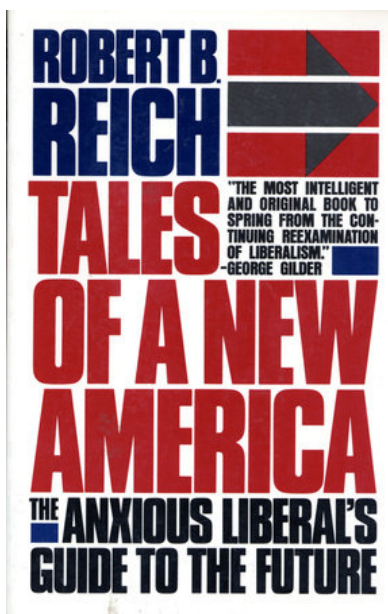




Scary Tales of a Far-Right America



In his book, *Tales of a New America*, former Secretary of Labor Robert Reich asserted that four narratives have guided and shaped this nation's life since its colonial days. "The Triumphant Individual" narrative includes stories reassuring us that anyone can make it here – just grab your bootstraps and pull! Stories about "The Benevolent Community" remind us that Americans are a good and generous people who will always lend a hand to neighbors in need. "The Mob at the Gates" stories warn that we must always be on guard against outsiders who would threaten our safety and security. And a similar set of cautionary tales, "Rot at the Top," turns the focus *inside* the gates to expose corruption in government, business, and other internal centers of power.

I was reminded of Reich's book last month when I watched a presentation entitled "Far-Right Media & The Power of Narrative." Hosted by [Spitfire Strategies](#), the presentation shared the top take-aways of an eye-opening study funded by the [Lumina Foundation](#) and conducted by [Protagonist](#), a firm that analyzes narratives driving human behavior.

Just as Reich did, Protagonist identified four narratives that are guiding and shaping American discourse – but with a critical difference. Rather than originating naturally over centuries, these far-right narratives have been deliberately constructed and disseminated for specific political and ideological purposes.

Call them “Scary Tales of a Far-Right America,” and ignore them at your peril, because it’s quite possible they are undermining your work as you read this. (Please scroll down for full story).

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Scary Tales of a Far-Right America (cont.)



For this study, Protagonist’s researchers reviewed 2.2 million articles, broadcast news reports, commentaries, and other pieces disseminated between January 2020 and September 2023 by Fox News, Breitbart, The New York Post, Heritage Foundation, and others –

38 far-right sources in all. The major topics covered by these stories included politics, education, immigration, race, religion, the economy, democracy, climate change and others. From all these stories four narratives emerged: (*the text defining each of the narratives below is taken verbatim from Protagonist’s presentation*)

- **Reject the Woke Agenda**
The radical and all-powerful Left is waging a mass indoctrination campaign that is silencing Conservatives and threatening the sacred values of our nation.
- **Americans Under Siege**
Chaos, crime, and violence have descended on this country, and Americans live amid constant threat of physical harm.
- **Expose the Deception**
We must open our eyes and resist efforts by Democrats, elites, and corporations to pull the wool over our eyes and amass power.
- **Preserve Capitalism**
In order to keep our country strong and prosperous, we must not lose track of our commitment to hard work, self-determination, and a free market.

These four narratives can work individually or in combination. For example, arguments that climate change is a hoax which restricts drilling for oil and hurts the economy tap into both the “Expose the Deception” and “Preserve Capitalism” narratives.

Protagonist also found that many of these narratives created clearly identifiable villains, putting human faces on otherwise abstract subjects, making them easier for audiences to emotionally connect with (and become enraged by.) Don't like the government telling you to get vaccinated? Blame Anthony Fauci!



Another tactic connected with these narratives is the poisoning of key terms associated with progressive ideals: DEI, CRT, affirmative action, and others. Far-right outlets are using every opportunity to make these terms so toxic that they can no longer be used. (In a similar vein, Florida Governor Ron DeSantis signed a law in May 2024 banning the use of the words “climate change” in any statewide statutes.)

Protagonist is already looking at left-leaning outlets to identify narratives on the progressive side of the ideological spectrum, and results of that research will be forthcoming later this year.

So, what do you do in the meantime? The first step in dealing with any problem is acknowledging that you *have* a problem, and clearly we have one here. These narratives comprise a well-orchestrated, relentless, and emotionally powerful attack on progressive values and causes. It requires the same in response.

Who's in?

To learn more about the webinar “Far-Right Media & The Power of Narrative” send an email to narrative@spitfirestrategies.com. Special thanks to Nima Shirazi of Spitfire for his assistance with this article.

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