

Demonstrations held against NSA spying, persecution of Snowden

Our reporters
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Demonstrations were held in over 100 cities throughout the United States on Thursday in opposition to the illegal and unconstitutional spying programs revealed by whistleblower Edward Snowden.

The “Restore the Fourth” movement, which began on the aggregator site Reddit and describes itself as a “non-partisan, non-violent movement,” organized demonstrations on July Fourth, US Independence Day, in New York, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Chicago, Boston, Seattle, Memphis, Miami, and many other cities.

The movement takes its name from the Fourth Amendment, which upholds the right of citizens to be free from “unreasonable searches and seizures” of their “persons, houses, papers, and effects,” without the issuing of a specific warrant based upon probable cause.

In New York City, several hundred people participated in the protest. As is now usual for any protest of any size in New York City, the marchers were trailed by New York City Police Department (NYPD) vans and motorcycles as well as officers with bundles of plastic handcuffs.

Many carried signs calling for a halt to NSA spying on the American people. Some carried hand-made signs that read “This is 2013 not 1984” and “Stop spying on us. Protect whistleblowers!” Others associated the abridgment of Fourth Amendment rights by the Obama Administration with the NYPD’s aggressive stop-and-frisk program, in which hundreds thousands of largely minority youth are searched without cause by police each year.

Marcus, a high-school student from Brooklyn, told the WSWS, “I came to the rally because I have followed the Snowden story and NSA leak very closely. I felt it was my civic duty to make my voice

heard and support those who are coming out for Snowden.

“I believe Edward Snowden was forever loyal to the country and the people. It was his loyalty to the government he questioned, and he was right.

“The government is acting unconstitutionally and with hypocrisy. The Constitution has a Fourth Amendment that says we have the right to be secure in our property and our persons. The government violated that right by extending section 215 of the Patriot Act, justifying the Prism program, and giving the FISA courts secret, unchecked power.

“Edward Snowden deserves protection by the international community. He did a service to his country and the world, and for that he deserves our gratitude and our protection.”

In Washington DC, the WSWS spoke with Graham, a high school student. “Privacy is something people have a right to. The people should be able to conduct their affairs without others looking into what they’re doing.”

Gabriel, an independent documentary filmmaker, commented on the systemic nature of the problems that face American workers and students. He added that politicians cannot be trusted to serve the interests of the population if it means “working against the banks and so many other interest groups.”

Andy, a college student, emphasized the straightforward language contained in the Fourth Amendment. “The Fourth Amendment clearly says people are protected from surveillance without a warrant. They have done away with that, so apparently we are all suspects now.”

Dave, a DC worker who was at the rally with a friend, discussed the need for an independent political party that is able to operate outside of the domination of banks and corporations. On Snowden, he said, “I think

it's important to keep in mind that the Obama administration has prosecuted more whistleblowers than any other president ever did. Money interests definitely control our government. I guess they always have, but it's so blatant now with rulings like *Citizens United*. Old party lines don't matter anymore, and the choices Americans are given in every election only represent a small fraction of the political spectrum."

At Daley Plaza in Chicago, the WSWWS spoke with Siobhan, a student, who said "I am tired of it, I'm tired of our rights being slowly taken away. One of the most important things is our privacy. I'm a citizen. I've done nothing wrong. I'm not a criminal."

About the difficult conditions faced by American workers she said, "It's ridiculous. My mother is sick—she has heart disease and diabetes. She has worked all her life, and she should be retired. But no, she works at Target. She's worked all her life for nothing."

Don, a Vietnam War veteran, said he was excited to see young people becoming politically active. He also spoke about the economic downturn, "I feel bad for you guys, your generation. Lower class, middle class—it makes no difference anymore. We're all under the same pressures."

Kristina, a writer for the *World Socialist Web Site*, addressed the crowd to explain the reasons behind the assault on democratic rights in the United States and internationally. "The ruling elite treats US citizens as enemies because they are terrified of the prospect of a politically organized movement of working people and youth," she said, before calling attention to the Socialist Equality Party's campaign to defend Edward Snowden and democratic rights.

In Los Angeles, the WSWWS spoke with Korelan, who said, "What's happening to Snowden is horrible."

When asked about Obama, Korelan replied, "We were really inspired by him before he was running, we thought he was a cool guy, the only guy against the Iraq War. We were swept up in 'change,' change that we could believe in, and now it seems like he's honestly worse than Bush. He hasn't closed Guantanamo or ended the use of drone strikes."

"I think drone strikes are horrible," she continued. "I don't see anyone in the government working for peace. They are just trying to get better at killing more people."

"It's funny because I resigned myself to being a little bit of a complacent American on the NSA issue, but then my husband was saying, you know, you can never say you're safe because you're not doing anything wrong, because next week what you could be doing could be considered wrong."

Korelan added, "I am trying to find a political party I can believe in. I think I consider myself a socialist... We should get rid of all the military spending."

Geoff commented on the Democratic Party, "I used to be a Democrat, and I had faith in the Clinton administration, but after Clinton I stopped supporting the Democrats. I feel like there is no political representation for me. Everyone had hope in Obama, so I voted for him, but it was just more of the same."



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