

How to Disappear in America

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Several misconceptions exist about the extent of [self-determination](#). Many assume that because you have arranged your life in such a way, you can't ever just up and leave, even if not doing so would be to enable your overly demanding parents or an abusive spouse. Misunderstandings about lifestyle choices, and the ability to radically change them, is what perpetuates the all too common modern feeling of [being trapped in your own life](#).

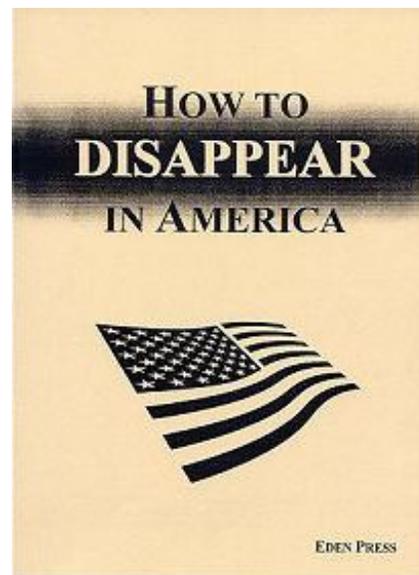
A [family of origin](#), or "FOO," are those humans that you are genetically related to and/or grew up with; "deFOOing," therefore, is the process of permanently [ostracizing](#) them from your life, usually by removing yourself from close geographical proximity, as well as being financially dependent on them. So, in one sense, [going on a paper trip](#) is the epitome of defooing, because you are not only cutting off all contact, but also creating an entirely different paper trail that, if you do it right, would make it difficult for even skip tracers to find you. Such a tool in the proverbial toolbox would be invaluable, if your goal is to just simply disappear.

In terms of legality, it's not "against the law" to disappear. Unless you are under the care of a legal guardian, or [on parole](#), then (generally speaking) you are free "move" anytime you'd like (and you aren't legally required to say "good-bye," either). Too many [socially engineered "norms"](#) have [inculcated behaviors](#) that may very well be detrimental to your freedom, and putting those whom you are trying to get away from "[on notice](#)" that you are upping and leaving is a fool-proof way of shooting yourself in the foot.

You will need to seriously ponder your traveling conditions, such as what to take along with you to your new life, how you are traveling, where you are going to *temporarily* live, where you are going to *permanently* live, and, most importantly, **when** you want to leave. Obviously, it is *much* better to take your time and gratuitously plan everything, and then *slowly* acquire whatever you need, because the more time you have, the better your chances of successfully disappearing will be; however, if your situation is continuously hazardous (for instance, if you happen to be a battered spouse), then you have little choice other than *immediately* leaving. Transitional locales would include very large metropolitan cities, as well as large university towns.

As the author likes to put it, "Cash speaks all languages," especially when disappearing. He proposes four ways of [financially supporting yourself](#):

1. Live off your own cash, property, or other assets that you can sell, trade, or invest.
2. Live off another person, or persons, as a companion, lover, or provider of other immediate personal services.
3. "Get a job," even with no SSN, credit, or references.



4. Start your own business based on your skills and the needs of the community.

Needless to say, the first two options are the easiest, although certainly not realistic for most. Option four is possible if you have some start up capital, know your respective market, and you have the drive to succeed as an entrepreneur. But for most people, I would even venture to say this about a good chunk of paper-trippers, the only realistic option is to get hired. Unfortunately, this will involve quite a bit of acting to convince your potential employer that you are qualified and experienced in the field to do the job excellently, but seeing that [using disguises](#) is a basic skill for paper-trippers, it shouldn't be too hard to pull it off well.

Reid's book really shines in its chapter on using low-profile techniques. Most of these are really nothing more than [common sense privacy methods](#), coupled with considerations specific to paper-tripping, as well as some skip-tracing avoidance. For example, Reid recommends:

“Keep your home, job, personal activities and hobbies well separated, [even self-contained](#). Don't let heat in one area endanger any of the others...[o]n the job, avoid giving background information to fellow workers. If you're planning to stay on the job only a short while, however, make an effort to plant false and misleading information in the minds of the other workers, such as your favorite pastimes, places you'd like to travel or live someday, and your plans for the future. Insulate your private self by keeping your personal interests and ideas to yourself alone. Share the spurious with the curious.”

“Avoid attending church. If you must, however, use an alias when attending, and make contributions in cash, never by check. If you are asked by inquisitive neighbors what church you attend, either name one of a different faith than theirs, or deny interest completely. Give the minister totally false information about yourself, as these good folks are great gossips when approached by snoops...[a]void membership in political groups or civic organizations. As a rule these groups are filled with super sneaky, nose-y individuals more willing than not to stab someone in the back if it suits their selfish purposes. Total snakes.”

“Protect the names, addresses, and telephone numbers of your friends. Use a code of your own making to disguise the actual names and numbers, or try to memorize what you need to know. You'd be amazed at how much you can remember in this area if you make the effort. Try to avoid carrying this coded address book with you. Cops always flash on such items, and so-called 'rings' are usually busted this way. A smart thing to do would be to carry a dummy book of names and numbers selected at random from the phone book. Keep your working book stashed in a safe place. This practice protects you, too, inasmuch as suspicion is cast on you should some of your friends be busted and their names appear in your book.”

As you can see, Reid's suggestions are geared towards [preserving personal privacy](#). It wouldn't be a stretch either to imagine how they would also be useful for [vetting someone into your little dissident group](#).

There are noticeable redundancies this book shares with [The Paper Trip III](#). The chapters on mail drops,

Social Security numbers (SSNs), and “Living with New ID” seem to have been copy/pasted into place, albeit with some minor editorial subtractions and additions. There was also a chapter dedicated to the three levels of ID that were virtually similar, but here I found some clarification about them that I didn’t quite understand before. Generally speaking, the levels are correct, but you have to approach it *backwards*, that is to say, Level Three ID establishes the *foundation* for your alternate ID (these documents would include your birth certificate and Social Security card), Level Two ID comprises your “walking around” ID (such as a driver’s license or US passport), and Level One ID is simply a persona you adopt (since there are no government issued identification documents to “validate” it). While it is possible for you to conjure up a Level One ID out of thin air, a Level Two ID *is dependent upon the existence of* Level Three ID.

Not only are there these redundancies, but also unavoidable differences from Reid’s earlier book. There is no information whatsoever on how to go about acquiring a birth certificate, a US passport, or a driver’s license. Although the introduction and ending of the chapter about SSNs seems to be unique, the meat of it was still lifted from the other book.

[Barry Reid’s *How to Disappear in America*](#) is a unique look at what is essentially *starting over*, but on paper. This book is good for providing a clearer picture of paper-tripping itself as whole, not so much on its specific techniques, although my unanswered questions from *The Paper Trip III* did get answered. I think this book is best used in conjunction with Reid’s earlier book, although since they are so similar to each other, and considering the amount of time that has passed, it would have been more efficient if Reid had just simply written a “Paper Trip IV” containing updated Obama regime era information. For those who still doubt the necessity for paper-tripping, I offer this parting thought from the author himself:

“A solid set of ID in another name is what can truly be called ‘freedom insurance.’ With the growing threat of arrest and prosecution for leading a ‘free’ life, it’s plainly comforting to have the option to cut and run, even if you choose not to. Obtaining alternate ID should be done before you get into trouble. Take the time to do it right. In an emergency many other matters will compete for your time. In the future first-class ID may become more difficult to obtain, too. The best ID to obtain is obviously that which is issued directly by government agencies themselves. Using forged, stolen, or counterfeited ID is a bust in itself...[w]ith government issued ID you can effectively erase the curse of jail or prison record. Tens of thousands of ‘free’ Americans carry with them the permanent label of ‘felon’ or ‘ex-con.’ [The real crime begins only after a person leaves the joint](#); legal and social ostracism continues all their life. What better reason to disappear?”

I can think of no better reason to go on a paper trip than as a way of making sure you have an escape hatch of sorts that will protect you from tyranny. Hey, if [Jan Karski was able to change IDs](#) as often as people typically change bedsheets, why can’t we do the same as well?