



Retirement *Lifestyle*
Advocates

RADIO PROGRAM

Expert Interview Series

Guest Expert: Jeffrey Tucker
Brownstone Institute

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Dennis Tubbergen:

Welcome back to RLA Radio. I'm your host Dennis Tubbergen. Joining me on today's program is returning guest Mr. Jeffrey Tucker. Many longtime listeners will recognize Jeffrey as the founder and president of the Brownstone Institute. The website is brownstone.org. Jeffrey's latest book is titled, *Blindsight is 2020*. We'll chat with him a little bit about that as well. But Jeffrey, welcome back to the program. Always a pleasure to have you on.

Jeffrey Tucker:

I always enjoy our conversations. Thank you.

Dennis Tubbergen:

So, Jeffrey, just for our listeners that may not be familiar with the Brownstone Institute, talk about the motivation behind founding the Brownstone Institute and what is it that your objective is.

Jeffrey Tucker:

The impetus for the founding was of course COVID and the response to COVID, because I realized very early on it wasn't just really about COVID, it was about a real contest we're facing between a functioning society and what is emerging as a sort of biomedical security state that really does threaten fundamental freedoms of everyone in the world, and not just for this crisis, but for many that are coming. Just realizing the, I guess, fundamental radicalism that the response really meant caused me to realize we needed a serious and robust intellectual resistance to what happened to us and to fundamentally rethink certain fundamentals of what freedom means. And so that's really what Brownstone is about.

Dennis Tubbergen:

So, Jeffrey, talk briefly if you would, about your most recent book, love the title, *Blindsight is 2020*.

Jeffrey Tucker:

Yeah, yeah. So, when you say "mine", Brownstone published it. It's by Gabriel Bauer, who's a good journalist. And she, each chapter just takes on one, two, or three of the great people who were pretty much alone from 2020 and objecting to what was happening with the COVID response. And it marches through various medical experts and jurists and journalists, and I guess she profiled something like about 48 different people. Now, it's an interesting thing to look through this list of names because there just weren't that many people who were on the right side of history. It was really

not many at all. And nowadays, you find lots of people say, "Oh, I was always against lockdowns." Well, that may be true, but there weren't that many, I guess, prominent names that you could find throughout most of 2020 who were fundamentally objecting to all this stuff that was going on.

And the thing I found, Dennis, as we're looking at these people, and I consider them all heroes in the old-fashioned sense of that term, which is to say doing self-sacrificial good at a great personal cost that really was not morally necessary but is meritorious and really essential for the continuation of a functioning society. So that's in this case, what I would consider heroism about this. And I'll tell you what. I was thinking about this the other day because Brownstone held a, I guess you would call it a private retreat. I would like you to come to one of those, by the way, one day. But it was our first private retreat of scholars and fellows, and we had about 30, which was about a good group to facilitate conversation and learning. And I got up to talk and I looked around the room, something occurred to me, there wasn't a single person in that room who was doing the same thing now professionally or geographically or otherwise that he or she was doing in 2019.

In other words, every one of these people experienced major life disruptions, getting fired from the law firm, having to move from New York to Florida, getting tossed out of academia, losing their position at a newspaper, getting their medical license ripped away, losing a book contract, having to figure out a new way to make money through whatever the thing is, that every person there had experienced this kind of wild life disruption. And unfortunately, this is what happens when you go against the norm, but you have to go against the norm in order to preserve society. And maybe that sounds hyperbolic to you, but I can elaborate on that if you'd like me to.

Dennis Tubbergen:

I would love to continue to explore that topic because I think that post, here we are what, three years after the fact roughly. And I think a lot of things that many people would've considered to be conspiracy theory at the time, now it's been proven that this is all true. So, these people really had a lot of good perspective. They had a good gut, they understood what was going on, and all of a sudden, it's becoming more mainstream. So, well, let's dig into that a little bit more.

Jeffrey Tucker:

So just to review, there was this time in the spring of 2020 where we're all sitting around at home wondering why we were doing this. How come we can't go to church? How come movie theaters are closed? Why can I not go to the gym? How come all the businesses downtown are boarded up? How come I can't even go to find a dentist who will see me? How come I can't attend my grandmother's funeral in another state? And so, it was all very strange and we were all asking the question, why was this happening? And that seems like there should be an obvious answer to it, but it's not so obvious really why they did it, because there was not really an exit strategy or even a theory. I mean, for example, I'll just make the obvious point, you can't make a virus disappear because you hide from it.

I mean, you can't just stay in your apartment, what, forever. That's also an unhealthy thing to do because the human immune system needs exposure in order to deal with the pathogens all around us. So, what was the point? Maybe it was to wait for the vaccine. But that itself is very strange because a vaccine that's safe and effective has usually taken five or 10 years of testing. Not only that, but a coronavirus does not lend itself to being vaccinated against simply because of its tendency to mutate and circulate and change clothes all the time. I mean, we've known this for many, many decades. And so, nothing really made sense of it. And even now I ask myself that question.

So just when you called today, I was finishing reviewing some of this history, and I bumped into a piece of correspondence from March 2nd, 2020. That's two weeks before the lockdowns began and just a few days after the New York Times had called on us to go medieval, an email from Anthony Fauci to Michael Garrison of the Washington Post, who was constructing an article at the time, trying to explain what it is that was about to happen to us and why. So, he writes Fauci an email, he said, "Is the purpose of lockdowns to wait for the vaccine?" Fauci writes back and says, "No, that's not the purpose. The purpose is to keep people separated so that they don't infect each other. And if we do that long enough and drive down the infection rate to less than zero, the virus will go away on its own."

And Garrison takes that paragraph and reprints it word for word in his own column and attributes the idea to himself. Now that sounds rather innocuous, but actually we know that just staying away from the virus doesn't cause the virus to go away any more than taking down your umbrella causes the rain to stop. This is a grave confusion. And so, it makes you wonder what did Fauci actually have in mind and how long, given that

you cannot make a virus go away by just having everybody stay indoors, how long did he imagine these lockdowns would go on? And I reluctantly conclude that the answer is forever. And the reason I know that is because about five months later, he wrote an article for the journal called Cell in which he says, "You know what the real problem is? The real problem is people, the real problem is that we live in a human dominated world, and we've been doing this for at least 12,000 years. That's the real issue. That's what we need to put a spot to."

And that's the article in which he said, we need a new infrastructure of human existence in which basically we get rid of cities, we get rid of birthday parties, we get rid of sports events, we get rid of bars, restaurants, and all the normal things we consider to be society, so messing with freedom, in his mind has to goal. So that is astonishing. I mean, I don't know who else you could say believes those kinds of things. Maybe the Joker from Batman. It's hard to come up with anybody else who believes something as fundamentally dangerous and truly insane as that. And yet, Dennis, if you think about it, we let this guy with these views construct the whole pandemic response not just for the US but for most parts of the world. And that really did happen to us. When you consider that, I mean, you should be alarmed, you should be shaken and really dedicate yourself to doing something to stop anything like this from ever happening again.

Dennis Tubbergen:

So Jeffrey, we've got just a couple, well, about two and a half minutes left in this segment. It just seems to me that this whole topic has gotten to be the more these truths have been exposed, it seems to me that more people have come around to say, that was a huge mistake. But it also seems like it's very divisive and there still seems to be, at least from my perspective, a general sense of apathy about this. What's your take?

Jeffrey Tucker:

You mean people's attitudes towards-

Dennis Tubbergen:

Yeah, exactly. Like, "They're going to make us do it again. I guess we'll have to do it again."

Jeffrey Tucker:

Yeah, that very well may be true. What I sense is that we've been so shattered as a culture and a people as a result of the last three years, that people are just tired, exhausted, demoralized, drugged up is another

problem and feeling powerless. So, when you feel powerless and you're demoralized and you think that there are people running the world that are much stronger than you, there's nothing you can do about it. You tend to give up and become a little bit apathetic. And I do think that's actually extremely dangerous.

Dennis Tubbergen:

Well, I'm chatting today with Mr. Jeffrey Tucker. He is the founder and president of the Brownstone Institute. I would encourage you to check out their work brownstone.org. I very much enjoy their work. And also check out the book *Blindsight is 2020*. I'll continue my conversation with Jeffrey Tucker when RLA Radio returns. Stay with us.

Welcome back to RLA Radio. I'm your host Dennis Tubbergen. I'm continuing my conversation with Mr. Jeffrey Tucker in this segment. If you're just joining us, Jeffrey is the founder and president of the Brownstone Institute. You can learn more about the Brownstone Institute brownstone.org.

And Jeffrey, we were chatting a bit before we actually started recording today's interview about the most recent jobs report. And I had mentioned that on a webinar I commented that the raw data said that the economy lost two and a half million jobs. There are layoffs from many, many big companies, particularly in the technology sector. And yet we had politicians doing victory lobs once the revisions were in, we created 517,000 jobs. So, what is someone supposed to believe?

Jeffrey Tucker:

I have lost a lot of respect for the Department of Labor over the last year. I have to tell you, oh, with these jobs reports that come out. It's exhausting. You have to dig through them and figure out what's what. And of course, reporters never have time to do that. So, they race to run the headlines. And that's largely dictated by the first two or three sentences of the press release itself. And those have been seriously politically compromised. And we see it across the board basically with everything the Department of Labor does, whether it's the jobs reports or the inflation reports. I mean, the inflation reports were particularly ridiculous this last month there because they all showed a reversal of the declines on the rate of increase, meaning that inflation is reaccelerating. But the Department of Labor didn't want to put it that way. So they said that it's firming, cooling all kinds of language.

And of course, the major media just stupidly reported it. And it's the same thing with these jobs figures once you dig into them. I mean, there are two

surveys, household survey and the institutional survey, and they come up with different results. But what's fascinating is that to the extent you see jobs being created at all, they're almost overwhelmingly existing job holders taking second and third part-time jobs, that's what's actually going on. I mean, which if you think about it, is really alarming. You could call that job creation, but if you're moving from a comfortable full-time employment to having to become an Uber driver and a DoorDash person and moonlight on the weekends just to pay the bills, that's not necessarily good news. And that seems like that explains the bulk of what we're seeing in job creation right now. So, if you get fired from your full-time job and you have to take three part-time jobs to make up for the difference, I mean, are you making a mighty contribution to job creation or is that generally pretty bad news for you in your life?

Dennis Tubbergen:

Well, I think, Jeffrey, another statistic that may support this, I think the fourth quarter of 2022 saw American consumers add \$394 billion in debt, largely credit card debt. And that seems to indicate that a lot of people are resorting to taking on debt to deal with inflation and deal with this economy that in my view is weakening.

Jeffrey Tucker:

You're right, Dennis, about that, and thank you for bringing that up. Household finances right now, and I keep writing about this, writing about this, not to sound the alarms, but the savings rate is very low. It's picked up a little bit recently, which I think is really good news, but by up, I think maybe we're up to like 3% or something like that, it's ridiculously low by historical standards. But the amount of credit card debt that's being put on, particularly by people in their thirties and forties is alarming. And it's just to maintain their lifestyles. People have not adjusted to the fact that we are far poorer today than we were five years ago, and they don't want to come to terms with it. So as the dollar keeps declining in value, people just keep throwing down their credit cards more and more and more. So credit card debt is soaring as real income is declining or flat and has been for the better part of 21 months.

And so, in other words, we're having to pay more for less and then going into more and more debt to do it. So yeah, household finances are right now in a terrible position. It doesn't lead to any kind of good news for the economy. And I'll tell you something else that's interesting, you like to follow these data releases like I do, but the retail sales data came out a couple weeks ago and everybody cheered. "Oh, retail sales are up."

Well, I did a simple thing. I went to the statistical packages and divided it by the inflation rate to get retail sales in real terms and found that they weren't up at all. Actually, it just means that people are spending more money because you have to spend more money because of inflation. That's not an increase in retail sales, that's spending more money for less. So that doesn't represent a sign of recovery. I tell you what, everybody, all of your listeners need to be extremely careful about reading the economic news in the mainstream press these days. I mean, it is so bad they can't even accurately report labor data, inflation data, retail sales data. And they certainly don't report what you just talked about, the skyrocketing debt.

Dennis Tubbergen:

Jeffrey, I want to shift gears. There's never enough time when I start talking to you, so I do appreciate you being on the program as do the listeners. But when you take a look at Fed policy right now, we have interest rate increases that are becoming more measured, a quarter point at the last Fed meeting. To me, the Fed has one of two choices here. They're going to stay the course and the economy's going to continue to weaken because it's been artificial, largely artificial due to Fed policy in the first place, or they're going to pivot, which is the new vogue term and go back to easy money policies, which I happen to think will likely happen, but that will only lead to probably a bigger deflationary event down the road. I'd like you to get out your crystal ball and tell me how you see this playing out.

Jeffrey Tucker:

Yeah, I don't see evidence yet of a pivot. What I see is a continuing tightening with higher and higher interest rates, which in historical terms, we've never seen interest rates increase this far this fast in the whole history of the Federal Reserve. But you have to remember that in 2021, the Fed faced an impossible situation. We had inflation roaring, nipping at double digits, while the federal funds rate was barely above zero. So, the great game that the Fed has to play here is to find what Powell calls the terminal rate, which is to say you need short-term interests running ahead or higher than the inflation rate. However, you want to calculate it. Well, they had a huge job to do. And the thing is that once they set out to do that, they couldn't really reverse course because that was the policy. And as far as I could tell, they still believe that which means that they need to get rates at least a point or two higher than they are right now in order to do something about the inflation problem.

And Dennis, I think maybe a couple months ago I would've agreed with you that they were going to pivot in order to achieve this, what they consider to be a soft landing. But when you look at the inflation data out of January and

you saw the CPI reaccelerate, the PPI reaccelerate, and the price deflator, the consumer price deflator thing that the Fed follows so carefully, that also reaccelerated. So, across the board, we're seeing a reacceleration of price pressure up, that surely alarmed the Fed. And my guess is that they're going to stay the course right now and continue to ramp up interest rates a quarter point at a time until something can happen to bring this inflation back to a manageable level. The new target is not 2%, it might be closer to two and a half percent or 3%, but they're nowhere near that right now. So, my guess is that it's just going to continue, this policy.

Now, what this means, I mean, there's some good news and bad news. I mean, let me just say the good news first is that your listeners can make money, maybe not in real terms, but at least for the first time in 70 years, keep money in the bank and earn a return. That is good news. CDs are a good deal right now. Money markets are at least making money. This is a new world. You hadn't been able to make any money by saving money for 17 years. You had to always chase out the speculative investments in the stock market. But that has changed. And so that's very good news, and I think that also accounts for the uptick on the savings rate a little bit. The bad news for many, many workers in this country and many owners of businesses, large businesses, is that it means a big continuing industrial shift out of the right side of the old curve over to the left side.

So, what that means is that the big companies are going to continue to shed labor costs in the form of human beings. I mean, Musk set the standard by firing three of four employees at Twitter and thereby causing the company to work better than ever. So that's a symbol to the rest of corporate America that they need to shed, shed, shed. That is going to devastate millions of people who believed that their credentials and their phony baloney experience, that they believe that they have entitled them to a permanent high six figure income while doing absolutely nothing while working from home. Those days are coming to an end, and I personally believe we've only begun to see the meltdown. Now while this is happening, we see a huge labor shortage in many, many industries on the left side of the curve that involves hospitality and what we think of as just consumer service, retail, consumer services and that sort of thing.

I mean, it's a remarkable thing. I mean, in my neck of the woods, we have all sorts of really high-end restaurants that have unlimited demand for their product, but cannot find workers to make the food and serve it and clean the pans and that sort of thing. So, there's massive shortages in those sectors, while there's huge surpluses in the high end, white collar, professional Zoom

jobs that thrived over the last 15 years. So that's all changing dramatically. In fact, I think it's only begun to change. We are going to see the largest industrial disruption of labor market allocation that we've seen in our lifetime. It's taking place right now.

Dennis Tubbergen:

Well, my guest today has been Mr. Jeffrey Tucker. He is the founder and president of the Brownstone Institute. You can learn more by visiting the website brownstone.org. Jeffrey, always a pleasure to have you on the program. Love to have you back down the road.

Jeffrey Tucker:

Sure.

Dennis Tubbergen:

As I said before, I always get terrific feedback when you're on the program, so thank you for joining us.

Jeffrey Tucker:

Well, it's always a pleasure to talk to you, Dennis, and we'll be in touch.

Dennis Tubbergen:

We will return after these words.