"He who sacrifices freedom for security deserves neither."
~Ben Franklin

We have sacrificed our freedom for security. We no longer have the right to privacy, and yet, we continue to sit back and watch while our government steals every last bit. In today's technologically advanced era, the surveillance power that the government has developed can invade our privacy to an extent so great, that it is nearly impossible to be sure you aren't being watched at any time. Have we lost our right to basic privacy? Is our government abusing the power they hold over us?

Have you ever thought about who can see what you type into a search bar, text message, or email? Have you ever wondered who else might be listening to your phone call or watching your video chat? Have you ever contemplated what someone could find out about you if they had this amount of access? Over the past few years, the government has gained "backdoor access" to almost every cell phone carrier and major search engine you use, whether it have been gained legally, or not (Greenwald). This does not exclude cell phone, computer, or security cameras (Greenwald). The public was always relatively aware that our "big brother" could gain this kind of data with a warrant, or at least having reason for suspicion, but that is far from the truth. The National Security Association (NSA) has advanced its technique so greatly in the past decade, that they no longer need the slightest reason for suspicion (Glenn Greenwald). The NSA is a "U.S. intelligence agency responsible for global monitoring, collection, decoding, translation and analysis of information and data for foreign intelligence and counterintelligence purposes" (NSA). Today, they have all the data they could ever need at their demand, with no obligation to go through any of the previously regulated checks and balances (Greenwald).

Now it is one thing to be entirely aware that the government can gain the control to so many of your electronics, but it is an entirely new situation to find out that the NSA specifically, had been hiding it from the public, as well as lying to Congress. Until in 2013, when Edward Snowden, the whistleblower of all whistleblowers, released top-secret documents from the NSA, stating otherwise. According to those documents, the NSA lied to Congress about their surveillance ability in denying having any access to any sort of metadata regarding American people's use of technology. Today, they have more access than ever recorded in our nation's history.

When you find out how one of the most powerful security systems in the world has been abusing its power beyond its legal limits, it is shocking. Yet, people seemed to get over it rather quickly once the NSA publically apologized for doing so, all the while claiming it was strictly for our safety as well as denying certain claims that had already been proven truthful. This makes me wonder what will happen if the government continues to test the public limits. Will we stand by and watch as they take away our rights, or act on this injustice?

This all brings up the most important question, has the NSA used information gathered by mass surveillance for its intended purpose? According to *Capitol Hill Daily*, the Russians tipped us off that an immigrant from Chechen might pose a threat to the U.S.; this threat turned out to be the Tsarnaev brothers who bombed the Boston Marathon 2 years later (CHD). It is also evident that the Tsarnaev brothers used smart phones and the Internet in going about their plan (CHD). In addition, this access did not help in preventing Major Nidal Hasan "before he massacred soldiers at Fort Hood, and he regularly surfed to jihadi websites" (CHD). Shouldn't that type of search somehow tip off the NSA? Senator Diane Feinstein responded to this information simply by stating, "the authorities need this information in case someone might

become a terrorist in the future" (CHD). How do they define terrorists today? Could someone completely innocent be just as easily mistaken as a criminal? According to Mint Press, "the U.S. government has added more than 1.5 million names — not individuals — to its Terrorist Watch list in the last five years" (Mint Press). According to Anya Bernstein, "Americans should be concerned about these watch lists, even if they are not currently affected, because there is virtually no external oversight of who is on the list or agency accountability associated with the lists, allowing those who are irrelevant to national security to remove themselves from the list" (Mint Press). We need to be concerned. Who's to say you won't be accused with misinterpreted evidence collected by our government, who just might be watching you right now?

The Fourth Amendment to the United States Constitution states that "the right of the people to be secure in their persons, houses, papers, and effects, against unreasonable searches and seizures, shall not be violated, and no warrants shall issue, but upon probable cause, supported by oath or affirmation, and particularly describing the place to be searched, and the persons or things to be seized." We need to be reminded of our basic rights as Americans. We need to be reminded why those rights were established in the first place. We deserve our rights, we deserve our privacy, and without them, there would be no democracy. Governments hold an immense amount of power over their people. They are trusted to keep the country protected and in order. With that trust comes a responsibility to honor the power they hold and not abuse it; and yet, that power continues to be abused. Our privacy has never been more endangered than it is today. How far does the government need to push us in order for us to act upon this injustice?

According to the Department of Justice, the Patriot Act was established to "unite and strengthen America by providing the appropriate tools required to intercept and obstruct terrorism." This act in particular allows the NSA to use mass surveillance to watch out for future "acts of terror," and yet the previously stated evidence has shown that this approach has not helped the NSA prevent terrorism in many of the major terrorism accounts (Dept. of Justice). Although there are some cases in which this approach has succeeded in preventing terrorism against our nation, we cannot be too sure. We may have forgotten the real idea behind being a patriot. According to the general American population, being a patriot means being "a person who loves, supports, and defends his or her country," which is accurate, but it seems that we may have forgotten that this occasionally means we must protect ourselves against some of our own governments policies (Scribd). Sometimes we must question our government, and the decisions that are made, they are what our future depends on.

When you think about a government, you probably think about it as a whole, but our government isn't exactly that. There are many different branches and responsibilities when it comes to keeping order in an entire country. The decisions get checked and balanced no matter the circumstances, or so we thought. In light of the recent release of documents from Edward Snowden, there are certain offices that don't exactly have successful communication. Once the Edward Snowden documents were released, it was proven that the NSA did in fact lie to congress. According to the *New York Times*, the NSA was called out "for repeatedly misleading the court that oversees its surveillance on domestic soil, including a program that is collecting tens of thousands of domestic e-mails and other Internet communications of Americans each year."

We hear people asking for more transparency between the government and the public, which is perfectly feasible, but have we ever taken into consideration that maybe there isn't enough transparency within the government itself? We trust them to run our country, yet we hear of numerous rumors concerning disagreements between certain departments, where there should

very minimal disorder. It seems that any time there are flaws found in our governments tactics, the idea is immediately shut down and ignored to avoid showing weakness. Why hasn't it occurred to us that maybe ignoring our flaws is the source of our weakness? If they continue to disregard anyone who shows concern in our nation's stability, we will not see any progress towards repairing these issues. Ignoring our weaknesses will not contribute to any source of growth.

This is why we should not treat whistleblowers like criminals. Whistleblowers are "people who expose misconduct, alleged dishonest or illegal activity occurring in an organization" (Investopedia). As you can imagine, our government does not take satisfaction in people like these exposing their wrongdoings to the public. In fact, it is not uncommon for these people to be arrested and denied the right to a fair trial. Many of the actions that the government takes when "protecting" our nation against people like these are illegal, but according to the government these people are terrorists and don't care about our nations safety. According to the government you must be completely compliant to what they say, no questions asked. If you ask questions, you aren't a patriot. When it is up to the government, you aren't a patriot if you doubt them at all, but doesn't that make us stronger, to doubt our decisions so we can be sure they are the right ones?

Whistleblowers have gained a bad name because we have been taught to trust our government completely, although we have, in many cases, been shown that that may not be the best idea. There have been multiple scenarios in which someone has released information about our government that shocks us, that is then forgotten in a matter of months. Thomas Drake, a previous whistleblower, was charged on an act, hastily created by our government, to get rid of whistleblowers. Drake's lawyer, Jesselyn Redack, explained the "Obama administration's unprecedented attack on whistleblowers," is "a way to create terrible precedent to go after journalists and a backdoor way to create an Official Secrets Act, which we have managed to live without in this country for more than 200 years. And I think it's being done on the backs of whistleblowers" (DemocracyNow). Edward Snowden is another example, Snowden found himself in a questioning position while working for the NSA. Before he became the whistleblower he is known as today, he was in the military, and then worked in many different departments in the NSA.

While working as a "tech analyst in a high standing position," Snowden found many of the things he was exposed to very alarming (Greenwald). It had become evident to him that the government he had always looked up to has not been doing exactly what they said they are, specifically the NSA, the department in charge of our entire nations safety. Snowden realized the NSA was spying on the public in ways he never imagined possible and it was well known to him that the public was not aware of any of it. As Snowden moved from job to job, still employed by the NSA, he continued to find out about alarming illegal activity going on within the NSA. When he began to ask his colleagues for an explanation, those who were aware of the spying told him to stop asking questions; those who weren't, were shocked (Greenwald). Snowden was not satisfied with sitting on information that he knew was wrong to ignore.

So, he set out to collect the information he needed to expose the NSA's activity to the public. All the while keeping his activity secret from his friends and family, to be sure no one else could be held accountable once he came forward as the source. In preparing to release the information, Snowden decided he needed to find a journalist to expose it, in order for the public to recieve an unbiased view of the information. As an anonymous source, Snowden contacted Glenn Greenwald and Laura Poitras to cover the story. After months of still anonymous

communication over an encrypted chat program called PGP, which Snowden insisted on using, Snowden convinced Greenwald and Poitras of his legitimacy. The two then traveled to Hong Kong where Snowden was staying. Their first meeting was set up very discreetly; with specific directions to be sure they did not look suspicious and were not followed (Greenwald). From then on, the three camped out in Snowden's hotel room to work on publishing the documents he had collected.

This information included the following; the NSA had secret court orders allowing them the ability to collect mass amounts of Americans' phone records (Greenwald). The next set of news released was regarding a program called Prism; Prism allows the NSA access to a number of major internet sights like Google, Facebook, Yahoo!, Microsoft, YouTube, Skype, AOL, and Apple (Greenwald). We also learned that the NSA works along side the British spy agency in tapping "fiber optic cables all over the world to intercept data flowing through the global internet" with a program called Tempora (Greenwald). This leak was followed by the release explaining that the NSA has also used these tools to spy on world leaders and foreign governments, targeting " at least 122 world leaders" (Greenwald). Next, XKeyscore was exposed, "the program that sees everything." XKeyscore is one of the many tools the NSA uses to "search nearly everything a user does on the Internet through data it intercepts across the world" (Greenwald).

The documents continued to be released, now containing information regarding the undermining of Internet security. Some encryption makes it more difficult for the previously stated techniques to collect data, so the NSA developed "a series of techniques and tricks to circumvent widely used web encryption technologies" (Greenwald). This means the NSA forced major Internet companies to leave "backdoor access" to areas that the NSA could not hack themselves (Greenwald). Many companies tried to fight back against the NSA but were denied. Not only were some sites forced to obey, others were hacked. If the NSA cannot get the companies to comply, they move to their elite hacking team (Greenwald). This team is called TAO, which stands for Tailored Access Operations, TAO "hacks into computers worldwide, infects them with malware and does the dirty job when other surveillance tactics fail" (Greenwald). The NSA continues in collecting all of the data they can by "intercept[ing] 200 million text messages everyday worldwide through a program called Dishfire" (Greenwald).

After this exposé hit the headlines, the NSA responded with exactly what Edward Snowden expected, they explained that Snowden put our nation's security in danger and that, of course, everything they do has all been for our safety. Yet many of our rights are getting violated in the process. The NSA also responded with alternatives to Snowden's actions. For instance, Richard Ledgett made an appearance on TEDTalk's to respond by stating Snowden had "many other avenues within the NSA, full of people who could have given him a better explanation" (Ledgett). This retaliation was shut down because Snowden had previously explained that the information he discovered "regarded things passed by three different branches of government" (Snowden).

As the news of the recent release of the documents sank in, it became clear that the NSA had not only lied to the public, but also failed disclose their surveillance capability to Congress. If the NSA is lying to Congress, how can we trust that any branch in our government is being honest with the other, or us? The public reaction was complete outrage, but once the news settled in, people began to question if it was really that important. The question of "if I have nothing to hide, why should I care?" came about. People began to wonder if they should care about it at all. The answer to this is yes, you should absolutely care if the government is secretly going against

your rights. If we sit around while our government violates some of our most basic rights, they won't stop, they won't have reason to stop. The NSA uses this data to not only look out for current threats we face, but also things that might hint toward future acts of terror. What happens if they misinterpret something you're doing as dangerous? How can you defend yourself against one of the most powerful associations on the planet?

As Americans, we have rights; one of those rights is the right to privacy. Our rights are nonnegotiable. Without our rights, our government would not be a government. There is no democracy without privacy; it is as simple as that. It makes you wonder why there isn't more transparency between the public and the system. It makes it difficult to decide whether "the system" should be this way in the first place, is it smart for us to trust such a large amount of power in the hands of the government? It makes you wonder who all of this is really protecting.

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