



CAPCR Shout Out

Dangers of the Surveillance State

by Derek Laney

Benjamin Franklin once said: "Those who would give up essential Liberty, to purchase a little temporary Safety, deserve neither Liberty nor Safety." That quote often comes up in the context of new technology and concerns about government surveillance. In this bizarre political world of alternative facts, overt white supremacy and xenophobia as policy, and cabinet members antagonistic to the duties they're supposed to uphold, we can see why concerns about state surveillance runs high for many people.

Digital technologies have revolutionized our lives, but they have also made detailed records of our transactions, physical movements, and opinions readily available. Under the guise of anti-terrorism, the government has shown a great appetite for acquiring this data to use however it will. And with the recently passed bill that would allow Americans' internet histories to be bought and sold by large telecom companies without our knowledge or consent, corporations can now profit from intimate details of our lives.

According to a recent Alternet news story, under new guidelines released in January, "the FBI is instructing high schools across the country to report students who criticize government policies and "western corruption" as potential future terrorists, warning that "anarchist extremists" are in the same category as ISIS and young people who are poor, immigrants or travel to "suspicious" countries are more likely to commit horrific violence." This is a prescription for racial profiling and fanning the flames of Islamophobia.

The St. Louis Police Department's Real Time Intelligence Center promises to prevent and solve crime through tying together cameras of the city agencies, businesses and even private citizens, and surveilling the public. What they don't emphasize is that the vast majority of what they'll be spying on is law abiding citizens. The potential for illegal tracking of innocent civilians and retaliation against political rivals cannot be ignored.

Our smart TV's can listen to and record our conversations at home. Social media retains records of our opinions, social circles and whereabouts that are routinely made available to police. The threat of governmental overreach is real. We must constantly stand against these intrusions into the private recesses of our lives. If we truly value our freedom, we won't willingly surrender it, but rather fight to ensure that we retain the vast majority of our lives as private and sacrosanct against corporate and governmental intrusion.