

We Are All Aaron Swartz! Fighting Back Against the “Intellectual Property” Racket

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[Land Destroyer](#)

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Aaron Swartz’ passing becomes even more tragic if we do not recognize what he spent his life fighting for, and realize that no matter where we think we stand on the issue of Internet freedom, the interests driving the debate from Wall Street and Washington, do not have any of our best interests in mind.

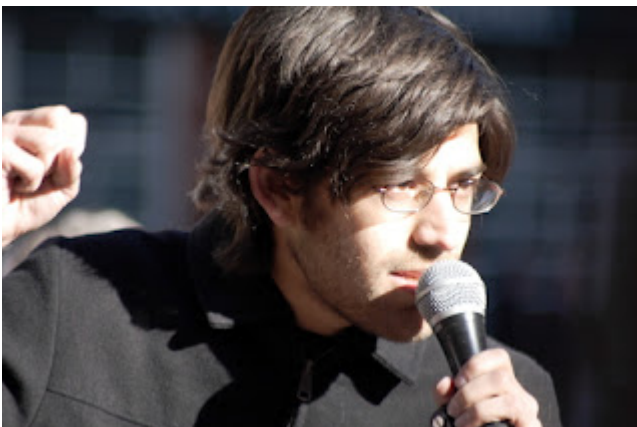
In your standard dictatorship, activists are brought out back and shot.

In the United States’ crypto-dictatorship, activists are bullied by the state until they go bankrupt, are buried under a mountain of legal woes, are publicly discredited or humiliated, or as in the case of [activist and Reddit co-founder Aaron Swartz](#), made to crack under the constant pressure, and commit suicide.

While superficially the United States may seem more progressive, a dead activist bullied to death for his political views, is a dead activist – whether it was a bullet in the back of the head by SS officers, or a mountain of litigation dumped upon someone by the US Department of Justice.

We are All Aaron Swartz.

Aaron Swartz protesting SOPA (image right)



Swartz was an active opponent of the media industry’s various [assaults on Internet freedom and sharing](#), including the scandalous [SOPA/PIPA](#) and [ACTA](#) bills. He was the director of [Demand Progress](#), which pursued the following campaigns:

[1. Congress Wants To Make Streaming A Felony](#)

The big business lobbyists who are behind the Internet Blacklist Bill are already making the sequel. The “Ten Strikes” bill would make it a felony to stream copyrighted content — like music in the background of a Youtube video, movies and TV shows — more than ten times.

[Click here to read the text of the bill and voice your opposition.](#)

2. Oppose Protect-IP

We knew that members of Congress and their business allies were gearing up to pass a revised Internet Blacklist Bill — which more than 325,000 Demand Progress members helped block last winter — but we never expected it to be this atrocious. Last year’s bill has been renamed the “PROTECT IP” Act and it is far worse than its predecessor.

The new PROTECT-IP Act retains the censorship components from COICA, but adds a new one: It bans people from having serious conversations about the blacklisted sites. Under the new bill, anyone “referring or linking” to a blacklisted site is prohibited from doing so and can be served with a blacklist order forcing them to stop.

[More than 50,000 Demand Progress members have already signed our petition opposing the bill, and you can join them here.](#)

3. Bin Laden Is Dead. Will The Patriot Act Live On?

The Patriot Act was enacted as a supposedly temporary measure in the wake of 9-11. With Bin Laden’s passing, the era of the Patriot Act, of spying on Americans who aren’t suspected of crimes, of heavy-handed abuse of our dearly held civil liberties, must come to an end. We need to act now to make sure we win this fight. Tens of thousands of Demand Progress members have already urged Congress to fix the Patriot Act. Will you ask Congress and the President to return us to the legal norms that existed before 9-11 and start respecting our civil liberties?

[Click here to read more and sign the petition.](#)

4. Tell Facebook: Stop Censoring Political Speech

A range of Facebook users, from political dissidents to technology bloggers, are reporting the sudden blocking of their pages. Facebook provided no prior warning, nor was there a clear process established to restore access to the blocked pages.

Will you fight back?

[The best way to get Facebook’s attention is to make the story go viral on their own site.](#)

5. Tell The DOJ: Investigate Goldman Sachs

Investigators discovered that Goldman traders bragged about selling “shitty” deals to clients and the mega-bank bet against the same financial products it was selling to investors. And they’ve lied about it all the way to the bank.

Millions of Americans have lost their jobs, and small-time homeowners are in jail for mortgage fraud, but no CEOs have been prosecuted for their roles in the financial crisis. It’s time to change that.

[Join Senator Levin's call for accountability by urging the Department of Justice to investigate Goldman Sachs and its CEO Lloyd Blankfein. Sign our petition and we'll deliver this message above to the DOJ.](#)

6. Tell Your Lawmakers: Shut Down The New Debtors' Prisons

Americans are in more debt than ever before, and the banks are going to new extremes to squeeze us for every last penny: If you can't pay up, they'll try to get you locked up.

[Read more here and add your name. We'll automatically send an email to your state legislators.](#)

7. Could the Government Really Shut Down Facebook?

Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) are out of control. They've been seizing domain names without due process: they shut down 84,000 sites by accident last month, arrested a man for linking to other websites, and government officials think ICE and DHS are claiming powers that would even threaten sites like Facebook.

[Watch our video — then sign our petition.](#)

8. Fight Internet 'Kill Switch'

Are our leaders better than Egypt's? Across the globe, governments know that the Internet is increasingly the lifeblood of democracy — that's why Egypt's oppressive regime just shut down the Internet there.

But even as American politicians condemn Egypt for doing so, they're pushing legislation to give our government the power to do the exact same thing here at home! The so-called 'Kill Switch' would let the president turn off our Internet — without a court even having to approve the decision.

Join over 40,000 in fighting it. [Add your name!](#)

9. Let the PATRIOT Act Expire

The most noxious parts of the USA PATRIOT Act are about to expire — but Congress wants to extend them again. These provisions let the government spy on people without naming them in a warrant, and secretly access your library and bank records under a gag order prohibiting anyone from letting you know.

Join over 60,000 in opposing extension. [Add your name!](#)

10. No Mandatory Internet IDs!

Commerce Secretary Gary Locke just announced that he's developing virtual ID cards for Internet users — and they could pose a severe threat to our privacy! The program's called the "National Strategy for Trusted Identities in Cyberspace" and the draft proposal indicates that we'd be forced to use the IDs for any online transactions with the government, and for online interactions with businesses that use them.

Over 30,000 have told Gary Locke to back off. [Add your name!](#)

11. Protect Whistleblowers at Big Banks

Crimes committed by the big banks helped crash our economy — and WikiLeaks is saying that a whistle-blower has sent them enough evidence to take down Bank of America. So now the big banks are fighting back by trying to get the government to muzzle future whistle-blowers.

Tell the SEC not to listen to them. [Add your name!](#)

12. Don't Let them Outlaw WikiLeaks!

Politicians are leading the charge to outlaw WikiLeaks and undermine freedom of the press. First Sen. Joe Lieberman (I-CT) successfully pressured Amazon.com to stop hosting the WikiLeaks website and now, as Julian Assange has been arrested in the UK, he's introduced a new bill changing the law to make WikiLeaks illegal.

More than 30,000 have signed our petition to stop him. [Add your name!](#)

13. Stop the TSA's Nude Scanners!

Across the country, TSA is replacing airport metal detectors with scanners that take nude photos of you — violating your rights, zapping you with X-rays that could cause cancer, and slowing down the lines. And if you opt-out, they feel up your “sensitive regions.”

Lawmakers in New Jersey and Idaho are trying to stop them. Let's get a similar bill introduced in every state! [Contact your lawmaker!](#)

14. Stop the Internet Blacklist!

Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) are out of control. They've been seizing domain names without due process: they shut down 84,000 sites by accident last month, arrested a man for linking to other websites, and government officials think ICE and DHS are claiming powers that would even threaten sites like Facebook. *Over 300,000 signers!*

[Add your name!](#)

PLUS: Download our new flyer for our [Stop The Internet Blacklist](#) campaign and start a grassroots movement in your area!

Clearly, Demand Progress is not just another faux-NGO working in tandem with special interests under the guise of “human rights,” “freedom,” and “democracy” to peddle further exploitation and expansion [of the powers that be](#) — but rather identified these special interests by name, and exposed both their agenda and the means by which they attempt to achieve it. Swartz' death is a tragic one, and compounded by the dismissive, almost celebratory atmosphere across the corporate-media of the passing of a man they labeled a suspected criminal.

Swartz was targeted by the US Department of Justice, MIT, and their corporate-financier

sponsors because he was a prominent and particularly effective voice against real creeping oppression. He was a pragmatic, technical individual and proposed solutions that short-circuited the typical and ineffectual political infighting that drives most disingenuous or misguided causes. We all stand the potential of being targeted like Swartz if we allow these monopolies to continue dictating the destiny of human progress. We are all Aaron Swartz – and must realize his targeting and subsequent suicide is the manifestation of the real danger these insidious monopolies pose to us.

Sharing is Not a Crime.

Technologically empowered openness and generosity across the corporate-financier dominated Western World is no more a real offense than was being Jewish inside Nazi Germany. But like Nazi Germany, anything can be “outlawed” if it suits political and economic special interest. Are we truly “criminals” for not respecting laws born of special interests, detached from the will and best interests of the people? No, we most certainly aren’t.

Swartz allegedly [downloaded scholarly files from an open and unsecured academic archive \(and here\)](#). The original files are still very much intact and at the disposal of the organization that maintains the archives. Nothing was stolen, yet Swartz was accused of “theft,” facing 30 years in prison and a 1 million dollar fine – this in a nation where rapists and murders can spend less time in prison, and elected representatives involved in willfully selling wars based on patently false pretenses walk free without even the faintest prospect of facing justice.

Swartz’ crusade against the corporate-financier interests attempting to monopolize and control communication and technology is surely why he was targeted by the federal government, academia, and their corporate-financier sponsors. It is no different than an activist being brought out back of a kangaroo court in a third-world dictatorship, and shot. The silence from so-called “human rights” advocates over the treatment, and now death of Aaron Swartz is deafening – exposing them yet again as another cog in the machine.

It is time to fight back – and time to fight back without the help of these disingenuous NGOs and their purposefully futile tactics of solely protesting and petitioning. Pragmatic, technical solutions must also be explored and deployed at the grassroots to shatter these corporate-financier monopolies at the very source of their power – that is – our daily patronage and dependence on their goods and services.

The Plan.

An alternative to the networks, media, services, and even hardware must be devised and deployed across our local communities. Laws born of special interests and flying in the face of the people’s best interests must be exposed, condemned, and entirely ignored. Taking away a human being’s freedom because they copied and shared a file is unconscionable – as unconscionable as imprisoning a human being because of their political, religious, or racial background. We would ignore laws imposed upon our society singling out blacks or Jews, but not laws criminalizing sharing solely for the benefit of corporate special interests?

In December 2012’s “[Decentralizing Telecom](#),” a plan for establishing a second Internet, locally built and maintained, and connected with neighboring networks to run parallel to the existing Internet – but be free of large telecom monopolies – was proposed.

Also published in December of 2012, was "[Sharing is Not a Crime: A Battle Plan to Fight Back](#)," which illustrated the importance of shifting entirely away from proprietary business models and instead, both using and producing open source hardware, software, news, and entertainment.

Establishing local, and eventually national and even international parallel networks is possible, but will take time. Turning toward open source software can begin today, with a visit to [OSalt.com](#) and exploring alternatives that are already being used by millions today.

A bridge between where we are now and a truly free Internet made by the people, for the people, and entirely maintained in a decentralized, local manner, is what are called "Pirate Boxes." [David Darts](#), an artist, designer, and coder, describes a Pirate Box as:

PirateBox is a self-contained mobile communication and file sharing device. Simply turn it on to transform any space into a free and open communications and file sharing network.

Share (and chat!) Freely Inspired by pirate radio and the free culture movements, PirateBox utilizes Free, Libre and Open Source software (FLOSS) to create mobile wireless communications and file sharing networks where users can anonymously chat and share images, video, audio, documents, and other digital content.

Private and Secure PirateBox is designed to be private and secure. No logins are required and no user data is logged. Users remain completely anonymous - the system is purposely not connected to the Internet in order to subvert tracking and preserve user privacy.

Easy to Use Using the PirateBox is easy. Simply turn it on and transform any space into a free communication and file sharing network. Users within range of the device can join the PirateBox open wireless network from any wifi-enabled device and begin chatting and sharing files immediately.

Under David's FAQ's regarding Pirate Boxes, a particularly useful question is answered:

Can I make my own PirateBox?

Absolutely! The PirateBox is registered under the [GNU GPLv3](#). You can run it on an existing device or can be built as a stand-alone device for as little as US\$35. For detailed instructions, visit the [PirateBox DIY](#) page.

For the media-industry to stop the spread of local hardware solutions like Pirate Boxes, they would have to literally be in every single community, inside every single person's house, to prevent people from taking legally purchased or freely available media, and sharing it - akin to publishers policing the entire population to prevent readers from lending their friends and family their copy of a particular book.

The basic principles and experience one gets from building and using a Pirate Box can allow them to tackle larger mesh networks and eventually, [decentralize telecom](#). By encouraging

local meetings where PirateBoxes are used, the foundation for new local organizations and institutions can be laid.

New Paradigms Require New Institutions - Join or Start a Hackerspace

Not everyone possesses the knowledge and skills necessary to create local networks or develop alternatives to the goods and services we currently depend on corporate-financier monopolies for. Even those that do, cannot, by themselves, effectively research, develop, and deploy such alternatives. By pooling our resources together in common spaces called “hackerspaces,” we can. Hackerspaces are not just for technically talented individuals, but a place where anyone with the inclination to learn can come and participate.

Hackerspaces [can be organized under a wide range of templates](#) - including clubs where dues are paid, spaces that earn income through providing courses or services to the community, and many others. It will be in hackerspaces, and local institutions like them, that [a truly people-driven paradigm shift takes place](#) - one of pragmatism and progress, not endlessly broken political promises from elected officials.

People can visit Hackerspaces.org to see the closest organization near them where they can join in. Conversely, for those who either don't have a hackerspace nearby to join, or simply want to start their own, see, "[How to Start a Hackerspace](#)," for more information on where to begin.

Finally...

Aaron Swartz' passing becomes even more tragic if we do not recognize what he spent his life fighting for, and realize that no matter where we think we stand on the issue of Internet freedom, the interests driving the debate from Wall Street and Washington, do not have any of our best interests in mind.

We are all Aaron Swartz - to reclaim the battle cry abused so flagrantly by the West's [faux-democratic “awakening” in the Arab World and beyond](#). And we must all become active opponents of this agenda to usurp our ability to determine our own destiny. Aaron Swartz was an exceptional proponent of Internet freedom and openness - but by all of us joining the ranks of this cause, we exponentially complicate the system's ability to target and destroy any one of us. If your cause is just, and your means constructive and pragmatic, there isn't just “safety” in numbers, there is invincibility.

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