

Clint Eastwood's Dishonest 'J. Edgar'

Exclusive: In the movie *J. Edgar*, director Clint Eastwood glosses over the long train of abuses committed by the late FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover so there's more time for a psychological profile. But James DiEugenio says that leaves a dishonest impression of this violator of American rights.

By James DiEugenio

Much of the controversy around Clint Eastwood's *J. Edgar* has swirled around screenwriter Lance Black's depiction of the late FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover as a closeted gay man, since Black is a gay writer-director and most of his previous projects featured gay themes.

But even more important in any critical analysis of the movie is Eastwood's work as director. Because that informs us about why the American film business has come to a point when a mediocre, compromised and dishonest production like this much ballyhooed film gets praised for "being candid" about one of the worst Americans of the 20th Century.

To my knowledge, this is the third film made about J. Edgar Hoover. In 1977, there was a rather low budget, independent film directed and written by Larry Cohen, which starred Broderick Crawford as Hoover. It was titled *The Private Files of J. Edgar Hoover*. Considering its time period, it was a forthright look at Hoover. Because of its controversial topic, it was plagued by budget problems. Therefore it was made on the run by sneaking onto locations.

In 1987, Robert Collins wrote and directed a TV film, which starred Treat Williams as Hoover. This film was less forthright about Hoover and his crimes. (I should note, there is also a third production that cannot really be called a movie. It was more like a one-man theatrical show with Ernest Borgnine enacting the Director and Cartha DeLoach, a senior FBI official under Hoover, providing the support. With Hoover's No. 3 man on board, one can imagine the depth of insight into Hoover.)

The fact that Hoover has been dead since 1972, yet there has been so little produced on film about him tells us something about the man and the film business in the USA. For there can be little doubt that J. Edgar Hoover was one of the most perniciously influential men in 20th Century America.

While helming the Bureau, he conducted some of the greatest abuses of power and legal transgressions that any American civil servant ever did. And while he did so, he protected himself by collecting pieces of personal blackmail against

federal, state and local politicians and government officers.

In one famous case cited by author Curt Gentry, Hoover managed to secure film of a prominent citizen's wife fellating her black chauffeur. When these kinds of things did not exist, Hoover would have FBI employees invent the evidence to execute the blackmail.

A good example of this was Hoover's destruction of Congressman Cornelius Gallagher, who was concerned about the use of the Bureau's technologies to spy on Americans. Gallagher spoke about this in Congress and began to hold hearings on the topic. Hoover sent an emissary to warn him about his activities.

When Gallagher persisted, the Director manufactured a scenario of Gallagher being tied in with the local New Jersey mob. The FBI broke into his home and stole his personal stationery. Hoover's operatives then forged documents to connect Gallagher to local Mafia chieftain Joe Zicarelli. They also forged telephone tapes of Gallagher talking to Zicarelli.

Hoover and DeLoach got *Life* magazine to publish that false story. DeLoach then told Gallagher's lawyer that unless the congressman resigned DeLoach would have *Life* print a story that a New Jersey gambler had died of a heart attack at Gallagher's home while in bed with his wife. [See Anthony Summers, *Official and Confidential*, pgs. 211-12.]

Hoover's Secrets

But this is just the beginning of the evils that Hoover indulged himself in while Director. Hoover allowed his agents to conduct unauthorized mail intercept programs, cable intercept programs and breaking and entering called black back jobs in order to steal and plant evidence, usually on leftist groups. [See Gentry, *J. Edgar Hoover: The Man and his Secrets*, pgs. 282-84].

Beyond that, Hoover conducted taps on phones and planted surveillance bugs in homes and businesses. [Ibid, pgs. 285-86] When authors tried to tell the public about some of the things Hoover did, he would send agents to try and thwart publication of these books and magazine articles. [Ibid, pgs. 386, 462] He even went as far as sending agents into library archives to remove documents that could be used to discredit him. [Ibid, pgs. 288-89]

Meanwhile, Hoover authorized books to be written about the Bureau hiding his personal crimes and exaggerating and glorifying the Bureau's triumphs e.g. Don Whitehead's *The FBI Story*. He then had books ghost-written for him by agents on company time, e.g. *Master of Deceit*.

Not paying for the writing, Hoover could then pocket the profits himself. He

would cover this windfall by saying he would donate the profits to something called The FBI Recreational Association. This turned out to be a slush fund used by him at his discretion. [Ibid, p. 448]

Inspiring McCarthy

Hoover played a prominent role in creating the Red Scare in the Fifties. In fact, some writers maintain that it was really Hoover who created Joe McCarthy by supplying him with reams of questionable information, which Hoover could not get into the record himself.

This, in turn, created the hysteria to persecute Communists and leftist sympathizers, even though it was not a crime to be a Communist and the relatively small movement supported many worthy reforms, such as the end to racial segregation. Nevertheless, Hoover's Red Scare resulted in personal tragedies like the case of the Hollywood Ten, a group of screenwriters, actors and directors who were blacklisted for their leftist political beliefs.

Although Hoover toiled at exaggerating to an insane degree the number of people in the Communist Party and how dangerous they were to America, he ignored the influence of the Mob in American life all the way up to the notorious Apalachin Raid in 1957, which discovered a meeting of about 100 Mafiosi in upstate New York.

Even after that proof of a national crime syndicate, Hoover never really ratcheted up the man-hours or legal techniques used against the Mafia until Robert Kennedy became Attorney General and pushed him into it. RFK thought it silly to use as many agents as Hoover did on the Communist Party since he famously said that a large percentage of those presumed Communists were actually FBI informants.

In another split with the Kennedys, Hoover never worried about white militant groups in the South or the violations of the Brown v. Board of Education decision, striking down "separate-but-equal" schools. In fact, in a meeting at the White House in 1954, Hoover actually discounted the power of the Ku Klux Klan despite its long record of racial violence. [Gentry, p. 141]

When the Freedom Riders began their efforts to integrate public facilities in the South, Hoover knew at least two weeks in advance that the Klan planned to use violence to terrorize the protesters. The FBI even alerted the police in Montgomery when the bus was coming, knowing that the local police were working with the Klan. [Ibid, p. 483-485]

When the violence broke out in Birmingham and Montgomery, Alabama and several people were severely beaten it was Robert Kennedy who had to call out federal

marshals to stop it. It was this dereliction of duty by Hoover that sparked criticism from Martin Luther King Jr against the FBI's laxness on Klan violence. King's criticism infuriated Hoover because he didn't like the fact that he was a racist to be implied in public. [Ibid, p. 497]

But Hoover made sure that most of the FBI's Special Agents in Charge, and their assistants, in southern cities were southerners. [Ibid, p. 499] Though Hoover's later smearing of King's character became infamous, Hoover already had a long record of collecting personal gossip and sexual blackmail against prominent individuals, including President Dwight Eisenhower. [Ibid, p. 441]

The FBI also had opened a file on King in 1958, long before he came to national prominence. There were at least 20 black bag jobs on King's organization, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) *that were recorded*. And as Gentry points out, the aim of these was to get information on King himself.

One of the worst aspects of Hoover's career was the launching of the infamous COINTELPRO assaults on certain groups, most notably the Black Panthers. This program employed the use of informants, double agents, newspaper assets, surveillance, and alliances with local police to sow discord and division within target groups, which often would degenerate into violent confrontations.

A prime example was the 1969 killing of Chicago Panthers Fred Hampton and Mark Clark while they were sleeping. [See "How the FBI Tried to Destroy the Black Panthers" in *Government by Gunplay*, edited by Sid Blumenthal and Harvey Yazijian.]

A Pattern of Abuses

The above compilation of Hoover's abuses could go on and on: he hired lying witnesses like Harvey Matusow to put innocent people in jail; the FBI either planted or built the famous Woodstock typewriter to corroborate witness Whittaker Chambers's spy accusations against State Department official Alger Hiss; Hoover lied about how he rolled up a group of Nazi spies during World War II; and he watched as the two informants in the group were sentenced to long prison terms at hard labor.

Yet beyond wanting to giving the reader a real taste of what Hoover was like, I have summarized his career to make an important point about the Black/Eastwood film, which is this: *none of the above is in this popular movie!*

Which means the worst things that Hoover did are left out of the film. Of course, it would be impossible to detail, or even mention in passing, all of the above. But surely any honest film about the man would have to deal with at least some of it. But this film does not. So right off the bat, the viewer gets a

whitewashed view of just how bad Hoover really was.

Most of the film's 137 minute running time consists of five episodes: 1.) Hoover's relationship with his mother; 2.) His relationship with his assistant Clyde Tolson; 3.) Hoover's role in the World War I-era Palmer Raids; 4.) The FBI's role in the Lindbergh child kidnapping case; 5.) The composition of a letter to Martin Luther King in which the FBI implied that he should commit suicide or else the Bureau would blackmail him about his infidelity.

The first two are personal matters of course. But before we get to them, it is interesting to explore how Black deals with the latter three since they are the incidents he uses to elucidate Hoover's professional career.

Exaggerating a Red Scare

The Palmer Raids are named after A. Mitchell Palmer who was Attorney General from 1919-1921. After a series of bombings, including one right outside his home, he was coaxed into organizing two raids by the Bureau of Investigation the forerunner of the FBI against suspected radicals who were behind the violence.

The problem was that the acts were carried out by anarchists, which the Bureau had very little information about. So instead, the raids were set up and planned against leftists, who the Bureau *did* have much information about.

Hoover had been in on the gathering of this information from the age of 22, when he was placed in charge of a unit in the Enemy Alien Registration Section of the Justice Department. [Gentry, p. 69] Hoover studied previous Justice Department raids against leftist unions like the IWW. And he became enamored of the dragnet-type raid. [Ibid, p. 73]

Before going any further, let us briefly describe what the film depicts about Hoover and the raids. Played by Leonardo DiCaprio, Hoover rides his bike down to the scene of the explosion near Palmer's house. He then is depicted as a foot soldier in the actual raids. As Palmer then leaves office, Hoover is heard saying, "I was only following orders."

To put it mildly, this is not what actually happened. First of all, to depict Hoover riding a bike to the scene is a bit of a stretch. The man was 24 years old at the time. He was not just a kid, as Eastwood and Black seem to imply. Further, he was not just a foot soldier, and he was not just following orders.

As Gentry and Tony Summers describe, Hoover actually assembled the lists of suspects for the two raids. But further, he also helped in cobbling together the (very weak) legal underpinnings for the raids, arrests, and deportation hearings. [Gentry, pgs. 81-82]

For the second series of raids, which began in late December of 1919, Hoover actually prepared the warrants all 3,000 of them. [Ibid, p. 89] These warrants usually contained only the name of the alien and the unsupported allegation that he was a member of the Communist Party.

Considering the advance work he did, Hoover was too valuable to be off in the field. In reality, and unlike what Eastwood depicts, he was back in the office coordinating things if anyone had any legal problem in the actual practice of the raids. [ibid, p. 91] We know this from the actual written instructions given to the agents involved in the raids.

Finally, Black's script underplays just how bad the raids were. Approximately 10,000 men were arrested. Within a week, about 6,000 were released since there was not even a card to prove they were Communist Party members, indicating how bad Hoover's files were.

Of the remaining 4,000, about half had been arrested without warrants. In many cases, the warrants were delivered *after* the arrest. Yet even with all of these rights violations, Hoover still tried to get judges to set high bail bonds so the detainees could not be released.

He then set up a propaganda organ inside the Bureau to pass information onto newspapers putting the best possible spin on the raids. In spite of the fact that even with all the legal lacunae he supervised, almost no weapons of violent revolution had been found. [Gentry, pgs. 94-95]

Hoover also was in on the legal preparations for the deportation hearings. [Ibid, p. 95] He also granted interviews to newspapers like the *New York Times*. And when Palmer was called before Congress, Hoover sat next to him and supplied him with documents. [Ibid. p. 100]

These propaganda ploys were meant to disguise the fact that Hoover, who had a law degree, must have known that the raids employed a fistful of illegal acts and doctrines that anticipated the police state tactics soon to be used in the fascist nations of Italy and Germany. When lawyers did begin to write about these issues, what did Hoover do? He opened files on them for speaking out. [Ibid, p. 99]

These facts belie the presentation by Black and Eastwood of Hoover as a bicycle-riding innocent foot soldier who was only following orders. In fact, what they present better fits the embroidered image that Hoover used afterwards to try and discount his key role in this sorry episode.

Lindbergh Case

Let us now look at the film's depiction of the 1932 kidnapping of Charles Lindbergh's infant son.

As Black and Eastwood show, the local and state authorities did not want the Bureau involved. But it is also true that Hoover had the opportunity to stake out the meeting at which ransom money was exchanged for information on where the child was being held. Hoover decided not to do so. [Gentry, p. 150]

This turned out to be a mistake since the child was not at the location where the kidnapper's said he was. He was already dead. And the decomposed body was within five miles of Lindbergh's home. This discovery finally got the Bureau involved through the orders of the president. And shortly after Congress passed what became known as the Lindbergh Law, making kidnapping a federal offense and giving Hoover jurisdiction.

But this expansion of his authority became a problem since Hoover had great difficulty solving the case: the arrest of Bruno Hauptmann was not made for over two and a half years.

In fact, Hoover always thought that more than one person was involved and that there was likely an inside agent as part of the plot. Hoover first suspected for this role the baby's nursemaid, Betty Gow, who was the last person to see the infant in the crib and the first to discover his absence. [Lloyd C. Gardner, *The Case that Never Dies*, p. 32]

Also, unlike what the film shows, Hoover's certainty about the guilt of Hauptmann was not close to absolute. Indeed, his agents told him that the local authorities had fiddled with the evidence.

We now know today, through the work of Anthony Scaduto in his 1977 book *Scapegoat*, that the prosecution had employment records in their possession that they hid from the defense that made it very difficult to believe that Hauptmann could have driven from New York City (where he was working that day) to New Jersey, the scene of the crime, at the time he was supposed to be there.

Further, the prosecutors even tampered with the start date of Hauptmann's New York job to make it appear he was not even there on the day of the kidnapping. (For a brief overview of the case, [click here](#))

As Curt Gentry notes, in October 1934, three months before Hauptmann's trial began, Hoover called a press conference to announce the FBI was withdrawing from the case. [Gentry, p. 162] From then, until Hauptmann's execution in April 1936, there was a long series of FBI memoranda marking the Bureau's and Hoover's doubts about the case.

Agent Leon Turrou, Hoover's main liaison to the local authorities from the time of the indictment, called the proceedings against Hauptmann "a mockery" of a trial. For instance, one of the main witnesses used to identify the defendant was a Dr. Condon, who met in a cemetery with a man sent to collect the ransom. Yet Condon failed to pick Hauptmann out of a line-up.

And two days after, Condon told Turrou that Hauptmann was not the man he met. The man he met was much heavier, had different eyes, different hair etc. [Ibid, p. 163] Yet, by the time of the trial, someone had changed his mind and he was now positive it was Hauptmann.

Same thing with Charles Lindbergh who only heard the man's voice in the cemetery. At first, Lindbergh said he could not positively identify the voice as Hauptmann's. But by the time he took the stand, Lindbergh positively identified it.

A witness who placed Hauptmann near the Lindbergh home was characterized in an FBI memo as "a confirmed liar and totally unreliable." [Ibid, p. 163]

Hoover himself doubted some of the evidence in the case. For instance as he admitted in a memo of Sept. 24, 1934, before the trial started, the defendant's fingerprints did not match "the latent impressions developed on the ransom notes."

And as Lloyd Garner writes, Hauptmann's fingerprints were not on the ladder allegedly used to climb to the infant's window at the Lindbergh home. The local authorities then washed the ladder of all prints and failed to disclose that Hauptmann's were not there. [Gardner, p. 344]

This is why when Lindbergh praised the FBI for its work on the case, Hoover was not thankful but indignant. [Gentry, p. 163] Of course, the FBI later concealed its doubts and made the case a hallmark of the official tour for propaganda purposes.

Eastwood and Black, again, sell the public the amended version, with both Hoover and Tolson in daily attendance at the trial, which was not the case.

Harassing King

An entire film could have been put together about Hoover's dark obsession with Martin Luther King. Yet of the three main episodes about the FBI depicted in the film, the Palmer Raids, the Hauptmann case and King the smearing of the civil rights leader takes the least amount of screen time.

What the movie's account essentially consists of is DiCaprio reciting the famous

letter to be sent to King blackmailing him about his infidelity and suggesting he take his own life before this behavior was exposed.

Director Eastwood depicts King and another woman in a hotel room, and Hoover listening to audiotapes of the tryst. This scene occurred in 1964-65, yet one would never know that Hoover first opened files on King in 1958. Also left out is that Hoover had arranged other campaigns to damage previous prominent African-Americans, such as Marcus Garvey and Paul Robeson. [Summers, p. 352]

Another inconvenient fact was that prior to the Kennedys taking office, there were at most five black agents in the Bureau, except they were not really agents. They had gone to a segregated FBI school and were only called special agents to exempt them from the draft for World War II. In reality, each one was either a chauffeur or butler. [Michael Friedly and David Gallen, *Martin Luther King Jr.: The FBI File*, p. 61]

As mentioned at the beginning of this review, Hoover's racism extended to the struggle for civil rights in the South. As one commentator inside the Bureau wrote, the FBI never enforced civil rights law since Hoover was opposed to the civil rights program.

The only reason things eventually changed was because Bobby Kennedy put pressure on Hoover to support civil rights workers. But prior to that time, Hoover ignored the wholesale violation of civil rights on the part of Southern law enforcement. [Ibid, p. 62]

All of this is a necessary prelude to understanding the mania that Hoover had about figures like King and Malcolm X. As early as 1963, Hoover had called a meeting to explore "avenues of approach aimed at neutralizing King as an effective Negro leader." [Summers, p. 353] This meeting led to the proposal of 21 avenues for achieving the goal.

About a month later, Hoover had what he thought were tapes of King partying in a hotel room with women present. He was overjoyed. He wrote a memo about it that said, "This will destroy the burrhead." [Gentry, p. 568]

Undermining Civil Rights

The FBI's campaign was meant to not just discredit and humiliate King, but to derail the civil rights movement by leaving it without a charismatic leader, thereby giving Hoover the opportunity to maneuver someone of his own liking into that position. Preferably a much more conservative, less dynamic, and more establishment figure. [Summers, p. 354]

Hoover also used these tapes to try and drive a wedge between first, King and

Bobby Kennedy, and then King and Lyndon Johnson. It did not succeed with the former, but as the Vietnam War escalated, it did succeed with the latter. [Ibid, p. 355]

Hoover ordered his agents to lobby organizations against giving King any official honors e.g. Marquette University in 1964. The FBI also worked hard to stop any media outlets from featuring him on TV, radio or in print media.

As time went on, Hoover tried to weaken support for King in Congress by furnishing blackmail material to representatives and senators. Hoover also made the material available to other civil right leaders, like Roy Wilkins of the NAACP, to create dissatisfaction with King and dissension in the ranks. [Gentry, p. 574]

Hoover even used his influence with Cardinal Spellman of New York to try and stop Pope Paul VI from granting King an audience in the Vatican. [Summers, p. 356] When King was about to get his Nobel Prize, Hoover went ballistic, trying to get his blackmail tapes published by the press, e.g. executive editor Ben Bradlee at the *Washington Post*. (Ibid, p. 358)

All of this bile originated not just with Hoover's inherent racism, but also because of King's criticism of the Bureau's inaction on the violation of civil rights in the South. Angered by the criticism, Hoover also smeared King with allegations that he was being influenced by Communists. [Gentry, p. 506]

This sorry episode culminated with the sending of a composite tape and the threatening letter to King's wife and to his organization's headquarters in Atlanta in early 1965. This was meant to stop King from collecting his Nobel Prize, but failed. However, it did cause King emotional turmoil. [Summers, p. 361]

Background Missing

This would seem to me to be important information in preparing the viewer for DiCaprio reciting the blackmailing letter. Yet virtually all of it is missing from the film. Therefore, the episode is robbed of both its personal and historical background. Clearly, Black does not want the viewer to know just how deep-rooted and longstanding Hoover's racism was.

But what makes the omissions even worse is that Black and Eastwood then try to soften Hoover's bigotry. The filmmakers have Hoover dictating his memoirs to a black agent and have Hoover talking about his actions against the Klan in the South.

Regarding the former, knowing what we do about Hoover, this seems a real

stretch. About the latter, the script leaves out the fact that there were virtually no actions in that area until Bobby Kennedy urged Hoover to use his COINTELPRO techniques against the Klan. [Gentry, p. 563]

Let us summarize what Black has done with Hoover's biographical materials. He left out the worst aspects of Hoover's career. Then in considering the actual facts and history in the three episodes he does describe, the Palmer Raids, the Hauptmann case, and the campaign against King, he left out key facts in order to make Hoover appear in a softer and hazier light.

One can fairly conclude that screenwriter Black had an agenda, which director Eastwood either condoned or agreed with. The result is that Black and Eastwood have done what a PR man might do, given the public's general knowledge about Hoover's unsavory history: they sprayed deodorant under his armpits and splashed some cologne on him so that this thoroughly deplorable villain could sit next to us at the dinner table.

According to Black and Eastwood, Hoover really wasn't such a bad guy after all. Sorry, some of us know better.

Let me end this section with this comparison. When Oliver Stone uses dramatic license in his political films, he gets pilloried from pillar to post and back again. Yet I detect little or no outrage from the familiar quarters for what Eastwood and Black have done with the record here. Why not?

Eastwood's Career

In the last two decades, Eastwood has managed to elevate his reputation and standing in the film colony in a way that would have seemed nearly impossible back in say 1971, the year that *Dirty Harry* was released.

If one recalls, Eastwood first got noticed by doing the TV series *Rawhide*, three so-called spaghetti Westerns with Italian director Sergio Leone, and the first of five movies in the *Dirty Harry* series.

Established as an actor with box-office appeal, Eastwood formed his own production company, called Malpaso, and produced, directed and/or starred in such films as *Breezy*, *The Eiger Sanction*, *Every Which Way but Loose*, *Any Which Way You Can*, *Honky Tonk Man*, *City Heat*, *Pink Cadillac*, *The Rookie* and so on.

Pretty much forgettable fare. But since Eastwood's much overrated Western *Unforgiven*, there seems to have been an almost industry-wide agreement to make believe that Eastwood is somehow both a fine actor and a serious director. Even people like Steven Spielberg and Martin Scorsese have joined in the effort.

This tells us a lot about the decline of American film, and the concomitant ascension of people like Quentin Tarantino, the Coen brothers, Kathryn Bigelow and Eastwood.

If one defines acting in its purest sense as channeling what one has into creating someone different than oneself, i.e. applying one's voice, carriage, intelligence and imagination to enliven this other persona, when has Eastwood ever done that?

When has he ever transformed himself like say Philip Seymour Hoffman did in the film *Capote*? Or say Robert DeNiro did in *The Last Tycoon*, or *Bang the Drum Slowly*? When did he ever do what Gene Hackman did in *The Conversation*?

At his best, Eastwood flexes his persona to *indicate* someone else. But this after the fact elevation of Eastwood as an actor has now led to his elevation as a director. I cannot remember an Eastwood-directed film from which I recall any memorable editing montage, any remarkable photographic effects, or any kind of extraordinary use of what is called *mise-en-scene*, that is the placement and movement of actors within the frame.

What makes this such a telling point is that Eastwood's directing career goes all the way back to 1971 and the film *Play Misty for Me*. And that non-distinction continues here.

Little Creativity

I generously counted two directorial strophes that were above the pedestrian. When DiCaprio listens to the illicit tapes, Eastwood shows us two silhouettes on the wall of a hotel room beginning to undress. When the body of the Lindbergh baby is discovered, the camera tilts up to show how close it was to the Lindbergh home. And that is it for a 137-minute film.

But what is even more surprising is that the actor Eastwood does very little, if anything, with his cast. DiCaprio takes on a different voice, but it's not Hoover's voice. And it sometimes lapses into Boston Irish, and then into a southern drawl.

This might be excusable (although there are many voice coaches available to aid in these things). But DiCaprio does not even capture the unusual speech cadence that Hoover had, the stop-start, staccato phrasing the man used.

And even when Hoover ages, I could not discern a real attempt to capture the unusual gait that Hoover had, which made him seem even more compact and bearish than he was. As for conveying any of the malevolence or manipulation in the man, DiCaprio barely registers it.

Naomi Watts walks through her nondescript role as Hoover's secretary Helen Gandy. Armie Hammer as Hoover's friend and assistant, Clyde Tolson, is a complete non-entity. And when Eastwood ages him he gets even worse.

First, the make-up is bizarre, making Tolson look like a walking exhibit from a waxworks museum. And Tolson did not look like that, as anyone can see from his photos at Hoover's funeral. But secondly, Hammer's attempts to simulate old age are pure amateur-night stuff: the slow walk with shaking arms. It is out of summer-stock theater.

If Eastwood could not get a performance out of someone like Hammer, one could excuse him. But what can one say if a director cannot do anything with Dame Judy Dench? This is the actress who was voted as giving the finest female performance ever in the Royal Shakespeare Company as Lady MacBeth. Dench delivers here a performance at about the level of former TV actress Linda Lavin.

Eastwood is famous for not rehearsing and not wanting to do more than three or so takes of a scene. The result of that method is pretty obvious in *J. Edgar*. These actors needed to be pushed harder. Eastwood doesn't do that, nor does he believe in it.

Kissing Scene

Let me end with what Black and Eastwood use as the climax of the film. It is a lover's quarrel between Tolson and Hoover in a hotel room. They are on vacation and Hoover says he is thinking of taking a wife, Myrna Loy.

This causes Tolson to get angry, and a fistfight ensues. But then Hammer kisses DiCaprio. I wondered where this scene came from since I had not seen it mentioned in any of the now standard biographies of Hoover.

I finally located it in a book that is not considered a standard reference work, *Puppetmaster* by Richard Hack. On page 233 of that book, an argument is described between the two men at a hotel. But it does not resemble the one that Black and Eastwood depict.

Hack just writes about an argument the two had which, he said, resulted from some apparent slight to Hoover by Tolson. That is it. Nothing about Hoover taking a wife and Tolson flying into a jealous rage.

But further Hack does not footnote this episode either. So we don't know how reliable the sourcing is. But apparently that didn't bother Black from using it to fulfill his agenda.

If Black didn't have an agenda, if he had been interested in who Hoover really

was, what he represented, and what his pernicious impact on America really was, he would have shown us a different confrontation, such as the one that went on between Hoover and Director of Domestic Intelligence William Sullivan.

To my knowledge, Sullivan was the only man in the executive offices who ever stood up to Hoover. About a year or two before Hoover died, Sullivan wrote a series of memos criticizing Hoover's performance as Director on issues like his gross exaggeration of the Communist threat inside the USA, his failure to hire African-American agents, and his failure to enforce civil rights laws. Sullivan also had tired of Hoover's blackmail surveillance on presidents and began to think the Director was not of sound mind. [Summers, pgs. 397-99]

This culminated in a meeting in Hoover's office where Sullivan said Hoover should retire. Hoover refused, and it was Sullivan who was forced out of the Bureau. Sullivan later testified before the Church Committee and gave Congress much inside information about Hoover's illegal operations.

Sullivan once told columnist Robert Novak that if one day he would read about his death in some kind of accident, Novak should not believe it; it would be murder.

In 1977, during the re-investigations of the killings of John Kennedy and Martin Luther King, Sullivan died in New Hampshire as he was meeting with friends to go deer hunting. Another hunter, with a telescopic sight, mistook Sullivan for a deer and killed him with his rifle.

The book that Sullivan was working on about his 30 years in the FBI was then posthumously published, but reportedly in much expurgated form. He was one of six current or former FBI officials who died in a six-month period in 1977, the season of inquiry into FBI dirty deeds and FBI cover-ups of political assassinations.

If this film had ended with the Sullivan-Hoover feud, it would have told us something about both America and about Hoover. But it would have been dark and truthful. Evidently, Black and Eastwood were not interested in that.

Black's agenda is pretty clear. Why Eastwood went along with this pastel-colored romance about a man who was a blackmailing monster is difficult to understand. But it proves again, as Pauline Kael explained decades ago, why Clint Eastwood is no artist. Artists don't compromise. And they don't falsify.

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Help Us Rewrite Recent US History

From Editor Robert Parry: The other day, I was on a West Coast radio show and a caller accused me of “trying to rewrite history” a charge to which I must plead guilty.

For the past 16 years, a core purpose of Consortiumnews.com has been to “rewrite” history when we dig up new evidence that shows that the old version was wrong or incomplete. In doing so, we don’t care that the Widely Believed Story has many Esteemed Defenders. We simply present the facts in context.

For instance, the caller to the radio show was protesting [my article](#) about Richard Nixon sabotaging the Vietnam peace talks right before the 1968 election. The caller didn’t want to believe that a Republican politician would do such a thing to win an election.

And the caller is not alone in wanting to avoid painful truths. We have seen many cases when major news organizations, such as The New York Times and The Washington Post, resist new information when it shows that they bungled or missed the original story. It’s easier for them to ignore the latest evidence than to admit they misled the American people.

So, that is where we step in, “to rewrite the history.” It’s where you come in, too.

Without your support since we started Consortiumnews.com in late November 1995, large swaths of recent American history would have been left in its old misleading form, from Nixon’s “treason” in 1968, to Ronald Reagan’s treachery with Iran in 1980, to the CIA’s cover-up of cocaine smuggling by Nicaraguan Contra rebels, to many more recent events.

We have “rewritten” this important history as well as providing groundbreaking coverage of current events while operating on a shoestring budget, only about \$10,000 a month. So, please donate what you can to our end-of-year fundraiser. We have set a modest goal of \$45,000 and we make every dollar count. (We are a 501-c-3 non-profit, so your donation may be tax-deductible.)

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Second: If you’d rather spread out your support in smaller amounts, you can sign up for a monthly donation. With contributions of \$10 or more a month, you can qualify for war correspondent Don North’s DVD, “Yesterday’s Enemies” about the lives of former Salvadoran guerrillas. For details, click here. (If you sign up for a monthly donation and want to get Don’s DVD, remember to contact us at consortnew@aol.com.)

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Fourth: You can help us close out some warehouse space by buying full boxes of *Secrecy & Privilege* or *Neck Deep* for only \$56. Each carton contains 28 paperbacks, or you can ask that we give you a mix of half and half, 14 of each. At \$56 for a carton, each book only costs you \$2. And for U.S. orders, we’ll pay for shipping, too.

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As always, thanks for your support and thanks for making it possible for us to go on “rewriting” history.

Robert Parry, Editor

Robert Parry broke many of the Iran-Contra stories in the 1980s for the

Associated Press and Newsweek. He founded Consortiumnews.com in 1995 as the Internet's first investigative magazine. He saw it as a way to combine modern technology and old-fashioned journalism to counter the increasing triviality of the mainstream U.S. news media.

Ivan Eland Disputes War-for-Oil Dogma

At least since the oil shocks of the 1970s, it has been Official Washington's dogma that the United States must stand ready to fight wars over access to Middle East oil, but the Independent Institute's Ivan Eland questions that certainty in a new book, writes Carl Close.

By Carl Close

Ivan Eland's new book, *No War for Oil: U.S. Dependency and the Middle East*, challenges a long-standing pillar of U.S. foreign policy, the belief that U.S. national and economic security require that American taxpayers fund the military protection of oil-rich foreign lands, especially in the Persian Gulf.

According to Eland, senior fellow at the Independent Institute and director of the Center on Peace & Liberty, the choice is not between preparing to fight wars for oil or risking the loss of energy resources that power the American economy, that's a false alternative.

Rather, the choice is whether or not to continue to spend increasingly costly resources on military and diplomatic policies that are unnecessary and detrimental to the economic and political interests of the American people.

The issue is monumental and merits far greater public discussion and debate than it has received. It's certainly more fundamental than many of the questions asked of the presidential hopefuls.

Here are highlights from the [book summary](#):

–The United States devotes more resources to the defense of oil in the Persian Gulf than most people realize, a total of more than \$334 billion per year (in 2009 dollars).

To ensure the free flow of oil from the Middle East, the United States maintains military facilities in Oman, Bahrain, Qatar, Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates, and Iraq, as well as in nearby Egypt, Djibouti, Turkey, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Diego Garcia. Despite the large amount of U.S. expenditures to defend the

Persian Gulf, the United States gets only about 18 percent of its imported oil from Saudi Arabia.

–“Cheap” foreign oil comes with huge hidden costs that American leaders and the public need to keep in mind when thinking about U.S. foreign policy.

According to one estimate, gasoline would cost U.S. consumers \$5 more per gallon if federal spending for the defense of Persian Gulf oil were incorporated into gas prices. The U.S. military subsidy for oil means lower prices at the gas pump, but consumers ultimately pay a steep price for that fake discount (and more) in the form of higher taxes and inflationary deficit financing to help fund a large U.S. military presence abroad.

The king’s ransom that the United States spends to defend Persian Gulf oil is more than ten times the value of its annual imports from the Gulf.

–U.S. military protection of the Persian Gulf is unnecessary to ensure access to oil from that region.

Without Uncle Sam’s generous help, Persian Gulf oil producers, shippers and consumers (that latter residing mostly in Europe and East Asia) would have strong incentives to protect the free flow of oil. If the U.S. government eliminated its military subsidy for oil in the Persian Gulf, it could decommission approximately five army divisions, five active air wings of the Air Force, five Marine Expeditionary Brigades, and 144 ships, including six aircraft carriers, roughly half of the U.S. armed forces.

–Because only 10 percent of the oil consumed by the United States comes from the Persian Gulf, U.S. military protection of that region is even more irrational than Nineteenth Century European imperialism.

American taxpayers would enjoy significant savings if the United States were to rely exclusively on markets to obtain oil, just as Europeans became better off as their governments reduced their use of armed forces and protectionist trade policies and relied more on free markets to obtain goods from other countries. Unfortunately, the U.S. government has taken the opposite approach in recent years and has extended its security umbrella over oil-producing regions in West Africa, Latin America, the Caspian Sea region, and Central Asia.

–Several popular myths about oil undermine clear thinking about America’s energy needs and U.S. foreign policy.

One long-standing myth is that oil possesses “special” or “strategic” characteristics. Yet, there are many critical products that the market is allowed to supply in abundance at efficient prices, and oil should be no

different. Furthermore, more than enough oil is produced in the United States to meet the needs of the U.S. military in time of war, and this supply can be augmented with oil purchased from Canada and Mexico. Thus, oil is not strategic.

–Becoming “energy independent”, a goal promoted by many Democratic and Republican politicians, is not in America’s best interest.

In reality, consumers are better off when they are free to buy goods from companies and regions that have a comparative advantage in the production of those goods. Energy independence would serve only special interests such as less-efficient domestic oil suppliers or alternative energy producers that can’t yet thrive without government subsidies or protection from foreign competition.

Next Challenge for Occupy Wall Street

Despite a lack of policy prescriptions, Occupy Wall Street dramatized the crisis of income inequality in America. Now, Danny Schechter says the challenge for the movement is to expand on that message with outreach to the broader national population.

By Danny Schechter

One of the oldest patterns of media coverage can be summed up this way: First, they ignore you. Then, they ridicule you. Then, they realize you are a story and fall in love. At that point, they build you up, but then – all at once – tear you down

You may not have changed, but they have, addicted as they are to keep coming up with shifting story lines, more to fight their own boredom and fear of tune-out from readers, listeners and viewers, than the validity or importance of the topic.

In the same way, that political sound bites went from nearly 30 seconds to five and that MTV-style editing invaded the newsrooms with quick cutting and razzle-dazzle effects, to “cover news” while making it difficult to concentrate on, much less comprehend the fast-paced presentation techniques. When asked by researchers, audiences could barely tell you what they had just seen, much less what it means.

We saw this in Iraq, when during the invasion, it was war all the time, literally around the clock but when you looked closely, it wasn’t really about

Iraq or Iraqis; it was a narrative of the U.S. slaying the evil-doers, good guys versus bad guys. There was almost no other perspective. It was AAU, All About Us.

Now, with Occupy Wall Street, the pattern is similar. The underlying issues largely don't exist, if they require explanation or analysis. Knowledge about Wall Street and the economy is assumed. It is conflict that drives the news.

There was little reporting on the occupation when it started. It was only after the cops began pepper-spraying protesters or after mass demonstrations that the media arrived en masse. Finally, they had adversaries, the cops and the protesters. That the media could understand.

Soon, reporters flocked to Zuccotti Park like blue birds. When one landed, they all landed. The TV trucks were everywhere especially at 6 and 11 p.m., so that local reporters could do silly live stand-ups and show off colorful characters to reinforce the narrative that the protesters were just having fun, with no serious ideas.

Many of these frontline reporters couldn't tell you the difference between a derivative and a donut, but that didn't matter because what does matter is face time, airtime, visibility.

First, the international press recognized that this movement was important. The media surrounding Zuccotti became a mini-United Nations with crews from BBC, Al Jazeera, Xinhua News Agency, Russia Today, Press TV, et.al. When they took it seriously, the American press began to do the same, and then network TV got into the act, once it became obvious that the protest was a national, even a global story.

Occupy Wall Street soon had a press desk trying to help reporters who often showed up with preconceived story lines demanded by their editors. Soon the stories about sex, drugs and drumming, no rock and roll yet, were everywhere as reporters turned over rocks and looked for the homeless and the harassers.

When one station framed the story as "the park is now a Wal-mart for rats," City Hall saw an opening and harping on cleanliness (which has always been next to godliness in Manhattan) used hygiene as a pretext for shutting the Occupy Wall Street encampment down.

Most activists were happy to be interviewed, but few ever watched how the stories were edited: what was covered and what was not. That's also because many of the occupiers hate television and what it has become. They don't read ponderous editorials or inflammatory headlines.

They do read and create social media, Twitter, Facebook, You-Tube, etc. The advantage is that they are then exposed to their truths and the news they believe they need to makes a difference. However, it's news for the community, not the country!

The disadvantage is the protesters often aren't reaching out to millions of Americans who won't join the movement just because it's cool. The 99 percent needs to be educated and inspired, but, alas, they rely on the tabloid newspapers and cable news, which are generally the least sympathetic to the movement.

You have to use media if you want to occupy the mainstream, and build a larger movement as opposed to being depicted as a tribal subculture of angry misfits. To avoid that, you need your own mainstream media campaign.

I would suspect that the Occupy Movement has not met with or tried to persuade editorial boards or newsroom execs. The protesters tend to react more to what they are saying than to act more proactively with their own media campaigns to shape a different message that gets disseminated widely.

As the movement moves on, messages have to change and target specific communities. This approach may be coming, but not quickly enough.

Already some big media outlets like The Washington Post, the paper still living off its Watergate reputation even as it finds few wars it won't support, is saying Occupy Wall Street is "over."

You can bet they want it to be over because their focus on politics starts with the top, the White House and specializes on inside-the-Beltway stories. For years, black people in Washington the majority have complained that they are largely ignored by their own hometown newspaper.

Washington Post editors are self-satisfied insiders, cloistered amid the 1 percenters who prefer to cover social movements of the past, not the present.

I once looked at how the Post covered the March on Washington back in 1963. The story line was on how violence had been averted. Martin Luther King Jr.'s "I Have A Dream" speech was barely news. The march's focus on the need for jobs was downplayed then just as Occupy Wall Street's economic critique is downplayed today.

Today's movement is being challenged by mayors, armed with the latest "non-lethal" toys, and coordinated by the Feds (a story few media outlets have investigated) who want to shut down the encampments.

Yes, it's wrong and unconstitutional and unfair, but is this a battle they can win? Yes, many can go to jail but what message does that send? Occupy Wall Street is not about camping, it's about crusading for justice.

Even Murdoch's Wall Street Journal (Not the Occupied version) is praising the protests, declaring: "This Thanksgiving weekend, Wall Street should say a prayer of gratitude for Occupy Wall Street. While some bankers and brokers have sympathized with or supported this ragtag protest movement, others grouse that they are being demonized.

"But compared with financiers of the past, who faced nasty rhetoric, political hostility and physical danger, today's bankers and brokers seem like a bunch of babies when they whine about being targeted by these dissidents. The 'Occupy' rhetoric might sound overheated, but it is golden praise alongside what bankers used to hear."

Thus, at least some of the 1 percent are hearing the message, but, apparently, they don't feel its strong enough.

It's the 99 percent that the movement should aim at with actions and media that shows they are on the side of the vast majority. To do that, the protesters need more creative forms of mass outreach and organizing to remake a community of activists as a mass movement with demands that the people can resonate with and find ways of supporting.

What about political infomercials, TV spots and ads? Media hype for activism can help, but it's no substitute for less glamorous organizing. In the end, that will be the test of whether the movement is "over" or goes over the top.

News Dissector Danny Schechter is covering Occupy Wall Street in his Newsdissector.com blog and will soon have a book out collecting his many reports since September. This was his TV report on Occupy Wall Street:

<http://tinyurl.com/6m53kf9> Comments to dissector@mediachannel.org (This is the first in what we hope will be a series of Mediachannel reports exploring the media and the Occupy Movement.)

Upholding Justice in the 'War on Terror'

As a Justice Department ethics adviser, Jesselyn Radack objected when U.S. citizen John Walker Lindh (dubbed the "American Taliban" after his capture in Afghanistan) was denied constitutional rights. For her integrity, Radack lost her job, but her courage earned her an award from former intelligence

professionals.

On Nov. 21, admirers of the example set by former CIA analyst Sam Adams (who exposed the intentional undercounting of Viet Cong in the Vietnam War) bestowed the Sam Adams Associates for Integrity in Intelligence Award for 2011 to Jesselyn Radack:

Jesselyn Radack became embroiled in 2001 in the case of the so-called “American Taliban” John Walker Lindh, one of the most prominent prisoners of the Afghan war. In our first glimpse of American-sponsored torture, a trophy photo circulated worldwide that showed Lindh naked, blindfolded, and bound to a board with duct tape.

Against this backdrop, when the Justice Department sought Radack’s opinion about the ethical propriety of the FBI interrogating Lindh without his attorney, she advised that his counsel must be present. When her advice was disregarded and then purged from the office file in contravention of a federal court discovery order, she resigned and blew the whistle.

The “Justice” Department retaliated by making Jesselyn the target of a federal criminal “leak investigation,” by referring her to the state bars in which she is licensed as an attorney (based on a secret report to which she did not have access), and by putting her on the “No-Fly” List.

Not one to be intimidated, Radack began writing and speaking publicly about torture, “enemy combatants,” legal ethics and whistle blowing. In June 2005, she was elected to and served on the D.C. Bar Legal Ethics Committee, despite still being “under investigation” by the disciplinary arm of the bar.

The Justice Department decided not to refer the authors of the Bush administration’s infamous “torture memos” to the D.C. Bar for disciplining, yet the bar referral against Radack is still pending.

Three years ago, in a major stroke of luck for whistleblowers past, present, and future, Jesselyn became the Director of National Security & Human Rights at the Government Accountability Project, the country’s leading whistleblower organization, where she focuses on issues of torture and government secrecy and surveillance.

She is one of the lawyers who represented Tom Drake (a whistleblower at the National Security Agency and a co-recipient of the 2011 Sam Adams award) under circumstances that closely resembled her own.

Acceptance Speech by Jesselyn Radack:

I am guilty of committing the truth – urging decency, moderation, and playing by the rules. I had no way of knowing that my story was a snapshot of one of President Bush's most controversial policies in their embryonic stages policies we are now seeing play out in full today.

I am the whistleblower in the case of "American Taliban" John Walker Lindh. This loaded sentence contains the ingredients of the perfect storm in the war on terrorism: government-sponsored torture, the Patriot Act, the treatment of "enemy combatants," and brutal punishment of truth-tellers.

I was a legal adviser to the Justice Department on matters of ethics. On Dec. 7, 2001, I fielded a call from a Criminal Division attorney named John DePue. He wanted to know about the ethical propriety of interrogating "American Taliban" John Walker Lindh without a lawyer being present.

DePue told me unambiguously that Lindh's father had retained counsel for his son. I advised him that Lindh should not be questioned without his lawyer. That was on a Friday. This was not radical advice. It was the law. Over the weekend, the FBI interviewed Lindh anyway, without counsel.

DePue called back on Monday asking what to do now. I advised that the interview might have to be sealed and used only for intelligence-gathering or national security purposes, not criminal prosecution. Again, my advice was ignored.

Three weeks later, on Jan. 15, 2002, then-Attorney General John Ashcroft announced that a criminal complaint was being filed against Lindh. "The subject here is entitled to choose his own lawyer," Ashcroft said, "and to our knowledge, has not chosen a lawyer at this time." I knew that wasn't true.

Three weeks later, Ashcroft announced Lindh's indictment, saying his rights "have been carefully, scrupulously honored." Again, I knew that wasn't true.

At about the same time, I was given an untimely, unsigned, unprecedented and blistering performance evaluation, despite having received a performance award and a raise during the preceding year. I was told that the vitriolic review would be placed in my permanent personnel file unless I found another job.

I was shocked, but I didn't put two and two together until a few weeks had passed. On March 7, I inadvertently learned that the judge presiding over the Lindh case had ordered that all Justice Department correspondence related to Lindh's interrogation be submitted to the court. Such orders routinely go to everyone with a connection with the case in question, but I heard about it only because the Lindh prosecutor contacted me directly.

There was more. The prosecutor said he had only two of my e-mails. I knew I had

written more than a dozen. When I went to check the hard copy file, the e-mails containing my assessment that the government had committed an ethical violation in Lindh's interrogation were missing.

With the help of technical support, I resurrected the missing e-mails from my computer archives. I documented and included them in a memo to my boss and took home a copy for safekeeping in case they "disappeared" again. Then I resigned.

Months later, as the Justice Department continued to claim that it never believed at the time of his interrogation that Lindh had a lawyer, I disclosed the e-mails to *Newsweek* in accordance with the Whistleblower Protection Act.

As a result, I was forced out of my job, fired from my subsequent private sector job at the government's behest, placed under criminal investigation without any charges ever being brought, referred for disciplinary action to the state bars where I'm licensed as a lawyer, and put on the "no-fly" list.

After years of professional exile and career rehabilitation, I decided to dedicate my life to representing whistleblowers. As horrible as my ordeal was, it taught me important lessons that I was able to bring to bear in helping another whistleblower who was facing something eerily similar to my case.

Like me, Tom Drake was the target of a federal criminal "leak" investigation. As much as the Bush administration treated me unmercifully, at least the "leak investigation" never led to an indictment. In Drake's case it did. To make matters worse, he was charged under the Espionage Act, a World War I-era law meant to go after spies, not whistleblowers.

His case was also the beginning of a disturbing trend: the criminalization of whistleblowers. The Obama administration has brought more prosecutions against whistleblowers, all of whom are in the national security and intelligence communities, than all previous presidential administrations combined.

With the work of the Maryland Public Defender's Office, the Government Accountability Project, and many people in this room, the Drake case collapsed in spectacular fashion, with the judge calling the government's treatment of Drake "unconscionable," and chastising the Justice Department for putting Tom Drake through "four years of hell."

But the Obama administration has vowed to continue its war on whistleblowers and its policy of "looking forwards, not backwards" at the underlying criminal conduct these employees risked their careers to expose. Whistleblowers should never have to choose their conscience over their career, and especially their very freedom.

This award is especially meaningful coming from the intelligence community because fear-mongering about harming national security and intelligence gathering underpinned this malicious prosecution. We don't need to jettison ethics, the Constitution or the rule of law to achieve national security.

I would argue that the best way to obtain meaningful intelligence and national security is to respect civil liberties, behave ethically, and follow the law. The notion that these ideals are in tension is a false dichotomy that has driven much of the war on terrorism, which should not be a war on ethics, integrity, civil liberties, the Constitution and the rule of law.

The award is especially meaningful coming from the Sam Adams Associates for Integrity in Intelligence because the government characterized me as a "traitor" for what I did, and characterized Tom Drake as an "enemy of the state." Nothing could be further from the truth. We were patriotic employees trying to help our government achieve its mission while upholding the highest ideals upon which our country is founded.

The war on whistleblowers is a toxic trend, and I hope our stories will help deprive it of oxygen. In responding to terrorism, we must not trample on the very freedoms for which we are fighting. Public servants should not have to choose between their conscience and their career, and especially their very freedom.

What Country Do We Want to Keep?

On Nov. 21, former National Security Agency official Thomas Drake was honored for his courage in blowing the whistle on the U.S. government's abuse of its secrecy powers. In his acceptance speech, Drake explained the larger and more frightening context the loss of American liberty.

Presented this 21st day of November 2011 in Washington, DC, by admirers of the example set by former CIA analyst, Sam Adams (who exposed the intentional undercounting of Viet Cong and other forces fighting U.S. troops during the Vietnam War), the Sam Adams Associates for Integrity in Intelligence Award for 2011 to Thomas Drake:

As a senior official at the National Security Agency Thomas Drake witnessed not only widespread waste, fraud and abuse, but also gross violations of our Fourth Amendment rights.

He was a material witness and whistleblower on a multi-year Department of Defense Inspector General audit of a failed multi-**billion** dollar flagship program called TRAILBLAZER and a breakthrough multi-**million** dollar intelligence data collection, processing, and analysis system called THINTHREAD that was ready to deploy.

THINTHREAD had been carefully designed to handle data in massive amounts and variety, but to do so with built-in Fourth Amendment and privacy safeguards, while providing superior intelligence. NSA rejected it.

Tom Drake stepped forward with the integrity, the courage, and, let's say it, the true patriotism, to blow the whistle. The Department of Justice retaliated by indicting and prosecuting Drake under the Espionage Act and, once again, became the laughing stock of the legal profession.

In Drake's case, government attempts to abuse the law to intimidate those who would speak truth to power expose in a telling way what has become the military-industrial-intelligence-surveillance-cybersecurity-congressional-media complex and its abuses, which drain our treasury, endanger our liberty, and make our country less, not more, secure.

Sam Adams Associates is not the first group to give high recognition to Tom Drake's fearless integrity and endurance in the ordeal he was put through. Earlier this year he was awarded the Ridenhour Truth-Telling Prize (named after Ron Ridenhour, the Vietnam War veteran who exposed the My Lai massacre).

In partnership with Jesselyn Radack, Drake writes and speaks on whistle blowing, privacy, civil liberties, secrecy, surveillance and abusive government power.

Acceptance Speech by Thomas Drake:

I first want to thank Sam Adams Associates for Integrity in Intelligence for bestowing upon us this truly special honor and special kudos to Ray McGovern for making it all happen. And thank you Jesselyn, for your introduction of me as a fellow whistleblower.

I simply cannot say enough about your incredible energy, diligence, persistence, dedication and tireless efforts that you so well demonstrated and displayed on my behalf during the government's criminal case against me. It was Jesselyn who wrote and spoke about my case with such outstanding focus and compelling clarity in terms of both content and context.

It was Jesselyn who so masterfully crafted the message about the government's egregious abuse of protected communications in their criminal indictment against

me as a whistleblower for the purposes of reprisal, retaliation, retribution, suppression, and stamping out dissent.

It was Jesselyn that got my case in spades and completely understood the gross injustices I experienced at the hands of our own government, BECAUSE I was a whistleblower. It was Jesselyn's many, many radio interviews, blogs, news articles, op-eds, TV appearances in both the alternative and mainstream media as well as her countless and untold hours working behind the scenes on my behalf that made a huge and telling difference.

Suffice it to say, Jesselyn truly became my public voice and conscience – speaking out and writing fearlessly and courageously – bringing truth to power with all her simply superb outreach and advocacy. And so I am incredibly grateful for all that you have been and have done for me as a whistleblower, Jesselyn, and the totality of your superb efforts and actions that so immensely helped in achieving a huge and decisive victory against an implacable government prosecution and thereby keeping me free.

We live in truly sobering times a time in which liberty is under significant and persistent duress. Jesselyn and I are two whistleblowers yoked together by the tragedy of 9/11. As government employees, we became embroiled in two of this era's most controversial programs in their infancy: torture and warrantless wiretapping as prime evidence of the government's abject abuse of power and bypassing of the law.

As a Justice Department ethics attorney, Jesselyn advised that the FBI not interrogate John Walker Lindh, an American, without counsel. The FBI ignored this advice, and the interrogation formed the basis of a criminal prosecution in which Radack's conclusion that the FBI committed an ethics violation "disappeared" from Justice files and was withheld from the court.

While a senior official at the National Security Agency, I found out about the use of electronic eavesdropping on Americans and turning this country into the equivalent of a foreign nation for the purposes of blanket surveillance and data mining blatantly disregarding a 23-year legal regime that was the exclusive means for the conduct of such electronic collection and surveillance, which carried criminal sanctions when violated.

I also discovered that NSA had withheld critical and crucial intelligence prior to 9/11 and after 9/11, as well as data and information that was available but was undiscovered and if shared could have made a decisive difference alone in preventing the 9/11 attacks from ever happening.

I also learned about a massively expensive and failing surveillance program

under development called TRAILBLAZER that largely served as nothing more than a funding vehicle to enrich government contractors and keep government program managers in charge – when a cheap, highly effective, and operational alternative called THINTHREAD was available in-house, that fully protected Americans' privacy rights under the law, while also providing superior intelligence to the Nation.

These secret programs, which deliberately bypassed the Constitution and existing laws, were born during the first few critical weeks and months following 9/11, as the result of willful decisions made by the highest levels of our government.

Such shortcuts and end-runs were not necessary, as lawful alternatives existed that would have vastly improved our intelligence capability with the best of American ingenuity and innovation, as well as time-honored, non-coercive interrogation techniques.

Jesselyn and I both raised our concerns through internal channels including our bosses and Inspector Generals. In my case, I also spoke directly with the NSA Office of the General Counsel, and became a material witness for two 9/11 congressional investigations.

I also became a material witness for a multi-year Department of Defense Inspector General audit of TRAILBLAZER and THINTHREAD at NSA based on a September 2002 Hotline Complaint that attempted to expose massive fraud, waste, abuse and mismanagement at NSA and the NSA's use of a data-collection program that was far more costly, far more threatening to American citizens' privacy rights and far less effective in supporting critical intelligence requirements than the readily available alternative – namely THINTHREAD.

This complaint was signed by my former NSA colleagues – Kirk Wiebe, Ed Loomis, and Bill Binney as well as Diane Roark, the former professional staffer from the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, who had oversight accountability for NSA, and had all retired by this time from government service. I was the unnamed senior official in this complaint – working directly at NSA.

The throwing out of THINTHREAD was due to multi-billion dollar “buy versus make” money interests and political connections, all surrounding personal gain and institutional self-interest. The throwing out of THINTHREAD was also due to blatant ignorance and disregard for policy under the Federal Acquisition Regulations and the Fourth Amendment of the Constitution.

Either way, same result critical breakthrough information technology, security, and defense innovation and ingenuity, the very best of who we are as Americans

was denied to the American people and precluded from use in providing for the common defense under the Constitution (as were a number of other programs) – with an incalculable loss of intelligence.

It is part of the great historical tragedy of what could have been including the disruption, even the prevention, of 9-11. THINTHREAD had a laudatory purpose – find terrorists, modernize a very outdated signals intelligence system from end to end and thus protecting the US, its soldiers and allies while doing it all legally.

It got caught up in the bureaucratic jealousy, turf, and debilitating internal corporate political jockeying and bickering that afflicts all too many larger organizations once they necessarily become more “organized” and bureaucratic after departing the initial creative stage.

THINTHREAD also illustrates in spades the widespread difficulty of protecting the iconoclastic, creative and out of the box, ‘contrary to the status quo’ thinking people and their new, even revolutionary ideas – a problem especially difficult when an organization has an effective monopoly, like NSA.

NSA wanted to go evolutionary, based on old technology that had not worked well even for the older and far less complex problem, and not revolutionary. The “ins” did everything they could to protect the old technology and successfully drove the creative people out, thus retaining their own turf and power. They may even have been blinded to the merits of the new system and believed their own lies, though from the beginning they demonstrably viewed and treated it as a threat.

In part, it was a threat because it was developed rapidly on a shoestring budget by a small staff – the NSA equivalent of a Silicon Valley garage startup, with a far superior, vastly less complex design and only cost about \$3 million to get it to a fully operationally ready demonstration stage that worked, instead of the multiple BILLIONS and BILLIONS spent over several years on the old technology with almost nothing to show for it except for some very fancy PowerPoint slides.

With all the unitary executive privilege, secrecy and exigent conditions used as the excuse to torture, deny due process and engage in ‘off the books’ electronic surveillance, Jesselyn and I followed all the rules as whistleblowers until it fundamentally conflicted with our oath to uphold the Constitution.

Then we both made a fateful choice to exercise our First Amendment rights. We went to the press with patently unclassified information about which the public had a right to know. However, rather than address its own corruption,

ineptitude, and illegality, the government made us targets of federal criminal “leak investigations” – part of a vicious campaign against whistleblowers that started under Bush and has come to full fruition under Obama.

Inverting the logical paradigm, we were transmogrified from public servants trying to improve our government into traitors and enemies of the state. The government subjected us to severe retaliation that started with forcing us from our jobs as career public servants, rendering us unemployed and unemployable by wielding a wrecking ball into conditions of our jobs (in my case, a security clearance, and in Jesselyn’s case, state bar licensure).

We were blacklisted and no longer had a stream of income, while simultaneously incurring attorneys’ fees, and necessitating second mortgages on our homes. But that was nothing compared to the overkill reprisal to come, placement on the “No-Fly” list for Jesselyn and prosecution under the Espionage Act for me.

What we experienced sends an unequivocally chilling message about what the government can and will do when one speaks truth to power, a direct form of political repression and censorship.

If sharing issues of significant and grave public concern, which do not in any way compromise our national security, is now considered a criminal act, we have strayed far from what our Founding Fathers envisioned. When exercising First Amendment rights is now considered espionage, this is anathema to a free, open and democratic government.

As Americans, we did everything we could to defend the constitutional rights of all U.S. citizens, which were violated and abused by our own government, when there was no reason to do so at all, except as an excuse to go to the proverbial dark side by abrogating unaccountable, irresponsible and “off the books” unilateral executive power in secret.

Once exposed, these unconstitutional detours were predictably justified by vague and undefined claims of national security, while aided and abetted by shameless fear mongering on the part of the government.

It is pure sophistry to argue that the government can operate secretly with unbridled immunity and impunity, especially for such blatant illegalities as torture and wiretapping without warrants, from those it is constitutionally bound to serve and protect when providing for the common defense of the Nation, and then persecute and prosecute the very people who revealed such wrongdoing and malfeasance.

Before the war on terrorism, our country well recognized the importance of free speech, privacy, legal counsel, and the right to be free from cruel and unusual

punishment. If we sacrifice these basic liberties, according to the false dichotomy that such is required for security, then we transform ourselves from an oasis of freedom into a police state that terrorizes its own citizens when they step out of line.

These are the hallmarks of tyranny and despotism, not democracy, and are increasingly alien to the Constitution and our American way of life.

Jesselyn and I now stand before you alongside the other whistleblowers before us like Dan Ellsberg, Coleen Rowley (who also nominated me for the Ridenhour Truth-Telling Prize), as well as Larry Wilkerson, an Integrity in Intelligence award recipient.

We did not take an oath to see secrecy and subterfuge used as cover for subverting the Constitution and violating the law. Our oath to support and defend the Constitution took primacy. I fear for the Republic.

“Democracy is two wolves and a lamb voting on what to have for lunch. Liberty is a well-armed lamb contesting the vote.” Benjamin Franklin

So what expired on 9/11 – the Constitution?

“Those who give up Essential Liberty to purchase a little Temporary Safety, deserve neither Liberty nor Safety.” Benjamin Franklin

Jesselyn and I became whistleblowers and our whistleblowing was both a warning and an alert to those in government and eventually the public about serious wrongdoings, and danger and malfeasance created and concealed within the government. Our whistleblowing also occurred because there was profound institutional failure a multi-layered breakdown in accountability.

Today we have a frightening lack of responsibility and accountability within the national security complex and it poses a direct threat to all our personal freedoms, as well as a clear and present danger to our Constitutional Republic. Both cannot co-exist as the social and legal contract is being broken. Our government has profoundly lost its constitutional compass and has been tainted to its core. And our enshrined liberties ARE our national security.

What country do we want to keep?

Jesselyn and I took an oath to support and defend the Constitution versus an oath of loyalty to the organization and false secrecy used to bypass and break the law.

But what is meant by personal integrity and by loyalty? Our personal integrity meant that we held consistently firm and true to the ideals and values centered on upholding and defending the Constitution! By loyalty we were steadfast in our allegiance to the Law of the Land. However, loyalty when blind or misplaced ceases to be a virtue and turns into a corrupting mechanism to hide and obfuscate wrongdoing, embarrassment and cover-up.

We blew the whistle because we saw grave injustice and wrongdoing occurring within our respective organizations. At the core of our whistleblowing lies accountability by exposing and disclosing government wrongdoing.

In my recently and successfully concluded case that ended decisively in my favor, the government wanted to put me away in prison for many, many years (I was actually threatened with 35 years) for simply telling the truth as a whistleblower and exposing government wrongdoing and illegalities.

The government found out everything they could about me and turned me into an Enemy of the State. Having the secret ability to collect and analyze data with few if any substantial constraints especially on people, is seductively powerful and when particularly done without the person's permission and in secret is the ultimate form of control.

In fact, the government, with its monopoly on certain powers, sometimes has a darker side than even the most cutthroat corporate environments. So it chose to sell out national security to big business and also violate the Constitution. All was SO unnecessary.

American ingenuity and the Constitution were quite sufficient to protect and defend the country with the best and under the Law. There was NO, I repeat, NO need to go to the dark side.

Those who have served in the military know what it means when the flag is flown upside down. It is a sign of distress. When a government hides behind its veil of secrecy, when it professes openness and transparency while practicing opaqueness and deceit, that's when its citizens need to become very wary of what the future might hold regarding what liberties they believe they possess that are then eroded and even taken away in the name of national security.

Modern governments today increasingly perform mass surveillance of their citizens, explaining that they believe that it is necessary to protect them from dangerous groups such as terrorists, criminals, or political subversives, dissenters in order to track the citizenry and maintain social control.

We are fast approaching a genuine surveillance society in the United States a dark Orwellian future where our every move, our every transaction, our every

communication, and our every contact is recorded, compiled, and stored away ready to be examined and used against us by the authorities whenever they want at any time.

What country do we want to keep?

Mass surveillance will erode our privacy. Yet privacy is an absolutely essential prerequisite to the exercise of our precious individual freedoms the inalienable rights we have as human beings to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. And yet the erosion of privacy also weakens the very constitutional foundations and boundaries of our democracy.

Five centuries ago, Machiavelli explained how to undertake a revolution from above without most people even noticing. In his *Discourses on Livy*, he wrote that one "must at least retain the semblance of the old forms; so that it may seem to the people that there has been no change in the institutions, even though in fact they are entirely different from the old ones."

In other words, keep the old government structures, even while you make profound changes to the actual system, because the appearances are all that most people will notice. So today, instead of seeing the mere corpse of the Republic in which we supposedly live, we only see the clothing and those clothes would appear to look the same as before, even if increasingly worn and threadbare.

We have had a revolution from within that has not eliminated our elected representatives it has simply made them largely irrelevant, especially since Congress is largely occupied by Wall Street err, preoccupied by Wall Street!

It's been a long journey to our current state of affairs, and wars and conflicts have been a major catalyst in that journey, especially since WWII. Most wars fought by the United States have added power to the Executive Branch, while taking away power from the Legislature.

I consider the immediate aftermath of WWII as the real turning point when the American Dream began to go south at the very moment when the U.S. sat astride the world at the pinnacle of power. Consider all the centralizing legislation for a national security state that was passed either by Congress or put into play by the Executive Branch. And therein lies the problem.

For this is when the American Republic began its transformation into a national security state and then this transformation was exponentially accelerated as a result of 9/11 into a Top Secret America an increasingly 'off the books' secret government operating within our Constitutional form of government that hides behind unitary executive privilege and the invocation of state secrets when questioned or held to account.

President Dwight Eisenhower warned us about the rise in this kind of a complex in his Farewell Address. Sen. Frank Church feared the future, and that given the right circumstances turning back might not be possible, if the national surveillance complex turned its enormous capabilities on the U.S. from within, with even more advanced technology.

We now live in post-9/11 America, only to suddenly discover that we are not doing the driving and the brakes are failing and others are in the front and backseat and also following us.

What country do we want to keep? We increasingly no longer govern ourselves as in of, for and by the people.

Consider the “nonstop” number of U.S. military actions around the world these days. And when did Congress last issue a formal declaration of war? Think about it! Consider the ramming through of the Patriot Act a bare month after 9/11 (an Act I would add that NSA was already violating with even more secret programs), when it was obvious that not a single member of Congress read it thoroughly?

And have you wondered what is really in the secret interpretation by the Executive Branch of Section 215 in the Patriot Act? And what about Section 1031 of the National Defense Authorization Act bill that would authorize the indefinite detention of American citizens?

Or how habeas corpus was gutted on Oct. 14, 2011, when Janice Rogers Brown of the Appeals Court for the District of Columbia held that in habeas suits, judges must grant official government records the *presumption of regularity* defined as simply accepting that an “official act” has been done, and that it will be presumed, until the contrary is proved, that the said act “complied with any necessary formalities” and that the person who did it was “duly appointed”?

With such a massively expanded ability by the government to spy into your personal life, we might as well bid adieu to the Fourth Amendment the foundation of a citizen’s integrity as an individual person and in their personal effects in this country as well as their ability to speak and associate freely with others under the First Amendment.

Have we become the proverbial boiling frogs? What country do we want to keep?

Consider the conviction held by this country’s Founding Fathers that a functioning Constitutional Republic and democracy requires an informed citizenry.

And in the case of an uninformed citizenry? The experiment in “government by the people” is doomed to failure, and would inevitably transform into what we

increasingly see today. Is this the day of bread and circuses like in the twilight years of the Roman Empire?

Is our exceptionalism an excuse to end run the very foundational precepts and principles of this Republic and used to violate certain human values that must never be transgressed like torture is never an acceptable human value and eroding away the First and Fourth Amendments removes the very heart of our experiment's exceptionalism?

Machiavelli had it right, and as the old song goes, "something's gotta give." What else are we willing to give up? Are we becoming the National Security State Under Surveillance Always the NSS/USA? Is secret government the new fig leaf for a quaint and outmoded Constitution?

Orwell's *1984* is real and now already screamingly relevant. Only the government can create a police state, and our technology can now make that happen. There is a long list of both private industry and government actions that are ripping away our privacy and our Fourth Amendment rights and our ability to speak freely about it!

I challenge you all to demand accountability, to update our protections in the Internet Age, and to insist upon adherence to the Constitution – conservative and liberal and independent alike. Even in the open press, we know enough about what both the industry and government are doing. Do you care? What will you do about it?

What country do we really want to keep? Do we want to continue to have a burgeoning military-industrial-congressional-intelligence-surveillance-cybersecurity-and-media complex? Whom does it benefit? Do we want to concede the eroding of basic human rights? Why?

Because we fear enemies, that creates the need for security, and we are then persuaded that human rights are ignored because of the primacy of the national security state beyond legitimate protections and the identifying of those who would actually do us harm, both abroad and domestically as a unifying cause for obsessing over national security and the use of fear by the government to control the public and private agenda?

What country do we want to keep?

On Aug. 3, 1857, Frederick Douglass delivered a "West India Emancipation" speech at Canandaigua, New York, on the 23rd anniversary of the event. He said:

"The whole history of the progress of human liberty shows that all concessions yet made to her august claims have been born of earnest struggle. The conflict

has been exciting, agitating, all-absorbing, and for the time being, putting all other tumults to silence. It must do this or it does nothing.

“If there is no struggle there is no progress. Those who profess to favor freedom and yet deprecate agitation are men who want crops without plowing up the ground; they want rain without thunder and lightning. They want the ocean without the awful roar of its many waters.”

Power and those in control concede nothing without a demand they never have and they never will. Every one of us each and every one of us must keep demanding, must keep fighting, must keep thundering, must keep plowing, must keep on keeping things struggling, must speak out and must speak up until “justice” is served because where there is no justice there can be no peace!

What country do we want to truly keep?

Consider what actions you will take when you leave this evening. After all, it is OUR country! So take the necessary action to conserve the very best of who we are and can be for this generation as well as future generations yet to come and keep us free. Our future depends on it.

Would Jesus Join the Occupy Protests?

In the holiday season, many Christians take pride in helping the poor by donating food and toys but U.S. religious leaders have stayed in the background of challenges to an inequitable economic system, leaving that Jesus work to mostly secular young people of the Occupy movement, the Rev. Howard Bess observes.

By the Rev. Howard Bess

When the Martin Luther King Jr. monument was dedicated recently in Washington DC, I was reminded that the civil rights movement in America was led not by a politician fulfilling campaign promises, nor by a popular evangelist bent on saving souls, but by a highly trained theologian who put his religious teachings into practice with a demand for justice for those who had suffered at the hands of the rich and the powerful.

The Rev. King was a Baptist preacher who took his religion into the arena of racism, economics and social disparity. However, hatred caught up with him, and he was killed.

Now, nearly a half century later, there is another broad-based protest that is gaining momentum. The Occupy Wall Street protests echo some of King's complaints about economic inequality and social injustice and the message can no longer be ignored.

The significance of this latest public protest movement, erupting all over the country, may eventually rival the impact of the civil rights movement of the 1960s, yet when comparing the two movements, there is one glaring difference: priests, pastors and clergy of every stripe are rarely in the forefront of Occupy protests.

Instead, secular young people are doing the very work that Jesus from Nazareth would urge us to do. Just as Jesus condemned the injustices of his own day and overturned the money-changing tables at the Temple the Occupy protesters are challenging how Wall Street bankers and today's rich and powerful are harming the masses of people.

This week, religious people have felt proud of giving turkeys to the poor, but they should be joining the protests against the haughty rich. I maintain that Jesus would be a part of the actions in Portland, Denver, New York and many other cities. For Christians, the crucial issue should be "what would Jesus do"?

Today, Christian theologians and Bible scholars agree that the Jesus trip to Jerusalem at the end of his life is essential to understand what Jesus was about. Yet, Christian tradition has brainwashed followers of Jesus about the realities of his trip south to Jerusalem. We have all been exposed to the worship services in which children march waving palm branches and singing "Hosanna."

Traditionally we have called the event "the triumphal entry." However, put into the political and social context of Jerusalem in the early first century BCE, Jesus riding into Jerusalem on a donkey was probably more like a protest march that mocked every leader in the city.

Political and religious "leaders" of the day probably would have ridden into town on a prancing horse, certainly not a humble donkey. So, Jesus's choice of transportation was more street theatre than triumphal entry. It triggered a week of confrontations and arguments with the leaders of state and Temple.

The key event of the week was the incident in the Temple. Once again church tradition has given us a special name for the incident, "the cleansing of the Temple." But It was more likely another piece of street theatre that became a bit physical.

To better understand the Temple incident, we need to understand its context. The

Temple had become a lot more than a religious temple. It had become a tax collection agency and a bank. The Temple held large sums of money accumulated by collecting tithes from the faithful.

In reality, the tithe was a tax, not a freely given gift to God. In addition, fees were charged for participation in the Temple's religious exercises. So, the Temple collected lots of money.

With that fat treasury, the Temple had entered the banking business and regularly made loans, primarily to poor people. Poor people were the victims not only of a flat tax, but also high-interest loans. So, the gap between the haves and the have-nots was growing rapidly. The poor were getting poorer, and the rich were getting richer.

Yet, equity was a key concept in the Israelite tradition. Torah (the law) had very specific rules demanding systematic redistribution of wealth. But those who controlled the Temple operation completely ignored their own religious teachings. The banking operation that had developed was very good to those who controlled the system.

Christians believe that Jesus Christ died for the sins of the whole world. However, from the perspective of history, Jesus died because he challenged a banking system that passed itself off as being righteous.

Today, bank buildings are the temples of America and the financial industry is a key pillar of an increasingly inequitable economic system. Although banks and their controlling officers claim to be upholders of orderly American life, a growing number of people know better.

Recent surveys have asked people "who in the banking business do you trust?" Credit unions came out on top, followed by locally controlled banks. Then, came regional banks. Large national banks came in dead last.

Christians should thank the current Occupy Wall Street protesters for their message and their activism. They are doing our justice work for us. The current crop of national bank leaders are being shown to be just as corrupt as the Temple bankers were in Jesus's day.

If Jesus were present among us today, he would be moving from Portland, to Los Angeles, to Kansas City, to Dallas, up to Chicago and on to Wall Street in New York City. He would join the protest in every city. He would be demanding an overhaul of our financial and banking system. He would be standing with the poor and their allies – and against the rich and their protectors.

When Jesus pursued the corruption of his own day, the representatives of the

religious and political status quo killed him. And Jesus said to his followers “take up your cross and follow me.”

The Rev. Howard Bess is a retired American Baptist minister, who lives in Palmer, Alaska. His email address is hdbss@mtaonline.net.

Will Holiday Splurge Save US Economy?

As the United States has de-industrialized over the past several decades, an illusion of prosperity was maintained by rampant consumerism fueled by easy credit and bubble economies. Now U.S. businesses are hoping for another fix from shoppers rushing to the malls, as Danny Schechter writes.

By Danny Schechter

“Black Friday” is “black” because it is the day when retail businesses supposedly go into the black. This may not have been such a wise use of language since the Wall Street crash of 1929, ushering in the Great Depression, started on a “Black Thursday.”

Throughout America, an advertising-dominated media is plugging all the “bargains” while shoppers, hungry to save a few bucks, in a country where more than half of our families are barely making it, are off to the malls in an annual ritual that each year barely saves the retail outlets but adds costly bills to already squeezed and debt-dependent consumers.

The easy availability of credit has created what Robert Manning calls our Credit Card Nation, where we are encouraged to shop until we drop.

In the aftermath of the terror attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, recall that President George W. Bush made that point shamelessly when he told the American people that the best way to help in that traumatic period was to go shopping again. He knew, even if most Americans didn’t, that it is their non-stop consumption that drives the economy. Without it, I guess, the terrorists could have won.

“In fact,” Manning writes in his seminal book on credit cards, “with the ascendance of the post-industrial economy, bank credit cards have become an essential technological and financial tool for commercial transactions as well as an increasingly important macro-economic tool for U.S. policy-makers.”

That is why this year, lobbyists for the retail shopping industry are begging the Federal Reserve Bank to further cut the costs of debit cards imposed by

avaricious banks. To have more impact, stores should be supporting the Occupy movement that's also protesting bankster greed.

Shopping may be our real national pastime, but it comes, as Manning warns, at a price that is not advertised in the malls.

"The idyllic wonderland of consumer credit too often belies a reality of unknown sacrifices and enduring debt. ... The credit card industry is playing a crucial role in transforming American consumer attitudes.

"The promotion of 'immediate gratification' ruptures the cognitive connection between earnings/saving and credit/debt that has traditionally shaped consumer behavior. It is this 'cognitive disconnect,' with its siren song 'Buy, buy, buy. It could be free, free, free' that constitutes the cornerstone of the Credit Card Nation."

And so, it is not surprising that holidays are used or created as national events to spur consumption. After months of financial volatility, "Black Friday" is seen as a make-or-break event.

Will it send a cathartic and upbeat signal that the economy is back? Can all the shoppers be counted on to launch the holiday shopping season with a big bang?

In the malls, preparations had been made for five months with advertising dollars set aside for promoting sales and deep discounts to lure the shoppers who had, in effect, been boycotting the stores in September and October. Ingenious plans for opening earlier and staging "midnight madness" sales to trigger a stampede were put in place.

You have seen the commercials disguised as news stories, featuring perky local news "correspondents" stirring a buying frenzy with upbeat reports on manic consumers waiting feverishly to rush into malls the night before.

Bill Bowles writes about this on his CNI Blog: "The problem is that many of us have been force-fed with a diet of nothing but passive, uncritical consumptionism, indeed, we are addicted to the stuff; breaking such powerful habits is what this is all about; it's about getting people to think critically again about what's going on and why and what, if anything, we can do about it."

Bowles also ties this cultural affliction, sometimes known as affluenza, back to our dependence on a media system that won't really allow other voices to be heard.

Were most media outlets connecting any dots between the annual shopathon and the "severe recession" that many economists are forecasting and the rest of us are

living?

Were there any warnings to the public to save their rapidly inflating money for expected harder hard times? Was there any explanation of how prices have sharply risen and, thus, the discounts, often "teaser" rates just like the ones offered sub-prime loan victims, are really not all they are cracked up to be? No way!

Where are the stories alerting us to this coming calamity on the front pages of the newspapers? They aren't there. It is just not in their interest to carry them, but years back, MTV pointedly rejected an ad from the Cultural Jammers Network urging a "Buy Nothing Day."

It is not surprising that it was a call from Adbusters, a leader of the anti-consumption movement, that helped galvanize the occupation on Wall Street that since morphed into a global movement.

Many of the shoppers this season are charging it, even though all the credit card companies have jacked up rates driving the real cost of shopping higher, and even though many people owe more than ever. The companies are banking on them. The day after Christmas, VISA will report on how much business was done. In years past, they called it "disappointing." They will likely again this year.

That's because of the steady decline of our economy thanks to illegal practices initiated by white-collar predatory lenders backed by our biggest banks and hedge funds, as well as the inability of regulators to regulate and a complicit media to blow the whistle, which caused a multi-billion dollar economic crime that is still in progress.

In years past, the New York Times sent reporters into the stores and found "desperation rather than celebration." By Monday, in recent years, Wall Street was "glum," according to Fox News. So much for a Black Friday bounce for Wall Street.

Said Manning, "Clearly, the winter holiday shopping season will need a much more enthusiastic response from higher income households if it is to prosper, given depreciating home values and rising daily living expenses."

Frederick Crawford, managing director at AlixPartners, a turnaround consulting company, said that amid economic challenges, people are buying fewer gifts. "Clearly, it was mission-based shopping," Crawford said. "People had their list, and they were very specific in what they were looking for."

So what are you looking for? Forget that new Laser TV and all the crappy toys we

buy only to see them destroyed a week later.

There can be no real turnaround without fundamental changes in how our economy functions, when it does. More regulations are needed, as are major reforms in all of our institutions, financial, political and judicial.

That's why the Occupy Movement is so needed because it is raising the right questions. Now, it needs a strategy to "Occupy the Mainstream" and challenge the people behind the sickness of excessive consumption, and appeal to and organize the people who are its ultimate victims.

Answer to question above: no, shopping will not save us.

News Dissector Danny Schechter blogs for Newsdissector.com. His film [Plunder exposes Wall Street crime \(Plunderthecrimeofourtime.com\)](http://Plunderthecrimeofourtime.com) Parts of this article first appeared in the book Plunder: Investigating Our Economic Catastrophe. (Cosimo Books). Comments to dissector@mediachannel.org

Gingrich, the Ultimate Beltway Bandit

Former House Speaker Newt Gingrich epitomizes the licentious lifestyle and lucrative cronyism that American conservatives claim to hate, yet he is the latest Republican presidential hopeful to soar into frontrunner status, as Michael Winship notes.

By Michael Winship

You maybe should think twice when even Jack Abramoff thinks you're beneath contempt. Not that Newt Gingrich cares.

Abramoff, America's favorite convicted influence peddler, told NBC's David Gregory that presidential candidate and former Speaker of the House Gingrich is one of those "people who came to Washington, who had public service, and they cash in on it. They use their public service and access to make money."

Newt, he continued, is "engaged in the exact kind of corruption that America disdains. The very things that anger the Tea Party movement and the Occupy Wall Street movement and everybody who is not in a movement and watches Washington and says why are these guys getting all this money, why do they go become so rich, why do they have these advantages?"

Why indeed? Granted, Abramoff's in the middle of his promotion tour of

confession and attempted redemption, a pot obscenely eager to call his kettle and former mentor black – especially if it sells books. But Casino Jack does have a point.

Gingrich personifies everything rotten about the ATM machine we call Washington: the merchandising of favors and votes; the conversion of past incumbency into insider information, making your contacts and the ability to play the system available to the highest bidder; the archetypal revolving door between government service and shilling for corporate America.

Yet there he is, suddenly riding at the top of the polls, his debate skills lauded, his churlish dismissal of the media praised, and infused with sufficient cheek to portray himself to gullible elements of the electorate as an *outsider*. It's as if Kim Kardashian proclaimed herself American Housewife of the Year.

(Gingrich now is trying to play the inside-outside game both ways, proclaiming last week, "We just tried four years of amateur ignorance and it didn't work very well. So having someone who actually knows Washington might be a really good thing.")

In fact, a quick look at just a few of Newt's activities since his GOP colleagues tossed him out of the speakership in 1998 is sufficient to expose him as the ultimate poster boy for inside-the-Beltway game playing – adherence to ideology often shoved aside in favor of expedience and the chance to make a buck.

You'll remember hearing just this past spring about Mr. and Mrs. Gingrich's revolving, no-interest credit line at Tiffany's, a luxury store they treated like a diamond encrusted version of the Home Shopping Network, and Tim Carney's report in *The Washington Examiner* that, "Christy Evans, formerly a top staffer to ... Gingrich, is a registered lobbyist for Tiffany's."

Now Carney writes, "We know that Gingrich has been paid by drug companies and by the drug lobby, notably during the Medicare drug debate. A former employee of the Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America (the main industry lobby), told me Gingrich was being paid by someone in the industry at the time.

"A spokeswoman for Gingrich's health care consulting firm, Center for Health Transformation, told me that drug companies have been CHT clients. PhRMA confirmed in a statement that they had paid Gingrich. *Bloomberg News* cited sources from leading drug companies AstraZeneca and Pfizer saying that those companies had also hired Gingrich...

"Three former Republican congressional staffers told me that Gingrich was

calling around Capitol Hill and visiting Republican congressmen in 2003 in an effort to convince conservatives to support a bill expanding Medicare to include prescription-drug subsidies.

“Conservatives were understandably wary about expanding a Lyndon Johnson-created entitlement that had historically blown way past official budget estimates. Drug makers, on the other hand, were positively giddy about securing a new pipeline of government cash to pad their already breathtaking profit margins.”

On Monday, the chair of Gingrich’s Center for Health Transformation estimated its revenues over the past decade at \$55 million. Fees are flexible, she said, with “charter memberships” going for an annual fee of \$200,000.

According to the Nov. 21 *Wall Street Journal*, “The health think tank also charges for consulting sessions with the former speaker and Mr. Gingrich’s speeches, according to two health care trade groups.”

More dynamically, the center’s PR materials promised “direct Newt interaction”(!) and as per *The Washington Post*, “The biggest funders, including such firms as AstraZeneca, Blue Cross Blue Shield and Novo Nordisk, were also eligible to receive discounts on ‘products and workshops’ from other Gingrich groups.” Sounds like the Potomac edition of “The Price Is Right.”

Another Center for Health Transformation charter member was Gundersen Lutheran Health System of La Crosse, Wisconsin. The Nov. 17 *New York Times* reported that in July 2009, without reporting his connection, Gingrich praised the company in *The Washington Post* “for its successful efforts to persuade most patients to have ‘advance directives,’ saying that if Medicare had followed Gundersen’s lead on end-of-life care and other practices, it would ‘save more than \$33 billion a year.’”

Advance directives means helping families determine future care for the terminally ill, but when Tea Partiers and others started yelling about “death panels” during the healthcare reform fight, Gingrich made a quick flip-flop to the right and changed sides.

Listening to Newt attack child labor laws this week, I thought one of his clients might be Miss Hannigan’s Orphanage. In reality, others who have anted up for his advice include GE, IBM, Microsoft, Growth Energy (a pro-ethanol lobby group that between 2009 and 2011 paid him \$575,000) and the US Chamber of Commerce.

The Wall Street Journal notes that, “The Chamber, the largest lobbying organization in Washington, paid Mr. Gingrich about \$840,000, according to people familiar with the arrangement, or about \$120,000 a year for seven years,

beginning in 2001, to serve on an informal board of advisers to its president and senior staff.”

And then, of course, there’s Freddie Mac, which triggered this recent tsunami of scrutiny when Gingrich claimed at the Nov. 9 candidates’ debate that it was for his expertise as an *historian* that the home mortgage giant had paid him \$300,000.

Bloomberg News then reported that the number was actually as much as \$1.8 million, paid as consulting fees right up until 2008, when the failing agency was taken over by the government and such outside contracts were suspended.

Gingrich claims he warned Freddie about “insane” loans and then told *USA Today*, “I was advising them over a period when they weren’t in crisis. I’m pretty happy to say, I gave these guys advice ... on how do you build opportunity for the poor to learn to be non-poor?”

Until caught, he hadn’t bothered to mention his own involvement, even as he attacked Barney Frank and others for taking Freddie Mac’s campaign contributions.

Through it all, Gingrich has denied being a lobbyist, apparently adhering to a very narrow definition he’s not officially registered with Congress under the Lobbying Disclosure Act of 1995, as amended by the Honest Leadership and Open Government Act of 2007.

But you do the math: according to Julie Hirschfeld Davis and Kristin Jensen at *Bloomberg News*, “The former Georgia congressman reported assets in 1997 of between \$197,000 and \$606,000, according to his last House personal financial disclosure report, which permits lawmakers to record their wealth in broad ranges. According to his 2011 presidential disclosure report, the Republican primary candidate today is worth between \$7.3 million and \$31 million.”

Not bad for government work.

Michael Winship, senior writing fellow at Demos, is senior writer of the new public television series “Moyers & Company,” premiering in January 2012. Go to www.billmoyers.com.

Questions to Ask the Candidates

Exclusive: During recent presidential debates, moderators have asked mostly

predictable questions and except for some notable gaffes have elicited mostly talking-point answers. But ex-CIA analyst Ray McGovern says it's time for citizens to put politicians on the spot with some more pointed questions.

By Ray McGovern

Pity the pundits. It must be hard to pretend to be a journalist and live in constant fear of being one question or comment away from joining the jobless.

This Thanksgiving holiday weekend we can be thankful for the obscene transparency of the "mainstream" pundits' efforts to avoid at all cost offending the corporations that own and use them.

Rather, media personalities who wish to be around for a while must do what they can to promote the notion of American exceptionalism and the need to sacrifice at home in order to defend and expand the Empire, "so that we don't have to fight them here."

From a global perspective looking back a few decades, it is hard to believe that major powers like China and Russia were fiercely competing with each other for improved relations with the U.S., and that we were able to play one off against the other to advance America's interests.

They are now laughing at us, smiling at how far we have outreached ourselves in our attempts to project power and corner the world market.

It is, actually, hard to believe: Marines now stationed in Australia, which our national security experts apparently believe is near China (well, kind of near); U.S. troops now in Africa where there's still a lot of untapped oil; U.S. threats to use a "military option" against Iran.

And the *coup de grace*: the feckless effort to build anti-ballistic missile defense systems that can defeat all countermeasures, the U.S. defense-industrial project that has long been one of the most expensive and lucrative corporate welfare programs.

Check out the breaking story, which brings still more good news for the military-industrial complex: Russia is threatening to defeat American missile defense systems in Europe, absent a bilateral agreement regulating them. And so, it's back to the drawing board and then the production line in the quixotic search for technical systems that cannot be countered. Is this a great country for weapons researchers and manufacturers, or what?

The pundits will explain, and our diplomats will try to convince others, particularly incredulous Europeans, that such defense systems are needed to

defend against an eventual missile threat from Iran, which our national security gurus believe to be near Europe (well, kind of near).

All this at a time when one out of three children in America live in poverty. Our Fawning Corporate Media (FCM), substantially owned and operated by the arms makers, war profiteers and their friends, does what it can to disguise this, as well as other grim statistics.

Be thankful, say the One Percent. Relax already. After all, even poor children, or most of them, anyhow, can watch football on TV and be enticed by heroic advertisements to join the military or some other part of the national security apparatus. Thus, maybe they can qualify for a credit card that enables them to shop like crazy on Black Friday and on future Black Fridays.

To further buck up national morale, our TV networks can be counted on to carry the usual orgy of flag-waving "God-bless-America" renditions accompanied by those explicit and implicit tutorials on American exceptionalism, expressed with jet-fighter flyovers and cutaways to U.S. troops "defending our freedoms" in Afghanistan and other faraway places.

The message from the One Percent the ultra-wealthy whom Republican lawmakers are fond of lauding as the "job creators" was that ALL of you must be grateful this Thanksgiving holiday, including the ungrateful Ninety-Nine Percent, some of whom are grumbling about inequities at "Occupy" protests around the country.

Ask Real Questions

Is there a medicine for this infection of militarism, consumerism and mindless politics? I think there is, but only if we all do our part. We need to find ways to raise the kinds of questions that FCM pundits and journalists avoid like the plague. Go to the rallies, the press conferences, the campaign speeches; press for cogent answers to the real questions.

That's what I'm going to try to do in the coming weeks and months. Here are three lines of questioning I think we might try to pursue with the candidates themselves. You may wish to try them out yourselves and/or devise your own. I include below the three questions, supplemented by background and potential lead-ins:

-Question 1:

Background: The aims of U.S. foreign policy in the post-World War II period were essentially to enforce a global system in which the Western powers under American leadership would maintain global dominance. This essentially meant being in control of the world's resources at the expense of non-Western nations.

This fundamental objective of U.S. foreign policy in the post-war period shines through with bare-knuckled candor in a TOP SECRET policy document written by George Kennan in February 1948. He was head of the State Department's Policy Planning Staff, and this was its first memorandum. Here is an excerpt:

"We have about 50 per cent of the world's wealth, but only 6.3 per cent of its population. ... Our real task in the coming period is to maintain this position of disparity. To do so we will have to dispense with all sentimentality and day-dreaming. We need not deceive ourselves that we can afford the luxury of altruism. We should cease to talk about vague, unreal objectives such as human rights, the raising of living standards, and democratization. The day is not far off when we will have to deal in straight power concepts."

Lead-in: Five years after approval of the basic policy aim of controlling more than our share of "the world's wealth," the policy was implemented by throwing millions of dollars at the CIA to overthrow the democratically elected leader of Iran. You see, Prime Minister Mohammad Mossadegh had the revolutionary, unacceptable notion that more of the profits from Iranian oil should stay in Iran for the Iranian people and not simply go to oil giants like the predecessor of British Petroleum (BP).

The Question: Do you think we had a right to overthrow the leader of Iran in 1953? And would you again give millions of dollars to the CIA to overthrow the Iranian government under your presidency?

-Question 2

Background: Further on Iran: During the Dec. 5, 2006, Senate hearing on the nomination of Robert Gates to be Secretary of Defense, he was questioned by Sen. Lindsey Graham, R-S.C., about the possibility of Iran acquiring nuclear weapons and the threat to Israel if it did. Gates said that he believed Iran was trying to acquire nuclear weapons and was lying when it said it wasn't.

However, amazingly, Gates added that Iran's motivation was largely self-defense. Sen. Graham asked: "Do you believe the Iranians would consider using that nuclear weapons capability against the nation of Israel?"

Gates replied: "I don't know that they would do that, Senator. ... And I think that, while they are certainly pressing, in my opinion, for nuclear capability, I think that they would see it in the first instance as a deterrent. They are surrounded by powers with nuclear weapons: Pakistan to their east, the Russians to the north, the Israelis to the west and us in the Persian Gulf."

This remarkably candid reply explains Iran's possible motive in seeking nuclear weapons as deterrence against aggression by nuclear powers in the region,

including Israel and the United States. In other words, according to Gates, Iran is seeking nuclear weapons to prevent others from attacking it, rather than to attack other states, like Israel.

This comes close to saying that the U.S. should be able to live with a nuclear-armed Iran (and Israel should be able to as well). And, remember, all this talk is properly put in the subjunctive mood. It remains a very big IF; namely, on whether or not the Iranian leaders opt to go for a nuclear weapon.

We were formally reminded last March that the jury is still out on this key question. James R. Clapper, the Director of National Intelligence, testified to Congress that the intelligence community judges that Iran has not yet made that decision. So, despite all the current media hype regarding Iran's nuclear program, there remains some reason to hope against hype, so to speak.

In the above reply, Gates also acknowledged what U.S. officials officially seek to obfuscate: that Israel has nuclear weapons. Remember, that at the time of his confirmation hearing, Gates had already served as CIA director and held other senior national security position in several administrations.

He had been around long enough both to know the details of Israel's undeclared nuclear arsenal and the longstanding U.S. policy NOT to acknowledge that Israel has nukes. That policy was designed to have the double benefit of not undermining Israel's policy of studied ambiguity on the issue and of not requiring the U.S. to take a position for or against Israel's possession of nuclear weapons and its refusal to sign the Non-Proliferation Treaty, which Iran has signed.

America's supposedly "objective" FCM also readily puts on the blinders when focusing on Iran's alleged nuclear weapons program and simultaneously ignoring Israel's real one. The truth is that there are no U.N. weapons inspectors crawling into crevices in Israel, as they regularly do in Iran.

Lead-in to question: A portion of intelligence funding goes to support intelligence analysis. Former Defense Secretary Robert Gates worked in the analysis part of the CIA. [Actually, as an apprentice analyst 40 years ago, he worked in the Soviet Foreign Policy Branch that I led. His portfolio was Soviet policy toward the Middle East.]

Fast-forward 35 years to Dec. 5, 2006, when the Senate held a one-day hearing on Gates's nomination to become Secretary of Defense. When Sen. Lindsey Graham asked Gates whether he thought the Iranians would consider a nuclear attack on Israel, Gates answered:

"I think that they would see it in the first instance as a deterrent. They are

surrounded by powers with nuclear weapons: Pakistan to their east, the Russians to the north, the Israelis to the west and us in the Persian Gulf.”

This is tell-it-like-it-is intelligence analysis [which exceeded my hopes as his erstwhile mentor]. It even included matter-of-fact mention of Israel’s nuclear capability, which President Barack Obama himself has refused to acknowledge. When Helen Thomas pressed the issue at Obama’s inaugural press conference (Feb. 9, 2009), the President awkwardly ducked the question, explaining he did not want to “speculate.”

The Question: Do you agree with Mr. Gates that Iran would see a nuclear capability “in the first instance as a deterrent?” And how many nuclear weapons do Western experts believe Israel has? President Carter has said 150, but that was some time ago.

A Follow-up: Let’s assume Iran does get a nuclear weapon: Do you think it would commit suicide by firing it off in the direction of Israel?

–Question 3

Background and Lead-In: This question deals with torture, an issue that has been given new life recently, with more and more Republican presidential candidates speaking in favor of it. We have surely come a long way since Virginia patriot Patrick Henry insisted passionately that “the rack and the screw,” as he put it, were barbaric practices that had to be left behind in the Old World, or we are “lost and undone.”

The Question: On Sept. 6, 2006, Gen. John Kimmons, then head of Army intelligence told reporters at the Pentagon, in unmistakable language: “No good intelligence is going to come from abusive practices. I think history tells us that. I think the empirical evidence of the last five years, hard years, tells us that.”

Gen. Kimmons knew that President George W. Bush had decided to claim publicly, just two hours later, that the “alternative set of procedures” for interrogation, methods that Bush had approved, like water-boarding, were effective. Whom do you think we should believe: President Bush? Or Gen. Kimmons?

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