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[American Tears](#)

Posted October 11, 2007 | 06:47 PM (EST) The Huffington Post

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I wish people would stop breaking into tears when they talk to me these days.

I am traveling across the country at the moment -- Colorado to California -- speaking to groups of Americans from all walks of life about the assault on liberty and the 10 steps now underway in America to a violently closed society.

The good news is that Americans are already awake: I thought there would be resistance to or disbelief at this message of gathering darkness -- but I am finding crowds of people who don't need me to tell them to worry; they are already scared, already alert to the danger and entirely prepared to hear what the big picture might look like. To my great relief, Americans are smart and brave and they are unflinching in their readiness to hear the worst and take action. And they love their country.

But I can't stand the stories I am hearing. I can't stand to open my email these days. And wherever I go, it seems, at least once a day, someone very strong starts to cry while they are speaking.

In Boulder, two days ago, a rosy-cheeked thirty-something mother of two small children, in soft yoga velours, started to tear up when she said to me: "I want to take action but I am so scared. I look at my kids and I am scared. How do you deal with fear? Is it safer for them if I act or stay quiet? I don't want to get on a list." In D.C., before that, a beefy, handsome civil servant, a government department head -- probably a Republican -- confides in a lowered voice that he is **scared to sign the new ID requirement for all government employees**, that exposes all his most personal information to the State -- but he is scared not to sign it: "If I don't, I lose my job, my house. It's like the German National ID card," he said quietly. This morning in Denver I talked for almost an hour to a brave, much-decorated high-level military man who is not only on the watch list for his criticism of the administration -- his family is now on the list. His elderly mother is on the list. His teenage son is on the list. He has flown many dangerous combat missions over the course of his military career, but his voice cracks when he talks about the possibility that he is exposing his children to harassment.

Jim Spencer, a former columnist for the *Denver Post* who has been critical of the Bush administration, told me today that I could use his name: he is on the watch list. An attorney contacts me to say that she told her colleagues at the Justice Department not to torture a detainee; she says she then faced a criminal investigation, a professional referral, saw her emails deleted -- and now she is on the watch list. I was told last night that a leader of Code Pink, the anti-war women's action group, was refused entry to Canada. I hear from a tech guy who works for the airlines -- again, probably a Republican -- that once you are on the list you never get off. Someone else says that his friend opened his luggage to find a letter from the TSA saying that they did not appreciate his reading material. Before I go into the security lines, I find myself editing my possessions. In New York's *LaGuardia*, I reluctantly found myself putting a hardcover copy of Tara McKelvey's excellent *Monstering*, an expose of CIA interrogation practices, in a garbage can before I get in the security line; it is based on classified information. This morning at my hotel, before going to the airport, I threw away a very nice

black T-shirt that said "We Will Not be Silenced" -- with an Arabic translation -- that someone had given me, along with a copy of poems written by detainees at Guantanamo.

In my America we are not scared to get in line at the airport. In my America, we will not be silenced. More times than I can count, courageous and confident men who are telling me about speaking up, but who are risking what they see as the possible loss of job, home or the ability to pay for grown kids' schooling, start to choke up. Yesterday a woman in one gathering started to cry simply while talking about the degradation of her beloved country.

And always the questions: what do we do?

It is clear from this inundation of personal stories of abuse and retribution against ordinary Americans that a network of criminal behavior and intention is catching up more and more mainstream citizens in its grasp. It is clear that this is not democracy as usual -- or even the corruption of democracy as usual. It is clear that we will need more drastic action than emails to Congress.

The people I am hearing from are conservatives and independents as well as progressives. The cardinal rule of a closing or closed society is that your alignment with the regime offers no protection; in a true police state no one is safe.

I read the news in a state of something like walking shock: seven soldiers wrote op-eds critical of the war -- in *The New York Times*; three are dead, one shot in the head. A female soldier who was about to become a whistleblower, possibly about abuses involving taxpayers' money: shot in the head. Pat Tillman, who was contemplating coming forward in a critique of the war: shot in the head. Donald Vance, a contractor himself, who blew the whistle on irregularities involving arms sales in Iraq -- taken hostage FROM the U.S. Embassy BY U.S. soldiers and kept without recourse to a lawyer in a U.S. held-prison, abused and terrified for weeks -- and scared to talk once he got home. Another whistleblower in Iraq, as reported in *Vanity Fair*: held in a trailer all night by armed contractors before being ejected from the country.

Last week contractors, immune from the rule of law, butchered 17 Iraqi civilians in cold blood. Congress mildly objected -- and contractors today butchered two more innocent civilian Iraqi ladies -- in cold blood.

It is clear yet that violent retribution, torture or maybe worse, seems to go right up this chain of command? Is it clear yet that these people are capable of anything? Is it obvious yet that criminals are at the helm of the nation and need to be not only ousted but held accountable for their crimes?

Is it treason yet? This is an open invitation to honorable patriots on the Right and in the center to join this movement to restore the rule of law and confront this horror: this is not conservatism; it is a series of crimes against the nation and against the very essence of America. [Join us, we need you.](#)

This movement must transcend partisan lines. The power of individual conscience is profound when people start to wake up.

Former Deputy Attorney General James Comey said "No": he told colleague that they would be ashamed when the world learned about the Administration's warrantless wiretapping. A judge today ruled that the U.S. can't just ship prisoners out of Guantanamo to be tortured at will -- she said "No!". The Center for Constitutional Rights is about to file a civil lawsuit -- against Blackwater: they are saying "No!".

In Germany, according to historian Richard Evans, in 1931-1932, if enough Germans of conscience had begun to say "No!" -- history would have had an entirely different outcome. If we go any further down this road the tears will be those of conservatives as well as progressives. They will be "American Tears".

The time for weeping has to stop; the time for confronting must begin.

End