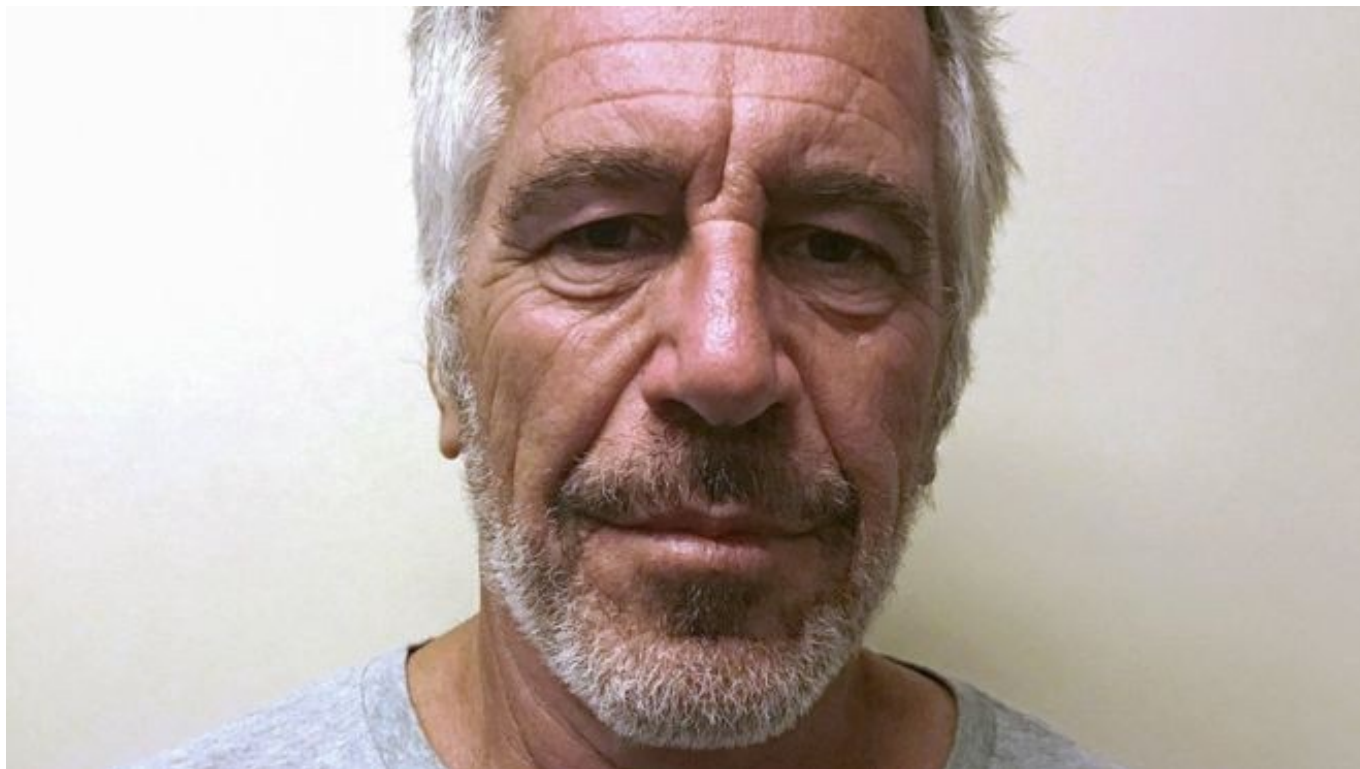


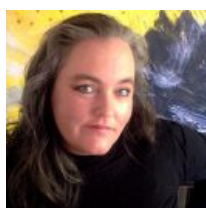
# The Epstein Case: Everyone's a Conspiracy Theorist

The only problem with the term is the meaningless use of it as a pejorative, writes Caitlin Johnstone.



By **Caitlin Johnstone**

[CaitlinJohnstone.com](http://CaitlinJohnstone.com)



Plutocratic propaganda outlet MSNBC has run a spin segment about the medical examiner's determination of the cause of Jeffrey Epstein's death "pending further information."

"Our sources are still saying that it looks like suicide, and this is going to set conspiracy theorists abuzz I fear," said NBC correspondent Ken Dilanian. "NBC News has been hearing all day long that there are no indications of foul play, and that this looks like a suicide and that he hung himself in his cell."

Dilanian, who stumbled over the phrase “conspiracy theorists” in his haste to get it in the first soundbite, is a known asset of the Central Intelligence Agency. This is not a conspiracy theory, this is a well-documented fact. A 2014 [article in \*The Intercept\* titled “The CIA’s Mop-Up Man”](#) reveals email exchanges obtained via Freedom of Information Act request between Dilanian and CIA public affairs officers which “show that Dilanian enjoyed a closely collaborative relationship with the agency, explicitly promising positive news coverage and sometimes sending the press office entire story drafts for review prior to publication.” There is no reason to give Dilanian the benefit of the doubt that this cozy relationship has ended, so anything he puts forward can safely be dismissed as CIA public relations.

When I [mentioned Dilanian’s CIA ties on MSNBC’s Twitter video](#), MSNBC [deleted](#) its tweet and then [re-shared it](#) without mentioning Dilanian’s name. Here is a [screenshot](#) of the first tweet followed by an embedded link to [the current one](#) (which I’ve [archived](#), just in case):

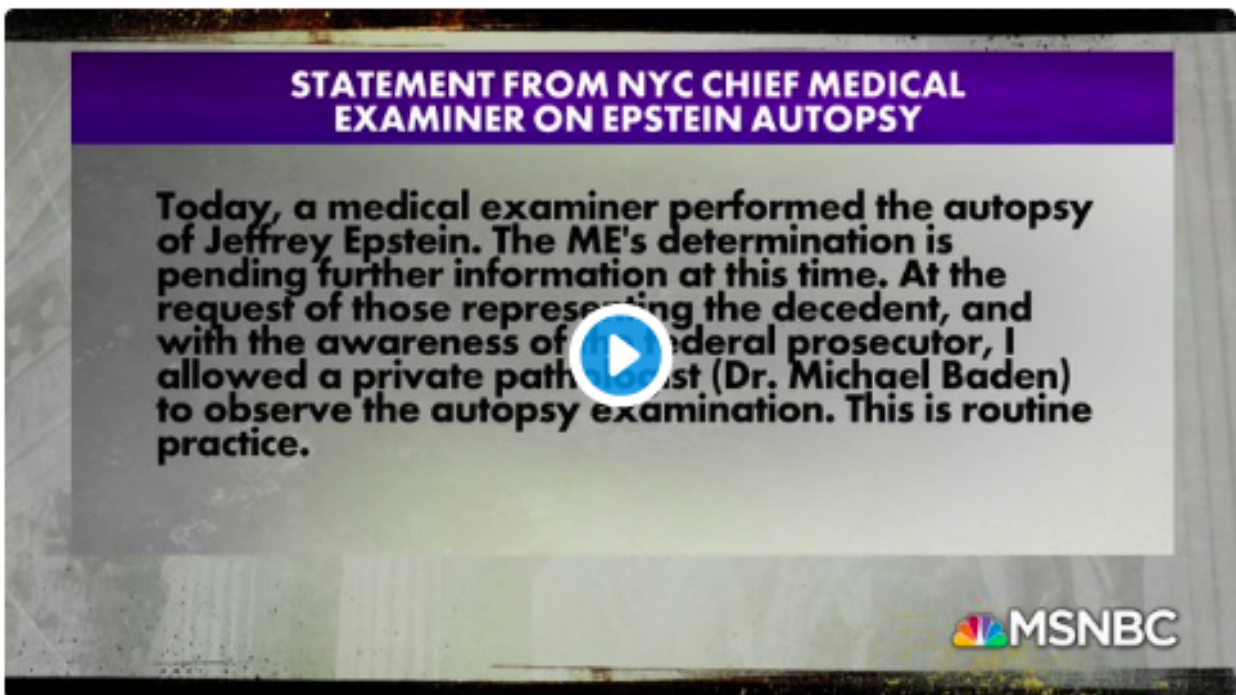


**MSNBC** ✓  
@MSNBC



After autopsy, NYC chief medical examiner says office's determination on the investigation into Jeffrey Epstein's death is 'pending further information.'

Multiple people briefed on the investigation tell [@KenDilanianNBC](#) that suicide remains the presumed cause of death.



♥ 89 9:32 AM - Aug 12, 2019



FYI Ken Dilanian is a known CIA asset. <https://t.co/9e7B7rstSz>

– Caitlin Johnstone ? (@caitoz) [August 11, 2019](#)

After autopsy, NYC chief medical examiner says office's determination on the investigation into Jeffrey Epstein's death is "pending further information."

Multiple people briefed on the investigation tell [@NBCNews](#) that suicide remains the presumed cause of death. <pic.twitter.com/3Sg5MCB1Iw>

– MSNBC (@MSNBC) [August 12, 2019](#)

Up until the news broke that Epstein's autopsy has been unable to readily confirm suicide, mass media headlines everywhere have been unquestioningly blaring that that was known to have been the cause of the accused sex trafficker's

death. This despite the fact that the FBI's investigation has been explicitly labeling it an "apparent suicide," and despite the fact that Epstein is credibly believed to have been involved in an intelligence-tied sexual blackmail operation involving many powerful people, any number of whom stood to gain plenty from his death.

### **Berating by Mass Media Narrative Managers**

So, things are moving in a very weird way, and people are understandably weirded out. The response to this from mass media narrative managers has, of course, been to berate everyone as "conspiracy theorists."

"Jeffrey Epstein: How conspiracy theories spread after financier's death," reads a BBC headline. "Epstein Suicide Conspiracies Show How Our Information System Is Poisoned," reads one from *The New York Times*. "Conspiracy Theories Fly Online in Wake of Epstein Death," warns *The Wall Street Journal*. "Financier Epstein's Death Disappoints Victims, Launches Conspiracy Theories," reads the headline from U.S.-funded *Voice of America*.

These outlets generally match Dilanian's tone in branding anyone who questions the official story about Epstein's death as a raving lunatic. Meanwhile, normal human beings all across the political spectrum are expressing skepticism on social media about the "suicide" narrative we're all being force-fed by the establishment narrative managers, many of them prefacing their skepticism with some variation on the phrase "I'm not a conspiracy theorist, but..."

“I’m not a conspiracy theorist but there are an awful lot of very powerful people who would like to see this Epstein thing go away. Is anyone investigating the guard on duty?” [tweeted](#) actor Patricia Heaton.

I’m not a conspiracy theorist but there are an awful lot of very powerful people who would like to see this Epstein thing go away. Is anyone investigating the guard on duty? [#JeffreyEpsteinSuicide](#)

– Patricia Heaton (@PatriciaHeaton) [August 10, 2019](#)

“I am not into conspiracy theories. But Epstein had destructive information on an extraordinary number of extraordinarily powerful people. It is not easy to commit suicide in prison. Especially after being placed on suicide watch. Especially after already allegedly trying,” [tweeted](#) public defender Scott Hechinger.

Journalist Abi Wilkinson summed up the silliness of this widespread preface very nicely, [tweeting](#), “ ‘I’m not a conspiracy theorist’ is such a weird assertion when you think about it, the idea there’s a binary between believing all conspiracies and flat out rejecting the very concept of conspiracy in all circumstances.”

Indeed, I think it’s fair to say that we are all conspiracy theorists if we’re really honest with ourselves. Not everyone believes that the official stories about 9/11 and the JFK assassination are riddled with plot holes or what have you, but I doubt that anyone who really sat down and sincerely grappled with the question “Do powerful people conspire?” would honestly deny it. Some are just more self-aware than others about the self-evident reality that

powerful people conspire all the time, and it's only a question of how and with whom and to what extent.

### **Dictionary Definition**

The word "conspire" is defined by Merriam-Webster as "to join in a secret agreement to do an unlawful or wrongful act or an act which becomes unlawful as a result of the secret agreement." No sane person would deny that this is a thing that happens, nor that this is likely a thing that happens to some extent among the powerful in their own nation. This by itself is a theory about conspiracy per definition, and it accurately applies to pretty much everyone. Since it applies to pretty much everyone, the label is essentially meaningless, either as a pejorative or as anything else.

The meaningless of the term has been clearly illustrated by Russiagate, whose adherents react with sputtering outrage whenever anyone points out that they're engaged in a conspiracy theory, despite the self-evident fact that that's exactly what it is: a theory about a band of powerful Russian conspirators conspiring with the highest levels of the U.S. government. Their objection is not due to a belief that they're not theorizing about a conspiracy, their objection is due to the fact that a highly stigmatized label that they're accustomed to applying to other people has been applied to them. The label is rejected because its actual definition is ignored to the point of meaninglessness.

The problem has never been with the actual term "conspiracy theory;" the problem has been with its deliberate and completely meaningless use as a pejorative. The best way to address this would be a populist move to de-stigmatize the

label by taking ownership of it. Last month Cornell University professor Dave Callum [tweeted](#), “I am a ‘conspiracy theorist’. I believe men and women of wealth and power conspire. If you don’t think so, then you are what is called ‘an idiot’. If you believe stuff but fear the label, you are what is called ‘a coward’.”

I am a "conspiracy theorist". I believe men and women of wealth and power conspire. If you don't think so, then you are what is called "an idiot". If you believe stuff but fear the label, you are what is called "a coward".

– Dave Collum (@DavidBCollum) [July 19, 2019](#)

This is what we all must do. The debate must be forcibly moved from the absurd question of whether or not conspiracies are a thing to the important question of which conspiracy theories are valid and to what degree.

And we should probably hurry. *Yahoo News* [reported earlier this month](#) that the FBI recently published an intelligence bulletin describing “conspiracy theory-driven domestic extremists” as a growing threat, and this was before the recent spate of U.S. shootings got establishment narrative-makers [pushing for new domestic terrorism laws](#). This combined with the fact that we can’t even ask questions about extremely suspicious events like Jeffrey Epstein’s death without being tarred with this meaningless pejorative by the mass media thought police means we’re at extreme risk of being shoved into something far more Orwellian in the near future.

**Caitlin Johnstone is a rogue journalist, poet, and utopia prepper who publishes regularly at [Medium](#). Follow her work**



on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), or her [website](#). She has a [podcast](#) and a book [“Woke: A Field Guide for Utopia Preppers.”](#)

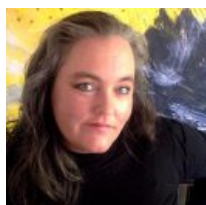
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## Propagandists Freak Out Over Gabbard’s Destruction of Harris

Establishment narrative managers distracted attention from a notable antiwar contender, seizing instead the chance to marshal an old smear against her, writes Caitlin Johnstone.



**I**n the race to determine who will serve as commander in chief of the most powerful military force in the history of civilization, night two of the CNN Democratic presidential debates saw less than six minutes dedicated to discussing U.S. military policy during the 180-minute event.

That’s six, as in the number before seven. Not 60. Not 16. Six. From [the moment](#) Jake Tapper said “I want to turn to foreign policy” to [the moment](#) Don Lemon interrupted Rep.

Tulsi Gabbard just as she was preparing to correctly explain how President Donald Trump is supporting Al-Qaeda in Idlib, approximately five minutes and 50 seconds had elapsed. The questions then turned toward the Mueller report on Russian interference in the 2016 elections and impeachment proceedings.

Night one of the CNN debates saw almost twice as much time, with a whole 11 minutes by my count dedicated to questions of war and peace for the leadership of the most warlike nation on the planet. This discrepancy could very well be due to the fact that night two was the slot allotted to Gabbard, whose campaign largely revolves around the platform of ending U.S. warmongering.

CNN is a virulent establishment propaganda firm with an extensive history of promoting lies and brazen psyops in facilitation of U.S. imperialism, so it would make sense that they would try to avoid a subject which would inevitably lead to unauthorized truth-telling on the matter.

But the near-absence of foreign policy discussion didn't stop the Hawaii lawmaker from getting in some unauthorized truth-telling anyway. Attacking the authoritarian prosecutorial record of Sen. Kamala Harris to thunderous applause from the audience, Gabbard criticized the way her opponent "put over 1,500 people in jail for marijuana violations and then laughed about it when she was asked if she ever smoked marijuana;" "blocked evidence that would have freed an innocent man from death row until the court's forced her to do so;" "kept people in prisons beyond their sentences to use them as cheap labor for the state of

California;” and “fought to keep the cash bail system in place that impacts poor people in the worst kind of way.”

## **Harris Folded Under Pressure**

Harris, who it turns out fights very well when advancing but folds under pressure, had no answer for Gabbard’s attack, preferring to focus on attacking former Vice President Joe Biden instead.

Later, when she was a nice safe distance out of Gabbard’s earshot, she uncorked a long-debunked but still effective smear that establishment narrative managers have been dying for an excuse to run wild with.

“This, coming from someone who has been an apologist for an individual, Assad, who has murdered the people of his country like cockroaches,” Harris told Anderson Cooper after the debate, referring to the president of Syria. “She who has embraced and been an apologist for him in a way that she refuses to call him a war criminal. I can only take what she says and her opinion so seriously and so I’m prepared to move on.”

That was all it took. Harris’s press secretary Ian Sams unleashed a string of tweets about Gabbard being an “Assad apologist,” which were followed by a deluge of establishment narrative managers who sent the word “Assad” trending on Twitter, at times when Gabbard’s name somehow failed to trend despite being the top-searched candidate on Google after the debate.

As of this writing, “Assad” is showing on the No. 5 trending list on the side bar of Twitter’s new layout, while

Gabbard's name is nowhere to be seen. This discrepancy has drawn criticism from numerous Gabbard defenders on the platform.

"Somehow I have a hard time believing that 'Assad' is the top trending item in the United States but 'Tulsi' is nowhere to be found," tweeted journalist Michael Tracey.

It really is interesting how aggressively the narrative managers thrust this line into mainstream consciousness all at the same time.



The image shows a screenshot of the Twitter 'United States trends' page. At the top right is a gear icon. The trends are listed as follows:

- 1 - Trending: **#NationalGirlfriendsDay** (4,772 Tweets)
- 2 - Trending: **Yeonjun** (22.5K Tweets)
- 3 - Trending: **Arin** (13.7K Tweets)
- 4 - Trending: **#ImOldEnoughToRememberWhen** (5,881 Tweets)
- 5 - Trending: **Assad** (39.7K Tweets)

The *Washington Post*'s Josh Rogin went on a frantic, lie-filled Twitter storm as soon as he saw an opportunity, claiming with no evidence whatsoever that Gabbard lied when she said she met with Assad for purposes of diplomacy and that she "helped Assad whitewash a mass

atrocities,” and falsely claiming that “she praised Russian bombing of Syrian civilians.”

## Met with Assad to Talk Peace

In reality all Gabbard did was meet with Assad to discuss the possibility of peace, and, more importantly, she said the U.S. shouldn't be involved in regime change interventionism in Syria. This latter bit of business is the real reason professional war propagandists like Rogin are targeting her; not because they honestly believe that a longtime U.S. service member and sitting House representative is an “Assad apologist,” but because she commits the unforgivable heresy of resisting the mechanics of America's forever war.

MSNBC's Joy Reid gleefully leapt into the smearing frenzy, falsely claiming that “Gabbard will not criticize Assad, no matter what.” Gabbard has publicly and unequivocally both decried Assad as a “brutal dictator” and claimed he's guilty of war crimes, much to the irritation of anti-imperialists like myself who hold a far more skeptical view of the war propaganda narratives about what's going on in Syria.

It really is just weird how Gabbard will not criticize Assad, no matter what. That and the Trump/Russia crowd cheering her on are things that should have come up at these now two debates she has participated in.

<https://t.co/uUFd1KdI6v>

– Joy Reid (@JoyAnnReid) August 1, 2019

At no time has Gabbard ever claimed that Assad is a nice person or that he isn't a brutal leader; all she's done is say the U.S. shouldn't get involved in another regime change

war there because U.S. regime change interventionism is consistently and predictably disastrous. That's not being an "Assad apologist," that's having basic common sense.

"Beware the Russian bots and their promotion of Tulsi Gabbard and sowing racial dischord [sic], especially around Kamala Harris," tweeted *New York Times* and CNN contributor Wajahat Ali.

All the usual war cheerleaders from Lindsey Graham to Caroline Orr to Jennifer Rubin piled on, because this feeding frenzy had nothing to do with concern that Gabbard adores Bashar al-Assad and everything to do with wanting more war.

Gabbard just publicly eviscerated a charming, ambitious and completely amoral centrist who would excel at putting a friendly humanitarian face on future wars if elected, and that's why the narrative managers are flipping out so hard right now.

To repeat: There is no quote in which Tulsi praises, supports, or otherwise "apologies for" Assad. I checked the record a long time ago, and it doesn't exist. This is just a smear intended to delegitimize diplomatic engagement  
<https://t.co/Iyww1C5Ew0>

– Michael Tracey (@mtracey) August 1, 2019

To repeat: There is no quote in which Tulsi praises, supports, or otherwise "apologies for" Assad. I checked the record a long time ago, and it doesn't exist. This is just a smear intended to delegitimize diplomatic engagement

War is the glue that holds the empire together. A politician can get away with opposing some aspects of the status quo

when it comes to healthcare or education, but war as a strategy for maintaining global dominance is strictly off limits. This is how you tell the difference between someone who actually wants to change things and someone who's just going through the motions for show; the real rebels forcefully oppose the actual pillars of empire by calling for an end to military bloodshed, while the performers just stick to the safe subjects.

The shrill, hysterical pushback that Gabbard received last night was very encouraging, because it means she's forcing them to fight back. In a media environment where the war propaganda machine normally coasts along almost entirely unhindered in mainstream attention, the fact that someone has positioned themselves to move the needle like this says good things for our future. If our society is to have any chance of ever throwing off the omnicidal, ecocidal power establishment which keeps us in a state of endless war and soul-crushing oppression, the first step is punching a hole in [the narrative matrix](#) which keeps us hypnotized into believing that this is all normal and acceptable.

Whoever controls the narrative controls the world. Whoever disrupts that narrative control is doing the real work.

**Caitlin Johnstone is a rogue journalist, poet, and utopia prepper who publishes regularly [at Medium](#). Follow her work on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), or her [website](#). She has a [podcast](#) and a new book ["Woke: A Field Guide for Utopia Preppers."](#)**

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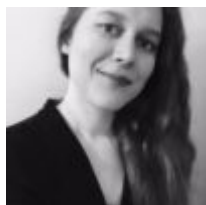
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## Consortium News Target of a Malware Attack as Twitter Takes Down Assange Support Group's Account

The simultaneous escalation of censorship of Julian Assange's support base, alongside the latest wave of fact-free attacks on Assange and *WikiLeaks*, raises concern about a coordinated effort to smear Assange while silencing those who counter such dubious reporting.

By ***Elizabeth Vos***

*Special to Consortium News*



***Consortium News*** was under attack on Monday, days after the premiere episode of the outlet's live-streamed show, CN Live! The malicious attempt to shut down the website, according to the site's web host, followed on the heels of the suspension of pro-Assange account Unity4J from Twitter.

***Consortium News*** wrote via Twitter on Monday regarding the cyberattack:

"Our website is completely down. Our media host said we have been attacked by malware. They actually tried to blame 'the Russians'! Every article published since 2011 now gets a 404 Not Found. They are working on it. Problem

started slowly on Friday first day of CN Live!”

<https://twitter.com/Consortiumnews/status/1150870051072987139>

Our website is completely down. Our media host said we have been attacked by malware. They actually tried to blame "the Russians"! Every article published since 2011 now gets a 404 Not Found. They are working on it. Problem started slowly on Friday first day of CN Live!

– Consortium News (@Consortiumnews) [July 15, 2019](#)

The hack of **Consortium News** sparked concern regarding what appears to be an escalating wave of attacks on the independent press, as well as censorship of activists who support independent journalists, including *WikiLeaks* founder Julian Assange. **Consortium News** was restored by 10:44 pm EDT on Monday, but issues related to publishing new material persist.

As news of the attack on **Consortium News** spread, some Assange supporters connected the event with Twitter’s suspension of the Unity4J movement’s Twitter account. Christine Assange, Julian Assange’s mother and an activist in her own right, **[Christine Assange tweeted:](#)**

ANOTHER Censorship attack on the truth!

This time respected investigative journalism media [@ConsortiumNews!](#)

CN hosted highly informative [#Unity4J](#) online Vigils, where prominent professionals exposed political persecution of journalist Julian Assange

They just launched CNLIVE! <https://t.co/dfUVfxxH11>

– Mrs Christine Assange (@AssangeMrs) [July 15, 2019](#)

Christine Assange also wrote on Sunday that she had lost “over 8,000 followers overnight.”

**CNLive!**’s inaugural live-stream included an interview with Nils Melzer, the UN rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, who “discussed his work on the condition of imprisoned WikiLeaks publisher Julian Assange.”

**Consortium News** had previously conducted the Unity4J online vigils over a period of months. The Unity4J Twitter account was suspended last Thursday for no known reason. The ban sparked a backlash including independent media coverage from a number of outlets, as well as an impassioned statement from Pink Floyd’s Roger Waters, who called Twitter “Big Brother” for permanently removing the account. To date, no explanation for Unity4J’s suspension has been made public.

Caitlin Johnstone wrote of the suspension via Medium:

“Speaking for myself as a vocal Assange supporter on Twitter, I can say that I’ve been following the @Unity4J account closely since its earliest days and I’ve never once seen it post anything other than highly professional-looking advocacy for Julian Assange. I’ve certainly never seen it post anything that could be construed as abusive, misleading, or otherwise in violation of any of Twitter’s posted rules.”

Unity4J was far from the only account targeted recently. Additional Unity4J activists, including many of those associated with running the Unity4J Twitter profile, were also either suspended or locked out of their accounts. One

Unity4J admin, Aaron Kesel, who also writes as an independent journalist, said in an interview that they were locked out of their accounts within minutes of publishing an [article](#) covering the Catalanian public's celebration of Assange's birthday. *Activist Post*, the site on which the article was published, was likewise reportedly hacked in recent weeks.

On the same day that *Consortium News* fell under attack, CNN published a [conspiracy-theory-laden article](#) accusing Assange of having conspired with "the Russians" to interfere in the 2016 U.S. presidential election from within the Ecuadorian embassy, which CNN described breathlessly as a "command post." (Little irony that *Consortium News* was also told that their website being attacked had had something to do with "The Russians.")

Spanish newspaper El Pais on July 9: "Spanish security company spied on Julian Assange's meetings with lawyers"

Add little security state propaganda and 6 days later you get from CNN: "How Julian Assange turned an embassy into command post for election meddling"  
[pic.twitter.com/7s0IKCTxTG](https://pic.twitter.com/7s0IKCTxTG)

– Kevin Gosztola (@kgosztola) [July 15, 2019](#)

The CNN piece rapidly garnered criticism from journalists including [Caitlin Johnstone](#), [Kevin Gosztola](#), and [Aaron Maté](#). The documents at issue in CNN's article were previously described in a totally different light by Spanish paper of record [El Pais](#):

"The security employees at the embassy had a daily job to do: to monitor Assange's every move, record his

conversations, and take note of his moods. The company's drive to uncover their target's most intimate secrets led the team to carry out a handwriting examination behind his back, which resulted in a six-page report. Company employees also took a feces sample from a baby's diaper to check whether Assange and one of his most faithful collaborators were the child's parents. This intelligence work had nothing to do with protection duties."

Gosztola wrote of CNN's piece: "If one reads CNN's report, it is clear, like the CIA, they do not view the work Assange was doing as journalistic but rather the work of an 'enemy' of the United States."

*Black Agenda Report* Editor and Senior Columnist Margaret Kimberly wrote via Twitter:

The Unity4J account was suspended just before CNN claims to have proof of Assange contacting Russians. @consortiumnews website hacked too. What a coincidence that people who have been Assange's staunchest defenders are kicked off their platforms at the same time.

– Margaret Kimberley (@freedomrideblog) July 16, 2019

The simultaneous escalation of censorship when it comes to Assange's support base, alongside the latest wave of fact-free attacks on Assange and *WikiLeaks'* reputation, raises concern regarding the potential of a coordinated effort to smear Assange while also silencing those who might counter such dubious reporting.

**Elizabeth Vos is a freelance reporter and regular contributor to *Consortium News*. She co-hosts CN Live!**

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## The 'Unconstitutional Animus' Against UK Labour Leader

Johanna Ross spoke with David Miller, a propaganda researcher, after the recent publicity of U.K. civil service murmurings about Jeremy Corbyn's "fitness."

By **Johanna Ross**

in **Edinburgh, Scotland**

*Special to Consortium News*



A couple of weeks ago, *The Times* of London published an article about senior civil servants fearing U.K. opposition leader Jeremy Corbyn was "too frail" to be prime minister. Reportedly they also thought he "lacks both a firm grasp of foreign affairs and the domestic agenda."

This is the same civil service that is supposed to maintain complete neutrality and according to its code "must not act in a way that unjustifiably favours or discriminates against particular individuals or interests."

Corbyn fought back, arguing that it was unacceptable that civil servants were briefing newspapers on an elected politician. He demanded an independent inquiry into who was spreading such fabrications in the press and "compromising the integrity of the civil service."

For David Miller, a professor of political sociology at the

University of Bristol, who investigates concentrations of power and ways to hold them accountable, the idea that the British civil service may not be impartial in its operations is hardly surprising.

Far from ever being objective, he told *Consortium News* that the civil service now clearly has “an unconstitutional animus against a potential Corbyn government and has been briefing against it one way or another through various agencies for some time now.”

### **Catalog of Smears**

Indeed, the anti-Corbyn bias within the establishment has been obvious in the catalog of smears on Corbyn and his team since he came to the Labour leadership; from allegations of being a “Soviet sleeper” to being “anti-Semitic” and now to questions about his overall fitness.

Miller said most of the allegations were created by a number of organisations and individuals who are “involved in a faction fight with the Corbyn leadership.”

Noam Chomsky, a leading U.S. social critic, is among those who have spoken out against what he termed a “witch hunt” against the Labour leader and his supporters.

Whether or not anti-Semitism exists in the party, Miller said the accusations are out of hand. “Almost everyone who says anything which is either critical of Israel or critical of the party’s response to the anti-Semitism crisis is denounced as an anti-Semite,” Miller said. “The question is how long will it be before everyone sees that the people who are involved in this have

overreached themselves.”

Attempts to undermine potential socialist governments are of course, not new.

Miller gives the example of the Zinoviev case – when a fake letter was published in the *Daily Mail* in 1924 just prior to the general election, suggesting Communists in Britain were taking orders from Moscow. The goal was clearly to undermine the British Labour movement.

Miller also points to the case of former Prime Minister Harold Wilson. “Despite what may now be said by some elements of the security state,” Miller said that British agencies were engaged in an active plot to undermine Wilson’s elected government.

As another example, Miller offered the “Information Research Department,” first proposed in 1947 and sold to the cabinet as a bipartisan, anti-Communist and anti-American propaganda operation. In fact, Miller described it as a “secret, covert, anti-Communist propaganda operation which in the 70s was engaged in undermining the Wilson government.”

Today, Miller said, similar agencies in the U.K. government are doing the same thing.

### **Integrity Initiative**

As an example, Miller cites the Integrity Initiative; organized by the government’s Institute for Statecraft, which has a stated mission of countering “Russian disinformation and malign influence by harnessing existing expertise and establishing a network of experts, opinion formers and policy makers to educate national audiences



in the threat and to help build national capacities to counter it.” Its website is incidentally now empty pending an investigation into the “theft of its data” – after a hack exposed detail of the extent to which the government-funded program was itself engaged in disinformation.

Miller, who runs the Bristol-based Organisation for Propaganda Studies, said the scheme was found to be spreading its own disinformation and openly criticizing opposition leader Corbyn and his party.

“Corbyn has recently said in relation to the most recent criticism from the civil service that there are people in the establishment that are trying to undermine Corbyn, his office, his advisors and supporters of him,” Miller said. “And that’s what the Integrity Initiative was doing.”

Miller said this was clear from the very beginning of the Integrity Initiative when it was regularly engaged in tweeting or retweeting attacks on Corbyn and his closest advisors.

Miller calls the use of taxpayers’ money to interfere in domestic politics an affront to democracy.

“A government-funded project was engaged in attacking the leader of the opposition,” Miller said, “which is unconstitutional and something the U.K. civil service should not be involved in... they crossed the line when they started attacking Corbyn. And when we look back on this period, the Integrity Initiative, its funding by the Foreign Office and its base in British military intelligence will be one of the strands of the activities which will be seen to have been a

secret state campaign against the elected leader of the Labour party.”

Miller would like to see an investigation into the attacks on Corbyn and whether they had been effectively funded by the Foreign Office, but doesn't hold out much hope of that happening.

Six months ago, Shadow Home Secretary Emily Thornberry demanded answers to how this could have happened, with no result.

And Chris Williamson, a Labour MP and Corbyn supporter who was trying to investigate the Integrity Initiative, found himself suspended from the party after he was targeted with allegations of anti-Semitism.

Corbyn's call for an independent investigation into the civil service leak to the press has also, as expected, been rejected by the government.

**Johanna Ross is a freelance journalist based in the United Kingdom.**

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## On The New York Times Cartoon Ban

Daniel Lazare looks into the Times' overreaction to charges of anti-Semitism.

**By Daniel Lazare**



*The New York Times* was so sorry last month for publishing an allegedly anti-Semitic cartoon showing Benjamin Netanyahu as a guide dog leading a blind Donald Trump, that it's decided never to run any satirical cartoon on any topic again.

Based on five minutes of googling, the consensus seems to be that it's a gross overreaction. But the reason the *Times* can't stop apologizing is that the cartoon shows the Israeli prime minister with a blue Star of David around his neck and Trump with a yarmulke atop his orange hairdo. Using such symbols in this way makes many people uncomfortable, which is understandable.

But imagine, if you will, a cartoon showing Canadian President Justin Trudeau with a maple leaf on his shirt, Angela Merkel with a German eagle, France's Emmanuel Macron dressed up like Napoleon, or Britain's Theresa May draped in a British flag? Why don't any of those stir an outcry?

The reason, one might counter, is that those images are political whereas the Star of David is religious. True, but that's precisely the point. Canada, France, and Germany are all secular societies in which church and state are firmly separate. (Britain is a bit more complicated thanks to the queen's role as head of the Church of England, but that's another story.) But the upshot is zero overlap as far as political and religious imagery are concerned.

Indeed, for all its sins, the same is true even for the United States. Think of America and what comes to mind – Uncle Sam, a bald eagle, or a missile-laden F-16?

Perhaps. What does not come to mind is the cross even though 75 percent of Americans identify as Christian, a higher portion than Canadians (67.3 percent), Germans (64.2), Brits (59.5), or French (51.1). Thanks to the First Amendment and a succession of Supreme Court cases dealing with things like school prayer, the U.S. government has been de-religionized and the very idea of America has been de-religionized as well.

But it's not true for Israel. To the contrary, the same Star of David that appears in the cartoon also appears on the national flag while the yarmulke is also virtually a national symbol thanks to the growing ultra-orthodox influence. Instead of separation of church and state, the consequence is an ever-closer union. Back in 2003, the late historian Tony Judt stirred a hornet's nest by [pointing out](#) that Israel has less in common in this respect with other postwar nations than it does with the ethno-religious states of the 1920s and '30s. As he put it in *The New York Review of Books*:

“At the dawn of the twentieth century, in the twilight of the continental empires, Europe's subject peoples dreamed of forming 'nation-states,' territorial homelands where Poles, Czechs, Serbs, Armenians, and others might live free, masters of their own fate. When the Habsburg and Romanov empires collapsed after World War I, their leaders seized the opportunity. A flurry of new states emerged; and the first thing they did was set about privileging their national, 'ethnic' majority – defined by language, or religion, or antiquity, or all three – at the expense of inconvenient local minorities, who were consigned to

second-class status: permanently resident strangers in their own home.”

## **Ethno States**

Ironically, the most inconvenient local minority of all was the Jews, who were all but obliterated when the same ethno-states were taken over by fascism during World War II. Yet, under the Zionists, Israel has reduced Palestinians to strangers in their own land as well.

Indeed, the situation is far worse than when Judt wrote. Where Israel “risks falling” into the camp of “belligerently intolerant, faith-driven ethno-states,” as he put it, it’s now the leader of the pack, a role model for up-and-coming ethno-authoritarians like Hungary’s Viktor Orbán, Brazil’s Jair Bolsonaro, or, of course, Trump, as they make their way through an increasingly illiberal political landscape.

One purpose of an ethno-state is to dazzle, confuse, and disarm. There are many reasons that the Star of David appears on the Israeli flag, but one of the most important is to de-legitimize the criticism of de-legitimization by making it all but impossible to attack the Jewish state without attacking Jews. Outsiders wind up damned if they do and damned if they don’t, spineless apologists for an increasingly brutal regime if they keep their mouths shut, and anti-Jewish bigots if they dare to speak up.

This is the boat that António Moreira Antunes, the unfortunate Portuguese artist behind the *Times* cartoon, finds himself in now that he’s been branded as anti-Semite across the globe. Antunes says he merely wanted to use

Israeli national symbols to make a point, which is that “Trump’s erratic, destructive and often blind politics encouraged the expansionist radicalism of Netanyahu.” Yet he found himself running headlong into a buzz saw of condemnation almost before he laid down his pen.

Not only does such doubled-edged symbolism make honest criticism more difficult – it also makes real anti-Semitism easier. Traditionally, anti-Semites have hidden their bigotry behind seemingly legitimate criticism of the Jewish state. Going on about this or that crime against the Palestinians is supposedly a way of going on and on about the Jews without quite saying so. But as the British anti-Zionist campaigner Tony Greenstein points out, today’s anti-Semites are good deal cleverer. Instead of hiding behind criticism, they hide behind support.

This is why someone like Orbán is so eager for Israeli approval even as he goes about rehabilitating Miklós Horthy, the Hungarian dictator from 1920 to 1944 who was a key Nazi ally and who, according to the historian Raphael Patai, bragged of being “an anti-Semite throughout my life.” All Orbán wants is for Netanyahu to sprinkle him with a little holy water, so to speak, so he can continue with his neo-Horthyite goal of creating an ethnically pure Greater Hungary in which Muslim refugees are prohibited. When the Hungarian president visited Jerusalem’s Yad Vashem Holocaust memorial last summer, furious demonstrators blocked his motorcade shouting, “Never again!” and “Shame on you!” and denouncing Yad Vashem for hosting him.

## **Favorite Target**

Bad as this is, the real story is even worse. Orbán's favorite target, the key to his success in fact, turns out to be the Hungarian-American financier George Soros. Soros is a major funder of liberal causes and organizations throughout the world, including the Free University in Budapest, a liberal bastion that has long been a thorn in Orbán's side. Soros also happens to be Jewish. For the Hungarian president, therefore, he's straight out of central casting, an international Jew who can be blamed for everything from the migrant crisis to the economic slowdown and know-it-all foreign critics. A recent government-funded poster campaign showed Soros's portrait along with the **inscription**, "Let's not let George Soros have the last laugh" – a reference, Tony Greenstein's suggests, to a famous speech that Hitler gave in January 1939:

"I have often been a prophet in my life and was generally laughed at. During my struggle for power, the Jews primarily received with laughter my prophecies that I would someday assume the leadership of the state and ... then, among many other things, achieve a solution of the Jewish problem. I suppose that meanwhile the then surrounding laughter of Jewry in Germany is now choking in their throats."

Just as Hitler didn't want Jews to have the last laugh, Orbán doesn't want them to either.

But Orbán didn't dream up the anti-Soros campaign on his own. To the contrary, a pair of rightwing American Jewish political consultants named Arthur Finkelstein and George Birnbaum thought it up for him. After Finkelstein and

Birnbaum helped Netanyahu become prime minister in 1996, he returned the favor by recommending their services to his old friend in Budapest. Amid the economic devastation caused by the 2008 financial blowout, they helped him win re-election, Hannes Grassegger reports in [Buzzfeed](#), by persuading him to target bureaucrats and foreign capital. When Orbán needed a fresh enemy to consolidate his control, they then came up with another target. Following their advice to the letter, Orbán [sailed into Soros](#) at the height of the 2015 refugee crisis:

“His name is perhaps the strongest example of those who support anything that weakens nation states, they support everything that changes the traditional European lifestyle. These activists who support immigrants inadvertently become part of this international human-smuggling network.”

This was the international Jew as enemy of the nation, tradition, and Christianity – an angle of attack that a couple of Netanyahu emissaries not only inspired but designed. Instead of defending Jews, Israel was egging on their attackers. Not for nothing does Israeli dissident Ronnie Barkan [argue](#) that “the greatest anti-Semitic force in the world today is the state of Israel.”

Yet the only thing *The New York Times* can do in response is to shoot the messenger by forever banning political cartoons from its pages. By censoring critics, editorial page editor James Bennet, the genius behind the new policy, hopes that maybe the problem will just go away. But it won't of course. He's guilty, rather, of a hear-no-evil strategy that will only make matters worse. The *Times's* definition of “all the news that's fit to print” grows narrower and



more distorted by the day.

Daniel Lazare is the author of “The Frozen Republic: How the Constitution Is Paralyzing Democracy” (Harcourt Brace, 1996) and other books about American politics. He has written for a wide variety of publications from *The Nation* to *Le Monde Diplomatique* and blogs about the Constitution and related matters at [Daniellazare.com](http://Daniellazare.com).

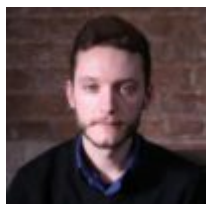
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## New York Times Admits it Sent Story to Government for Approval

The American paper of record just provided a major example of the symbiotic relationship between U.S. corporate media and the government, Ben Norton writes for *Grayzone*. By [Ben Norton](#)

[Grayzone](#)



*The New York Times* has publicly acknowledged that it sent a story to the U.S. government for approval from “national security officials” before publication.

This confirms what veteran *New York Times* correspondents such as James Risen have said: The American newspaper of record regularly collaborates with the U.S. government, [suppressing reporting](#) that top officials don't want made public.

On June 15, the *Times* reported that the U.S. government is escalating its cyber attacks on Russia's power grid. According to the article, "the Trump administration is using new authorities to deploy cybertools more aggressively," as part of a larger "digital Cold War between Washington and Moscow."

In response to the report, President Donald Trump attacked the *Times* on Twitter, calling the article "a virtual act of Treason."

*The New York Times'* PR office replied to Trump from its official Twitter account, defending the story and noting that it had, in fact, been cleared with the U.S. government before being printed.

"Accusing the press of treason is dangerous," the *Times* communications team said. "We described the article to the government before publication."

"As our story notes, President Trump's own national security officials said there were no concerns," the *Times* added.

Do you believe that the Failing New York Times just did a story stating that the United States is substantially increasing Cyber Attacks on Russia. This is a virtual act of Treason by a once great paper so desperate for a story, any story, even if bad for our Country....

– Donald J. Trump (@realDonaldTrump) June 16, 2019

Indeed, the *Times* report on the escalating American cyberattacks against Russia is attributed to "current and former [US] government officials." The scoop in fact came from these apparatchiks, not from a leak or the dogged investigation of an intrepid reporter.

## 'Real' Journalists Get Approval

The neoliberal self-declared "Resistance" jumped on Trump's reckless accusation of treason (the Democratic Coalition, which boasts, "We help run #TheResistance," responded by calling Trump "Putin's puppet"). The rest of the corporate media went wild.

But what was entirely overlooked was the most revealing thing in *The New York Times*' statement: The newspaper of record was essentially admitting that it has a symbiotic relationship with the government.

In fact, some prominent American pundits have gone so far as to insist that this symbiotic relationship is precisely what makes someone a journalist.

In May, neoconservative Washington Post columnist Marc Thiessen – a former speechwriter for President George W. Bush – declared that WikiLeaks publisher and political prisoner Julian Assange is "not a journalist;" rather, he is a "spy" who "deserves prison." (Thiessen also once called Assange "the devil.")

What was the *Post* columnist's rationale for revoking Assange's journalistic credentials?

Unlike "reputable news organizations, Assange did not give the U.S. government an opportunity to review the classified information WikiLeaks was planning to release so they could raise national security objections," Thiessen wrote. "So responsible journalists have nothing to fear."

In other words, this former U.S. government speechwriter turned corporate media pundit insists that collaborating

with the government, and censoring your reporting to protect “national security,” is definitionally what makes you a journalist.

This is the express ideology of the American commentariat.

Julian Assange is no hero. He is the devil. <https://t.co/LCXdRlTLKG>

– Marc Thiessen (@marcthiessen) [October 24, 2016](#)

## NYT Editors ‘Quite Willing’ to Cooperate

The symbiotic relationship between the U.S. corporate media and the government has been known for some time. American intelligence agencies play the press like a musical instrument, using it to selectively leak information at opportune moments to push U.S. soft power and advance Washington’s interests.

But rarely is this symbiotic relationship so casually and publicly acknowledged.

In 2018, former *New York Times* reporter James Risen published a 15,000-word article in [The Intercept](#) providing further insight into how this unspoken alliance operates.

1. [#JamesRisen](#): "A top CIA official once told me that his rule of thumb for whether a covert operation should be approved was, “How will this look on the front page of the New York Times?” <https://t.co/YIUtpTthe8>

– stefania maurizi (@SMaurizi) [May 8, 2018](#)

Risen detailed how his editors had been “quite willing to cooperate with the government.” In fact, a top CIA official even told Risen that his rule of thumb for approving a

covert operation was, "How will this look on the front page of the New York Times?"

There is an "informal arrangement" between the state and the press, Risen explained, where U.S. government officials "regularly engaged in quiet negotiations with the press to try to stop the publication of sensitive national security stories."

"At the time, I usually went along with these negotiations," the former *New York Times* reporter said. He recalled an example of a story he was writing on Afghanistan just prior to the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks. Then-CIA Director George Tenet called Risen personally and asked him to kill the story.

"He told me the disclosure would threaten the safety of the CIA officers in Afghanistan," Risen said. "I agreed."

Risen said he later questioned whether or not this was the right decision. "If I had reported the story before 9/11, the CIA would have been angry, but it might have led to a public debate about whether the United States was doing enough to capture or kill bin Laden," he wrote. "That public debate might have forced the CIA to take the effort to get bin Laden more seriously."

This dilemma led Risen to reconsider responding to U.S. government requests to censor stories. "And that ultimately set me on a collision course with the editors at *The New York Times*," he said.

"After the 9/11 attacks, the Bush administration began asking the press to kill stories more frequently," Risen

continued. "They did it so often that I became convinced the administration was invoking national security to quash stories that were merely politically embarrassing."

In the lead-up to the Iraq War, Risen frequently "clashed" with *Times* editors because he raised questions about the U.S. government's lies. His stories "raising questions about the intelligence, particularly the administration's claims of a link between Iraq and Al Qaeda, were being cut, buried, or held out of the paper altogether."

The *Times*' executive editor Howell Raines "was believed by many at the paper to prefer stories that supported the case for war," Risen said.

In another anecdote, the former *Times* journalist recalled a scoop he had uncovered on a botched CIA plot. The Bush administration got wind of it and called him to the White House, where then-National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice ordered the *Times* to bury the story.

Risen said Rice told him "to forget about the story, destroy my notes, and never make another phone call to discuss the matter with anyone."

"The Bush administration was successfully convincing the press to hold or kill national security stories," Risen wrote. And the Barack Obama administration subsequently accelerated the "war on the press."

## **CIA Infiltration and Manufacturing Consent**

In their renowned study of U.S. media, "[Manufacturing Consent](#): The Political Economy of the Mass Media," Edward S. Herman and Noam Chomsky articulated a "propaganda model,"

showing how “the media serve, and propagandize on behalf of, the powerful societal interests that control and finance them,” through “the selection of right-thinking personnel and by the editors’ and working journalists’ internalization of priorities and definitions of newsworthiness that conform to the institution’s policy.”

But in some cases, the relationship between U.S. intelligence agencies and the corporate media is not just one of mere ideological policing, indirect pressure, or friendship, but rather one of employment.

In the 1950s, the CIA launched a covert operation called Project Mockingbird, in which it surveilled, influenced, and manipulated American journalists and media coverage, explicitly in order to direct public opinion against the Soviet Union, China, and the growing international communist movement.

Legendary journalist Carl Bernstein, a former *Washington Post* reporter who helped uncover the Watergate scandal, published a major cover story for *Rolling Stone* in 1977 titled [“The CIA and the Media: How America’s Most Powerful News Media Worked Hand in Glove with the Central Intelligence Agency and Why the Church Committee Covered It Up.”](#)

Bernstein obtained CIA documents that revealed that more than 400 American journalists in the previous 25 years had “secretly carried out assignments for the Central Intelligence Agency.”

Bernstein wrote: “Some of these journalists’ relationships with the Agency were tacit; some were explicit. There was

cooperation, accommodation and overlap. Journalists provided a full range of clandestine services – from simple intelligence gathering to serving as go-betweens with spies in Communist countries. Reporters shared their notebooks with the CIA. Editors shared their staffs. Some of the journalists were Pulitzer Prize winners, distinguished reporters who considered themselves ambassadors without portfolio for their country. Most were less exalted: foreign correspondents who found that their association with the Agency helped their work; stringers and freelancers who were as interested in the derring do of the spy business as in filing articles; and, the smallest category, full-time CIA employees masquerading as journalists abroad. In many instances, CIA documents show, journalists were engaged to perform tasks for the CIA with the consent of the managements of America's leading news organizations."

Virtually all major U.S. media outlets cooperated with the CIA, Bernstein revealed, including ABC, NBC, the AP, UPI, Reuters, *Newsweek*, Hearst newspapers, *The Miami Herald*, *The Saturday Evening Post*, and *The New York Herald Tribune*.

However, he added, "By far the most valuable of these associations, according to CIA officials, have been with *The New York Times*, CBS and Time Inc."

These layers of state manipulation, censorship, and even direct crafting of the news media show that, as much as they claim to be independent, *The New York Times* and other outlets effectively serve as de facto spokespeople for the government – or at least for the U.S. national security state.



Ben Norton is a journalist and writer. He is a reporter for *The Grayzone*, and the producer of the “[Moderate Rebels](#) podcast,” which he co-hosts with Max Blumenthal. His website is [BenNorton.com](#), and he tweets at [@BenjaminNorton](#).

*This article is from [Grayzone](#).*

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## John Pilger: The Global War on Assange, Journalism & Dissent

John Pilger talks about the persecution of the *WikiLeaks* publisher and the rapid crackdown on investigative journalism in a wide-ranging interview with Dennis J. Bernstein and Randy Credico.

By [Dennis J Bernstein](#) and [Randy Credico](#)

[KPFA Flashpoints](#)



The muckraking work of Oscar- and Emmy-award-winning filmmaker John Pilger is revered and celebrated by journalists and publishers all over the world. While still in his twenties, Pilger became the youngest journalist to receive Britain’s highest award for journalism, “Journalist of the Year,” and was the first to win it twice. Moving to the United States, he reported on the upheavals there in the late 1960s and 1970s. Pilger was in the same room when Robert Kennedy, the presidential candidate, was assassinated in June 1968.

His reporting in South East Asia and his subsequent documentary, "[Year Zero: the Silent Death of Cambodia](#)," raised almost \$50 million for the people of that stricken country. Similarly, his [1994 documentary and dispatches report from East Timor](#), where he travelled under cover, helped galvanize support for the East Timorese, then occupied by Indonesia. In Britain, his four-year investigation on behalf of a group of children damaged at birth by the drug [Thalidomide](#), and left out of the settlement with the drugs company, resulted in a special settlement. In 2009, he was awarded Australia's human rights prize, the Sydney Peace Prize. He has received honorary doctorates from universities in the U.K. and abroad. In 2017, the British Library announced a John Pilger Archive of all his written and filmed work.

In this interview with Dennis J. Bernstein and Randy Credico, Pilger talks about what is happening to his friend and colleague Julian Assange, founder and publisher of *WikiLeaks*, and how his persecution could be the beginning of the end of modern investigative reporting as we know it. Since Assange's high-profile arrest and maximum-security imprisonment on a bail-jumping charge, journalists and whistleblowers have been pursued, arrested and have their documents and hard drives seized in the U.S., France, Great Britain and Australia.

**Bernstein:** Good to speak with you again, John. Thanks for talking with us. What's happening – not only with Julian Assange – but the future of journalism is extremely



disturbing. Now we have seen high-profile raids of journalists in Australia, France, and here in the U.S. in San Francisco, where police put a reporter in handcuffs, while they searched his house and seized his hard drive. We know Julian Assange is in maximum security and Chelsea Manning is also locked down. These are terrible times for the open flow of information.

**Pilger:** Well, it's happening all over the world now and certainly all over that part of the world that regards itself as the enlightened. We are seeing the victimization of whistleblowers and journalists who tell the truth. There is a global war on journalism. More than that, there's a global war on dissent. The speed with which these events has happened is quite remarkable since April 11th when Julian Assange was dragged out of the Ecuadorian embassy in London by police. Since then, police have moved against journalists in the United States, in Australia, spectacularly, in Latin America. It's as if somebody has waved a green flag.

**Credico:** I was thinking by now that Assange would be out. Didn't you think at this point that he would be out of the dire situation that he was in when I last saw him two years ago?

**Pilger:** I'm reluctant to be a futurist. I did think a political deal might have been done. Now looking back, that was naive in the extreme because the very opposite was planned for Julian Assange. There is an "Assange Precedent" at work all over the world. In Australia there was a raid on the public broadcaster, the Australian Broadcasting Corporation, where the federal police marched in with warrants, one of which gave them the authority to delete,

change and appropriate the material of journalists. It was one of the most blatant attacks on journalistic freedom and indeed on freedom of speech that I can remember. We saw even Rupert Murdoch's News Corporation attacked.

The political editor of one of Murdoch's papers, *The Sunday Telegraph*, watched as her house was ransacked and her personal belongings, intimate belongings, rifled. She had reported on the extent of official spying on Australians by the Australian government. Something similar has happened in France where [President Emmanuel] Macron's police have moved against journalists on the magazine, *Disclose*.

Assange predicted this while he was being smeared and abused. He was saying that the world was changing and that so-called liberal democracies were becoming autocracies. A democracy that sends its police against journalists and carries away their notes and hard drives simply because those journalists have revealed what governments have not wanted people to know is not a democracy.

**Credico:** You know, John, some of the mainstream media here in the U.S. and I guess in the U.K., now that their ox is possibly being gored, have suddenly come out in defense of Assange particularly on the use of the Espionage Act and the gathering of information. I don't want to denounce them for waiting so long but why did they wait so long and what kind of help can they offer at this point and what should they do since they are in the crosshairs, as well?

**Pilger:** Let's look at who is actually in the crosshairs. *WikiLeaks* co-published the Afghanistan and Iraq War Logs in 2010, in collaboration with a range of media organizations:

*Der Spiegel* in Germany, *The New York Times*, the *Guardian* and *Espresso*. The co-publishers of the Iraq material were also *Al Jazeera*, *Le Monde*, the *Bureau of Investigative Journalism* in London, Channel 4's "Dispatches" in London, the Iraq Body Count project in the U.K., RUV (Iceland), SVT (Sweden) and so it goes on.

There's a list of individual journalists who reported this and worked with Assange. They echoed his work; they were collaborators in the literal sense. I'm looking at a list right now: On *The New York Times* there is Mark Mazzetti, Jane Perlez, Eric Schmitt, Andrew W. Lehren, C. J. Chivers, Carlotta Gall, Jacob Harris, Alan McLean. On *The Guardian* there is Nick Davies, David Leigh, Declan Walsh, Simon Tisdall ... and so it goes on. All these journalists are in the crosshairs. I don't believe that many will find themselves in the dire straits in which Julian Assange finds himself because they don't present a danger to the system that has reacted against Assange and Chelsea Manning; but they have, *prima facie*, committed the same "crime," that is, publishing documents that the U.S. government did not want made public. In other words, they are as "guilty" as Assange of journalism.

That applies to hundreds of journalists if not thousands all over the world. The *WikiLeaks* disclosures were, if not co-published, were picked up by newspapers and journals and investigative programs on television all over the world. That makes all the journalists involved, all the producers, all the presenters, all of them complicit. And, of course, the hounding of Assange and the intimidation of others make a mockery of the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution,

which says that you have every right to publish; you have every right to “publish and be damned.” It’s one of the demonstrably noble principles of the U.S. Constitution that has been thrown away completely. And what’s ironic is that the journalists who looked down on Assange, even maintained he was not a journalist, are now running for cover because not only is he a journalist of the highest order he is a far more conscientious journalist than most of them. He – and they in his shadow – were doing a basic job of journalism. That’s why I call it a global war on journalism and the precedent of Julian Assange is unlike anything we have seen.

**Bernstein:** John I want to sort of pick up where you left off with Randy and I want to unpack more and deepen peoples’ understanding of exactly who Julian Assange is and the, if you will, the beat that he chose for his work. How would you describe Julian Assange’s beat and the people he chose to work with?

**Pilger:** When I first met Julian Assange, I asked him, “What’s *WikiLeaks* all about, what are you doing here?” He described very clearly the principle of transparency. In fact, he was describing the principle of free speech: that we have a right to know. We have a right to know what our governments are doing in our name. He wasn’t saying that there is a right to endanger people. He was saying that in the normal business of liberal democracies, we have a right to know what our governments are doing for us, at times conspiring against us, in our name. We have the right to know the truth that they tell in private which are so often translated into untruths in public. That transparency, he said, was a moral principle. That is the “why” of

*WikiLeaks*. He believes it passionately and, of course, that should strike a chord with every authentic journalist, because that's what we all should believe.

What the Assange case has shown us is that this war on journalism, this war on dissent, has yet to enter the political bloodstream. None of the candidates now running for the presidency of the United States has mentioned it. None of the Democrats have uttered it. We don't expect the Trump gang to talk about principles like this but there is some naive hope that maybe some of the Democrats might. None of them has.

**Bernstein:** [What does it say when] Julian Assange and Chelsea Manning; a publisher and one of the most significant military whistleblowers of our time, are in jail and locked down?

**Pilger:** They want to get their hands on Julian Assange because he protected his source and they want to get their hands on Chelsea Manning because she, being the source, has refused to lie about Julian Assange. She's refused to implicate him. She's refuses to say there is a conspiracy between them. These two exemplify the very best of truth telling in the modern era. We've been bereft of the likes of Assange and Chelsea Manning.

Yes, there's been some fine investigative reporting and disclosures but we have to reach back to the caliber of Daniel Ellsberg to appreciate what Chelsea and Julian, these two heroic figures, what they've given us and why they're being persecuted.

If we allow their persecution, so much is lost. The

intimidation and suppression will work on all our lives. In the media that once abused Assange, I detect fear. You read some of these editorials by those who once attacked Julian Assange and smeared him, such as in *The Guardian*, and you see their fear that they may be next. You read famous columnists like Katie Benner in *The New York Times*, who attacked Assange and now sees a threat from his tormentors to all journalists. The same is true of David Corn [at *Mother Jones*] who now sees a threat to all of journalism. They are justified in being frightened.

**Credico:** What was the fear of Assange? That he would have continued to work on new avenues of exposure? Why are they so afraid of Assange?

**Pilger:** Well, I think they were worried – are worried – that among the 2 million people in the U.S. who have a national security clearance are those whom Assange has called “conscientious objectors.” I once asked him to characterize the people who were using *WikiLeaks* to release important information. He likened them to the conscientious objectors in wartime, people of principle and peace, and I think that’s quite an apt description. The authorities are worried that there are quite a few Chelseas out there. Perhaps not quite as brave or as bold as Chelsea, but who may start releasing information that undermines the whole war-making system.

**Credico:** Yeah I spoke to Julian about this about a year and a half ago when I was in London, about trying to make a comparison to mid-19th century Antebellum South and journalists like Elijah Lovejoy and David Walker who were murdered for exposing the brutality and destinism of slavery



and I said, "You know, we gotta' start packaging you in that kind of light," and he's says, "You know, there's a big difference, Randy." He said that, "See those guys only had one, one side to deal with, that's it; the people in the South and some of the collaborators in New York that were part of the cotton shipping business. But the rest of the North pretty much was on the side of the abolitionists. I exposed the war crimes and got the conservatives upset with me. And then I exposed misbehavior, malfeasance by the Democratic Party. So, I target everybody, I don't exempt anybody so it doesn't apply to me."

And that's what's happened here. [You see it in the small size of the protests on his behalf.] I was at a demonstration the other day, a small little protest for Assange in front of the British embassy, and only half a dozen people were there, a few more the previous week. He's not generating that kind of interest thus far. And you had people walking by saying, "Assange is a traitor." I mean, they are so disinformed and I want to go to this quote that you quoted, Vandana Shiva, in your book "Freedom Next Time," she talked about the "insurrection of subjugated knowledge," can you talk about that?

**Pilger:** Vandana Shiva is the great Indian environmentalist and political activist whose books on the threat of monoculture are landmarks, especially the threat of the multinational agri-power companies that impose themselves on vulnerable, rural societies like India. She described an "insurrection of subjugated knowledge." It is a fine truism. I have long believed that the truth resides in a metaphorically subterranean world and above that is all the

noise: the noise of the accredited politicians, the noise of the accredited media, those who appear to be speaking for those below. Now and then, truth tellers emerge from below. Take the Australian war correspondent, Wilfred Burchett, who was the first to reach Hiroshima after the atomic bombing. His report appeared on the front of his newspaper *The Daily Express* in London, which said, "I write this as a warning to the world." He was warning about nuclear weapons. Everything was thrown at Burchett to smear and discredit him. *The New York Times* correspondent was leading this: the same *New York Times* correspondent who denied that people were suffering effects of radioactivity: that people had died only from the blast. He was later found to be in bed with the U.S. authorities. Wilfred Burchett suffered smears over most of his career. As all whistleblowers do – those who are affronted by the indecency of something they discovered perhaps in a corporation they work for, or within a government – they believe that the public has a right to know the truth.

*The Guardian*, which turned on Julian Assange with such viciousness having been one of *WikiLeaks*' media partners, back in the '80s published the disclosures of a Foreign Office official who had sent them the plans of the U.S. to install medium-range Cruise missiles throughout Europe. *The Guardian* published this and was duly praised as a paper of disclosure and principle. But when the government went to the courts and a judge demanded the paper hand over the documents that would reveal who the whistleblower was – instead of the editor doing as editors are meant to do, standing up for principle and saying, "No, I will not reveal my source" – the paper betrayed its source. Her name is

Sarah Tisdall and she went to prison as a result. So, whistleblowers have to be extraordinarily brave, heroic people. When you look at the likes of Julian Assange and Chelsea Manning, it's as if the full force of the American national security state backed by its so-called allies has been imposed on them. Julian represents an example that they must make because if they don't make an example of Julian Assange, journalists might even be encouraged to do their job and that job means telling the public what they have a right to know.

**Credico:** Very well said. In your preface or introduction in your book, "Freedom Next Time," you also quote Harold Pinter and his Nobel Prize speech in which he talked about the vast tapestry of lies that we feed on and he goes on and says that American crimes were superficially recorded, let alone documented, let alone acknowledged. This is something that Julian Assange has broken out of that mode, big time, and he has exposed war crimes by the U.S. and whatever kind of shenanigans the State Department has perpetrated. You talk about Harold Pinter, what a great influence he's been.

**Pilger:** Yes, I recommend to your listeners [Harold Pinter's Nobel Prize acceptance speech](#), I believe it was 2005. It was a superb and eloquent testament of how and why the truth should be told and why we should no longer tolerate political double standards.

Harold Pinter was comparing our view of the Soviet Union and of Stalin's crimes with America's crimes; he was saying the main difference was that we know about the scale of Stalin's crimes and know little about Washington's. He was saying

that the vast silence that enveloped our crimes – when I say, “our crimes,” I mean those of the United State – meant, as he said, memorably, “These crimes didn’t happen, they didn’t even happen when they were happening, they were of no interest, they didn’t matter.”

We have to rid ourselves of these double standards, surely. We have just had a unctuous celebration of June the 6th, D-Day. That was an extraordinary invasion in which many soldiers took part and laid down their lives but it didn’t win the war. The Soviet Union actually won the war but the Russians weren’t even represented, weren’t even invited or spoken of. It didn’t happen, as Pinter would say. It didn’t matter. But Donald Trump was there, lecturing the world on war and peace. It is truly gruesome satire. This silence, these omissions, run right across our newspaper – right across the BB – as if it’s even a semblance of the truth, and it’s not.

**Bernstein:** I want to pick it up with Wilfred Burchett and the implications, and the enormous responsibility that these big-time journalists have for allowing terrible things to go on unnoticed, based on issues of patriotism and claims of national security. I’m thinking, they had to shut down Willfred Burchett because that could have opened the whole door about how dangerous nuclear weapons and nuclear power is, exploding the myth of the peaceful atom.

**Pilger:** That’s very true, Dennis, and it also undermined the moral plans of the “Good War,” the Second World War which ended with these two great crimes – the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki after Japan posed no threat. Credible historians now don’t tell us the fairytales that

these atomic bombs were needed to end the war. So, it's destroyed in many respects the great moral mission of the war.

It not only did that, it declared, the atomic bombing, that a new war was beginning, a "Cold War," although it could very well have turned very quickly into a "hot war" with the Soviet Union. And it was saying "we"—that is the United States and its allies like Britain — had nuclear weapons and we're prepared to use them. That's the key: We're prepared to use them. And the United States is the only country that has ever used them against another country.

Of course it then went on to test them throughout the United Nations' Trust territory, which was meant to be held in trust by the United Nations in the Marshall Islands, setting off many Hiroshimas over a period of 12 years. We didn't know anything about that at the time. And how much do we know about the development of nuclear warheads that President Obama got underway and committed something like a trillion dollars that President Trump has certainly carried on.

And those treaties that offered some fragile defense against a nuclear holocaust, treaties with the Soviet Union such as the intermediate-range weapons treaty torn up by this administration. One thing leads to another. This is truth telling.

**Bernstein:** I want to come back to remind people of the kind of structure that Julian Assange created at *WikiLeaks* to protect whistleblowers. This is crucial because we've seen now other journalists being a little more careless and we

see sources being tracked down, arrested, and facing major jail time. And I think this is the way that Julian Assange honored whistleblowers by protecting them is a crucial part of who he is and what he did.

**Pilger:** He invented a system whereby it was impossible to tell who the source was and it allowed people to use a letterbox drop to leak material without their identity being disclosed. The *WikiLeaks* system gives them that protection. It's probably that that has so enraged those who are pursuing him. It means that people of conscience within governments, within systems, who are troubled like Chelsea Manning who was deeply troubled by what she saw, have the opportunity to tell the world without fearing that their identity will be exposed. Unfortunately, Chelsea revealed her identity to somebody who betrayed her. It is an unprecedented means of getting the truth out.

**Bernstein:** John, please tell us about your recent visit with Assange at Belmarsh maximum security prison in Great Britain. How is he holding up?

**Pilger:** I would like to say one thing about Julian personally. I saw Julian in Belmarsh prison and I got a vivid sense of what he has had to endure. I saw the resilience and courage that I've known for many years; but now he is unwell. The pressure on him is unimaginable; most of us would have bent beneath it. So, there is an issue here of justice for this man and what he has had to take; not only the lies that were told about him in the embassy and the lies that sought a full-scale character assassination of him. The so-called respectable media from *The New York Times* to *The Guardian*, all of them have

reached into the mud and thrown it at him; and today he is a very vulnerable, and I would say to your listeners: He needs your support and solidarity. More than that, he deserves it.

**Bernstein:** Say a little more about the conditions there and why it's so significant that they would treat him to a year in this kind of prison.

**Pilger:** Well, I suppose because of what a threat he is. Even with Julian locked away, *WikiLeaks* carries on. This is a maximum-security prison. Anyone in for just bail infringement – first of all, they wouldn't have been sentenced to 50 weeks as he was. They might have been given a fine and at best a month but of course this has now morphed into an extradition, a case with all these ludicrous charges coming from the indictment in Virginia. But Julian, as a person, what's always struck me he's the diametric opposite portrayed by so many of his detractors. He has a sharp intellect so he's clever, of course. He's also gracious and he's very funny. He and I often laugh. We even managed to laugh the last time I saw him at the embassy when there were cameras all over the room, you could tell as we swapped notes and we had to cover up what we were actually writing on the pad. He managed to laugh about this. So, there's a dry, almost black humor and he's a very passionate person but his resilience has always astonished me. I've tried to put myself in his position and I couldn't imagine it. And when I saw him in prison and we had to sit across from each other, I was with a couple of other people, when one of us went around the table just to be close to him she was told to go back by one of the guards. This is what

somebody who has committed no crime, yes, he's committed the crime of journalism, and this is what he has to endure.

[Listen to the interview.](#)

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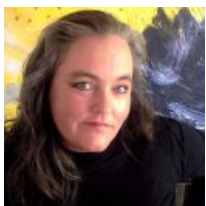
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## Propaganda Prospering Far and Wide

Human minds are very hackable, writes Caitlin Johnstone, and that causes a major problem for democracy.

By [Caitlin Johnstone](#)

[CaitlinJohnstone.com](http://CaitlinJohnstone.com)



[Forbes](#) reports that the CEO of CrowdStrike, the extremely shady cybersecurity corporation which was foundational in the construction of the official CIA/CNN Russian hacking narrative, is now a billionaire.

George Kurtz ascended to the billionaire rankings on the back of [soaring stocks](#) immediately after the company went public, carried no doubt on the winds of the international fame it gained from its role as a central protagonist in the



most well-known hacking news story of all time. A loyal servant of empire well-rewarded.

Never mind that U.S. insiders such as Hillary Clinton had been prepping for escalations against Russia well in advance of the 2016 elections, and that their preexisting agendas to shove a geostrategic obstacle off the world stage benefitted from the hacking narrative as much as George Kurtz did.

Never mind that CrowdStrike is tied to the NATO narrative management firm known as the Atlantic Council, which receives funding from the U.S., the EU, NATO, Gulf states and powerful international oligarchs. Never mind, either, that CrowdStrike was financed with a whopping \$100 million from Google, which has had a cozy relationship with U.S. intelligence agencies since its very inception.

Never mind that to this day the DNC servers have not been examined by the FBI, nor indeed were they examined by the Special Counsel of Robert “Iraq has WMD” Mueller, preferring instead to go with the analyses of this extremely shady outfit with extensive and well-documented ties with the oligarchic leaders of the U.S.-centralized empire. Also never mind that the CrowdStrike analyst who led forensics on those DNC servers had in fact worked for and was promoted by Robert Mueller while the two were in the FBI.

The CEO of the Atlantic Council-tied CrowdStrike, which formed the foundation of the official CIA/CNN Russian hacking narrative, is now a billionaire. I'm telling you, the real underlying currency of this world is narrative and the ability to control it.<https://t.co/XsBCvkIDzJ>

– Caitlin Johnstone ? (@caitoz) June 12, 2019

## The Real Currency

As I never tire of saying, the real underlying currency in our world is not gold, nor bureaucratic fiat, nor even raw military might. The real underlying currency of our world is narrative, and the ability to control it.

As soon as you really grok this dynamic, you start noticing it everywhere. George Kurtz is one clear example today of narrative control's central role in the maintenance and expansion of existing power structures, as well as an illustration of how the empire is wired to reward those who advance pro-empire narratives and punish those who damage them; just compare how he's doing to how Julian Assange is doing, for example.

But you see examples pop up every day:

- The U.S. State Department just got busted using a \$1.5 million troll farm to manipulate public discourse on social media about Iran.
- Video footage has just surfaced of the director general of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons admitting that the OPCW did indeed deliberately omit any mention in its official findings of a report from its own investigation which contradicts the establishment narrative about a chemical strike in Douma, Syria, an admission which answers controversial questions asked by critics of western imperialism like myself, and which the mainstream media have not so much as touched.
- *Mintpress News* broke a story the other day about a new

narrative management operation known as “The Trust Project,” a coordinated campaign by establishment-friendly mass media outlets for “gaming search-engine and social-media algorithms in collusion with major tech companies like Google and Twitter.”

- In an [interview with \*The Canary\*](#), UN Special Rapporteur on torture Nils Melzer explicitly named the mass media as largely responsible for Assange’s psychological torture, excoriating them for the way that they “have shown a remarkable lack of critical independence and have contributed significantly to spreading abusive and deliberately distorted narratives about Mr. Assange.”
- In a new essay, [“Freeing Julian Assange,”](#) journalist Suzie Dawson reports that “Countless articles appear to have been obliterated from the internet” about Assange and *WikiLeaks*, amounting to some 90 percent of the links Dawson examined which were shared in tweets by or about *WikiLeaks* and Assange since 2010.
- I just finished reading [this excellent \*Swiss Propaganda Research\* essay](#) about the little-known fact that “most of the international news coverage in Western media is provided by only three global news agencies based in New York, London and Paris.”

I write about this stuff for a living, and even I don’t have the time or energy to write full articles about every single narrative control tool that the U.S.-centralized empire has been implementing into its arsenal. There are too damn many of them emerging too damn fast, because they’re just that damn crucial for maintaining existing power structures.

Because whoever controls the narrative controls the world.

Power used to be much easier to identify in our society: just look for the fellow with the sparkly hat made of gold sitting in a really big chair and bossing everyone around. As our society advanced philosophically, however, people started fighting for ideals called “freedom” and “democracy” in their respective nations. And, as far as our parents and teachers have taught us, freedom and democracy are exactly what we have now.

Except that’s all crap. Freedom and democracy only exist within the Western empire to the extent that it keeps up appearances. Because the trouble with democracy, it turns out, is that human minds are very hackable, when they are pursued with enough resources. Wealthy and powerful people do have the resources, which means that it’s very possible for wealthy and powerful people to manipulate the masses into voting in a way that consistently benefits the wealthy and powerful. This is why billionaires and narrative control consistently go hand-in-hand.

This dynamic has allowed for western power structures to operate in a way that western democracy was explicitly designed to prevent: for the benefit of the powerful instead of for the benefit of the voting populace. So now we’ve got people in so-called liberal democracies voting to maintain governments which advance wars which don’t benefit them, to advance intrusive surveillance and police state policies which oppress them, to advance austerity policies which harm them, to advance labor policies which exploit them, and to maintain eco-cidal environmental policies which threaten the very survival of our species.

All because the wealthy and powerful are able to use their wealth and power to manipulate the way people think and vote.

I remember in the run-up to the Iraq War a friend I had known all my life suddenly said to me, 'We must do something about this monster in Iraq.' I said, 'When did you first think that?' He answered honestly, 'A month ago'.  
#Propaganda @medialens

– Malcolm Pryce (@exogamist) April 12, 2018

This is why I pay far more attention to narrative control than to politics. Politics is downstream from narrative control, which is why the 2020 U.S. presidential race is already a contest to see what level of Democratic corporatist warmonger will be running against the incumbent Republican corporatist warmonger. The narrative-controlling class does its level best to hide the fact that anything's fundamentally wrong with the system, then when people notice it's deeply broken they encourage them to use completely impotent tools to fix it. "Don't like how things are run? Here, vote for our *other* puppet!"

The root of all our problems right now is the fact that human minds are very hackable with enough resources, combined with the fact that war, oppression, exploitation and ecocide are highly profitable. This dynamic has caused human collective consciousness to generally dead-end into a kind of propagandized, zombified state in which all our knowledge and all our thinking moves in alignment with the agendas of existing power structures. It's much easier to continue believing the official narratives than to sort through everything you've been told about your society, your

nation and your world since grade school and work out what's true and what's false. Many don't have the time. Many more don't have the courage.

We will remain in this collective dead-end, hurtling toward either Orwellian dystopia or extinction via climate collapse or nuclear Armageddon, until we find a way out of it. It won't come from the tools our rulers have given us, and it won't come from repeating any of the old patterns which got us here. In order to escape from the increasingly adept [narrative control matrix](#) that is being built around our collective mind by the powerful, we're going to have to [change our relationship with narrative altogether](#). We will either pass this great test or we will fail it, and we absolutely have the freedom to go either way.

**Caitlin Johnstone is a rogue journalist, poet, and utopia prepper who publishes regularly [at Medium](#). Follow her work on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), or her [website](#). She has a [podcast](#) and a new book [“Woke: A Field Guide for Utopia Preppers.”](#) This article was re-published with permission.**

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## Cover-Ups and Truth Tellers

Lawrence Davidson finds a reversal of values – in who gets punished and who does not – when whistleblowers and publishers expose immoral behavior by governments.

By [Lawrence Davidson](#)

[Tothe PointAnalysis.com](#)



In a May, 22, 2019 appearance in the White House Rose Garden, President Donald Trump declared that “I don't do cover-ups.” Various news outlets immediately started to enumerate a long list of bona fide cover-ups associated with the president.

What can one say about this bit of Trumpian nonsense? Can you accuse a person of lying who actually seems not to know the difference between truth and untruth? Trump's inability in this regard is demonstrated daily, and *The Washington Post* fact checker puts the running count of presidential lies at 10,111, with no end in sight. When it comes to reality, the president appears to be a malignant version of Walter Mitty.

Unfortunately, Trump's behavior is but the tip of the iceberg when it comes to cover-ups. One can surmise that just by virtue of being the head of the U.S. government, the president – any president – must be directly or indirectly associated with hundreds of such evasions. That is because, it can be argued without much paranoia, that every major division of the government is hiding something –particularly when it comes to foreign activities.

Of course, being cover-ups by the government may make them appear acceptable, at least to a naive public. Many of them are rationalized as necessary for the sake of national “security.” And, of course, everyone wants to be “secure,” accepting the notion that “people sleep peaceably in their beds at night only because rough men stand ready to do violence on their behalf.”

The fact that much of this violence is done to other

innocent people trying to get a peaceful night's rest is "classified" information. So woe be it to the truth tellers who defy these rationalizations and sound off. For they shall be cast out of our democratic heaven into one of the pits of hell that pass for a U.S. prison—or, if they are fleet-footed, chased into exile.

### **Melodramatic, Except ... Assange and Manning**

Well, that sounds a bit melodramatic – unless you happen to be Julian Assange, the publisher of *WikiLeaks*, or his notable informant, Chelsea Manning, or, taking one step back from the firing line, the [Freedom of the Press Foundation](#).

The Trump administration is now seeking, via the "Justice" Department, to destroy Assange and Manning. Both are truth tellers or, if you want, whistleblowers who, by revealing the truth about government behavior during the Iraq War, badly embarrassed Washington. The rush to punishment is being carried out with a maliciousness for which this president and his bureaucratic minions seem temperamentally well-suited. Always keep in mind that there are plenty of unethical professionals, in this case operating in the guise of government lawyers, available to serve the disreputable purposes of disreputable bosses.

Julian Assange has been charged with an [18-count indictment](#) alleging that he "unlawfully obtained and disclosed classified documents related to national defense." It goes on to allege that Assange accomplished this when he "conspired with Manning and aided and abetted her in obtaining classified information ... to be used to the injury of the United States or to the advantage of a foreign



nation.” Manning’s sentence for these “offenses” was subsequently commuted by President Barack Obama, but she is now in jail for refusing to testify before a grand jury investigating Assange.

The attack on Assange and Manning has brought into question the viability of the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution and the notion of a free press – seminally important matters. Here is how the Freedom of the Press Foundation describes the implications of the indictment against Julian Assange:

“Put simply, these unprecedented charges against Julian Assange and WikiLeaks are the most significant and terrifying threat to the First Amendment in the 21st century. The Trump administration is moving to explicitly criminalize national security journalism, and if this prosecution proceeds, dozens of reporters at *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post* and elsewhere would also be in danger. The ability of the press to publish facts the government would prefer remain secret is both critical to an informed public and a fundamental right. ... Anyone who cares about press freedom should immediately and wholeheartedly condemn these charges.”

Given these circumstances, one might be surprised, and very disappointed as well, to know that a concerted opposition to this threat from the so-called Fourth Estate (the press and news media) has yet to materialize.

### **Too Few Protecting Journalism**

The truth is that, beyond fact-checking the statements of a pathological president, too few journalists are willing to

go out on a limb on the issue of a "free press," or, if you will, for the integrity of their own profession. As it is, most of the American mass media more or less toes a government line and has done so for a very long time. They do this because their owners and editors are either in agreement with the government, see it as economically necessary to appear as traditionally loyal Americans to their readership, or have selectively hired reporters and other staff who are too passive to resist government pressure. Thus, episodes such as the 1972 reporting about the Nixon-inspired break-in at the Watergate and the revelation of the Pentagon Papers in 1971, along with the occasional local investigative expose, are exceptions rather than the rule of journalistic behavior. At best, if a newspaper or TV station wants to appear politically risqué they will confine the effort to a supposed "balanced" editorial page or segment.

If the journalistic establishment appears hesitant, civil liberties organizations such as the ACLU readily agree with the Freedom of the Press Foundation. The ACLU Director, Ben Wisner, notes that "For the first time in the history of our country, the government has brought criminal charges against a publisher for the publication of truthful information." The key words here are "publisher" and "truthful information." Wisner goes on to say that "It establishes a dangerous precedent that can be used to target all news organizations that hold the government accountable by publishing its secrets." In other words, Trump and his minions are taking a step in the direction of dictatorial censorship.

## Two Opposing Issues

Wisner's comment suggests that there is often a real tension between what the government wishes to keep secret and issues of public morality and common decency. Indeed, Manning's stated motive in dealing with *WikiLeaks* was to "remove the fog of war and reveal the true nature of 21st century asymmetric warfare." Hence, in 2010, Manning, after being rebuffed by *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post*, sent *WikiLeaks* some 750,000 classified or otherwise "sensitive" military and diplomatic documents. Much of this material showed the U.S. waging a cruel and lawless operation in Iraq that any normal American should find troubling. This is probably part of the reason why this revelation was judged by Washington to be injurious to the U.S.

We have two issues here and they are in opposition.

First, there is the formal issue of the government (actually all governments) having made it illegal to acquire and make public, in an unauthorized fashion, classified information. However, it is clear that information is often classified not only because it might be militarily or diplomatically harmful but because it is likely to be found repulsive by a government's own citizens. This proved to be the case with at least some of Manning's revelations.

That brings us to the second issue – what are the proper behavioral standards to which we want to hold our government, our military, and our diplomatic corps? How are we to know if they are meeting those standards when they have the advantage of legally keeping official behavior secret?

So it is a conundrum. As libertarians like to put it, “all that which is immoral for men acting individually is equally immoral for men acting in association.”

However, no one seems to have both the legal clout and the courage to demand moral standards for the government, at least not when it comes to foreign policy. Oddly enough, there are domestic laws that make it a criminal offense to withhold incriminating information from the police. But those laws have no application here, though they really should. So the entire situation is managed for the sake of one side of the dilemma – the government. On the other side, the casualties continue to pile up.

Most of us are told that our government is the best, most progressive one in existence – a model for all the world. And, if you go along with the likes of Vice President Mike Pence and Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, the U.S. government takes a seat at the right hand of God.

However, what happens when truth tellers who notice starkly immoral U.S. government behavior reveal that fact to the public? With but rare exception, what happens is that you get a reversal of values. To name the operatives of the U.S. government as criminals, you often must reveal “classified” evidence. It is that revelation that instantly becomes the primary offense. What the revealed information might say about government wrongdoing recedes into the shadows, and it is the truth teller who becomes the primary criminal.

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**international and humanitarian law and Israel/Zionist practices and policies since 2010.**

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