

# The End of America

## ACTION GUIDE

“My sense of alarm comes from the clear lessons from history that, once certain checks and balances are destroyed, and once certain institutions have been intimidated, the pressures that can turn an open society into a closed one turn into direct assaults; at that point events tend to occur very rapidly, and a point comes at which there is no turning back to the way it used to be.”

Naomi Wolf

*The End of America: Letter of Warning to a Young Patriot*  
(Chelsea Green Publishing, 2007)

“As for our common defense, we reject as false the choice between our safety and our ideals. Our founding fathers faced with perils that we can scarcely imagine, drafted a charter to assure the rule of law and the rights of man, a charter expanded by the blood of generations. Those ideals still light the world and we will not give them up for expedience’s sake.”

President Barack Obama  
*Inaugural address, January 20, 2009*

## CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	2
WARM UPS	4
<i>Ten Steps to Close An Open Society</i>	
BACKGROUND	8
<i>The U.S. Constitution</i>	
<i>The Bill Of Rights</i>	
WORKING ON CIVIL LIBERTIES ISSUES	9
<i>Core Values</i>	
<i>How To Be a Patriot</i>	
FEATURED ISSUE — ISSUE I: UNLAWFUL DETENTION & TORTURE	14
FEATURED ISSUE — ISSUE II: PARAMILITARY FORCES	18
FEATURED ISSUE — ISSUE III: OUTLAWING DISSENT	22
CREDITS & ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	26

There is this great story where  
Benjamin Franklin was coming out of  
the Constitutional Convention and  
a woman asked him, “So, what is it?  
A republic or not a republic?” And he said,  
“A republic ma’am if you can keep it.”

Naomi Wolf, *The End Of America*

## INTRODUCTION

You may have seen the bumper sticker that says, “If you’re not outraged, you’re not paying attention.” The slogan aptly describes Naomi Wolf’s call to activism in *The End of America: Letter of Warning to a Young Patriot* and her follow-up, *Give Me Liberty: A Handbook for American Revolutionaries*. Comparing historical patterns common in emerging dictatorships to recent U.S. policy, Wolf demonstrates how our Constitutional protections — the very things that make the United States a democracy instead of a dictatorship — have been eroded during the eight years of the Bush administration, not in single grand actions, but in a series of gradual steps, each taken in the name of “securing the homeland” in a post 9/11 world.

Ironically, America’s founding ideals of liberty and freedom were crafted as a critique of an ineffective and unjust government. So when criticism of the government or dissent is made to seem unpatriotic or unlawful, the America that is envisioned in the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution ceases to exist.

It is no accident that when the U.S. president takes the oath of office, he swears to uphold the *Constitution* — not to protect the homeland or lead the country’s government, but to uphold the ideals and laws in the Constitution.

According to Wolf, it is not just the president who has that duty. Rather, every American is entrusted with the responsibility to preserve the freedoms that the Constitution guarantees. Wolf recounts a story about Benjamin Franklin exiting the Constitutional Convention when a woman approached and asked him, “So, what is it? You know, is it a republic or not a republic?” He responded, “A republic, ma’am, if you can keep it.”

This **End of America Action Guide** is meant to help us “keep it.” A tool for educators, students and engaged citizens, the Guide leverages *The End of America* and *Give Me Liberty* to promote civic action and dialogue, restore civil liberties and support outstanding work being done by many national organizations. This Guide, along with the film, brings the erosion of civil liberties in the U.S. into sharp historical and contemporary focus, and sounds a clarion call for defending these rights so clearly etched in the U.S. Constitution. Not every activity or suggestion will apply to every person or situation, but every person, no matter their situation, will find at least one idea that can help them engage.

For a PDF version of the Guide and related video modules visit: <http://www.endofamericamovie.com>

*The End of America* is a provocative, 75-minute documentary based on Naomi Wolf’s bestselling book of the same name. The film intercuts footage from one of Wolf’s lectures with news footage, interviews with key players and activists, and more. The film — like her books *The End of America* and *Give Me Liberty* — challenges viewers to respond, not just intellectually or rhetorically, but with action.

## WARM-UPS

To begin thinking about the things that threaten or strengthen American democracy, you might want to spend some time discussing these questions:

How do you define these words? What do they look like when they are put into action?

- *Patriotism*
- *Freedom*
- *Liberty*
- *Democracy*
- *America*

What role does fear play in people's willingness or reluctance to give up civil liberties?

In current political debates about national security, who uses fear to make their case and in what ways?

If you have watched *The End of America*, what did you learn from the film? Describe one question you still have. Brainstorm ways that you might get an answer to that question.

Test your knowledge about the Constitution and current U.S. policy by taking the MAP Constitutional Quiz at <http://www.endofamericamovie.com>

# LIBERTY: USE IT OR LOSE IT

I wrote *The End of America* in a kind of desperate  
heat and haste in 2007 because of an emergency  
I saw that we were facing.

Naomi Wolf, *The End Of America*

# 10 STEPS THAT CLOSE AN OPEN SOCIETY\*

As you consider each of the following, think about:

## **THE SPECIFIC DANGER**

How does this step undermine democracy?

## **HISTORICAL EXAMPLES**

Where and when has this step been taken and what were the results?

## **CURRENT U.S. POLICY**

How does current U.S. law or policy facilitate or prevent this step?

## **ECONOMIC INTERESTS**

Who profits from taking this step and how are their interests the same as or different from yours?

## **OPTIONS & ALTERNATIVES**

What alternatives exist to preserve security without taking this step and what specific actions could improve security without undermining civil liberties?

\*These ten steps are based on Naomi Wolf's *The End of America* and are being reprinted for the purposes of this guide with the generosity of the publisher, Chelsea Green.

## 10 STEPS THAT CLOSE AN OPEN SOCIETY

### 1. INVOKE AN INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL THREAT

People who are afraid are willing to do things that they wouldn't otherwise do.

### 2. ESTABLISH SECRET (UNACCOUNTABLE) PRISONS WHERE TORTURE TAKES PLACE

In a secret system, the government does not have to provide any proof of wrongdoing by those it holds, so it can incarcerate anyone it wants.

### 3. DEVELOP A PARAMILITARY FORCE

A private military force — under the exclusive direction of the “commander in chief” with no accountability to Congress, the courts, or the public — blurs the line between a civilian police force and a militarized police state.

### 4. SURVEIL ORDINARY CITIZENS

People who believe they are being watched are less likely to voice opposition. To scare a population into silence, the government need only monitor the activities of a few to make everyone fear that they are being surveilled. Every closed society keeps a “list” of so-called opponents it tracks.

### 5. INFILTRATE CITIZEN'S GROUPS

Spies in activist groups put psychological pressure on genuine activists by undermining their trust in one another. They may also disrupt legal activities, undermining the effectiveness of group efforts.

### 6. DETAIN AND RELEASE ORDINARY CITIZENS

Detention intimidates or psychologically damages those arrested and also lets everyone know that anyone could be labeled an “enemy combatant” and “disappeared.”

### 7. TARGET KEY INDIVIDUALS

People are less likely to speak out when those who are highly visible, like journalists, scholars, artists, or celebrities, are intimidated or have the livelihoods threatened. Targeting those who are especially visible makes it less likely that people will speak out and robs society of leaders and others who might inspire opposition.

### 8. RESTRICT THE PRESS

The public is less likely to find out about government wrongdoing if the government can threaten to prosecute anyone who publishes or broadcasts reports that are critical of the government.

### 9. RECAST CRITICISM AS ESPIONAGE AND DISSENT AS TREASON

People who protest can be charged with terrorism or treason when laws criminalize or limit free speech rather than protect it.

### 10. SUBVERT THE RULE OF LAW

The disappearance of checks and balances makes it easier to declare martial law, especially if the judiciary branch continues to exercise authority over individuals but has no authority over the Executive branch.

## BACKGROUND - CIVICS 101:

### U.S. CONSTITUTION

The U.S. Constitution was developed in reaction to the limits and injustices of the British monarchy. This monarchy persecuted people who expressed unpopular beliefs, usurped all legal authority, forced property owners to house and feed soldiers, and appropriated economic resources at will through property seizure and taxes.

To protect individuals against the abuses of an all-powerful government, the framers of the Constitution designed checks and balances into their governing system. Each of three branches of government would share power equally: the Executive (president and advisors), the Legislative (a bicameral Congress – the Senate and House of Representatives), and the Judiciary (the federal court). The framers further limited the power of the federal government by granting specific powers to the states.

### BILL OF RIGHTS

In 1791, just two years after the Constitution was ratified, the nation's leaders acted to fill gaps in the original document by adding ten amendments, known as the Bill of Rights. Since then, the Constitution has been amended another seventeen times. Below are Amendments key to the issues raised in this guide:

1<sup>st</sup> – the government cannot interfere with citizens' rights to practice the religion of their choice, to speak freely, to assemble, and to address the government.

4<sup>th</sup> – the government must get court approval (a warrant) before they can search or detain a person or seize their property.

5<sup>th</sup> – people cannot be locked up or have their property taken by the government without due process of law (e.g., defendants must have the chance to present their side of the story).

6<sup>th</sup> – people who have been accused of crimes have the right to a public (not secret) trial in which they have an opportunity to present evidence and question their accuser. Defendants also have a right to be represented by a lawyer and to have the case heard by an impartial jury.

8<sup>th</sup> – prohibits cruel or unusual punishment.

9<sup>th</sup> – citizens may have rights that are not specifically written into the Constitution, but that are protected anyway. Subsequent Supreme Court decisions have held that one such right is the right to privacy.

10<sup>th</sup> – any power that has not been assigned by the Constitution to the federal government automatically belongs to the states or the people.

### DISCUSS

If the “Bill of Rights” had been called the “Bill of Responsibilities” — e.g., if citizens had the “responsibility” of free speech instead of the “right” to free speech — how would that influence the civic role you take?

In what ways have U.S. government policies enacted since September 11, 2001 strengthened or weakened the constitutional rights of American citizens?

In America's three-pronged system of “checks and balances,” the press has sometimes been called the Fourth Estate. What specific actions could you take to strengthen the watchdog function of the press?

## WORKING ON CIVIL LIBERTIES

### WEIGHING IN

Sometimes people are willing to trade civil liberties in exchange for something they perceive as a greater good. To think about where you would draw the line, imagine the scale that Lady Liberty holds.

On one side of the scale, think about a policy, program, or law enacted to protect national security (e.g., the Patriot Act or the Military Commissions Act). Ask yourself what NEED is being addressed by the policy, program, or law. Is the need real? Are there alternative ways to meet the need?

On the other side of the scale, list the COSTS to civil liberties (e.g., giving up the right to assemble for public protest or losing the right to have private phone conversations). How might the policy, program, or law damage an open society? Are you prepared to live with that damage?

Is the scale balanced or does one side outweigh the other? What does it say about your values?

### RESTORING THE CONSTITUTION

Before taking action, find out as much as possible about the steps to take to achieve your goal.

For example, If you want Congress to pass a law, you need to know how to solicit sponsors, take it through committee, involve key congressional staffers in facilitating the process, make a bill veto-proof or guarantee a presidential signature, etc.

If you want to initiate a legal challenge to an existing law, find out who would have legal standing to sue, under what legal theory your suit might be successful, which court (and perhaps which district) is the right place to file, how to file a request for documents under the Freedom of Information Act, etc.

### HELPFUL RESOURCES

**Amnesty International – USA's** Activist Tool Kit includes guides for lobbying Congress, organizing local groups, tabling, holding vigils, organizing teach-ins and much more. <http://www.amnestyusa.org/get-activist-toolkit/amnesty-international-usa-sitemap/page.do?id=1101296>

**The Ruckus Society's** website Resources section has manuals on how to organize direct actions, get media coverage, and more. <http://www.ruckus.org>

**The Community Tool Box from the University of Kansas Work Group for Community Health and Development** provides instructions on organizing boycotts and other kinds of community actions. [http://ctb.ku.edu/tools/sub\\_section\\_main\\_1264.htm](http://ctb.ku.edu/tools/sub_section_main_1264.htm)

**The Bill of Rights Defense Committee** helps people pass local and state resolutions that create civil liberties “safe zones,” and offers sample questions to ask candidates at public forums. <http://bordc.org/resources/candidatequestions.pdf>.

The People's Campaign for the Constitution, BORDC's grassroots initiative, provides guides for building local coalitions to defend the Bill of Rights and hold representatives accountable. <http://www.constitutioncampaign.org/toolkit/steps.php>.

**Corpwatch** offers step-by-step instructions on how to research corporations in preparation for boycotts or other direct actions. <http://www.corpwatch.org>

**Campus Progress**, a project of the Center for American Progress, provides guidelines for how to organize student action. <http://campusprogress.org/issues/1461/activism-links>

**Sunlight Foundation** is a pioneer in the Open Government movement. <http://www.sunlightfoundation.com/>

# CORE VALUES OF DEMOCRACY\*

If Wolf’s “10 Steps” towards dictatorship are a roadmap for what not to do, then the Seven Principles she lays out in *Give Me Liberty* are the guideposts for what to do. Discussing these values can help inform and focus a group that intends to take action.

For each of the principles below, ask yourselves these questions:

- What does this really mean?
- How does this relate to preserving liberty?
- What could we do to translate this principle into action?

---

**1: WE ARE REQUIRED TO SPEAK FREELY.**

---

**2: WE HAVE A DUTY TO REBEL CONTINUALLY AGAINST INJUSTICE AND OPPRESSION.**

---

**3: ORDINARY PEOPLE ARE SUPPOSED TO RUN THINGS.**

---

**4: AMERICANS CHERISH THE RULE OF LAW.**

---

**5: AMERICA ESTABLISHES NO GOD.**

---

**6: AMERICANS DELIBERATE WITH THEIR NEIGHBORS AND DISAGREE WITHOUT RESORTING TO VIOLENCE.**

---

**7: LIBERTY IS UNIVERSAL: THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA CANNOT ACT AS OPPRESSOR IN OTHER PLACES IN ORDER TO PRESERVE LIBERTIES FOR ITSELF.**

---

\*A more detailed version of this list is available in Naomi Wolf’s, *Give Me Liberty: A Handbook for American Revolutionaries* (Simon & Schuster, 2008), which includes an action-based User Guide that gives citizens concrete tools for participating in the democratic process.

# HOW TO BE A PATRIOT

What you do depends on your own abilities and priorities. Check-off each of the following things that you have done or want to do. Below each action write a starting date and how, and with whom, you will take action.

<p><b>LEARN THE CONSTITUTION. MAKE SURE THAT YOUR ELECTED OFFICIALS DO, TOO.</b></p>	<input type="radio"/> NEW ACTION	<input checked="" type="radio"/> TAKE ACTION	<input type="checkbox"/> HAVE DONE
<p>DATE _____ PLACE _____ HOW _____ WITH WHOM _____</p>			
<p><b>TAKE REAL STEPS TO ADVANCE YOUR ISSUES.</b></p>	<input type="radio"/> NEW ACTION	<input checked="" type="radio"/> TAKE ACTION	<input type="checkbox"/> HAVE DONE
<p>DATE _____ PLACE _____ HOW _____ WITH WHOM _____</p>			
<p><b>BE VOCAL. SPEAK OUT, CREATE A PETITION, WRITE A BLOG OR AN OP-ED.</b></p>	<input type="radio"/> NEW ACTION	<input checked="" type="radio"/> TAKE ACTION	<input type="checkbox"/> HAVE DONE
<p>DATE _____ PLACE _____ HOW _____ WITH WHOM _____</p>			
<p><b>EXPOSE GOVERNMENT SECRECY. LEARN ABOUT THE FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT AND SUNSHINE LAWS.</b></p>	<input type="radio"/> NEW ACTION	<input checked="" type="radio"/> TAKE ACTION	<input type="checkbox"/> HAVE DONE
<p>DATE _____ PLACE _____ HOW _____ WITH WHOM _____</p>			
<p><b>REGISTER TO VOTE. HELP YOUR FRIENDS VOTE, TOO.</b></p>	<input type="radio"/> NEW ACTION	<input checked="" type="radio"/> TAKE ACTION	<input type="checkbox"/> HAVE DONE
<p>DATE _____ PLACE _____ HOW _____ WITH WHOM _____</p>			
<p><b>TRACK THE POLLS ON ELECTION DAY. VOLUNTEER TO COUNT THE BALLOTS.</b></p>	<input type="radio"/> NEW ACTION	<input checked="" type="radio"/> TAKE ACTION	<input type="checkbox"/> HAVE DONE
<p>DATE _____ PLACE _____ HOW _____ WITH WHOM _____</p>			
<p><b>YOU CAN DO IT BETTER. BE A LEADER &amp; RUN FOR OFFICE YOURSELF.</b></p>	<input type="radio"/> NEW ACTION	<input checked="" type="radio"/> TAKE ACTION	<input type="checkbox"/> HAVE DONE
<p>DATE _____ PLACE _____ HOW _____ WITH WHOM _____</p>			

## MORE ACTION IDEAS

**BECOME A DEMOCRACY COMMANDO.** Elected officials pay more attention to people whose names show up on lists of registered voters, so be sure you are registered to vote and encourage everyone you know to vote. When you approach your political representatives, do so with lists of registered voters. Let officials know that the people on the list care about (and talk with others about) the issue you are asking them to address.

### **BECOME A DEMOCRACY COMMANDO.**

### **CREATE AN ELECTORAL AFFINITY GROUP.**

### **HOST A SCREENING OF THE END OF AMERICA.**

### **CREATE AN EDITORIAL TEAM.**

### **BRAINSTORM OTHER OPPORTUNITIES TO SHARE YOUR MESSAGE.**

**CREATE AN ELECTORAL AFFINITY GROUP** of friends and family to work together on issues of common interest. As a group, attend meetings of local government councils and boards, volunteer to work on campaigns or grassroots initiatives, invite a speaker from a local community organization to join you for dinner or coffee, monitor local news providers or progress of elected officials on campaign promises, etc. Doing things together adds a fun social dimension to activism and provides a built-in support group.

**HOST A SCREENING OF *THE END OF AMERICA*.** Make it a house party. End the party by choosing a focus for action and planning the group's next meeting. Order the film at <http://www.endofamericamovie.com>

**CREATE AN EDITORIAL TEAM.** Newspaper editors and call-in show producers don't like to give space or air time to the same person over and over again. Rather than go it alone, pull together a team of people who develop a set of "talking points" about your issue and take turns submitting letters-to-the-editor or op-eds, or making phone calls to radio shows.

**BRAINSTORM OTHER OPPORTUNITIES TO SHARE YOUR MESSAGE.** For example, in addition to opinion pages, a newspaper might have a feature that reminds readers of historical events. The people who write such columns are always looking for ideas. Oblige them with events related to your issue (e.g., "On this date in 2002, XYZ military contractor was fined for overcharging the U.S. government for services," or "50,000 people showed up in front of the courthouse to call for peace," etc.). Or create display-quality photographs with captions of an event you attend and offer to help the local library create an exhibit.

## FEATURED ISSUES

Because Constitutional protections are integral to so many aspects of our everyday lives, there are dozens of civil liberties issues in need of our attention. Likewise, there are so many different ways to take action that it would be impossible to detail them all in a single guide. Instead, what this guide does is to provide you with a sampling.

**INVITE MANY KINDS OF  
USER ACTIONS.**

**INTENDED TO INSPIRE,  
NOT LIMIT.**

**PROTECTING CIVIL LIBERTIES  
IS A RESPONSIBILITY.**

The featured issues that follow - Unlawful Detention and Torture, Paramilitary Forces and Outlawing Dissent – were chosen because they command urgency, invite many kinds of user actions, and are supported by compelling national campaigns currently underway. Each featured issue corresponds with video modules excerpted from *The End of America*, available at <http://www.endofamericamovie.com>

These modules are intended to inspire, not limit. Most of the action suggestions could be applied to a wide range of civil liberties issues. As you consider each issue or suggestion for action, be creative. Find the ones that suit your skills and needs. Or use the actions suggested here as a springboard to launch your own ideas.

Protecting civil liberties is a responsibility, but it doesn't have to feel like a burden. Select actions that you find energizing.

# UNLAWFUL DETENTION AND TORTURE

## FACTS ON THE GROUND

In 2006, Congress passed the Military Commissions Act. In theory, it permits the president to declare anyone to be an “unlawful enemy combatant.” Once that label is applied to a person, the Act allows for denial of habeas corpus\* rights. The only “legitimate” means that the law provides to detainees wishing to challenge their detention or treatment is a secret court in which the accused has no right to hear the evidence against them (because the government can declare it to be “classified”) and where prosecutors can use evidence obtained by torture. In addition, the Act gives the president the right to define what is and isn’t torture.

\*Habeas corpus refers to the right not to be incarcerated without a trial. In the United States, that means having the right to see the evidence against you, confront your accuser, and be tried before an impartial judge or jury. In short, it means that the accused are guaranteed an opportunity to prove their innocence.

## SOLUTIONS

Fix or repeal the Military Commissions Act (MCA).

Pass current versions of The Restoring the Constitution Act of 2007 (H.R. 1415, S. 576) and the Habeas Corpus Restoration Act (H.R. 1416, S. 185). Note that bill numbers and names often change each year as a new Congress takes office. An excellent resource to stay current with pending legislation is <http://www.opencongress.org>.

Make permanent the current Presidential Executive Order banning torture by passing a law outlawing the use of torture by any American for any reason.

## How might you be vulnerable to indiscriminant detention if the U.S. President has the power to declare anyone to be an “enemy combatant” without having to present evidence?

### ACTIONS

#### Pressure Congress and the White House by:

- Calling the switchboard at 202.456.1414. Leave your comments at 202.456.1111.
- Arranging a meeting with your elected representatives to ask them to support repealing the MCA or to co-sponsor bills that fix the problems with MCA. Share with local media the response you get. To find your representatives, go to: <http://www.congress.org/congressorg/directory/congdir.tt>
- Asking campaign donors to include requests to repeal the MCA with their contributions.
- Submitting a petition to support repeal of the MCA. There are many resources on the web for starting a petition – just search “start a petition.”

### ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

#### The American Civil Liberties Union

<http://www.aclu.org/safefree/detention/29012res20070313.html>

In addition to specific information on the Military Commissions Act, the ACLU has extensive information available related to illegal detention, suppression of dissent, ending secrecy, surveillance, torture, and more. The website includes fact sheets, legal and legislative documents.

#### The American Freedom Campaign

<http://www.americanfreedomcampaign.org> — The American Freedom Campaign is a citizens initiative to limit undue Executive power, clearly outlaw torture, and hold those who have violated basic civil liberties accountable.

#### The Center for Constitutional Rights

<http://ccrjustice.org/illegal-detentions-and-guantanamo> — CCR has ongoing initiatives to end torture, rendition and illegal detention and is actively involved in restoring the right to due process, filing countless cases on behalf of detainees and others swept up in the Bush administration’s post-9/11 policies.



**ACTION**  
**1.**

# TIPS FOR CONTACTING CONGRESS

There are several options for contacting your elected representatives in Congress, each with its own strength and weakness.

To find the phone, email and address of your representative's local and D.C. offices, go to:  
[http://www.congress.org/  
congress.org/directory/congdir.tt](http://www.congress.org/congress.org/directory/congdir.tt)

## TIPS FOR CONTACTING CONGRESS

**E-mail messages** are quick and easy and they let your representative's staff know what constituents care about. They are likely to be read by interns, who, if they see trends will report to a staffer. Because there can be thousands of e-mails in a day, it may take awhile for your message to elicit a response. Emails determined to be part of an organized campaign carry less weight than those from individual constituents, so always invent your own unique subject line.

**Twitter** is used more and more by elected officials. To find out if your congressperson tweets visit <http://www.tweetcongress.org>

**Phone calls** to your representative primarily provide empirical evidence about how the general public feels about an issue. Interns or staff members will calculate how many calls were received on a particular issue and of those calls, how many were "pro" and how many were "con." In addition to calling the Washington, D.C. office, you may want to contact a senator or representative's local office. There you are more likely to be able to speak with a staff member.

**Handwritten letters**, perhaps because they are so rare, are a more effective way to get an elected official's attention than e-mails or phone calls. The assumption is that if you care enough to spend time writing, this is something really important.

**In-person meetings**, either in Washington, D.C. or at the local office, are an especially effective way to communicate. When you arrange your meeting, let the office know which issue or piece of legislation you want to focus on so they can make sure that you are greeted by the staff member who specializes in that area. You may actually spend more time with the staffer than with their boss, and that isn't necessarily a bad thing. Be prepared to state your

case succinctly and leave behind well-organized literature that supports your point of view. Statistics, pithy descriptions, news articles, and excerpts from academic texts that can be easily cited during a speech or hearing can be especially helpful.

### IN ALL CASES

Provide your name and street address. Politicians will want to confirm that you are a constituent and that you are a registered voter.

Keep communication short and to the point. Address only one issue at a time. A long list of all the issues you care about is likely to get lost in a shuffle among staffers. If you need to provide a lot of evidence, do it with attachments, not in the main body of your communication.

Be very clear about what you want your elected representative to do. Always provide the specific number, not just the popular name of any bill that you want them to co-sponsor or vote for or against. In the House of Representatives, that number will always be preceded by "H.R." and in the Senate by an "S." (and the numbers are never the same). You can find the numbers at: <http://thomas.loc.gov/>

**Be respectful.** An office that receives hundreds or thousands of constituent messages every day is looking for reasons to reduce their workload. Profanity or the use of slurs allows them to quickly send your message to the discard pile.

If you represent a group of constituents, let your elected official know — e.g., "After a discussion at our Thanksgiving dinner, I am sending you this letter on behalf of twenty-six members of my family and we all vote." Or "I am here as a representative of my university's chapter of the Society of Women Engineers. We have twelve active members and all of us are registered to vote."



# PARAMILITARY FORCES

## FACTS ON THE GROUND

Since 2000, Blackwater Worldwide has received \$500 million in federal security contracts (two-thirds of which are no-bid contracts). Until the recent agreement with the Iraqi government that began the process of returning control of the country's military to its own government, employees of U.S. military contractors in Iraq were exempt from accountability for their actions. As civilians, employees were not subject to military authority but as military contractors they were protected from civilian prosecution. In addition to providing services in Iraq, companies like Blackwater have attempted, in some cases successfully, to win contracts to provide border security in the U.S., security services in emergency disasters like Hurricane Katrina, and response to public protests.

- What is posse comitatus and how does it protect us against military occupation?
- How do we benefit from the separation of civilian police functions and military functions?
- Why are national guard units designed to be under the command of state governors rather than the president?

## SOLUTIONS

Prohibit government from employing mercenaries or private contractors for military functions.

Make it unprofitable, uncomfortable, and unpopular for private companies offering mercenary services.

Hold private military contractors accountable for their actions, past and present

## ACTIONS

Pressure the White House, Congress, Department of Defense, Department of State and the Attorney General's office to hold private military contractors accountable for their actions by:

## Are you more or less safe when private military contractors provide services that were once the exclusive province of government armed forces or police?

Calling or meeting with elected federal officials to ask them to establish and enforce clear procedures for criminal and civil prosecution of contractors who violate the law, support a moratorium on hiring contractors until such procedures are in place, and support legislation that clarifies legal jurisdiction over military contractors. For details on joining the campaign to accomplish those goals, check out Human Rights First's "How to End Impunity for Private Security and Other Contractors" [http://www.humanrightsfirst.org/us\\_law/pmc/index.asp](http://www.humanrightsfirst.org/us_law/pmc/index.asp)

Keep pressure on the contractors by making it impossible for them to operate in secrecy.

Make media about the actions of military contractors and the threats to liberty posed by private armed forces. Write op-eds, participate in blog conversations and radio call-in shows. Post video on YouTube or make a program for your local cable access station.

Meet with journalists working in mass media and ask them to cover the issue. Provide them with the information you have. If possible, provide opportunities to interview people who have been directly affected by the use of private military contractors.

Organize a demonstration outside the offices of a military contractor. Be sure to let the press know when and where you will be and what you want the contractor to do.

Ask your city council, county board, and/or state legislature to adopt a resolution banning the use of private military contractors for any law enforcement duties, including patrols during emergencies or natural disasters and/or security during political protests.

Ask the United Nations not to hire private companies like Blackwater to conduct peacekeeping missions. For more information on this initiative, [http://www.blackwaterwatch.net/take\\_action.htm](http://www.blackwaterwatch.net/take_action.htm).

### ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

#### **Blackwater Watch**

<http://www.blackwaterwatch.net> — This grassroots organization is engaged in a variety of actions designed to keep in check the use of military contractors by and in the United States.

**Jeremy Scahill. *Blackwater: The Rise of the World's Most Powerful Mercenary Army*** (Nation Books, 2007) — A detailed account of one of the nation's largest military contractors.

#### **Corpwatch**

<http://tinyurl.com/corpwatchwar>

Corpwatch gathers news stories and prepares reports documenting abuses by companies profiting from war. Look under the issue heading "War and Disaster Profiteering."



**ACTION**  
**2.**

# THE PATRIOT: STAGING A BOYCOTT

One response to the Patriot Act could be to refuse to do business with companies that willingly turn over your private information. Below are some tips for planning a boycott. Check the websites listed on the last page of this guide for additional information.

## THE PATRIOT: STAGING A BOYCOTT

1. Choose the company you intend to target. To avoid duplicating efforts that are already underway, do an Internet search or check websites like [boycottwatch.org](http://boycottwatch.org) or [snopes.org](http://snopes.org).

2. Investigate to establish the company's track record. Sites like <http://www.corpwatch> can help with your research.

3. Develop a clear statement explaining what you want the company to do, e.g., "We are calling for a boycott of Company XYZ until they enact a corporate policy that protects customer privacy from unwarranted government surveillance." The more detailed your statement, the better. For example, you might want to write out the corporate policy that you want the company to adopt.

4. Contact the company with your demand and document their response. Be sure to define a clear end point. Provide a specific action that the company can take that will end the boycott.

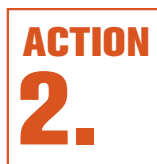
5. You can add power to your demand if you can demonstrate that a competitor has already met your demand. Offer that competitor as a model for the kind of action you want Company XYZ to take.

6. Craft your demand into a press release that includes the company response, information about the boycott and your organization, and the name and contact information for a spokesperson. Send the press release to every media outlet you can.

7. Disseminate information about the boycott in as many places as possible, from tabling at community events to online bulletin boards, blogs, websites, networking sites, etc. For publicly held companies, you might even consider purchasing a share of stock, which allows you to attend shareholder meetings and, in some cases, introduce a shareholder resolution.

8. Be prepared to provide boycott updates. For example, track the value of a publicly held company's stock and their sales figures (available in annual reports). If they go down, publicize the role that your boycott might have played in the downturn.

9. Be prepared to notify the press, online networks, and activists of victory. You don't want to continue to penalize a company that has met your demands. Send a victory press release to all the media outlets and others who received word of the original boycott.



## FACTS ON THE GROUND

Since the United States began its “War on Terror” in 2001, hundreds of Americans have been arrested for protesting the War in Iraq, for demonstrating at national political conventions, or for being near such demonstrations. This includes more than 200 people who were arrested in a public park in St. Paul, Minnesota, during the 2008 Republican National Convention, despite the fact that they were not involved in demonstrations.

In addition, editors at the *New York Times* have been threatened with prosecution under the Espionage Act for printing stories exposing secret (and illegal) government surveillance techniques. Many other public dissenters have been placed on the TSA’s “No Fly” list.

In October of 2001, Congress passed the Patriot Act, a 400-page bill that was rushed through Congress. In 2006, Congress reauthorized the law. Among its provisions are the power for government to:

- Search your home without informing you.
- Collect information about what you read and buy, and look at your medical and banking records without demonstrating probable cause.
- Take away your property without a hearing.
- Monitor your e-mails and Internet activity.
- Share information with non-law enforcement agencies like the CIA.
- Put non-citizens in jail indefinitely and without

ever having to prove that they are terrorists.

- Label you a “terrorist” just for being a member of an activist group.

## SOLUTIONS

End government surveillance of non-violent advocacy groups.

End government and corporate actions that prevent or discourage public dissent.

Expose government and corporate efforts to suppress dissent.

Repeal the Patriot Act. Stop it from becoming permanent.

Block immunity for private companies that give out our private information.

## ACTIONS

When you disagree with a government policy or law, exercise your constitutional responsibility to dissent:

Organize a protest. Involve as many stakeholders and decision makers as you can in the planning. Where applicable, make sure to obtain needed permits. Be prepared to provide journalists with interviews and good pictures. Don’t be afraid to be creative, use humor, or publicly invite elected officials to join you.

## Are there things so dangerous to a democracy like the United States that we should not permit them to be said publicly?

## Do you really have free speech if protest or dissent is equated with espionage or treason?

Participate in a protest. Invite friends and family to join you.

Monitor protests. Bring a video camera and record events. If appropriate, share your footage online or with local media. Include your commentary.

Applaud those who dissent. Let those who take public risks (from protest organizers to legislators who organize hearings to expose illegal government surveillance) know that you appreciate their efforts. Contact them directly, donate to their cause, or write a letter to the editor praising their efforts.

Work with organizations like the ACLU to prevent the federal Patriot Act from becoming permanent (<http://action.aclu.org/reformthepatriotact/>) or the Bill of Rights Defense Committee (<http://www.bordc.org>) to repeal state level Patriot Act type laws and/or pass laws creating civil liberties “safe zones.”

Petition your lawmaker regarding police tactics used at protests. Insist that Department of Homeland Security funds received by local law enforcement are not used to train officers to use abusive or cruel tactics against protestors.

### ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

#### The American Civil Liberties Union

<http://www.aclu.org/safefree/dissent/index.htm>

The ACLU website includes specific information on attempts to suppress dissent related to post-9/11 policies.

#### The Constitutional Rights Foundation

<http://www.crf-usa.org/america-responds-to-terrorism/america-responds-to-terrorism.html>

CRF’s website provides key background information on relevant legislation, including overviews, public opinion polls, debate summaries, dates and more.

#### The American Library Association

<http://www.ala.org> — Local librarians can be good allies on issues related to free speech. The American Library Association has adopted a variety of policies and resolutions related to libraries, free speech, and requirements that they turn over records of library patrons without a warrant. They also provide action information on the Freedom to Read Act.

**Need ideas for creating an electoral affinity group?  
Start by inviting your family and friends to a home viewing of *The End of America*. Watch the film together and have everyone make a list of the issues that speak most directly to them.  
Look for similarities and chose one issue to focus on through ongoing conversation and action.**

ISSUE  
**3.**

**ACTION**  
**3.**

# ACTIVIST PROFILE- MATTHIS CHIROUX



If my America is your  
America, organize and stand  
now to demand justice and  
accountability! Jefferson,  
Franklin and Madison would  
expect nothing less.

## ACTIVIST PROFILE-MATTHIS CHIROUX

My name is Matthis Chiroux and this has always been my America. That's why I'm an activist; my country is an extension of myself. What hardships she is made to bear I must also shoulder.

Though I tried to defend America as a sergeant in the Army, after four years overseas, I learned a valuable lesson: when the enemy is in your kitchen, real heroes fight at home.

Never have I done America a greater service than when I refused to fight in Iraq June 15th, 2008. I did so unashamedly after nine of my fellow Iraq Veterans Against the War testified in Congress about what they experienced in the occupation. I refused to participate because I knew the occupation was not just an assault on the Iraqi people, but also our Constitution (specifically Article 1 and Article 6, Paragraph 2), which decree that only Congress may declare war and our country must follow all treaties as the supreme law of the land. I began contacting selected Members of Congress through their web-pages and set appointments with roughly 40 offices. The result: 13 of them signed a letter of support for me and "all military members who speak out, advocate or otherwise support efforts to bring the troops home.

Now, when I'm not in school, I spend my time organizing and engaged in political protest. My veteran friends and I marched on the final presidential debate to bring our questions to Obama and McCain. I climbed scaffolding around the National Archives in D.C. to read names of those fallen in Iraq and demand that Bush and Cheney be prosecuted for war crimes. I allowed myself to be mock-waterboarded during Bush's final address at the United Nations to demonstrate that it IS torture.

The time for people to stand up and take action is NOW, because our nation is in distress, and our civil liberties are waning. With *habeas corpus* gone, the only thing our Bill of Rights does is guarantee protection from having soldiers quartered in our homes. (Ironic for a country that "supports the troops" who are "fighting for our freedoms.")

If my America is your America, organize and stand now to demand justice and accountability! Jefferson, Franklin and Madison would expect nothing less.

Matthias Chiroux, February 2009



**ACTION**  
**3.**

## COMMUNITY PARTNERS

ACLU: <http://www.aclu.org>

American Freedom Campaign: <http://www.americanfreedomcampaign.org>

Bill of Rights Defense Committee: <http://www.bordc.org>

Campus Progress: <http://www.campusprogress.org>

Center for Constitutional Rights: <http://www.ccrjustice.org>

The Woodhull Institute: <http://www.woodhull.org>

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

### **About *The End of America***

Based on Naomi Wolf's best-selling book, *The End of America* identifies how open societies close down as they slide toward fascism, and how this has been happening in the U.S. From award-winning filmmakers Annie Sundberg and Ricki Stern, *The End of America* follows Wolf as she takes her message to the streets, urging Americans to defend the Constitution and restore our nation's cherished democratic values. For more information visit:

<http://www.endofamericamovie.com>.

### **About *Give Me Liberty***

In *Give Me Liberty: A Handbook for American Revolutionaries*, Wolf investigates the roots of a growing national malaise that has bred "fake democracy" in the United States. *Give Me Liberty* includes an action-based User's Guide that gives citizens concrete tools for participating in the democratic process. For more information visit: <http://www.naomewolf.org>.

### **About Break Thru Films**

Founded by New York filmmakers Ricki Stern and Annie Sundberg, Break Thru Films creates powerful character driven documentaries and dramatic films. In addition to directing *The End of America*, their feature documentaries include "The Devil Came On Horseback" (Sundance 2007, National Geographic Channel 2008), "The Trials of Darryl Hunt" (Sundance 2006, HBO premiere 2007), "In My Corner" (ITVS, PBS) and "Neglect Not The Children" (PBS). <http://www.breakthrufilms.org>

### **About IndiePix**

IndiePix was founded in 2004 to bring film fans the very best of independent cinema. Today, IndiePix is proud to be home to the broadest online selection of indie films from around the world, including the latest award-winning titles

from the festival circuit, popular indie classics, foreign, documentaries and more. Sign-up for a weekly email for new releases, special offers and promotions at <http://www.indiepixfilms.com>

### **About Katahdin**

Katahdin Productions is a non-profit documentary production company based in Berkeley and Los Angeles. Founded by Lisa Thomas, co-founder and former CEO of Clif Bar, Inc., the mission of Katahdin is to tell compelling stories often ignored by mainstream media — stories that inspire, engage and even enrage. For more information visit <http://www.katahdin.org>.

### **CREDITS & ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

Faith Rogow, PhD.: Writer

Heejung Yoon/MOCD, Matter of Creative Design: Designer

Jennifer Schmidt: Editor/Project Director of My America Project

Daven Gee: Co-Editor/Director of Outreach, Katahdin Productions

Sophie Sartain: Copy Editor/Director of Development, Katahdin Productions

Deann Borshay Liem: Executive Director, Katahdin Productions

Lisa Thomas: President, Katahdin Productions

Special Thanks: Steve Fox, Ryan Harrington, Avram Ludwig, Michelle Ngo, Liz Ogilvie, Ricki Stern, Annie Sundberg, Kyle Walters and Jerry Weinstein

Guide produced by Katahdin Productions with additional support from The Fledgling Fund.

Special thanks to Chelsea Green Publishing and Simon and Schuster for generously sharing content from Naomi Wolf's books, Center for Constitutional Rights for offering invaluable input into the featured modules, Matthis Cheroux for contributing his story and to Naomi Wolf for providing the inspiration.

### **TO PURCHASE**

DVD copies of *The End of America*, visit <http://www.endofamericamovie.com>.

Naomi Wolf's books, *The End of America* or *Give Me Liberty*, check your local bookseller or Amazon.com.

### **GET MORE DETAILS. TAKE ACTION.**

<http://www.endofamericamovie.com>.

“We lost our way. We just need to find our way back to  
the path that served us well for so long, and served  
our forefathers well.”

Naomi Wolf , *The End of America*