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Once Upon America

By John Cory
truthout | Guest Contributor

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"No one man can terrorize a whole nation unless we are all his accomplices."
- Edward R. Murrow

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And so it goes. The 4th of July is here with its parades and "what America means to me" essays, and picnics and fireworks, and all those pretty speeches about freedom and democracy and the true meaning of Independence Day. But it is all a facade. A lie.

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Modern America now spies on its citizens, conducts warrantless wiretaps, suspends habeas corpus, creates "free speech zones" to corral protestors out of sight of sensitive royal eyes, and politicizes the very justice system meant to protect people's rights by turning it into a fraternity of God-fearing Republican conservatism. Neocon America rewards hate speech with celebrity, reviles the very immigration that built this country, and sells out to the highest lobbyist while poisoning its people. Preemptive war trumps truth, and death is glorified by those who never have to sacrifice an ounce of flesh. America has become the personal ATM machine of Bush and the GOP while their corporate cronies line their pockets with the lives of our loved ones.

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Washington is no longer that "shining city on the hill," but rather a dismal swamp cloud of shadows that slink about in swirls of deception. The people's house is a piceous cavern of razor black secrets that shred the Constitution with every breath. And those charged with defending the Constitution - defending the Bill of Rights - scurry around in frantic search for the cheese of compromise and campaign contributions.

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. once said, "Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter."

Americans have become orphans of the great silence.

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Democrat and Republican alike have forsaken representation of the people and the people's will. The latest polls show that 77 percent of Americans want the troops home from Iraq. And still the politicians argue for more time, maybe more money, maybe there is a way to support the troops without confronting the GOP machine. Congressional approval is at the same depressing nadir as that of George Bush. The people voted for change and got nothing but wimpy words and bluster and more political petulance - and more death and destruction.

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America needs leadership, not Congressional co-conspirators or senatorial somnambulists. We need inspiration, not desperation. Edward R. Murrow said: "We hardly need to be reminded that we are living in an age of confusion - a lot of us have traded in our beliefs for bitterness and cynicism or for a heavy package of despair, or even a quivering portion of hysteria. Opinions can be picked up cheap in the market place while such commodities as courage and fortitude and faith are in alarmingly short supply."

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I'm not a smart guy, nor educated in the fine political arts, but here's the deal: it's time to wake up and step up, dear Democrats. Plan all you want to take Congressional seats in the '08 elections - but be prepared to pay the price for inaction today. Nothing is off the table. Nothing. Ever.

Push the subpoenas to this White House. Don't fold. Don't whine. Don't run. And while you push the subpoenas to find the truth, fashion your spending bill that America supports, the one with the timetable for bringing our loved ones home. And then push that the day after you push the

subpoenas. And when Bush vetoes the spending bill, shout it from the nearest blog and rooftop, that George Bush just vetoed America. Vetoed the will of the American people. And push for another vote.

And then generate the bill to bring back the Draft. That's right, the Draft. If Bush's war is so damned patriotic that he keeps recycling the troops over and over - then it is the patriotic duty of every American son and daughter to be drafted and serve. And when Bush vetoes that, remind America that the war is not all that patriotic, and certainly not for everyone - just those that Bush picks to die in the sandbox of incompetence and violence that is Iraq.

And then you start impeachment procedures against Bush and Cheney and Rove. You push the hearings that must be shown to all the American people - the voters - the ones who live and die at the hands of these ruthless, greedy thugs and power-hungry politicians.

And when you are called un-American and unpatriotic, point your finger at Bush and Cheney and remind everyone of Ronald Reagan, who said: "Concentrated power has always been the enemy of liberty." And that, my Democratic friends, is all the bipartisanship this country needs. The words of Dr. King should be your comfort. "When you are right you cannot be too radical; when you are wrong, you cannot be too conservative."



It is the 4th of July. Celebrate Independence Day by repeating the words of George Bush when he addressed the UN Assembly on September 21, 2004. "The desire for freedom resides in every human heart. And that desire cannot be contained forever by prison walls or martial laws, or secret police. Over time, and across the Earth, freedom will find a way."

Any other choice and we become a story that begins, "Once upon America there used to be democracy and freedom!"

[John Cory](#) is a Vietnam veteran. He received the Purple Heart and Bronze Star with V device, 1969 - 1970.

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