

# Defend Edward Snowden!

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*Read the WSWS article on the filing of charges against Snowden here.*

The *World Socialist Web Site* and the Socialist Equality Party call on all workers, students and youth within the United States and internationally to come to the defense of Edward Snowden.

Snowden is the target of a massive government witch-hunt organized in response to his courageous exposure of secret and illegal surveillance programs targeting millions of people in the US and around the world. His defense is a matter of the greatest urgency.

The Obama administration has already said it plans to indict the 29-year-old former National Security Agency (NSA) contractor. Congressmen, senators and media commentators have denounced him for treason and demanded that he be jailed for life or executed.

The charge of treason is a vicious libel. Snowden is not the one betraying the democratic principles embodied in the Bill of Rights. By exposing the conspiracy against these rights and coming forward at the cost of his career and possibly his life, he is defending them.

Snowden was not in the least exaggerating when he said his life was in danger. No doubt his decision to go public was taken in part because he realized his defense depended on an informed public, and that otherwise he could be targeted to become the next victim of the Obama administration's assassination program.

What is extraordinary is that the full rage and anger of Congress and the media are directed not against those responsible for carrying out massive violations of the US Constitution, but against the man who has exposed them. Only a few weeks ago, the director of national intelligence, James Clapper, perjured himself before a Senate committee when he was asked whether any government programs collected data on millions of Americans. Yet no official or newspaper is calling for his prosecution.

Nor are there any calls for impeachment proceedings against Obama. Forty years ago, Richard Nixon faced impeachment for actions that did not come close in their

gravity to the violations of the Constitution carried out by the current president.

The hysterical and vicious reaction of the establishment to Snowden's exposures has laid bare the degree to which anti-democratic, authoritarian and even fascistic conceptions are embedded in the outlook of the American state and media. Within these layers there is an increasingly rabid hostility to the Bill of Rights and, behind that, the American people.

Those accusing Snowden of treason and persecuting Bradley Manning and Julian Assange are themselves traitors to the democratic rights of the American people. They are complicit in a conspiracy to impose dictatorship.

Lining up behind the Obama administration, the NSA, CIA, FBI and Pentagon, the massive propaganda apparatus of the American media is being mobilized in a desperate attempt to poison public opinion against Snowden. A prime example is the *New York Times* and its columnist David Brooks.

Brooks is one of many commentators who have focused on Snowden's age, writing that Snowden is representative of "a growing share of young men in their 20s." The political establishment and the media are frightened. They rightly see in Snowden not simply an individual, but the representative of an entire generation that has become thoroughly alienated from the official institutions and lost any confidence in them as upholders of democratic rights.

In a column published Tuesday, entitled "The Solitary Leaker," Brooks denounces Snowden and the millions of other young people who share his distrust of the political system, employing the same types of arguments that were used in the 1930s to defend the fascist dictatorships of Franco, Mussolini and Hitler.

He champions the virtues of "authoritative structures: family, neighborhood, religious group, state, nation and world." He preaches "respect for institutions" and "deference to common procedures," and inveighs against Snowden's "strong belief that hierarchies and organizations are suspect" and his "fervent devotion to transparency."

In making the absurd accusation that Snowden has “betrayed the Constitution,” Brooks displays not only hostility, but complete ignorance of the democratic foundations of the American republic. He writes: “The founders did not create the United States so that some solitary 29-year-old could make unilateral decisions about what should be exposed.”

The founders, including many in their late 20s and early 30s, defended the right of the people to “make the unilateral decision” to carry out a revolution and overthrow a repressive regime. They explicitly formulated the Constitution from the standpoint that the government was not to be based on trust, but rather on a foundation of “organized distrust,” lest it turn into a new form of despotism. Hence the insistence on a government of law, not of people, and a system of checks and balances between the three branches.

Brooks concludes his piece by accusing Snowden of being “obsessed” with data mining and oblivious to “the damage he has done to social arrangements and the invisible bonds that hold them together.”

Snowden is the product of the experiences of his generation, which have politicized and radicalized millions. Born in 1983, he grew up under conditions of growing social inequality and the collapse of the unions as organizations of social opposition.

Snowden’s formative political experience as he approached adulthood was 9/11 and the so-called “war on terror.” Lacking political experience, his initial response was a naïve combination of idealism and patriotism. He at first believed the American government. The next ten years would shatter his illusions.

He enlisted in the military because, as he has said, he “felt like I had an obligation as a human being to help free other people from oppression.” He soon became disillusioned because “Most of the people training us seemed pumped up about killing Arabs, not helping anyone.” He, like millions of others, discovered that the Iraq war was based on the lie that Baghdad possessed weapons of mass destruction.

He saw, under George W. Bush, the use by the United States of torture against detainees at Abu Ghraib in Iraq and the US prison camp in Guantanamo, the destruction of the Iraqi city of Fallujah and countless other war crimes in Iraq and Afghanistan, and a barrage of police state measures such as indefinite detention without trial, rendition and domestic surveillance on a mass scale. He was affected by Barack Obama’s campaign promises and stated opposition to the Iraq war and Bush’s attacks on

democratic rights, but became further alienated from the political system by what he has called “the slow realization that presidents could openly lie to secure the office and then break public promises without consequence.”

Snowden eloquently summed up his motives in leaking information on the NSA programs and coming forward to assume responsibility, telling the *South China Morning Post* Tuesday night, “I am not here to hide from justice; I am here to reveal criminality.”

Snowden’s evolution terrifies the ruling elite. They are losing credibility and the trust of broad masses of the population. Since they cannot win back their allegiance by persuasion, they resort to terror and threats. They want to make an example of Snowden in order to intimidate others.

Democracy is collapsing in America under the weight of imperialist militarism and the concentration of wealth and power in the richest one percent of the population.

Working people and youth, both in the United States and around the world, must take up the defense of Edward Snowden, as well as Bradley Manning and Julian Assange. Support must be built up in work places, at colleges and schools, and in working class neighborhoods. Their defense must become the spearhead for the development of a mass movement in defense of democratic rights.

The fight for democratic rights is inseparable from the development of a political movement of the American and international working class against the capitalist system, the source of war, social inequality and the drive toward dictatorship.

No time can be lost. Contact the Socialist Equality Party and become involved in the fight to defend Edward Snowden. Click here to contact the SEP.



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