

Whistle-blowers and “The Fifth Estate”. The New Feature Film about WikiLeaks and its Founder Julian Assange

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“It is no measure of health to be well adjusted to a profoundly sick society.” – Jiddu Krishnamurti, Asian Indian philosopher

Last weekend, I talked my two grandsons into joining me to watch “The Fifth Estate”, the new feature film about WikiLeaks and its founder Julian Assange. The movie is being marketed as an “action thriller” and is reportedly having a hard time competing, revenue-wise, with two current block-buster movies, “Gravity” and “Captain Phillips”. (I don’t doubt that fact because, at the end of the Saturday afternoon screening, we were the only ones left in the theater; folks who had been in the audience at the beginning had bailed out, presumably for more mindless, more entertaining fare elsewhere in the multiplex theater.)

For those readers who are not fully aware of what WikiLeaks really is, here is a good definition from a supporter:

“WikiLeaks is an international, online, non-profit organisation which publishes information submitted by courageous whistleblowers, people with conscience. Most whistleblowers prefer to remain anonymous for fear of reprisals. Google what happened to Bradley Manning and Edward Snowden. They are being hounded, hunted, criminalised, ostracized, ex-communicated by the very top people whose secret criminal deals and activities they have exposed.” The final sentence of that quote explains why tremendous courage is necessary to be a whistle-blower and why most of us are too frightened to speak out when witnessing injustice. The last phrase summarizes what is a major component of what constitutes “a profoundly sick society”.

I brought my grandsons to see the WikiLeaks film because I thought it was important to expose them to a movie about a historically important movement that was trying to respond to Krishnamurti’s concerns (about the western society he had witnessed in the first half of the 20th century). My busy, “wired-in” grandsons, like most distracted, computer game savvy, over-entertained adolescent students their age, seem to be relatively oblivious to pertinent past history – and even current events. I see the eternal truth of George Santayana’s powerful truism about the mistakes made by sick societies who are historically illiterate: “Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.” Whistle-blowers, who are all motivated by their consciences, might be our only hope.

At this point, it would be a good idea to step back to explain the title of the film [which will also illustrate the importance of Santayana’s quote]. A little background about the history of

the French Revolution of 1789 is important.

Up until 1789, France had been ruled by a hereditary monarchy for centuries. French society was regarded at the time as having three groups that were subservient to the king. The three classes were known as the Three Estates. The first two “estates” represented the parasitic ruling classes that never paid taxes or contributed to French society’s economy in any significant way. The First Estate was the clergy, the Second Estate was the aristocracy/nobility and the Third Estate was comprised of the common people who did all the work. These commoners were, of course, the largest group and were also the taxpaying group, while the First and Second Estates (ruthlessly protected by an obedient, well-trained and indoctrinated professional military) never did any labor nor did they participate in the production of food or other consumer goods.

Much later in history, elsewhere in the world, the media was given the title of The Fourth Estate, and journalists deserved the label when they were actually doing good investigative journalism by exposing the unethical behaviors and crimes of the ruling classes.

The title of the film, “The Fifth Estate”, refers to the hundreds of whistle-blowing groups like WikiLeaks, Occupy Wall Street, Catholic Worker groups, Democracy Now, Courage to Resist, antiwar groups, anti-nuclear groups, the 9/11 Truth movement, Earth First, etc, etc, all of whom have found themselves altruistically and courageously doing the dangerous investigations and protests in order to expose corrupt governments, corrupt militaries, corrupt law enforcement agencies, corrupt churches, corrupt national security institutions, corrupt financial institutions and other secretive planet-damaging corporations that the “disappeared” and virtually non-existent Fourth Estate has forsaken or been scared away from.

Here is a small sampling of courageous and often severely punished whistle-blowers – some famous and many that we don’t know or care about. The list includes Jesus of Nazareth, Paul of Tarsus, Martin of Tours, Martin Luther, Henry David Thoreau, Leo Tolstoy, Smedley Butler, Dorothy Day (and the entire Catholic Worker movement), Gandhi, Martin Niemoller, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Martin Luther King, John Paul Vann, Ronald Ridenhour, Daniel Ellsberg, the Catonsville Nine, Frank Serpico, Gary Webb, Karen Silkwood, Mordechai Vanunu, [Karen Kwiatkowski](#), Colleen Rowley, Sibel Edmunds, Greg Boertje-Obed, Julian Assange, Bradley Manning, Edward Snowden, Pope Francis, etc, etc. See Wikipedia for a list of some of the others who are less well-known: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_whistleblowers

The movie was instructive and well worth seeing, although the Collateral Murder video (google it) was severely shortened and therefore its impact weakened. Still, I would recommend the movie for anyone, although, for those interested in a more thorough treatment of the historical impact that WikiLeaks has had, it would be better to watch the documentary “Underground: The Julian Assange Story,” which is, I am told, the best factual documentary about WikiLeaks.

“The Fifth Estate” probably won’t have enough entertainment value to interest those who aren’t very curious about why the White House, the Congress, the NSA, the FBI, the CIA and the Pentagon are so freaked out about Assange, Manning and Snowden. Others who won’t appreciate this movie include those who desperately want to believe what they are told and who therefore trust the commercials on TV, trust the talking heads on the mainstream media and trust the official Pentagon, State Department or White House pronouncements.

Folks who aren't very curious about what are the motivations behind the 9/11 Truth or the Occupy Wall Street movements probably won't be interested in this movie either, now will those who don't much care about the war, peace and justice issues that drive the multitudes of lesser-known anti-establishment folks to action.

Whistle-blowers, in a nutshell, are, in one way or another, trying to resist, expose and perhaps turn around the sickest parts of our globalized, colonized, corporatized, militarized, economically-oppressed, and increasingly totalitarian surveillance state before the quasi-fascists who are working the levers behind the curtains destroy the planet and its inhabitants.

Please study the following inspirational quotes that keep the whistle-blower folks that are our most courageous neighbors working hard at attaining justice for all:

"Individual citizens have the duty to violate domestic laws to prevent crimes against peace and humanity." — **The judges at the Nuremberg trials** that tried and condemned as war criminals many upper echelon Nazis (whose actions were defended by their lawyers as totally legal and constitutional according to the rule of law in Nazi Germany)

"In a time of universal deceit, telling the truth is a revolutionary act."- **George Orwell**

"Anyone who trades liberty for security deserves neither."- **Benjamin Franklin**

"Those who can make you believe absurdities can make you commit atrocities."

—**Voltaire**

"We can either have democracy in this country or we can have great wealth concentrated in the hands of a few, but we cannot have both."- **Justice Louis D. Brandeis**

"A great war leaves a country with three armies: an army of cripples, an army of mourners, and an army of thieves." — **An anonymous German saying**

"Only the dead have seen the end of war."- **George Santayana**

"Anyone who has proclaimed violence his method. must choose lying as his principle."-**Mikhail Gorbachev**

"There comes a time when silence is betrayal."- **Martin Luther King, Jr.**

"It may well be that the greatest tragedy of this period of social change is not the glaring noisiness of the so-called bad people, but the silence of the so-called good people."-**Martin Luther King, Jr.**

"The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing"- **Edmund Burke**

"To sin by silence when they should protest makes cowards of men." — **Abraham Lincoln**

"The hottest places in hell are reserved for those who, during times of great moral crisis, maintained their neutrality." — **Dante**

"Wars throughout history have been waged for conquest and plunder. It is the ruling class that declares the wars, and it is the working class who fights all the battles and furnishes the corpses. The ruling class continually talks about "patriotic duty", but it is

not their duty but your patriotic duty that they are concerned about. There is a decided difference. Their patriotic duty never takes them to the firing line or chucks them into the trenches.”- **Eugene V. Debs**

“We’re not made by God to mass kill one another, and that’s backed up by the Gospels. Lying and war are always associated. Pay attention to war-makers when they try to defend their current war; if they’re moving their lips they’re lying.”-**Phil Berrigan**

“Aggressive militarization under the rubric of defense against terrorism threatens to provoke a chain reaction among nuclear nations, big and small, that, once set in motion, may prove impossible to control. No military confrontation anywhere in the world is free from this ominous and ever-present danger.”- **Helen Caldicott**, in **The New Nuclear Danger**

“Globalization is but another name for colonization – nothing has changed but the name. And, just as the East India Company was the instrument for colonization, today’s corporation is the instrument for globalization. And, corporatization is but another name for Fascism.”— **Urban Kohler**

“Those who take oaths to politically powerful secret societies cannot be depended on for loyalty to a democratic republic.”- **John Quincy Adams**

“Certified lunatics are shut up because of their proneness to violence when their pretensions are questioned; the uncertified variety (*of lunatic*) are given the control of powerful armies, and can inflict death and disaster upon all sane men within their reach.”- **Bertrand Russell**

“Slavery is the legal fiction that a person is property. Corporate personhood is the legal fiction that property is a person.”- **Anonymous**

“The President is merely the most important among a large number of public servants. He should be supported or opposed exactly to the degree which is warranted by his good conduct or bad conduct, his efficiency or inefficiency in rendering loyal, able, and disinterested service to the Nation as a whole. Therefore it is absolutely necessary that there should be full liberty to tell the truth about his acts, and this means that it is exactly necessary to blame him when he does wrong as to praise him when he does right....To announce that there must be no criticism of the President, or that we are to stand by the President, right or wrong, is not only unpatriotic and servile, but is morally treasonable to the American public.”- **Theodore Roosevelt**

“A patriot must always be ready to defend his country against his government.”-**Edward Abbey**

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