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Whistle Blowers, Truth Seekers or Treason

Whistleblowing, or as the public might know it better, leaking sensitive information, has for a long time been a topic of hot debate among both the United States government and the public at large. Some say that the leaking of information the government has deemed top secret is nothing less than treason, and deserves punishment befitting of such a crime. Others see these people as a kind of hero, peeling back the red tape and allowing us, as the American public, to see what is truly going on behind the scenes.

**Those who believe that they are traitors**

 The official stance of the NSA for cases like Edward Snowdens is that they are traitors and need to be shipped back to face justice for what they claim to be a dangerous data leak, exposing a system which the NSA uses to fight terrorists and other such dangerous criminals. According to Wired magazine in an interview with Snowden in 2014, the director of the NSA, Keith Alexander, said that Mr. Snowden has caused “irreversible and significant damage”. That he is a traitor and needs to face justice has also been said by several important members of government, including the secretary of state John Kerry. The documents that Snow leaked were classified top secret documents regarding the governments civilian surveillance, documents regarding deals made with several European countries to obtain information on the civilians there, and one high level one code named PRISM. In this regard, the government is not completely without merit for their opinion of Mr. Snowden. However, he wasn’t completely against the government as a whole, only the reasoning behind their actions.

The government’s stance on such things is life in prison, and Snowden agreed on that point. In an interview with Wired, he said that he would give himself up for prison, but only for the right reasons, which would be, according to the law, right and just. He did leak classified documents to the internet that detailed government programs, and it is true that those documents are now common knowledge for people who might be planning these attacks. According to an interview with Micheal Heyden, former head of the NSA and CIA, in an interview with genius.com (Joye, 2013), he has stated that creating a law in the US on cyber security is tough, due to the civil liberties that are available here. He goes on to state that this is because there is no real official laws in place for intelligence gathering in a cyber space. Given all of the recent inventions even in the past 100 years, this is a legitimate concern, due to different cyber-attacks we have seen in the past 5 years, like the attack on the governments background check database in 2015, which exposed around 21 million’s personal data to hackers. This, in the government’s eyes provides more than enough grounds for the push for more security and more ability to watch what the public is viewing and what they are saying over the internet and phone. However, this is only one side of the issue, and those that believe that government whistleblowers are heroes have their own pretty valid points.

**Those who believe they are heroes**

 Whistleblowers are seen as traitors by their governments, a lot of them being exiled from their countries seeking refuge from those whom they once served. They have no choice but to flee, to run from those they claim to protect through revealing the truth, or face life in prison or worse. In the US at least, it’s an opinion not shared by the government and citizens, and the people at large often view them as heroes, a kind of modern day robin hood of information. Sites such as WikiLeaks have sprung up in the past couple decades, and with the advent of smartphones, everyone has a video camera in their pockets, allowing everyone from your everyday joe to major news crews to report on what they see without government oversight. People like Edward Snowden are the best example of this. According to Snowden himself in the same interview with Wired (2014), the government saw him as a kind of villain, however regarding his decision to leak the documents about PRISM, the government’s program that spies on millions of Americans, a surprising 55 percent of Americans agreed with his decisions. That is a massive number when considering that this is in direct opposition against the government’s point of view. It goes to show the way the government sees itself, as more of a big brother then a avatar of the people. He goes on to talk about the moment when he decided to act. He said that if the government will not represent our best interests, the the people have to act to do so.

 Given this viewpoint that the government needs to represent the people, this revelation stands at the center of the ideal of almost every modern whistleblower, everyone from the first major leak, Senator Frank Church in the 70s, to Snowden. They all make a case that they speak for the American people and stand as a beacon of truth. In the most literal sense they seem to be right, and supported by the people. According to the New York Times (Mackey, 2015), he now works for a non for profit called Freedom of the Press, a foundation which helps to expose dishonesty and law breaking in the government, and is headed up by another former whistle blower named Daniel Ellsberg, whom is famous for leaking the Pentagon Papers, which revealed a lot of the black ops that were occurring during the Vietnam War. These people all used to work for the government, and have all given up their lives to what they describe as revealing the truth to the people, and although their actions are questionable as far as legality goes, their purpose, by all accounts, is done for the good of the people.

**My Findings**

In the surveys I conducted, this purpose is seen by a majority of the people I surveyed, with 6 out of the 4 believing that he was not a traitor. This information follows a trend, with those who didn’t think he was a traitor also agreeing that the government has no right to sentence him to life in prison, with the only outlier being if he should return home or not. The most interesting part of this data, however, is two of the people that believed that he was a traitor also answered tht the government has no right spying on everyday citizens. To me, this speaks either of someone who dosent agree with how the information was leaked, or dosent really understand the full story. Personally, I believe that he is a hero, a true patriot. He was standing up for every US citizen, from those informed and that understand the implications to those who might not even care, and he paid the price for it. UI think that he should return home, be issues a full pardon, and be allowed to live his life at home, where he blongs.

**Conclusion**

 Given all of this evidence, personally I believe these people to be true patriots of the people. They expose all of the ways that the government distrust their own citizens and spy on everyone, and do this realizing that they are burning for the American people. They giver their lives to us to show us the truth, and trust us to act. I do realize that this information, if in the wrong hands, could do some damage, but I believe that if the government gave us a choice, or at least gave us our voice that by right is ours, it would not be necessary to hide all of this. In the debate regarding whistleblowers and Edward Snowden, he is a hero, and should be remembered as one of the great American patriots, working fot the people.