

NSA Surveillance: Historic Challenge to Support the Moral Actions of Edward Snowden

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In Washington, where the state of war and the surveillance state are one and the same, top officials have begun to call for Edward Snowden's head. His moral action of whistleblowing — a clarion call for democracy — now awaits our responses.

After nearly 12 years of the “war on terror,” the revelations of recent days are a tremendous challenge to the established order: nonstop warfare, intensifying secrecy and dominant power that equate safe governance with Orwellian surveillance.

In the highest places, there is more than a wisp of panic in rarefied air. It's not just the National Security Agency that stands exposed; it's the repressive arrogance perched on the pyramid of power.

Back here on the ground, so many people — appalled by Uncle Sam's continual morph into Big Brother — have been pushing against the walls of anti-democratic secrecy. Those walls rarely budge, and at times they seem to be closing in, even literally for some (as in the case of heroic whistleblower Bradley Manning). But all the collective pushing has cumulative effects.

In recent days, as news exploded about NSA surveillance, a breakthrough came into sight. Current history may not be an immovable wall; it may be on a hinge. And if we push hard enough, together, there's no telling what might be possible or achieved.

The gratitude that so many of us now feel toward Edward Snowden raises the question: How can we truly express our appreciation?

A first step is to thank him — publicly and emphatically. You can do that by clicking [here](#) to sign the “Thank NSA Whistleblower Edward Snowden” petition, which my colleagues at RootsAction.org will send directly to him, including the individual comments.

But of course saying thank-you is just one small step onto a crucial path. As Snowden faces extradition and vengeful prosecution from the U.S. government, active support will be vital — in the weeks, months and years ahead.

Signing the thank-you petition, I ventured some optimism: “What you've done will inspire kindred spirits around the world to take moral action despite the risks.” Bravery for principle can be very contagious.

Edward Snowden has taken nonviolent action to help counter the U.S. government's one-two punch of extreme secrecy and massive violence. The process has summoned the kind of

doublespeak that usually accompanies what cannot stand the light of day.

So, when Snowden's employer Booz Allen put out a statement Sunday night, it was riddled with official indignation, declaring: "News reports that this individual has claimed to have leaked classified information are shocking, and if accurate, this action represents a grave violation of the code of conduct and core values of our firm."

What are the "code of conduct" and "core values" of this huge NSA contractor? The conduct of stealthy assistance to the U.S. national security state as it methodically violates civil liberties, and the values of doing just about anything to amass vast corporate profits.

The corporate-government warfare state is enraged that Edward Snowden has broken through with conduct and values that are 180 degrees in a different direction. "I'm not going to hide," he told the Washington Post on Sunday. "Allowing the U.S. government to intimidate its people with threats of retaliation for revealing wrongdoing is contrary to the public interest."

When a Post reporter asked whether his revelations would change anything, Snowden replied: "I think they already have. Everyone everywhere now understands how bad things have gotten — and they're talking about it. They have the power to decide for themselves whether they are willing to sacrifice their privacy to the surveillance state."

And, when the Post asked about threats to "national security," Snowden offered an assessment light-years ahead of mainline media's conventional wisdom: "We managed to survive greater threats in our history . . . than a few disorganized terrorist groups and rogue states without resorting to these sorts of programs. It is not that I do not value intelligence, but that I oppose . . . omniscient, automatic, mass surveillance. . . . That seems to me a greater threat to the institutions of free society than missed intelligence reports, and unworthy of the costs."

Profoundly, in the early summer of 2013, with his actions and words, Edward Snowden has given aid and comfort to grassroots efforts for democracy. What we do with his brave gift will be our choice.

Norman Solomon is co-founder of RootsAction.org and founding director of the Institute for Public Accuracy. His books include "War Made Easy: How Presidents and Pundits Keep Spinning Us to Death."

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