

The Dangerous Reagan Cult

Exclusive: Ronald Reagan's anti-government philosophy inspires Tea Party extremists to oppose any revenue increase, even from closing loopholes on corporate jets. Democrats try the spin that "even Reagan" showed flexibility on debt and taxes. But Robert Parry says it is the "Reagan cult" that is at the heart of America's crisis.

By Robert Parry

In the debt-ceiling debate, both Republicans and Democrats wanted Ronald Reagan on their side. Republicans embraced the 40th president's disdain for government and fondness for tax cuts, while Democrats noted that "even Reagan" raised the debt limit many times and accepted some tax increases.

But Reagan possibly more than any political leader deserves the blame for the economic/political mess that the United States now finds itself in. He was the patriarch for virtually every major miscalculation that the country has made over the past three decades.

It was Reagan who slashed taxes on the rich to roughly their current level; he opened the flood gates on deficit spending; he accelerated the decline of the middle class by busting unions and slashing support for local communities; he disparaged the value of government regulations; he squandered money on the Pentagon; he pushed more militaristic strategies abroad; and he rejected any thoughtful criticism of past U.S. foreign policies.

Reagan also created what amounted to a "populist" right-wing cult that targeted the federal government as the source of nearly all evil. In his First Inaugural Address, he famously declared that "government is not the solution to our problem; government is the problem."

It is that contempt for government that today is driving the Tea Party extremists in the Republican Party. Yet, as with many cults, the founder of this one was somewhat more practical in dealing with the world around him, thus explaining some of Reagan's compromises on the debt ceiling and taxes.

But once the founder is gone, his teachings can become definitive truth to the disciples. Flexibility disappears. No deviation is permitted. No compromise is tolerated.

So, at a time when government intervention is desperately needed to address a host of national problems, members of this Reagan cult apply the teachings of the leader in the most extreme ways. Since "government is the problem," the only

answer is to remove government from the equation and let the corporations, the rich and the magical “market” dictate national solutions.

It is an ironic testament to Ronald Reagan’s enduring influence that America’s most notable “populist” movement, the Tea Party, insists that tax cuts for the wealthy must be protected, even minor ones like tax loopholes for corporate jets. Inside the Tea Party, any suggestion that billionaire hedge-fund managers should pay a tax rate equal to that of their secretaries is anathema.

Possibly never in history has a “populist” movement been as protective of the interests of the rich as the Tea Party is. But that is because it is really a political cult dedicated to the most extreme rendering of Ronald Reagan’s anti-government philosophy.

Astro-Turf ‘Populists’

Granted, the Tea Party also can be viewed as an astro-turf outfit financed by billionaires like the Koch brothers and promoted by billionaire media mogul Rupert Murdoch. But Election 2010 proved that the movement is capable of putting like-minded politicians into office, especially when discouraged elements of the American Left choose to sit on the sidelines.

During the debt-ceiling battle, the GOP’s Tea Party caucus showed it was strong enough to block any compromise that included a revenue increase. The thinking is that the “evil” government must be starved even if that means defending indefensible tax loopholes and shoving the world’s economy to the brink of catastrophe.

The Tea Party’s rabid enforcement of the Reagan orthodoxy instills such fear among top Republicans that every one of the eight presidential hopefuls at a recent Iowa debate vowed to reject a deal that would include just \$1 of higher taxes for each \$10 in spending cuts. Even supposed moderates like Mitt Romney and Jon Huntsman threw up their hands.

But the Reagan cult reaches far beyond the Republican Party. Last February, a [Gallup poll](#) of Americans cited Reagan as the greatest president ever, with a five percentage point lead over Abraham Lincoln.

These days, virtually no one in Washington’s political or media circles dares to engage in a serious critique of Reagan’s very checkered record as president. It’s much easier to align yourself with some position that Reagan took during his long career, much like a pastor selectively picking a Bible passage to support his theological argument.

When negative national trends are cited such as the decline of the middle class

or the widening gap between rich and poor the self-censorship demands that Reagan's name not be spoken. Instead, there are references to these problems deepening "over the past three decades," without mentioning whose presidency got things going big time.

Creating an Icon

And there is a self-interested reason for this hesitancy. The Republicans and the Right have made it a high priority to transform Reagan into an icon and to punish any independent-minded political figure or journalist who resists the group think.

The first step in this process occurred in the late 1980s, with aggressive cover-ups of Reagan's crimes of state, such as scandals over the Iran-Contra arms-for-hostages affair, Contra-cocaine trafficking, and the Iraq-gate support of dictator Saddam Hussein.

Faced with furious Republican defenses of Reagan and his inner circle, most Democrats and mainstream journalists chose career discretion over valor. By the time Bill Clinton was elected in 1992, the refrain from Democrats and Washington pundits was to "leave that for the historians."

Those who didn't go along with the cover-ups like Iran-Contra special prosecutor Lawrence Walsh were subjected to ridicule from both the right-wing and mainstream media, from both the Washington Times and the Washington Post. Journalists who challenged the implausible Reagan cover-ups also found themselves marginalized as "conspiracy theorists."

Leading Democrats decided it made more sense to look to the future, not dwell on the past. Plus, acquiescing to the cover-ups was a way to show their bipartisanship.

However, Republicans had other ideas. Having pocketed the concessions regarding any serious investigations of Reagan and his cohorts, the Republicans soon went on the offensive by investigating the heck out of President Clinton and his administration.

Then, having stirred up serious public doubts about Clinton's integrity, the Republicans trounced the Democrats in the 1994 congressional elections. With their new majorities, the Republicans immediately began the process of enshrining Reagan as a national icon.

By and large, the Democrats saw these gestures, like attaching Reagan's name to National Airport, as another way to demonstrate their bipartisanship.

But Republicans knew better. They understood the strategic value of elevating Reagan's legacy to the status of an icon. If everyone agreed that Reagan was so great, then it followed that the hated "gub-mint" must be that bad.

More Accommodations

Increasingly, Democrats found themselves arguing on Republican ground, having to apologize for any suggestion that the government could do anything good for the country. Meanwhile, the Clinton-era stock market boom convinced more Americans that the "market" must know best.

Going with that flow, President Clinton signed a Republican-sponsored bill that removed Depression-era regulations in the Glass-Steagall Act, which had separated commercial and investment banks. With the repeal, the doors were thrown open for Wall Street gambling.

In the short run, lots of money was made, encouraging more Americans to believe that the government and its "safety net" were indeed anachronisms for losers. People with any gumption could simply day-trade their way to riches.

Reagan, it seemed, was right all along: government was the problem; the "free market" was not only the solution but it could "self-regulate."

That was the political/media environment around Election 2000 when the wonkish Vice President Al Gore ran against the brash Texas Gov. George W. Bush, who came across to many as another version of Ronald Reagan, someone who spoke simply and disdained big government.

Though Gore could point to the economic successes of the Clinton years, including a balanced federal budget and the prospect of the total elimination of the federal debt, the major media mocked him as a know-it-all nerd who wore "earth-toned sweaters." Meanwhile, mainstream journalists swooned over Bush, the regular guy.

Still, Gore eked out a narrow victory in the national popular vote and would have carried the key state of Florida if all legally cast votes were counted. But Bush relied on his brother's administration in Florida and his father's friends on the U.S. Supreme Court to make sure that didn't happen. Bush was declared the winner in Florida and thus the new president. [For details, see [Neck Deep](#).]

In retrospect, Election 2000 was a disastrous turning point for the United States, putting into the highest office in the land an unqualified ne'er do well who had lost the election.

But this outrage against democracy was largely accepted because of the muscular right-wing machine, the on-bended-knee mainstream media and the weak-kneed Democrats a political/media dynamic that Reagan had helped create and had left behind.

The progress that the Clinton administration had made toward putting the U.S. financial house in order was quickly undone as Bush pushed through two massive tax cuts benefiting mostly the rich and waged two open-ended wars financed with borrowed money.

Years of Reaganism also had taken its toll on the government's regulatory structures. Reagan had consistently appointed regulators who were hostile to the very concept of regulating, such as Anne Gorsuch at the Environmental Protection Agency and James Watt at Interior. He also elevated Alan Greenspan, a "free market" admirer of Ayn Rand, to be chairman of the Federal Reserve Board.

In the 1980s, the looting of America was underway in earnest, but the elites of Washington and New York saw little to protest since they were getting a cut of the plunder. The real losers were the average Americans, especially factory workers who saw their unions broken or their jobs shipped overseas under the banner of "free trade."

Feeling Good

But many Americans were kept entranced by Reagan's feel-good magic.

Taking office after a difficult decade of the 1970s, when America's defeat in Vietnam and the Arab oil price hikes had shaken the nation's confidence, Reagan simply assured everyone that things would work out just fine and that no excessive sacrifice was in order. Nor should there be any feelings of guilt, Reagan made clear.

By the late 1970s, it was widely accepted even among many Republicans that the Vietnam War had been an abomination. But Reagan simply rebranded it a "noble cause," no reason for any serious self-reflection on America's imperial role in the world.

Reagan then allied the United States with "death-squad" regimes all over Latin America and across the Third World. His administration treated the resulting carnage as a public-relations problem that could be managed by challenging the patriotism of critics.

At the 1984 Republican National Convention, Reagan's United Nations Ambassador Jeane Kirkpatrick labeled Americans who dared criticize U.S. foreign policy as those who would "blame America first."

To continue this sort of verbal pummeling on those who continued to get in the way, Reagan credentialed a bunch of thuggish intellectuals known as the neoconservatives.

For the rest of the country, there were happy thoughts about “the shining city on a hill” and “morning in America.”

In reality, however, Reagan had set the stage for the tragedies that would follow. When George W. Bush grabbed power in 2001, he simply extended the foreign and economic policies of the Republican cult leader: more tax cuts, more militarism, less regulation, more media manipulation.

Soon, the gap between rich and poor was widening again. Soon, the United States was at open war in two countries and involved in secret wars in many others. Soon, the nation was confronted with new scandals about torture and deception. Soon, the federal budget was flowing with red ink.

And near the end of Bush’s presidency, the de-regulated excesses of Wall Street pushed the country to the brink of a financial cataclysm. Bush supported a bail-out to save the bankers but didn’t do much for the millions of Americans who lost their jobs or their homes.

Second Thoughts?

One might have thought that the financial crack-up in 2008 (plus the massive federal deficits and the botched wars in Iraq and Afghanistan) would have confronted the Reagan cult with an existential crisis of faith. It would seem obvious that Reagan’s nostrums just didn’t work.

However, after only a brief interregnum of Barack Obama, the Republicans seem poised to restore the Reagan cult to full power in the United States. The new apparent GOP frontrunner, Texas Gov. Rick Perry, is already being hailed in the Washington Post as “The Texas Gipper.”

The Washington Times (yes, Rev. Sun Myung Moon’s right-wing propaganda sheet is still around) fairly cooed over Perry’s tough attacks on Obama, depicting America’s first black president as someone who apologizes for America and isn’t deserving of its soldiers in uniform.

“One of the powerful reasons for running for president of the United States is to make sure every man and woman who puts on the uniform respects highly the president of the United States,” Perry said. “We are indignant about a president who apologizes for America.”

As far as Perry is concerned, America has nothing to apologize for.

These are themes right out of Ronald Reagan's playbook. And it appears likely that Election 2012 will be fought over terrain defined by Reagan, even though he left office in 1989 and died in 2004.

It is already clear that President Obama will be on the defensive, trying to justify a role for the federal government in America and explaining why the Reaganesque policy of low taxes on the rich must finally be reversed. Obama also is certain to shy away from any serious examination of how U.S. foreign policy went so wrong, so as not to be labeled "apologist-in-chief."

Rick Perry or whatever other Republican gets the party's nomination will hold the high ground of Reagan's lofty standing among the American people. The GOP nominee can continue blaming "guv-mint" for the nation's problems and promising another "morning in America" if only the nation further reduces the size of "guv-mint."

With Democrats also trying to associate themselves with the "greatest president ever," it appears doubtful that any serious effort will be made to explain to the American people that the charming Reagan was the pied piper who led them to their current demise.

[For more on these topics, see Robert Parry's *Secrecy & Privilege* and *Neck Deep*, now available in a two-book set for the discount price of only \$19. For details, [click here.](#)]

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

Common Ground in Anti-War Appeal

The major U.S. news media is again focusing Campaign 2012 on personalities, gaffes and poll-measured momentum, a superficiality that has contributed to America's dysfunctional politics for several decades. But ex- FBI agent Coleen Rowley describes her work with an anti-war group seeking to change that dynamic.

By Coleen Rowley

The Des Moines news reporter who noted our anti-war message at the entrance of Saturday's Republican Straw Poll in Ames, Iowa, did not stay around long enough to see the real story.

Our banners actually got an amazingly good reception!



Positioned as we were at the entrance to the event, we were surprised at how many of the thousands of straw poll attendees (even those clad in Pawlenty and Santorum t-shirts) responded positively to the "Come Home America" message.

Banners warning that "Endless War = Endless Debt" and "War IS Taxing" resonated with people of all political (conservative, libertarian, and socially progressive) backgrounds who stopped to talk, with some even giving up an hour or two of their time to help us hold the banners.

Attendees seemed genuinely interested when we encouraged them to sign our recent "Dear Obama" letter and told them we were part of a non-partisan effort focused on the most important ISSUES of the day, instead of the promises, slogans, cute winks and other crazy antics of any particular political candidate.

The truth is that progressives who support social safety nets, funding of public education, and who are opposed to the widening disparity between the wealthiest and the poor cannot possibly see their goals realized without the U.S. government changing course away from the last decade of destructive and costly wars.

Libertarians will not see restoration of civil liberties, adherence to the Constitution and away from national security policing and "War Presidency" empowerment.

"Greens" will not see more funding and research diverted to sustainable and environmentally clean energy technologies. And fiscal conservatives cannot possibly get the small, decentralized government they long for while the United

States seeks costly world empire and military superpower status.

All of these worthwhile goals are connected by money and are antithetical to the U.S. government's spending on runaway militarism.

If the American government continues to be controlled by the military-industrial-congressional-media complex, in defiance of this popular consensus, throwing away trillions of hard-earned and increasingly scarce taxpayer dollars on bombs, drone technology, armoring tanks and outright corporate contractor fraud, none of these other objectives are possible.

So while hundreds of national media in Iowa covered the actual, close straw poll finish (near tie) of Michele Bachmann (only beating Ron Paul by 152 votes) and did not seem to care or cover the enormous outpouring we witnessed from people of different political backgrounds and loyalties, the consensus for ending the wars and runaway militarism is building.



Numerous polls confirm that we're approaching a unique moment when a variety of rationales for ending the wars are coming together that transcend prior political differences.

In any event, look for our Come Home America initiative and banners to represent this remarkable convergence outside some of Obama's upcoming speeches as well as other major political events throughout the nation.

By strengthening the emerging consensus, it may be possible to end the insanity of these wars.

While politicians and horse race bettors constantly talk of making their selections using the "lesser of two evils" formula, one thing is clear: it is the issues that matter more than the political personalities.

And unjust, unnecessary war is not the lesser of two evils! It is the evil that corrupts and contaminates everything else.

Retired FBI agent Coleen Rowley is on the Steering Committee for "Come Home America" (<http://comehomeamerica.us/>)

Back to Big Media's Political Circus

As the United States careens toward another economic crisis, the big-time U.S. news media is back to trivializing politics as some inconsequential sporting event where the competing sides score points measured by daily tracking polls. Danny Schechter dissects the madness.

By Danny Schechter

And so it came to pass as predicted, projected and warned about that the economy is about to tank again.

No less an authority than Nouriel Roubini, once dismissed as "Dr. Doom" for his accurate predictions of the financial crisis in 2007 and 2008, is again shaking his head and pointing his finger.

In intellectual circles, there's more and more talk about the fall of America. Even Noam Chomsky, who wrote some of his 150 books about the rise of the American empire, sees the handwriting on the wall.

The wags at the New York Times are monitoring what looks like an impending collapse. On one page, you read: "Data released on Friday leaves little doubt that the European economy is losing momentum before most countries have even recovered to the level of output they had in 2008, when the recession hit."

Closer to home, the newspaper fears a "double dip" and says, "few cushions left for a new crisis."

MSNBC reports: "As the debate rages on about whether the U.S. economy is headed for a double-dip, one expert says another recession is all but guaranteed, **and there's nothing that can be done to prevent it.**"

"Paul Gambles, Managing Director of financial advisory and asset management firm MBMG Group said the bond market, which is the most reliable indicator, has been pointing to a slowdown since at least April or May." [Emphasis mine.]

Gambles says the deeper problem predated the Obama administration and has been ongoing for at least a decade.

You would think the captains of industry would be battening down the proverbial hatches, stabilizing the ship and getting out the life boats instead of supporting policies and politicians who believe that chaos offers the only way forward.

To quote House Speaker John Boehner about some of his colleagues, "A lot of

them, believe 'enough chaos' would make opponents yield."

Where is the sense of national urgency beyond the bitter partisan divide?

In response, President Barack Obama may yet discover some backbone, before he loses support from what's left of his liberal base. Over the years, he has ceded so much of his power through compromise that some of his supporters believe he is a Republican at heart, that is, if he has a heart.

His most clever comment of late is a play on "Obamacare."

"Obama does care," he insists.

While the GOP and its noise machine blather on blaming unemployment and a lack of growth on the President, their practices insure that there can be no progress. Boehner admits as much,

The Times explains the quagmire this way: "Expectations remain low for anything beyond least-common-denominator accords, unless economic conditions and public pressure shift the political facts on the ground. At this point, a spokesman for Mr. Boehner said, the House has 'no plans to take up' the president's job creation ideas except for patent reform and pending trade deals."

So where is the public pressure? There is talk about a new initiative to "save the dream" led by Van Jones, the environmental activist booted from his White House job by an administration that quickly capitulated to protests against Jones on the Right.

The unions are talking up a jobs agenda. A few editorial writers are backing them, but it doesn't seem to be leading to any prospect of a needed new stimulus.

The deeper problem is that most of the media has just parroted economic statistics with little independent assessment much less investigation. They stay away from showing how banks and corporate interests got us into this deep and depressing pit.

They continue to define politics narrowly and only in electoral terms. They would likely ignore a Cairo-type uprising in America unless there was lots of police violence.

Instead, with the Iowa Straw poll, the circus is back in town and the elephants are on display,

Here we go again, as a new election cycle takes over the news. Bring on the pundits, the pollsters and, most of all, the familiar personality parade.

To Big Media, only formal campaign politics are legitimate. Other political expression is not.

“No one cares,” claims the media elite. Translation: they don’t care!

Bring back CNN’s “best political team on television” bigger than a baseball team. Wind up the sound-bite artists, and watch them argue all sides of any issue while marginalizing all dissent.

We can’t wait.

Never mind, the deepening financial crisis. Forget that there is a world out there. Ignore the wars, the riots and the pervasive repression.

Our media is destined to return to the most parochial focus because we think we do it so well.

Soon the preening pols will be everywhere. Their every utterance and burp will be considered newsworthy. Never mind the many contradictions and shifting positions. Never mind the calculated hypocrisy.

What do the Republicans stand for?

Obama is bad!

What does Obama stand for?

Good Question.

Soon the issues will disappear as color commentary takes over, like in sports events. What is Michelle Bachmann wearing?

And then the endless discussion of candidate geography. Rick Perry is now in New Hampshire. John Huntsman is on a motorcycle. Sarah’s bus broke down. Ron Paul, who’s he?

How fascinating.

The Washington Post has yet another big yawn-breaking snooze bulletin: “Former Minnesota Governor Tim Pawlenty announced Sunday morning that he is stepping out of the race for the GOP presidential nomination.”

The game is on. The boys are back. The election industry is cranking up its own army of professional consultants, advertising mavens, spin doctors, media buyers, disinformation specialists and field operatives.

The cycle is cycling again, hooray.

There are two rules in the political game book:

1. Don't Say What You Mean.
2. Don't Mean What You Say.

Election fever is something the networks know how to market and massage. They have had a lot of practice at it. Their graphics people are already at work. The sets are being built. The clichés are being sharpened.

And the political experts are out in force collecting data as in this study arguing that when campaigns are rocking, fewer people are taking their own lives. (I would have thought it was the other way around.)

Read this dreck:

“Using an original data set, this article explores the impact of U.S. presidential elections as collective rituals on monthly suicide rates. Controlling for a host of rival explanations, including year and month fixed effects, the business cycle, and other collective events (the Olympics), I find that certain months of the presidential election cycle are associated with lower suicide rates.

“I conclude that U.S. presidential politics, typically seen as an arena of conflict, can be a source of social solidarity, and therefore, society- or network-centered theories of social cohesion need to be augmented to include institutional mechanisms of social integration.”

Meanwhile, the forces behind the candidates, the funders and astro-turf organizations are mostly out of the news, still hidden in a shadow political landscape, like a shadow banking system.

Everyone knows it's there, but no one talks about it. The focus is always on **issues**, never **interests**.

As the nation careens towards a nose dive, it's trivia time again on TV. Did you see Romney's new look?

News Dissector Danny Schechter blogs at [News Dissector.com](http://NewsDissector.com)

Life in an Age of Looting

The ugly scenes of rioting and arson in Great Britain are a preview of

the societal breakdown that can be expected from today's staggeringly inequitable economic/political system, where stock-market sharpies get away with plundering pension funds but the poor get nailed for looting consumer goods, observes Phil Rockstroh.

By Phil Rockstroh

As the poor of Britain rise in a fury of inchoate rage and as stock exchanges worldwide experience manic upswings and panicked swoons the financial elite (and their political operatives) are arrayed in a defensive posture, even as they continue their global-wide, full-spectrum offensive vis-À-vis The Shock Doctrine.

Concurrently, corporate mass media types fret over the reversal of fortune and trumpet the triumphs of the self-serving agendas of Wall Street and corporate swindlers even as they term a feller, in ill-gotten possession of a flat-screen television, fleeing through the streets of North London, a mindless thug.

According to the through-the-looking-glass cosmology of mass media elitists, when a poor person commits a crime of opportunity, his actions are a threat to all we hold dear and sacred, but, when the hyper-wealthy of the entrenched looter class abscond with billions, those criminals are referred to as our financial leaders.

Regardless of the propaganda of "free market" fantasists, the great unspeakable in regard to capitalism is its wealth, by and large, is generated for a ruthless, privileged few by the creation of bubbles.

When those bubbles burst, the resultant economic catastrophe inflicts a vastly disproportionate amount of harm upon those – the laboring and middle classes – who generate grossly inequitable amounts of capital for the elitist of the fraudster class ... by having the life force drained from them by the vampiric set-up of the gamed system.

Woody Guthrie summed up the situation in these two (unfortunately) ageless stanzas:

"Yes, as through this world I've wandered
I've seen lots of funny men;
Some will rob you with a sixgun,
And some with a fountain pen.

"And as through your life you travel,
Yes, as through your life you roam,

You won't never see an outlaw
Drive a family from their home."
—excerpt from "Pretty Boy Floyd."

Although, at present, U.S. bank vaults contain little tangible loot for a Pretty Boy Floyd-type outlaw to boost. How would it be possible for an old-school bank robber such as Floyd to make-off with a haul of funneling electrons?

Here's the lowdown: The Wall Street fraudsters of the swindler class want to refill their coffers and line their pockets (that is, offshore accounts) with Social Security and Medicare funds. That's the nature of the unfolding scam, folks. Oligarchic rule has always been a system defined by legalized looting that leaves a wasteland of want, deprivation and unfocused rage in its wake.

Consequently, in the U.K. (and beyond): When poor people's hopes dry up, cities become a tinderbox of dead dreams, and we should not be stricken with shock and consternation when these degraded places are set aflame, nor should we be surprised when the bribed, debt-beholden and commercial media propaganda-bamboozled middle-class (who helped create the wasteland with their arid complicity) cry out (predictably) for police-state tactics to quell the fiery insurrection.

There have been incidents in which a fire has smoldered for years in an abandoned, sealed-off mineshaft, and then the fire, traveling through the tunnels of the mine, and up the roots of dead, dried trees have caused a dying forest to bloom into flames.

The rage that sparks a riot can proceed in a similar manner – and the insular, sealed-off nature of a nation's elite and the willful ignorance of its middle-class will only make the explosion of pent-up rage more powerful when it reaches the surface.

We exist in a culture that, day after day, inundates its have-nots with consumerist propaganda, and then, when the social order breaks down, its wealthy and bourgeoisie alike express outrage when the poor steal consumer goods – as opposed to going out and looting an education and a good job.

Under Disaster Capitalism, the people in the underclass have had economic violence inflicted upon them since birth, yet the corporate-state mass media doesn't seem to notice the situation, until young men burn down the night. Then media elitists wax indignant, carrying on as if these desperate acts are devoid of cultural context.

A mindset has been instilled in these young men and boys that they are nothing *sans* the accoutrements of consumerism. Yet when they loot an i-Phone, as opposed

to creating economy-shredding derivative scams, we're prompted by the corporate media to become indignant.

When the slow-motion, elitist-manipulated mob action known as our faux democratic/consumerist culture deprives people of their basic human rights and personal dignity – then, in turn, we should not be shocked when a mob of the underclass fails to bestow those virtues upon others.

The commercial mass media's narrative of narrowed context (emotional, anecdotal and unreflective in nature) serves as a form of corporate state propaganda, promulgated to ensure the general population continues to rage against the symptoms rather than the disease of neoliberalism.

The false framing of opposing opinions – of those who state the deprivations of neoliberalism factor into the causes of uprisings, insurrections and riots as being apologists for violence and destruction is as preposterous as claiming one is an apologist for dry rot when he points out structural damage to a house due to a leaking roof.

Because of the elements of inverted totalitarianism, inherent within the structure of corporate state capitalism, and internalized within the general population by constant, commercial media re-enforcement, one should not be surprised when a sizable portion of the general populace is inclined to support police-state tactics to quell social unrest among the disadvantaged of the population.

Keep in mind: When watching the BBC or the corporate media, one is receiving a limited narrative (tacitly) approved by the global power elite, created by informal arrangements among a careerist cartel comprised of business, governmental and media personality types who have a vested interest in maintaining the status quo, even if, in doing so, they serve as operatives of a burgeoning police state.

Accordingly, you can't debate fascist thinking with reason nor empathetic imagination, e.g., the self-righteous (and self-serving) pronouncements of mass media representatives nor the attendant outrage of the denizens of the corporate state in their audience – their umbrage engineered by the emotionally laden images with which they have been relentlessly pummeled and plied – because their responses will be borne of (conveniently) lazy generalizations, given impetus by fear-based animus.

Through it all, veiled by disorienting media distractions and political legerdemain, we find ourselves buffeted and bound by the predicament of paradigm lost that constitutes the onset of the unraveling of the present order.

“The kings of the world are growing old,
and they shall have no inheritors.
Their sons died while they were boys,
and their neurasthenic daughters abandoned
the sick crown to the mob.”

–Rainer Maria Rilke, excerpt from “The Kings of the World”

Yet, while there is proliferate evidence that, even as people worldwide are rising up against inequity and exploitation, the economic elite have little inclination to do so much as glimpse the plight of those from whose life blood their immense riches have been wrung, nor hear the admonition of the downtrodden that they are weary of life on their knees and are awakening to the reality that the con of freedom of choice under corporate state oligarchy is, in fact, a life shackled to the consumerism-addicted/debt-indentured-servitude that comprises the structure of the neoliberal, global company store.

“The rotten masks that divide one man
From another, one man from himself
They crumble
For one enormous moment and we glimpse
The unity that we lost, the desolation
...Of being man, and all its glories
Sharing bread and sun and death
The forgotten astonishment of being alive”
–Octavio Paz, excerpt from “Sunstone”

Accordingly, the most profound act of selfless devotion (commonly called love) in relationship to a society gripped by a sociopathic mode of being is creative resistance. Submission is madness. Sanity entails subversion. The heart insists on it; otherwise, life is only a slog to the graveyard; mouth, full of ashes; heart, a receptacle for dust.

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Mocking the Gaza Flotilla

A small flotilla carrying human rights and peace activists to Israel-blockaded Gaza was itself blockaded in Greece after intense diplomatic pressure from

Washington and Tel Aviv. But the Israeli news media continues to heap ridicule on the passengers. Two of them, retired U.S. Army Col. Ann Wright and Israeli-born Hagit Borer, respond.

By Ann Wright and Hagit Borer

Being, so to speak, of the “flotilla folk” ourselves, we read with some interest Roz Rothstein and Roberta Seid’s idle speculations in the Jerusalem Post on who our shipmates might have been, for idle speculations they certainly are, the writers having never contacted any of us.

In fact, at least when it comes to the American-flagged boat, *The Audacity of Hope*, we are not nearly as much of a mystery as one might imagine. Our biographies are all publicly posted at www.ustogaza.org.

A perusal of our stories would reveal, among other things, that 58 percent of us are women and that our median age is 60.

Similar demographic patterns existed on other boats as well. Many are retired people; most with modest means. We are people willing to spend our savings to fly to Athens and stay there for weeks, doubled or tripled up in hotel rooms, waiting to sail to Gaza.

We are people who felt, who still feel, that we must make the time and find the means because struggling for justice is the moral thing to do. Because we have all come to believe, in the words of Howard Zinn, that “You Can’t Be Neutral on a Moving Train” all notions, one feels, that Rothstein and Seid view with a mixture of scorn and incredulity.

As Americans, many of us also feel our primary duty is to speak truth to precisely that power that purports to speak on our behalf a notion that is, likewise, rather alien to most Israeli-Jewish society, although by no means to Jews elsewhere.

A third of us, passengers and organizers of *The Audacity of Hope*, are Jews, representing a long and valiant tradition of Jewish progressive activism in the U.S., Europe, South America, South Africa and elsewhere.

What Rothstein and Seid have neglected to note (carried away as they were by their enthusiastic description of our Israel-Hating Syndrome) is that many passengers on *The Audacity of Hope* have a long and distinguished record of anti-war activism.

They have been outspoken opponents of the American war in Vietnam; they have spoken against American involvement in Central America, and in the past decade,

against wars the U.S. has waged on Iraq and Afghanistan.

Many have traveled numerous times to war-ravaged Baghdad and Afghanistan. Kathy Kelly, one of our passengers, traveled to Iraq 26 times!

No, we are definitely not like other folks, if by "other folks" Rothstein and Seid refer to themselves. Unlike Rothstein and Seid, we insist on remembering not only the 23 people killed by rockets from Gaza, but also the over 1,000 Palestinian civilians killed by Israel in Gaza in Operation Cast Lead. And the scores killed in Jenin, and those shot routinely in demonstrations in the West Bank.

Unlike folks such as Rothstein and Seid, we refuse to forget that 1.6 million people in Gaza have been living in an open-air prison for five years now, or that 2.6 million in the West Bank have been under military occupation for 44 years the longest military occupation in modern history, and a situation with absolutely no current parallels!

That we have turned our attention to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in general and to the occupation and oppression of the Palestinians in particular derives directly from the understanding that these could not have survived without U.S. government support.

It is the U.S. government that has directly abetted Israel in its continuing dispossession of the Palestinians, and that has supported and protected Israel through its decades of refusal to enter meaningful negotiations.

Insofar as we are Americans, and insofar as our action is fundamentally political, it is intended to raise the awareness of our own people and to pressure our own government to change its course.

And yes, horrendous things are happening elsewhere in the world. Some on the flotilla have been very concerned about that. The IHH that organization which *The Jerusalem Post* links to jihadist groups has, in fact, interceded to support the Syrian refugees in Turkey, and delivered medicine and medical equipment to hospitals in al-Bayda and Benghazi in Libya.

How inconvenient for your case! But not to worry. One would be hard-pressed to find any trace of these facts in the mainstream Western or Israeli press.

Reading your derisive comments all intended to belittle the flotilla and its passengers it strikes us that the main question is not the one you pose, namely, who we are. Rather, a very different question comes to mind. Here we are, by your description a bunch of pathetic losers, misguided vacationers, professional activists and idealists who ran out of causes.

A grand total of 1,500 an overestimation to begin with and in actuality a lot less once the *Mavi Marmara* withdrew.

And yet, the State of Israel sees fit to keep us in the headlines for months with threats of attack dogs, snipers and anticipated deaths. Israel pulls out all stops in putting pressure on Mediterranean countries in general, and on Greece in particular, to make sure we don't leave port.

The Israeli ambassador to the UN, Ron Prosor, on June 22, called on the international community "to do everything in their ability in order to prevent the flotilla and warn citizens of their countries of the risks of participating in this type of provocation."

But if we are deluded losers, what does that make the State of Israel and its hysterical response? If 16 passengers on a small yacht off the coast of Gaza are bored vacationers with a mental disorder, what does that make the four fully armed gunboats confronting them?

The fact of the matter is that Israel, without any aid from us, provided our otherwise symbolic and rather small-scale effort with the overwhelming amplification that made it headline news in the rest of the world, and most crucially, it would appear from your article, an ongoing Israeli obsession.

While we wanted the plight of the Palestinians to be noticed by the world, we did not set out to have the flotilla become a major world event. That it has become one, however, became patently clear to us once Secretary of State Hillary Clinton saw fit to travel to Greece to deliver her heartfelt thanks to Greek Prime Minister George Papandreou for services rendered the stopping of our flotilla.

Frankly, we are grateful.

Ann Wright is a retired U.S. Army Reserve colonel and former U.S. diplomat. Hagit Borer is a professor of linguistics at the University of Southern California.

Wrestling Over the Debt Ceiling

As Republicans threaten to throw the U.S. economy into a new crisis by not raising the debt ceiling, Democrats have given ground time and again, erasing one line in the sand after another. But is this self-inflicted crisis real or just another political game, asks Danny Schechter.

By Danny Schechter

Oh, the gnashing of the teeth, Oh, the flamboyant tactics. Oh, all the breaking news excitement on cable news as the debt ceiling countdown saga went down to the wire with an intense political confrontation of a kind we haven't seen before

Or maybe we had in the TARP debate and so-called Obamacare vote, to cite but two moments of high political drama. Once again, all the key players knew the outcome but wanted to keep us guessing because it served everyone's interests.

For Boehner and the boys on the GOP side, it was the great leadership test subplot. He would prove how tough he was, demonstrate his leadership mettle, get equal time with the President, and even look presidential.

The orange tan was gone. His moment in the sunlight had come as he roped the Tea Party kids into the politically correct corral. The congressman from Ohio was now a national force to be reckoned with,

Let's not forget that he had become Wall Street's butt boy. He had many of the big-money lobbyists on his side even as the financiers whined and complained about exaggerated threats to the world economy.

They made some noise but not too much. They well remember the wit and wisdom of ex-White House aide and now Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel about a crisis being a terrible opportunity to waste,

The Wall Street power-crats are high-stakes poker players and this was one game they knew they would win in a political arena dependent on their beneficence.

At the same time, the media compared the charade to the uncertainty of who would be chosen as this week's Bachelorette reality TV show. The Tea Party even got Sen. Charles Schumer and comedian Jon Stewart going by reaching into home-video collections for a sound bite from Ben Affleck's flick, *The Town*, a bank robbery shoot em' up set in Charlestown, Massachusetts.

The only difference was that the pols on the Hill were interested in serving the banksters and had their eyes set on slightly bigger banks.

Some analysts put the Republican tactics down to "lunacy," others to irrationality.

But this gambit was far more rational than most commentators realized. It reminded me of Richard Nixon's "madman strategy" to make the Vietnamese think he was crazy enough to blow up their dykes or even drop the big one. It was a fear tactic in the game of psychological warfare.

New York Times columnist Paul Krugman understood what was going on, seconding my own analysis on the kamikaze tactics that the Right was using. He wrote what most of the media obfuscated about:

“The facts of the crisis over the debt ceiling aren’t complicated. Republicans have, in effect, taken America hostage, threatening to undermine the economy and disrupt the essential business of government unless they get policy concessions they would never have been able to enact through legislation.

“And Democrats – who would have been justified in rejecting this extortion altogether – have, in fact, gone a long way toward meeting those Republican demands.”

And, oh yes, the President had some big skin in the game. It gave him the posturing moment he needed to show how “balanced” he was, and how centrist he could become.

Obama talked left to move right, as Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting noted:

“Forget about ‘winning the future’ – Barack Obama wants to win the center. That’s what the Washington Post is telling readers (7/25/11): **Obama ‘Big Deal’ on Debt a Gamble to Win the Center.**

“Advisers think securing his plan would ensure general-election victory

“The Post’s Zachary A. Goldfarb (who can’t be held responsible for the headline) explained that Obama was making Republicans an offer they couldn’t refuse.

“He added: ‘Obama’s political advisers have long believed that securing such an agreement would provide an enormous boost to his 2012 campaign, according to people familiar with White House thinking. In particular, they want to preserve and improve the president’s standing among independents.’”

FAIR dipped into its own archive to remind us of an article from September 2009 which showed the President was under pressure even then to drop a focus on jobs to concentrate on the deficit.

In other words, this whole strategy is not new but years in the making, as Veronica Cassidy wrote for FAIR’s Extra! magazine:

“Parroting the Republican Party, corporate media have recently devoted much energy to deploring the federal deficit and chastising President Barack Obama for not focusing enough on balancing the budget.

“Very soon, media warn, either spending must be cut or taxes will need to be raised across the board, an argument that rests on the assumption that deficit

reduction is, indeed, the top economic priority”

And, so, White House priorities shifted subtly to please the plutocrats and try to neutralize the Tea Party fanatics by co-opting their program the way Bill Clinton did in 1996.

It was called “triangulation” then. Obama’s own supporters call it “betrayal” now; Obama’s pro-Wall Street economic team made clear they wouldn’t give the men on The Street too much to worry about.

And so what happens now? The Republicans get their bill, unify their ranks even though it’s just more show and tell.

As Reuters explains, it’s all a prelude to coming back to the bargaining table at the 11th hour to make a deal that both sides can use to political advantage.

Read this and as you do, read between the lines;

“The House of Representatives approved a Republican deficit plan on Friday that has no chance of becoming law **but could pave the way for a last-ditch bid for bipartisan compromise** to avert a crippling national default.”

This was the scenario, more akin to a Kabuki play than a real political fight. It’s more like professional wrestling of the kind they perform at the Capital Arena not far from Capitol Hill.

The audience is hyped. The wrestlers pretend to hate each other, and arouse the crowd with acts of physical aggression. The match looks fierce, but, as everyone knows, it is fixed and scripted.

The musclemen throw each other around the ring, sometimes even gushing blood. The big bruisers denounce each other until it’s over to the count of 1-2-3; the bad guy always goes down.

The match ends, imagine that, just in time for a commercial break. Here it will end at the debt ceiling deadline. Each side will claim victory.

There is no ceiling on these political shenanigans. It’s just part of fast-paced game designed to keep the public on the sidelines and on the edge of uncertainty while the media keeps the politicians in the spotlight and excites the base in both parties,

In the end, the media will salute both sides for putting country above party. The only deficit here is one of political morality and honesty.

You tell me: am I too cynical, or is this the way what some call poli-tricks are

played?

News Dissector Danny Schechter writes a blog at newsdissector.com. Comments to dissector@mediachannel.org

Who Commits Terrorism?

Exclusive: A right-wing Christian nationalist has claimed credit for the terrorist attacks in Norway, killing at least 76 people. Though his writings show that Anders Behring Breivik was inspired by anti-Muslim extremists in the United States, that bigotry also made Muslims the early suspects in the U.S. media, Robert Parry reports.

By Robert Parry

If the Fox News promoters of racial profiling had been in charge of investigating last Friday's terror attack in Norway, they might well have encountered blond, blue-eyed Anders Behring Breivik and his two smoking-hot guns only long enough to ask if he'd seen any suspicious-looking Muslims around.

After all, it has been a touchstone of the American Right, as well as right-wing Israelis, that Muslims are the source of virtually all terrorism and thus it makes little sense to focus attention on non-Muslims. A clean-cut Nordic sort like Breivik, who fancies himself part of a modern-day Knights Templar, is someone who would get a pass.

Or, as Israel's UN Ambassador Dan Gillerman told a conference of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee in 2006, "While it may be true and probably is that not all Muslims are terrorists, it also happens to be true that nearly all terrorists are Muslim." [Washington Post, March 7, 2006]

So, if you were tuned in to Fox News after the Norway attack, you would have seen smug-looking Fox talking heads recounting how this attack was surely an act of Islamic terrorism and even one exchange about the value of racial profiling to avoid wasting time on non-Muslims.

Yet, while the biases of Gillerman and Fox News represent a large chunk of the conventional wisdom, the reality is that terrorism is far from some special plague associated with Muslims. In fact, terrorism, including state terrorism, has been practiced far more extensively by non-Muslims and especially by Christian-dominated nations, both historically and in more modern times.

Terror tactics have long been in the tool kit of predominantly Christian armies and paramilitaries, including Breivik's beloved Crusaders who slaughtered Muslims and Jews alike when Jerusalem was conquered in 1099.

Terror, such as torture and burning "heretics" alive, was a big part of the Roman Catholic Inquisition and the intra-Christian bloodletting in Europe in the middle of the last millennium. Terror played a big role, too, in genocides committed by Christian explorers against the indigenous peoples of the Western Hemisphere and other unfortunate targets of colonialism.

More Crusading 'Knights'

During the Jim Crow era in the American South, white Christians organized Ku Klux Klan chapters, which, like Breivik's Templars, considered themselves Christian "knights" harkening back to the Crusades. The KKK inflicted terror on blacks, including lynching and bombings, to defend white supremacy.

In the 20th Century, there were countless examples of "red" and "white" terror, as Communists challenged the Capitalist power structure in Russia and other countries. Those violent clashes led to the rise of German Nazism which empowered "Aryans" to inflict terrifying slaughters to "defend" their racial purity from Jews, Gypsies, Slavs and other "inferior" races.

To prevail in World War II, the Allies resorted to their own terror tactics, destroying entire cities from the air, such as Dresden in Germany and Hiroshima and Nagasaki in Japan.

After World War II, the United States created the CIA to conduct what amounted to a war of terror and counter-terror against revolutionary movements around the world. This "low-intensity conflict" sometimes spilled into massive slaughters, such as U.S. terror bombings that killed estimated millions across Vietnam and Southeast Asia.

The CIA also recruited, deployed and supported proxy terrorists throughout Latin America, with right-wing Cubans receiving special training in explosives and a generation of South and Central American military officers schooled in how to intimidate and repress political movements seeking social change.

A fierce slaughter occurred in Guatemala after the CIA ousted an elected government in 1954 through the use of violent propaganda that terrified the nation. The CIA's coup was followed by military dictatorships that used state terror as a routine means of controlling the impoverished population.

The consequences of the U.S. strategy were described in a March 29, 1968, report written by the U.S. embassy's deputy chief of mission, Viron Vaky.

"The official squads are guilty of atrocities. Interrogations are brutal, torture is used and bodies are mutilated," Vaky wrote. "In the minds of many in Latin America, and, tragically, especially in the sensitive, articulate youth, we are believed to have condoned these tactics, if not actually encouraged them.

"Therefore our image is being tarnished and the credibility of our claims to want a better and more just world are increasingly placed in doubt."

Vaky also noted the self-deceptions within the U.S. government that resulted from its complicity in state-sponsored terror.

"This leads to an aspect I personally find the most disturbing of all – that we have not been honest with ourselves," Vaky said. "We have condoned counter-terror; we may even in effect have encouraged or blessed it. We have been so obsessed with the fear of insurgency that we have rationalized away our qualms and uneasiness.

"This is not only because we have concluded we cannot do anything about it, for we never really tried. Rather we suspected that maybe it is a good tactic, and that as long as Communists are being killed it is alright.

"Murder, torture and mutilation are alright if our side is doing it and the victims are Communists. After all hasn't man been a savage from the beginning of time so let us not be too queasy about terror. I have literally heard these arguments from our people."

Vaky's lament, however, mostly fell on deaf ears. Before long, much of Latin America was governed by murderous regimes, including the Southern Cone dictatorships which went so far as to create an international assassination combine called Operation Condor to spread terror among political dissidents by killing critics as far away as Washington and European capitals.

The Bush Role

These terror operations reached a peak when George H.W. Bush was CIA director in 1976. In that year, U.S.-backed Cuban terrorists blew up a Cubana Airline plane killing 73 people, with the evidence pointing at Cuban anti-communists Orlando Bosch and Luis Posada Carriles.

But those two right-wing Cubans continued to receive help and protection from the United States, including from the next generation of Bushes, Jeb and George W. (Thanks to the Bushes and their readiness to harbor these terrorists, Bosch lived out his golden years in Miami and Posada was spared extradition to Venezuela.)

Some of the worst examples of state terrorism occurred in Central America during Ronald Reagan's presidency. Reagan threw the support of the U.S. government behind the blood-soaked militaries of Guatemala and El Salvador (ironically, in the name of fighting terrorism). He also unleashed a terrorist organization, known as the Contras, against the leftist government in Nicaragua.

The butchery was shocking. Tens of thousands were slaughtered across Central America with the U.S.-backed Guatemalan army engaging in genocide against Indian populations of the highlands.

Though Reagan was the leading proponent in this application of terror in the 1980s, he is today one of the most honored U.S. presidents with scores of government facilities, including National Airport in Washington, named after him. (He is routinely cited by all sides in policy debates, including by President Barack Obama in his address on the debt ceiling Monday night.)

Though Israel has been the victim of many horrible acts of Islamic terrorism, it also is not without guilt in the dark arts of terrorism.

Militant Zionists employed terrorism as part of their campaign to establish Israel as a Jewish state in the 1940s. The terrorism included killings of British officials who were administering Palestine under an international mandate as well as Palestinians who were driven violently from their land so it could be claimed by Jewish settlers.

One of the most famous of those terrorist attacks was the 1946 bombing of the King David Hotel in Jerusalem where British officials were staying. The attack, which killed 91 people including local residents, was carried out by the Irgun, a terrorist group run by Menachem Begin. Another veteran of this campaign of Zionist terrorism was Yitzhak Shamir.

And, these Jewish terrorists were not simply obscure figures in Israeli history. Begin later founded the Likud Party and rose to be Israel's prime minister. Shamir was another Likud leader who was later elected prime minister. (Today, Likud remains Israel's ruling party.)

In the early 1990s, as I was waiting to interview Shamir at his Tel Aviv office, I was approached by one of his young female assistants who was dressed in a gray and blue smock with a head covering in the traditional Hebrew style.

As we were chatting, she smiled and said in a lilting voice, "Prime Minister Shamir, he was a terrorist, you know." I responded with a chuckle, "yes, I'm aware of the prime minister's biography."

Defining Terrorism

The classic definition of “terrorism” is the use of violence against civilians to achieve a political goal. But the word ultimately has been transformed into a geopolitical insult. If “our” side is the target, it’s “terrorism,” even if it’s a case of local militants attacking an occupying military force. Yet, when “our” side is doing the killing, it is anything but “terrorism.”

So, for instance, when Palestinians trapped in the open-air prison called Gaza fire small missiles at nearby Israeli settlements, that is decried as “terrorism” because the missiles are indiscriminant. But in 1983, when the Reagan administration lobbed artillery shells from the USS New Jersey into Lebanese villages (in support of the Israeli occupation of Lebanon), that was not “terrorism.”

Yet, when Lebanese militants responded to the U.S. shelling by driving a truck bomb into the U.S. Marine base at the Beirut airport, killing 241 American troops, that was widely deemed “terrorism” in the American news media, even though the victims weren’t civilians. They were military troops belonging to a country that had become a participant in a civil war.

As a Washington-based reporter for the Associated Press then, I questioned the seeming bias that the wire service was showing in its selective use of the word “terrorist.” A senior AP executive responded to my concerns with a quip, “Terrorist is the word that follows Arab.”

Working journalists understood that it was an unwritten rule to apply the word “terrorism” liberally when the perpetrators were Muslims but avoid the term when describing actions by the United States or its allies. At such moments, the principle of objectivity went out the window.

Eventually, the American press corps developed such an engrained sense of this double standard that unrestrained moral outrage would pour forth when acts of “terrorism” were committed by U.S. enemies, but a studied silence or a nuanced concern would follow similar crimes by the United States or its allies.

So, when President George W. Bush carried out his “shock and awe” assault on Iraq, there was no suggestion that the destruction might be an act of terror because it was specifically designed to intimidate the Iraqis. Bush then followed up with a brutal invasion that has since resulted in hundreds of thousands of Iraqi deaths.

Many Muslims and others around the world denounced Bush’s Iraq invasion as “state terrorism,” but such a charge was considered far outside the mainstream debate in the United States. Instead, Iraqi insurgents have been labeled “terrorists” when they attack U.S. troops inside Iraq.

This double standard then reinforces the notion that “only Muslims” commit acts of “terrorism,” because the Western news media, by practice, almost never applies the t-word to non-Muslims. By contrast, it is both easy and expected to attach the word to Muslim groups held in disfavor by the U.S. and Israeli governments, i.e. Hamas and Hezbollah.

Islamophobe Hearings

This double standard has been on display this year with Rep. Peter King’s Homeland Security Committee hearings on the “radicalization” of American Muslims. King has refused to expand his investigation to include what appears to be the new rising threat from Christian Right “radicalization.”

Much like the Norway slaughter, a number of recent examples of domestic terrorism have emanated from the Right’s hostility toward multiculturalism and other policies of the modern American state.

Recent cases of domestic terrorism have included the gunning down of presumed liberals at a Unitarian Church in Kentucky; violent attacks on gynecologists who perform abortions; the killing of a guard at Washington’s Holocaust Museum; and the shooting of a Democratic congresswoman and her constituents in Arizona.

From Breivik’s manifesto urging European Christians to rise up against Muslim immigrants and liberal politicians who tolerate multiculturalism, it is clear that he was largely inspired by anti-Muslim rhetoric that pervades the American Right and has surfaced in ugly campaigns to prevent mosques from being built across the country or even an Islamic community center that was deemed to be too close to 9/11’s Ground Zero.

Rep. King’s hearings were inspired by the work of noted Islam-basher Steven Emerson, whose Investigative Project on Terrorism has sought to link the locations of mosques to the incidence of terrorism cases. Emerson, who has close ties to Israel’s Likud and American neocons, also was a key figure in the campaign to block the Islamic community center near Ground Zero.

In 2010, Emerson went on right-wing activist Bill Bennett’s national radio show and insisted that Islamic cleric Feisal Abdul Rauf, the leading force behind the community center, would likely not “survive” Emerson’s disclosure of supposedly radical comments that Rauf made a half decade ago.

Emerson said, “We have found audiotapes of Imam Rauf defending Wahhabism, the puritanical version of Islam that governs Saudi Arabia; we have found him calling for the elimination of the state of Israel by claiming he wants a one-nation state meaning no more Jewish state; we found him defending bin Laden violence.”

However, when Emerson's Investigative Project on Terrorism released its evidence several days later, it fell far short of Emerson's lurid descriptions. Rauf actually made points that are shared by many mainstream analysts and none of the excerpted comments involved "defending Wahhabism."

Imbalanced Propaganda

As for Rauf "defending bin Laden violence," Emerson apparently was referring to remarks that Rauf made to an audience in Australia in 2005 about the history of U.S. and Western mistreatment of people in the Middle East.

"We tend to forget, in the West, that the United States has more Muslim blood on its hands than al-Qaeda has on its hands of innocent non-Muslims," Rauf said.

"You may remember that the U.S.-led sanctions against Iraq led to the death of over half a million Iraqi children. This has been documented by the United Nations. And when Madeleine Albright, who has become a friend of mine over the last couple of years, when she was Secretary of State and was asked whether this was worth it, [she] said it was worth it."

Emerson purported to "fact check" Rauf's statement on the death toll from the Iraq sanctions by claiming "a report by the British government said at most only 50,000 deaths could be attributed to the sanctions, which were brought on by the actions by former Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein."

What Emerson's "fact check" ignored, however, was that Rauf was accurately recounting Leslie Stahl's questioning of Secretary of State Albright on CBS "60 Minutes" in 1996. Emerson also left out the fact that United Nations studies did conclude that those U.S.-led sanctions caused the deaths of more than 500,000 Iraqi children under the age of five.

In the 1996 interview, Stahl told Albright regarding the sanctions, "We have heard that a half million children have died. I mean, that's more children than died in Hiroshima. And, you know, is the price worth it?"

Albright responded, "I think this is a very hard choice, but the price we think the price is worth it."

Later, an academic study by Columbia University's Richard Garfield put the sanctions-related death toll of Iraqi children, under five, at 106,000 to 227,000.

Emerson didn't identify the specific British report that contains his lower figure, although even that number 50,000 represents a stunning death toll and doesn't contradict Rauf's chief point, that U.S.-British actions have killed

many innocent Muslims over the years.

Also, by 2005, when Rauf made his remarks in Australia, the United States and Great Britain had invaded and occupied Iraq, with a death toll spiraling from tens of thousands to hundreds of thousands with some estimates of war-related deaths in Iraq now exceeding one million.

Far from “defending bin Laden violence,” Rauf’s comments simply reflected the truth about the indiscriminate killing inflicted on the Muslim world by U.S.-British interventions over the decades. British imperialism in the region dates back several centuries, a point that Emerson also ignored. [See Consortiumnews.com’s [“Islam Basher Claims to Unmask Cleric.”](#)]

It is Emerson’s kind of anti-Muslim propaganda that has infected the ability of the U.S. political system to deal fairly with Middle Eastern issues. Rep. King’s one-sided hearings have become another opportunity to exacerbate American hostility toward Muslims.

Emerson has boasted about his role in helping to structure King’s hearings, but lashed out at King when the congressman refused to include Emerson on the witness list.

“I was even going to bring in a special guest today and a VERY informed and connected source, who could have been very useful, possibly even critical to your hearing, but he too will not attend unless I do,” Emerson wrote to King. “You have caved in to the demands of radical Islamists in removing me as a witness.”

In a particularly weird twist, Emerson somehow envisioned himself as the victim of McCarthyism because he wasn’t being allowed to go before the House Homeland Security Committee and accuse large segments of the American-Muslim community of being un-American. [[Politico, Jan. 19, 2011](#)]

But such is the strange world of the propagandists who have managed to associate the crime of “terrorism” almost exclusively with Muslims, when the ugly reality is that the blood of innocents covers the hands of adherents to many other faiths (and political movements) as well.

It is that sort of anti-Muslim bigotry which feeds the Christian Right terrorism of an Anders Behring Breivik.

[For more on these topics, see Robert Parry’s *Secrecy & Privilege* and *Neck Deep*, now available in a two-book set for the discount price of only \$19. For details, [click here.](#)]

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

The Blue Eyes of Terror

On Friday, as news spread of the ghastly terror attacks in Norway, U.S. cable news outlets jumped to the conclusion that Muslims must have done it. Many talking heads were stunned to learn that the confessed killer was a blond, blue-eyed Christian terrorist, as Danny Schechter reports. By Danny Schechter

Move over Osama bin Laden – even as I know you already have in the physical sense – because you now have an emulator who borrows your tactics and inverts your ideology.

Anders Behring Breivik is Norway's candidate for the new world's top living evil-doer and terror supremo having admitted to killing at least 76 people, many of them at a youth summer camp, and blowing up buildings in Oslo.

While bin Laden castigated Western Crusaders, Breivik salutes these Christian warriors in a 1,518-page manifesto of madness. And his lawyer has rationalized his murder spree in a way similar to how some justified Al Qaeda's actions as defending Islam.

The two are almost carbon copies. The Norwegian posted videos on YouTube while bin Laden relied on TV communiqués.

One was killing in the name of Islam, the other in the name of Christianity.

Foreign Policy reports, "Breivik's lawyer said that his client admitted to the killings, but rejected 'criminal responsibility.' He described Breivik as being motivated to carry out the attacks by a desire to force radical change on Norwegian society.

" 'He has said that he believed the actions were atrocious, but that in his head they were necessary,' the lawyer said."

And now he's pled not guilty, Of course!

Breivik has taken Islamophobia to a new level of violence and killing hoping to spark an uprising in Europe. He quotes from American websites that view all Muslims as jihadists, and even the tract of the Unabomber.

The "Made in USA" stamp is all over this despicable act.

We can see how easily hate mongers abandon argument for agitation and vow death for all perceived enemies.

We can also see how quickly major media outlets jumped to the assumption that the perpetrators were Muslims, Al Qaeda killers or worse. All the "terror" experts did what was done before after the Oklahoma City bombings, blame the "other."

Fox News led the rush to judgment with predictable Muslim bashing.

CNN's Ton Lister was not far behind, speculating early on, "You've only got to look at the target – prime minister's office, the headquarters of the major newspaper group next door. Why would that be relevant? Because the Norwegian newspapers republished the cartoons of Prophet Mohammad that caused such offense in the Muslim world. ... That is an issue that still rankles amongst Islamist militants the world over."

Hmmm.

A resort to violence escalates when underlying prejudice is legitimated and is recycled. Recently members of Congress condemned a "Ground Zero Mosque" that was neither a mosque nor at Ground Zero. Demagogues whipped up anti-Islamic passions and promulgated stereotyping.

Protests against the protesters went largely unreported. Today, one-time pizza company executive, Herman Cain, a Republican presidential candidate, spews disdain of all Muslims.

Anwaar Hussain, a Pakistani by birth and blogger by vocation, offers a perspective worth contemplating. May I quote him at length?

"Condolences, Norway. Our hearts ache for you in this time of incredible sadness and shock. As more than 90 of your families bury their dead, we stand with you in solemn sorrow.

"And welcome to the world of right wing zombies.

"These are words written by the citizen of a country that continues to reel from the onslaught of these androids. We understand your grief and your disbelief.

"But please understand that these human low-lives go by many different names i.e. fundamentalists, jihadists, radicals, extremists etc. yet they all claim to get their instructions straight from their god.

"Afterward, they go out to slaughter some children in the name of that god. We are sorry that you had to taste firsthand what we've been living through for the past twenty years. We were taken there, we have seen it all, we are still there.

"From the Oslo carnage, three facts emerge as usual.

"Firstly, these cowards always turn on their own first, attacking the most defenseless of the society for starters. It may be called the terror stage.

"Secondly, the victims always refuse to believe that killer/s could be one/s of their own. In Pakistan, for a long time people said, 'these killers can't be Muslims.' And in Norway now when the killer is even confirmed as a blond, blue-eyed, indigenous Norwegian white right-wing extremist, their very own Anders Breivik Bin Laden, people are saying, 'he can't be a Christian.'

"Let us call it the denial stage which may linger on, as is in Pakistan, for decades before

the victims can differentiate between their Messiahs and killers.

“Thirdly, extremists come in every hue. What they have in common is extreme views and the conviction that they know what’s good for the rest of us.”

And here we are at a time of financial collapse and political stalemate when so many want simple explanations and symbolic enemies to go after.

As our politics polarize in the USA, so does the world’s.

It’s shocking but all too predictable.

It’s time to take a stand for tolerance and mutual respect, and reject the simplistic attacks on multiculturalism that stir prejudice and reinforce racism by pandering politicians who play to the public’s fears.

It is a time to call a fascist a fascist and condemn this outbreak of violence that stains a great nation and troubles the world.

May our artists and politicians speak out before there are more copycat incidents?

May our educators stop their lesson plans and focus on the lessons of this dastardly deed against the youth of the county that gives us the Nobel Prize and helps poorer countries while the more affluent countries stand by and do nothing.

We can’t let this “incident” pass without a global media-led teach-in to turn the madness around. This happened in Norway but the extremists are everywhere and will be emboldened unless a universal chorus of condemnation arises.

It will happen again and again until the teachers of hate are challenged and stopped. Journalists have a responsibility to take on the machinations of extremist views and groups and expose them for what they are.

Only then can we say that those young people at a Norwegian summer camp did not die in vain.

How many more of these “templars” in their fantasy costumes armed to the teeth and ready to destroy what democratic societies remain. With their fertilizer they make bombs out of bullshit.

One warning: Incidents like this invite armed overreactions as 9/11 did with military establishments the beneficiary even as the threat is not a military one in the end.

We are all Norwegians now. Their loss must become our own. The duty to respond belongs to every person of conscience. Show some solidarity.

Speak now or forever say goodbye to peace and justice.

News Dissector Danny Schechter writes the News Dissector.com blog. Comments to dissector@mediachannel.org

Fixing the American Narrative

We all are familiar with the age-old warnings about what happens if we don't know the past, or if we base assumptions on foundations made of sand, or if we delude ourselves into thinking that safeguards exist when they have been corrupted or no longer function as intended.

Simply put, we founded Consortiumnews.com more than 15 years ago as a response to such dangers.

Though perhaps little understood at the time, the watchdog role of the U.S. news media had collapsed. Rather than telling the truth about high-level crimes (especially national security ones), major news outlets had, more often than not, become enablers of the abuses.

The once-vaunted Washington press corps found itself acquiescing to cover-ups, especially those crafted by the master media manipulators of the Reagan-Bush administrations. Over time, modern American history became polluted by propaganda and lies. The resulting false narrative was leading the nation off a cliff.

Since 1995, Consortiumnews.com has worked to set the record straight so that a truthful narrative can help Americans and people around the world understand current events. It is our belief that without knowing that past, you can't understand the why's and how's of what's happening today.

However, we need your help.

We are now in the midst of an important mid-year fund drive and, so far, we have raised only about 20 percent of our modest target of \$25,000. So, whether you can afford only a small donation or if you can make a sizeable one, please give what you can.

There are four easy ways to support what we do:

First option: You can make a tax-deductible donation by credit card at the Web site or by check to Consortium for Independent Journalism (CIJ); 2200 Wilson Blvd.; Suite 102-231; Arlington VA 22201. Or you can use PayPal (our account is named after our e-mail address "consortnew@aol.com").

With any donation of \$50 or more, you can request as a premium gift a copy of one of two documentaries about the historic 1980 election:

A DVD of the PBS "Frontline" documentary "The Election Held Hostage," co-written by Consortiumnews.com's editor Robert Parry. It explores whether Republican skullduggery with

Iran was a factor in electing Ronald Reagan.

Or, a DVD of filmmaker William Brandon Shanley's documentary, "The Made for TV Election," which examines the role of media manipulation. It is narrated by actor Martin Sheen.

For \$100, you can get both. And for \$125, we will add the two-DVD set of the closed-door congressional debriefing of Israeli intelligence officer Ari Ben-Menashe, describing his role in these historic events.

Once you make your donation, simply e-mail us your selection at consortnew@aol.com.

If you'd prefer, a book instead of a DVD, you can ask for an autographed copy of one of Robert Parry's last three books *Lost History*, *Secrecy & Privilege* or *Neck Deep* as a substitute. Just follow up your donation with an e-mail expressing your choice.

Second: if you'd rather spread out your support in smaller amounts, you can sign up for a monthly donation. With contributions of \$10 or more a month, you can qualify for war correspondent Don North's DVD, "Yesterday's Enemies" about the lives of former Salvadoran guerrillas. For details, [click here](#).

(If you sign up for a monthly donation and want to get Don's DVD, remember to contact us at consortnew@aol.com. If you prefer, we can substitute "The Election Held Hostage" or "The Made for TV Election." Just ask.)

Third option: if you can't afford a donation right now, you can also help us reach our fundraising goal by taking advantage of our deep discount for the two-book set of Robert Parry's *Secrecy & Privilege* and *Neck Deep* (co-authored with Sam and Nat Parry). The sale price for the set is only \$19, postage included. For details, [click here](#).

Fourth: you can help us close out our warehouse space by buying full boxes of *Secrecy & Privilege* or *Neck Deep* for only \$59. Each carton contains 28 paperbacks, or you can ask that we give you a mix of half and half, 14 of each.

You can give the books away as gifts or resell them for your own fundraiser. (One reader placed an order for her book club, a great idea since each book costs only about \$2.)

For details about this bulk book order, [click here](#) and scroll down to the \$59 offer.

As always, thanks for your support.

Robert Parry broke many of the Iran-Contra stories in the 1980s for the Associated Press and Newsweek. He founded Consortiumnews.com in 1995 as the Internet's first investigative magazine. He saw it as a way to combine modern technology and old-fashioned journalism to counter the increasing triviality and timidity of the mainstream U.S. news media.

The Rise of Pro-Democracy Journalism

The old idea of journalism arming the people with facts they need for democracy

to work has been betrayed by major U.S. news outlets, like the New York Times and Washington Post, which have instead aligned themselves with national power under the guise of “objectivity.” But Nozomi Hayase sees the Internet as a more democratic hope.

By Nozomi Hayase

July 18, 2011

There is much controversy over the future of journalism. The discourse surrounding WikiLeaks in its relation to traditional media has become the eye of the storm.

Both the New York Times and The Guardian have come out strongly critical of WikiLeaks and Julian Assange. Bill Keller, executive editor of the New York Times has refused to refer to Assange as a journalist.

In an interview on PBS, Keller described Assange as an activist with an agenda to promote, carrying an ideology of transparency, claiming that his aim is to embarrass the U.S. government. Recently, Keller’s view on this topic has shifted a bit. He came close to admitting WikiLeaks is a journalistic entity.

Yet, he distanced himself from the non-profit whistle-blower site, saying “it still wasn’t ‘my kind of news organization,’ and that if Assange was acting as a journalist, ‘I don’t regard him as a kindred spirit, he’s not the kind of journalist I am’” [as cited in Ingram, 2011].

There are various possible motives at work here. American mainstream media’s lack of support and even hostility towards WikiLeaks could indicate simple jealousy of WikiLeaks’ accomplishments and also may come from sensing a threat to the familiar way of practicing “journalism.”

Yet, the debate surrounding WikiLeaks’ status as a journalistic organization and the question of whether First Amendment protections cover the unauthorized release of sensitive or secret government documents bring out a larger issue. It urges us to reexamine what freedom of speech and the press really is.

The First Amendment of the United States:

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

Attorney Jonathon Peters wrote in his article titled “WikiLeaks, The First Amendment, and the Press,” that “The First Amendment does not belong to the

press. It protects the expressive rights of all speakers, sometimes on the basis of the Speech Clause and sometimes on the basis of the Press Clause.”

In a representative democracy, it is vital for citizens to be vigilant and aware of the actions of their government and aware that they are free to speak. This is different from a monarchy where the authority comes from the centralized throne of a King.

The First Amendment was meant to bring a new balance of power between citizens and the government, particularly as a check on the executive branch. It gives ordinary people power to challenge the gap in power between those who are in a position of the official authority and the “governed” on the street.

Those who govern are meant to be in service to the best interests of the general populace. It is therefore both a right and also a responsibility in a democracy for individuals to engage as watchdogs against abuse of power.

The First Amendment as a whole is meant to safeguard that role, encouraging communication between citizens and governments to move toward dialogue rather than monologue.

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

To argue that the First Amendment would protect Assange and WikiLeaks only if they are part of the press is to assume (1) that the Speech Clause would not protect them, and (2) that there is a major difference between the Speech and Press Clauses. (Peters, 2011)

Journalists share the right of free speech and press with ordinary people as they themselves are citizens. Yet, they serve as a critical link as purveyors of mass communication.

The press in its early form was simply the collective effort of individuals, aided by the technology of printing that gave power to multiply and distribute information faster and more effectively than any one individual alone.

Though journalism is the only occupation explicitly protected by the U.S. Constitution, the journalist’s freedom to print is there to serve the citizen’s right to know and is not meant to take precedence over those citizens’ right to speak, have access to and utilize all organs of communication.

Yet, what has been happening is a deviation from this Constitutional right, through monopolization of the organs of mass media and the professionalization of journalism. This was revealed in the established media’s dealings with WikiLeaks.

At the National Conference for Media Reform in Boston, one of the panelists, Greg Mitchell, writer for The Nation magazine described how the establishment media functions as a gatekeeper that decides what to withhold and what to cover. They decide what the public should know according to that media organization's relationship to those in power.

When WikiLeaks first tried to partner up with established media organizations in a gesture of equality, these established media outlets such as the New York Times attempted to take the traditional stance of control and management.

How did the established media come into this role as self proclaimed gatekeeper?

The profession of journalism arms itself with the creed of objectivity to exercise this control. This idea of objectivity can be traced back to the epistemology of physical science, which has been extended into the field of journalism and psychology in the guise of social science.

David Scott and Robin Usher (1996) showed how the foundation of knowledge for this notion of objectivity depends on validation by an outer authority:

One of the most important aspects of these epistemological "good ground" are that the researcher was "objective", i.e. that he or she was unbiased, value neutral and took care to ensure that personal considerations did not intrude into the research process in other words, that the researcher's subjectivity has been eliminated as a factor in the knowledge claim. (p. 12)

Yet, the so-called unbiased reporting is filled with private agendas. Constitutional scholar and blogger Glenn Greenwald pointed out how American journalism identified themselves as a part of political power.

As an executive editor, Bill Keller went to great lengths to show how he is proud of the fact that he always turns to the Administration for permission for what the Times should or should not publish. For some journalists, what they claim to be a creed of objectivity is actually replaced with or a cover for government authority or corporate interests.

David Allen, associate professor of journalism, describes the consequence of this creation of professional authority:

The importance of professionalism can be seen in the passivity it has created within the body politic. Individuals began to regard professional judgments, often supported by scientific data, as unquestionable, 'discouraging independent evaluation. [See Allen, D. S. (2005). Democracy, Inc.: The press and law in the corporate rationalization of the public sphere. Chicago: University of Illinois Press. p. 54]

With the rise of the expert class in mass communication, a gap is created between professionals and layman, where people are not encouraged to think for themselves. They start to distrust their own intuitive and experiential ways of knowing.

While science relies on external validation, an epistemology of art would be founded in a more subjective domain. When the scientific approach becomes more dominant, art is often degraded as inferior and considered an illegitimate way to process reality.

Many of the creative avenues of art have been co-opted by commercial interests and are contained within constricted bounds. Music is labeled and controlled by big companies and public art or murals have been replaced by corporate advertisement billboards.

Instead of expanding the First Amendment right for all people, the professionalized media appears to have been doing the opposite.

This censoring of art and particular political points of view is indeed a fundamental assault on free speech and amounts to a colonization of the cultural sphere, where citizens would naturally cultivate connection with their innate creative force through arts and education.

What is happening to WikiLeaks in terms of attempts to discredit them has already been done to ordinary people. Under the umbrella of professionalism, those in power tend to devalue or exclude the voices of citizens from participating in democratic action.

“Freedom of speech is something that represents the very dignity of what a human being is,” said Mario Savio, a spokesperson of Free Speech Movement.

What was this freedom of speech that Savio so fiercely defended? The commonly held view is that freedom of speech is simply the right for people to speak without interference.

One underlying principle for this idea is the notion of individuality. Interpreted from the Western framework of the idea of enlightenment, the focus is given to individual expression. Free speech as self-expression is a vital first step of any healthy communication.

Yet, man does not exist in isolation. What is often not looked at is speech from the paradigm of the interdependent self. The meaning of speech is found in the communal ground because humans are inherently social beings and speech is only useful when there is common interest and active listening is involved.

The capacity for dialogue where both parties are given space to freely express themselves with interest in the other is essential. True speech is founded on listening. It requires recognition of the other as an independent being.

When one truly speaks, this act is based on the speaker's listening into where the listener of their speech is coming from.

This vital connection between the act of speaking and listening is not often given its due. In modern days, speaking as an avenue toward one's own personal gain is emphasized. Speech that is not grounded in listening becomes indulging self-talk or animal roaring without higher meaning.

Established media has not been listening to the public. This disrespect for citizens is seen in the act of engaging the public in tabloid drivel, lowering news reporting into trivial gossip.

Citizens voices are not held to be worth listening to. What could be a conversation easily becomes a monologue, with information that is fed from top down.

Language gets abstracted from the common ground. Those who are separated from listening can often speak with complexity and technical jargon. Such speech becomes babbling and tends to obscure or break down communication.

Foremost it uses semantics and euphemisms that distort reality and cut off one's feeling from other human beings. Torture becomes enhanced interrogation. Illegal kidnapping is replaced with extreme rendition and civilians are described as enemy combatants.

This one-sided communication that is often seen in traditional news does not make room for interaction, while increasingly popular online alternative media opens up a space for lively dialogue.

In today's mass media, the spirit of freedom of speech is often lost. By not engaging in active listening and by serving the moneyed elites, many established journalists end up actually working against the true meaning of the First Amendment.

In an interview with Al Jazeera, Assange described how he was surprised by the lack of public response after the release of two war logs.

When journalists act as professionals who have lost community values and become sentinels for the status quo and when art is enslaved to commercial interests, then public space is privatized or left in a vacuum. Citizens who became apathetic and cynical are driven to consume products of a soulless culture to

fill that empty space.

In Guernica magazine article on April 29, 2008, Assange posed an urgent question:

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

There are a few excellent journalists, yet many who have professional skills become obedient, taking orders from authority. The failure of the Fourth Estate is only the surface of a deeper illness in society.

The deeper issue is the decay of the cultural sphere, and absence of a public who holds policymakers accountable. Fredrick Douglas once said, "Power concedes nothing without a demand. It never did and it never will."

Systems will not change from the top, but only when demand for that change comes from the bottom, through the actions of ordinary people.

Before journalists start acting out of morals and speaking truth to power, they must first be reminded of their roots as citizens that share communal values.

What comes first is the enlivening of the cultural sphere, for each person to restore the lost union of speaking and listening. For this, the true impulse of art that had been enslaved by commercial and empirical supremacy must be allowed to freely speak once again.

The authentic hard source material of WikiLeaks made it possible for the organization to meaningfully challenge the authority of establishment and the sophisticated perception management that had been built up over the years.

Their passionate disclosure of classified documents has broken the chains of the creed of objectivity that have kept people down in skepticism and apathy.

WikiLeaks's release of "Collateral Murder" broke through the shield of professions and showed the world what modern war really looks like. Assange described how WikiLeaks wanted "to knock out this 'collateral damage' euphemism, so when anyone uses it they will think 'collateral murder.'" (as cited in Khatchadourian, 2010).

"Because Assange publishes the full source material, he believes that WikiLeaks is free to offer its analysis, no matter how speculative" (Khatchadourian,

2010). Only when this scientific approach is taken does a space open up for editorial freedom.

WikiLeaks's titling of that video "Collateral Murder" was perceived by some as political slant. Yet, when publishing all source material and disclosing the motives behind it, what is characterized as political slant moves into the realm of artistic license.

WikiLeaks, with its editorial freedom and passionate activism, created a space where uncensored images from a war zone are disseminated freely, encouraging people to step out of a given framework to see things that had been intentionally concealed. Brutal and honest images confront preconceptions and sanitized images that emanate from the halls of power.

"'All' artists who believe in artistic freedom create work that challenge domination." [bell hooks, (1995). *Art on my mind: Visual politics*. New York: New Press, p. 42, 1995]

The role of art lies in bringing constructive critique to a dominantly held view. WikiLeaks's presentation of "Collateral Murder" was an artistic act. It invited the world to examine what is portrayed through the euphemism, "collateral damage," and to feel the misery of innocent people subjected to the barbarism of war collateral murder.

Images of the Apache helicopter, gunmen shooting at a crawling wounded man emerged before the public eye and could speak for themselves. They call for emotional engagement and for a compassionate shift in perspective.

The use of Native American nomenclature in the U.S. military such as Apache and Black Hawk helicopters had for a moment been lifted and revealed for what it is – the continuation of oppression of indigenous people and of genocide.

WikiLeaks instigated the freeing innate power of art. This is only just a beginning. Brazilian educator, Paulo Freire spoke of how once art's inherent creative power is released, it spreads and transforms the work of artists:

The arts gradually cease to be the mere expression of the easy life of the affluent bourgeoisie, and begin to find their inspiration in the hard life of the people. Poets begin to write about more than their lost loves, and even the theme of lost love becomes less maudlin, more objective and lyrical. They speak now of the field hand and laborer not as abstract and metaphysical concepts, but as concrete men with concrete lives. [Freire, P. (2000). *Cultural action for freedom*. MA: Harvard Educational Review. p. 51]

Many around the globe are following WikiLeaks' lead to revitalize the cultural

sphere and reclaim citizenry power.

“I feel that is the job of any good writer or filmmaker or artist of any sort to look at the thing that no one else wants to look at, to hold up the truths that most of society would rather deny, and to say, ‘This is who we are.’” said filmmaker James Spione (as cited in Andrews, 2011).

He lent his talent to bring life to the scene captured in WikiLeaks Collateral Murder video in a documentary, Incident in New Baghdad.

“Art becomes a political act, a conscious effort to facilitate and participate in social change,” said artist Dekade-Z (as cited in Andrews, 2011) who assisted with the birth of TheJuiceMedia Rap News. With its combination of rap and moving imagery this new news frequency stepped forward to deepen the Fourth Estate.

“We lost TV to Murdoch, the press to the sharks; This internet our last channel to connect to the mark. No rhetorical questions at last: If we lose this frequency we will be left in the dark” (RapNews 4: WikiLeaks v The Pentagon).

The creative duo of Hugo Farrant and Giordano Nanni calls for audience participation in history as it is happening.

When the true force of art is freed, it works to facilitate and engage a rapture of perception. Art communicates through listening. A conversation through images and feelings is the act of going where the audience is and presenting something that is open to the context of each individual’s own life.

It is the act of speaking and listening at the same time. For example, spoken word poet Taalam Acey speaks in a manner where those who hear him can feel they are being listened to through his words.

Speaking based on listening invites others into dialogue. For too long, establishment media has treated people as ignorant masses who passively receive information and become deaf to their community. Assange repeatedly spoke of how WikiLeaks is taking the First Amendment and giving it to the world.

The First Amendment was founded on the spirit of the Declaration of Independence. “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, ”

Who are the people that were meant to be equal in this historical document? Is it to apply only to U.S. citizens?

For WikiLeaks, it means everyone in the world. WikiLeaks is a transnational organization. They listen to anonymous whistle-blowers, whose voices up to then have been increasingly denied. It is the publisher of last resort, carrying

voices that yearn to be free regardless of race and nationality.

Since its creation, the Declaration of Independence has been regarded by many as a universal, even divine document that has inspired millions.

If the ideals in the Declaration are truly universal, it would be extended to everyone. WikiLeaks appears to be working to fill the gap between ideals and reality. They are showing through their actions how freedom of speech is everyone's inherent right and not simply empty rhetoric.

How are they doing it? When people are so long excluded from any true democratic process, made to feel powerless, they eventually forget how to think and speak for themselves.

While the State smothered speech, WikiLeaks listens. It is their genuine listening that frees the speech, making ordinary citizens feel that they themselves matter. Those who feel listened to start to trust their own thoughts and find words that organically emerge from their own experience.

We saw this in the uprising of the Middle East. People began trusting their ways of knowing, their own experiences and intuitions that had been denied by authority. Assange spoke how Young people around the world, after feeling excluded from politics now begin to actively participate in taking hold of their own future.

Their action is revitalizing the First Amendment around the world. The new technology of the Internet and its decentralized open-source nature tends to neutralize power relationships. It allows power to flow back to ordinary people.

The individual now can access and distribute information more efficiently. The Internet is the modern equivalent of the first printing press, this time making publishing accessible to all.

Social media such as Twitter connects people around the world. It has transformed mass communication from one-sided, top-down filters to two-way and peer conversations. As was seen in the recent AskObama Twitter Town Hall event, people around the world twittered and voiced opinions that till then had no forum.

Like an avalanche, courage is contagious. WL Central with its telos of "WikiLeaks news, analysis and action" responded to the call to fill in the vacuum in journalism.

Sites such as these along with transnational social networking counter the propaganda of corporate media that relies on public ignorance and apathy.

Asher Wolf and like individuals who seem to work with little sleep are crowd-sourcing, working for free to circulate the latest news and tweets to inform people what is happening around the world.

The loosely tied online collective Anonymous has also emerged around the globe to demand the voices of citizens to be heard and illegitimate power challenged. WikiLeaks Forum and bloggers engage people with their articles to engage in comments and discussion.

WikiLeaks sparked interaction among these clustering grassroots that have bubbled up across borders. Billboards sprang up that seems to symbolize a transformation of the corporate landscape.

“You can speak freely It is really the thing that marks us as just below the angels” Mario Savio

We are approaching the threshold of a great turning and are faced with a choice of the evolution or devolution of global society. A just and humane world depends on mankind’s ability to communicate in support of one another. It is speech in service to relationship and to listening that Savio saw as giving man meaning.

“WikiLeaks is the intelligence agency of the people.” They show how each can live up to the responsibility of the First Amendment.

Exercising freedom of speech is taking responsibility for speaking as an act of listening. In the age of WikiLeaks, freedom of speech is not a professional privilege nor should it apply only to a particular nation or group of people. It is everyone’s right and responsibility.

Each person’s act of free speech becomes a torch for a new civilization to come.

Nozomi Hayase is a contributing writer to Culture Unplugged and a global citizen blogger at Journaling Between Worlds. A phenomenologist by training, she brings out deeper dimensions of modern events at the intersection between politics and psyche, fiction and reality to share insight on future social evolution. She can be reached at: nozomimagine@gmail.com

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