

# WikiLeaks, the Global Fourth Estate: **History Is Happening**



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**WIKILEAKS, THE GLOBAL FOURTH ESTATE: HISTORY IS  
HAPPENING**

By Nozomi Hayase

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Credit: Inspiration for the book's subtitle, "History Is Happening," is derived from the motto of The Juice Media.

For the youth who grew up on the Internet,  
future of civilization depends on acts of courage inspired  
by the heart.

“Who controls the past controls the future: who controls the present controls the past.”

—George Orwell<sup>1</sup>

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# Foreword

The Introduction of “Cypherpunks” (2012) [1] began with this legendary assertion by Julian Assange: “This book is not a manifesto. There is no time for that. This book is a warning”.

Six years have passed by since the WikiLeaks founder and co-workers described and predicted, in that significant book, the menace that the Internet has become to human rights, civil liberties, and freedom of speech. It has been summarized by the authors as a “threat to human civilization”.

Alongside state or corporate espionage exercised against our privacy, control algorithms seek to manipulate our preferences in the market, and aim to monitor our opinions and political behaviour.

By 2018, governments have openly begun to curtail the activities and development of alternative media, or media that may now be considered as “enemy of the State” and “hostile” to those established and/or controlled by the elite.

A common denominator of these media is that the content they publish online, print or broadcast, questions the ‘official’ versions of those in power.

These constrictions to freedom of speech and expression have further significant, as much as nefarious, consequences:

When the state directly prohibits certain news outlets to exercise their right of expression, the direct effect of this edict is that it restrains the individuals' right to seek access to information.

As I have already said, “The public cannot exercise that democratic right if the physical possibilities for those alternatives to exist are asphyxiated with such repressive measures.” [2]

For, intrinsically, it is within individuals' human rights to seek information from sources that they choose, on the basis of their perceived trustworthiness.

I could simply state it with this suggested axiom:

Reduction or abolition of freedom of speech in a society, is inversely proportional to the survival of its individuals' right of freely decide their source of information.

In other words, repression against *one* media outlet, which publishes online or broadcast in a given community, constitutes the constriction of *all* individuals' potential rights.

Nonetheless, State apparatus is not the only actor, decision-maker, and executor of this campaign. To its

aid, nowadays, rush corporate social-media platforms that also indulge in censorship against alternative media sites that seek to project their voices into the Internet forum.

To its aid rush some mainstream media too. One example was when leading mainstream media published or linked to the so called blacklist in the “Propornot” site, in which WikiLeaks had been included. [3]

In her book, Dr Nozomi Hayase gives us an account of a variety of transgressions perpetrated against freedom of speech between 2010 and 2017, including other civil liberties issues.

She further analyses the risks for democracy, the perils that true journalism has been confronted with, focusing on the troubles faced by WikiLeaks and other publishers, whistle-blowers, etc.

Her brave defence of the human rights of Julian Assange is elegant, solid and logically argued.

I personally regard most of the conclusions embedded in her awe-inspiring piece as a call for ethical and intellectual action.

In my view, Dr Nozomi Hayase in her book also demonstrates that the warning given to society in “Cypherpunks” was utterly valid, its contents stood well the test of time. In fact, the 23 chapters reviewing almost a decade of cyber information, and censorship, signify a

confirmation and up to date illustration of the perils anticipated for society.

The book also develops on the historical role of Julian Assange, who with his organization WikiLeaks has reshaped the panorama of modern-day media. It set the premises for the democratization of information which shall, at individual level, foster consciousness for qualitative social change.

The author concludes:

*“As the world’s first stateless Fourth Estate, WikiLeaks has opened up new territory where people can touch the ground of uncensored reality and claim creative power to participate in the history that is happening.”*

Nozomi Hayase, who holds a PhD in Psychology, is a notable columnist and author, and First Amendment advocate. We have published several of her pieces in The Indicter Magazine, where she is a valuable, and one of the most prolific contributors.

She is also since November 2016 a member of the Editorial Board of *The Indicter*. [4]

Dr Nozomi Hayase’s writings have been published further in a variety of outlets such as Counterpunch, CommonDreams, Dissident Voice, Truthout, Global Research and Antiwar.com, etc.

I am now honoured of being the publisher of her eminent work at Libertarian Books – Sweden.

Professor Emeritus Marcello Ferrada de Noli, PhD  
CEO, Libertarian Books – Sweden

Bergamo, Italy, January 2018.

[1] Assange J, Appelbaum J, et al. “Cyberpunks. Freedom and the Future of the Internet”. OR books, 2012. ISBN 978-19399293-00-8.

[2] “Crackdown on RT, Sputnik in US Infringes on Right for Information - NGO Chair”. Sputnik News, 11 October 2017.  
<https://sputniknews.com/analysis/201711091058951648-crackdown-rt-sputnik-us-rights/>

[3] Norton B, Greenwald G, “Washington Post Disgracefully Promotes a McCarthyite Blacklist From a New, Hidden, and Very Shady Group”. The Intercept, 26 November 2016.  
<https://theintercept.com/2016/11/26/washington-post-disgracefully-promotes-a-mccarthyite-blacklist-from-a-new-hidden-and-very-shady-group/>

[4] *The Indicter Magazine*, theindicter.com

# Preface

## History Has Awakened

April 2010 was a typical spring day in San Francisco. The world I knew was about to change. The WikiLeaks publication of the “Collateral Murder” video became an international sensation. The cruel scenery in an Iraqi suburb viewed from a US military helicopter gunsight was laid bare for the whole world to see.

The uncensored face of modern war lifted the dark cloud of apathy in the post-9/11 world, opening a crack in public consciousness. The new vocabulary of transparency and government secrecy entered into everyday discourse. Along with it came the notion of “illegitimate governance.” At key moments in history, the right term captures a zeitgeist, guiding the world in a new direction. Illegitimate governance became one such term.

WikiLeaks, with its method of transparency, revealed a gap between ideals and reality and made it possible for people to have a more honest account of history. The meaning of a leak can be fully understood with the philosophical foundation of humanity as a species that lives in time and space. We are historical beings. We process information in a context that is built from the

past. Our interpretation of past events informs our actions, influencing the trajectory of the future.

For so long, our right to exist historically—to participate in a discourse of civilization—has been denied for so many. Democracy was a promise and aspiration to acknowledge that each person ought to participate in understanding historical events and that the consensus of ordinary people could guide the direction of society. Yet democracy has become an empty word, and people are relegated to being merely spectators. The system of representation has become a shield that conceals and guards elite interests. People have been kept in the dark. The perspective of the few, bypassing democratic consensus, has become accepted as an official narrative.

WikiLeaks brought an end to this dark age. Through releasing information that belongs to the public, the organization began bringing historical records back to civilization. In a sense, by opening archives, WikiLeaks freed people from a stolen history that repeats abuses of the past. Leaked documents allow us to look at past events anew and restore perspectives that were oppressed and pushed to the margins.

Released documents helped everyday people to participate in shaping the course of their own destiny. I was one of these ordinary people who witnessed this tidal shift of balance of power. I am one of countless others who were inspired, empowered, and whose life was changed by WikiLeaks.

This book is a collection of articles that I wrote from 2010 through 2017 about WikiLeaks. I tried to capture the effect of this organization, not just on journalism but also on the future of democracy and civilization at large.

I put the articles in chronological order with publication date to document the historical unfolding. I kept the text to maintain authenticity, except with minor editing for readability and orientation in time, including shortening some of the articles.

Only through entering into the present, with our uncompromising power of imagination, can we change the course of history. WikiLeaks is a media for all people. It invites everyone to join the front lines of history that is happening. It is my hope that this chronicle can contribute to narratives of this pivotal time in history when the birth of this global Fourth Estate changed the world forever.

# The Rise of New Journalism

AUGUST 21, 2010

In the spring of 2010, the unknown whistleblowing website was thrust onto the world stage with the release of a cockpit video from a 2007 Apache gunship attack in Baghdad. WikiLeaks called this sensational video “Collateral Murder.”<sup>1</sup> It opened with a quote from George Orwell’s *1984* and depicted the US military gunning down Iraqi civilians and Reuters reporters on a street in Baghdad.

As the controversy over the video boiled over, attention was directed at WikiLeaks, with the US security establishment coming out with rhetorical guns blazing, trying to shoot the messenger and avert attention from the message itself.

WikiLeaks brought polarizing reactions. Despite the establishment’s efforts to paint the organization in a negative light, many saw WikiLeaks as a positive development toward transparency and accountability of those in power. On one hand, the organization became an instant hero as a champion of open government. On the other, some perceived these leaks as a threat to the national security state and that WikiLeaks’ releases of

war documents were putting lives in danger.

The primary criticism has come mostly from US government leaders and from Americans, who are insulated by the mainstream corporate media. WikiLeaks' editing of the video, and especially the naming of it, became a center of scrutiny. Some viewed it as a slant put out to manipulate the public.

### **Collateral damage vs. collateral murder**

One might recall Julian Assange's interview on Comedy Central's *Colbert Report* back in 2010 where Colbert challenged Assange in a sarcastic tone on the framing of the "Collateral Murder" video.<sup>2</sup> Colbert, playing the role of a stereotypical right-wing character, said, "You have given it a title called 'Collateral Murder.' That's not leaking, that's a pure editorial." To which Assange responded, "The promise that we make to our sources is that . . . we will attempt to get the maximum political impact for the materials they give to us." Colbert continued, "That way you have manipulated the audience into the emotional state you want before something goes on the air. That is an emotional manipulation. . . ." Then, tongue-in-cheek, he said, "That's journalism I can get behind." Colbert's satire was taken as real by some, and for them WikiLeaks' action seemed to be intentional manipulation. Was the editing and naming of the video an act of deception?

The term "collateral murder" had a strong effect, triggering shock in some people. When one carefully

examines people's reactions not only to the video but also to the way it was edited, a lot can be revealed about their position and perspective in the matter. In the article "Manning & WikiLeaks Are True Patriots by Definition," Dallas GoldBug examined a controversial question related to the ethics of whistleblowers—namely, whether they should be prosecuted for their actions or not. He said, "The answer to this would perceivably be different depending on what side of the pond you call home."<sup>3</sup> This home is one's foundational framework through which one perceives the world and is something that one is often not aware of.

This titling by WikiLeaks broke down the habitual patterns of viewing reality. Many of us were used to hearing the term "collateral damage." This is a commonly accepted euphemism coined by the military that refers to innocent civilians being injured or killed. This word reveals a certain perspective. The USAF (United States Air Force) Intelligence Targeting Guide defines the term as the "unintentional or incidental damage affecting facilities, equipment or personnel, occurring as a result of military actions directed against targeted enemy forces or facilities. Such damage can occur to friendly, neutral, and even enemy forces."<sup>4</sup> Yet its most common usage is to refer to deaths and injuries of civilians that were not intentionally targeted or actually involved in war.

For most people, were they to come across innocent

people being killed, they would likely see the obvious human misery as somehow unacceptable. On the other hand, for those embedded with the home perspective of the military, the death of civilians simply becomes unavoidable “damage.” The question arises, if the situation was reversed and an invading foreign army came to the US, killing their own family members, would they still use the euphemism “collateral damage” to describe their family’s death?

## **Managed democracy**

People’s reactions to the title revealed their orientation. The sensational words that accompanied uncensored images challenged their unexamined, preconceived assumptions that too often cloud the lens of perception. WikiLeaks brought a new opening of knowledge. Perhaps this emotionally charged criticism toward the organization was a kind of defense, an attempt to maintain a worldview that is now experienced as being under attack. How did this stagnation of perspective occur?

The answer to the question has to do largely with the failure of the Fourth Estate. Journalism’s vital role in a democratic society is acknowledged in the US Constitution, as this is the only profession protected by it. The idea behind it is that in a representative government, it is crucial for citizens to be informed about the actions of elected officials in order to hold them accountable. For this mechanism to function,

independent investigation and reporting on potential abuse of power is necessary.

Yet history has shown that the press has often not lived up to its ideal, and moreover it has become just another arm of government. Instead of striving to carry its intended role as a watchdog on the powerful, modern journalism and mass media have been turned into an instrument used by the rich and powerful to shape the perception of reality. In fact, if we look more closely, this apparent failure of the press was not a failure but was intended by design to fit a particular conception of democracy.

Sigmund Freud's nephew Edward Bernays articulated the system of democracy implemented in the US. Bernays believed that "the conscious and intelligent manipulation of the organized habits and opinions of the masses is an important element in democratic society."<sup>5</sup> For him, democracy has to be controlled, and he found a way to effectively govern the masses by studying his uncle Sigmund's psychoanalysis and gaining insight into the power of the unconscious. He saw how unconscious drives could be channeled to make people perceive things in certain ways and then manipulate them to engineer consent.

## **Advent of an apathetic populace**

The press's secret control and perception management robs power from ordinary people and fosters blind acceptance of an official script. Corporate media in the

US has long collaborated in normalizing wars and violence. If a culture centers around glorifying perpetual war and is based on hiding the reality of the war from the public, it becomes an accepted part of life and is rarely questioned.

Once a dominant view takes root, it tends to hold sway. Ideas that challenge this dominant view are often simply dismissed and filtered out from perception. Even after witnessing or partaking in a horrible injustice, one may go back to daily life as if nothing happened and nothing needs to be changed.

For each individual to overcome this fixed view, a catalyzing event must occur. Then different perspectives can enter that shake up and call into question the validity of the one-sided embedded point of view. When the Fourth Estate fails, an apathetic populace emerges. The question then arises, How can one transform the apathy and cynicism that currently prevails in the public?

The journalist has a special role to play in changing the direction of the trend toward unquestioned conformity. The first important step for journalists is to get the facts as accurately as possible and understand what is really happening, independently from the perspective of the system they are investigating. Once journalists gain facts, then the question becomes how to open perception and engage the public in dialogue for interpreting the events. Perhaps an answer for this can be found in an

unusual venue—art.

## **Participatory knowledge**

What is a purpose of art? One of the important aspects of art is how it engages people in the activity of perception. In a sense, all artistic work is a performing art. It is an act of performing, of *forming perception*. In the mainstream media's top-down distribution of information, the stage of public perception is carefully controlled by the state and expert authorities. Art, on the other hand, opens a crack in fixed perceptions and allows one to see uncensored views of events and interpret them freely.

Artists imagine and bring new ideas to invite people to see what they see and feel what they feel. In a way, this opening of perception allows people to recover perspectives that have been oppressed and to remember what has been forgotten. Assange indicated that the purpose of the release of “Collateral Murder” was to show the world what modern warfare actually looks like and that “his mission is to expose injustice, not to provide an even-handed record of events.”<sup>6</sup> WikiLeaks’ political slant in their edit effectively put forward perspectives that are pushed to the margins. Assange described how WikiLeaks wanted “to knock out this ‘collateral damage’ euphemism, so when anyone uses it they will think ‘collateral murder.’”<sup>7</sup> The video momentarily dissolved manufactured perception that had become the norm through this mainstream

monopoly of information.

So what differentiates manipulation of perception from art? The difference lies in the latter's transparency. Artists reveal to the audience the intent of their performance and messages they wish to convey. Out of this disclosure, the artist has the audience's consent to engage creatively with the work and call for its participation. On the other hand, lack of disclosure of motives and intentions does not invite the public to be engaged dialogically; therefore, deception can occur, whether one intentionally tries to do this or not.

### **Political slant as artistic license**

As a publisher, WikiLeaks, like any other media outlet, will impact public perception and interfere with the process of forming opinion. Yet what makes WikiLeaks unique and sets it apart from conventional journalism is its method of transparency. WikiLeaks always releases the source material and if the material was edited, provides up-front disclosure of any slant or intention. Assange made it clear that it is not enough to release the raw documents. He noted how source material needs at least a summary for journalists to pick it up. He stated the need for some journalistic work by WikiLeaks. While doing this, they would publish the whole archive, just like scientific papers that include the data available that led to the conclusion.

Publishing all source material and stating one's bias and affiliations makes journalism honest. This situates the

event on an agreed-upon objective physicality. “Because Assange publishes the full source material, he believes that WikiLeaks is free to offer its analysis, no matter how speculative.”<sup>8</sup> Only when this scientific approach is taken does a space open up for real editorial freedom. This freedom allows one to incorporate aspects of the subjective field, such as opinions and value judgments, which are often considered taboo in modern journalism.

Instead of pretending to be neutral and bias-free, honest disclosure of motives allows journalists to connect with their convictions. What guides this new journalism is their untamed passion for justice. The release of the “Collateral Murder” video was a good example. In Assange’s words, it needed to be communicated in a manner that could bring maximum political impact. Thus the creative approach to the title, “Collateral Murder.” It was intended to replace the military-created euphemism of collateral damage, which up to this point implicitly excused the war crime of killing civilians.

In the Manning-Lamo Chat Logs, then alleged whistleblower Bradley Manning wrote:

i cant separate myself from others . . . i feel connected to everybody . . . like they were distant family . . . i . . . care? . . . we’re human . . . and we’re killing ourselves . . . and no-one seems to see that . . . and it bothers me . . . i want people to see the truth . . . regardless of who they are . . . because without information, you cannot make informed decisions as a public . . .<sup>9</sup>

Manning wanted us to remember connection with humanity as a distanced family. By publishing the photo of the two Reuters news employees, Saeed Chamagh and Namir Noor-Eldeen in the “Collateral Murder” video, WikiLeaks remained true to the wishes of the source: to help the world see that those who have been portrayed as enemies are actually human.

Indeed, this was so effective that WikiLeaks’ site crashed from the traffic overload and the video gained massive attention from the public. The film *Incident in New Baghdad* was nominated for an Oscar, and the “collateral damage” euphemism that was used so much after 9/11 seems to have quietly fallen out of favor.<sup>10</sup> In addition, many have credited seeing “Collateral Murder” as turning them actively against the wars.

When this conscious editorializing and the motives behind it are disclosed, the perceived political slant actually falls under a kind of artistic license. Assange was honest about this slant and at the same time, the organization released the full video for public examination. Contrary to the criticism that “Collateral Murder” was an act of manipulation, it can be seen as a unique example of creative rendering, meant to break down the Orwellian framing of casual slaughter in the public mind and awaken the sense of humanity that has been numbed by this euphemism.

Transparency is an invitation for a certain equality in relationship, while the lack of it exploits the relationship

for one-sided purposes. Transparency of the artistic act respects the audience as co-creators of historical discourse. It leaves everyone in freedom in their engagement with unfolding perception. On the contrary, propaganda can bypass active engagement and critical examination to then garner uninformed consent from the public.

We are now seeing a rise of new journalism. By combining rigorous scientific fact gathering and art, WikiLeaks helps create active citizens empowered by knowledge and infused with passion, making it possible for each to move from the position of passive spectator to active participant in the world as an agent of history.

# Freedom of Speech in the Age of WikiLeaks

JULY 17, 2017

A tidal shift in the way people communicate is occurring around the world. With social media, blogs, and YouTube channels, more people are turning away from traditional sources of information. Along with the wide spread of the Internet, WikiLeaks has changed the landscape of the media with its release of secret government documents.

There is much controversy over the future of journalism. The discourse surrounding WikiLeaks in its relation to established media has become the eye of the storm. Both the *New York Times* and the *Guardian* came out strongly critical of WikiLeaks and Julian Assange. Bill Keller, executive editor of the *New York Times*, refused to refer to Assange as a journalist.

Keller initially described Assange as an activist with an agenda to promote an ideology of transparency and claimed that his aim was to embarrass the US government. Later, Keller's view on this topic shifted a bit. He came close to admitting WikiLeaks is a journalistic entity. Yet he distanced himself from the

nonprofit whistleblower site. He noted, “It still wasn’t ‘my kind of news organization,’ and if Assange was acting as a journalist, ‘I don’t regard him as a kindred spirit—he’s not the kind of journalist I am.’”<sup>1</sup>

There are various possible motives at work here. American mainstream media’s lack of support and even hostility toward WikiLeaks could indicate simple jealousy of the organization’s accomplishments and also may come from sensing a threat to the media’s familiar way of practicing journalism. Yet the debate surrounding WikiLeaks’ status as a journalistic organization brings out a larger issue; specifically, the question of whether or not First Amendment protections cover unauthorized releases of sensitive government documents. This urges us to reexamine the definition of freedom of speech and the press.

## **Meaning of the First Amendment**

In his article “WikiLeaks, The First Amendment, and the Press,” attorney Jonathon Peters wrote, “The First Amendment does not belong to the press. It protects the expressive rights of all speakers, sometimes on the basis of the Speech Clause and sometimes on the basis of the Press Clause.”<sup>2</sup>

In a representative democracy, it is vital for citizens to be informed of the actions of their government and to secure the right to freely speak their mind. Democracy is different from a monarchy, where the authority comes from a king or queen. The First Amendment was meant

to bring a new balance of power between citizens and the government, particularly as a check on the executive branch. It gives ordinary people the power to challenge the gap in power between those who are in a position of authority and those who are said to be governed. Elected officials are meant to serve the best interests of the general populace. It is therefore both a right and also a responsibility in a democracy for individuals to perform the function of watchdog against abuse of power. The First Amendment as a whole is meant to safeguard that role, to encourage communication between citizens and governments to move toward dialogue rather than monologue.

Peters brought out a question unique to the case of WikiLeaks:

To argue that the First Amendment would protect Assange and WikiLeaks only if they are part of the press is to assume (1) that the Speech Clause would not protect them, and (2) that there is a major difference between the Speech and Press Clauses.<sup>3</sup>

Journalists share the right of free speech with ordinary people, as they themselves are citizens. In its early form, the press was simply a collective effort of individuals, aided by the technology of the printing press, that gave power to multiply and distribute information faster and more effectively than any one individual could do alone. Though journalism is the only occupation explicitly protected by the US Constitution, journalists' freedom to

print was there to serve the citizen's right to know and was not meant to take precedence over the citizens' right to speak.

Yet what has been happening in the media is a deviation from this constitutional right, facilitated through monopolization of media outlets and the professionalization of journalism. This was revealed in the established media's dealings with WikiLeaks. At the national conference for media reform in Boston, one of the panelists, Greg Mitchell, writer for the *Nation* magazine, described how the established media function as a gatekeeper that decides what to withhold and what to cover. They decide what the public should know according to that media organization's relationship to those in power.<sup>4</sup>

## **Colonization of the cultural sphere**

How did journalism come into this role as arbiter of truth? Despite their claim of impartiality, the media's so-called unbiased reporting is filled with private agendas. Constitutional scholar and blogger Glenn Greenwald pointed out that some American journalists identified themselves as a part of political power.<sup>5</sup> Executive editors like Keller went to great lengths to show that he is proud of the fact that he always turns to the US administration for permission for what the *Times* should or should not publish.

The consequence of this creation of professional

authority was that it created passivity in the populace. With the rise of the expert class in mass communication, a gap is created between professionals and laymen. Ordinary people were discouraged to think for themselves, and they began to distrust their own intuition and ways of knowing.

Instead of expanding the First Amendment right for all people, the institutionalized media appears to have been doing the opposite. Their censoring of particular political points of view is indeed a fundamental assault on free speech and amounts to a colonization of the cultural space that hinges upon citizens' ability to interact and express their thoughts and ideas freely.

### **Lost meaning of free speech**

In today's mass media, the deep understanding of freedom of speech is often lost. The commonly held view is that freedom of speech is simply the right for people to speak without interference. One underlying principle for this idea is the notion of individuality. Interpreted from the Western framework of the idea of enlightenment, focus is often given to individual expression.

Free speech as self-expression is a vital first step of any healthy communication. Yet man does not exist in isolation. What is often not looked at is speech from the paradigm of the interdependent self. The meaning of speech is found in a communal ground because humans are inherently social beings, and speech is only useful when there is common interest and active listening. The

capacity for dialogue where both parties are given space to freely express themselves with interest in the other is essential. True speech is founded in listening. It requires recognition of the other as an independent being. When one truly speaks, the act is based on the speaker's listening into where the listener of their speech is coming from.

This vital connection between the acts of speaking and listening is not often given its due. In modern days, speaking as an avenue toward one's own personal gain is emphasized. Speech that is not grounded in listening becomes indulging self-talk or an animal roaring without higher meaning. Under the umbrella of professionalism, the mainstream media devalue or exclude the voices of citizens from participating in democratic action. By doing so, the media stifle free speech. Established media have not been listening to the public. This disrespect for citizens is seen in the act of engaging the public in tabloid drivel, relegating news reporting into trivial gossip. What could be a conversation easily becomes a monologue, with information that is fed from top down.

## **Liberation of the civic arena**

By not engaging in active listening and by serving the moneyed elites, many established journalists end up actually working against the true meaning of the First Amendment. In an interview with *Al Jazeera*, Assange described how he was surprised by the lack of public response after the release of two war logs. In a *Guernica*

magazine article, Assange posed an urgent question: What does it mean when only those facts about the world with economic powers behind them can be heard, when the truth lays naked before the world and no one will be the first to speak without payment or subsidy? WikiLeaks' unreported material is only the most visible wave on a black ocean of truth in draws of the fourth estate, waiting for a lobby to subsidize its revelation into a profitable endeavor.<sup>6</sup>

When journalists act as professionals who are more driven by financial incentives, they trade in communal and civic values for commercial and corporate values. As they become sentinels for the status quo, the public space is privatized or left in a vacuum. There are a few excellent journalists, yet many who have professional skills often become obedient, taking orders from authority. The failure of the Fourth Estate brings decay of the cultural sphere and the absence of a public that holds policymakers accountable.

Systems of power will not change from the top but only when demand for that change comes from the bottom, through the actions of ordinary people. Before journalists perform their duty of informing the public, they must first be reminded of their roots as citizens that share communal values. What needs to be done first is the enlivening of the civic space, for each person to restore the lost union of speaking and listening.

## **Democratic dialogue**

WikiLeaks' courageous act facilitated resuscitation of free speech, revitalizing the cultural sphere. "I feel that is the job of any good writer or filmmaker or artist of any sort to look at the thing that no one else wants to look at, to hold up the truths that most of society would rather deny, and to say, 'This is who we are,'" said filmmaker James Spione.<sup>7</sup> He lent his talent to bring life to the scene captured in WikiLeaks' "Collateral Murder" video in the documentary *Incident in New Baghdad*.

"Art becomes a political act, a conscious effort to facilitate and participate in social change," said artist Dekade Z, who assisted with the birth of Juice Rap News.<sup>8</sup> With its combination of rap and moving imagery, this news frequency stepped forward to deepen the Fourth Estate: "We lost TV to Murdoch, the press to the sharks. This Internet is our last channel to connect to the mark. No rhetorical questions at last: If we lose this frequency we will be left in the dark."<sup>9</sup> The creative duo of Hugo Farrant and Giordano Nanni calls for audience participation in history as it is happening.

WikiLeaks inspired people to take part in empowerment of citizen journalism. WL (WikiLeaks) Central, with its telos of "WikiLeaks news, analysis, and action" responded to the call to fill the vacuum in journalism. Sites such as these, along with transnational social networking, counter the propaganda of corporate media that relies on public ignorance and apathy. Citizens

around the world step up to take up the slack of mainstream journalism, crowdsourcing to circulate the latest news and inform people what is really happening around the world. The loosely tied online collective Anonymous has also emerged around the globe to demand the voices of citizens to be heard and illegitimate power challenged.

For too long, establishment media have treated people as ignorant masses who passively receive information and become deaf to their community. When people are so long excluded from any true democratic process and made to feel powerless, they eventually forget how to think and speak for themselves. While the State smothers speech, WikiLeaks listens. It is their genuine listening that frees speech, making ordinary people feel that they themselves matter. Those who feel listened to start to trust their own thoughts and find words that are informed by their own experience.

WikiLeaks opened the age of freedom of speech. In this new era, freedom of speech is not a professional privilege, nor should it apply only to a particular nation or group of people. It becomes a right and responsibility that can now be exercised by people around the world.

# 3

## The Effect of WikiLeaks in the Stadium of Democracy

SEPTEMBER 1, 2011

Americans love sports. They love watching football and baseball games. I live in the San Francisco Bay Area and depend on the Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) rail transit system almost everywhere I go. Even though I have no interest in sports and don't know much about them, I know when the games are on, as I experience immediate changes in the familiar scenery of my commute.

Whenever there is a game, the station is transformed into a kind of zoo, or maybe a shopping mall. The train is packed with people wearing uniforms and San Francisco Giants hats. The people are filled with excitement, finding kindred spirits and sharing cheers for their team. I must say this is a rare time for me to see this kind of passion in American people. Other than at sporting events, people are rather subdued. Most Americans I know don't seem to pay too much attention to what is happening in Washington. With massive bailouts going to Wall Street and harsh budget cuts, many don't seem to care or even know how those policies impact their lives.

American people have passion. I see it. They get up off their couch to go watch the game and support their team. I wondered what would happen if this zest that I see was directed into the civic arena. What would be possible if all those people that jammed the train go out onto the street and express grievances toward the actions of their government?

Perhaps something might change. Grumbling of the masses on the street could break down the elitist walls of Capitol Hill and force Congress and the president to finally hear the voices of the people. I cannot foresee the future and I have yet to see this passion for sports be translated to civic action, to demand fundamental system change. Yet I must admit there was one time I saw excitement toward politics get closer to matching the rabid sports fever.

With the chants of “hope and change” and flags of “yes we can,” something similar to American’s love for sports was called forth during the 2008 presidential election. It was as if the whole country was transformed into a football stadium, with people waving red or blue flags, cheering their favorite quarterback.

US presidential candidates are like football players, with powerful and fashionable uniforms designed by Nike, Exxon, Starbucks, and Monsanto, dressed up by millions in campaign donations from the moneyed elite as the candidates enter the stadium. The name of the game is “American Democracy,” where each party puts on a show

to prove how strong and fast they are to score points and win the game.

But nothing seems to change when the government playoff win goes to a different team. People are simply watching the game and never actually participate in it. Indeed, the stadium is closed and the game appears somewhat rigged. Behind the gate, we are given the role to cheer and watch. It is not a fair game and really like a show between the two parties, as no other colors are allowed to play, despite the fact that participation by other parties would not technically be breaking the official rules by entering the electoral stadium.

The whole logic behind this exclusion from the game is the idea of “representative democracy.” One has to be qualified to be “chosen” to represent people. The message to the public is simply this: “You are not capable enough, so we will play for you.”

But the truth is, those players do not represent people. The game is a kind of show business sponsored by corporations. What the taxpayers got were wars for oil and profit during the Bush administration and the largest transfer of wealth ever from the poor to Wall Street and banks under the current Obama presidency, along with even more wars.

After being exiled from the field, the domesticated masses obediently watch the game and wave flags. Most people never dare to think of actually participating in the game or calling the whole arrangement into question.

Anyone that doesn't toe the line is dismissed as a pariah or "spoiler"—like Ralph Nader. Or they are called irrelevant like Ron Paul or too naive like some idealistic kid.

In the middle of 2010, the audience madly cheered for "hope and change." Soon the euphoria wore off and many were feeling betrayed by that new quarterback that had promised to tackle and fight for them. Then something happened.

A little-known organization called WikiLeaks suddenly emerged in the stadium and grabbed the teams' and the audience's attention. The WikiLeaks founder, a mysterious white-haired dude, managed to enter the field and interrupt the game. He is no Goldman Sachs, no Obama-like charismatic politician, no Uncle Tom for the Ivy League elite. He was not a powerful, manufactured celebrity groomed for consumption.

But this happened before our very eyes. He got hold of the ball and ran in a totally different direction. The "Collateral Murder" video showed what modern war really looks like on the ground. People worldwide began to see a new horizon; the goal was justice and to reveal the true enemy that stands in the way of this goal.

The real awakening with WikiLeaks was that ordinary people could now enter the stadium of the media and politics and even change the game. Many simply realized that the gate to the field was broken down with transparency. They saw the goal on the citizen side wide

open. No one had been protecting it and corporations had the open field.

Julian Assange threw the ball in the air. Now the ball passed to the midfield. Security guards for the apologists for power such as US officials, the *New York Times*, and the *Guardian* were trying to tackle him and push him out.

Attempts to prosecute and silence WikiLeaks have continued. Assange was under house arrest in London without charges. Alleged whistleblower Bradley Manning had been in jail without trial, as if those who control the game were trying to intimidate the audience. There is clear desperation in the attempts to hide the fact that the gate is now open. The message was “Look at what happened to those who dare to enter the field; be careful or you will be next.”

But it seems the rules of the game have changed. No matter how the establishment tries to put on a facade of control by attacking those who are now in the stadium, the gate is already open. More people are finding their way into the public arena.

Assange gave a message in his special video address at the 2011 Splendour in the Grass festival:

This generation is burning the mass media to the ground. We’re reclaiming our rights to own history. We are ripping open secret archives from Washington to Cairo. We are reclaiming our rights to share ourselves and our times with each other, to be the agents and

writers of our own history. We don't know yet exactly where we are but we can see where we're going.<sup>1</sup>

The online collective Anonymous and its affiliates were catching the ball that was still in the air. These actions changed the rules of the game. In spite of this, many people are still behind the gates like sheep eating grass on a familiar, comfortable pasture, not realizing that the cage is open and they are free to move. Others feel the excitement of this newly acquired freedom and wonder what to do from here.

WikiLeaks invited all who have been feeling shut out from democracy into the stadium. They revealed the real game that is yet to be played, the battle for Democracy between mega-corporations and united citizens around the world.

The economic and political events seemed to be saying outwardly that justice is losing and greed is winning. Is it too late? It's too early to say. WikiLeaks released material, pushing the ball across the centerline. We need to move it further forward. First, those who are willing to do the research and journalistic work need to do the heavy lifting of the material to tell the stories. Then lawyers and those who are driven by justice need to dig into the evidence of crimes and create a case. All the while, artists around the world sing and speak freely to enliven the cultural sphere, cultivating compassion that makes it possible for us to share the suffering of the

world. Together, all this can bring justice into the court of public opinion.

“We have it in our power to begin the world over again,” said Thomas Paine.

With social media networks like Twitter, citizens around the globe now can pass the ball of justice and collaboratively move toward a shared goal. The world has already changed. This force to build a true democracy cannot be stopped.

# 4

## Redefining Power

DECEMBER 28, 2011

Over the last century, the New York Stock Exchange has represented much of the country's wealth and political power. In mid-September 2011, Occupy Wall Street began in downtown Manhattan. The Financial District was flooded by those who were enraged by corporate corruption and broken dreams. Here were people from all walks of life, foreclosed on and unemployed, students with debts and those who struggle with a pay-or-die medical system.

The movement struck a chord with the rank and file of America, as it quickly spread nationwide. People began to acknowledge that Occupy was the biggest social movement since the antiwar and civil rights protests. This popular uprising was surely built on past struggles and traditions of activism, yet there was something unique now that was not present in previous movements. How is this different than the civil rights movement or even the more recent protests against the WTO and G20?

Many recognize the role of the Internet in recent revolutions around the world. Although social media and online connections have had significant impact on the

birth of the Arab Spring and the Occupy movement, there was something else that set them apart from all that came before. By tracing the impulse behind Occupy back to the release of the US Army helicopter gunship “Collateral Murder” video, Phillip Dorling pointed out how the movement is based on the work of WikiLeaks:

What is not well known, and has gone unreported, is the key role that WikiLeaks supporters have played in igniting the surge of internet-based activism that has so far resulted in protests in reportedly more than 1,000 cities in 82 countries.<sup>1</sup>

There is no doubt that the rise of WikiLeaks, the world’s first stateless media organization, triggered deep political changes on a global scale. November 28, 2011, marked the first anniversary of the WikiLeaks Cablegate release. The US embassy cables revealed deep-seated corruption and the illegitimacy of many Middle Eastern dictatorships.<sup>2</sup> In reflecting on the past year, Amnesty International noted the role of the leaked documents in triggering these revolutions:

The year 2010 may well be remembered as a watershed year when activists and journalists used new technology to speak truth to power and, in so doing, pushed for greater respect for human rights.<sup>3</sup>

The information provided by WikiLeaks that spread through social media confirmed people’s suspicions. This facilitated transformation of pervasive defeatism and despair into collective action in the streets. And further,

in the shrinking global world connected by the Internet, the defiance of people became contagious.

From the Middle East, Spain, Greece, and the London riots to the Occupy movement, we saw waves of action for self-determination reaching the West.<sup>4</sup> After the rise of WikiLeaks, the social and political climate has fundamentally changed. What is different in this WikiLeaks era? Beneath the surface of events, a new way of thinking is emerging and changing how people relate to one another.

### **Power shifts and horizontal alliance**

There are similarities between the Occupy movement and struggles in the past. One common thread is that they all started as resistance, opposing injustice. For instance, the civil rights movement was waged against the racist application of law that denied basic human rights for blacks. The Battle of Seattle tried to stop the undemocratic and exploitative economic structures of the WTO. The Occupy movement also expressed deep distrust and anger regarding inequality and the transnational corporations' rampant looting of the populace. Yet there was something else unfolding.

There was an undeniable shift in power dynamics. Resistance is a condition that assumes a lack of power. Now people are no longer simply resisting. During a general assembly at Occupy Oakland, a man spoke of how there is a difference between revolution and reform. He said that the Occupy movement is clearly calling for

revolution. While social movements in the past involved people making demands of their leaders, this one was bypassing said “leaders.”

What made the Occupy movement different is this change in perception about the basic illegitimacy of current government and the sense of individuals’ capacity to give direction to their own lives. Occupiers were not just sitting and waiting for politicians to deliver change. They refused to engage in rigged political games and were no longer interested in negotiating with politicians, as they become more aware of the fact that the system is beyond repair.

The Occupy movement, using direct online connections and working with the principle of mutual aid, created a horizontal organizing that mirrors decentralized networks that have grown around WikiLeaks. 2011 was the year Anonymous came to the forefront. Signified with Guy Fawkes masks, this loosely tied online collective embodied shared morals and ideals that transcend race, color, and nationality.<sup>5</sup> Just like WikiLeaks, Anonymous moves beyond borders and is committed to the free flow of information and free speech for all people around the world.

In a similar way as websites and online chat rooms, the Occupy movement spread around the world. When one is taken down, a new one pops up. These simultaneous actions created a transitional alliance, with each mutually supporting one another. After the police

brutality in Occupy Oakland, New York Occupy Wall Street General Assembly pledged to send money and tents,<sup>6</sup> while Egyptians in Cairo marched in solidarity. People around the globe watched the livestream of the police raids and eviction of Zuccotti Park and began to glimpse how the legitimacy of Western democracy was beginning to crumble.<sup>7</sup>

## **Revolution in WikiLeaks era**

So how did WikiLeaks contribute to this power shift? This organization is based on the conviction that when corruption of those in power is exposed to the public, there is potential for great change. Leaks driven by the conscience of whistleblowers can become a kind of explosive compassion that opens systems that have been closed and contaminated with corruption and apathy. In the past, governments and corporations could hide their actions behind smooth rhetoric and propaganda. Now citizens equipped with cell phones and cameras surround those who oppress, and then leak or share the footage immediately to the world to witness.

What happens when the facade of legitimacy begins to fall? People recognize that the real source of power is actually within themselves and they start to find their own moral authority. This is what we were witnessing with the Occupy movement and popular uprisings around the world.

Months before the spark of the Occupy Movement was lit, WikiLeaks tweeted:

It is clear that the rule of law is breaking down all over the West. Many are now held for days or years without charge.<sup>8</sup> As such we can drop any pretense of legitimate governance. It is just one wretched, scheming network of patronage and power.<sup>9</sup> It is not reformable, although it might be destroyable. We must create our own networks of trust and authority and live within them.<sup>10</sup>

Rather than passive resistance, people who were engaged in these Occupy camps around the world were asserting their power, bringing the rule of law back into society. Individuals coming together were attempting to create a new social order from the bottom up. One example of this coalescing power was seen in Internet memes. After the repellent UC Davis pepper spray incident, photoshopped images of campus officer Lt. John Pike pepper-spraying the students became a fast-spreading Internet meme.<sup>11</sup> From pepper-spraying the *Last Supper* to the signers of the Declaration of Independence, he was all over history and the Internet.

The power of lulz was crowd-sourced, creating creative shields against oppressive forces. Mic check, a technique of speaking that allows a large group to hold an assembly without an amplifier, became a new check and balance on power. The old authorities were going on trial in this newly emerging court of public opinion. Anyone can get tickets for public speaking events. People are no longer relegated to just being a passive audience. They can participate and have their own voices heard through mic

checking wherever necessary.

Occupy protesters in Washington, DC took over a meeting at the Chamber of Commerce to disrupt a speech by BlueCross BlueShield CEO Scott Serota.<sup>12</sup> Students at Princeton also used this method to challenge JPMorgan Chase.<sup>13</sup> Karl Rove also got mic checked<sup>14</sup> as did President Obama.<sup>15</sup> In Melbourne people mic checked the mayor: “We occupy because another world is possible.”<sup>17</sup>

Revolution in the WikiLeaks era shakes up the indoctrinated idea that people don’t have the power to create their own society. The illegitimacy of the current interlocking regimes of corporate corruption is now undeniable as we awaken to the simple truth that the only power that governments and institutions have is that which we grant to them.

This realization of personal power redefines the conventional idea of power. It does not mean to exploit or dominate. It is not to have power over others but is the ability to connect and collaborate with fellow citizens, to create totally new communities that reflect our shared values. This newly gained power cannot come from the top but streams from each individual being inspired and choosing to act freely.

“Courage is contagious.” The WikiLeaks motto that at first may have appeared naively idealistic now seems auspicious and prophetic. WikiLeaks has inspired hearts frozen by apathy and fear. Who would have expected

how fast it would spread? We don't know exactly where this courage is taking us. But we know one thing for sure. Collective creative power sees no borders. We live in exciting and historic times when forgotten virtues of humanity once again occupy the heart. When we allow what moves within to guide our actions, we open the door to a new society where not a few, but all can participate in power.

# 5

## Revolutionary Journalism in a Time of Universal Deceit

FEBRUARY 18, 2012

The emergence of WikiLeaks in the global media landscape has thrown the organization into the center of a massive storm of controversy. On one hand, WikiLeaks and its founder, Julian Assange, have widespread global support and have won numerous journalism awards.<sup>1</sup> On the other, the US government portrayed them as a criminal entity, trying to strip the organization from press protection guaranteed by the First Amendment. Some top US officials called Assange a “high-tech terrorist”<sup>2</sup> and said he should be prosecuted under the Espionage Act of 1917.<sup>3</sup>

With such inflamed rhetoric, many in the mainstream media negatively framed the narrative of this new journalistic entity and tried to distance themselves from it. By doing so, they attempted to deflect perception of WikiLeaks from the appearance of legitimacy associated with the word “journalism.” One tactic used was sensational personal attacks, with classic character assassination of Assange to distract the public from asking questions about the real actions of WikiLeaks.

The other was sophisticated intellectual persuasion, where the corporate media criticized the organization, particularly questioning its journalistic status.

Among others, Bill Keller of the *New York Times* strongly disapproved of calling Assange a journalist.<sup>4</sup> This established news outlet tried to treat WikiLeaks as a source and not a partner.<sup>5</sup> The establishment attempted to discount WikiLeaks by deciding to exclude its representatives from the UNESCO (Untied Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) international conference that was meeting to discuss the future of media after WikiLeaks came to public prominence.<sup>6</sup>

While the established media controls most of the discourse surrounding WikiLeaks, the question concerning its journalistic status is extremely important for the future of journalism and freedom of speech worldwide. It is true that in many ways, WikiLeaks appears different than the established corporate media. Yet what is it that really sets them apart from other news organizations?

There are obvious differences between WikiLeaks' approach and that of traditional journalism. When these differences are simply judged and framed from the dominant view, what is unique about this new stateless journalism is not revealed. To fully understand WikiLeaks as a phenomenon that redefines journalism, a new framework is required to engage in the question of

what journalism is.

## **The myth of the creed of objectivity**

What is really the basis behind the accusation that WikiLeaks is not a member of the press? WikiLeaks' apparent agenda and modus operandi were called into question as if they were violating some basic rules. First, we must look at common assumptions that are shared in this profession.

Journalism all across the board shares the notion of objectivity. Journalists' stance of neutrality can be traced back to the epistemology of physical science, which was extended into various branches of social science. The creed of objectivity promises unbiased reporting, and journalists under this professional code are expected to be neutral and objective. In fact, this creed appears to have become a doctrine. Those who step away from it are met with consequences. A recent example is how web designer Caitlin Curran was fired from her job with Public Radio International's *The Takeaway* on WNYC for participating in the Occupy Wall Street demonstration.<sup>7</sup>

Contrary to the convention of claiming journalistic objectivity, Assange admitted and disclosed his organization's agenda. He once made it clear: "We are an activist organization. The method is transparency. The goal is justice."<sup>8</sup> WikiLeaks stands behind this moral value with their actions, and one can see this in their history. For instance, Assange described how, by naming

the gunship video “Collateral Murder,” WikiLeaks wanted “to knock out this ‘collateral damage’ euphemism, so when anyone uses it they will think ‘collateral murder.’”<sup>9</sup> This explicitly confrontational attitude is contrary to the neutral position claimed by professional journalism’s creed of objectivity. Indeed, passion and conviction are what fuels the engine of WikiLeaks.

If Assange’s actions were to be examined under the generally accepted definition of journalism, his seeming audacious principle and ethical framework might be called into question as interference of his subjectivity in the process of framing and reporting the news. In this view, one could easily conclude that Assange is not a journalist, for he seems to violate this supposed golden rule of objectivity in journalism. Yet is this really true?

In one of his weekly columns in *Truthdig*, titled “The Creed of Objectivity Killed the News,” Chris Hedges brought up the potential hazard of the stance of objectivity:

This creed transforms reporters into neutral observers or voyeurs. It banishes empathy, passion and a quest for justice. Reporters are permitted to watch but not to feel or to speak in their own voices. They function as “professionals” and see themselves as dispassionate and disinterested social scientists.<sup>10</sup>

Before journalists become professionals, they are first citizens within society. The creed of objectivity

indoctrinates those who seek for a journalistic career. They are taught to distrust what dwells in the realm of subjectivity, such as moral values. They are trained to see passion in their work as unprofessional; allowing personal conviction to enter the process would cloud their “lens of objectivity.”

Individual success in the consolidated corporate media world depends on the ability to trade one’s own critical thinking with one of outer authority in exchange for access to power. British investigative journalist Robert Fisk spoke of how the media became a closed circle where only appointed journalists invited to press conferences by the White House are allowed to ask questions that are often preapproved by officials.<sup>11</sup> Many journalists kneel before this profession’s creed of objectivity as a kind of religious doctrine. This concocted frame preempts real questioning, or any efforts to challenge the agenda of people in power, whose actions they are reporting on.

So the question becomes more nuanced: At the expense of passion, can the creed of objectivity grant this promise of unbiased reporting? Or does it simply set up unspoken obeisance to a deeply entrenched system of power?

Just claiming objectivity does not magically eliminate subjectivity. Sociologist Gaye Tuchman has termed objectivity a “strategic ritual” that journalists use to turn facts into truth.<sup>12</sup> In fact, according to communications consultant James Moore, a reporter’s objectivity can

never be attained. Moore dismantled the creed of objectivity thus:

The craft of reporting has surrendered most of its sense of balance and fairness. Objectivity has never existed. Stories have always been framed for purpose and overdramatized because reporters want to lead a newscast or be above the fold on the front page... reporters cannot be objective because they are a product of their experiences. They cannot ignore their upbringing, socioeconomic status, circle of friends, personal self-interests, and the viability of the employers they serve.<sup>13</sup>

Reporting through these filters conjures hidden agendas into empirical facts in public perception, often bypassing critical examination. Ted Diadium, in the article “Should Journalists Never Be Activists?,” pointed out the possible hidden motivation behind the trend of separation of the news report and op-ed—that it was made to remove any appearance of “biases from reporting on political issues, drawing a solid line between news reports and opinion columns and protecting the paper’s credibility through strict ethical barriers.”<sup>14</sup> This practice helps to create a perception that reported news is grounded, objective, and legitimate.

Yet the mainstream media quite often shuns a critical issue if it appears to question corporate and government agendas. Outlets like CNN or the *New York Times* strive for control of either the content or the framing of an

issue. Constitutional attorney and author Glenn Greenwald shed light on one media blackout of investigative journalist Jeremy Scahill, noting how his revelation about the CIA's secret black site in Somalia was largely ignored by the establishment media.<sup>15</sup> He described how a few status quo journalists acted as a mouthpiece for the CIA and attempted to discredit Scahill's story.

Contrary to the profession's assertion, there is no such thing as true objectivity. The creed of objectivity is often simply a pretense to cloak private agendas and construct hyped sound bites that obscure some aspect of what is really happening. Investigative journalist John Pilger elegantly summed up the rule of engagement that binds corporate journalists: "Do your job as it should be done and you are traitors; do your job as we say you should and you are journalists."<sup>16</sup> Whether they know it or not, most journalists have become stenographers of power to defend a premanufactured perception or hidden agenda.

What is behind this false creed of objectivity? Its influence is invisible and subtle, yet for those who are willing to look deeper, it reveals a powerful force to govern and control public perception. This creed has become an unspoken law to define and confine journalists and what they might say. Media that serves authority in Washington is disguised as a professional class and perceived as a moral institution. In the article "The Dangerous Cult of the Guardian," Jonathan Cook

shed light on this blind faith in the established media, where readers accept content at face value.<sup>17</sup>

Mainstream media holds itself out as a moral authority, providing a lens through which to see and validate outer events and perspectives. Individuals that follow this governance are often discouraged from engaging in critical thinking. While conventional media holds firmly to this doctrine of objectivity as a professional standard, what is fueling the action of WikiLeaks is something considered taboo in conventional journalism. Could it be that it is not violating the rules but simply working under a different creed?

## **The creed of transparency**

When people talk about unbiased reporting, they fail to recognize that the framework in which reporting is done is itself not neutral. The truth of the matter is that, in the established paradigm, the vast majority of people are not granted an equal voice. Here, it is natural for the rich and powerful to dominate the discourse. Corporations increasingly control the airwaves and significantly influence what is offered as news. In this situation, how can fair reporting be achieved?

If the press were really to work for the people instead of moneyed interests, then in a sense they must strive for justice by bringing voices and perspectives that were pushed to the margins. John Pilger once asked Assange about his passion. He responded, “Our goal is justice. Our method is transparency.”<sup>18</sup> He emphasized the

importance of not mixing up the two.

On its website's "About" page, WikiLeaks described the philosophy behind the aim and method: "Publishing improves transparency, and this transparency creates a better society for all people. Better scrutiny leads to reduced corruption and stronger democracies in all society's institutions, including government, corporations and other organizations."<sup>19</sup>

How does this creed of transparency differ from the creed of objectivity? In the current climate of secrecy, transparency is largely talked about in the context of revealing concealed information. Yet transparency in general just implies openness and communication. It is an act of honest sharing. Transparency in this sense has two meanings. One is disclosure and sharing when transparency is brought forth voluntarily. Another is exposure of secrets when transparency is demanded from outside an inner circle. This forced transparency is what WikiLeaks does in holding powerful organizations accountable.

Voluntary transparency is what we used to have when things were more localized, before industrialization and corporate globalization. People used to be able to trust products in the stores in their neighborhood, as they knew the owner and farmers and they could interact with them. Nowadays, services and products have increasingly become abstracted, with corporations taking up many critical aspects of our lives and community. We

no longer know the owners and producers.

When people are distanced from each other and disconnected, it is harder for them to see the effects of their own actions. Real people have become faceless consumers—human relationship is no longer required. Commercial interests and profit motives have come to permeate all of society. With the rise of the advertisement industry, this veil of abstraction has caused people to become more susceptible to false representation, divorced from genuine relationship.

We are surrounded by cosmetic, artificial images. From outside, products can look beautiful and news stories can register as credible. Glorious pictures and beautiful or friendly models accompany the new antidepressant pill and blind one's eyes to the fine print of hidden side effects. Blood of innocent Iraqis is covered by patriotic images of American flags.

Monsanto, a large biotech corporation that produces over 90% of genetically modified organisms (GMOs), portrays a positive image of an agricultural company helping farmers grow food. Yet in reality it is quite the opposite, as it is destroying nature and killing farmers around the world, all the while producing poison for people and the planet. The company actively hides decades of agricultural poison, their extreme monopolizing behavior, and suppression of clinical data that shows the harm of their products on living beings. Another example is the media's portrayal of war as rosy

and successful, when in fact the war in Afghanistan was a disaster.

Sophisticated ads veil profit motives and transform the real nature of products into elevated manufactured images. Many don't even see the depth of dishonesty permeating our lives. Images packaged with lies and deception are often disguised as the opposite and break down what should be direct, genuine communication.

When human relationship is mediated by false images, the foundation of society itself is artificial and this relationship becomes false. Honesty is an essential aspect of human relationship and its degradation in society is a sign of the devolution of civilization, where people move away from cultivating a sense of brotherhood and shared responsibility. In this scenario, society inevitably moves toward corruption and despotism.

With this decay of honesty, forced transparency has become more and more necessary. In the '60s, consumer advocacy groups fought for ingredient labeling. That was a call for transparency, a form of check and balance on abuse of power by profit-driven corporations. It was also an attempt to demand honesty when genuine human relationship was no longer possible.

Before corporate consolidation and control, the press was more effective in fostering honesty in basic human communication. They were not just reporting an event that happened in the community but also had more true

investigative journalism. By utilizing the Freedom of Information Act, newspapers and magazines more often exposed the corrupt actions and secrecy of those in power. This way, they demanded honesty from institutions and held them more accountable.

Nowadays, journalism has fallen into the role of advertisement and distraction. When ads become an essential avenue for financing newspapers, reporters of course tend to turn away from news that would upset their sponsors. The moral spine of the press has been bent toward commercial interests, which are also taking over government. The creed of objectivity is utilized as a tool to lend a veneer of legitimacy and to conceal the real control over perception by those in power. Now this creed itself is being questioned and the public has begun to look for or create a press that acts in the interest of the people.

WikiLeaks' honest and brave admission of what cannot be objective transformed the false creed of objectivity into a new ethic of transparency. This transparency does not negate the importance of objectivity. Unlike a false pretense of neutrality in which one's actions and words do not match, WikiLeaks gives honest disclosure of motives and agendas and puts the information it receives out for public scrutiny. It is here to provide to the public vital information that reveals the yawning gap between rhetoric and real actions of a pompous elite. Such information allows everyone to confront deception and

actively engage in creating reality.

## **Revolutionary journalism**

The Founding Fathers understood that governments have an inherent tendency toward corruption and that the role of the press is to counter that corruption through exposing abuse of power. They envisioned the press to be a watchdog of power and a servant of the people. In fact, it was the only occupation that was given protection under the US Constitution for this very reason.

When governments and corporations abuse their power, it is a journalist's responsibility to side with the common man and with justice. From the onset, the journalist's role was never meant to be neutral and was actually often intended to take an activist stance. WikiLeaks is an organization that follows an inner conviction that dissenting views must be allowed to be expressed. The fact that one small nonprofit organization released more important documents than all the media combined in the past few decades is simply a testimony of their commitment to the true role of the press.<sup>20</sup>

“How do you prosecute Julian Assange and not the *New York Times*?” a former administration official asked Reuters.<sup>21</sup> The reality is, you can't. What WikiLeaks does is to bring out information from the source. This is what journalists should do and have done for decades as a commonly accepted practice. The *New York Times* and WikiLeaks in this regard are fundamentally no different when it comes to the First Amendment.

The real difference lies not in the releasing of sensitive material, but in their allegiance manifested in their root affiliations and actions. The *New York Times*, under the banner of professionalism, released only government-approved materials. At one point, they even showed their pride in being praised by the White House after obeying orders not to publish certain material.<sup>22</sup>

Over 40 years ago, the *New York Times* released the Pentagon Papers, and the 1971 Supreme Court decision made it clear that its publication was protected by the Constitution.<sup>23</sup> The *Times* and the *Guardian* once defended the public right to know. Yet now their treatment of WikiLeaks shows how they are actually betraying the foundational principles of the US Constitution. By violating their true professional ethics of commitment to justice and speaking truth to power, the established media has really fallen from grace.

George Orwell once said, “In a time of universal deceit, speaking truth to power is a revolutionary act.” *Rolling Stone’s* contributing editor Michael Hastings acknowledged that what Julian Assange is doing with journalism is truly revolutionary.<sup>24</sup> In a time when the media has lost much of its roots, becoming an arm of concentrated money and power, WikiLeaks reconnects with old traditions of the press and blazes new ground on the world stage. This budding new journalism is bringing back the virtue of honesty as a foundation of human relationship. WikiLeaks is revolutionary

journalism in a time of universal deceit. It is here to stay because only true journalism is revolutionary.

# 6

## “Terrorist” by Association, Assange’s Lawyer on the Watch List

APRIL 22, 2012

On April 20, 2012, human rights and Julian Assange lawyer Jennifer Robinson was held up on her flight from London to Sydney for what was described as security reasons.<sup>1</sup> Over the years, journalists have been interrogated and detained at borders, often for purely political reasons. This incident was unprecedented, with a lawyer facing similar treatment.

Robinson was told that she is on an “inhibited” list of mysterious origin and that the Australian High Commission in London needed to be contacted before her departure. At some point, she was given the green light to board without that call being made and was able to get to her destination. When pressed, Australian Attorney General Roxon showed concern about the incident. She said, “This is not the result of any action taken by the Australian Government. We believe [Robinson], as an Australian who is not subject to any criminal charges or allegations, should be free to travel in and out of Australia.”<sup>2</sup>

The *Guardian* reported that the Australian High

Commission in London had not received any call from UK authorities concerning her travel.<sup>3</sup> Virgin Atlantic, the airline that stopped Robinson, deferred responsibility to security services, while the UK Border Agency and Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade each denied involvement.<sup>4</sup>

Bernard Keane at Crikey found that the term “inhibited,” used to describe Robinson’s flight status, was not used by Australian or British agencies but was listed in the US Department of Homeland Security’s operating manuals for airlines.<sup>5</sup>

Robinson has represented Julian Assange in his legal battle against extradition to Sweden. Was she on some kind of US watch list because of her association with Assange? She was not the only person associated with WikiLeaks to have had trouble at airports. There is clear precedent with other people associated with WikiLeaks and Bradley Manning who have been stopped and interrogated when entering the US.

David House, founder of the Bradley Manning Support Network, was pursuing a court case against the US government regarding similar border harassment for his political affiliations. He was repeatedly interrogated and his computer confiscated while entering the US.<sup>6</sup>

Computer researcher and journalist Jacob Appelbaum described several accounts of interrogations and surveillance since he volunteered for WikiLeaks. He has been a target of government surveillance and hassled at

the US border. He is also under a controversial court order from the US to obtain his email communication.<sup>7</sup> He spoke in an interview on *Democracy Now!* about his experience with authorities:

They wanted to know about my political views. They wanted to know about my work in any capacity as a journalist, actually, the notion that I could be in some way associated with Julian.... They didn't ask me anything about terrorism. They didn't ask me anything about smuggling or drugs or any of the customs things that you would expect customs to be doing. They didn't ask me if I had anything to declare about taxes, for example, or about importing things. They did it purely for political reasons and to intimidate me... denied me a lawyer. They gave me water, but refused me a bathroom, to give you an idea about what they were doing.<sup>8</sup>

Are these people being intimidated by the US government in a kind of insinuation of guilt by association? What is troubling here is the lack of factual reasoning for this assumption. Contrary to misconceptions delivered by the corporate media, Assange and WikiLeaks have not been charged with anything. Yet they have generally been treated as criminals, with prominent US politicians and pundits even calling for Assange's assassination. It is a classic Gandhian formula—"First they ignore you, then laugh at you, and then try to destroy you." WikiLeaks and

Assange have certainly experienced these three phases. From establishment media smears and ridicule to high US officials calling him a high-tech terrorist, Assange has gone through character assassination and been terrorized in the public mind.

In a way, it seems those who are associated with Assange or WikiLeaks are also being treated as potential “terrorist associates.” The pattern of intimidation and demonization of people who have never been violent or even charged with breaking a law is similar to the treatment of Assange himself. In the eyes of the US government, perhaps they all appear as dangerous individuals who need to be intimidated, controlled, and tracked. On the face of it, this is patently absurd. Again, none of these people have ever been violent or advocated violence.

Yet now with Robinson’s case, a very dangerous line has been crossed—the “inhibiting” of a lawyer from reentering her home country from England, far from the shores of the US. What is unique and disconcerting about this situation is that she is a lawyer and this will likely have a chilling effect on all lawyers, as one of their own has apparently been harassed simply for associating with her clients. This is ominous in its implications for justice systems worldwide. The international organization Commonwealth Lawyers Association issued a statement concerning Robinson’s interception and called for an explanation. They addressed a deep concern

regarding their profession's independence by citing Article 13 of the UN Principles on the Role of Lawyers that "lawyers shall not be identified with their clients or their clients' causes as a result of discharging their functions."<sup>9</sup> In addition, Robinson was not entering or leaving the US. This incident revealed that the US may be intervening in foreign border controls to apply its own political blacklists in other countries, which raises the real specter of loss of sovereignty, heading into lawless hegemony.

What we may have here is the political crime of intimidation. The Department of Homeland Security is apparently treating journalists and now maybe even lawyers as "associative terrorists."

Oscar- and Emmy-nominated filmmaker and journalist Laura Poitras spoke about her own experience of repeated intimidation at the US border. In an interview with *Democracy Now!* she described how she was detained, interrogated, and searched by federal agents. She recounted an incident where while she was taking notes during the interrogation with a pen, she was ordered to put it away:

They said that my pen was a dangerous weapon . . . that my pen was a threat to them. . . . I mean, in terms of the context, you have to understand that I'm surrounded by border agents who are all carrying guns, and I'm taking out . . . a pen that they find threatening. And so, this was profoundly upsetting.<sup>10</sup>

This inane picture of government agents viewing a pen as a weapon is very telling. Imagine the picture of a pen in the hand of a nonviolent woman who is surrounded by armed agents. There is something quite compelling in this image. The pen can be seen as representing the ideals of the press, those who advocate for free speech globally and laws that protect human rights and equal justice. To those authorities who stop journalists and human right lawyers at the border, this symbol of the pen clearly appears to be a threat. It is similar to the blatantly unconstitutional laws passed in some US states against the videotaping of police officers in public.<sup>11</sup>

In the name of security and stopping “terrorism,” a question arises. Who are actually the ones creating an atmosphere of terror? Isn’t it those who are attempting to make lawyers, journalists, and the public more fearful? The word “terrorist” itself has become a catch-all term defined by empirical power to label and control anyone who legitimately questions authority.

Those clinging to power act as if they actually know that the pen is mightier than the sword and any physical weapon. Could what is revealed in this abuse of border control be a desperate attempt by a failing power to intimidate people globally who expose abuse by the US government? By singling out those who are associated with WikiLeaks and Julian Assange, the US government is violating the very ideals enshrined by the First Amendment, those of free assembly (association),

speech, and the press.

This kind of political persecution must be borne witness to by the international community and not tolerated, because any one of us could be next and treated as a “terrorist by association.” History has shown that this is one step down a dangerous road toward tyranny.

# Activist or Journalist? Pulling a Yes Men on Bill Keller

JULY 30, 2012

One quiet evening was disrupted when what seemed to be a *New York Times* op-ed piece with Bill Keller supporting WikiLeaks surfaced on Twitter. For WikiLeaks supporters, this was too good to be true, as someone who had shown much animosity toward WikiLeaks appeared to be speaking in their defense. It turned out to be a well-crafted hoax.<sup>1</sup>

The stunning prank was believed by almost everyone, as the only potential giveaway was the URL. The article borrowed words from Keller's emails and mimicked the *New York Times* home page. It fooled journalists and, embarrassingly, even the *Time*'s tech writer, Nick Bilton.<sup>2</sup> It was surreal, as Keller, someone who had come to represent the kind of "journalism" that bends over for the US government, now appeared to stand behind WikiLeaks. The spoof lasted for hours before it was finally debunked. Later in the day, WikiLeaks released a sequence of tweets that admitted they were involved in the production of this fake Bill Keller op-ed.<sup>3</sup>

Shortly after the revelation of the hoax by WikiLeaks,<sup>4</sup>

some people expressed dismay, saying that they may have damaged their own credibility by crafting this prank.<sup>5</sup> Lawyer and Salon blogger Glenn Greenwald wrote a piece highlighting the strength of the Internet in correcting errors, using the original debunking of this article as an example. Later in an update, he expressed his ambivalent reaction to WikiLeaks' claim of responsibility for it:

I don't know if this claim of responsibility is true or not. Either way, it doesn't strike me as a good idea for a group that relies on its credibility when it comes to the authenticity of what they publish—and which thus far has had a stellar record in that regard—to be making boastful claims that they published forged documents. I understand and appreciate the satire, but in this case, it directly conflicts with, and undermines, the primary value of WikiLeaks.<sup>6</sup>

Let's look more closely at Greenwald's reaction. Does this hoax really discredit WikiLeaks' work and betray the organization's values?

WikiLeaks first emerged onto the global stage with its release of the "Collateral Murder" video in April 2010. At that time, its sensational title triggered unfavorable reactions. The political slant created through the naming of the video was seen by some as an act of editorializing at best and blatant manipulation of perception at worst. Critics referred to the supposed journalistic ethos of unbiased or balanced reporting and portrayed WikiLeaks

as violating it.

WikiLeaks engages in scientific journalism. Their leaked documents have an impeccable record of authenticity. They also have never failed to protect the anonymity of their sources. They claimed all along to be a journalistic entity. In looking back, we can see that not only are they journalists, but they released more scoops than all established media institutions combined. In the past, Bill Keller has himself openly admitted that WikiLeaks is practicing journalism, but a type that differs greatly from traditional forms like that of the *New York Times*.

In addition to WikiLeaks' purpose of publishing complete, authenticated documents, their other role should not be forgotten. "We are an activist organization. The method is transparency. The goal is justice," said Assange.<sup>7</sup>

The recent Bill Keller hoax was implemented to highlight the hypocrisy of the *New York Times* and also to bring attention to its silence on the corporate banking blockade of WikiLeaks. It was created as a direct message to the *New York Times* and Keller's silent complicity with the US government and private companies like PayPal that engaged in economic censorship to stifle the First Amendment. With major influential media, this kind of silence itself means complicity.

Within 24 hours of their action, WikiLeaks disclosed their responsibility for the fake op-ed and said why they

did it. How long did it take for the *New York Times* to take responsibility for the WMD (Weapon of Mass Destruction) lie they disseminated that led to the deaths of over 250,000 in Iraq? They never really did. It is always important to put things in context.

In the Twittersphere, some recognized this current WikiLeaks stunt as an art of political activism.<sup>8</sup> Back in 2008, the Yes Men, Andy Bichlbaum and Mike Bonanno, pulled a prank in writing a spoof edition of the *New York Times*. They wanted to show what real change could look like. They set it six months ahead to show what would happen if people's imaginations were freed. The headline of the spoof announced the end of the Iraq War. It was printed in a form that was such high quality it successfully fooled many New Yorkers.<sup>9</sup>

A creative surrealistic act can for a moment open minds and effectively bring attention to issues that are often obfuscated or ignored by mainstream media. Like the Yes Men's creative stunt, WikiLeaks' fake op-ed falls into the category of creative activism. It is important to note that this is not in any way related to their release of documents. It is the art of satire, with a touch of surrealism that temporarily twists reality to engage the public in thinking about the world in a different way. In a sense, it is no different than an op-ed. Yet with this they used the unwitting *New York Times* as a vehicle to make a powerful statement.

Some see this kind of act as a creative deed, while others disapprove. Perhaps WikiLeaks is ushering in a new form of journalism that is more creative and interactive. They have showed us that journalists too can connect with their passion and invite the world to imagine a different reality. Their innovative style is also a way of staying true to the original role of the media—that of speaking truth to power. Now WikiLeaks also is performing as a watchdog for the established media. If journalists betray their true profession according to the First Amendment, it appears that on the Internet they can be called out for it. Is WikiLeaks an activist or a journalistic organization? By its own admission and track record of rigorous publishing, it is both.

# 8

## We Are All Enemies of the State

NOVEMBER 19, 2012

Revelations of WikiLeaks documents exposed corruption of institutions and governments on a global scale. This vital information engaged the public with the right to know. No one can deny these disclosures' impact on society. After the birth of WikiLeaks, the world has changed.

By creatively using the platform of the globally connected Internet, WikiLeaks shook up existing power structures. Their document releases and the controversies surrounding them brought up questions regarding the First Amendment, particularly what these basic human rights mean now in a global context. At the Hope 9 conference in New York, ACLU (American Civil Liberties Union) lawyer Catherine Crump pointed out how the WikiLeaks case revealed the need to reexamine national laws and the broader ramifications of their interpretation in a digitized world.<sup>1</sup> The borderless domain of the Internet opened a new horizon within societies that for decades have been governed by national laws and boundaries.

On the one hand, there are authoritarian and repressive governments such as those in China and Bahrain that

suppress any form of dissent. Bahrain, a key US ally, recently banned protesting and revoked the citizenship of 31 opposition activists for allegedly having “undermined state security.”<sup>2</sup> On the other side, there are Western countries such as the United States, where speech freedom has traditionally been protected, though this distinction is fast fading. There has been a trend of using international laws and treaties to thwart and suppress the free flow of information between people globally. Many political leaders across the West pay lip service to such things as human rights and democracy with rhetoric like “humanitarian intervention” while actually doing the opposite.<sup>3</sup>

These forces to control people are now being met by the impulse to create structures that protect the basic rights of free communication and association. The potential to harmonize laws and emerging principles of justice into unified values is being realized in various instances. The Icelandic Modern Media Initiative is a good example of people coming together to crowdsource progressive legislation from around the world in order to battle against threats of legal attacks on journalism. It is meant to create a safe haven for investigative journalists everywhere and to safeguard media outlets with source protection. While Hollywood and the copyright industries attempt to exercise further control over digital communication through insidious censorship bills disguised as copyright law, grassroots activists and everyday people continue to fight such efforts.

WikiLeaks is a transnational organization that was born within the stateless infrastructure of the Internet. It provides a platform for people to challenge structural laws that protect government abuses of individual rights. At a rally in Melbourne for Julian Assange, founding member of WikiLeaks Daniel Mathews shared an idea that has lived at the heart of the organization from the start:

The people of this world are treated like mushrooms: Kept in the dark, and fed shit. Wikileaks is a fundamentally anti-mushroom organization. . . . Wikileaks proposed that the people reject their status as fungi—find out what their governments are doing, what corporations are doing, what the powerful are doing, what the 1% are doing.<sup>4</sup>

He quoted their original mission statement from 2006:

WL may become the most powerful intelligence agency on earth, an intelligence agency of the people. It will be an open source, democratic intelligence agency. . . . It will have no commercial or national interests at heart; its only interests will be truth and freedom of information. . . .<sup>5</sup>

With the ever-increasing influence of corporations in every aspect of society, civic power has weakened dramatically. Citizens are made into consumers, to be entertained and fed superficial distractions that don't fundamentally matter. Democracy has turned into a facade—a corporate version of the free market with the

right to choose and consume manufactured products. The word *liberty* has been reduced to mean the right to freely purchase goods we often don't even need, or to choose which corporate party to vote for. Politics, laws, and the idea of justice have become abstract for most people. Unless we were interfered with directly by the law or receive firsthand experience of the deep injustice and inequity of society, we rarely have any need to think of the erosion of our rights as citizens. After all, when human actions are narrowly defined within a commercial arena, what might the Bill of Rights have to do with our lives?

Laws and knowledge of the world have become abstract thoughts to be studied in school by lawyers and scholars. When language gets abstracted, people lose their relationship to what the words actually mean. Democratic principles such as free speech become empty words. As a result, many have become spectators in their world, as if they are not participating in the unfolding of their own history and destiny.

While much of the public is divorced from events in the world, WikiLeaks challenged the bubble of insulated reality. The “Collateral Murder” video showed the true face of war that the public never sees in the mainstream media. It helped make the injustice and suffering of the world more real and personal. People were waking up to the lies and abuses of power. They began questioning the legitimacy of governments, realizing that the people can have an unfiltered voice.

WikiLeaks showed how freedom of speech and of the press are pillars of any healthy society. It has now become clearer what happens when information is suppressed and when it is freed. Freedom of information is the precursor to free speech. In order for people to truly exercise the right to free speech, they first need to access true representations of reality, including concealed information and marginalized views that challenge official narratives.

WikiLeaks performed a critical duty of the press: magnifying voices of whistleblowers who align themselves with freedom of speech by freeing information. Such an act is true to the founding American ideals. Historically, rights stemming from the First Amendment are recognized and granted as inherent to the balance of power outlined by the US Constitution. It reads:

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.

Aside from its well-known protection of free speech, the First Amendment guarantees free assembly—the right to associate with anyone and freely voice opinions, especially those criticizing the government. The idea behind the First Amendment is deeply rooted in the

country's founding document, the Declaration of Independence, which reads:

We hold these Truths to be self-evident, that all Men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness—That to secure these Rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just Powers from the Consent of the Governed, that whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these Ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its Foundation on such Principles, and organizing its Powers in such Form . . .

What is stated in this history-making document is a declaration of the supreme power of the common man. Even if it remains an ideal, it was a move away from the single power of a monarchy—of a king, other aristocrat, or elected official. This declaration recognizes the ordinary human being as the active critical agent within any society. Independence of citizens in their thought and actions from outside forces such as governments, churches, or corporations was considered fundamental and was made explicit in the First Amendment. This independence makes it possible for people to freely connect with fellow citizens and to organize and form a type of government based on mutual aid.

Is the First Amendment a universal right, something that should be claimed by all people in the world? WikiLeaks

answered this question through its actions. The stateless global dimension of the Internet created loopholes in existing national laws and power structures. Within the platform of this borderless network, a transnational domain has been created, where the First Amendment can be applied anywhere. Vital information that had been concealed and controlled within nation-states and corporate governance could now be set free.

WikiLeaks freed information from the control of the state. It affected countries where there is little free speech. For instance, leaked US diplomatic cables put legitimacy of governments under broad scrutiny in places like Tunisia.<sup>6</sup> Materials evidencing corruption and lies of leaders everywhere shook up the official cover provided by corporate media that is often embedded with state power. It helped to make what many Tunisians already knew as undeniable and added fuel to the rage that later became the Tunisian uprising. Such courageous actions created a ripple effect in the world. When the Tunisian government blocked leaked State Department cables, pro-WikiLeaks computer hackers went into Tunisian government websites and redirected the material through another route for the public to access. In 2011, Egypt dictator Mubarak shut down all but one of his country's Internet service providers in the face of an uprising, while Telecomix, a decentralized cluster of Internet activists, kept communication lines open for the people.<sup>7</sup>

Months after the Arab Spring, WikiLeaks cables had fueled the fire in another part of the world, this time in Mexico, bolstering a peaceful youth movement against the political corruption of the media. “The TV is yours,” read one banner, “but Mexico is ours.”<sup>8</sup> On June 10, more than 90,000 protesters took part in a mass demonstration.<sup>9</sup> The students continued to protest, calling for democratization of the media, while many challenged the validity of their last election.

Revelations of Cablegate burst into Latin America, having a fresh impact on corrupt politics, changing media and public perspectives on major issues.<sup>10</sup> It affected the course of a presidential election in Peru, transformed the media in Brazil, and in two countries led to the departure of US ambassadors.<sup>11</sup>

Defending free speech and free association means to uphold the supreme right and power of the common man. With this realization, ordinary people are now beginning to engage in critically examining their own governments worldwide. What we see is a wave of uprisings. People were starting to connect with their neighbors, organizing and addressing grievances, and even beginning to tear down despotic governments. The impact of freeing information and of people acting on their knowledge has reverberated all over the world.

WikiLeaks brought the First Amendment to regions where communication is limited and historically suppressed. These acts of liberation were met with

vicious attacks by the White House. At a Pentagon briefing in August 2010, White House Spokesman Geoff Morrell condemned WikiLeaks public disclosure of classified documents.<sup>12</sup> In early 2011, the DOJ (Department of Justice) subpoenaed Twitter accounts of several WikiLeaks volunteers and other individuals who were associated with the organization.<sup>13</sup> It demanded a large scope of user information, including mailing addresses, billing information, etc. Later, a federal judge ruled that the documents subpoenaed from the WikiLeaks Twitter account will remain under seal to preserve an ongoing criminal investigation.<sup>14</sup>

In December 2010, private companies such as PayPal, Visa, and MasterCard froze the organization's account through extrajudicial financial blockade.<sup>15</sup> Australian diplomatic cables showed that the US government investigation targeting WikiLeaks goes back as early as July 2010.<sup>16</sup>

In all of this, Assange has become a major focus of attack. The iconic December 2010 *Time Magazine* photo of Assange being silenced by the American flag captured the true nature of the US attitude about transparency for the whole world to see.<sup>17</sup> High-profile US political figures such as Mike Huckabee and Sarah Palin had called for his murder. Vice President Joe Biden called him a high-tech terrorist.<sup>18</sup> Republican Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich called Assange an “enemy combatant” and said that he deserves to be hunted down and executed.<sup>19</sup> Senator Dianne Feinstein demanded the prosecution of

WikiLeaks and Julian Assange.<sup>20</sup> Established media institutions such as the *New York Times* and the *Guardian* jumped on the bandwagon to discredit and attack WikiLeaks with hit pieces smearing Assange by engaging in cheap tabloid journalism. Four Corners reporter Andrew Fowler, in the documentary *Sex, Lies and Julian Assange*, looked into what is behind the allegations of sexual misconduct in Sweden. It revealed how a man wanted for questioning on flimsy, manipulated “evidence” has morphed into rape allegations in the minds of millions.<sup>21</sup>

Then came the final straw. In late September, the *Sydney Morning Herald* reported that the US military had designated Julian Assange and WikiLeaks as enemies of the state. The article noted how “declassified US Air Force counterintelligence documents, released under US freedom-of-information laws, reveal that military personnel who contact WikiLeaks or WikiLeaks supporters may be at risk of being charged with ‘communicating with the enemy,’ a military crime that carries a maximum sentence of death.”<sup>22</sup>

Harassment and threats began against anyone associated with Assange and WikiLeaks. Jacob Appelbaum, computer security researcher and a core member of the Tor Project, experienced several bouts of interrogations and surveillance since he volunteered for the site.<sup>23</sup> Assange’s lawyer, Jennifer Robinson, was held up on a flight from London to Sydney for “security reasons.” Robinson was told that she was on an

“inhibited” list of mysterious origin and that the Australian High Commission in London needed to be contacted before her departure.<sup>24</sup>

Guests of the Assange show *The World Tomorrow* were questioned seemingly for their association with Assange. Jérémie Zimmermann, a cofounder of cyber freedoms group La Quadrature du Net, was detained on his way from the US to France after filming an episode of Assange’s show.<sup>25</sup> Bahrain rights activist Nabeel Rajab was arrested at Bahrain’s international airport upon his return from Lebanon in April 2012.<sup>26</sup> Although the Bahrani authorities didn’t give reasons for their action, it took place directly after his episode of Assange’s show.

These acts of intimidation have been carried out mostly under the radar. Then came the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA). This law, signed by Obama, totally abrogates the fundamental tenets of the Constitution and gives to the president the power to detain anyone without charge indefinitely, including US citizens, simply for association with anyone defined as a “terrorist.” Obama’s kill list,<sup>27</sup> along with his unprecedented prosecution of whistleblowers<sup>28</sup> and endless attacks on WikiLeaks, have revealed the previously hidden motives of this empirical mindset. For those who have been following the steps of the US government, this all-out attack on Assange and WikiLeaks may come as no surprise. The designation “enemy of the state” now can mean anyone who challenges imperial power according to the NDAA.

In such a fast-changing political climate, it is important to pose the question, Who are the people being made into “enemies of the state”? They are occupiers and young people who are called “anarchists”—a word used as synonymous to terrorists. They are whistleblowers who take risks inside the system to awaken the public to government and institutional wrongdoing. They are journalists and activists. In November 2011, journalists covering a police raid on Occupy Wall Street at Zuccotti Park were arrested.<sup>29</sup> Journalists and filmmakers even in the US were being interrogated and detained at borders, often for purely political reasons. In October, Pakistani politician and activist Imran Khan was taken off a flight to New York in Toronto, Canada, for his outspoken views on drones and interrogated by US Customs authorities.<sup>30</sup> Oscar- and Emmy-nominated filmmaker and journalist Laura Poitras was repeatedly intimidated at the US border.<sup>31</sup>

But what are their crimes? In mid-October, an FBI task force raided a home in Portland, Oregon, and young people in Seattle were called to a grand jury for owning books that were identified as “antigovernment or anarchistic.”<sup>32</sup> Three activists were put in jail after refusing to speak at a grand jury hearing. Protesters peacefully demonstrating were arrested and brutally attacked for engaging in activities that historically have been protected under the First Amendment.<sup>33</sup>

Whistleblower Bradley Manning, who acknowledged responsibility for releasing classified documents as an

act of conscience, believed information should be free.<sup>34</sup> For exposing US war crimes, he has been detained way beyond the legal time limit in conditions that the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Torture said amounted to torture.<sup>35</sup> Web developer and political activist Jeremy Hammond was accused of providing documents from Strategic Forecasting Inc. (Stratfor) to WikiLeaks. He was charged with electronic infiltration and detained.<sup>36</sup> He was placed into solitary confinement for five days during superstorm Sandy.<sup>37</sup> Hammond believed in creating “an *army* so powerful we won’t need weapons.”<sup>38</sup> In a statement to his supporters, he wrote:

They call us robbers and fraudsters when the big banks get billion dollar bailouts and kick us out of our homes. They call us gun runners and drug dealers when pharmaceutical corporations and defense contractors profit from trafficking armaments and drugs on a far greater scale. They call us “terrorists” when NATO and the US military murder millions of innocents around the world and employ drones and torture tactics. And they call us cyber-criminals when they themselves develop viruses to spy on and wage war against infrastructure and populations in other countries.<sup>39</sup>

WikiLeaks’ alleged “crimes” were publishing the truth, exposing government crimes, secrecy, and lies. Its “crime” was exercising and defending free speech, and as a result embarrassing the governments that abuse it and that violate human rights around the world. Its “crime” was acting as a watchdog for power in the spirit of the

First Amendment and challenging the false legitimacy of governments that ensnare man's will under their authority.

Many have responded to defend WikiLeaks, Julian Assange, and Bradley Manning. Perhaps we have seen ourselves in Assange, his face smothered by an American flag. We have all become Bradley Manning. It was not just about one individual wrongly treated by those on the wrong side of history. Those who have been branded enemies of the state have become the face of something we all cherish. What is an enemy of the state really? By attacking WikiLeaks, what is the US government fighting? Its reaction reveals deep-seated fear.

This government seems threatened by basic First Amendment free speech activity, the right to assemble, and foremost, the coalescing power of ordinary people globally. It is becoming clear that the War on WikiLeaks and whistleblowers is an unprecedented war on the First Amendment. By persecuting the organization that stands up for this primary constitutional pillar, the US government has declared war on the very principles on which this country was founded. The US, once a beacon of light for the world, is now betraying its own ideals.

"There is unity in the oppression. There must be absolute unity and determination in the response."<sup>40</sup> Assange spoke from the balcony of the Ecuadorian embassy as a large crowd cheered him. In the face of enemies, our common humanity is revealed. When WikiLeaks was

met with a financial blockade, Anonymous stepped forward to fight for justice. Allies of freedom of speech mobilized across the globe.<sup>41</sup>

When Australia's largest newspaper reported the branding of Assange as an enemy of the state, Twitter hashtag #EnemiesOfTheState quickly trended, and around the world people came together with disbelief at such a radical statement and showed solidarity with their hero who had been declared an enemy of the empire. Supporters in Melbourne conducted sit-ins at the US Consulate in response to this authoritarian labeling of their fellow Australian.<sup>42</sup>

In the end, the war on the First Amendment has actually made us all enemies of the state. In the face of this, people are uniting around the world, with courage to defeat narrow ideologies of nationalism or fear. Obama's reelection marked the 248th day of political prisoner Jeremy Hammond's detention without trial and the 899th day of detention of Bradley Manning. It marked the 701st day of Julian Assange's detention without charge as he remains holed up in the Ecuadorian embassy in London.

Obama's 2012 campaign slogan of "Forward" promised war and plunder. He went "forward" with Guantanamo Bay, drone attacks, and illegal wars, as the world was drifting into financial and social dystopia. Directly after his win, he bombed Yemen, and his first foreign policy was to put further sanctions on Iran.<sup>43</sup> At that very

moment, as Israel conducted a large-scale bombardment on Gaza, he continued to support Israel's aggression.<sup>44</sup>

The Founding Fathers of the United States spoke of the responsibility of each citizen to uphold and defend the Constitution against all enemies, foreign and domestic. The persecution of WikiLeaks is about the freedom of all people. It is about us. The story of this battle for free speech is our story. History will remember that the birth of WikiLeaks brought hope for free speech throughout the world.

Now is the time for people to uphold the First Amendment. The highest law of the land is the law of the earth. Her veins flow with the blood of passion for justice and compassion for brothers and sisters who see no borders. The WikiLeaks case reminds us of an important lesson: that freedom of speech is not for one country alone. It belongs to the world. This has always been and always will be.

# 9

## Inside the Hourglass

DECEMBER 31, 2012

In the last decades, with its economic and military force, the United States has attained sole superpower status in the world. The legacy of the US empire carries a dark history: genocide of natives, colonization, slavery of blacks, and atomic bombs. None can deny that much of American hegemony and economic might has been built on the exploitation and suffering of millions. Narratives of glorious victories and rhetoric of “exporting democracy” have repeatedly erased the trails of tears and justified the scars of the oppressed. The rewriting of history by the beneficiaries of empire has rendered many poor and people of color voiceless and invisible. Behind this official version of history, the oppression continues.

The economic injustice and militarization of today has evolved with sophisticated technology. Because drone attacks and insidious digital surveillance were rarely discussed in the corporate media, the general public became disconnected or oblivious to what has been happening in their name.

The year 2010 was a turning point. The slow-motion financial collapse into debauchery of the global economic system was entering an advanced stage. About the same

time, whistleblowing site WikiLeaks brought the brutality of illegal wars and arrogance of US foreign policy out into the open for all to see. For a moment, the buried stream of history arose and intersected with the present.

The raw footage of WikiLeaks’ “Collateral Murder” showed airstrikes by a United States Army gunship attacking journalists and a family in New Baghdad. It revealed the truth hiding behind the euphemism “collateral damage.” The cynical naming of the Apache helicopter helps trigger a lost memory of the genocide of American natives long ago. Native American activist Winona LaDuke once spoke of how it is common military-speak when you leave a base in a foreign country to say that you are heading “out into Indian country.”<sup>1</sup>

The legacy of past colonization has lingered to haunt this postmodern global society. This dark shadow was carried over into the military-industrial age of the 20th century with its outward-thrusting brutality. In *Discourse on Colonialism*, Martinican poet and author Aimé Césaire wrote how colonization brutalizes the colonizer himself:

Colonization . . . dehumanizes even the most civilized man; that colonial activity, colonial enterprise, colonial conquest, which is based on contempt for the native and justified by that contempt, inevitably tends to change him who undertakes it; that the colonizer, who in order to ease his conscience gets into the habit of seeing the

other man as an animal, accustoms himself into an animal.<sup>2</sup>

The real scenes of modern war on the ground stand as a mirror. Reflected in the graphic WikiLeaks video, we see ourselves, the actual barbarians degraded in an effort to “civilize” others. These untold histories repeat themselves like suffocating stories, dying to be remembered. Voices that had been locked between the lines in history books now start to speak.

In a sense, leaking sensitive and classified documents is the act of intervening in the writing of history itself, a process that historically has been controlled by those in power, by the “winners” of wars. Leaking secrets can for a time disrupt the official lies and reveal the continuous thread of an untold story of disenfranchisement. WikiLeaks has reset the sands of time. It put our world inside a transparent hourglass for all to see. When stories that were frozen in the past are released, our collective memory starts to flow.

WikiLeaks’ courage in bringing truth to light shattered the lens of the corporate media’s supposed dispassionate objectivity. More and more people are finding that they no longer remain passive spectators of history. History is happening and we can engage in charting its course if we care to. With the persecution of Julian Assange and Bradley Manning and the dismantling of human rights with bills like the National Defense Authorization Act, people are stepping forward to defend the freedom of

speech and fight against this unprecedented erosion of our rights.

In 2011 and 2012, a wave of revolutions brought activism to a new level of global impact. On Nov 16, 2011, in the wake of Occupy, writer and activist Arundhati Roy spoke at Washington Square in New York: “Few of us dreamed that we would see you, the people of the United States, on our side, trying to do this in the heart of Empire. I don’t know how to communicate the enormity of what this means.”<sup>3</sup> People were beginning to wake up to the current global banking fraud and the largest transfer of wealth in human history. The Occupy movement was a response to this systemic usury where a 1% elite sucks the lifeblood from 99% of humanity.

This engagement of people who had remained uninvolved till then is a testimony to our awakening from an insulated and manufactured reality that has prevented us from rooting ourselves in the solid ground of history.

The sands in the hourglass are moving again. Our untold history is leaking. The world inside the transparent glass opens the eyes of the world to a true story of our imperfect yet beautiful selves. We have an opportunity to remember the often untold story of our deeper communion and of our common struggles. As the old states crumble inside the hourglass, a new world arises. Each person’s remembering connects us to the larger

current of history. It is in the solidarity found in our shared past that our future lies. We begin again.

# 10

## Whistleblowers at the Frontier of Digital Liberation

AUGUST 13, 2013

In the early summer of 2013, the volcanic revelation of NSA (National Security Agency) surveillance was felt around the world. Immediately after the first NSA stories were published and Snowden revealed himself as the source behind the largest classified disclosure in history, calls for aggressive prosecution rolled out from Washington, with high officials denouncing his action as treason.<sup>1</sup>

Computer scientist Nadia Heninger argued that leaking information is now becoming the “civil disobedience of our age.”<sup>2</sup> Historian and activist Howard Zinn described the act of civil disobedience as the “deliberate, discriminate, violation of law for a vital social purpose.”<sup>3</sup> He advocated it, saying that such an act “becomes not only justifiable but necessary when a fundamental human right is at stake and when legal channels are inadequate for securing that right.” Snowden’s act was clearly one of civil disobedience. John Lewis, US Representative and veteran civil rights leader, noted that Snowden was “continuing the tradition of civil disobedience by revealing details of classified US

surveillance programs.”<sup>4</sup>

Snowden is not alone. In recent years, there have been waves of dissent that revealed the depth of corruption and abuse of power endemic in this global corporate system. Before Snowden, there were Bradley Manning and Jeremy Hammond who shook up the trend of criminal overreach within the US government and its transnational corporate and government allies. Private Bradley Manning blew the whistle on US war crimes and activist Jeremy Hammond exposed the inner workings of the pervasive surveillance state. They took risks to alert the world about the systemic failure of representative government and the trend toward a dangerous corporate authoritarianism.

After Snowden was charged with espionage, Assange called for global support to stand with him:

Edward Snowden is one of us. Bradley Manning is one of us. They are young, technically minded people from the generation that Barack Obama betrayed. They are the generation that grew up on the Internet and were shaped by it.<sup>5</sup>

Snowden, Manning, and Assange are all part of an Internet generation that holds transparency of governments and corporations as a critical check on power. They believe in the power of information and in the public’s right to know. In an interview with Glenn Greenwald of the *Guardian*, Snowden described how his motive was “to inform the public as to that which is done

in their name and that which is done against them.”<sup>6</sup> Snowden advocated for the participation of ordinary people in decisionmaking processes, which he considers to be a vital part of democratic society, indicating that the policies of national security agencies that he exposed should be up to the public to decide.<sup>7</sup>

This belief is shared by his forerunners. As Bradley Manning, whose actions directly inspired Snowden, wrote in his infamous chat log with ex-hacker Adrian Lamo: “I want people to see the truth . . . regardless of who they are . . . because without information, you cannot make informed decisions as a public.”<sup>8</sup> Manning confirmed this conviction once again when he testified at the providence inquiry for his formal plea. After admitting that he was the source of the largest leak of classified documents in history, he spoke again about the motivation behind his actions:

I believed that if the general public, especially the American public, had access to the information . . . this could spark a domestic debate on the role of the military and our foreign policy in general.<sup>9</sup>

In pleading guilty to one count of conspiracy for hacking into the computers of the private intelligence firm Stratfor, computer whiz Jeremy Hammond stated that he believed “people have a right to know what governments and corporations are doing behind closed doors.”<sup>10</sup>

Barrett Brown, journalist and director of a website called

Project PM, held a similar conviction. Brown sat behind bars with a possible maximum sentence of 105 years for his daring investigation of the growing private intelligence contractor industry. In an interview with NBC's Michael Isikoff, Brown described "information freedom" as "the value of this age."<sup>11</sup> He spoke of how this belief motivates many cyber-activists to engage in civil disobedience against those in positions of power who act unethically.

The motto of these activists is simple: privacy for the public, transparency for government officials and corporate executives. It was this care for privacy and protection of personal information that motivated Snowden to risk his freedom and also caused Andrew "Weev" Auernheimer to expose a security flaw inside AT&T servers. Natasha Lenard of *Salon* clarified that "Auernheimer's crime was not a hack."<sup>12</sup> She explained how Auernheimer "did not illegally access a private server. Rather, his conviction hinged on what data gets to be authorized or unauthorized and who gets to decide this." Though his actions didn't harm anyone, Auernheimer was sent to prison for pointing out the company's failure to protect user data.

It is this common theme of information freedom that motivates this new generation of activists. Their fight against a corrupt system required great personal sacrifice; they have been incarcerated, stripped naked, put on show trials, stuck in airport transit spaces, and immobilized in an Ecuadorian embassy.

## A vision of a new world

These digital dissenters speak truth to power. By way of the new digital medium, they reveal the deep fraud of an arrogant system that enables governments and corporations to look into the private lives of others while concealing their own immoral actions from the public. But this was not all: these young activists also carry within them a vision of a new world and of a more open and just society. With the release of the classified NSA files, Snowden stated that he was acting in defense of what he cherishes:

I don't want to live in a world where everything that I say, everything I do, everyone I talk to, every expression of creativity or love or friendship is recorded. And that's not something I'm willing to support, it's not something I'm willing to build and it's not something I'm willing to live under.<sup>13</sup>

In his chat log, Manning pointed to the idea of open diplomacy, elaborated on in a *New York Times* article as “the opposite of secret diplomacy, which consists in the underhand negotiation of treaties whose very existence is kept from the world.”<sup>14</sup> Discreetly referring to the release of Cablegate, Manning described the material as the “non-PR-versions of world events and crisis” and referred to it as “open diplomacy.” Later he noted that “information should be free” as it “belongs in the public domain” and shared his view that if information is out in the open, no one can take advantage of it: “it should do a

public good.” Here he showed his longing for an honest society where there is some form of transparency for what leaders are doing in the dark.

This vision of the world is tied to certain values that are encouraged by the open structures of the Internet. Unlike the age of the printing press, when information tended to be centralized, the era of the Internet fosters an interactive and direct peer-to-peer form of communication.

The life of the late activist Aaron Swartz exemplified these new values born in tandem with this digital communication medium. Swartz stood up for the people’s right to free information. The 2008 manifesto he coauthored stated that sharing information was a “moral imperative” against the privatization of knowledge: “We need to take information, wherever it is stored, make our copies and share them with the world. We need to take stuff that’s out of copyright and add it to the archive.”<sup>15</sup> Swartz urged us to fight for “Guerrilla Open Access.” It was his belief that the freedom to connect led him into a battle to defeat the Hollywood-based Stop Online Piracy Act (SOPA), a bill that was camouflaged as a solution to copyright infringement but actually threatened the ability to communicate and share freely over the Internet.

Hammond fought for the same vision as Swartz. Upon Swartz’s death, Hammond wrote in his commemoration: What is needed is not reform but total transformation—

not amendments but abolition. Aaron is a hero to me because he did not wait for those in power to realize his vision and change their game, he sought to change the game himself, and he did so without fear of being labeled a criminal and imprisoned by a backward system of justice.<sup>16</sup>

Before Snowden's whistleblowing, Julian Assange saw the increasing force that was subverting the Internet and alerted people to the spying networks created by transnational corporate allies. In his new book *Cypherpunks: Freedom and the Future of the Internet* (cowritten with Andy Müller-Maguhn, Jérémie Zimmermann, and Jacob Appelbaum), Assange showed how the Internet can be used as an instrument for both freedom or oppression.

"Once upon a time in a place that was neither here nor there, we, the constructors and citizens of the young internet discussed the future of our new world," Assange wrote in the introduction.<sup>17</sup> Pioneers of this net culture seemed to have recognized a democratizing force inherent in the technology of the Internet and how its power, when truly freed, could transform the existing structures of ownership and control. The founder of WikiLeaks articulated the vision of cypherpunks, activists who woke up to the potential of cryptography in bringing societal and political change:

We say that the relationships between all people would be mediated by our new world, and that the nature of

states, which are defined by how people exchange information, economic value, and force, would also change. We saw that the merger between existing state structures and the internet created an opening to change the nature of states. . . . The new world of the internet, abstracted from the old world of brute atoms, longed for independence.<sup>18</sup>

Yet Assange witnessed how the Internet was moving in the opposite direction of his own vision, noting how it “has been transformed into the most dangerous facilitator of totalitarianism we have ever seen,” and indeed has become a “threat to human civilization.”<sup>19</sup> Assange elaborated in a *Guardian* article how the control of oil resources has been a major denominator for granting certain countries geopolitical power and the “war for oil pipelines” has been driving the world.<sup>20</sup> He argued that this battle has shifted over into the “war for information pipelines: control over fibre-optic cable paths that spread undersea and overland.”

Now the situation is accelerating. Over the years we have seen a tremendous assault on Internet freedom. The force to squash the vision of this generation infiltrated cyberspace. The battle has begun.

## **The frontier of digital liberation**

The trend toward centralization and restriction of information flow has become an antithesis to the way of life experienced by this generation of digital activists. Richard Stallman, who inspired figures like Assange,

also warned about the surveillance scheme. Stallman, founder of the Free Software Movement, promotes freedom-respecting software, which gives users control over their technology. He pointed to an unfolding battle between corporations and a growing body of people who believe software and communication venues should be free of insidious covert control.<sup>21</sup>

Stallman has furthermore described how this control is exercised by a form of propriety where corporations and governments subjugate users with insidious features such as converting cell phones into spying and tracking devices and creating software backdoors to make changes to programs or install intentionally malicious software without user's consent.<sup>22</sup>

In the name of copyright and intellectual property, the act of sharing has in many cases become a crime, yet some have found creative ways to circumvent the systemic clampdown. One of those on the frontier of digital liberation is Per Gottfrid Svartholm Warg, alias anakata, a Swedish computer specialist who cofounded the BitTorrent site called The Pirate Bay, which facilitates peer-to-peer file sharing.

Similar pioneering work was done by Kim Dotcom, a German-Finnish Internet entrepreneur who launched the Hong Kong-based company Megaupload, which enables massive file storage and viewing. Such actions were legally attacked by the corporate-government information cartels. The founder of Pirate Bay,

Svartholm Warg, was charged with illegal downloading of copyrighted material and sent to jail,<sup>23</sup> while the US government overextended its arrogant imperial power by attempting to shut down Megaupload and extradite Dotcom.<sup>24</sup>

While Warg sat behind bars, the Torrent Site continued to combat censorship. It then released a customized Firefox called PirateBrowser that enabled users to circumvent censorship. After the stories of NSA mass spying became public, Dotcom announced the upcoming release of encrypted secure message apps and email service.<sup>25</sup>

More and more people were joining together to defend the values of the Internet generation. In the last few years, the online collective Anonymous became the ubiquitous face of cyber-activism. With their well-known V for Vendetta Guy Fawkes masks, this loosely tied and decentralized network acts whenever and wherever its radar catches a classic abuse of power. Beneath the mask there is an idea. Anonymous hacktivists are united by their shared sense of justice and their conviction that ideas are bulletproof. Repeatedly, the collective has been shown to be a champion of the downtrodden and of those who challenge the powerful.

## **Ideals of the heart**

The common struggles of these young people bind them together, but the true mark of this generation is a shared vision of a world with virtues like sharing, love, and

creativity that have been suppressed in the generalized trend toward extreme capitalism within the neoliberal corporate state. Along with their enormous courage, these digital dissenters reveal a strong sense of compassion and trust in ordinary people. In the online chat logs, Manning showed his extraordinary empathy for others when he wrote that “I can’t separate myself from others. . . . I feel connected to everybody, like they were distant family.”<sup>26</sup>

At OHM 2013, a five-day outdoor international festival for hackers and cybersecurity workers, retired CIA officer Ray McGovern remarked how both Snowden and Manning acted with empathy when they witnessed human suffering.<sup>27</sup> They trusted the general public over governments and found hope in the actions of ordinary people to change the course of society for the better. Manning said:

It’s important that it gets out. . . . I feel, for some bizarre reason . . . it might actually change something . . . hopefully worldwide discussion, debates, and reforms . . . if not . . . then we’re doomed as a species.<sup>28</sup>

The same sentiment was shared by Snowden when he said that “the greatest fear that I have regarding the outcome for America of these disclosures is that nothing will change.”<sup>29</sup> It is those human attributes that the empire has been trying to punish, repress, and eradicate.

On July 30, 2013, the military judge delivered a verdict in the case of Bradley Manning. Manning was found not

guilty for the most ridiculous charge of “aiding the enemy” for leaking state secrets and evidence of war crimes that were published by major news outlets and posted on the Internet. Yet he was found guilty of multiple other counts, including six Espionage Act offenses. He faced punishment of up to 136 years in prison, which, during the sentencing phase, was reduced to maximum of 90 years.

In responding to the verdict, journalist Norman Solomon wrote about how the problem the US government had with Manning was that he acted out of “caring, with empathy propelling solidarity.”<sup>30</sup>

In this sense of naïveté there lies a strength that makes it possible for us to act toward a vision of a world that we imagine. WikiLeaks wrote in its “About” page: “It takes a little bit of naivety in order to jump in and do something that otherwise looks impossible. Many great advances in science, technology and culture have a touch of naivety at their inception.”<sup>31</sup>

What at first appears as naïveté is what actually plants seeds for future change. Ideals grow in the minds and hearts of many in this generation and help cultivate a moral sensibility that allows each person to make unique contributions to the world. Janet Reitman, who wrote a defining piece on Hammond, ended the article by highlighting his idealism: “[Hammond] was an idealist who even after being jailed, kept fighting at every occasion and he never betrayed himself.”<sup>32</sup>

For those in power, the idealism of this generation and their conscience is an existential threat to their order. The “crime” of aiding the enemy here is really the act of aiding democracy and acting for the public good. In the end, it has shown that we the public have become the enemy of the state.

What is really happening with the growing trend of crackdowns on digital dissenters and truth-tellers? Our society has failed to listen. Those in power are actively shutting out the voices of those with a conscience. Obama’s unprecedented war on whistleblowers, equating these heroic deeds with treason, is simply a symptom of this systematic deafening of society. How did it get to this? How has our society become so degraded?

## **We are winning**

The totalitarian surveillance state wasn’t built in a day. There was a warning. Back in 1975, the late senator Frank Church at the famous Church Committee hearings challenged the burgeoning potential of total surveillance in the US:

[The National Security Agency’s] capability at any time could be turned around on the American people, and no American would have any privacy left, such is the capability to monitor everything: telephone conversations, telegrams, it doesn’t matter. There would be no place to hide.<sup>33</sup>

Thirty-eight years later, the young and courageous whistleblower Edward Snowden stepped forward to once

again alert the people of the world to the severity of Big Brother moving into a digital dystopia, which he described as a “turnkey tyranny.”<sup>34</sup> All the US government would need to do would be to give the order and this once-great nation could quickly spiral into overt despotism. The battle thus continues in earnest between opposing forces: freedom and control, transparency and secrecy, sharing and proprietary ownership. It is in this fight that the Internet generation has found itself.

Speaking from the Ecuadorian embassy, Assange said that “we are winning. . . . We are a part of a new international body politic that is developing, thanks to the Internet.”<sup>35</sup> He predicted the inevitable defeat of the national security state, emphasizing that the ones who are recruited into the NSA and the CIA are mostly young people aged between 20 and 30 who have been exposed to Internet culture all their lives and who have been profoundly shaped by its values of sharing and transparency. Assange further stated that these young people will find “the agencies that they work for do not behave in a legal, ethical or moral manner.”<sup>36</sup> This is already happening, and this new form of information dissent is growing.

For instance, at Black Hat Briefings, a gathering of computer experts and cybersecurity professionals in Las Vegas, NSA head Keith Alexander was repeatedly interrupted by the audience. As Alexander stated the NSA’s mission for freedom, a critical voice emerged to oppose the NSA surveillance.<sup>37</sup>

Despite Obama's aggressive prosecution of whistleblowers, the climate of fear doesn't seem to hinder the will of those who act with conscience. Edward Snowden spoke of how he learned from others who came before him, noting that the power of one's conscience cannot be imprisoned:

Binney, Drake, Kiriakou, and Manning are all examples of how overly-harsh responses to public-interest whistleblowing only escalates the scale, scope, and skill involved in future disclosures. Citizens with a conscience are not going to ignore wrong-doing simply because they'll be destroyed for it: the conscience forbids it. Instead, these draconian responses simply build better whistleblowers.<sup>38</sup>

That Snowden asylum victory was just the beginning. Now privacy has a chance to at least have a front row debate. Snowden's revelations led to a major House vote on an amendment that would defund one single NSA program to end its blanket collection of US phone records.<sup>39</sup> Even though the bill was defeated, it lost by only 12 votes.<sup>40</sup> This process has brought about huge shifts in public opinion about the security state and government secrecy.<sup>41</sup>

A grassroots organization called Restore the Fourth quickly formed, which had its first round of protest on July 4th to challenge the constitutionality of NSA mass surveillance after it was revealed by Snowden. The group then launched mass protests, calling for "1984

Day,” named after George Orwell’s classic novel about the surveillance state. This movement is gathering momentum. Across major cities in the US, people marched, calling to end government spying.<sup>42</sup>

More recently, Ladar Levison, the founder of a US-based encrypted email service reportedly used by Edward Snowden, announced that he was shutting down the operation. He made the decision after being given a stark choice between becoming “complicit in crimes against the American people” or walking away from “nearly ten years of hard work by shutting down Lavabit.”<sup>43</sup> Levison chose the latter instead of submitting to the government’s secret order to provide it with access to customer information.

While government surveillance brings pressure on Internet companies to collude with them, more and more people are coming together to resist this insidious force. Three of Germany’s largest email providers announced plans to partner up to strengthen the security of messages sent between them.<sup>44</sup> Mailpile, an Iceland-based free/open source email service, is crowdfunding a secure private email client/cloud service as an alternative to US-tied services such as Gmail.<sup>45</sup> After the revelation of the Xkeyscore spying program, which has been shown to specifically target Wikipedia users, the Wikimedia Foundation stepped forward to take extra measures to protect users’ privacy.<sup>46</sup>

Nothing can stop this generation infused with a new

sense of justice and a shared vision for humanity. Just like with online connections, where when one link is broken, another emerges, when one person is taken out of the global network of digital dissenters, several more inevitably emerge.

Call them whistleblowers, dissidents, hackers, or geeks, the digital dissenters of today's Internet generation are uncovering deceit and corrupted state power. Our connections and genuine care for one another are a form of power in the ether, creating networks that can lead us into a future already imagined in our heart. Whether or not this generation can help move the world beyond the inhumane system of illegitimate governance is up to us, as we too are a part of this rising Internet generation.

# 11

## The Unsung Hero of the NSA Revelations

SEPTEMBER 26, 2013

How many people can look back on their lives and say they have done something significant for the betterment of society? Oftentimes selfless and noble actions of individuals go unrecognized. There are always those who act quietly behind the scenes at crucial turning points in history. Such a person is Sarah Harrison.

After Edward Snowden came forward as the source behind the release of the NSA classified documents, and the Obama Administration's aggressive international manhunt began, Harrison, a 31-year-old British native, emerged on the world stage as the mysterious woman who accompanied this high-profile whistleblower in his quest for asylum. On June 23, WikiLeaks published her profile on its website. It described Harrison as a journalist and legal researcher who worked as section editor for WikiLeaks and as an investigative researcher for The Bureau of Investigative Journalism and the Centre for Investigative Journalism.<sup>1</sup> In July 2012, while Assange was unavailable, Harrison stepped forward to announce the release of the Syria Files at the Frontline Club in London.<sup>2</sup>

Harrison played a crucial role in enabling Snowden to leave Hong Kong and accompanied him on his fateful journey to Russia. When the United States revoked the passport of this former NSA contractor and attempted to extradite him, Harrison and Assange provided means for his safe passage to Moscow.<sup>3</sup> She stayed with him there, assisting with his asylum applications to various countries.

The *Washington Post* ran a story on Harrison on July 5, recounting her path into the world of journalism, from an unpaid internship to becoming one of Assange's close advisers. In the *Post* story, those who knew Harrison were cited. These included Gavin MacFadyen, director of the Centre for Investigative Journalism, and Vaughan Smith, founder of the Frontline Club, who offered Assange residence at his English estate while he was on house arrest. MacFadyen, who welcomed Harrison with no prior experience into his crew of investigative journalists, described how "she's smart, determined, and fully believes in the moral principle of shedding light."<sup>4</sup> Vaughan Smith said, "It's not as if she's getting anything out of this other than doing something that she believes is right, helping a whistleblower." He also noted how Harrison is driven by her own conviction.

As the media focused on Snowden's saga, she remained in the background. She was there beside him when he held the press conference at Sheremetyevo International Airport with local human rights groups, handling the situation professionally as the inflamed rhetoric

regarding Snowden's precarious situation grew.<sup>5</sup> She was there as Snowden holed up in the transit zone for almost six weeks, providing protection and a steady presence. She was last seen on August 1, leaving the airport with Snowden when he was granted temporary asylum in Russia.<sup>6</sup> Reports were circulating about Snowden's life in Russia, while Harrison's situation and whereabouts seemed to have slipped under the radar.<sup>7</sup> Yet in the same way that Snowden's life has changed forever because of his choice, it would be naive to think that Harrison could go back to her pre-Snowden life in the UK.

On August 18, WikiLeaks tweeted "How can WikiLeaks journalist and UK citizen Sarah Harrison feel safe to return home?"<sup>8</sup> On the following day, WikiLeaks stated that Harrison was now in self-exile.<sup>9</sup>

This action is not based on unfounded fear. The partner of the *Guardian* journalist Glenn Greenwald, David Miranda, was held at London's Heathrow Airport under Section 7 of the British Terrorism Act for the maximum time he could be detained.<sup>10</sup> After the incident, the *Guardian* revealed the British government's media intimidation.<sup>11</sup> The *Guardian* editor, Alan Rusbridger, spoke of how the British government threatened the newspaper with possible legal action unless they either destroyed Snowden's documents or handed them over to British authorities.<sup>12</sup>

Jacob Appelbaum, a computer security researcher, journalist, and advocate for the Tor Project, outlined the

extreme measures being used to intimidate journalists. He said that the US is increasingly becoming a place that is not safe for those who tell truth to power. Describing this as forcing “the birth of a generation of dissidents,” Appelbaum noted the trend of journalists exiling themselves because of likely government reprisal as a result of their work.<sup>13</sup> Glenn Greenwald is in Brazil. Both award-winning filmmaker Laura Poitras, who filmed the *Guardian* interview of Snowden, and Appelbaum have been living in Berlin.

Considering the US government’s draconian reactions to whistleblowing site WikiLeaks and others who expose government crimes and illegality, Harrison’s involvement with this organization already raises concern for her safety. Harrison is one of the few publicly known and acknowledged associates of Julian Assange beside Kristinn Hrafnsson and Joseph Farrell. WikiLeaks is under investigation by the US Justice Department, which has impaneled a secret grand jury, seeking information on Assange and staffers who are tied to the organization.<sup>14</sup>

The NSA scandal revealed that the agency spied on the Brazilian government, including its citizens and even the private communication of Brazilian president Dilma Rousseff.<sup>15</sup> After this finding, the president of Brazil canceled a state visit to the US.<sup>16</sup> In an email sent to the Brazilian daily *Folha de Sao Paulo*, Assange was reported to have acknowledged this act of the president

as symbolically important. He then urged Brazil to grant Harrison asylum.<sup>17</sup>

In an interview with Israeli news organization Haaretz, Greenwald spoke of how meeting Edward Snowden changed his life. He then stressed that the risk Snowden took was without any personal gain and done simply for the public good. He stated that this fits the “definition of a hero: someone who is prepared to take upon himself a fate that would terrify most people in the name of a noble goal.”<sup>18</sup>

The degree of risk might be different, but this is also what Harrison did and she was truly brave. After Snowden made the one-way trip to Hong Kong, he soon felt the imperial hands of the US government reaching for him, which he had expected. The drumbeat from Washington was getting louder with the rhetoric of traitor as they aggressively attempted extradition, even charging him with espionage on June 21.<sup>19</sup>

When no other organization stepped forward to offer Snowden help, WikiLeaks effectively intervened on his behalf.<sup>20</sup> With the organization’s commitment to source protection, Harrison carried the mission to secure the safety of what became the world’s most wanted whistleblower.

We live in an age of secrecy where elected leaders hide their true actions of oppression behind a facade of democracy. The acts of whistleblowers who bring transparency, revealing the vile nature of what is

concealed, are heroic. From Chelsea Manning to Snowden, what marks them as extraordinary is their courage and commitment to what they believe is right.

When Sarah Harrison decided to accompany Edward Snowden, she aligned herself with his courageous act. She stepped up to unite her fate with this historic deed of conscience. She had a choice, and she chose to risk her own security. Such an act was also heroic. Harrison's brave deed is an example of the significant yet often missed links that help shape history. It brought the world one step closer to a just society where conscientious acts of whistleblowers are protected and rewarded and abuse of power is revealed and punished. This kind of courage needs recognition, and heroes such as these need support and protection.

# 12

## Defeating the Conspiracy of Governance

JANUARY 2, 2014

In 2010, ongoing wars and government corruption spread through a fog of apathy. As the world appeared to be reaching a tipping point for great catastrophe, WikiLeaks emerged like a call to the conscience of humanity. Over the last few years, it released secret documents revealing Kenyan government corruption, Iceland's financial collapse, the criminality of US wars in the Middle East, and more. Its very existence and what it revealed called into question the legitimacy of imperial power structures around the world.

Ever since its initial public insurrection, WikiLeaks kept making headlines. In spite of founder Julian Assange being immobilized—first under house arrest and then confined in the Ecuadorian embassy in London—the stateless organization has continued to publish documents, shedding light on corruption and abuse of power. One might well have thought the life of this transparency advocacy group would be over after massive US government retaliation and financial blockades by PayPal, Visa, and other US financial giants.<sup>1</sup>

Yet in the year 2013, WikiLeaks showed itself to be as resilient and relevant as ever by releasing a secret draft of the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) treaty and aiding Snowden in his quest for asylum.

The inception of the whistleblowing website goes back to late 2006. At that time, Assange wrote a kind of manifesto called *Conspiracy as Governance*. In analyzing how corruption and secrecy are tied together, he described how “illegitimate governance is by definition conspiratorial—the product of functionaries working in collaborative secrecy . . . to the detriment of a population.”<sup>2</sup>

In the introduction, Assange defined the words “conspiracy, conspire” to mean “mak[ing] secret plans jointly to commit a harmful act; working together to bring about a particular result, typically to someone’s detriment.”<sup>3</sup> The word *conspire* originates in Latin: *con* (together) and *spire* (breathe)—to breathe together.<sup>4</sup> The common use of the word is by nature exclusive, where two or more people share fetid intellectual air behind closed doors, shutting out fresh ideas and the cleansing sunlight from outside. Conspiracy is sustained by inbred collusion of selfish interests. It is like smoke surrounding those who are bound by it, disconnecting them from the reality of everyday people who are kept outside of such elite circles and often exploited or otherwise harmed by their actions.

Enactment of hidden motives of conspiracy depends on secrecy. Whether elected government officials or corporate executives, their interests are mostly divorced from ordinary people, who are excluded from the circle. The primary motive behind this secrecy is to guard the self-interests of those involved.

## **The battle over public perception**

Secrecy is created and maintained through two means. One is simply to close information off from access by the public through government classification of documents. The other is to deceive by way of public relations—propaganda used to control or distort public perception. Secrecy and corruption of government and the corporate state have reached a point of no return as the US government overclassifies information under the pretext of national security, including information that undeniably belongs in the public domain.<sup>5</sup> In an interview with RT, activist and whistleblower Sibel Edmonds said, “Currently the executive branch is the sole determinant of what is classified,” pointing out how excessive government classification is being used as a tool to silence whistleblowers.<sup>6</sup>

Secrecy creates a gap in public perception about the stated goals of governments and real actions of their officials. This gap gives power to rich corporations and the governments to erase their bloody footsteps and hide the exploitative motives behind their actions. The power of secrecy is primarily the invisibility it grants to those

actions that would be universally condemned if they were fully placed in the public eye. If the real motives and actual effects of rapacious forces in government and industry are kept invisible to those outside of the inbred circle, the conspirators can carry out their agendas without any real opposition.

For instance, actions of corporations overseas involving cheap labor and exploitation is largely kept out of public sight. This creates a gap between actions of those in power and how everyday people see the world. What people see are beautiful clothes displayed at shopping malls. The names on store tags such as Old Navy, Banana Republic, and Gap found in the horrific aftermath of burned-out or collapsed sweatshops in Bangladesh reveal this insidious practice, yet to the Western consumer these names are just nice branding with appealing images of beautiful models.<sup>7</sup> These kinds of corporations perform Orwell's doublespeak with ironic store names that carry colonial connotations as they manufacture consumer's consent in their support of this exploitative model. Another example is the current round of negotiations over the TPP, which is a brazen attempt to subvert national law and individual enterprise so corporations can guarantee profits by overruling protections for the people and the free sharing of information.

This simple concealing of information and motives of those in power often goes hand in hand with the work of propaganda, keeping the public ignorant of what lurks

behind the scenes. A vital part of PR work involves creating false perception regarding self-interests of the elites, spinning false images that those in conspiracy are working for the common good. Moreover, the Pentagon spends an ever-increasing amount of money on PR every year, and there has been an alarming merger of commercial and government interests with mainstream journalism through the consolidation of corporate media. The forces behind state and corporate collusion are increasingly the primary forces shaping new laws and public policy—and these forces are heavily invested in maintaining control of public perception.

## **Illegitimate governance**

We are surrounded by an invisible force of control. Assange saw through its inner working and pointed out how governments that operate in secrecy are inherently conspiratorial and that such governance is by definition illegitimate. His observation led him to his first hypothesis for solving the problem of dissolving conspiracy. Assange wrote that “when a regime’s lines of internal communications are disrupted, the information flow among conspirators must dwindle, and that, as the flow approaches zero, the conspiracy dissolves.”<sup>8</sup>

He put this forward as kind of a mathematical formula that he thought could be used to dissolve conspiracy. Exposing secrecy equals weakening trust lines of communication which equals a collapse of conspiracy. With this act, the conspirators’ power of invisibility from

outsiders is undermined. In order for a formula to hold true and manifest, it needs a precise logic of architecture that would carry out each step. The act of becoming a watchdog on power usually comes from within the system, somewhere closer to the circle of conspiracy. This has traditionally come in the form of whistleblowers. The original Whistleblower Protection Act was enacted to ensure this necessary check and balance on power.<sup>9</sup> Yet we have seen steady erosion of this law. And, with Obama's aggressive prosecution of whistleblowers, there is no denying that this system of accountability has broken down.

The same can be said to some degree about the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) that was passed by Congress in 1966, which set limits on the government's withholding of documents. FOIA made federal agency documents except Congress and the judiciary available not only to US citizens, but people of any nationality upon request, with certain exemptions. Over the years, this has been rendered increasingly ineffective. One example is the case of the classified US military video of the incident on July 12, 2007, in New Baghdad depicting three airstrikes from a US Apache helicopter, which WikiLeaks released with the title "Collateral Murder." Reuters, some of whose journalists were killed in the video, tried to obtain the footage through FOIA requests, but without success.<sup>10</sup>

## **The method of leaking**

It was in response to this breakdown of traditional checks and balances on power that WikiLeaks blazed onto the world stage with a new model of stateless free press that practices adversarial journalism. The method of leaking was made possible through a unique technical infrastructure. The system of online anonymous drop boxes provides a secure platform that helps those inside an organization have the confidence to step forward and reveal wrongdoing without fear of their identity being revealed.

Exposing secrecy can bring the actions of conspirators into the public eye and rectify distorted public perception. Assange described a particular kind of information that signals the presence of conspiratorial work.<sup>11</sup> He explained how concealed information sends an economic signal for oppression because it shows someone putting economic input or work into concealing that information. This means it would be most effective to focus on the information that is most concealed and bring it out into the open, as that which is most heavily invested in being kept secret likely has the strongest effect of revealing corruption when unveiled to the public.

Assange also spoke of censorship as a signal of oppression. He held the view that censorship “reveals fear of reform. It means that the power position is so weak that [they] have got to care about what people

think.”<sup>12</sup> After releasing authentic classified documents that are gained through an inside source, WikiLeaks disseminated the information as widely as possible.

In April 2013, WikiLeaks published a trove of 1.7 million US diplomatic and intelligence documents called *The Kissinger Cables*, spanning from 1973 and 1976.<sup>13</sup> WikiLeaks spokesperson Kristinn Hrafnsson noted that hiding information behind a wall of complexity is also a form of secrecy.<sup>14</sup> By developing a highly searchable database, WikiLeaks made documents usable that were normally quite difficult to access.

## **The Trans-Pacific Partnership leaks**

Then came the TPP leaks. On November 13, WikiLeaks released a complete draft of the Trans-Pacific Partnership’s Intellectual Property Rights chapter.<sup>15</sup> TPP is a backroom corporate deal that enforces US interests and corporate hegemony on most countries. A major controversy over this bill is how its documents and dealings have been kept in extreme secrecy. Fast-track authority written into it is part of the corporate takeover of basic lawmaking, as only a few members of Congress have seen parts of it. Upon releasing the documents, WikiLeaks provided its interpretation in a short statement:

If instituted, the TPP’s IP (Intellectual Property) regime would trample over individual rights and free expression, as well as ride roughshod over the intellectual and creative commons. If you read, write,

publish, think, listen, dance, sing or invent; if you farm or consume food; if you're ill now or might one day be ill, the TPP has you in its crosshairs.<sup>16</sup>

Critics call the bill "ACTA (Anti-Counterfeiting Trade Agreement) on steroids"<sup>17</sup> and a "supersized NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement),"<sup>18</sup> arguing that it would violate privacy, sovereignty, and Internet freedom, and effectively trample on many basic information and environmental protections. Its main elements undermine popular sovereignty and democracy while empowering transnational corporations to change certain laws to suit their fancy. After WikiLeaks revealed this group of documents that seem designed mainly to expand US hegemony and corporate penetration of countries all over the world, there was a serious backlash from civil rights groups and the other negotiating parties. Despite the Obama Administration's aim to reach a deal by the new year, disagreements boiled over and the timeline for the agreement was then delayed.<sup>19</sup>

Once concealed information is revealed, conspirators lose the cloak of invisibility and the public can grasp the tails of the conspirators' intentions. This begins a process that can lead to justice. In the case of the TPP leaks, people could see real corporate interests and agendas disguised as governmental trade agreements. This is the formula: expose heavily guarded secrecy = correct public deception = bring about social and political justice.

WikiLeaks' mathematical formula to dissolve conspiratorial governance seems to have begun proving its validity. Yet as the world engages with deepening political and moral dilemmas, a more complex problem has surfaced within this increasingly corrupt and corporatized civil society. What new variable was added to the equation?

## **The death of the Fourth Estate**

There is no question that after WikiLeaks came in, the world changed. The organization published documents evidencing war crimes and government corruption, but this is not all it revealed. Over the years, WikiLeaks has become the acid test that unveiled how the Fourth Estate has degraded into a conspiracy of consolidated corporate media networks. It is now more clear than ever how mainstream journalism has become a guardian of conspiratorial power rather than performing any real check and balance on corruption.

Back in 2010, former CIA analyst Ray McGovern, in an exclusive interview with *Raw Story*, declared that “the Fourth Estate is dead!” and described the US media’s complicity with the Pentagon: “The Fourth Estate in this country has been captured by government and corporations, the military-industrial complex, the intelligence apparatus. Captive! So, there is no Fourth Estate.”<sup>20</sup>

Control of information and perception has become a real war of the 21st century. This year has seen the

overreaching decay of the Fourth Estate as the ubiquitous Hollywood entertainment industry collaborated in character assassination of Assange. In contrast to powerful propaganda films about WikiLeaks, like the multimillion dollar DreamWorks film *The Fifth Estate* and Alex Gibney's *We Steal Secrets*, WikiLeaks itself released a documentary called *Mediastan* to reveal the trend toward globalized media corruption, which also put forward its own narrative of the game-changing events that WikiLeaks helped set in motion.

In many ways, WikiLeaks embodies a new form of this essential function of the Fourth Estate. In past years, it disclosed more relevant authentic documentation than all corporate news media combined. Yet in the process, it faced another conundrum. Anyone who strives for truth will meet challenges, and Assange is no exception. In an interview with Al Jazeera, he was asked by the interviewer what he expected and what he did not expect prior to the releases. He responded that after the release of two war logs, he was surprised by the lack of public response to the leaked materials.<sup>21</sup>

In a 2010 *Time* interview, Assange talked about the role of social media in assisting the work of WikiLeaks.<sup>22</sup> He described how the analytical effort he expected from Internet citizens around the world did not occur, so WikiLeaks, professional journalists, and human rights activists had to do the bulk of the work. This relative lack of interest was also brought out during WikiLeaks' Operation Cablerun, featured in their film *Mediastan*.

The film followed a crew of WikiLeaks associates in a quest for media outlets to publish secret US diplomatic cables throughout Central Asia. One after another they met corruption, cynicism, or apathy from publishers. With the undeniable global decay of the Fourth Estate, people's sense of justice and morality seems to have become somewhat neutered. After decades of corporate and state propaganda, what prevails today is a passive and apathetic populace.

### **Reawakening the civic duty of resistance**

Leaking concealed information is fundamental for a democratic form of governance. Yet without a dedicated public willing to perform checks and balances on the inevitable and increasing abuse of power, there is little possibility of effectively transforming corrupt structures and dissolving any conspiracy of illegitimate authority. The problem of our age has taken a new twist. There is now another factor that needs to be added to the equation: the awakening of citizens who are motivated to perform civic duty to hold the powerful accountable and demand justice in a rapidly changing global landscape.

This leads to the deeper impulses behind leaking. In his 2006 paper, Assange laid out insights to dissolve conspiracy and stated how “we must use these insights to inspire within us and others a course of ennobling and effective action to replace the structures that lead to bad governance with something better.”<sup>23</sup> Assange clarified his insight on transparency, saying that “it is not our goal

to achieve a more transparent society; it's our goal to achieve a more just society.”<sup>24</sup> Transparency through leaking is not a goal in itself but a method for achieving an even higher moral goal. It is a way to break the shield of power that keeps citizens in the dark and to counter the kind of extractive and abusive behavior that human nature tends toward when working in secret.

Leaks are a way to break down walls, yet dissolving a conspiracy needs something more than simply releasing information. It requires an active force to confront and transform this centralized power, which is something those who conspire against the public depend on. Transparency in the form of whistleblowing is a courageous act. It opens locked doors, bringing air into the deep reaches of a rotting system. It allows those close to or within it to breathe fresh air. What transformative variables arise when an individual decides to act on this principle of transparency that is crucial for dissolving conspiracy?

## **The conscience of Chelsea Manning**

In his formula for achieving fundamental change, Assange points to inspiration as a critical factor when combined with knowledge. It is this inspiration from sources that is the fount of WikiLeaks’ contagious courage. In an interview on *Democracy Now!*, when he was asked what gives him hope, Assange responded:

What keeps us going is our sources. These are the people, presumably, who are inside these organizations,

who want change. They are both heroic figures taking much greater risks than I ever do, and they are pushing and showing that they want change in, in fact, an extremely effective way.<sup>25</sup>

Now the equation advances: courage and conscience of the source + means of transparency = movements toward justice. In 2013, we have seen this contagious quotient of inspiration prove itself vital to the equation of dissolving conspiracy. Two weeks after the court-martial proceeding of Chelsea Manning began, an unauthorized audio recording of her initial courtroom statement spread through social media, despite the extraordinary secrecy surrounding her trial.<sup>26</sup> For the first time after three years of silence, the world heard Manning's voice of conscience. In it, Manning laid out why she chose to release the massive trove of documents. After admitting that she was the source of the largest leak of classified information in history, Manning spoke about the motivation behind her actions:

I believed that if the general public, especially the American public, had access to the information . . . this could spark a domestic debate on the role of the military and our foreign policy in general.<sup>27</sup>

As she had hoped, her courage sparked new waves of insurgency. Manning's role in inspiring the Arab Spring was praised by Daniel Ellsberg, the former US military analyst and America's most renowned whistleblower. On the first day of Manning's pretrial hearing, Ellsberg

acknowledged her act as the impulse behind critical global movements that have quickly risen as tides of change for our time:

The *Time* magazine cover gives protester, an anonymous protester, as “Person of the Year,” but it is possible to put a face and a name to that picture of “Person of the Year.” And the American face I would put on that is Private Bradley Manning. . . . And, the combination of the WikiLeaks and Manning exposures in Tunis and the exemplification of that by Mohamed Bouazizi led to the protests, the nonviolent protests.<sup>28</sup>

In September of this year, Tunisian activist Sami Ben Gharbia paid homage to Manning for her role in inspiring the Arab Spring. He said the revolution:

had to start somewhere, and the release of the cables started with Private Chelsea Manning, alone in the Iraqi desert. After she was sentenced to 35 years in prison, Chelsea Manning said in her statement that “Sometimes you have to pay a heavy price to live in a free society.” I don’t know if she knows that she helped us, in this part of the world, to move toward that noble goal. Closing a cell door on a prisoner with a free mind has opened a thousand and one doors for a free society.<sup>29</sup>

## **The contagion of courage**

While Manning’s act of conscience became a catalyst for a global uprising, it also paved the way for other whistleblowers to courageously step forward. In 2013, the world saw a new wave of dissent. Then 28-year-old

political activist Jeremy Hammond hacked into Stratfor, a Texas-based global intelligence company, to expose the inner workings of the insidious and pervasive surveillance state, including their spying activities on activists around the globe.

Right after Hammond's sentencing hearing, WikiLeaks finished publishing the Global Intelligence Files—over five million emails from Stratfor. At his sentencing hearing, Hammond spoke about how his act was inspired by his forerunner Chelsea Manning and her courage in exposing the atrocities committed by US forces in Iraq and Afghanistan:

She took an enormous personal risk to leak this information—believing that the public had a right to know and hoping that her disclosures would be a positive step to end these abuses . . . I had to ask myself, if Chelsea Manning fell into the abysmal nightmare of prison fighting for the truth, could I in good conscience do any less, if I was able? I thought the best way to demonstrate solidarity was to continue the work of exposing and confronting corruption.<sup>30</sup>

Then came Edward Snowden, the former NSA contractor who blew the whistle on the most powerful surveillance entity in history. In a video interview with former *Guardian* journalist Glenn Greenwald, Snowden spoke of the motives behind his action:

I don't want to live in a world where there's no privacy and therefore no room for intellectual exploration and

creativity. . . . My sole motive is to inform the public as to that which is done in their name and that which is done against them.<sup>31</sup>

Snowden admired Manning and learned from his young forerunner. Behind the NSA leaks are others who were infected by their courage. Award-winning documentary filmmaker Laura Poitras—who was the first media contact in the story<sup>32</sup>—and Glenn Greenwald were both inspired by Chelsea Manning and Snowden’s contagious courage.<sup>33</sup>

In a statement he made one year after entering the Ecuadorian embassy, Assange called out the US government for framing those who speak truth to power as “traitors” and criminalizing them.<sup>34</sup> He defended these whistleblowers, urging the public to help Snowden in his quest for asylum.

This past year we have seen WikiLeaks continue to walk their talk. When the US government revoked Snowden’s passport, journalist Sarah Harrison of WikiLeaks helped him escape Hong Kong and inevitable jail time or worse in the United States.<sup>35</sup> Months later, Snowden remained free to speak and engage in the public debate he helped to create.

“Citizens have to fight suppression of information on matters of vital public importance. To tell the truth is not a crime,” Snowden wrote in his letter to the German government.<sup>36</sup> On Christmas day, Britain’s Channel 4 televised his message: “Privacy matters. Privacy is what

allows us to determine who we are and who we want to be.”<sup>37</sup> In an interview with *Washington Post* reporter Barton Gellman, Snowden expressed his sense of victory and stated that his mission had already been accomplished.<sup>38</sup> The genie was not going to be put back in the bottle. This contagion of courage cannot be stopped, as people have begun to inspire each other.

## **The courage to inspire**

Snowden’s pursuit for asylum has created a new discourse. WikiLeaks journalist Sarah Harrison played a crucial role in making this possible. Referring specifically to Chelsea Manning, who is now serving decades behind bars, Harrison explained the reason for risking her own life and liberty to accompany Snowden: “There needs to be another narrative.... There needs to be a happy ending. People need to see that you can do this and be safe.”<sup>39</sup> In her November 6 statement, Harrison articulated her conviction of the importance for transparency that was demonstrated in her extraordinary commitment to source protection:

When whistleblowers come forward, we need to fight for them so others will be encouraged. When they are gagged, we must be their voice. When they are hunted, we must be their shield. When they are locked away, we must free them. Giving us the truth is not a crime. This is our data, our information, our history. We must fight to own it.<sup>40</sup>

The 30th Chaos Communication Congress (CCC), held in Hamburg in the last days of 2013, saw a significant increase in the number of participants, which showed how this whistleblower support community is thriving. In the opening keynote speech, Glenn Greenwald shared with the audience the profound impact Snowden's act had on him and on people around the world:

The courage and the principled act of conscience that he displayed will shape and inspire me for the rest of my life, and will inspire and convince millions and millions of people to take all sorts of acts that they might not have taken because they've seen what good for the world can be done by even a single individual.<sup>41</sup>

Later he reminded the crowd of Harrison's heroic act as well. Greenwald empowered the audience, noting that there is now a huge network of human beings around the world who believe in causes for transparency and who devote time and sacrifice for it.

Assange joined the CCC talk “Sysadmins of the World, Unite!” via Skype with Jacob Appelbaum,

independent journalist and security expert, and with Harrison, who was welcomed with a standing ovation by more than 4,000 people.<sup>42</sup> Assange spoke to the audience about how high-tech workers compose a particular class and how, as system administrators, they are part of an important administration of interconnected individual systems. He encouraged these administrators to unite in their fight for Internet

freedom, reminding them how they “have extraordinary power, in a way that is really an order of magnitude different to the power industrial workers had back in the 20th century.”<sup>43</sup>

Appelbaum asked the audience “What is it that you feel like you can do?”<sup>44</sup> He emphasized the positive contribution one can make, each in their own way. He then used Harrison’s action as an example that embodies individual courage and creates the kind of link that inspires others.

Inspiration is an antidote to conspiracy. It is like a compassionate bullet that brings down the walls around armored hearts and breaks up the conspiring of narrow interests. In solving the problem of illegitimate governance, we are now waking up to the fact that ordinary people are the vital quantity for the equation. The numbers are growing as the new network of awakened and impassioned individuals expands.

In these years after WikiLeaks came to public prominence, where are we with the equation in Assange’s conspiracy as governance? Has it been tested and its solution enacted? As leaked documents continue to shed light on the darkness of the world, illegal wars, drone attacks, bankster heists, and corporate dirty deals continue. Yet thanks to Manning, we now have a clearer picture of what modern war really looks like and the extent to which the military-industrial complex is morally bankrupt. Thanks to Hammond, we are more

aware of the collusion of governments and corporations in a network of spying on activists. Thanks to Snowden's NSA files, we are now beginning to see the latent tyranny of an out-of-control surveillance state.

2013 was the year that we saw the courage of individuals who speak truth to power become truly contagious. There is no doubt that WikiLeaks and other budding organizations have helped the world move one step closer toward a more democratic society. More and more people are counting themselves into the equation. In the presence of love, hatred cannot last. In the light of transparency, darkness dissolves and in the presence of inspiration, people can no longer conspire. Each person's act of conscience breathes into the other, eventually becoming the critical mass needed to solve the critical moral math of our time.

# 13

## The First Amendment Revolution

JULY 4, 2014

Since 2011, from the Arab Spring and Spanish Revolution to Occupy, waves of global uprisings have erupted as never before. The crisis of representation helped spawn decentralized movements as a manifestation of people's aspiration to take the reins of their own destiny. For many, the presumption of legitimacy of governments has been crumbling. So what has triggered this widespread global crisis?

Amnesty International reported the role of WikiLeaks' documents in instigating global revolutionary uprisings.<sup>1</sup> The BBC documentary *WikiLeaks: Secret Life of a Superpower* also attributed its revelations as a spark for the Arab revolutions, showing how US cable leaks shared through social networking sites in 2010 became a powerful force that finally toppled the corrupt Tunisian dictator Ben Ali.<sup>2</sup>

We live in a globalized society where consent of the governed is often manufactured through domestic propaganda or denied by military forces of authoritarian regimes or foreign powers. This use of coercive force is well-hidden from the vast majority of people in the world. The global crisis of legitimacy that seeded a cycle

of movements revealed the interwoven structure of Western economic and military power, which in many countries imposes a kind of corporate dictatorship under the guise of liberal democracy.

WikiLeaks' publication of disclosed documents along with established media reaction showed the true face of liberal institutions and the waning effectiveness of the politics of representation. Western media outlets like the *New York Times* and the *Guardian* engaged in sensational tabloid hit pieces on Julian Assange and other truth-tellers, showing themselves to be servants of the managed pretense of Democracy Inc.

In late 2010, political activist and essayist John Perry Barlow tweeted: “The first serious infowar is now engaged. The field of battle is WikiLeaks. You are the troops.”<sup>3</sup> Following the massive release of US diplomatic cables, WikiLeaks became a target of fierce retaliation from the Pentagon and aggressive corporate media rhetoric, attempting to incriminate the whistleblowing site along with extrajudicial banking blockades by private companies such as PayPal, Visa, and MasterCard.

### **We the people: the ultimate source of legitimacy**

Journalist and WikiLeaks editor Sarah Harrison gave a keynote address at the Deutsche Welle Global Media Forum. She noted how the attacks on WikiLeaks revealed the “greatest unaccountable power of today—the United States and our Western democracies.”<sup>4</sup>

This battle against WikiLeaks was an assault on the fundamental principle of the First Amendment. Here, we have seen the US government declaring war against the very founding ideals of this country. Obama's unprecedented war on both whistleblowers and journalists has revealed the escalation of this frontal assault on freedom of speech and the press.

The First Amendment is the primary cornerstone of the Bill of Rights. It was founded on the ideals that inspired the Declaration of Independence. This was a revolutionary spirit of equality and the aspiration of ordinary people to take control of their lives. It fueled passion for the revolt against the human condition of monarchy, exemplified by the imposed authority of King George.

Despite all the flaws, contradictions, and inherent inequality with the founders of the US, and the large gap between ideals and reality, the Bill of Rights was a groundbreaking move away from the single power of central authority, whether it be king, plutocrat, or president. It was an attempt to create a shift from a centralized throne to a system of law, specifically with the US Constitution as a mechanism for the balance of power.

This history-making document was a declaration of the supreme power of the common man. It recognizes everyday people as the primary active agent within any healthy society. No government, profession, politician,

or business owner shall be above the law; all are to be bound by the common law of “we the people” that was proclaimed in the preamble to the Constitution. This was based on the idea that authority of governance is only legitimate when granted, checked, and balanced by ordinary people. From this, there emerged a vision of government as a social form that can become a manifestation of people’s free will to associate with others and organize their own governing structures based on mutual aid. The First Amendment was a crucial step toward deriving the source of legitimacy from ordinary people. It was to ensure citizens the right to choose who to trust and give authority to, and when it is appropriate to withdraw that trust and authority.

Yet despite the ideals in the Declaration, from its inception, democracy in the US republic was never intended to be direct, created of the people, by the people, and for the people. The idea of equality self-evidenced in the Declaration was kept unfree as the republic took representation as its formal governing structure. The true revolutionary force behind the First Amendment remained leashed. This was most apparent in the denial of rights for slaves, indigenous people, and women.

Though in many ways it was a groundbreaking concept, American democracy still had a tendency for corruption and unchecked power of privilege. In this representative form of governance, some progress was made, but the fuller meaning of the First Amendment remained

unrealized. The people as the source of all power as a concept seems to have been lost, and the role of citizens came to be defined as simply a check and balance on existing power. Yet over the last hundred years, with the rise of corporate dominance, a deep decay in the system of government accountability has taken place.

### **The corporate coup d'état and subversion of the rule of law**

A little-known incident took place in 1886, when a Supreme Court clerk made a notation from an offhand comment of a judge, which launched the legal fiction of corporate personhood. This was a silent corporate coup d'état of democracy, bringing the concept of “we the people” as the highest law of the land to its knees.

The notion of corporate personhood with rights equal to (or more than) human beings was slipped in without much examination. Soon, corporations were granted the rights of personhood under the equal protection clause of the Constitution. The 14th Amendment, which was originally passed to grant rights to former slaves, was now being used to create a new class of personhood that would stand above all people under the Constitution.

In the article “Destroying the Commons: How the Magna Carta Became a Minor Carta,” Noam Chomsky described what happened:

The post-Civil War fourteenth amendment granted the rights of person to former slaves, though mostly in theory. At the same time, it created a new category of

persons with rights: corporations. In fact, almost all the cases brought to the courts under the fourteenth amendment had to do with corporate rights, and by a century ago, they had determined that these collectivist legal fictions, established and sustained by state power, had the full rights of persons of flesh and blood; in fact, far greater rights, thanks to their scale, immortality, and protections of limited liability.<sup>5</sup>

This was a pivotal moment that can be traced as the beginning of ever-increasing corporate dominance, unfolding mostly without the awareness of the people.

The First Amendment was the first casualty of this corporate coup d'état of the US Constitution. Over the years, the principle of equality before the law was effectively diminished and many have been excluded from the circle of us the people. The consolidation of media corporations took over public airwaves and began to filter the flow of information. With the control of money through a privately owned Federal Reserve and corporate trade agreements such as WTO (World Trade Organization) and NAFTA, bankers and transnational corporations have been imposing regulation and restricting the flow of finance and labor to subvert the sovereignty of whole nations. Now, thanks to WikiLeaks, this blatant takeover of governments and economies by hidden private interests can no longer stay under the radar.

Following its revelation of the secret trade deal known as the TPP (the Trans-Pacific Partnership), WikiLeaks published a draft chapter for the Trade in Services Agreement (TISA), a Financial Services Annex that covers 50 countries and over 68% of world trade in services.<sup>6</sup> This deal was classified and intended to be secret, not only during the negotiation but also for five years after it became law. It was meant to serve transnational corporations by forcing deregulation of global financial services markets for commercial interests and was promoted by the same governments and central banks that were responsible for creating the global financial crisis five years ago.

In a nutshell, this proposed global trade agreement is just another tactic for corralling the global population into a new peasant class. Its only purpose is to constrict the free flow of capital by setting centralizing rules to benefit oligarchs under the guise of political representation, by way of fast-track trade authority.

This corporate hijacking of governments and democratic processes nullifies the power of people to guide their own lives. It results in the stagnation of imagination and turns the will toward apathy. The remedy for this continuous assault by this corporate coup d'état first requires the freeing of the First Amendment from the very foundations on which it was born, namely the US Constitution, which over the past decades has been subverted by corporate power. How can we liberate free

speech from this corporate propriety and release its true force into the world?

## **The liberation of the First Amendment**

Efforts to free the First Amendment from this takeover came from outside the US. Since 2010, the rise of WikiLeaks and politicized youth on the Internet have started to intervene in the expanding imperial power of the corporate state.

In a sense, WikiLeaks was an experiment of free speech with the world as laboratory, testing this hypothesis: What would happen if the First Amendment is really applied to all people? Through placing its operation upon the ether network, this journalistic organization broke down the firewalls of nation-bound laws. By making servers run through various countries that have strong source protection laws and bouncing encrypted information through dozens of computers, they created an autonomous zone that would function as a new global Fourth Estate.

This encryption technology that secures communication made it possible for the organization to create systems of anonymous drop boxes, helping those inside a large corrupt organization to step forward and reveal wrongdoing without being exposed. This way, the world's first truly transnational publisher crossed borders and challenged the barriers to free speech that exist in a similar way to boundaries in ideas and language that restrict free thought. So how did

WikiLeaks unleash the true revolutionary force of the First Amendment around the world?

## **Scientific journalism**

By way of its infrastructure of stateless, untraceable whistleblowing, WikiLeaks open-sourced the principles of free speech, making it possible for silenced and oppressed voices to find their expression.

With their source-driven journalism, they supported the equal application of the First Amendment all over the world. This publishing organization typically does not solicit and actively seek information. After the release of the Afghan War Diary, when asked about his stance on the war in Afghanistan, Assange said, “This is not a role our organization has. We don’t have a pro-war, anti-war [stance]. We are an organization that represents what our confidential sources want to say to the world.”<sup>7</sup> He described that their foremost duty is to be true to the source, to give voice to the information that comes through them.

The organization does not play favorites or target specific groups or governments or discriminate against submissions based on a particular political bias or agenda. Its job is to simply verify the authenticity of the submitted materials. If they fit the criteria for publication, then WikiLeaks finds a way to best represent and manifest the wishes of the source. Through a platform for publication of leaked documents, WikiLeaks liberates the right to free speech that has been

very abused by the US government, ironically from the very birthplace of this idea. Through freeing information for the common people, it counteracts interlocking corporate-led globalization.

WikiLeaks' fidelity to the First Amendment far exceeds other journalistic entities. This was exemplified by the organization's extraordinary commitment to source protection. At re:publica14, Harrison described the reason for her courageous act in rescuing Snowden, saying how it was important to create another example of how one can safely tell the truth and participate in the ensuing debate.<sup>8</sup>

As a press for people, WikiLeaks performs the role of adversarial journalism as a watchdog on those in power. WikiLeaks specifically offers an avenue for those voices likely to be persecuted or ignored, making it often the publisher of last resort.<sup>9</sup> Assange described how they are most interested in a particular quality of information and pointed out that concealed information has greater potential for just reform because those who hide it spend energy and resources in concealment for a reason. He pointed out how this signal of suppression is a sign of opportunity, showing how “there is something worth looking at to see if it should be exposed and that censorship expresses weakness not strength.”<sup>10</sup>

What sets WikiLeaks apart from other media organizations is its discipline of scientific journalism. It always releases the full source material related to a story,

whether the story is published by WikiLeaks or someone else. This makes it possible for it to work in line with the spirit of free speech, to act as the people's press. Assange explained:

Everything we do is like science. It is checkable, independently checkable because the information which has informed our conclusions is there, just like scientific papers which are based on experimental data and must make that experimental data available to other scientists and the public if they want their papers to be published.<sup>11</sup>

When the information that led to a conclusion is made available to the public, people can follow the process themselves and examine the validity of the disclosures and analysis, so they can make their own independent conclusions about the material. This places the role and task of journalists and press as a servant of the people rather than purveyors of propaganda spin or shapers of perception. Instead of journalists dictating what the public should know and mediating public opinion, journalism for the people upholds ordinary people's right to know and treats freeing of public information as a vital application of the First Amendment, allowing all to participate as peers.

Behind this approach is a premise that we are all equal, that no one is above the law and allowed to govern others without their consent. In addressing the issues of redaction, Harrison talked about how through its past publication experience, WikiLeaks learned that the best

approach is to start with the premise that the public deserves everything and thus everything should be given to them.

Harrison also stated how WikiLeaks holds a view that information itself does not create harm and names of individuals that cause imminent threats of course may need to be redacted. Nevertheless she noted how the organization believes that the public should have access to full source documents in order to see pieces of information in context, as each part can change meaning. Along with scientific journalism, Harrison also noted the ethics of preserving history and providing people with full archives in a searchable format, allowing the public an “ability to engage with their own history.”<sup>12</sup> She argued how information can empower the public. She gave an example of a particular German citizen who was mistakenly identified as a terrorist and how he was able to use information released by WikiLeaks to make his own court case.

As an intelligence agency for the people, WikiLeaks respects anyone’s rights to form their own opinions, to freely associate and express themselves. Through committing to provide archives, it makes journalism a participatory experience in which it does not claim to be the final authority. Rather, WikiLeaks engages people in a collaborative and inclusive process of facilitating the court of public opinion to draw their own conclusions.

With scientific journalism, we can now free people from the pretense of authority inherent in the corporate media model and its false creed of objectivity. This empowers people to question authority and discern for themselves the legitimacy of those who claim to represent them.

Once this system of checks and balances is in place, we can all act as equal participants in a democracy. With the ability to hold those in power accountable, we are now questioning the current form of representation itself. This creates an option of representation where anyone can check the legitimacy of those who claim to represent them. Whether it is WikiLeaks or another media organization, we can choose for ourselves who we want to grant authority to represent our interests. It makes outer authority not so much a necessity or something to be imposed, but just an option where the public can choose professionals such as journalists, lawyers, and politicians to perform the tasks on their behalf.

The First Amendment revolution continues, and organizations like WikiLeaks are at the front line in this battle. This is an experiment of democracy and we are now seeing the unhindered revolutionary force of the First Amendment. What would happen if people realize that they have power and that representation is no longer necessary? What happens if the science of human intelligence and the genius of technology are used to serve for the emancipation of human potential rather than as a weapon of control? It is not encryption or

technology itself or WikiLeaks that determines the course of destiny. It is you and I who are the true active agents of history.

The First Amendment revolution calls for an awakening behind the mask, a rising active citizenry who will think critically and engage in the work of checking on those to whom we choose to grant authority. The real question in our hands is, Are we ready to be free, to claim and exercise the responsibility that comes with such great power?

# When Google Met WikiLeaks

OCTOBER 3, 2014

In recent years, the online and offline worlds have become increasingly blurred. Much of cyberspace has come to mirror the outer structures of power dictated by the 1% of oligarchic elites. We stand at a crossroads, at a turning tide of civilization. This shift is indicated in Assange's new book *When Google Met WikiLeaks*.<sup>1</sup> In its essence, this book is about two contrasting forces that could determine the course of our future in important ways. In these 223 pages, one will find a lively record of a fascinating meeting of minds, along with Assange's account and analysis, which provides his vision for the future of the Internet.

This is a story of the encounter between WikiLeaks and Google. These two entities, each in its own way, have become highly influential in the world. The meeting took place June 23, 2011, while Assange was living under house arrest in the country manor of Vaughan Smith, the founder of the Frontline Club. At that time, Assange was fighting extradition for questioning regarding Swedish authorities' allegations of sexual misconduct. With the release of the US diplomatic cables and an unprecedented political retaliation against WikiLeaks

unfolding, “the delegation,” which Assange described as “one part Google, three parts US foreign-policy establishment” came out to rural Norfolk, about three hours northeast of London.<sup>2</sup>

The purpose of this visit was to collect research for a book being written by Eric Schmidt, the former CEO of Google, and Jared Cohen, director of Google Ideas and former adviser to Condoleezza Rice and Hillary Clinton. They had requested the meeting to discuss ideas for their upcoming publication entitled *The New Digital Age*.<sup>3</sup>

Accompanying the duo were the book’s editor, Scott Malcomson, former senior adviser for the UN and member of the Council on Foreign Relations, who eventually worked at the US State Department. Also with them was Lisa Shields, the vice president of the Council on Foreign Relations, closely tied to the State Department, who was Schmidt’s partner at the time. In the illuminating three hours of conversation, which can be heard in its entirety on the WikiLeaks site, the editor in chief of the publisher of last resort engaged in an in-depth discussion with the then CEO of Google, who had turned the Silicon Valley iconic start-up into a multinational search giant. They debated political challenges and ways that global digital networking and technology might bring changes to fundamental structures of society.

## **Web of self-deception**

When people talk about interaction on the World Wide Web, the topic often shifts to Facebook and Google, as if the whole Internet has become synonymous with such third-party companies. Many people don't realize how these companies are simply centralized aspects of the Internet and that they don't represent its basic structure or what it could become. Here, Assange alerted us to the growing influence of such entities and revealed how "Google's geopolitical aspirations" are deeply interwoven with the "foreign-policy agenda of the world's largest super-power."<sup>4</sup>

If President Obama, with his rhetoric of "hope and change," is a brand that expands the structure of the offline Western patronage networks and disguises its architects, then Google seems to have become a new meme, mobilizing this radical American foreign policy into the digital space.

Assange observed US state power's silent co-option of Google, using its friendly, playful color and progressive image as part of the smiley face of modern oppression. He warned that the "advance of information technology epitomized by Google heralds the death of privacy for most people and shifts the world toward authoritarianism."<sup>5</sup> In the book, Assange made it clear that Google is not as innocent as it portrays itself to be. He revealed what happened when this company, that grew out of an innovative California graduate student

culture, came in contact with Washington's halls of power.

Assange described how “Google’s bosses genuinely believe in the civilizing power of enlightened multinational corporations, and they see this mission as continuous with the shaping of the world according to the better judgment of a ‘benevolent superpower.’”<sup>6</sup> This process is so gradual and discrete that it is hardly conscious on the part of the actors. Through getting quite close to the US State Department and NSA, this digital mega-corporation began to incorporate their ambitions and came to “see no evil.”

This internalization of imperial values created what Assange called the “impenetrable banality of ‘don’t be evil.’”<sup>7</sup> It appears that bosses at Google genuinely think they are doing good, while they are quickly becoming part of a power structure that Assange described as a “capricious global system of secret loyalties, owed favors, and false consensus, of saying one thing in public and the opposite in private.”<sup>8</sup> Allegiance can create obedience, and unspoken alliance creates a web of self-deception through which one comes to believe one’s own lies and becomes entangled in them.

## **Radicalization of Internet youth**

Along with shedding light on this invisible force of governance, Assange pointed us to a deeper decentralized net. Now, for more than two years, the founder of WikiLeaks has been holed up in the

Ecuadorian embassy in London, ever since the British government obstructed his passage to Ecuador. It is this underground world of cyberspace that connects him to the interconnected world of dissidents and visionaries, making it possible for him to continue doing his work.

We might here discover the true force of the Internet and how WikiLeaks represents a crucial facet of its autonomous force. Calling it a “guerrilla publisher,”<sup>9</sup> Assange described how the organization would “draw surveillance and censorship in one jurisdiction and simply redeploy in another, moving across borders like ghosts.” He explained the philosophy behind WikiLeaks and its architecture, especially what made the organization successful in combating censorship with the use of technology as a nonviolent tool to fight coercion and secrecy of the state.

Tapping into waves of street movements and similar insurgence that has emerged on the Internet, Assange draws attention to a new organ of civil society growing in tandem with WikiLeaks’ decentralized infrastructure. He saw it as a kind of evolution of the Internet, transforming itself from an apathetic space into a “demos—a people with a shared culture, shared values, and shared aspirations.”<sup>10</sup>

Assange engaged with this team of tech giants, openly sharing his understanding of a technology that enabled communication in a critical revolutionary time. At one point, Malcomson inquired about the human side that

makes broad peer-to-peer open networks possible. He asked Assange how vital it is to have what appears to be a new subculture emerging around WikiLeaks, especially for the work he does. Calling it the “radicalization of Internet educated youth,” Assange described it as the most positive development in recent years on the Internet.<sup>11</sup>

Assange pointed out how the young generation that grew up on the Internet exhibits certain values. These are open access to knowledge, free flow of information, and expectations of government transparency and individual privacy. He explained how rapid communication and these attacks on WikiLeaks have become catalyzing events for this new generation to create critical mass of political action.<sup>12</sup>

Malcomson responded to Assange with great reservation, saying that “young people aren’t inherently good.” Then he added, “I say that as a father and with regret.”<sup>13</sup> Assange countered Malcomson’s point, saying that he believes human instincts are actually much better than the values of existing society and that these young people innately have good hearts but are simply hardened by the social structures that reward narrow commercial interests.

What do these divergent views tell us? These strikingly opposing opinions on young people are also a reflection of contrasting views on the nature of the Internet. One could see how Malcomson’s sentiment can easily fuel the

State Department rationale that criminalizes anyone who dares to challenge US hegemony. Conscience is replaced by the interlocking power of state and corporations that now functions as an arbitrator of moral authority. They call those who engage in civil disobedience traitors, malicious hackers, and cyberterrorists that need to be governed or put behind bars for decades.

## **Clash of governance models**

In the conversation, Jared Cohen brought up the topic of “intervention in the context of a futuristic genocide” that is explored in one chapter of their book.<sup>14</sup> He questioned the role that WikiLeaks might play in a situation like the Rwandan genocide. This eventually led to a discussion about the growth of WikiLeaks and problems that slowed down its process. Stating that “it’s not that easy to do a WikiLeaks,” Assange outlined its particular way of organizing.<sup>15</sup> He talked about how, due to the nature of their work, WikiLeaks cannot just put up an ad and recruit people with certain skills but needed a different approach. He described a way to lead by “values instead of through command and control.”<sup>16</sup>

Similar to the open source movement, this form of leading through values creates an affinity network through which spontaneous collaboration becomes possible without central authority. Through WikiLeaks educating people about its values and beliefs, people across the world who adopt these values find each other

by creating their own “computational network of human beings that can think in the same way, that can trust each other on a point-to-point basis.”<sup>17</sup>

This horizontal network enabled people to fight effectively, in a David and Goliath-like struggle, to find the Achilles’ heel of the empire. Here WikiLeaks’ decentralized organizing took on the top-down mammoth structures of the State Department and the Pentagon. The US government’s orchestrated attacks on WikiLeaks revealed the clash of two divergent governing forces. While the US empire is highly organized, staffing 10,000 people in these tasks, allocating massive resources to push against the whistleblowing site, WikiLeaks had millions of people around the world who share the same values gather together to organize themselves around shared values and act purely on principle. This bottom-up organizing, where each person’s free deeds inspire the other, embodies the organization’s very ethos of contagious courage.

As Assange shared his interest in seeing this global network of affinity create a “broader, general, globalized cultural change,”<sup>18</sup> Schmidt also acknowledged the effect of globalization in making an interconnected world and how this would likely lead to fast-paced culture shifts. In Assange’s book, he later reflected on how this Google former CEO, who knows well “how to build and maintain *systems*: systems of information and systems of people,”<sup>19</sup> was not familiar with Assange’s world, with its

“unfolding human processes, scale, and information flows.”<sup>20</sup>

## **Mechanism of accountability**

This uncensored, genuine public response is ultimately what drives WikiLeaks and makes it thrive. Here, the conversation shifted to exploring what sets this whistleblowing site apart from other organizations, including Google. Assange explained the mechanism of accountability, addressing the question of how the “human economic ecosystem” influences the organization in a certain direction.<sup>21</sup> “We have our values. How do people see whether we are sticking to our values or whether we have betrayed our values?” he asked. Then he described how the organization is “disciplined by the market of sources” and how “sources speak with their feet” by choosing who to give material to through assessing each publisher’s integrity and looking at source protection and the impact of released material.

One could say WikiLeaks is a prime embodiment of source-driven journalism. Whistleblowers who take profound risks and act on behalf of the public good are the engine of the organization. By being true to the intentions of the source, the organization best serves the common people. WikiLeaks derives its source of legitimacy from the public, the only agent with the ultimate power to hold any institutions or organizations accountable in any real democracy.

In this context, Assange talked about harm minimization procedures. The organization's much more nuanced and thought-out approach to this issue was contrasted with that of US Joint Chiefs of Staff Mike Mullen. He was a mouthpiece of the official Pentagon bombastic line of "blood on their hands," calling WikiLeaks publications reckless and irresponsible, while not one single shred of evidence has ever been brought forth that any of these disclosures caused anyone harm.<sup>22</sup>

Assange explained to the visiting Google crew the organization's decisions concerning redaction (which are, in truth, only delayed redactions, as they never permanently redact anything). He said it is rarely about reasonable risk of producing harm but more about minimizing probable risk that it may divert and distract people from the importance of the disclosures themselves. He described it as a "pragmatic, tactical decision," as it keeps the tacit promise to the source—namely, to bring maximum political impact.<sup>23</sup> Obviously, this diverges from Google's modus operandi and seemed to appear alarming, foreign, and unfathomable to Schmidt and Cohen.

### **Hidden fist of the market**

Assange compared the actual interaction to how the conversations were eventually presented in Google's *The New Digital Age*. He noted that despite Schmidt seeming sympathetic to the general vision of WikiLeaks and how he had not found any real damage caused by the

organization, the Google authors moved to pontificate on how a platform like WikiLeaks would “enable or encourage espionage.”<sup>24</sup>

Here, we see the heads of Google acting like politicians in the new digital age, with the company on the list of “top-spending DC lobbyists in 2012.”<sup>25</sup> They blithely joined the parade of US senators who “labeled WikiLeaks a ‘terrorist organization’ and named Assange a ‘high-tech terrorist.’”<sup>26</sup> They tried to delegitimize WikiLeaks in order to push an aggressive agenda for a dystopian vision of the future. With the trite campaign slogan of “don’t be evil,” they sell their “liberation technology” that they promise will connect the world, yet is nothing but a sellout that further enables US domination, surveillance, and corporate governance. As apologists for the state, they parroted the Pentagon’s talking points and without evidence, brought improbable scenarios in which leaked materials would put people’s lives at risk.

Assange cited Schmidt and Cohen when they ask their readers why someone like Assange should get to decide what information is in the public interest. He concluded that for these Google leaders, the bearer of such authority would be the state. They said whistleblowing publishers need “supervision” in order to serve a positive role in society” and suggested “a central body facilitating the release of information.”<sup>27</sup> They certainly don’t abide by principles of truly free markets that in theory would enable people to give honest feedback on the company’s innovative enterprise. In the case of WikiLeaks, free and

informed choice of whistleblowers is an important force that guides the organization. In the case of massive information giant Google, if it is not the informed spontaneous force of the market, what then would give demands and hold them accountable?

*New York Times* columnist Tom Friedman wrote in 1999 about the existence of a hidden fist that controls markets behind the scenes. Citing this, Assange pointed to how the “hidden fist that keeps the world safe for Silicon Valley’s technologies to flourish is called the US Army, Air Force, Navy, and Marine Corps.”<sup>28</sup>

Google does not see evil in itself. By embedding with US central authority, this global tech company not only fails to see the invisible fist of “American strategic and economic hegemony” that dictates the market, but moreover aspires “to adorn the hidden fist like a velvet glove.”<sup>29</sup> By advancing the force of monopoly, they subordinate civic values to economic and US hegemonic interests and escape any real accountability. They no longer recognize the unmediated market that responds to people’s demands, a true market that functions as a space of democratic accountability. This normalization of control eventually leads to a subversion of law, creating a rogue state where a ripple effect of corruption is created, as individuals, companies, and the state each betray their own stated principles.

## The First Amendment

Perhaps the most fascinating interaction in this conversation emerged when Assange playfully suggested to Schmidt that WikiLeaks would welcome a leak from Google, specifically all the Patriot Act demands for Google info on citizens. Schmidt responded with a nervous chuckle, “which would be [*whispers*] illegal.”<sup>30</sup> Assange quickly countered with “it depends on the jurisdiction!” with another chuckle. Schmidt said, “We are a US—.” Assange gently reminded him, “There are higher laws. First Amendment, you know.”

Here is an ironic picture in which an Australian native confronts an American citizen and chairman of a capital venture that was born on US soil about his stance on upholding the US Constitution. From its inception, WikiLeaks has attained status around the globe as a fierce defender of the First Amendment, pushing on the boundaries of free speech. This was perhaps the precise moment when Google truly met WikiLeaks. Through this encounter, they had an opportunity to fully understand the very principle that founded their country and confront the banality of evil that over decades has hollowed out the very heart of this nation. But the Google crowd didn’t take this up.

Assange told Schmidt about the case with Twitter where they successfully resisted the gag order regarding the secret US government grand jury espionage investigation into WikiLeaks. He asked him to disclose the contents of

US subpoenas on Google and hand over information, especially those pertaining to WikiLeaks or any of its staff. Schmidt refused by citing the “gag clauses in the government data requests.”<sup>31</sup> He said he would pass it onto their counsel, which was the last communication about the issue.

The book *When Google Met WikiLeaks* is a must-read for anyone who wishes to understand the true potential of the Internet and the invisible tug-of-war between those who try to centralize it and those who fight to keep it free and decentralized. The conversation moves through a wide range of topics, from theoretical underpinnings of WikiLeaks and its technology, encryption-based currency like Bitcoin, private security firms’ subversive smear campaigns against dissent, and the upheaval of a citizen movement boiling up against a “business as usual” extreme capitalistic order. This serious discussion, amplified in detailed footnotes, shows Assange’s broad knowledge of virtually everything that happens on the Internet. Conversations at times get heavy and then quickly lightened into laughter. What was covered beneath the Google chairman’s casual and charming demeanor may have been his nervousness of the real agenda behind the “Google idea as usual” being exposed.

Through this revelation, perhaps we meet the true Google for the first time and through it can face the emblematic power of the state integrated in the digital world. At the same time, this may lead to discovering a

new hope for the Internet and civilization by beholding those who fight to carry the torch of liberty. These are the dissidents, whistleblowers, anonymous freedom fighters, lawyers fighting legal battles, and independent journalists who strive for the truth. It is this contagious courage that not only sees evil but can overcome the temptation of succumbing to the banality of “don’t be evil.” In the end, it is not giant multinational corporations or governments that will create the future, but simple networks of ordinary people acting from their conscience, who together will define the new digital age.

# 15

## Countering the Banality of Evil

JANUARY 6, 2015

More than half a century ago, Hannah Arendt made an observation about aspects of human nature that people often fail to acknowledge or confront. Arendt, a Jew who fled Germany during the Nazi's rise to power, survived to witness the trial of German Nazi Lieutenant Colonel Adolf Eichmann. She pointed to wartime atrocities where dutiful administrators like Eichmann become mass murderers, seemingly with no regret or even conscious recognition of the routine horror they inflicted. She called it the "banality of evil"—a systemic evil that has become "terrifyingly normal."<sup>1</sup>

Fascism comes in all shapes and forms. Comedian George Carlin once pointed out that when fascism comes to America, it will not be in "brown and black shirts" or "jack boots" but will be in "Nike sneakers and smiley shirts."<sup>2</sup> With NSA mass surveillance and the recent Senate CIA torture report evidencing murder of innocent people in offshore US prisons, a kind of systemic evil is secretly being carried out within present-day society.<sup>3</sup>

As the smiley face of modern oppression is quietly being

integrated into our everyday reality, there were some who came to recognize the changing scenery and found they could not stay silent. These are whistleblowers who have witnessed the seeds of corruption that has become the ubiquitous evil surrounding us all.

## **The contagion of courage**

The disclosures by Chelsea Manning and Edward Snowden have revealed the alarming level of abuse of power through corporations and governments that often collude in war crimes and mass surveillance. Here we find the other side of the banality of evil, a story of resistance carried out by those awakening in the midst of the terrifyingly normal. It all started with one person's courage.

Manning's act became a catalyst for a new wave of dissent. It paved the way for other whistleblowers to courageously step forward. Inspired by his forerunner, Chelsea Manning, political activist Jeremy Hammond alerted the public about insidious surveillance activity of a private intelligence company, including its spying activities on activists around the globe.<sup>4</sup> Journalist Barrett Brown, who also has seen this growing surveillance dystopia, courageously investigated private government cybersecurity contractors. Then it all blew out into the open with Edward Snowden. In a video interview that went viral, the world saw and heard a clear-headed, well-spoken man who left his life behind to expose pervasive, global government spying programs.

Before Snowden, there were four former National Security Agency analysts who rang the alarm about widespread government surveillance: Thomas Drake, William Binney, J. Kirk Wiebe, and Edward Loomis.<sup>5</sup> John Kiriakou became the first CIA officer to give evidence of the use of torture (which was confirmed by a Senate CIA report), and he was sent to jail for calling this torture unconstitutional. All these brave individuals were driven by a common belief that the public always has a right to know about the actions and wrongdoings of governments and corporations. They stepped forward and sacrificed their safety to bring vital information to the light of day.

### **The war of terror doctrine**

Whistleblowers are people that attend to deep immorality and crimes of those in power that others fail to see. In witnessing illegality, injustice, and abuse of power, those who choose to follow their conscience do not turn away. Instead, they face it with clarity of thought. They are fully aware of the risks, moving beyond fear and choosing to act with courage. In her chat log, Manning indicated how she was ready to go to prison for the rest of her life or even be executed for releasing the documents.

In the video interview where he made his first public appearance, Snowden addressed the threat of retaliation. “You can’t come forward against the world’s most powerful intelligence agencies and be completely free

from risk.”<sup>6</sup> He continued, “they’re such powerful adversaries” and it seems “no one can meaningfully oppose them. If they want to get you, they’ll get you in time.” Snowden told the *Guardian* reporter in Moscow that if he ends up being in chains in Guantanamo Bay, he can live with that.<sup>7</sup>

Despite this imminent danger, he was determined to make the information public. He expressed his profound sense of obligation when he said: “I can’t in good conscience allow the US government to destroy privacy, Internet freedom, and basic liberties for people around the world with this massive surveillance machine they’re secretly building.”<sup>8</sup>

What made these truth-tellers courageously confront these government and corporate crimes? And conversely, what makes the vast majority of citizens obedient or even give tacit Eichmann-like support for the banality of evil, allowing it to devour human values that many of us cherish so deeply?

In investigating the crucial role that German doctors played in the Nazi genocide, psychiatrist Robert Jay Lifton observed a “psychic numbing,’ a general category of diminished capacity or inclination to feel.”<sup>9</sup> He described how, prior to Auschwitz death camps, Nazis set a policy of direct medical killing, and a program called “euthanasia” was carried out by the doctors. Lifton noted the mentality that prevailed among psychiatrists who took part in this as the “doctrine of the absence of

empathy.”<sup>10</sup> He recognized how the Nazi-Auschwitz ideology of anti-Jewishness used the simple concept of “life unworthy of life” as justification for killing them.

Our current smiley-face fascism has indoctrinated us into extreme American exceptionalism in the post-9/11 world. This makes us accept previously inconceivable realities of torture, mass surveillance, and brutal murder with Orwellian doublespeak like “enhanced interrogation,” “bulk collection,” and “collateral damage.” The Bush Era doctrine of “War on Terror” spreads the same old fearful ideology of hatred, this time of Muslims and also branding anyone that stands in the way of US hegemony as a terrorist.

Like most of us, Manning and Snowden were at one time swept up in these official narratives that have led us to the banality of evil of our time. Early on, Manning herself believed the rhetoric of Operation Iraqi Freedom that was presented as freeing Iraqis from state oppression. Civil rights attorney Chase Madar noted how Manning enlisted in the US Army believing she could make a difference. He described how in October 2009, when Manning was deployed to Iraq, she thought she was helping the people there build democracy.<sup>11</sup> For a time, Snowden also believed in the doctrine of Iraqi Freedom. In 2003 he enlisted in the US Army to fight in the Iraq War and began a training program to join Special Forces. He said the reason for his participation was that he felt an “obligation as a human being to help free people from oppression.”<sup>12</sup>

Both Manning and Snowden were ordinary people who showed extraordinary courage. In the fog of the terrifyingly normal, they came to recognize something was very wrong and began questioning the dominant perspective. Manning soon became aware of the systematic abuse of imprisoned Iraqi citizens with torture, and when she brought her concern up the chain of command she was shut down by her superiors. Snowden also became disillusioned about the stated mission of the war, and he was discharged after he broke his legs during training. Later, a strong sense of betrayal grew in him with his awareness of Obama's broken campaign promises, especially the transgression of his stated "sunshine policy" by enacting his unprecedented and brutal prosecution of whistleblowers.

### **Empathic inquiry**

In the face of deception and systematic numbing, these truth-tellers maintained a sensitivity and a feeling of their intrinsic connection to others. This enabled an empathic inquiry for them to see through the hidden truth in this War on Terror. In the video known as "Collateral Murder" that depicted the incident in New Baghdad, Manning gained access to uncensored images of America's war in the Middle East. In the unfolding images of decimated Reuters reporters shot from the Apache helicopter gunsight, she saw human beings where she had been trained to see "enemy combatants." She saw another person whose life was as precious as hers. In that moment, she freed them from perception

enslaved by the subject position of US supremacy, which had made them into mere objects. She was able to bear witness to the truth articulated in her chat log, “we’re human . . . and we’re killing ourselves.”<sup>13</sup>

This recognition of those who had been dehumanized has cast light on the smoke and mirrors of Pentagon and government propaganda and cracked the shield of the banality of evil of our time. At the providence inquiry, Manning spoke for those who have become victims of this destructive American foreign policy:

I wanted the American public to know that not everyone in Iraq and Afghanistan were targets that needed to be neutralized, but rather people who were struggling to live in the “pressure cooker” environment of what we call asymmetric warfare.<sup>14</sup>

By letting the public see these people who had been made into faceless images of “life unworthy of life” by the corporate media, she also spoke for the American people who were themselves victims of the War on Terror ideology. Her disclosure of government secrecy was deeply rooted in her empathy for ordinary people who had been relegated to spectators, trivialized, made ignorant, or betrayed by their own governments. This was expressed when she described her primary wish: “I want people to see the truth, because without information, you cannot make informed decisions as a public. . . .”<sup>15</sup> This sentiment was also shared by her successor, Snowden, who claimed that his motive for

disclosing documents pertaining to NSA spying was to inform the public, so they could decide what is best for themselves.

Truth is grounded in dialogical reality and conscience is awakened through the path of empathy, which is the ability to put oneself in another's shoes. This is what drove those whistleblowers and also what guides WikiLeaks.

When the *Guardian* abandoned Snowden in Hong Kong, and there were no other organizations or individuals willing to help, WikiLeaks stepped forward. This action was acknowledged later by Snowden when he described the organization as one that runs “toward the risks everyone else runs away from.”<sup>16</sup>

Assange noted empathy as a reason he supported Snowden’s bid for asylum. He described how he personally sympathized with his situation, especially after watching what Manning had gone through. Sarah Harrison, who cofounded the Courage Foundation, an international organization that supports whistleblowers, also pointed to empathy as one reason behind her courageous act.<sup>17</sup> She said, “Someone had done something so brave, and they should be supported. . . . I felt an empathy, a natural human empathy, and wished to support that.”<sup>18</sup>

After the shock waves of the Snowden revelations wore off, many normalized the violation of privacy with the attitude “I have nothing to hide” as if this Stasi-like

system could somehow be justified. In spite of governments' harsh reactions toward those who speak truth, many simply will say that this would never happen to them. Yet history has shown that the failure to feel for others and stand up to blatant injustice makes us passive in the unfolding of the future and that this silence often leads to horrific ends. Martin Niemöller, the famous Protestant pastor who spoke against the rise of Hitler and spent years in concentration camps, reminds us of this:

First they came for the Socialists, and I did not speak out—because I was not a Socialist. Then they came for the Trade Unionists, and I did not speak out—because I was not a Trade Unionist. Then they came for the Jews, and I did not speak out—because I was not a Jew. Then they came for me—and there was no one left to speak for me.<sup>19</sup>

The contagious courage that emerged from these waves of whistleblowers shows that someone has spoken out for us. To act with conscience is to abide by our innate ability to feel the truth; to recognize something that has become so dark inside that it makes us deny our inherent obligation to one another.

Each person's courage transforms this feeling into love that can meet the banality of evil and dismantle its cold and merciless sword. The actions of individuals, no matter how small, can change history. It is for this power of ordinary people to determine the course of history

that these truth-tellers sacrificed their personal lives. We must all fight to claim it so that the light that shines from within can define who we truly are.

16

## Sixth Anniversary of “Collateral Murder” Video

APRIL 15, 2016

On April 5, 2010, WikiLeaks published classified military footage of the July 2007 attack by a US Army helicopter gunship in the Iraqi suburb of New Baghdad. The video, titled “Collateral Murder,” depicted the killing of more than a dozen men, including two Reuters staffers. At the time of release, the WikiLeaks website temporarily crashed with a massive influx of visitors, while versions popping up on YouTube reached millions.

The importance of the “Collateral Murder” video has often been talked about from the perspective that it provided visual evidence of unaccounted US military power and brutality. Now, on the sixth anniversary of its publication, we will revisit the emergence of WikiLeaks in the public consciousness and explore the significance of this video release for the advocacy of free speech.

In reflecting on this groundbreaking public debut, journalist Greg Mitchell noted, “Now WikiLeaks had fully arrived—as a concept, as an organization, as a media fixture in America.”<sup>1</sup> Along with an apparent war crime, the uncensored images of modern war alerted

people to the lack of government transparency and stifling of free speech in the very country that claims to hold a torch for such things.

Former US Foreign Service employee Peter van Buren pointed to several fronts where the government has assaulted the First Amendment.<sup>2</sup> Examples include the weakening of the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) that was originally created in 1966, the gutting of whistleblower protection, along with the recent unprecedented crackdown on truth-tellers. In fact, this WikiLeaks publication revealed this trend. By using FOIA, Reuters attempted to obtain the footage of these airstrikes from the US Army with no success, and it wasn't until WikiLeaks released "Collateral Murder" that they were able to access this information regarding the killing of their own journalists.<sup>3</sup>

## **Censoring of images**

The smothering of free speech has cost the public access to the real images of war. Back in the 1960s, during the Vietnam War, pictures of wounded soldiers and dead civilians flooded through televisions into American homes. Unlike the current situation, the government had not yet learned to keep the press out of war zones, where all could see the horrific images of what in many cases amounted to war crimes.

Brazilian educator Paulo Freire described two types of words as two opposing forces. "Human existence cannot be silent," he wrote.<sup>4</sup> "Nor can it be nourished by false

words, but only by true words, with which men transform the world.” These honest images of war were true words that have immense power to alter reality. Indeed, a sensational Associated Press photograph of a naked Vietnamese girl running, her body burnt by a US napalm attack, that got on the front page of virtually every newspaper, outraged the American people, contributing to the ending of that war.<sup>5</sup>

Now these real images are crucified on the crosshairs of the corporate media lens and government control. They are being blocked or turned into snapshots that conveniently carry one-sided official narratives, with crimes covered up by euphemisms. The WikiLeaks publication of this 2007 aerial footage lifted the gate of public perception that had been tightly guarded through secrecy and media manipulation.

The video opened with a quote from George Orwell: “Political language is designed to make lies sound truthful and murder respectable, and to give the appearance of solidity to pure wind.”<sup>6</sup> Transcripts within the footage presented facts about the incident: “On the morning of July 12th 2007, two Apache helicopters using 30mm cannon fire killed about a dozen people in the Iraqi suburb of New Baghdad. Two children were also wounded. Although some of the men appear to have been armed, the behavior of nearly everyone was relaxed.” Then a narrative followed that quoted the US Army’s response to the attack, stating that “all the dead were ‘anti-Iraq forces’ or ‘insurgents.’”

What was brought to life in this grotesque image of horrific death was the voice of dissent, which until that time was suppressed by institutional hierarchies. This was the voice of whistleblower Chelsea Manning, who was sentenced to 35 years in prison for releasing the largest trove of secret documents in US history. At her pretrial hearing in 2013, Manning spoke about the facts regarding the incident in New Baghdad in her own words. After identifying the second engagement in the video of the unarmed bongo truck taking the kids to school and the attitudes of the soldiers in the helicopter as the “most alarming aspect of the video,” she described it as “seemingly delightful bloodlust” and noted how it appeared to be similar to a “child torturing ants with a magnifying glass.”<sup>7</sup>

As the video continued, blips and whirs of radio distortion slowly occupied silence. Images that were freed began to move, momentarily intercepted by a still slide of official lines, so viewers could engage critically with the plain, colorless scenery shot from an Apache helicopter gunsight.

## **Permission to engage**

This previously unreleased video footage called all to witness the everyday life of the brutal military occupation of Iraq. In the 17-minute film, we were given an opportunity to see with our own eyes who those labeled as enemies in the “War on Terror” really were—a group of adults and children trying to defend themselves

from being shot and journalists risking their lives to do their job. At the same time, it invited Americans to see themselves and their roles in this scenery unfolding in a distant land.

In an interview with Raffi Khatchadourian of *The New Yorker*, WikiLeaks editor in chief Julian Assange described how before deciding on the title “Collateral Murder,” he had considered naming the short commentary film “Permission to Engage.”<sup>8</sup> This video with transcripts and a package of supporting documents released on April 5, 2010, provided the claim by US military authorities that the actions of the soldiers and pilots involved were in accordance with the law of armed conflict and its own “rules of engagement.”

The radio transmission audio catches the line of ruthless weaponry when voices of the copter crew came through: “Yeah, Bushmaster, we have a van that’s approaching and picking up the bodies.” [Pause] “Let me engage. Can I shoot?” “Roger. Break. Uh, Crazyhorse One-Eight request permission to engage.” “Picking up the wounded?” “Yeah, we’re trying to get permission to engage.” “Come on, let us shoot!”<sup>9</sup>

The carnage enacted in this raw footage calls on everyone to question these rules of engagement, and most importantly who gives these soldiers permission to engage in such airstrikes, killing civilians in countries that are clearly no threat to the US.

Militaries that operate under the nation-state premise are said to act on behalf of the interests of their people. In the case of the US military, the president acts as commander in chief for the entire military. So ultimately he granted the aerial weapons team permission to engage the van in the square with open fire—to murder in the name of “God and country.” A government based on the idea of consent of the governed requires informed citizens, and for this, unfiltered information is critical for people to make informed decisions. Those who govern, with overclassification of information and dismantling of basic free press, have been keeping citizenry in the dark and preventing them from participating in these vital decisions.

WikiLeaks, as a creative application on the Internet, has enabled the right of people to freely speak—speech that challenges authority, speech that questions its legitimacy, especially when such acts become so dangerous. Through Manning’s brave act of conscience, a lost image was resurrected—true words through which ordinary men and women everywhere can transform the world. This made it possible for people to engage in determining the legitimacy of authority and begin withdrawing consent when necessary.

Soon after the video release, Ethan McCord, one of the soldiers on the ground at the scene of the shooting, came forward to write an apology letter to the Iraqi people. With a heavy heart, he and another former soldier from the Army unit expressed their deep sorrow and wish to

repair the damage their country had caused.<sup>10</sup> Icelandic collaborators on the video release traveled to Baghdad to meet the family of the victims of this attack to seek for justice.<sup>11</sup> Debate and discussion that was sparked began to dissolve apathy and callous disregard, replacing it with genuine interest and concern for others. In the eyes of many, this video came to be seen as having turned the tide of the war in Iraq.

On this sixth anniversary, let us celebrate the publication of “Collateral Murder” as a historical renewal of free speech. On the day after Easter Sunday in 2010, the act of posting this video online instigated a free flow of information globally, giving an everlasting effect of letting people see the other side of the story that had been buried by the official narrative.

This iconic film continues to remind us of all those who risked their lives for free press and also of the power of free speech, that our collective engagement with the truth can set frozen images into motion. By seizing the present, we can intervene in the course of that one fatal day and alter the running footage of the past, bringing each person one step closer to self-determination of their own future.

## Standing with the Conscience of Truth-Tellers

SEPTEMBER 19, 2016

Oliver Stone's biopic *Snowden* hit the theaters. The film illuminates the life of Edward Snowden between 2004 and 2013, aiming to humanize one of the most wanted men in the world. Just before its release, a public campaign was launched, urging President Obama to pardon this renowned NSA whistleblower.

The massive US government persecution of truth-tellers over the past years has exiled conscience from civil society, locking it behind bars and driving it into asylum. Yet despite these attacks, this conscience refuses to die.

From prison, where she had been serving a 35-year sentence, Chelsea Manning is standing up for her dignity. Recently, she protested her dehumanizing treatment by engaging in a hunger strike.<sup>1</sup> All the while, WikiLeaks editor in chief Julian Assange keeps publishing, giving asylum to the most persecuted documents, while being arbitrarily detained in the Ecuadorian embassy.<sup>2</sup> As this struggle continues, the torch for transparency and courage that kindled hearts

and sparked public debate keeps shedding light on the state of the world we live in.

In a debate between executive director of Freedom of the Press Foundation Trevor Timm and national security attorney Bradley Moss, they addressed the question of pardoning Snowden. Moss expressed his disdain over the former NSA contractor providing information to the press. He criticized Snowden's act, noting how journalists are unauthorized to possess government information:

There's approximately four million people who also hold clearances. It is a sacred trust and Snowden broke it by giving these documents to people who were not authorized to have it.<sup>3</sup>

Moss's statement revealed the culture of the intelligence community that permeates the life of not only of US citizens, but of people around the globe. What is this "sacred trust" that Moss referred to that would give exclusive privilege to a certain population? Implied in Moss's comment is that honoring this trust should take precedence over the right to free speech, requiring journalists to ask for permission to engage in activities that are supposedly protected under the First Amendment of the US Constitution. This signals the existence of an invisible governance that claims superiority over the highest law of the land.

## **Government secrecy**

There are some who have come to see the internal working of a patronage network that is bound within this exclusive trust. In his 2006 seminal writing *Conspiracy as Governance*, Assange noted how secrecy was used by political elites “as the primary planning methodology behind maintaining or strengthening authoritarian power.”<sup>4</sup> He then assessed how “collaborative secrecy, working to the detriment of a population, is enough to define their behavior as conspiratorial.”

In his book *The WikiLeaks Files*, Assange described how he saw a “level of hysteria and non-corporeality” displayed by the intelligence community in reaction to WikiLeaks’ disclosures “that is not easily captured by traditional theories of power.”<sup>5</sup> He recognized how classified documents function as tangible objects that symbolize a bond among those who are inside this secret network, in a similar way that “many religions and cults imbue their priestly class with additional scarcity value by keeping their religious texts secret from the public or the lower orders of the devoted.”<sup>6</sup> He pointed out how US government employees who have been cleared to read classified documents are forbidden to read the same documents when published by journalistic organizations like WikiLeaks. If cleared employees ever come across them, “they are expected to self-report their contact with the newly profaned object, and destroy all traces of it.”<sup>7</sup> He noted:

The implication is that there is a non-physical property that inhabits documents once they receive their classification markings, and that this marginal property is extinguished, not by copying the document, but by making the copy public. The now public document has, to devotees of the national security state, not merely become devoid of this marginal property and reverted to a mundane object, it has been inhabited by another non-physical property: an evil one.<sup>8</sup>

With overclassification, high-ranking government officials maintain secrecy and a sense of exceptionalism. Once one goes through the clearance of this embedding process, one is invited into the inner circle to participate in a ritual to conspire. Here, elites who cut their ties from the rest of humanity have formed an exclusive allegiance to one another. They are essentially secret brotherhoods who have elevated themselves above the law, claiming unearned authority and entitlement.

This conspiratorial governance floats above Congress. These self-selected elites have their own laws. They have their own secret judicial proceedings with the likes of the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court (FISC). This state within a state can act as an empire of all states, making sealed court orders and commanding private payment companies to engage in, for example, the extrajudicial banking blockade against WikiLeaks.<sup>9</sup> It exercises its power in virtually any jurisdiction in the world, going after anyone it deems a threat to their structure of power. This is shown in the case of Kim

Dotcom, founder of Megaupload, who was branded a fugitive and subjected to an egregious civil asset forfeiture process by the US government.<sup>10</sup>

Like the Dark Riders in J. R. R. Tolkien's Middle-earth legendarium, major media outlets, political parties, and candidates are bound to this sacred trust to act as servants for its elusive core. This became apparent with the Democratic National Committee (DNC) leaks, which revealed the organization and the media's efforts to undermine the democratic process, along with the *New York Times* blatantly acting as a mouthpiece for the Hillary Clinton campaign.<sup>11</sup>

This unaccounted authority has been magnified with a complete double-standard toward other leaks. Retired US Army general and former CIA director David Petraeus revealed classified national security information to his mistress with little consequence,<sup>12</sup> and more recently, Hillary Clinton's mishandling of classified materials was given leniency.<sup>13</sup> All the while, whistleblowers who released information responsibly in the public interest, while causing no harm, have been aggressively prosecuted.

### **Entrapment through deception**

With government secrecy and propaganda, super-villains inside the ring of power have exploited the youth's idealism and their genuine devotion for the country, making them serve selfish interests. The USA PATRIOT Act, a bill that gave intelligence agencies wide-ranging

power in the post-9/11 world, unleashed a tyrannical monster that is blind to the terror it is creating, swallowing information indiscriminately.

Under the ubiquitous prying eyes of the NSA, the influence of this unelected power has expanded around the world. This invisible force of governance has been blending into the fabric of our culture through the private sector. With the growing market in mobile phones and Internet services, companies like Google have become agents to snare the masses into their vision of the future.

In his book *When Google Met WikiLeaks*, Assange revealed Google's ties to the US State Department and to former secretary of state Hillary Clinton. Assange brought attention to how this Internet giant is not as innocent as many think. He elucidated Google's participation in mass surveillance and its political aspirations that are "firmly enmeshed within the foreign-policy agenda of the world's largest super-power."<sup>14</sup> Through "marketing" and chasing ads online, they prey on people, turning them into products. With friendly, progressive images offering free emails and data storage, this tech giant gains wide popularity and gets users to consent to the terms and conditions of their services, making them pawns to advance geopolitical agendas.

To this priest class, whistleblowers that threaten the security of their sacred trust are their greatest enemies. With the power of social media and the Internet,

technology is now used as a strategic weapon against democracy. Recently, Google was accused of manipulating its search engine to create positive suggestions and hide negative terms for Clinton with its auto-complete, inserting bias and intruding into people's thought processes.<sup>15</sup> It is not just corporate media that is used to influence national elections. Seemingly innocent and apolitical actors like Silicon Valley companies are also interfering with the democratic process by engaging in electronic manipulation and altering people's views.

### **Persecuting conscience with the Espionage Act**

Those with conscience remember truth and the heritage of humanity. They can find what is stolen from the public inside the castle of those who claim to be holier than the rest. Their courage to bring back what belongs to the public opened the door into these hidden halls of power. In the wake of such unauthorized disclosures, federal agencies have tried to tighten cybersecurity to tackle these threats from within. They implemented new control mechanisms such as insider threat programs to detect and monitor those who may disrupt such exclusive lines of communication.<sup>16</sup>

Many classified documents keep prestige in this rarefied air of power. Once they are unsealed by conscience, they lose this magical power. This unsealing challenges their god-like omnipotence, showing it to be a fantasy of grandeur created through collaborative secrecy, using dirty tricks, lies, and manipulation. Released documents

that were recollected in the public memory awaken a history that had been condemned to the oblivion of a hidden past.

To this priest class, whistleblowers who threaten the security of their sacred trust are their greatest enemies. Journalists who publish this material are treated as aiding traitors. Just as unsealed documents that have lost their scent of holiness in the temple need to be destroyed, so does the conscience of ordinary man that shines light into the darkness that binds them.

We are now seeing a kind of modern witch-hunt. The Espionage Act of 1917,<sup>17</sup> a US federal law created after World War I for wartime prosecutions, is now being used to burn the conscience of whistleblowers. This law does not allow a public interest defense and prevents whistleblowers from having their motivations considered in court, making it impossible for them to defend their acts and receive a fair trial.<sup>18</sup>

Manning was convicted and Snowden charged under the Espionage Act by President Obama, who has been at the helm of this empire state for eight years. Obama, with his kill list, exerts the sole power emanating from the executive branch and can act as accuser, prosecutor, judge, jury, and executioner all in one.<sup>19</sup> His power is completely unchecked, stripping off due process and allowing him to assassinate anyone, including US citizens.

Behind the smile of his promised transparency,<sup>20</sup> Obama has also waged an unprecedented war against whistleblowers, hunting down those who defend press freedom and act in the public interest.<sup>21</sup> He even signed into law the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) that greatly expands the scope of government power, allowing the military to detain US citizens without due process under these new antiterrorism provisions.<sup>22</sup> This unauthorized power has escalated. In his final months in office, Obama vowed to seal the corporate trade deals of the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP), and the Trade in Services Agreement (TISA). This is trade dictatorship by a self-selected group of rich countries where corporations can have governments completely subordinate to their interests, bringing entire populations around the globe to their knees.<sup>23</sup>

## **Our sacred bond**

Whistleblowers are true defenders of democracy. Both Manning and Snowden believed in ordinary people and their ability to make vital decisions about their own lives. Their faith in fellow human beings made them question and ultimately break what they had been indoctrinated to believe as a “sacred trust.” Snowden woke up to the fact that the government that he had believed in all his life was engaged in an “extraordinary act of deception.” He now reminds government workers how their “first allegiance as a public servant is to the public rather than to the government.”<sup>24</sup>

By acting on behalf of the people, these truth-tellers revealed true sacred trust that is inscribed in our hearts—the same breath that inspired the founding documents of the United States. In her request for a presidential pardon in 2013, Manning wrote how her time in Iraq made her “question the morality of America’s military presence since 9/11,” and she realized that “in our efforts to meet the risks posed to us by the enemy, we had forgotten our Humanity.” She continued:

If you deny my request for a pardon, I will serve my time knowing that sometimes you have to pay a heavy price to live in a free society. I will gladly pay that price if it means we could have a country that is truly conceived in liberty and dedicated to the proposition that all women and men are created equal.<sup>25</sup>

These patriots of the Internet generation pledged allegiance to trust in the common man, reminding us of a kinship that binds us all together, regardless of religion, gender, and nationality. When the system cannot self-correct by ways of its internal mechanisms of checks and balances, efforts to achieve such goals have to come from outside the existing models of democracy. A call for presidential pardon for Snowden must become a larger political resistance. Our efforts to free these brave souls require each of us to step forward and respond to their extraordinary courage.

The resilience of truth-tellers in the face of this adversity teaches us that truly nothing else will do if our courage is

not to fail us. In the court of public opinion formed through uncompromising power, we can claim that the highest law of the land is that of the commons enshrined in our own sacredness—in the conscience of ordinary people.

## Ten Years of Pushing the Boundaries of Free Speech

OCTOBER 4, 2016

“To me, freedom of speech is something that represents the very dignity of what a human being is . . . that’s what marks us off from the stones and stars.” These are words spoken by Mario Savio, the spokesperson for the free speech movement in the ’60s.<sup>1</sup> Decades later, the power of free speech surged onto the global stage and began reclaiming the dignity of our humanity.

We are now entering WikiLeaks’ 10th anniversary. The organization registered its domain on October 4, 2006, and blazed into the public limelight in the spring of 2010 with the publication of “Collateral Murder.”<sup>2</sup>

This stateless media organization has published over 10 million documents. WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange remains detained in the Ecuadorian embassy in London. In an interview with *Der Spiegel* on 10 years of WikiLeaks, he gave his view that those US diplomatic cables they published were the single most important collection of documents, which are up to three million now.<sup>3</sup>

Since its first publication on December 28, 2006, the effect of WikiLeaks has been felt across the world. From the 2007 release of the Kroll report on official corruption in Kenya<sup>4</sup> that affected the outcome of the national election<sup>5</sup> to the exposing of the moral bankruptcy of Iceland's largest bank in 2009,<sup>6</sup> the information they revealed empowered people and helped revitalize democracy in many countries. WikiLeaks' social and political impact became quite apparent and acknowledged as a force behind revolutionary global uprisings. For this 10th-year celebration, we will now look back at the birth of WikiLeaks and examine its effect on freedom of speech around the world.

### **Consent of the governed**

WikiLeaks started with a mission to open governments by releasing sensitive and classified documents that belong to the public and had been unjustifiably kept secret. Early on, Assange saw the existence of a network working in collaborative secrecy as detrimental to all people. The concept of WikiLeaks can be seen as based on this analysis of the hidden force of governance, and leaks were used as a means to bring accountability to those in power.

Assange recognized how “people’s will to truth, love and self-realization” are pushed away by institutional hierarchies. He gave a metaphorical picture of this force: When we look at an authoritarian conspiracy as a whole, we see a system of interacting organs, a beast with

arteries and veins whose blood may be thickened and slowed until it falls, stupefied; unable to sufficiently comprehend and control the forces in its environment.<sup>7</sup>

This beast-like being doesn't only exist in power structures, but works inside each person through impulses and desires that are often unknown to us. It is a thinking that arises from animalistic desires that conspire in secret and moves quickly into abstraction, seizing the past, present, and future of civilization.

In the old colonial era, this was enacted in the brutal use of force and subjugation. Now in modern time, democracy's notion of the "consent of the governed" has become a battleground for conquest by this hidden beast. By controlling information and manipulating perception, this creature inside civilization enters our thoughts and feelings, dragging our humanity down.

## **Objectivity of knowledge**

Instincts and personal desires seem to hide in a particular foundation of knowledge, namely what is understood as the creed of objectivity. This is a dominant logic based in empiricist epistemology, laid out by scientists and later researchers of what has become a social science. Professors David Scott and Robin Usher shed light on the prevailing value of this notion of objectivity:

One of the most important aspects of these epistemological "good grounds" are that the researcher was "objective," i.e. that he or she was unbiased, value

neutral and took care to ensure that personal considerations did not intrude into the research process—in other words, that the researcher's subjectivity has been eliminated as a factor in the knowledge claim.<sup>8</sup>

This notion of objectivity assumes separation of observer from the observed and tends to divide the whole world into subject and object. It is a way of knowledge based on solipsism—knowing alone. Through this ethos of separation, it has established a kind of knowledge that scholar and environmental activist Vandana Shiva once attributed to what Francis Bacon described as the “marriage of knowledge with power, a particular kind of knowledge, a very mechanistic knowledge that defined nature as dead—and, on the other side, women as passive.”<sup>9</sup>

The creed of objectivity has become a powerful shield that covers the motives and influence of special interests or private agendas. In *Democracy INC: The Press and Law in the Corporate Rationalization of the Public Sphere*, professor of journalism David Allen observed how science has become a methodology that backs up professional legitimacy and that professionalism was used as a disguise for “public service and impartiality” and to promote a particular ideology in society.<sup>10</sup>

Quoting Harvard law professor Morton J. Horwitz, Allen explained that the “attempt to place law under the banner of ‘science’ was designed to separate politics from

law, subjectivity from objectivity and layman's reasoning from professional reasoning.”<sup>11</sup> He continued, noting how the creed of objectivity is also used as a professional methodology for journalism, using this purported neutrality as a “strategic ritual,” which in the words of sociologist Gaye Tuchman, “journalists use to turn facts into truth.”<sup>12</sup>

People who are indoctrinated into this orthodoxy of objectivity have become a new class of humanity. It was once priests and royalty who were placed in positions of authority. Now it is scientists, lawyers, and journalists that carry this role, elevated from the status of ordinary citizens. Like a kind of intellectual survival of the fittest, perceived truth is crafted through a win-or-lose, right-or-wrong debate with shattering logical conclusiveness, certainty, cleverness, and persuasion. The ultimate accomplishment of this practice is a co-optation of the public interest by the narrow interests of the few. It specifically creates citizens' adoption of a knowledge that denies inherent connections to the other and defines each other in rank.

By locking people in a singular viewpoint, this invisible force of control makes those captured in its sight surrender their experience and become defined within this confined narrative. With the cloak of objectivity, this beast within humanity claims authority, rising through the will to rewrite history.

## **Source-driven journalism**

WikiLeaks challenges this authority of knowledge that manufactures consent of the governed without public participation. It does this through engaging in a new journalism backed by the conscience of whistleblowers.

One of WikiLeaks' most prominent sources, US Army Private Chelsea Manning, was sentenced to 35 years in prison. The publication of the “Collateral Murder” video in 2010 brought the first glimpse of this innovative, source-driven journalism. With the powerful, unfolding images in that 18-minute film, we were able to see what Manning saw. In this raw image of modern war in Iraq, Manning witnessed something that those indoctrinated by the ideology of terrorism often fail to see.

At her pretrial hearing for releasing the largest trove of secret documents in US history, Manning spoke about facts regarding the July 12, 2007, aerial weapons team in the video depicting the incident in New Baghdad. Manning pointed to the “seemingly delightful bloodlust” that soldiers engaged in. She then described the specific moment where the father driving his kids to school in a van stopped and attempted to assist the wounded, noting how she was “saddened by the AWT (Air Weapons Team) crew’s lack of concern about human life.”<sup>13</sup>

Manning had come to see this everyday reality in Iraq from the perspective of those who had been conjured into the designation of “enemy.” In that moment, she began to see these unfolding human events more from

the point of view of those she was trained to see as “others,” those methodically demonized by the Bush era doctrine of “War on Terror.” She saw what amounted to murder in the acts of these soldiers. She saw civilians, including journalists, defending themselves against the aggressors invading their own neighborhood. Through her act of conscience, Manning restored knowledge that she gained through placing herself in relationship with others.

Jungian psychoanalyst Edward Edinger elucidated the etymology of the word *conscience* by relating it to the concept of consciousness:

*Conscious* derives from *con* or *cum*, meaning “with” or “together,” and *scire*, “to know” or “to see.” It has the same derivation as *conscience*. Thus the root meaning of both consciousness and conscience is “knowing with” or “seeing with” an “other.” In contrast, the word *science*, which also derives from *scire*, means simple knowing, i.e., knowing without “withness.” So etymology indicates that the phenomena of consciousness and conscience are somehow related and that the experience of consciousness is made up of two factors—“knowing” and “withness.”<sup>14</sup>

Edinger articulated how conscience and consciousness transforms the dichotomy of subject and object, as it is the “experience of *knowing together with an other*, that is, in a setting of twoness.”<sup>15</sup> Manning’s act of conscience gave birth to a new subjectivity, one that can witness and

bring back the consciousness of witness. Through this knowing that comes from putting oneself in the shoes of others, the mirror of subject-object dichotomy was shattered, liberating the perspective that had once been conquered.

Her courage to defy the US military's official narrative and put forth a view that had been concealed by the euphemism of "collateral damage" broke the chains of illegitimate authority that enslaved most people into a false vision of isolated personhood and the biases of patriotism, imperialism, and militarism.

WikiLeaks' source-driven journalism has ushered in a new form of science. It is a *conscience* that unites the knowledge that had been separated, that which was dividing the population into knower and known, master and slave. It brings a true objectivity rooted in inter-subjectivity, making journalists and Americans who have been elevated to a professional class or privileged citizens of empire to see events together with others as citizens of the world.

### **Method of transparency**

Unlike conventional journalism's creed of objectivity, WikiLeaks employs a different methodology. In an interview with journalist John Pilger, when asked about his passion, Assange responded, "We are an activist organization. The method is transparency. The goal is justice" and emphasized the importance of not mixing up the two.<sup>16</sup>

In the current climate of secrecy, transparency is largely talked about in the context of exposing concealed information to hold a powerful organization accountable. Yet transparency also means an act of self-disclosure in which transparency is brought forth voluntarily. WikiLeaks' method of transparency extends into both.

David Weinberger, senior researcher at Harvard's Berkman Center, recognized the importance of transparency in the form of disclosure of bias or potential conflict of interest. He proposes transparency as the new objectivity:

What we used to believe because we thought the author was objective we now believe because we can see through the author's writings to the sources and values that brought her to that position. Transparency gives the reader information by which she can undo some of the unintended effects of the ever-present biases. Transparency brings us to reliability the way objectivity used to.<sup>17</sup>

This creed of transparency allows WikiLeaks to be true to its source. It replaces the source of legitimacy of the professional class, who are guarded by their often false objectivity, with the conscience of ordinary people. Like any researcher who strives to disclose their motives and hidden agendas, WikiLeaks is eminently transparent in disclosing the motives behind its work. Assange said at the Sydney Peace Prize award ceremony: "We're

objective but not neutral. We're on the side of justice—objectivity is not the same as neutrality.”<sup>18</sup>

This commitment to justice is manifested in its publishing criteria. In the website’s publishing policy, WikiLeaks spelled out the criteria for its publishing, saying that it accepts material that is of “diplomatic, political, ethical, or historical significance, which has not been published before, and which is being suppressed. . .”<sup>19</sup>

Assange described how WikiLeaks is most interested in a particular quality of information and pointed out that concealed information has greater potential for just reform because those who hide it spend energy and resources in concealment for a reason.<sup>20</sup>

With this transparency, WikiLeaks incorporates the scientific basis of objectivity within the very infrastructure of its website. The technological system does not play favorites or target specific groups or governments. Its job is to simply verify the authenticity of the submitted materials and if it fits the criteria for publication, then WikiLeaks finds a way to best represent and manifest the wishes of the source.

In responding to the mainstream media spin concerning the DNC leaks, where they criticize WikiLeaks as aiding Donald Trump, Assange made it clear that the role of the organization is to publish whatever is given to them, and they will not censor their publications for any political

reasons. He noted that if they receive documents pertaining to Trump, they would publish them.<sup>21</sup>

Upon this carefully established foundation, WikiLeaks engages in scientific journalism. It always releases the full source material related to a story.<sup>22</sup> When the information that led to a conclusion is made available to the public, people can follow the process themselves and examine the validity of the disclosures and analysis so they can make their own independent conclusions about the material.

Instead of pretending to be neutral and bias-free, honest disclosure of motives allows journalists to connect with their convictions. Then they can be in service to the wishes of the source and achieve their stated goal of justice.

### **Unleashing the power of free speech**

WikiLeaks liberates the right to free speech from authorities that restrict access. They amplify the voice of the common man by working to bring maximum political impact. Assange spoke of how “history belongs to human civilization that understands in order to better itself.”<sup>23</sup>

The whistleblowing site pushes boundaries of free speech in order to get information back to the historical record. Their act of publishing online instigated not only a free flow of information, but also an awakening of history.

In the released video “Collateral Murder,” the buried stream of history arose and intersected with the present. In the unfolding scenery in that Iraqi suburb, the shadow of colonization lingers. A hidden past behind the legacy of the US empire, with its dark history of genocide and slavery, haunts the present. It is now being carried over into the military-industrial age of the 21st century with the global war of terror and its outward-thrusting machine-like brutality.

The cynical naming of the Apache helicopter evokes a memory of the mass murder of American natives. The brutal projection of US power into the oil-rich Middle East contains echoes of that same savagery of massacres waged against indigenous people. Those images released from the crosshairs of the gun sight on that fatal day in New Baghdad shattered the mirror that has kept us in amnesia of our true history, rendering us into mere reflections in the eyes of those who seek to bend the narrative to their selfish aims. In this awakened consciousness, a spark of awareness reversed the shadows . . . and those who had been made into “enemy combatants” on the other side of the barrel of the gun started to reveal who they are.

The voices that had been silenced between the lines of history books now began to speak. The words of Frederick Douglass, in his speech “The Meaning of July Fourth for the Negro,” resound:

Whether we turn to the declarations of the past, or to the professions of the present, the conduct of the nation seems equally hideous and revolting. America is false to the past, false to the present, and solemnly binds herself to be false to the future.<sup>24</sup>

Tiny cracks have now been opened within the cemented consciousness of Western civilization. Winds of silence have begun to unwind untold stories of our ancestors. Mathew King of the Lakota tribe once said:

We Indians lived a good life, a happy life until *you* came here and made it miserable. Who gave *you* the right to do that? *You* killed our people. *You* killed our chiefs. *You* stole our land. But God gave us this land. *You* can't take it away!<sup>25</sup>

The beast inside humanity grows in darkness, trying to swallow the consciousness of knowing together, so as to render all into automatons and become defenseless before the terrain of an occupied future. Free speech is the freeing of consciousness from forces that keep us asleep and make us remain victims of our unredeemed past. The roots of speech go deep into listening. It is the heart that seeks for what is silenced and actively senses what remains to be spoken. This act of speaking calls for a response, as human speech can't exist alone. Images buried inside history beckon to us. They seek to be remembered. When original events are brought to public sight, the veil of night shifts and our perception of reality

changes, making it possible for us to become aware of that which would have us fall prey to a single vision.

Manning's conscience cast a light onto what has been forgotten in history, allowing the view that was lost to come forward. At the same time, we are now given an opportunity to see something that has been sealed from our memory. This is our barbarian within, which binds our will to the tyranny of the past and now continues into the present. This act of free speech is not just a political deed, but as Savio said, is something that represents our very dignity, "the thing that marks us as just below the angels."<sup>26</sup>

### **Awakening the sleeping giant**

WikiLeaks has begun to awaken our own giant from its long slumber—the author within each person whose inspiration can defeat what seeks to conspire inside us. 2011 was the year it all caught fire. Courage that was sparked online became contagious on the streets. What had only been in history books was unfolding in real time as a rolling wave of revolutions moved around the world. The fire of self-immolation and global awakening, confirmed by US-Tunisian diplomatic cables, spread like wildfire through social media and lit the passions of Egyptians in Tahrir Square.

Around the globe, people began taking the reins of destiny into their own hands. In the US, coalitions of resistance made across political parties morphed into the powerful 99% alliance. WikiLeaks-revealed cables fueled

insurgents in Mexico, bolstering its peaceful youth movement against political corruption of the media.

From TPP trade agreement chapters, the emails of AKP—the Turkish ruling party—to the recent DNC emails that revealed the rigged presidential primary, WikiLeaks is still going strong, inviting people to actively participate in the history that is happening.

With the coming of this momentous 10th anniversary, let us celebrate this publisher of last resort—this fierce vanguard of democracy. Greek philosopher Diogenes said, “The most beautiful thing in the world is free speech.” WikiLeaks, the innovation of stateless journalism on the Internet, is perhaps the most beautiful thing that has happened in the world for decades, and it continues to grow.

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## Controversy over Podesta Emails Opens a Debate for Future Journalism

OCTOBER 30, 2016

In its 10 years of existence, WikiLeaks has been at the center of controversy. Ever since its global debut with the 2010 Apache helicopter gunsight video depicting the killing of civilians in Baghdad, the whistleblowing site has consistently exposed the naked power of empire for the world to see. As a result, the organization has been subject to relentless retaliation. With banking blockades, a secret grand jury, and constant character assassination of its founder, Julian Assange, the US government's efforts to divert public attention from evidence of its own crimes have quickly escalated into a war on the First Amendment.

WikiLeaks' publications influenced the outcome of a Kenyan election and played a role in instigating the Icelandic revolution. Now, by means of email leaks, they began informing US voters of the real working of Corporate America's tradition of "lesser-evil" politics.

After the DNC email leaks that led to the resignation of top DNC officials, WikiLeaks intensified its activity.<sup>1</sup> In

October 2016, it began publishing emails from the private account of Hillary Clinton's campaign chair, John Podesta.<sup>2</sup> The archive contained transcripts of Clinton's paid Goldman Sachs speeches<sup>3</sup> that show her two faces and total disconnect from the middle class.<sup>4</sup> It also revealed her private remarks dismissing climate activists. As usual, the leaks were condemned by the status quo and Clinton loyalists. This time, a narrative that "Vladimir Putin was meddling in the election" was used to discredit their publication, with the mainstream media creating an echo chamber of McCarthy-era hysteria.<sup>5</sup>

As WikiLeaks grew over the years with evolving strategies, criticism against the organization has also changed. Back in the day, WikiLeaks was slandered with a Pentagon official's rhetoric of "blood on their hands" and was depicted as reckless hackers putting innocents in danger.<sup>6</sup> Proclaimed liberal media institutions such as the *New York Times* abandoned WikiLeaks, with then executive editor Bill Keller differentiating it from his kind of journalism.<sup>7</sup>

Now, while the beam of transparency was focused on a rigged US contest for power, WikiLeaks was once again in the eye of a media storm. Some criticized what they perceived as a politically driven information dump and question whether WikiLeaks had gone too far. This new sensation around WikiLeaks started a debate for all to examine the role of journalism. At the same time, this gave everyone an opportunity to understand how the

organization's efforts to open governments is changing the media landscape.

## **Role of journalists**

Criticism toward WikiLeaks' latest publication also emerged from those who share similar values. NSA whistleblower Edward Snowden, who once described WikiLeaks as fearless journalism,<sup>8</sup> weighed in after the release of the DNC emails. He said: "Democratizing information has never been more vital, and @Wikileaks has helped. But their hostility to even modest curation is a mistake."<sup>9</sup>

Renowned author and journalist Naomi Klein joined in this critique. In an interview with Glenn Greenwald of *The Intercept* (funded by eBay founder Pierre Omidyar), Klein expressed her view that the publication of the Podesta emails is not in the same category as the Pentagon Papers or previous publications by WikiLeaks, such as chapters on the TPP trade agreements. Despite her acknowledging valuable and newsworthy stories in this material, she noted how indiscriminate publication of someone's personal exchanges brings a grave threat to privacy.<sup>10</sup>

The crux of the criticism revolves around different views on redaction, which has been debated in past years between Assange and Greenwald, who has been a strong advocate for WikiLeaks. In May 2014, what was widely portrayed as a Twitter storm emerged.<sup>11</sup>

Upon *The Intercept*'s publication that revealed the NSA interception of phone calls in the Bahamas,<sup>12</sup> WikiLeaks began a series of tweets criticizing *The Intercept*'s decision to redact the name of a fifth country revealed by the Snowden files that was a target of NSA spying.<sup>13</sup> Assange condemned *The Intercept* for censoring, noting how it is not the place for any media organization to "deny the rights of an entire people to know they are being mass recorded."<sup>14</sup> WikiLeaks then announced that in 72 hours it would reveal the name of the fifth country that had been a prime target of NSA mass surveillance, and as promised, it identified the fifth country as Afghanistan and provided the reason behind its publication.<sup>15</sup>

The difference in its approach to publishing came up again and brought out a particular perspective on the role of journalists. In his article titled "On WikiLeaks, Journalism, and Privacy," Greenwald explored obligations of journalists in reporting controversial materials such as Podesta's emails that are widely speculated to be hacked<sup>16</sup> (in which WikiLeaks noted they have many sources and have not stated the methods they used to obtain each part<sup>17</sup>).

Greenwald explained how he thought it should be reported. In this, he countered the often held objections that "journalists should not act as arbiters of privacy or gatekeepers of information."<sup>18</sup> He emphasized how all journalism is based on this determination of what should or should not be published and stated that the "core

purpose of the First Amendment’s free press guarantee was to add an additional safeguard against excess government secrecy by ensuring that others beyond government officials made decisions about what the public knows.”

Klein’s thoughtful criticism also appealed to this principle of journalism. In expressing her concern about privacy, she questioned the “subjectivity of who gets defined as sufficiently powerful to lose their privacy....”<sup>19</sup> Implied in this concern is a need for a designated authority who could and should determine what information is to be withheld. The idea here is that certain “professionals” should decide what is to be released in the “public interest.” For her, this is certainly the responsibility of journalists.

## **New checks and balances**

This traditional role of journalism as a safeguard against an authoritarian state has been under attack for decades. The assault against WikiLeaks and Obama’s war on whistleblowers has shown the dire state of press freedom in the West. With consolidation of media and infiltration of commercial and corporate interests, an oligarchic class has captured journalists, bringing them in to defend the interests of those in power. As a result, free speech is often coopted, becoming something that requires permission.

Once a position of authority is inserted, this often becomes a point of control used to violate privacy and

restrict information in favor of the rich and powerful. No matter how good the intentions of journalists are, the act of curating can become a slippery slope, where they engage in self-censorship with ingrained bias and act unconsciously as gatekeepers—apologists and stenographers for their patrons.

The question emerged as to what would hold journalists accountable and how can everyday citizens protect themselves from those who claim to act on their behalf. Unlike many other media organizations, WikiLeaks is fully independent, with its operation being funded by its readers. By engaging in scientific journalism, they lift the gates that guard structures of power while at the same time bringing a new form of checks and balances.

Gavin MacFadyen, a mentor and staunch defender of WikiLeaks who recently passed away, noted how the good witness is a crucial element in investigative journalism and described this witness as “someone who bears a truthful account of something they witnessed” and “can describe it with the same accuracy, hopefully, as they saw it.”<sup>20</sup>

As described in its submission page, WikiLeaks accepts anonymous source materials of “political or historical importance that are censored or otherwise suppressed.”<sup>21</sup> It verifies the authenticity of these documents and always releases the full source material related to any story, whether it is published by WikiLeaks itself or someone else. In this, full source documents that are

authenticated give opportunity for the public to become a good witness that can provide a true account of events, and this collective witnessing can engage people in what the Czech novelist Milan Kundera once called the “struggle of memory against forgetting.”<sup>22</sup>

By connecting ordinary people directly to documents, WikiLeaks replaces the source of legitimacy that used to be journalists’ supposed “objectivity” with the public’s understanding of authentic documents. When the information that can lead to a conclusion is made available to the public, people can follow the process themselves and examine the validity of the disclosures and analysis so they can draw their own independent conclusions.

This allows the public to critically examine the legitimacy of those who claim to represent it and brings accountability not only to those in positions of power but also to the media itself. It even makes the system of representation somewhat of an option.

### **The invention of the anonymous drop box**

At the core of WikiLeaks’ scientific journalism is a breakthrough of technological innovation. The invention of the anonymous drop box and mechanism of verifying documents without relying on a third party creatively solves the problem of corporate- and state-sponsored media. This foundation goes beyond just technology and into the philosophy of the cypherpunks, a group that advocates the use of privacy-enhancing technologies for

social and political change. In *A Cypherpunk's Manifesto*, Eric Hughes, one of the founders of the movement, expressed his distrust of illegitimate authority:

We cannot expect governments, corporations, or other large, faceless organizations to grant us privacy out of their beneficence. It is to their advantage to speak of us, and we should expect that they will speak. . . . We must come together and create systems which allow anonymous transactions to take place.<sup>23</sup>

Residents of the early Internet saw the enclosure of civil liberties and unaccounted power in the rise of the corporate state. Regulations and laws that are supposed to protect civil rights and maintain the function of democracy have now been shown to be extremely ineffective. When law enforcement through the system of representation fails to protect the public, it sought for solutions in cryptography. In his speech titled “Computers, Freedom, and Privacy,” John Gilmore, the founder of the Electronic Frontier Foundation and one of the individuals on the cypherpunk mailing list, spoke of how “I want a guarantee—with physics and mathematics, not with laws—that we can give ourselves real privacy of personal communications.”<sup>24</sup>

In 1991, as a response to the need for privacy, long before Snowden alerted the public about the looming dystopian vision of mass surveillance on the Internet, Philip R. Zimmermann invented and released PGP (Pretty Good

Privacy) software that makes anonymous online communication possible.<sup>25</sup>

Laws that are in favor of free speech have been increasingly weakened. The Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) was constantly undermined (as proven in the case of Reuters not being able to obtain the footage of 2007 US airstrikes in Iraq that were later released as the “Collateral Murder” video by WikiLeaks). The Whistleblower Protection Act was also gutted. Now a free press needs to be guaranteed not by laws but by strong math. WikiLeaks created an anonymous drop box that cryptographically ensures that anyone can communicate and transfer information securely. This made it possible for whistleblowers to exercise unhindered free speech.

With this new technical capability combined with the ethics of the cypherpunks, WikiLeaks built a robust platform of publishing. By making servers run through various countries that have strong source protection laws and by bouncing encrypted information through dozens of computers, it decentralized its infrastructure, making itself resilient to censorship and legal attacks.

## **Preserving history**

With scientific journalism, WikiLeaks challenges the traditional role of journalists, shifting them from gatekeepers to liberators of information. Then the task of journalists becomes one that helps the public to bear

witness to what whistleblowers saw and brings concealed information back into the historical record.

Contrary to US high officials denouncement of this new journalistic organization, WikiLeaks, which was actually founded on the same values of the American Revolution, liberated the First Amendment from the castle of this empire state.<sup>26</sup> By doing so, it appears to fulfill the promise in the Declaration of Independence that “all men are created equal,” with abolition of any single power that claims authority over history. But this time, it is at a global scale.

Assange once articulated this passionate conviction, reminding us:

History does not belong to institutions that engage in the world like National Security Agencies and the State Department. History does not belong to journalists. History does not belong to a media organization. History belongs to human civilization that understands in order to better itself.<sup>27</sup>

Then he added that history also doesn't belong even to whistleblowers, although they play a vital role. This commitment to preservation of history is shown in WikiLeaks' approach to redaction. In addressing the issues of redaction at re:publica14, WikiLeaks editor Sarah Harrison spoke about how the concept of redaction came to imply responsible journalism.<sup>28</sup> She then pointed out that the process of redaction is often used to hide the deeds of those in power, where large

companies' names are redacted and not for the reasons stated. Harrison explained how through its past publication experience, WikiLeaks learned that the best approach is to start with the premise that the public deserves everything and thus everything should be given to them.

Harrison pointed out how the idea that information itself causes harm is illogical.<sup>29</sup> She did clarify that names of individuals who could be subject to imminent threat and potential loss of life need to be redacted for a short period of time. Nevertheless, the organization believes that the public should have access to full source documents in order to see information in context, as each part can change meaning in relationship.

As a critical part of preserving history, WikiLeaks believes that information must be not only accessible but also usable. It teaches the public how it can read and access documents, such as the Public Library of US Diplomacy, or PlusD, that contained Cablegate. By actively engaging the public to inform itself, this publisher of last resort makes sure that no nation, president, political party, or corporation—including journalists—can control the past, present, or future of our civilization.

## **Insurgent publisher of the Internet**

In this new digital age, the role of media organizations is quickly changing. The Internet on one hand has become a terrain of surveillance and control. But it also has

fostered democratization of knowledge and free flow of information. Secretary of State John Kerry said, “This little thing called the Internet . . . makes it much harder to govern.”<sup>30</sup> Now each person around the world can set up a blog or website and connect with social media and technically become their own media.

WikiLeaks is the iconic insurgent publisher in this new digital age. It ushers in a new journalism that is borderless, censorship resistant, and participatory. In this, conventional lines between journalism and citizens dissolve, and ordinary people are empowered to participate in history as authors of their own lives. They themselves can become watchdogs for forces of power that omit, erase, and alter history, in order to fight against collective amnesia.

With its Twitter account that has now close to four million followers, WikiLeaks actively interacts with its readers around the world. It now has created two new Twitter accounts, @WLTaskForce<sup>31</sup> and @CommunityWL,<sup>32</sup> for supporters to spread releases from WikiLeaks, verify facts, and correct misinformation. Instead of top-down distribution of information, it encourages grassroots organizing and seeks an awakening of civic power.

Despite massive attacks and threats coming from the halls of power in Washington and its European allies, the organization remains as relevant as ever. From creating sparks for uprisings in the Arab world to disrupting the

scripted, corporate-sponsored charade of the current US presidential election, WikiLeaks stays strong.

In its 10 years of activity, WikiLeaks publications have caused no harm. With a perfect record of authentication of documents, it is at the forefront of pushing the boundaries of free speech. WikiLeaks will continue to be in the spotlight, challenging our preconceived notions of journalism, law, and governance, and inviting all to envision a future of democracy. Has WikiLeaks gone too far? Perhaps the real question that should be asked is, How far can the rest of media organizations go to keep up with this world's first truly global Fourth Estate?

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## Filling the Phantom of Democracy with Our Networked Power

DECEMBER 28, 2016

After the Electoral College vote, the Trump presidency became official. As denial and blame games continue, this was not likely a “foreign government coup d'état.” This was clarified by US intelligence chief James Clapper, who noted that agencies lacked evidence for WikiLeaks’ connection with alleged Russian cyberattacks.<sup>1</sup>

The truth is, democracy in America has been rotten to the core for decades. It is meddled with by corporate lobbyists, Big Pharma, Big Oil, and Wall Street—those who are addicted to money and power. American democracy is hollowed out, veiled with a loud media echo chamber, bringing feigned solidity to its emptiness. Out of this vacuum emerges a madness for power. US politics is a contest of those who are driven by insatiable hunger—the most callous, cunning, and manipulative people in society.

In this system, only people who lack empathy and advance self-serving agendas without concern for others can rise to the top. The results of this year’s presidential

election may mean that the person many saw as “unfit to be president” was better suited to play this dirty game than his opponent, Hillary Clinton.

## **Ascent of Trump**

Donald Trump, a perceived outsider, seemed to appear out of nowhere. The former producer of the American game show *The Apprentice* sniffed the vulnerability of disfranchised Americans who are continually betrayed by the establishment. He then quickly moved in for the kill, turning the electoral arena into a new reality TV show.

With social media as a hunting ground, this new Republican contender made direct connection with his audience, pouring out charm and grooming them with fake promises. By deploying words as weapons of control, he managed to garner favorable reactions from his followers. His language cast a magic spell where contradictory remarks and lies bypassed critical examination. Emotions triumphed over reason and under the grip of irrational logic, facts no longer seemed to matter. With a chameleon-like ability to shapeshift and say whatever voters wanted to hear, he was able to create a mirage and ensnare the populace into a grandiose fantasy.

What was the press, the supposed watchdog of power, doing during Trump’s uncanny rise in popularity? Mainstream media did nothing to prevent Trump’s ascent and instead facilitated the process. His bombastic

comments hit jackpot high ratings in the corporate media, and rhetoric not bound by facts was not only tolerated but actively promoted with the media's shortsighted mentality of profit at any cost.

## **Emancipating power of the Internet**

This same corporate media also buried a few important facts regarding the 2016 US presidential election. This year's election was an unprecedented phenomenon—not only because the lesser-evil game was fought between two of the historically most disliked candidates but also because of its own significance unique to elections in the Internet era.

While the Internet is now in many ways subverted to create mass surveillance and censorship, it also unleashed the potential for emancipation. As much as Trump's mobilization was made possible by his use of social media, Bernie Sander's campaign was also built on the democratizing force unleashed on the net. With independent campaign funding, this virtually unknown senator from Vermont successfully sparked the idea of socialism and raised issues of Wall Street corruption, economic injustice, and poverty at a national level. Sander's largest support came from millennials.<sup>2</sup> It was these natives of the Internet, through their grassroots organizing, that galvanized his political revolution.

The Internet also brought a new actor into the US electoral arena. Days before the election, a *Forbes* article acknowledged the significance of WikiLeaks' DNC

emails, calling them a “Holy Grail of understanding of US electoral politics.” It noted how “few understand the importance of WikiLeaks in the eventual writing of the history of presidential politics.”<sup>3</sup>

WikiLeaks, the world’s first global Fourth Estate, which operates outside of any government, was birthed on the Internet. WikiLeaks has shown how elections in the existence of a truly free press will never be the same as before. Sponsored by corporate masters, US politics creates a milieu of deception, lies, and fraud and is fraught with corruption. These power-driven politicians can only thrive in secrecy. When their actions are exposed, like Hillary’s highly paid Goldman Sachs speeches, crafted public images that suck the masses into their illusions of grandeur tend to shatter.<sup>4</sup> Contrary to hysterical rants of “Russia hacked the election!” the defeat of the Clinton dynasty was a testimony to the power of transparency that has risen from the Internet.

### **Democrats’ sabotage of democracy**

Democrats seem to be disconnected with this new reality of the Internet age. Even worse, they appeared to be adversaries of it. This was shown in their reaction to the corruption revealed in the DNC email database and Trump’s winning of the election.

On the second day of the Democratic National Convention, hundreds of Sanders delegates who learned about DNC’s rigging of the primary walked out in

protest. Chanting “This is what Democracy looks like!” they vowed not to go with Hillary.<sup>5</sup>

Revelations of the Podesta emails opened up an opportunity for real democracy. In that moment, Sanders had the masses behind him. With social media as a democratizing tool, along with WikiLeaks-authenticated documents, he had the power to truly challenge the establishment and revolutionize the nation. But then Sanders turned away, urging his supporters to nominate Hillary, and sided with the deeply corrupt Democratic Party. His failure to seize this historical moment helped throw the election to Trump, who the Clinton campaign had portrayed as a “pied piper candidate.”

After all this came the “fake news” explosion. Some established liberal media, freaked out by the country quickly turning red in this Republican takeover, created a new red scare. They blamed Clinton’s loss on anyone but themselves. On November 24, an article in the *Washington Post* made wild accusations that Russia was engaging in propaganda during the election to spread “fake news” in favor of Trump.<sup>6</sup> Soon after the publication of the article, *The Intercept*<sup>7</sup> and Matt Taibbi of *Rolling Stone*<sup>8</sup> quickly denounced and challenged its claim. In the end, this fake news article was debunked, with WaPo issuing a correction.<sup>9</sup> The anonymous site that claimed to have identified the fake news sites cited in the article was shown to be nothing but a blacklist that labels anyone who challenges the official narrative as

untrustworthy, even insinuating them to be Russian agents, spies, or traitors.

## **WikiLeaks, a game changer**

The election is over and hope is fading to stop the rise of demagoguery. The president-elect began recruiting his rich buddies into his cabinet.<sup>10</sup> He convened a group of Silicon Valley tech leaders to invite them into his new “construction project to rebuild America.”<sup>11</sup> On January 20, 2017, Trump was sworn in with the oath of office. The White House became his new executive boardroom. With this United States Incorporated, the Constitution could be slowly shredded off from his business contract. Evidence was shown in the president-elect’s proposal on Twitter to give jail time or loss of citizenship for burning the American flag.<sup>12</sup>

As this void of American democracy was being filled with more blatant patronage networks, new insurgencies were already here. During the election, this civic power came to the forefront. WikiLeaks was a game changer. With the creative use of technology, it built a robust network that is censorship resistant, making it possible for the organization to be free from this rigged game of state and corporations, allowing it to truly serve the interests of the people.

In its 10 years of existence, the organization has gained credibility around the world. With rigorous scientific journalism that publishes full and verifiable archives, it

lets truth be discovered through each individual's participation in its process.

Years ago in 2007, it was Kenyans who learned from WikiLeaks' release of the Kroll report<sup>13</sup> about the corruption of their government, and they were able to change the outcome of their election.<sup>14</sup> Then in 2009, people in Iceland were empowered with WikiLeaks documents that revealed the country's largest bank's moral bankruptcy.<sup>15</sup> 2016 was America's turn.

The whistleblowing site, by means of information liberation, gave American voters an opportunity to revive the ghost of democracy. Despite mainstream media's smearing of the organization, the significance of its work was acknowledged by Americans, with public opinion polls showing their strong approval of the Podesta leaks.<sup>16</sup>

### **In their nothingness, we find the all**

Lost opportunity in the electoral arena can be brought into a larger battle. Just as the power of the Internet can be used by the oligarchic class to corral the masses, it can also be used to empower the people through its open network. Whatever the outcome of elections, WikiLeaks has already shown the power of unfiltered information and a glimpse of what informed citizens can do. When the liberating force of a free net is claimed by the people to create movements across borders, linking diverse struggles together, it can give all a chance to make real changes.

In the story of Faust, Goethe wrote about a universal man following his thirst for knowledge. In this journey, Dr. Faust meets Mephisto (the devil), who tries to trick and tempt him to come under his control. In the act “A Dark Gallery,” Faust tells Mephisto, “In your Nothingness I hope to find my All.”<sup>17</sup> He then takes a key and enters into the mysterious unknown.

Our quest for democracy asks for our courage to enter into the realm of nothingness. We no longer want to believe, we want to know. We no longer blindly accept a world conceived by a few elites. Now, in this chaos and abyss we are descending into, we may be able to find the real source of our own legitimacy. With knowledge that springs from deep within, we are able to penetrate the deception of those who seek to control us and recognize their emptiness. In their nothingness, we can find the creative power that has always been there, the power that can bring life back to this phantom of democracy.

# 21

## Vault 7, CIA Cyberwar, and a Battleground of Democracy

MARCH 17, 2017

WikiLeaks dropped a bombshell on the US Central Intelligence Agency. The whistleblowing site began releasing the largest publication of confidential documents, code-named “Vault 7,” that came from the top-secret security network at the Cyber Intelligence Center.

Long before the Edward Snowden revelations, Julian Assange noted how “the Internet, our greatest tool of emancipation, has been transformed into the most dangerous facilitator of totalitarianism we have ever seen.”<sup>1</sup> He decried the militarization of the Internet with penetration by intelligence agencies like the NSA and Britain’s Government Communications Headquarters (GCHQ). According to Assange, this created a “military occupation of civilian space.”<sup>2</sup> Now WikiLeaks’ latest disclosures shed further light on this cyber-warfare, exposing the role of the CIA.

At a recent press conference from the Ecuadorian embassy in London, Assange explained how the CIA developed its own cyber-weapons arsenal and lost it after

storing it all in one place.<sup>3</sup> What is alarming is that the CIA became aware of this loss and didn't warn the public about it. As a result, this pervasive technology that was designed to hide all traces can now be used for malicious purposes by cyber-mafias, foreign agents, hackers, and anyone else who ended up with it.

Part one of this WikiLeaks publication, dubbed “Year Zero,” revealed the CIA’s global hacking force from 2013 to 2016.<sup>4</sup> The thousands of documents released contain visceral revelations of the CIA’s own version of an NSA. With an ability to hack any Android or iPhone, as well as Samsung TVs and even cars, they spy on citizens, bypassing encrypted messaging apps like Signal and Telegram. The Vault 7 leaks that exposed the CIA’s excessive power is of great importance from the point of view of security and individual privacy. But it has larger significance tied to the mission of WikiLeaks.

## **Opening government into the deep state**

Describing itself on its site as a “multi-national media organization and associated library,” WikiLeaks aims to open governments in order to bring justice.<sup>5</sup> In the speech at the SWSX (South by Southwest) conference in Texas, delivered via Skype in 2014, Assange described the particular environment that spawned the culture of disclosure that this organization helped create. He noted how “we were living in some fictitious representation of what we thought was the world” and that the “true history of the world” is “all obscured by some kind of

fog.”<sup>6</sup> This founder and editor in chief of innovative journalism explained how disclosures made through WikiLeaks’ publications break this fog. The magnitude of this Vault 7 cache, which some say may be bigger than the Snowden revelations, perhaps lies in its effect of clearing the fog to let people around the world see the ground upon which the narratives of true history are written.

Since coming online in 2007, WikiLeaks has published more than 10 million documents. Each groundbreaking disclosure got us closer to where the real power of the world resides. In 2010, WikiLeaks rose to prominence with the publication of the “Collateral Murder” video. With the release of documents concerning US wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, it struck the nerves of the Pentagon—the central nervous system of the military-industrial complex. With the release of the US diplomatic cables, WikiLeaks angered the State Department and came head to head with this global superpower.

In 2016, this unprecedented publisher began to blow the cover off American democracy a step further and clear the fog. WikiLeaks played an important role in the 2016 US presidential election. The DNC leaks disrupted the prescribed script of corporate-sponsored, “lesser of two evils” charade politics. The publication of the Podesta emails that revealed the internal workings of the Clinton campaign gave the American people an opportunity to

learn in real time about the function of the electoral arena as a mechanism of control.

With the demise of the Democratic Party, led by its own internal corruption, the cracks in this facade widened, unveiling the existence of a government within a government. People were beginning to glimpse those who seek to control behind the scenes—anonymous, unelected actors who exercise enduring power in Washington by manipulating public perception. The unraveling that has been slowly unfolding appeared to have reached a peak last month when Trump's former National Security Adviser, Michael Flynn, resigned.<sup>7</sup> He was forced to do so on the grounds that leaked classified information revealed he was lying about his phone conversation discussing sanctions with the Russian ambassador.

WikiLeaks has now entered its 10th year. The momentum continues, bringing all to a new pinnacle of disclosure. At the end of last year, in anticipation of this new release, WikiLeaks tweeted, “If you thought 2016 was a big WikiLeaks year, 2017 will blow you away.”<sup>8</sup> During the dramatic takedown of General Flynn, the media created a frenzy around unconfirmed claims that Russia was meddling with the US election and around Putin’s alleged ties with Trump, creating another fog of obfuscation. It was in this climate that WikiLeaks published documents showing CIA espionage in the last French presidential election.<sup>9</sup>

## **History awakening**

The idea of a shadow government has been the focus of political activists while also being a subject of ridicule as conspiracy theories. Now WikiLeaks' pristine documents provide irrefutable evidence about this hidden sector of society. The term “deep state” that is referenced in the mainstream media first really hit the major airwaves in 2014, in Bill Moyers’ interview with Mike Lofgren.<sup>10</sup> This former congressional staff member discussed his essay titled “Anatomy of the Deep State” and explained it as the congruence of power emerging as a “hybrid of corporate America and national security state.”<sup>11</sup>

We are now watching a deep-state sword fight against the elected Caesar of American plutocracy in this gladiator ring, surrounded by the cheers of liberal intelligentsia, who are maddened with McCarthy-era hysteria. As the republic begins to fall into disarray, with its crumbling infrastructure and anemic debt economy, far away from the coliseum, crazed with an out-of-tune national anthem, the silent pulse of hope begins to whisper. WikiLeaks unlocked the vaults that had swallowed the stolen past. As the doors open into this hidden America, history awakens with dripping blood that runs deep inside the castle.

As part of the release of this encrypted treasure trove of documents, WikiLeaks posted on Twitter the following passphrase:

“Splinter It Into A Thousand Pieces And Scatter It Into The Winds.”<sup>12</sup> These were words spoken by President John F. Kennedy a month before his assassination. His exact words were, “I will splinter the CIA into a thousand pieces and scatter it into the wind,” which shows his attitude toward the CIA as an arm of the deep state and what many believe to be the real reason for his assassination.<sup>13</sup>

The secret stream of history continues, taking control over every aspect of civil life and infecting the heart of democracy. The US has long since lost its way. We have been living in a fictitious representation of the flag and the White House. It is not the judicial boundaries drawn by the Constitution or even the enlightenment ideals that once inspired the founders of this country that now guide the course of our lives. Tyranny of the old world casts its shadow, binding Congress, the Supreme Court, and the president into a rule of oligarchy. CIA documents revealed that the US consulate in Frankfurt was used as a covert hacking base, while CIA officers work under the cover of the State Department to conduct these intelligence operations.<sup>14</sup> The *Wall Street Journal* now reported that President Trump has given the CIA expanded authority to carry out drone attacks, power that had previously only been available to the Pentagon.<sup>15</sup>

Decisions that radically alter the direction of our society are not made in a fair democratic election, a public hearing, or the senate floor. They are made in the FISA

Court and secret grand juries, bypassing judicial warrants and democratic accountability. This hidden network of power that exists above the law entangles legislators, judges, and the press into a web of deception through dirty money and corrupt influences. It controls perception of the past, present, and future.

## **The Internet generation**

As the deep state comes to the surface, we are able to see the real battle on the horizon. What is revealed here is a clash of values and two radically different visions of a future civilization. In his response to the Vault 7 publication, Michael Hayden, the former CIA director, was quick to lay blame on the new generation. He said, “This group of millennials and related groups simply have different understandings of the words loyalty, secrecy and transparency than certainly my generation did.”<sup>16</sup> To him, these young people are the problem, as if their different cultural approach and instincts must be tempered and indoctrinated into this hierarchical system so they know who their masters are.

Who are these people that are treated as a plague on society? This is the Internet generation, immersed with the culture of the free net and freedoms of speech and association. They believe in privacy for individuals, while demanding transparency for those in power. Peter Ludlow, a philosopher who writes under the pseudonym Urizenus Sklar, shared his observation of a cultural shift that happened in 2011. He noted that WikiLeaks had

become a catalyst for an underground subculture of hackers that burst into the mainstream as a vital political force.<sup>17</sup> Assange recognized this development in recent years as a “politicization of the youth connected to Internet” and acknowledged it as the “most significant thing that happened in the world since the 1960s.”<sup>18</sup>

This new generation ran into the deep state and those who confront it are met with intense hostility. Despite his promise of creating the most transparent government, Obama engaged in unprecedented persecution of whistleblowers. Now this dark legacy seems to be continuing with the present administration. Vice President Mike Pence vowed to “use the full force of the law” to hunt down those who released the intelligence agency’s secret material.<sup>19</sup>

As these conflicts heat up, resistance continues on an Internet that has now become a battleground. Despite crackdowns on truth-tellers, these whistleblowers won’t go away. From Manning to Snowden, people inside institutions who have come to see the subversion of government into insidious control and want change, have shown extraordinary courage. According to a statement given to WikiLeaks, the source behind the CIA documents is following in the steps of these predecessors. They want this information to be publicly debated and people to understand the fact that the CIA created its own NSA without any oversight. The CIA claims its mission is to “aggressively collect foreign intelligence overseas to protect America from terrorists,

hostile nation states and other adversaries.”<sup>20</sup> With these documents that have now been brought back to the historical archive, the public can examine whether this agency has itself lost control and can determine whose interests they truly serve.

## **The future of civilization**

As the world’s first stateless Fourth Estate, WikiLeaks has opened up new territory where people can touch the ground of uncensored reality and claim creative power to participate in the history that is happening. In a press conference on Periscope, Assange made reference to a statement by the president of Microsoft, who called for the creation of a digital Geneva Convention to provide protection against nation-states and cyberattacks.<sup>21</sup> Assange then affirmed WikiLeaks’s role as a neutral digital Switzerland for people all over the world.

WikiLeaks is taking the first step toward this vision. After it carefully redacted the actual codes of CIA hacking tools, anonymized names, and email addresses that were targeted, it announced that it will work with tech companies by giving them some exclusive access to the material. Assange explained that this could help them understand vulnerabilities and produce security fixes, to create a possible antidote to the CIA’s breach of security and offer countermeasures. WikiLeaks tweeted, notifying the public that they now have contacted Apple, Microsoft, Google, Mozilla, and MicroTik to help protect users against CIA malware.<sup>22</sup>

The Internet unleashed a beast that grows its force in the dark. Unaccounted power is dragging global society down toward an Orwellian dystopia. Yet from this same Internet, a new force is arising. Courage of the common people is breaking through the firewall of secrecy, creating a fortress that becomes ever more resilient as the network of people around the world fighting for freedom expands. When democracy dies in darkness, it can be reborn in the light of transparency. The deep state stretches across borders, sucking people into an abyss of totalitarian control. At the same time, the epic publication of Vault 7 that has just begun reminds us that the greatness in each of us can awaken to take back the power of emancipation and participate in this battle for democracy, the outcome of which could not only determine the future of the Internet, but of our civilization.

# Prosecution of Assange Is Persecution of Free Speech

APRIL 24, 2017

US authorities are reported to have prepared charges to seek the arrest of WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange.<sup>1</sup> This overreach of the US government toward a publisher, whose actions are aligned with the principle of the US Constitution,<sup>2</sup> is another sign of a crumbling facade of democracy. Previously, the Justice Department of the Obama Administration could not prosecute WikiLeaks for publishing documents pertaining to the US government because they struggled to determine whether the First Amendment protection applied.<sup>3</sup> Now the torch of Obama's war on whistleblowers seems to have been passed on to Trump, who had shown disdain toward free speech<sup>4</sup> and even called the US media "enemies of the people."<sup>5</sup>

Earlier this month, CIA director Mike Pompeo vowed to end WikiLeaks, accusing the whistleblowing site of being a "non-state hostile intelligence service often abetted by state actors like Russia."<sup>6</sup> He also once called Edward Snowden a traitor and claimed that he should be executed.<sup>7</sup> This declaration of war against WikiLeaks

may bring back a reminiscence of George W. Bush's speech in the aftermath of 9/11 in which he said, "Either you are with us or against us" and urged the nation to side with the government in his call to fight a global "war on terror."<sup>8</sup>

In a recent interview on *Democracy Now!*, journalist at *The Intercept* Glenn Greenwald put this persecution of WikiLeaks in the context of a government assault on basic freedom. He spelled out its tactics, noting how the government first chooses a target group that is hated and lacks popular support, for it knows attacking an idea or a group that is popular would meet resistance. He explained:

They pick somebody who they know is hated in society or who expresses an idea that most people find repellent, and they try and abridge freedom of speech in that case, so that most people will let their hatred for the person being targeted override the principle involved, and they will sanction or at least acquiesce to the attack on freedom because they hate the person being attacked.<sup>9</sup>

Demonizing and scapegoating a particular group or organization is an alarming tendency toward an authoritarian state. At a news conference last Thursday, Attorney General Jeff Sessions also chimed in to emphasize how Assange's arrest is a priority. This targeting of WikiLeaks is a threat to press freedom and could be seen as a slippery slope toward fascism.<sup>10</sup>

## **History repeats itself**

In the Weimer Republic during the rise of Adolf Hitler, he was successfully able to instill hatred in the minds of Germans to ultimately carry out massive crimes against humanity. Americans often wondered what made many ordinary Germans accept these horrendous acts that led to the Holocaust. Now, in Trump's America, it is not so far a stretch to say that Muslims, Mexicans, and other immigrants are becoming like the new Jews, scapegoated under this right-wing administration.

Once he gained power, Hitler made his word to be above the law. Trump, in his first 75 days in office, turned the rhetoric of hatred into action through passing an executive order barring refugees and citizens from seven majority-Muslim nations from entering the United States<sup>11</sup> and enacting mass deportation, with ICE (Immigration and Customs Enforcement) agents acting like Nazi Gestapo to track immigrants.<sup>12</sup> Draconian policies that were more below the radar during the Obama Administration are now becoming overt. More and more, Americans might now be able to get into the shoes of those “good Germans.”

In Hitler’s Germany, persecution of Jews didn’t happen overnight. It was a gradual escalation. The first thing Hitler did was to control media and create an arm of propaganda. By using this weapon of mass deception, the Nazi regime garnered popular support on a platform of racial identity and nationalism and managed to

brainwash citizens with the Nazi ideology of anti-Semitism. Under the guise of fighting communism, the party suppressed civil liberties, free speech and association, and expanded its power by demonizing whoever stood in its way.

## **Identity politics and machination of power**

The Trump campaign slogan “make America great again” spoke to middle-class America and disfranchised populations who were fed up with corporate plunder enacted under Democrats. His message of putting America first also struck a chord with white nationalists. By channeling their frustration and desires, Trump successfully created a fertile soil to harvest identity politics that is now coming to resemble Nazism’s emphasis on nationalism and racial supremacy.

No one can deny how the Trump victory empowered white supremacist groups that until that point were more on the fringe. The identity politics that seemed to be spreading around the world tends to contract one’s heart. Whatever the ideology is, “progressive” or “conservative,” anyone gripped by it falls into a narrow vision of humanity and loses perspective. This identity, fixed by ideology, becomes a point of manipulation to be exploited by those in power and is used to divide everyone through “us against them.”

When people lose capacity for dialogue, they become deaf to their own humanity. Then the state can easily exert control over the masses and seize power through

manufacturing a kind of war of all against all. We are now seeing a new civil war unfolding in America. The city of Berkeley is becoming an iconic battleground.<sup>13</sup> In February, riots erupted on the University of California (UC) Berkeley campus when protesters shut down an event scheduled for right-wing commentator Milo Yiannopoulos.<sup>14</sup> Also, at the free speech rally on Patriot Day, Trump supporters, along with far-right nationalists, clashed with local activists and antifascist groups. Ironically, the protest in the birthplace of the sixties' free speech movement devolved into a bloody fight, with each camp acting totally contrary to the principles of free speech.<sup>15</sup>

### **Height of McCarthy-era hysteria**

The attack against Julian Assange and WikiLeaks is not something new. Consorted efforts to delegitimize the organization through character assassination and smearing of Assange have been persistent ever since the site came to public prominence. Assange was called a high-tech terrorist by former vice president Joe Biden and incitement for his murder came from high US officials.

Assange has been holed up in asylum in the Ecuadorian embassy for five years, despite a UN ruling clearly stating his detention is unlawful.<sup>16</sup> This was not the first time he and his organization were declared to be enemies of the state. In 2012, the US military had designated them as such enemies.

So what is different now? The head of the CIA and the Department of Justice's declaration of war against WikiLeaks came in a particular political climate. These efforts to arrest Assange, now backed by President Trump,<sup>17</sup> are taking place at the height of a kind of McCarthy-era hysteria.

Just like the recent US government cruise missile attacks on Syria, carried out without any investigation or evidence that Assad was the one using chemical weapons, the echo chamber of the liberal media has been amplifying speculation of WikiLeaks' alleged source of DNC leaks and Podesta emails. With the narrative that Russia meddled in the US election, they branded Assange as a Putin sympathizer and/or Russian agent, without backing it up. The Left's seeming irrational obsession with Russia is also rooted in these identity politics—namely, its allegiance to the Democratic Party and America's post–Cold War national identity that is defined by a hysterical red scare.<sup>18</sup>

## **Whistleblowers as democracy's last line of defense**

In the wake of this possible arrest of Assange, the ACLU noted that “prosecuting WikiLeaks would set a dangerous precedent that the Trump administration would surely use to target other news organizations.”<sup>19</sup> We must never forget where hatred-driven identity politics led Nazi Germany.

Fascism begins in the mind. Its seed grows whenever we accept hatred toward someone who has different views. Enclosure happens when we suspend critical thinking in the hype of fear and turn the other into “the enemy.” It happens every time we close our hearts, shunning those who have been made into enemies. Democracy dies whenever we choose to pick up the sword of ideology and engage in a self-righteous crusade rather than choosing to uphold our common humanity.

When Trump signed a Muslim ban into law, outrage spread nationwide and people rallied at airports. The US Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit refused to reinstate Trump’s travel ban, and so the solidarity of the people won.<sup>20</sup> As Trump applied pressure to cut funds for sanctuary cities, these cities defied the order to maintain their immigrant policy.<sup>21</sup> Now the US government is coming after WikiLeaks, a transnational journalistic organization, who has no allegiance to any political party, government, or corporation, only to the conscience of ordinary people around the world.

In the darkness that hovers in the veil of ideology, whistleblowers shine a light through which we are able to recover lost perspectives. WikiLeaks, through their act of publishing, lets everyone see views that are forbidden, marginalized, or shunned. It is a front line in this battle for democracy and a last line of defense. One may dislike WikiLeaks and disagree with Assange, but whatever one’s opinion is, we all need to stand up against the erosion of our civil liberties. Prosecution of WikiLeaks is

persecution of free speech. Setting this precedent moves us down a dangerous path.

23

## From Gandhi to Catalans, the Revolutionary Movement of Peacemakers

OCTOBER 27, 2017

As Trump's dangerous move on Iran's nuclear deal<sup>1</sup> and his provocative reaction to North Korea<sup>2</sup> undercut diplomacy, tension is rising for World War III. Discord in the international community has been amplified in conflicts of identity politics across America. Greed and power-seeking leaders' ambition for profits never end. With ever-increased military budgets<sup>3</sup>, the legacy of imperialism is carried on. Uncertainty created by economic stagnation is generating frustration and anxiety, which is turned into anger and fear. These emotions are then channeled to harness a false sense of nationalism and white supremacy.

In the air of hostility that surrounds us, it is tempting for people to shun those who have opposing views and to respond to hate with even more hate. Resistance can easily be relegated to reactionary rallies. Protests quickly turn into an ideological battle of us versus them, which often results in violence. Yet for real social change to

happen, it is imperative for all of us to overcome this loathing toward different views and work together.

There is a force within each person that can counter the hatred that seeks to separate us. Mahatma Gandhi recognized this as the power of peace and applied it to create nonviolent civil disobedience that led to India's independence from British rule.<sup>4</sup> Now, more than a half century later, a similar peaceful resistance has emerged.

Recently, leading up to the independence referendum on October 1 in Catalonia, Spain's richest province, Spanish police engaged full force to stop the voting.<sup>5</sup> WikiLeaks founder and editor in chief Julian Assange, who has remained confined to the Ecuadorian embassy in London for more than five years<sup>6</sup>, acknowledged the peaceful act of self-determination by the Catalonian people in facing this police violence. Calling it "the most disciplined Gandhian project since Gandhi," he said that "its results will spread everywhere."<sup>7</sup> Peace is a revolutionary force that largely remains untapped. How can social movements be created by this innate transformative power and bring harmony to this divided world?

## **The great law of peace**

The same force of peace that guided Gandhi to fight against the oppression of Britain was present at the

beginning of the United States. In history classes, many learned about the American Revolution and the War of Independence, where founders bravely fought for separation from King George. We all know America was founded on revolutionary spirit, but little is known about the quiet strength behind a fiery passion of war at the birth of a nation.

Early colonists, after settling into this New World, interacted with indigenous people. Historians have consistently noted how the original framers of the US Constitution like George Washington and Benjamin Franklin greatly admired the core concepts of the Six Nations of the Iroquois Confederacy and their democratic governance that was based on a vision of peace.<sup>8</sup> So what does peace mean?

From Leo Tolstoy's *War and Peace* to John Lennon's popular song *Give Peace a Chance*, the word "peace" is in our everyday vocabulary. Many of us make slogans, carry banners of peace, and march in the streets. In our culture, peace seems to have become a mere symbol and has come to simply indicate the opposite of violence or a lack of conflict. Native Americans had a different conception of peace. Philosopher Jacob Needleman described how to them, it is "not as something passive, not as a mere absence of conflict, but as a force that can harmonize the actions and impulses of human life in all

their multiplicity and opposition to each other.”<sup>9</sup> Peace, to Native Americans, is at the center of their way of life.

Needleman recognized how this peace diverges from European religious and ethical principles that work in duality and supports the “radical separation of the good (however it is understood) and the evil (that which resists the good)”<sup>10</sup> noted how peace conceived by Native Americans acknowledges interconnectedness of good and evil and it “includes all the forces of life,” even “what we often call ‘evil.’”<sup>11</sup> He then described for them “to be at peace means to be at peace with one’s conscience.”<sup>12</sup>

The First Nation’s conception of peace calls on each to recognize and respect each other’s differences, even the opinions and viewpoints of those we disagree with or condemn.<sup>13</sup> The Great Law of Peace protects independence and individual liberty, while at the same time bases decision-making processes on consensus rather than majority rule. This wisdom of peace was not only at the root of Native American governance, but also influenced the formation of the US government—in particular, the key concept of decentralized power that was secured by the separation of power and checks and balances incorporated into the US Constitution.<sup>14</sup>

## **Lost ideals and call for love**

This peace placed at the foundation of America is a radical acceptance of differences that recognizes all equally in their uniqueness. Out of this fertile soil that embraces diverse seeds sprang the sprouts of inalienable rights. These include life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness that were promised in the Declaration of Independence.

Yet this revolutionary idea of peace that enlightened the mind and lit the hearts of early settlers seems to have been cast off by the shadow of the old world of monarchy. As Frederick Douglass reminded us in his famous speech “The Meaning of July Fourth for the Negro,” America became “false to the past, false to the present, and solemnly binds herself to be false to the future.”<sup>15</sup> From the onset, with internal contradictions in the genocide of natives, slavery of Blacks, and the oppression of women, the nation diverged from the ground upon which it stood. The promise of equality in the Declaration became empty words. History, with absence of authors who can take responsibility for their creative power, remained asleep to its potential and fell prey to the darkness within.

As the republic expanded, with a focus on material happiness and short-term pleasure through acquisition, the force of peace retreated into the background. Yet it

continued to speak to the hearts of ordinary people who still listened to the cries in the wilderness, awakening impulses for social change.

In the 1840s, women's suffrage gained strength. Through the emergence of feminism, nature began to speak its silent language of peace. Some recognized the influence of the Iroquois principles of democracy, in which women played an important role.<sup>16</sup> In the mid-1950s, mass protests erupted against racial segregation and discrimination in the southern states, which launched the nationwide civil rights movement. Martin Luther King Jr. found the power of peace that Gandhi had discovered. In his effort to liberate Black people in the struggle for civil rights, he inspired the nation through a true message of peace—its unifying force of love even for one's enemies. In his speech delivered in 1957 in Montgomery, Alabama, Dr. King said:

Somewhere, somebody must have some sense. Men must see that force begets force, hate begets hate, toughness begets toughness. And it is all a descending spiral, ultimately ending in destruction for all and everybody. Somebody must have sense enough and morality enough to cut off the chain of hate and the chain of evil in the universe. And you do that by love.<sup>17</sup>

Such is the decentralized power of peace. It inspires all to yield the urge for power in order to open a space for

others to come forward, a principle necessary for democratic dialogue.

## Rage against the machine

The '60s brought the further destruction of the democratizing force of peace and at the same time created a resurgence of peacemakers. As the country engaged in military action overseas, the opposition to US involvement in the Vietnam War quickly organized anti-war protests. Jimi Hendrix's rendition of "The Star-Spangled Banner"<sup>18</sup> in 1969 at Woodstock struck a chord in the hearts of many, letting people hear "the rockets' red glare, the bombs bursting in air" over Vietnam.

As the nation began seeking for answers blowing in the wind, a massive student movement kicked off at UC Berkeley. In the launch of the free speech movement (FSM), Joan Baez, who led the first group of protesters into Sproul Hall on the UC Berkeley campus, echoed Gandhi's principles of nonviolence. She reminded the crowd of the commitment to act with love in the heart and that students were going to be "nonviolent in thought, word, and deed."<sup>19</sup>

The clash of two forces became visible in images of flowers placed in gun barrels. As the youth turned to the hardened America represented by armed police, for a moment a breath of peace was brought back to

resuscitate this dying culture. Yet this power of peace upheld by childlike innocence alone was not enough to confront the growing beast of the military industrial complex, which with its insatiable hunger consumes all into its soulless capitalism. As Mario Savio, the spokesperson for the FSM depicted in his passionate speech in December 1964, the “operation of the machine becomes so odious.”<sup>20</sup>

As the rise of corporate power rolled back most progress that consumer advocate groups had made, the rage against this machine was quietly building up. Decades later, a call for an uprising came from southern Mexico, one of the poorest parts of the world, where indigenous people were treated like animals and abandoned by Western neoliberal economic policies. On January 1, 1994, the day NAFTA went into effect, the people in Chiapas revolted against the Mexican government. This ignited the revolutionary power of peace on the streets of Seattle in 1999. The protest against the World Trade Organization (WTO) spawned a cycle of global social justice movements. Yet this victory was short-lived and the enthusiasm for a different world was crushed by the Bush era’s “war on terror” and a draconian crackdown of dissent, creating a chilling effect and moved society toward a more authoritarian state.

## **The age of cypherpunk**

In the moral ice age of the post-911 world, a new front of courage emerged from the internet. In April 2010, with the release of the “Collateral Murder” video, an unknown website burst onto the global stage. When the government’s internal mechanism of checks and balance had been broken, WikiLeaks opened an avenue for a new accountability. Through this whistleblowing platform, patriotic and liberty-loving men and women found a way to restore the peace of a nation by each choosing to be at peace with their conscience.

Empowered by the vision of cypherpunks, a group that advocates social change with the use of strong cryptography, WikiLeaks engaged in nonviolent information warfare, freeing speech that is censored and oppressed. With its radical acceptance of speech in all forms, backed by innovative technology, WikiLeaks made the First Amendment available to the whole world.

From the election in Kenya and the Icelandic revolution to the Arab Spring and Occupy movements, WikiLeaks’ publications sparked contagious courage, helping open a future where ordinary people armed with knowledge began claiming the power of peace that was for so long stripped away and denied. History that was awakened through this courage is still moving.

Now in Catalonia, as Assange observed, significant events were happening that would change the “relationship between population and state in Western Europe since the fall of the Berlin Wall.”<sup>21</sup> As the Spanish government seized election literature, shut down websites, and threatened politicians as well as the offices of newspapers, the Catalan president gave his people instructions on how to circumvent this blockade and obstruction of free speech.<sup>22</sup> Assange then noted: “When #Catalonia's press is Tweeting how to use proxies to avoid voting censorship we are in the age of cypherpunk.”<sup>23</sup> He then provided technical support for people in Catalonia to communicate and organize securely, as they faced Spanish oppression for their right to vote for the referendum.<sup>24</sup>

## **A network of radical acceptance**

The unchecked power of the dominant elite continues, engaging in the suppression of free speech through economic censorship. Along with control of public media and police,<sup>25</sup> the Spanish government has been trying to seize control of Catalonia’s finances.<sup>26</sup> Assange, who had firsthand experience of this kind of financial warfare with private companies’ illegal banking blockade of WikiLeaks,<sup>27</sup> called people’s attention to the network of resistance that has been steadily growing online.<sup>28</sup>

The invention of Bitcoin was the holy grail of cypherpunks. With features of permissionless, censorship resistant, and unseizable transactions, it was envisioned to become stateless currency that preserves the individual liberty of all. The white paper of this revolutionary decentralized money was published in 2008.<sup>29</sup> It became operational in 2009.

The Iroquois' law of peace codified in the wampum belt is now being coded into software. It becomes an armory that is made much more secure and immutable to any foreign or domestic attacks. Here, the First Nation's vision of great peace that inspired its democratic confederation seems to have found its realization in the open source protocol of the consensus algorithm. Security expert and author Andreas M. Antonopoulos calls Bitcoin's governance model "leaderless"—that which creates decentralized power. He describes how the system motivates people to come to consensus at a very high level and decisions are made by the circle of five constituents: miners, developers, wallets, merchants, and users.<sup>30</sup>

As the era of cypherpunk opened up, the tyranny of the incumbent legacy system gathered up its power to define a new digital age on its own terms. Western liberal democracy, with the arms of technology and transnational corporations, has now expanded throughout the world, placing all into an elaborate web

of a financial industrial complex. In this artificial machination of the world, money that has been used as a weapon to wage war and exploit can be automated, with humans no longer in charge. With mass surveillance and control, it can create a total dystopia. Here, the Great Law of Peace enshrined in a piece of mathematics can offer a shield for ordinary people to defend themselves against the sword of power that seeks to control and enslave all living beings into institutional hierarchies.

With Bitcoin, the First Amendment becomes an app that can be distributed across borders indiscriminately to anyone, including those condemned as enemies. Stewarded by developers around the world committed to the shared ideals of cypherpunk, Bitcoin makes its transactions from country to country, from belief to belief, from opinion to opinion, and traverses the way of peace. Having demonstrated its unbreakable integrity for the last eight years, the protocol of radical acceptance continues to evolve, providing an alternative to tyranny without fighting, by each engaging in the creative act of innovation.

As governments all over the world become destructive and old systems begin to crumble, new networks are being made by linking the knowledge of computer science with the wisdom of the First Nations, who have lived in harmony with nature. Now, the West and

natives, two minds from the same roots that once diverged paths can come together to begin a new civilization. By each choosing freely to chart the way of peacemaking, social movements can be created. People walking side by side bring this world toward a more perfect union, founded upon a principle of equality that allows everyone to be free.

# Afterword

## History Is Happening

While I write these final words, Julian Assange still remains in asylum in the Ecuadorian embassy, with intensified US government threat of prosecution. As attacks against free speech continue, documents released by the organization have brought people around the world together in a path of self-determination.

WikiLeaks has already changed the world. By opening governments, it opened the door for creating a future imagined in the hearts of ordinary people. As leaks reveal deep corruption among elected officials and powerful institutions, the legitimacy of governance is being dissolved, and we are beginning to see the truth about who we really are.

We have been divided into ideologies, national and racial identities imposed by policymakers. Chelsea Manning spoke of the unfolding scenery in the “Collateral Murder” video, reminding us all how “we’re human . . . and we’re killing ourselves.”<sup>1</sup> Information that is freed began to dismantle the abstract image of who we are, instilled by government propaganda. We are waking up to a larger identity that is rooted in our shared humanity.

Around this global Fourth Estate, a network of a new citizen power is emerging, one that recognizes free speech and equality as inalienable rights of all people. History is no longer a frozen or a forgotten past in our memory. The future is no longer dictated by the few. History is happening and we are each the authors of our own story.

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—Nozomi Hayase  
Berkeley, California, December 2017

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Nozomi Hayase was born and grew up in Japan. When she was young, C. S. Lewis's fantasy novel, *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* captured her imagination. Inspired by this story of a moral battle, she aspired to become a writer to tackle the dilemma of good and evil. As a young adult, she moved to the United States. From civil rights to peace and free speech movements, she saw her childhood story unfold in ordinary people's struggles for freedom in the history of America. In 2010, WikiLeaks' publication of the Collateral Murder video was a turning point. She found the impulse for social justice carried onto a global stage with the Internet becoming a battleground. She is a columnist and essayist, whose writing is dedicated to liberate potent forces in history that allow us to participate in creating the future. She holds an MA in Human Development and a Ph.D. in Psychology and has years of experience teaching adolescents.



"While the State smothers speech, WikiLeaks listens. It is their genuine listening that frees speech, making ordinary people feel that they themselves matter. Those who feel listened to start to trust their own thoughts and find words that are informed by their own experience. WikiLeaks opened the age of freedom of speech. In this new era, freedom of speech is not a professional privilege, nor should it apply only to a particular nation or group of people. It becomes a right and responsibility that can now be exercised by people around the world."