

Clinton, Petraeus, Snowden and Manning: The Tail of the Two Americas

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The Obama Administration will hold the dubious distinction as the most hostile presidency towards whistleblowers in the history of the US. The administration's unprecedented enmity towards individuals, such as Chelsea Manning and Edward Snowden, who were courageous enough to expose US war crimes, fraud and corruption was met with aggressive retaliation, imprisonment, exile and ham-fisted punishment.

Since 2009, the Administration has invoked the WWI-era Espionage Act that carries not only the possibility of life imprisonment but also the death penalty. The administration has sent a clear message that individuals who expose crimes will be severely punished while the perpetrators of the crimes will receive immunity.

Such is the situation that we find with Democratic presidential nominee Hilary Clinton who has admitted, under threat of derailing her campaign, of using a private server to receive and respond to over 1,300 sensitive emails while she was Secretary of State. Had Clinton been deemed a whistleblower or not a member of the 1% club she would have joined Manning in federal prison or perhaps Snowden in exile. Instructively, Clinton severely criticized Edward Snowden for exposing state crimes:

"If he wishes to return knowing he would be held accountable and also able to present a defense, that is his decision to make," the former secretary of state said in an interview with the Guardian. Clinton has called Snowden an 'imperfect messenger' who could have gone about his whistleblowing in a way that would have been less damaging to national security."

Clinton later commented that it was "sort of odd" that Snowden fled to China and Russia, countries that have restrictive cyberpolicies. Furthermore, she said that his leaks helped certain terrorist networks.

But contradictions abound and fault lines are drawn regarding who the government prosecutes or who is allowed to run for the highest office in the land. It was reported that a hacker in Serbia "had scanned Clinton's Chappaqua server at least twice, in August and in December 2012. It was unclear from the reports whether the hacker knew the server belonged to Clinton, although it did identify itself as providing email services for clintonemail.com." The domain names for Clinton's e-mail address were clintonemail.com, wjcoffice.com, and presidentclinton.com. Justin Cooper, a longtime aide to former President Bill Clinton, managed the e-mail system *but did not possess a security clearance* [emphasis added] although her e-mails contained highly classified and security information."

To make matters worse, a cybersecurity expert determined “that the [Clinton] server had amateur hour vulnerabilities.”

The State Department announced Friday (1/30/16) that it will not release 22 emails from former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton because they contain “top secret” information. This information comes three days before the critical Iowa caucuses. The State Department noted that 37 pages are now classified at the highest level of government classification.

Nevertheless, Chelsea Manning sits in a federal prison because she exposed war crimes against unarmed civilians in Iraq.

According to a recent Information Clearinghouse report:

“One of the top-secret emails she [Clinton] received and forwarded contained a photo taken from an American satellite of the North Korean nuclear facility that detonated a device just last week. Because Clinton failed to safeguard that email, she exposed to hackers and thus to the North Koreans the time, place and manner of American surveillance of them.”

Rep. Mike Pompeo, R-Kan., member of the House Intelligence Committee, said the former secretary of state, senator, and Yale-trained lawyer had to know what she was dealing with:

“There is no way that someone, a senior government official who has been handling classified information for a good chunk of their adult life, could not have known that this information ought to be classified, whether it was marked or not,”

he said.

“Anyone with the capacity to read and an understanding of American national security, an 8th grade reading level or above, would understand that the release of this information or the potential breach of a non-secure system presented risk to American national security.”

Pompeo suggested that the military and intelligence communities have had to change operations, because the Clinton server could have been compromised by a third party:

“Anytime our national security team determines that there’s a potential breach, that is information that might potentially have fallen into the hands of the Iranians, or the Russians, or the Chinese, or just hackers, that they begin to operate in a manner that assumes that information has in fact gotten out.”

On ABC’s “This Week” on (1/31/16), one day before the Iowa caucuses, Clinton claimed ignorance on the sensitivity of the materials and stressed that they weren’t marked. “There is no classified marked information on those emails sent or received by me,” she said. Clinton was pressed during the interview on her signed 2009 non-disclosure agreement which asserts that markings are “irrelevant... marked or unmarked ... including oral communications.”

Another example of government benevolence towards their disciples is the case of General David Petraeus. US Defense Secretary Ashton Carter, signaling the encircling of the wagons around David Petraeus, announced this week that the US government has decided not to “impose further punishment” on the former US military commander and CIA Director for espionage for keeping secret and top-secret documents in an unlocked drawer in his desk inside his home. Petraeus allegedly shared those documents with a female “friend” who was writing his memoir. Unlike Manning, who is serving a 35 year sentence in Leavenworth, and Snowden, forced into exile in Russia, a year outside the familiar walls and perks of the federal executive club was deemed by political insiders as excessive “punishment” for Petraeus. Excessive punishment? Manning is serving 35 years in military prison and Snowden an undetermined amount of time in exile – that’s excessive punishment.

It is perhaps noteworthy to mention that Petraeus has recovered from his bout in federal service. He now serves as chairman of the private equity firm Kohlberg Kravis Roberts of the [KKR Global Institute](#).

What is remarkable about American democracy is the consistent and perpetual benevolence of the ruling class towards its loyal disciples. Many of these disciples belong to the 99% but characteristically identify and would literally kill on command for the 1%. The reward for their loyalty is straightforward: there is rarely a crime committed by these 1% wannabes that command punishment or rebuke. Police, as agents of the state are granted immunity and rewarded for killing young unarmed Black men and women, investment bankers who nearly tanked the US economy are rewarded with White House cabinet-level positions and generous bailouts from the pockets of working-class communities. Federal employees complaining of racism are eviscerated while their managers receive promotions. The message is clear, there are two America’s – one immune from any accountability and the other living in a political and economic purgatory.

Dr. Marsha Coleman-Adebayo is the author of the Pulitzer Prize nominated: [No FEAR: A Whistleblowers Triumph over Corruption and Retaliation at the EPA](#). She worked at the EPA for 18 years and blew the whistle on a US multinational corporation that endangered South African vanadium mine workers. Marsha’s successful lawsuit led to the introduction and passage of the first civil rights and whistleblower law of the 21st century: the Notification of Federal Employees Anti-discrimination and Retaliation Act of 2002 (No FEAR Act). She is Director of Transparency and Accountability for the Green Shadow Cabinet, serves on the Advisory Board of [ExposeFacts.com](#) and coordinates the Hands Up Coalition, DC.

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