; David Harsanyi, “Joe Biden’s Incoherent Second Amendment Rant,” *National Review*, February 10, 2020, <https://www.nationalreview.com/2020/02/joe-biden-gun-rights-doesnt-understand-second-amendment/>.

<sup>23</sup> David B. Kopel, Paul Gallant, and Joanne D. Eisen, “Is Resisting Genocide a Human Right?” *Notre Dame Law Review* 81, no. 4 (2006), <https://scholarship.law.nd.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1347&context=ndlr>.



Similarly, law professor Nelson Lund says, “Governments bent on the oppression of their people almost always disarm the civilian population before undertaking more drastically oppressive measures.”<sup>24</sup>

And yes, it still happens in the twenty-first century. Venezuela’s dictatorial regime of Hugo Chavez and Nicolás Maduro banned the sale of guns and ammunition to civilians. The law, whose stated purpose was to “disarm all citizens,” left Venezuelans defenseless. The state’s forces killed nearly two hundred (unarmed) pro-democracy protesters in a year.<sup>25</sup> And remember the genocide in Darfur? Before that began, Sudan’s Islamist regime disarmed non-Arab ethnic groups.<sup>26</sup>

In the twentieth century, the Nazis disarmed Jews and other political enemies at home, and they seized weapons in territories they occupied.<sup>27</sup> Communists fell in love with disarming the people. Mao’s Chinese Communists did it. So did Fidel Castro’s Cuba and the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia.<sup>28</sup>

The Bolsheviks began disarming Russians almost as soon as they seized power. First only “the wealthy classes” would have to surrender their weapons,<sup>29</sup> but soon disarmament extended to “the entire population.”<sup>30</sup> The Soviets kept it up, both at home and in other countries behind the Iron Curtain.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Nelson Lund, “The Second Amendment, Political Liberty, and the Right to Self-Preservation,” *Alabama Law Review* 39 (1987), <https://heinonline.org/HOL/LandingPage?handle=hein.journals/bamalr39&div=9&id=&page=>.

<sup>25</sup> Hollie McKay, “Venezuelans Regret Gun Ban, ‘A Declaration of War Against an Unarmed Population,’” Fox News, December 14, 2018, <https://www.foxnews.com/world/venezuelans-regret-gun-prohibition-we-could-have-defended-ourselves>.

<sup>26</sup> David B. Kopel, “Guns Kill People, and Tyrants with Gun Monopolies Kill the Most,” *Gonzaga Journal of International Law* 25, no. 1 (Fall 2021), <https://gjil.scholasticahq.com/article/40361-guns-kill-people-and-tyrants-with-gun-monopolies-kill-the-most>; Kopel, Gallant, and Eisen, “Is Resisting Genocide a Human Right?”

<sup>27</sup> Austin Prochko, “Armed Populace Serves as Check on Government Overreach,” *Washington Times*, June 20, 2022, <https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/jun/20/armed-populace-serves-as-check-on-government-overr/>.

<sup>28</sup> Kopel, “Guns Kill People, and Tyrants with Gun Monopolies Kill the Most.”

<sup>29</sup> “Declaration of the Rights of the Laboring and Exploited People,” Central Executive Committee, January 16, 1918, <https://soviethistory.msu.edu/1917-2/workers-organization/workers-organization-texts/7149-2/>.

<sup>30</sup> “Decree on the Surrender of Weapons.” Council of People’s Commissars, December 10, 1918, <http://museumreforms.ru/node/13766>.

<sup>31</sup> Yuri M. Zhukov, “Taking Away the Guns: Forcible Disarmament and Rebellion,” *Journal of Peace Research* 53, no. 2 (March 2016), [https://scholar.harvard.edu/files/zhukov/files/2015\\_zhukov\\_jpr\\_preprint.pdf](https://scholar.harvard.edu/files/zhukov/files/2015_zhukov_jpr_preprint.pdf); Robert Conquest, *The Harvest of Sorrow: Soviet Collectivization and the Terror-Famine* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 154.

How do you think the Soviets managed to send some twenty million people to the Gulag? If you doubt whether the right to self-defense protects your freedoms, read what the great dissident Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn wrote in *The Gulag Archipelago*, his account of his years in the prison camps:

And how we burned in the camps later, thinking: What would things have been like if every Security operative, when he went out at night to make an arrest, had been uncertain whether he would return alive and had to say good-bye to his family? Or if, during periods of mass arrests, as for example in Leningrad, when they arrested a quarter of the entire city, people had not simply sat there in their lairs, paling with terror at every bang of the downstairs door and at every step on the staircase, but had understood they had nothing left to lose and had boldly set up in the downstairs hall an ambush of half a dozen people with axes, hammers, pokers, or whatever else was at hand? . . . The Organs would very quickly have suffered a shortage of officers and transport and, notwithstanding all of Stalin's thirst, the cursed machine would have ground to a halt!

If . . . if . . . We didn't love freedom enough.<sup>32</sup>

Do we love freedom enough? In the United States, we have not lost our right to keep and bear arms—yet. But consider: If a million Jake Gardners or Kyle Rittenhouses had stepped forth in 2020, the riots would have stopped.

And the left is trying to take away this fundamental right. They have gone to incredible lengths to try to criminalize gun ownership in this country. When they can't get it done through the legislative process (which is often), they use any means at their disposal to try to keep law-abiding Americans from exercising their constitutional right to keep and bear arms. They do it by declaring as much territory as they can “gun-free zones.” They do it by getting lower-court judges to ignore both the clear meaning of the Second

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<sup>32</sup> Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, *The Gulag Archipelago, 1918–1956: An Experiment in Literary Investigation*, I–II (Glasgow: Collins/Fontana, 1974), 13.

Amendment and Supreme Court precedent. (The Court upholds an originalist understanding of “the right of the people to keep and bear arms shall not be infringed.”) They do it by suing gun makers and sellers into oblivion. They do it by pressuring credit card companies and sporting goods stores to create a *de facto* registry of firearms owners.

And they do it by trying to scapegoat and destroy those who use guns defensively, like Jake Gardner and Kyle Rittenhouse. The most aggressive critics of self-defense present gun owners not as citizens with rights but as depersonalized vectors of “gun violence” contagion.

As crucial as the right to self-defense is, the issues at stake extend further still. Apart from the irreplaceable Ms. Coulter, I’m one of the few people still writing about Jake Gardner. In fact, the thought of him haunts me. I think that God put him on my heart. Several times a week I remember that U.S. combat veteran and small business owner who was goaded to despair and suicide by Black Lives Marxists and his own corrupted government.

Then I break down crying, as if we’d been friends.

And in a way, we have. I’ve met Jake Gardners throughout my life. Our country used to be full of them. Those weary-looking Greeks—refugees from a dictatorship—who ran all-night diners in Astoria, Queens, where I grew up, and bought nice two-family houses whose front yards they kept immaculate. Then on Greek Easter they’d dress up and march through the streets carrying lilies and candles and icons to their churches. They were Jake Gardners, too.

The sweet old Jewish couple whose cousins had all been murdered in “the Old Country,” who ran the tiny Weber’s Department Store under the El train and sold us the uniforms for our Catholic school. They kept a keen eye for shoplifters but were always kind to us kids. A Jake and a Jackie Gardner, absolutely. Or as they might have put it, they were “*mensch*es.”

The black and Korean and Latino business owners whose windows were smashed and property looted by mobs led by affluent Marxists slumming in somebody else’s neighborhoods: each of those

storeowners was a Jake Gardner, too, in his or her way. I pray they've managed to piece back their livelihoods, and that the resentful layabouts who robbed them, unpunished, rot in prison for the *next* crimes they commit.

A Jake Gardner is an American who busts his hump, plays by the rules, keeps his word, breaks up fights, treats people fairly, fears God, distrusts the government, doesn't envy his neighbors, and stands up for his rights but doesn't pick on the weak. He's not the sullen government worker who watches the clock and maxes out his sick days. He's the teacher who stays late to tutor troubled students. Or the weary mom who volunteers twenty hours a week at the crisis pregnancy center, helping illegal immigrants or teenage moms to keep their babies instead of killing them.

The Jake Gardners are what keep any decent country running. So if you want to wreck the place, they are the people you need to target. To cow, intimidate, break, and batter them into learned helplessness, so that the next time a mob charges down the street, they won't try to help their neighbors, as Kyle Rittenhouse did. They won't even try to protect their own dads, as Jake Gardner did. They'll let felons hopped up on drugs loot their businesses right in front of them. Jake Gardner wouldn't let that happen, which is why our homegrown Bolsheviks knew he must be destroyed. As a lesson to the others.

The founder of modern Marxism, Nikolai Lenin, had a word for the Jake Gardners of Russia. He called them "kulaks," and he hated them to the point of genocide. Here's what he wrote in an infamous telegram of August 11, 1918 ( though? he might as well have been writing in August 2020):

Comrades! The uprising by the five kulak *volosts* [regions] must be mercilessly suppressed. The interest of the entire revolution demands this, for we are now facing everywhere the "final decisive battle" with the kulaks. We need to set an example.

1. You need to hang (hang without fail, so that the people see) no fewer than 100 of the notorious kulaks: the rich and the bloodsuckers.

2. Publish their names.
3. Take all their grain from them.
4. Appoint the hostages—in accordance with yesterday’s telegram.

This needs to be done in such a way that the people for hundreds of versts<sup>33</sup> around will see, tremble, know and shout: they are throttling and will throttle the bloodsucking kulaks.

Telegraph us concerning receipt and implementation.

Yours, Lenin.

P.S. Find tougher people.<sup>34</sup>

That’s all you need to know about Marxism, right there—including its modern American versions, such as Critical Race Theory.

Those modern American strains of Marxism are no longer confined to fringe groups. They hold massive influence over elites in academia, the legacy media, Big Tech, massive corporations beholden to “woke” ideology, and even our churches, which have increasingly surrendered to a post-Christian ethos.

By following this path, America’s left has shown the foresight of the twentieth-century Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci. From Mussolini’s prisons, Gramsci observed that the Leninist formula of seizing power first, then transforming society ideologically, seemed destined to fail. He proposed instead that the left focus first on a campaign to influence, subvert, co-opt, and finally dominate society’s non-governmental institutions. Political power would then fall into their hands like a ripe piece of fruit.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> A “verst” is a Russian unit of measure equivalent to about two-thirds of a mile.

<sup>34</sup> Vladimir Ilyich Lenin, “Telegram to Comrades Kuraev, Bosh, Minkin, and Other Penza Communists,” Marxists Internet Archive, <https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1918/aug/11c.htm>.

<sup>35</sup> Samuel Gregg, “The Most Dangerous Socialist in History,” *The Stream*, July 25, 2016, <https://stream.org/dangerous-marxist/>.

Instead of being imposed from the top down, by the government, the new Berlin Wall is emerging from the ground up, with today's cultural Marxists building it brick by brick.

Don't believe me? Just think about the radical transformation of the American left over the past thirty years.

Imagine you went back in time to 1993. Do you think any of the people celebrating Bill Clinton's first inauguration—or even the conservatives opposed to Clinton—would believe you when you said that within a few decades the Left would:

- abandon “Safe, legal, and rare” for “Shout your abortion”?
- not only demand same-sex marriage as a basic human right but also persecute churches that don't approve of it?
- abandon their longtime skepticism of foreign wars, intelligence agencies, federal law enforcement, billion-dollar corporations, and censorship, and in fact wield their growing control over these institutions to silence their political opponents?
- deny the fundamental truth of biological sex and insist that there are more genders than flavors of ice cream, then denouncing and silencing anyone who urges caution before giving children potentially irreversible hormone treatments or surgically mutilating them?
- condemn America's founding, embracing baseless conspiracy theories about our ancestors, despite the warnings of even liberal scholars?
- favor *de facto* open borders, the prosecution of parents who dissent at school board meetings, and the forcing of untested vaccines on millions of unwilling citizens?
- allow governors to place whole states under house arrest, with no legislative authority?

Nobody would have believed you if you said any of this. But it's exactly what has happened.

Now, as the Left has learned, political power remains difficult to hold onto. It's not quite the ripe fruit falling into their hands that Gramsci envisioned—though they may have felt that way upon the election of Barack Obama in 2008. The left greeted Obama's public appearances like the Jerusalem mob on Palm Sunday in *Jesus Christ, Superstar*. Early in the 2008 campaign, as Obama began attracting the adoring throngs, his wife admitted, "For the first time in my adult life, I am really proud of my country."<sup>36</sup>

Shortly before his election, Obama promised that he would go about "fundamentally transforming" America. And he embarked on that path as soon as he took office. During his two terms, his appointees politicized the FBI, the Department of Justice, and the Internal Revenue Service.<sup>37</sup> They took the vast, sweeping powers that Republicans had foolishly granted our intelligence agencies and weaponized them politically—as a few of us had warned was bound to happen.<sup>38</sup> The transformation he imposed on our country was supposed to be irreversible.

But then the American people stabbed their self-appointed leaders in the back on Election Night 2016. Virtually no one among the elites even considered that Donald Trump could be elected president. Trump's election felt like a cosmic betrayal, and leftists howled at the sky. Like far-right Germans in the 1920s, they descended into paranoia, hatred, and fantasies of revenge. Whole groups of citizens now became domestic "enemies" or stooges of foreign powers ("Russian collusion").

The Left now treats anyone who disagrees with them—anyone, that is, who defends beliefs that prominent progressives held just a few years ago—as evil, dangerous, and worthy of personal and professional destruction.

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<sup>36</sup> Evan Thomas, "Michelle Obama's 'Proud' Remarks," *Newsweek*, March 12, 2008, <https://www.newsweek.com/michelle-obamas-proud-remarks-83559>.

<sup>37</sup> "The Surveillance and Political Spying Operations Highlighted by John Durham Are the Tip of the Iceberg," *The Last Refuge*, February 12, 2022, <https://theconservativetreehouse.com/blog/2022/02/12/the-surveillance-and-political-spying-operations-highlighted-by-john-durham-are-the-tip-of-the-iceberg/>.

<sup>38</sup> John Zmirak, "The War on Terror," in *American Conservatism: An Encyclopedia* (Wilmington, DE: ISI Books, 2006).

## **Abandoning Our Ancestors**

Although the left could not hold political power eternally, its zealots still wield enormous influence throughout our culture because they dominate our most important institutions. And they have indeed transformed our country. As a result, we have turned away from certain truths on which the United States was founded. The Founders fought our War of Independence, debated our system of government, and drafted our Constitution based on those truths. These items in our national creed appear both explicitly and implicitly in their debates and public writing. State constitutions, public sermons, private letters, and other records also inscribe the views about man, his rights, and his nature that our Founders held in common.

Our Republic was premised on the eternal truthfulness of certain assertions about the human person. Our legal system rests on them, and the stunning prosperity, stability, and freedom we have enjoyed in subsequent centuries go a long way toward proving that our Founders' beliefs were right.

But the current generation isn't learning those truths—not in our schools or even in our churches. From our law schools and court opinions, to our media and teachers colleges and seminaries, Christian humanism and moderate Enlightenment views about the proper role of government have been ousted by newer, less humane ideas. Progressivism, which views human beings as more akin to social insects than sons of God, has long prevailed among our elites. Cultural Marxism, which views all social relationships through a jaundiced eye, has tainted our view of our forefathers. Shallow utilitarianism, which seeks to pile up happy moments for ignorant consumers, has replaced the Christian vision of man as dignified but fallen and created in God's image to live in ordered liberty.

Our system of government wasn't designed with these radical new ideas in mind, and it won't function properly if its laws and principles are systematically reinterpreted to match them. But we see this reinterpretation happening all around us. Judges distort the plain text of the Constitution. Lawyers offer false and crass arguments that betray our basic principles, and these arguments prevail in court. Bureaucrats seek to wield vast powers incompatible with our freedoms, and lawmakers empower them to do so.



The heritage we received from our ancestors is increasingly endangered. Unless we awaken to the problem, what's genuinely exceptional about the American system will fade into history, and the world will lose its last best hope.

This book is a modest attempt at restoration, at reweaving the ancient tapestry of truths that made our Republic possible and carried it through many crises up to the present. Consider it an act of grateful patriotism by the grandson of immigrants from an embattled, desacralized Europe.

Part I of this book explores the degeneration of the Judeo-Christian worldview that made possible the founding of a self-governing, free republic such as the United States of America. It shows how supernatural faith gave way to wistful “spirituality,” and a firm grasp of the natural law (that set of moral truths knowable by reason alone) as the basis for making just laws for free individuals surrendered to humanitarian tinkering by an ever-more powerful state. Instead of citizens created in the image of God, afflicted by the Fall but offered Redemption, responsible for their actions, we now see ourselves and our neighbors as termites in a hive—dependent on top-down management and constant protection by our “betters.” These elites in politics, media, academia, and multinational companies arrogate to themselves a superhuman status. They plan for the “future of the planet” based on partial, politicized, dogmatic theories that they exempt from rational scrutiny and enforce via censorship, “canceling,” and even direct financial penalties inflicted on dissenters. In this section, the right to keep and bear arms serves as the test case, the prime example, of how our political masters are confiscating our rights in the name of protecting us from ourselves.

Part II provides a roadmap for rolling back this dehumanizing movement and training ourselves in sounder modes of reasoning about politics and theology, which accord with our own traditions and beliefs. Here, the right to armed self-defense again is used as an example of sound and unsound reasoning, of authentic reflection on man's nature and the proper limits of government, as opposed to inhuman and anti-human modern ideologies.

Part III offers a detailed historical study of the crucial political question at the center of this book: how the biblical view of man helped create (unique to the West) a philosophy of freedom, which rejected rigid hierarchies and other tyrannical structures. How is it that a country such as the United States of America came about, predicated on the idea that man has such an intrinsic moral dignity that he must not be subject to governments that violate his rights? Where did our Founders get the idea of building into the Constitution they were drafting a mechanism such as the Second Amendment, which keeps the people armed so that they can serve as the final bulwark against tyranny? What are the biblical, philosophical, and historical roots of American ordered liberty, and how can we preserve those roots against those who are even now attempting to hack down the tree?

Any patriotic citizen should wish to know the answers to those questions, and how he can help pass on to his children the same sacred heritage he received from his ancestors.