

WHY FIGHT IT? *This is a first-person column by Roberto Rodriguez.*

Ever since the recent presidential elections, I've been hearing people making plans to leave the country. They fear fascism. Go to some coffee shops or protests or to some Web sites, and you'd be convinced that it's already here.

Most of these doomsayers have given up hope, believing that our freedoms and liberties have already been lost, and they fear that a great purge and silencing is but around the corner. As proof, they cite the administration's manipulation of fear, its reliance on fraud to win elections, and its quest for a permanent state of war. (Newt Gingrich predicts the "war on terror" is a 30- to 70-year endeavor.)

They don't so much hate this administration as they resent the wimpiness of the Democrats. They also believe that the courts are useless, as they are completely beholden to the administration. For example, they cite the case of lawyer Lynne Stewart, who was recently convicted as an accessory to terrorism. Worse, they also believe that the media establishment has virtually become stenographers for an administration hell-bent on worldwide domination. They also see the end of freedom of speech, citing the case of University of Colorado professor Ward Churchill, who is being pilloried for his views on 9/11.

Apparently, "spreading democracy" and "abolishing tyranny" are the new code words for justifying U.S. military invasions and occupations worldwide.

Well, I ain't leaving, and I don't fear fascism.

I have this crazy idea: If it's coming, why not just embrace it? Fascism. That's what I'm talking about. Rather than wait for ominous developments that curtail our human rights incrementally, perhaps we should outright revoke the U.S. Constitution. Let's just start from scratch and negotiate our rights ... or perhaps our "lefts" (leftovers).

The Democratic Party could negotiate with the administration the face and terms of this new fascism. Though given their track record (failure to stop a clearly illegal war and failure to derail the truth-challenged Condoleezza Rice and the torture-enabler Alberto Gonzales nominations), they probably would bungle this one, too.

Perhaps we should start with the creation of a self-identified enemies list. Why live in doubt and fear? In times of emergency (now), those on this list would report to the nearest professional sports stadium. As an incentive, those reporting promptly would be exempted from torture. And perhaps it would also entitle one to see the game of the week -- even if it's from the nosebleed sections. (Why can't there be perks under fascism, and why does it have to be oppositional?)

So the first order of business would be to expand this list. Who would qualify? Perhaps Pinochet's Chile could serve as the model: Any opposition organizer or activist would qualify. Guatemala might make for an even better model. During the 1970s through 1990s, beyond human-rights champions, activists and organizers, anyone who could think, read or write was targeted. Anyone involved in teaching and eliminating illiteracy was at the head of the list (right-wing evangelists were exempted). And, of course, there was a racial element involved. This means that here, any persons of color not already locked up in our many government or private prisons, especially if they're involved in the aforementioned activities, should consider themselves prime targets and, thus, voluntarily place themselves on the Patriotic Enemies List of America.

To avoid being confrontational, perhaps its charter members can engage in a national competition to create loyalty oaths. They can also engage in creating -- in honor of the first

ladies -- the Bush-Cheney Approved Reading List. The winners can be permitted to watch unrestricted Fox programming. Everyone else would be restricted to watching Fox News 24 hours a day.

As such, confinement to these sports complexes wouldn't need to be seen as punishment, but rather as part of patriotic re-education camps where people would unlearn the U.S. Constitution and the U.N. Human Rights charter, and memorize the USA Patriot Act.

To avoid idleness, the stadiums could also be turned into intensive labor camps (perhaps they could print the new federal IDs for every citizen). There would be no pay, but everyone would come to value the meaning of hard work. And there would always be ways to work in the great outdoors. For example, one could join a work crew to help finish constructing the 2,000-mile wall along the U.S.-Mexico border. (The House recently passed a bill to complete one portion of that wall.)

Also, there could be a competition to call this new fascism something else -- Bushism doesn't quite work, as it implies simplemindedness -- and there could be a prize (price?) for that too.

* As if anyone needed additional proof... John Negroponte of Iran-Contra fame was just nominated to head the newly created intelligence post.

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