

The Bush/Obama War Against Truth

The harsh treatment of alleged leaker Bradley Manning is part of a broader campaign to silence government whistleblowers, a pattern that began with Vice President Dick Cheney's outing of CIA officer Valerie Plame but has expanded under President Obama, says ex-CIA analyst Melvin A. Goodman.

By Melvin A. Goodman

When Pvt. Bradley Manning appeared in a military courtroom at Fort Meade, Maryland, last week, it was his first public appearance in more than 19 months. Manning has been held without trial for the past year and a half; only now is a hearing being conducted to determine if there is sufficient evidence to refer his case to a general court martial.

During this period, Manning, who is charged with transferring classified information to an unauthorized source, has been treated as an "enemy combatant," subjected to solitary confinement in a maximum-security cell as well as harassment day and night.

Manning's inhuman and degrading treatment clearly is designed as a warning to other individuals who might be considering the unauthorized release of classified information. There were periods in his pre-trial confinement when he was forced to stand naked, which conjures up images of Guantanamo and Abu Ghraib, not U.S. justice.

At the current hearings, the government has even been allowed to exclude journalists from portions of the proceedings. The norms of the legal system, including military justice, have been observed in the breach, particularly the right to a speedy trial.

The documents leaked by Manning were an embarrassment to the United States, but not a threat to U.S. security. The overwhelming majority of the documents were governmental boilerplate.

The campaign to intimidate potential whistleblowers or dissidents within the government is consistent with the national security state that the Bush and Obama administrations have created over the past decade.

A new policy of domestic intelligence gathering has permitted not only law enforcement agencies, but intelligence agencies and the Pentagon to collect, store and analyze vast amounts of digital data on law-abiding U.S. citizens. Lawsuits that challenge improper eavesdropping have been met with challenges from the Department of Justice concerning "state secrecy" in order to prevent

trials.

The Obama administration has resorted to the Espionage Act of 1917 and to state secrecy defense even more often than the Bush administration did.

The increase in domestic surveillance has often been illegal; the practice of warrantless eavesdropping has been unconstitutional. The FBI has wiretapped conversations between lawyers and defendants, challenging the legal principle that attorney-client communication is inviolate.

The FBI has been given the authority to issue secret National Security Letters without the review or approval of a judge or prosecutor. The letters are a form of administrative subpoena used to obtain records from "third parties," such as hotels, banks, phone companies, Internet providers and even libraries. Any transaction in digital data is subject to government collection.

The Plamegate Scandal

The government's campaign, including the treatment of Manning, to deter others from exposing sensitive and embarrassing information began with the outing of a clandestine intelligence operative, Valerie Plame.

This effort was led by Vice President Dick Cheney in 2003 and was designed to establish the precedent of discipline of the national security bureaucracy as well as to exercise total control over the release of information embarrassing to the Bush administration.

Plame's husband, Ambassador Joe Wilson, had traveled to Africa for the Central Intelligence Agency in February 2002 to investigate clandestine reports of a possible Iraqi effort to purchase uranium yellowcake. Also in early 2002, the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Department of State sent high-level representatives to Africa to conduct similar investigations.

All three emissaries determined that there was no substance to intelligence reporting that Iraq was trying to buy uranium yellowcake from Niger. The intelligence community was not surprised because they knew the reports were part of a not-so-sophisticated forgery by members of the Italian military intelligence service.

However, since so-called Iraqi efforts to obtain weapons of mass destruction was the key to the Bush administration's invasion of Iraq in March 2003, Cheney was livid when Ambassador Wilson began to leak details of his Niger trip to Nicholas Kristof of the *New York Times* as well as to the *Washington Post* and the *New Republic*.

The details first appeared in May 2003, and in July, Wilson went public with a signed op-ed in the *New York Times*, making the case that the Bush administration had manipulated intelligence to justify the invasion.

Bush administration officials, including Cheney's chief of staff Lewis "Scooter" Libby, began to tell reporters that Plame worked for the CIA's clandestine service and that she supposedly had been involved in dispatching her husband to Niger. However, only syndicated columnist Robert Novak published the information concerning Plame's clandestine affiliation with CIA.

The Office of the Vice President took a huge risk in outing Plame because it was a violation of the Intelligence Identification Act of 1983, which made it a felony to disclose an undercover agent's name. Cheney and Libby were willing to take the risk because they wanted to intimidate Wilson as well as other members of the policy and intelligence communities who had sensitive information that would put the lie to the White House justification for the use of force against Iraq.

And the intimidation seemed to work. No CIA or State Department whistleblower stepped forward either to corroborate Wilson's op-ed or to dispute the chicanery of the White House in the run-up to war. The fact that no one from CIA exposed the deceit of the White House is particularly egregious, because the Agency had provided credibility to the charge that Iraq was trying to purchase uranium.

In October 2002, the CIA had published both a highly classified national intelligence estimate, which was managed by Robert Walpole, and an unclassified White Paper managed by Paul Pillar, indicating that Iraq was "shifting from domestic mining and milling of uranium to foreign acquisition." Both the estimate and the White Paper were passed to the Congress only days before the vote on the use of force resolution in October 2002.

However, internally, there were deep divisions regarding these claims. In October 2002, the CIA blocked White House efforts to use the information linking Saddam Hussein to purchases of uranium ore for a presidential speech in Cincinnati.

Then, three months later in January 2003, the CIA made no attempt to block the President from making the accusation in his State of the Union address. However, in February 2003, Secretary of State Colin Powell did not use the information in his otherwise regrettable speech to the UN Security Council.

Though Wilson's rejection of the Niger allegations would ultimately be proved correct, Plame's career as a clandestine services officer was nevertheless ruined.

Punishing Whistleblowers

The unconscionable treatment of Manning and the reckless handling of the Plame-Wilson affair are two of the most dramatic examples of the Obama and Bush administration's creation of a national security state, but they are not alone.

The campaign against a whistleblower from the National Security Agency, Thomas Drake, similarly threatens American access to important information. Drake passed unclassified information about fraud, waste and abuse at NSA, only after failing to get action from his own agency's inspector general, the Pentagon's inspector general, and congressional intelligence committees.

Every key ruling in the case went against the prosecution, and Drake eventually pleaded guilty to one charge of misuse of an authorized government computer; he received a sentence of one-year probation and community service. However, like Plame, Drake will never again be able to work in his chosen field. [For details, see Consortiumnews.com's ["What Country Do We Want to Keep?"](#)]

Earlier this year, William Welch II, the federal prosecutor who had overreached in pressing espionage charges against Drake, issued a subpoena against James Risen, a reporter for the *New York Times*. The Justice Department wanted Risen to testify against a former CIA officer, Jeffrey Sterling, who is facing felony charges for leaks of classified information.

Risen has been a target of federal leak prosecutions since he exposed the Bush administration's warrantless eavesdropping program in 2005. The shot across Risen's bow is aimed at all national security reporters who receive classified information.

As a result of the treatment of Manning, Drake and Risen, potential whistleblowers will certainly think twice before going to the press. And it is possible that journalists, less courageous than Risen, will think twice before accepting and using such information.

A double standard is at work here. Officials at the highest levels of government can pass sensitive information to anointed journalists such as Bob Woodward, who typically receives sensitive and classified information for his books. However, lower-level officers must keep their mouths shut about government perfidy.

This trend is particularly regrettable because government oversight processes have been severely weakened during the Bush and Obama administrations. The Offices of Inspector General, particularly at the CIA and the Department of Defense, have been downgraded and significantly weakened. The House and Senate Intelligence Committees are unwilling to investigate illegal conduct in the intelligence community.

President Obama, who endorsed protection for courageous whistleblowers during his campaign, has been both unwilling to investigate crimes of the Bush administration and most willing to invoke the Espionage Act of 1917 to harass genuine whistleblowers.

We expected a Bush/Cheney administration to bend the law in their direction. But who would have expected Obama, a Harvard-trained lawyer and a teacher of constitutional law, to follow suit?

Melvin A. Goodman, a former CIA whistleblower, is senior fellow at the Center for International Policy and adjunct professor of government at Johns Hopkins University. He is the author of the forthcoming "National Insecurity: The Cost of American Militarism" (City Lights Publisher). Goodman's email address is goody789@verizon.net.

Braveheart, Edward I and Bush

From the Archive: This week, House Republicans fancied themselves reliving Braveheart's Battle of Stirling as they blocked a compromise to extend a tax cut for 160 million working Americans after having protected tax breaks for the rich a misguided metaphor from the Scottish patriot's real history that Robert Parry researched in 2005.

By Robert Parry (Originally published Aug. 10, 2005)

In a dark and musty bar in Stirling, Scotland, a working-class fellow named Colin reminded me why wars especially invasions are to be avoided, lest they engender hatreds that can divide people and lands for generations and even centuries.

Americans with shorter historical perspectives tend to underestimate this fact, unless they were part of some ethnic or regional group that has borne the brunt of a military occupation, such as Native Americans or old-time Southerners, who still call the Civil War "the War of Northern Aggression."

For many people in the world, grievances of past centuries can be as real as the events of last week and often more powerful. Animosity born of brutality and perceived injustice can distort relations even between countries with strong economic and cultural ties.

Which is what Colin, with his close-cropped hair and strong Scottish accent,

recalled to me as we sat in the bar on the night of July 4, 2005, talking about the bloody wars waged against Scotland and Wales by Edward I, the ruthless and cunning English monarch of the late 13th Century.

My conversation with Colin and his spike-haired college friend David was the sort of serendipity that comes with foreign travel. Off-duty guides from the nearby Stirling Castle, both were mildly intrigued by my reason for being in their gritty, central Scottish city of Stirling:

My wife and I were taking my 16-year-old son and one of his friends on what I had dubbed the "Edward I/William Wallace tour" of the United Kingdom. (Yes, it is that much fun to be one of my kids.)

Our tour had started four days earlier in London, after we had arrived from Washington. We began our little quest at the end of life for the two historical figures.

First, we searched through Westminster Abbey for Edward I's tomb, upon which Scots are reputed to spit even seven centuries later. We found its location, although access to the tomb itself was cordoned off to the general public.

Later, we toured the Tower of London, a castle best known as a prison for political enemies, many of whom met the grisly fate that Edward I and other English monarchs meted out to "traitors." While victims of royal blood faced relatively quick death from beheading, lesser-born victims were dragged through the streets, partially hanged, castrated and disemboweled before their hearts were cut out. Then they were decapitated and their bodies chopped into quarters.

It was that fate that awaited Scottish hero William Wallace also known as "Braveheart" who led the Scottish resistance to Edward I's military campaigns against Scotland in the 1290s. Wallace was captured in 1305 and taken to London for a show trial at Westminster before being condemned.

Edward I ordered Wallace's torture to be especially deliberate with his entrails to be pulled out inch by inch as a warning to Scots to cease all rebellion. On Aug. 23, 1305, Wallace was dragged some four miles through London streets to a market area called Smithfield, where his public torture and execution were carried out.

Finding a Plaque

After completing our visit to the Tower of London, we took the Underground to the Barbican station and then walked to the Smithfield market area in search of a plaque that marks the location where Wallace was drawn and quartered.

Following directions I got from a gentleman who sang in the choir at the Medieval-era St. Bartholomew's Church, we walked 20 paces beyond the church grounds, looked to our left and found Wallace's plaque on the wall of an adjacent hospital building. In front of the plaque, someone had left a display of fresh flowers.

A few days later, another part of our U.K. trip took us to northern Wales, which Edward I had subdued with his usual ferocity, before turning on Scotland.

In Wales, Edward I known as "Longshanks" because of his height had imposed his dominion over the Celtic population by constructing a network of mammoth castles in important towns, a strategy that strangled Welsh resistance but drained the English treasury. We visited two of Edward's castles one at Conwy and another at Caernarfon (near where our Parry ancestors had lived).

After throttling Wales, Edward I turned his attention to Scotland, where Gaelic tribes had resisted external control for a thousand years, since the days of the Roman Empire. In 1297, Edward's army without him in command marched north to crush Scottish rebels led by Wallace.

That campaign brought the English army to the strategic Scottish town of Stirling. There, English commanders, including Edward's treasurer for Scotland, Hugh Cressingham, rashly decided to cross a narrow bridge, giving Wallace his opportunity.

Though outnumbered, the Scottish soldiers charged down a slope and set upon the half of the English army that had made its way across the bridge. Amid the chaos, the rest of the English force couldn't cross and the wooden bridge collapsed.

The Scots slaughtered half the English army, driving many into the river where they drowned. Among the dead was Cressingham, whose skin was cut off and sliced into Scottish battle ribbons. (The producers of the Mel Gibson movie, "Braveheart," were running short of money when they filmed the battle, so they set it in a field instead of around a river. They also put Wallace in the front lines when he actually remained on high ground above the battle.)

(On Monday, as the House Republicans prepared to scuttle the Senate-approved compromise on extending the payroll tax cut for working Americans, some 10 GOP members spoke to their conference about their favorite scenes from the apocryphal battle in "Braveheart," such as when Wallace has his troops moon the English and then joins them in spearing the English cavalry by raising wooden spikes at the last moment.

(According to witnesses who spoke with Washington Post reporters, some

Republican lawmakers were inspired to chant Wallace's supposed instructions to his troops, "Hold! Hold! Hold! Hold!" On Fox News, Rep. Phil Gingrey, R-Georgia, also deemed this "a 'Braveheart' moment" and described the instructions from the House GOP conference to John Boehner, "You, Mr. Speaker, are our William Wallace.")

The Aftermath

The rout at Stirling Bridge forced the English into retreat. Wallace's army marched south after them, taking the war to towns in northern England before withdrawing back to Scotland as winter weather set in.

The next year, Edward personally led a fearsome new campaign against the Scots. Aided by dissension within the Scottish ranks and using the devastating longbow developed by Welsh archers, Edward crushed Wallace's army at the Battle of Falkirk. Gradually, Edward tightened his grip on Scotland as Wallace went into hiding and exile.

Seven years later, after Wallace returned to Scotland, he was betrayed by a fellow Scot, taken prisoner by Edward's forces and paraded before mocking crowds in English towns en route to his grisly fate in London.

After Wallace was drawn and quartered, Edward ordered Wallace's head put on a spike on London Bridge and his severed limbs displayed over the sewers in the Scottish towns of Newcastle, Berwick-upon-Tweed, Perth and Aberdeen.

Edward's goal was to make Wallace's suffering and humiliation a warning to the Scots. Instead, Edward created a martyr who has inspired the Scottish independence movement to this day. After actor Mel Gibson portrayed Wallace in the 1995 movie "Braveheart," new impetus was given to the cause of Scottish nationalism.

In the decade since the movie, the Scots pursued what they call the "devolution" of their ties to England. With their own parliament and control over many domestic policies, many Scots regarded their land as an independent country only in loose confederation with Great Britain.

On July 4, 2005, our "Wallace/Edward tour" brought us to Stirling, where we met Colin and David, who were drinking beers at the bar after finishing their day's work as guides at Stirling Castle. It was hard to tell if they were more bemused or impressed that some Americans had bothered to visit the site of Wallace's execution in London.

Colin especially held Wallace in deep reverence as the archetypal Scottish hero who never bent to the will of England, even in the face of a horrible death.

There were other Scottish heroes, Colin said, but none measured up to Wallace.

After Edward I's own death in 1307, as he was preparing another military campaign against Scotland, Robert the Bruce led the Scots to a major victory over Edward II at Bannockburn in 1314. But Colin said the memory of Robert the Bruce was tainted by his on-again-off-again collaboration with Edward I.

Colin leaned toward me at the bar. "You know a bunch of us Scots are going down to London on the 700th anniversary of Wallace's death," he said. "We're going to follow the route that Wallace took through London, to where he was executed in Smithfield."

It struck me that the calm commitment on Colin's face was a lesson that should not be lost on George W. Bush and other modern politicians. However justified they might regard their military operations in other lands, those wars carry the heavy risk of creating martyrs and enflaming hatreds that could outlast any short-term objectives, just as Edward I's brutality against Scotland did.

That is one reason why leaders with deep historical perspective really do treat war as a last resort, rather than a casual means for achieving some geopolitical end.

Though William Wallace was undoubtedly a brutal man himself, Edward I's aggression against Scotland and his martyrdom of Wallace created a legacy that has haunted English-Scottish relations to the present day. As Colin made clear, Wallace's path of execution on Aug. 23, 1305, is becoming a kind of "stations of the cross" for Scottish independence.

Edward I may have viewed Wallace's torture and dismemberment as one sort of political warning to his enemies, but that atrocity has evolved into another type of cautionary tale for politicians of all eras if you rely too readily on violence, it can have negative consequences that far outweigh its successes.

[For more on related topics, see Robert Parry's *Lost History, Secrecy & Privilege* and *Neck Deep*, now available in a three-book set for the discount price of only \$29. For details, [click here.](#)]

Robert Parry broke many of the Iran-Contra stories in the 1980s for the Associated Press and Newsweek. His latest book, *Neck Deep: The Disastrous Presidency of George W. Bush*, was written with two of his sons, Sam and Nat, and can be ordered at neckdeepbook.com. His two previous books, *Secrecy & Privilege: The Rise of the Bush Dynasty from Watergate to Iraq* and *Lost History: Contras, Cocaine, the Press & 'Project Truth'* are also available there.

Catholic Bishops vs. Women's Rights

Catholic bishops are pressuring the Obama administration to retreat on issues of women's reproductive rights and with the election year looming, they appear to be making progress, as NOW President Terry O'Neill described in an interview with Dennis Bernstein.

By Dennis J. Bernstein

The National Organization for Women is calling on the Obama administration to stand up for women and not give in to demands from the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops that would deny birth control coverage for millions of women.

The bishops have been lobbying the administration to expand a religious exemption that would allow a broad range of religiously affiliated organizations, such as colleges and hospitals, to take contraception coverage away from women who rely on those organizations for health insurance.

I spoke about this and other important issues pertaining to women with Terry O'Neill, President of the National Organization for Women.

DB: It is sort of ironic that Secretary of State Hillary Clinton is spearheading a sort of quiet revolution in progressive foreign policy, trying to empower women but her administration here at home and her boss in the White House apparently is betraying a lot of women. You want to talk about this?

TO: Yes, and let me start by quoting Hillary Clinton [as] she gave an amazing, powerful, inspired speech at the United Nations in honor of International Human Rights Day. And here is part of what she said, "All human beings are born free and equal, in dignity and rights, it does not matter what country we live in, who our leaders are or even who we are. Because we are human we, therefore, have rights. And because we have rights governments are bound to protect them."

Now, in that speech she was talking about lesbians, gays, bisexuals and transgender persons. But clearly it applies to all human beings, including women. And if only, President Obama and Secretary of Health and Human Services, Kathleen Sebelius would take those words to heart and understand that a woman's fundamental right to birth control is a human right. They need to recognize it. They don't give it to us, we have it. They need to recognize it.

DB: Well, what exactly has the Obama administration done, or say they are going to do that will endanger, I think you are saying, perhaps hundreds of thousands, millions of women?

T0: So we have two threats, actually right now. One Secretary Sebelius in an unprecedented move we tried at the NOW office we tried to find any time in the history of this country that the HHS has overruled a scientific evidenced-based decision of the FDA [Food and Drug Administration] and we thought we had found something involving cranberries from 1959 but apparently that wasn't a case of overruling.

This is the first time, and what the secretary did was to overrule the FDA's decision that Plan B, a particular kind of emergency contraception is safe and effective for all women, no matter what their age and should be available over the counter. That is scientific and evidenced-based decision and Kathleen Sebelius overruled it purely on political grounds. It is not acceptable.

The women's movement is mounting a massive on-line effort to convince President Obama to overrule this decision notwithstanding that he has very shamefully hidden behind his daughters, to support this kind of a decision.

DB: What do you mean by that?

T0: So what he said was that it wasn't his decision it was only Secretary Sebelius's decision but he thought it was a good decision because, you know, younger girls now, is that, emergency contraception is available over the counter for women 17 years old and older, but not under seventeen. And so what he said was that, well, you know the cognitive development of younger teenage girls is not where it needs to be, and therefore, we need to withhold access to contraception from them. That makes that makes no sense. And then he has the unmitigated gall to say "I'm sure most parents would agree with that."

I am the mother of a 21-year-old young woman, and she is safe, and healthy, and wonderful and perfect. And I intend to keep her perfect and no sir, it is not the case that other parents think it is okay to play politics with the lives of teenage girls and that is exactly what the Obama administration is doing.

DB: Well, and let's throw this into the mix, it is interesting that the CDC [Center for Disease Control], a recent study there shows a declining rates of teen pregnancy and teen birth due to increased contraceptive use. I guess Obama didn't pay attention to the CDC.

T0: Exactly. He didn't pay attention to the CDC. Candidate Obama promised his voters that he was going to be guided by science, by evidence. He was not going to follow in the footsteps of the Bush administration which politicized these decisions about contraception. In fact, it was under the Bush administration the FDA, dragged its heels and dragged its heels, and dragged its heels, about recognizing whether over the counter emergency contraception was safe and

effective. That's the FDA's job: Determine if it's safe and effective.

Finally they did, but then they put this age restriction on it and a federal court heard a complaint about it and told the FDA that age restriction is purely political and sent it back to the FDA, told the FDA to apply scientific and public health and medical standards. And when they finally did that and Margaret Hamburg of the FDA is quoted in the newspapers as saying, We had made the decision that this is safe and effective, should not have any age restriction. Then the Obama administration swoops in and overrules the FDA. Not acceptable.

DB: We're talking about the Obama administration caving in to the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops. Taking actions that would deny probably millions of young women the kind of birth control and counseling that they need to continue the situation pointed out by the CDC study that there are declining rates of teen pregnancy because of the increased use of contraceptives.

Now let's step back, this is, I guess it's the Hyde Amendment turns 35 this year. Of course, that bans Medicaid coverage of abortion. The U.S. is currently experiencing the highest number of people living in poverty since the U.S. census began (keeping tallies) in '59 and this is rather significant. Let's take a look at what it looks like for women and if not, President Obama is sort of joining forces with the ghost of Henry Hyde.

TO: You know Dennis, he really is. The Catholic bishops want President Obama to expand a clause in the regulations implementing the Affordable Care Act. And these regulations have to do with preventive care. So under the Affordable Care Act insurance companies are going to be required to cover certain types of services. And the list of required services for prevention, where the insurance company has to cover it without charging an extra co-pay or an extra higher deductible among these preventive services includes birth control.

Now the Catholic bishops convinced Secretary Sebelius again to include this clause in that regulation that says, well, yeah, the insurance companies have to cover contraception but not for employers who are religiously affiliated. And we objected to that clause. We know that that clause is three times of unconstitutional. But the Catholic bishops are insisting, not only that the clause stay in but that it be expanded drastically.

Right now the clause applies basically to religiously affiliated associations like churches. Under the Catholic bishops proposal it would apply to Catholic colleges, Catholic hospitals, anything with any kind of religious, not just Catholic, but any kind of religious affiliation. You are talking about upwards of three million women would be denied birth control health insurance coverage under the Catholic bishops' proposal.

We have been working night and day to stop the President from caving in to this proposal by the Catholic bishops. And we're very worried. You know, about what he's going to do.

DB: And there have been a few victories, I guess, Initiative 26 in Mississippi the so-called Personhood Amendment which would have defined a fertilized egg as a person; that was voted down. Was that a surprise?

TO: You know it was a real surprise. And it was a very pleasant surprise and I think this tells us where the country is. That Mississippi Initiative 26 would have criminalized many forms of birth control. In declaring that a fertilized egg as a human being, it would have criminalized invitro fertilization, would have criminalized many miscarriages, would have required a criminal investigation of a woman who had had the trauma of a miscarriage. It was an absolutely pernicious initiative. And the people of Mississippi voted it down.

And the reason they voted it down, honestly, was because a small number, initially a very small number of feminist activists at the local level in Mississippi started making a big noise about it. And I'm going to tell you the truth, six weeks out up here in Washington, we were saying to each other "Oh my God, this is probably going to pass because it's Mississippi." But the activists in Mississippi went to the radio stations, and they went to the college campuses, they went to the community colleges. They started getting the word out. Two weeks out we realized it was neck and neck.

On the day of the election, I mean I was on line to the Jackson, Mississippi, newspaper refreshing every 15 minutes. I couldn't believe what I was seeing. On the day of [the election], we won that initiative vote by 58 percent to 42 percent. Which tells you, people in this country support birth control.

Yeah, abortion is controversial, there is no doubt about it, although most people think abortion should not be a crime. But people very strongly support birth control and so it's really puzzling to me that the administration doesn't understand that. In fact, there's a lot of elected officials right here in Washington who don't understand the deep pro-active support for birth control that's throughout this country.

DB: Well, it's hard to imagine that the state of Mississippi is sort of ahead, apparently at least in this context, one step ahead of the President of the United States who is from Chicago and prides himself on being a progressive liberal and a pro-choice sort of guy. How are the women doing on the 35th anniversary of the Hyde Amendment?

TO: You know we are working very hard to... We want to repeal the Hyde Amendment

altogether. It's a pernicious law that prohibits federal tax dollars going to fund abortion care. All the other forms of health care are funded through Medicaid but not abortion care. And that's just plain sex discrimination. Abortion, one in three women will have an abortion in their life time. It is a common and necessary part of women's reproductive health care so prohibiting federal dollars from ... and heck, I don't like war. So are we going to stop using federal dollars to prosecute war just because I don't like it? No.

Some people don't like abortion, my advice is don't have one. But don't stop other women from having the health care that they need.

Dennis Bernstein is host and executive producer of "Flashpoints," an award-winning radio show heard over Pacifica radio and originating from KPFA, 94.1, in Berkeley California.

Pvt. Manning and Imperative of Truth

Exclusive: The prosecution of Pvt. Bradley Manning for inconvenient truth-telling is more proof of how hypocritical Official Washington is, especially when Manning's case is compared to how Bush administration officials walked despite clear evidence that they sanctioned torture and other war crimes, notes ex-CIA analyst Ray McGovern.

By Ray McGovern

When I was asked to speak at Saturday's rally at Fort Meade in support of Pvt. Bradley Manning, I wondered how I might provide some context around what Manning is alleged to have done.

(In my talk, so as not to think I had to insert the word "alleged" into every sentence, I asked for unanimous consent to using the indicative rather than the subjunctive mood.)

What jumped into my mind was the letter Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. wrote from the Birmingham City jail in April 1963, from which I remembered this:

"Like a boil that can never be cured as long as it is covered up, but must be opened with all its pus-flowing ugliness to the natural medicines of air and light, injustice must likewise be exposed, with all of the tension its exposing creates, to the light of human conscience and the air of national opinion before it can be cured."

I suggested that this is precisely what Bradley Manning did when he saw the need to uncover war crimes like the indiscriminate murder of civilians and torture he witnessed in Baghdad and read about in cables.

What he had become witness to was the inevitable result of aggressive war, which the post-World War II Nuremberg Tribunal called the "supreme international crime," differing from other war crimes only inasmuch as it contains within itself the "accumulated evil of the whole." Was he to obey orders to keep his mouth shut? Or was he to follow his conscience and lance this ugly boil of accumulated evil?

What I especially admire in Bradley Manning is this: his ability, at the age of 22, to discern that there can be a hierarchy of, sometimes conflicting, values, and that from a moral standpoint some values dwarf others in importance.

Apparently, Manning saw in ending the mindless slaughter of aggressive war, with its accumulated evil, its torture and other pus-flowing ugliness, what ethicists define as a "supervening value," one that outweighs lesser values like keeping a secrecy promise required as a condition of employment.

Manning chose to break that promise. And Dr. King, in his Letter from the Birmingham Jail, addressed something analogous. King insisted "an individual who breaks a law that conscience tells him is unjust," and risks jail in order "to arouse the conscience of the community over its injustice, is in reality expressing the very highest respect for law."

When Generals Lie

Bradley Manning's courage hits a personal nerve in me. At age 28, I had an opportunity to blow the whistle on the lies of the senior U.S. military in Saigon. The evidence was documentary (a SECRET/EYES ONLY cable from Saigon); indeed, it was hard for me to believe the generals would put their deceit so explicitly in writing, but they did.

Younger readers need to be reminded that, at the time (August 1967) there was no WikiLeaks, but *The New York Times* was an independent newspaper prone to publishing documentary evidence critical of the government. The *Times* had not yet gotten into the habit of seeking prior approval from the White House.

Six years older than Bradley Manning was when he summoned the courage to do the right thing, and with college courses in ethics in my moral quiver, I nonetheless, well, quivered.

I blew a unique opportunity to let Americans know that, duty, honor, country be damned, unconscionable corruption at senior levels in Saigon and in Washington

had badly misled us on the war and that our GIs and the Vietnamese were being chewed up in a March of Folly.

And that opportunity came months before so many got chewed up in the January-February 1968 Communist countrywide offensive, ushering in the second half of the bloody war in Vietnam. I discussed this last year, in connection with the WikiLeaks disclosures. [See Consortiumnews.com's "[How the Truth Can Save Lives.](#)"]

As for Bradley Manning, he would not sequester himself in a moral vacuum. He had the insight and summoned the moral courage to follow his conscience and act with integrity.

Manning's Motive

In his correspondence with Adrian Lamo, the man who betrayed him, Manning said he wanted people "to see the truth, because without information you cannot make informed decisions as a public." He wrote that he hoped his disclosures would lead to "world-wide discussion, debate, and reform."

Manning's first disclosure that came to light was the Apache helicopter gun-barrel video, with sound, showing the indiscriminate murder of a dozen Iraqi civilians, including two Reuters journalists and the wounding of two little children. The [incident was duly "investigated"](#) by the Army, and the shooting was deemed to be consistent with what is permitted by the Army's Rules of Engagement.

Whoa! Official Washington cannot tolerate such disclosures if it remains intent on waging aggressive war, with its accumulated evil, in secret. So the Obama administration set out to make Bradley Manning an object lesson about what will happen to anyone tempted to divulge these sorts of secrets.

For such truth-telling, this is what you can expect: solitary confinement, cruel, inhuman, and degrading punishment; and a very long wait before being brought to the military pre-trial charade that I watched with others at Fort Meade, Maryland, last weekend.

President Barack Obama, commander-in-chief of Bradley Manning, and those trying him have already said Manning "broke the law" and be damned with the countervailing moral imperative of truth-telling when faced with clear evidence of unpunished war crimes.

Command influence, anyone? What's wrong with this picture? Quick. Someone explain to me how those subordinate to the commander-in-chief can be expected to hold an impartial inquiry, since they already know Manning "broke the law." The

top boss said so.

What About the Damage?

Still, whatever the measure of Manning's technical "guilt," the government's hand-wringing over the alleged damage from the disclosures of diplomatic cables has been "significantly overwrought." How do we know? Defense Secretary Robert Gates said so, in those words. And this time he was telling the truth.

Gates mocked the professional alarums sounded by officialdom and dismissed the negative impact of the disclosed cables as "fairly modest." He had learned a lesson from the earlier WikiLeaks disclosures of documents about Afghanistan and Iraq, when normally sober folks like Chairman of the Joint Chiefs Mike Mullen were accusing Manning of having "blood on his hands."

When Sen. Carl Levin, Chair of the Armed Services Committee, asked Gates to provide proof in writing of such claims, Gates could adduce no evidence that actual people, as opposed to reputations, had been harmed.

It's also instructive to see how selective prosecutions work in Official Washington. Manning may face life imprisonment for exposing the slaughter of civilians and other serious crimes (as well as revealing the absurd over-classification of U.S. government documents).

However, when President George W. Bush and Vice President Dick Cheney confess that they ordered waterboarding and other acts that have long been regarded as illegal torture, they and their subordinates are spared prosecution, presumably because to do otherwise would stir up a political mess.

Suddenly, clear violations of the law must be set aside as being outweighed by larger national considerations, i.e. political comity in Washington. But no such balancing act is available to spare Pvt. Manning possible life imprisonment for truth-telling, even when many experts believe much good has come from the disclosures, including inspiration for the Arab Spring's ouster of dictators whose brutality and corruption were frankly described in the WikiLeaks cables.

Daniel Ellsberg has called Bradley Manning a hero, and that's what he is. We need to find ways to tell the American people the full story. These days, they are not going to get the whole truth (or anything close to it) from *The New York Times*.

Ray McGovern works with *Tell the Word*, a publishing arm of the ecumenical Church of the Saviour in inner-city Washington. A 30-year veteran of intelligence work in the Army and the CIA, he now serves on the Standing Group of Veteran Intelligence Professionals for Sanity (VIPS).
