

## Edward Snowden: A Healing Voice

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Like many people, I was surprised to hear of Edward Snowden's decision to leave his job and move toward Hong Kong in search of a place where he could reconcile his conscience with his understanding of humanity and the US Constitution. Ever since, I have been trying to understand how he had come to a decision that, one may be certain, others contemplated, but then did not pursue for reasons that are not important, at this point, to figure out.

As days, weeks, months passed, most citizens of the US had difficulties in assessing Edward Snowden's act: was he a hero or a traitor? In the midst of these hesitations, his father embraced him tightly. (His mother may have done the same, but more discretely, so discretely in fact, that no one but herself and Edward and his father know about it). It was a very encouraging and courageous act even if it had to be handled, as too many things have to, in these days, with the help of a lawyer.

Is this lawyerly mediation of father-son love a sign of the times we are living in?

Solidarity, generosity, love, – natural as humans for thousands of years – cannot be expressed without consulting lawyers,

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expert navigators in protecting humans from being liquidated by other humans. So blinded by the exercise of power with impunity, they and/or their lobbyists cannot see how such insanity has led to a slow, possibly Irreversible process of annihilation of values that once defined humanity

In these turbulent and confusing times, the striking quality of Edward Snowden's voice may account for the silence it has tended to generate among his fellow humans. In the ideological dictionary of how to catalogue him, the specialists are at a loss, between honouring him as a hero and castigating him as traitor. Yet, his voice has come out as clear as crystal, as simple as a healing voice echoing his own conscience, a conscience fine-tuned to how it was defined thousands of years ago when humans began to gain a conscience of themselves as different from animals.

As one reads Ancient Egyptian texts, especially around the concept of *Mâât* (justice, balance, ethics, solidarity, etc.), it is not difficult to see the connection between Snowden's *Ba* (inner spirit, soul, conscience, according to the Ancient Egyptians) and that of *The Man In Dispute of His Ba*, a text from the 12th dynasty (see Miriam Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature. Vol. 1: The Old and Middle Kingdom*, UCLA Press, 1975). It is not difficult to imagine Snowden debating with his *Ba* on how to decide what to do in the face of doing work that told him that it was not right.

As in that text from the 12th dynasty (1990-1785 BC), one could imagine Snowden thinking like that man:

To Whom Shall I Speak Today  
The Constitution shows one way  
My bosses kept messaging me:  
stay away  
From your conscience  
They would say  
Insisting you are  
Too young to know anyway  
The right from the wrong way

Still I kept asking myself  
 To Whom Shall I speak today  
 While being encouraged to go  
 against the right way  
 To Whom Shall Speak Today  
 Facing solitary incarceration  
 Because I cannot help say  
 Yes to my conscience

Knowing what he did and what he was being asked to do, it is not difficult to imagine how he first tried to push his conscience away, silence it, telling himself that his job was to follow orders and not think about the bigger issues of whether it was right or wrong. But his conscience or his *Ba* kept coming back, sometimes in the middle of the night. He may not have thought the same as The Man from the text in Ancient Egyptian 12th dynasty, but it is also clear that it is those words that led him to look for people with whom he could share the load weighing on his conscience/*Ba*. The pain from the load was too much. Like any reasonable human being he looked for help, searching for someone he could speak to, without facing punishment concocted by generations of misguided, gone astray guardians of laws built on lies, violence, still unacknowledged crimes against humanity.

We do know that our brain/body still react physically/psychically in ways that were learned from thousands of years ago, whether in the face of threatening danger or in the face of dilemmas dealing with life issues. Living as human beings means

that one is permanently connected to one's conscience. That umbilical cord that connects us to primordial times has never been severed, but it will come under severe strain, now and again. In times past, land and conscience were as inseparable as any of the organs that make humans what they are. Inheritors of that crime against humanity see nothing wrong in cashing in on that original impunity by invading the soul/conscience of every single human being to own it as they owned the land they conquered.

Could it be that the difficulties of figuring out how Edward Snowden decided to do what he did stem from a station in the evolution of humanity that is showing signs of being split from its conscience? Put in another more brutal fashion: could it be that one of the consequences of the way humans are being organized economically, politically, scientifically, culturally, religiously [is that] humanity as we have known it is being liquidated, along with its history, and being replaced by a species fashioned to respond without resistance to the rules and regulations that are being imposed in all spheres of life, all of them rooted in the impunity that sanctioned the severing of the land from people whose conscience kept repeating:

You are the guardian of the land  
 Earth, air, water one way  
 As Corbin Harney used to say  
 Only one way to stay  
 The integrity of humanity  
 Let no one take your land away

Because not long after  
 They will take your conscience away  
 They turned the land into a commodity  
 With names like plantation, reservation,  
 Bantustans, colonies, commonwealth,  
 francophony, Lusophony  
 How far is humanity from unrecoverable  
 cacophony( hibernation, isolation,  
 desolation?

Liquidation?

The signal is clear: do not listen to your conscience, especially if it tells you to denounce something that is damaging to other members of humanity.

Looked at from such an angle, Edward Snowden's voice and action can be seen as healing gestures in a world increasingly being pushed to self-annihilation by practices that emphasize, single-mindedly, the competitive search for self-enrichment. In the face of such a disaster, should one be surprised that a person with a highly sensitive conscience could not help but follow it? When a healing voice, like Edward Snowden's, emerges in the midst of an undeclared war against humanity, one can be certain that such a voice is the result of massive healing energy being expressed from different segments of humanity. This voice is not an isolated cry. Could it be the water breaking preceding the birth of a renewed conscience and affirmation of fidelity to humanity?

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## Trade and Industrial Development in Africa: Rethinking Strategy and Policy

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*The book is a product of the Guy Mhone conference on  
 'Rethinking Trade and Development in Africa'*

This book revisits the perennial challenge that scholars, economists, and politicians have been grappling with since the 1960s. Development, in this book, has been defined in a context that projects it as a multidimensional and complex process which seeks to enhance the human, social, economic and cultural welfare of the people. This book calls for a rethinking of trade and industry for Africa's development. It uses data drawn from national development plans and strategies, and trade and industry issues have been prioritized at the continental level, in key policy documents. On the whole Africa's industry and trade performance have been poor in spite of national, regional, and continental plans. The contributors to this volume propose some alternative strategies and policies which are necessary for trade and industry to grow and to contribute to the wellbeing of Africa's people. It calls for a developmental trade and industry policy which, fundamentally, must be people-centred. African states should invest time, energy and resources to develop policies which will take into consideration African realities. The different contributors are aware that Africa has experienced strong economic growth in the recent past but this growth has largely been due to a strong demand for Africa's primary commodity exports.

