

## Transkription der Rede von Jacob Appelbaum bei der Verleihung des Whistleblower-Preises 2013 am 30. August 2013

Thank you so much for the opportunity to come here to speak with you tonight. It's quite an honor, actually, and it's really a privilege, especially to have someone like Laura [Poitras] in the audience here with us and to have Glenn [Greenwald] to send a video. I would speak with you in German, but this seems like a place where I should be able to express myself naturally and it's a little difficult for me, so I apologize if English is not easy for you; I'll try to not speak too quickly. When I spoke with Edward Snowden this evening, he wanted me to convey a message to you, which I will read, but he also wanted me to not talk too much about geopolitics, and not to talk too much about all of the things that everyone also has already said this evening. And instead he wanted me to talk about individuals, to talk about people, he wanted me to talk about hope for change, and this reminded me of something that one of the greatest American whistleblowers to ever live is famous for saying – that is Daniel Ellsberg; he said: “Courage is contagious.” I see amongst people here in the audience a number of people who embody that – Laura being the clear winner of that so far. And I think that it is important to talk about what each of us have as our personal agency, that is to say: each and every one of us has the ability to stand against corruption, to stand against war crimes, to stand against things that we know are obvious lies that are done in our name. And it happens for each and every one of us when we choose it in each of the actions we do every single day. It's a very straightforward and simple thing, and so I think it is important to think of this not as an issue of internet freedom, but as a question of our own personal liberties, and we must have a consciousness raising about our own role in this. So, when we talk about spying on the internet, we should not pretend we are exempt from this, because in fact it is a question on our very lives and every aspect of our lives so as to be able to – literally, in some cases – try to read our minds. This is something that each and every single one of us I think would reject in its core if we were to really truly have an honest discussion about it, and so it is up to us to have those honest discussions with each other.

It seems important to say that Edward Snowden is a person of high moral character. I can't really imagine a person who would be better fitting for this award, not just this year, but almost any year. That isn't to forget about Chelsea Manning, it isn't to say that other people have not done great service for humanity, but when I spoke with him this evening, his first question was not about how things would go, but he asked me if I had slept. He asked me how I was feeling, and I told him that I was fine. He said: “Are you sure?” This is person who really cares about other people. This is a person who has been attacked and relentlessly smeared by the propaganda machines. He is a person who has thrown himself onto the gears of that very machine, and he has done it for each and every one of us, and in some sense I can't actually believe that it is true, because it just seems so incredibly powerful, so passionate and so beautiful.

And so with that in mind, I'd like to read what he had to say. I think that this is beautiful; the first time I read it, I cried, mostly because, knowing that he is of such high moral character, it really rings true to me. So he says:

“It is a great honor to be recognized for the public good created by this act of whistleblowing. However the greater reward and recognition belongs to the individuals and organizations in countless countries around the world who shattered boundaries of language and geography to stand

together in defense of the public right to know and the value of our privacy. It is not I, but the public who has affected this powerful change to abrogation of basic constitutional rights by secret agencies. It is not I, but newspapers around the world who have risen to hold our governments to the issues when powerful officials sought to distract from these very issues with rumor and insult. And it is not I, but certain brave representatives in governments around the world who are proposing new protections, limits and safeguards to prevent future assault on our private rights and private lives.

My gratitude belongs to all of those who have reached out to their friends and family to explain why suspicionless surveillance matters. It belongs to the man in a mask on the street on a hot day and the women with a sign and an umbrella in the rain, it belongs to the young people in college with a civil liberty sticker on their laptop, and the kid in the back of a class in high school making memes. All of these people accept that change begins with a single voice and spoke one message to the world: governments must be accountable to us for the decisions that they make. Decisions regarding the kind of world we will live in. What kind of rights and freedoms individuals will enjoy are the domain of the public, not the government in the dark.

Yet the happiness of this occasion is for me tempered by an awareness of the road traveled to bring us here today. In contemporary America the combination of weak legal protections for whistleblowers, bad laws that provide no public interest defense and a doctrine of immunity for officials who have strayed beyond the boundaries of law has perverted the system of incentives that regulates secrecy in government. This results in a situation that associates an unreasonably high price with maintaining the necessary foundation of our liberal democracy – our informed citizenry. Speaking truth to power has caused whistleblowers their freedom, family, or country.

This situation befits neither America nor the world. It does not require sophistication to understand that policy equating necessary acts of warning with threats to national security inevitably lead to ignorance and insecurity. The society that falls into the deterrent trap known in cultural wisdom as "shooting the messenger" will quickly find that not only is it without messengers but it no longer enjoys messages at all. It is right to question the wisdom of such policies and the unintended incentives that result from them. If the penalty providing secret information to a foreign government in bad faith is less than the penalty for providing that information to the public in good faith, are we not incentivizing spies rather than whistleblowers? What does it mean for the public when we apply laws targeting terrorism against those engaged in acts of journalism? Can we enjoy openness in our society if we prioritize intimidation and revenge over fact-finding and investigation? Where do we draw the lines between national security and public interest, and how can we have confidence in the balance when the only advocates allowed at the table of review come from the halls of government itself?

Questions such as these can only be answered through the kind of vigorous public discussion we are enjoying today. We must never forget the lessons of history regarding the dangers of surveillance gone too far, nor our human power to amend such systems to the public benefit. The road we travel has been difficult, but it leads us to better times. Together we can guarantee both the safety and the rights of the generations that follow.

To all of those who have participated in this debate, from the highest official to the smallest citizen, I say thank you.

Edward J. Snowden“

So, he asked me also to try to contextualize this for Germany. He said that I could do a better job of it. I can't actually imagine that that is possible; it's a tough act to follow.

I think, though, that what he meant is something that many of us have felt. It is why Laura lives in Berlin, it is why I now live in Berlin. Germany has a history with these types of issues that is not forgotten, but it is in fact carried forth and remembered today. This is something which is so important, because it is not that Edward Snowden or Laura's journalism or my standing here is against the United States. It is actually the case that we are American citizens asking for your solidarity and help, because there are certain corrupt individuals in our government who have taken it and they have done things in our name that are simply wrong. So to the individuals that are here, each and every one of us, what I hope is that it will be possible for each of you to recognize that there are people in the United States who need to learn from the history that each of you has learned, that many of you have lived, and that right now is so sorely lacking in the debate and in the discussion. We must not let history, especially German history of the 20<sup>th</sup> and the early 21<sup>st</sup> century be forgotten. This is something that was learned through very hard times, and it is something that the rest of humanity is not exempt from. And so it is my hope that if each and every single one of you were to adapt an American or simply to reach out as individuals, this is something that can create change. When it is a German that speaks to the world and says "these things scare me the same way that the Stasi *Zersetzung* scares me, when I see these things and they remind me of secret police action, when I see political crackdowns, when I see journalists being treated as terrorists, it reminds me of darker times", and to show what those darker times are, to talk about the relationship and to talk about the progression past that, that kind of personal connection is something that allows people to move past their fear, which is controlling them now.

So what I want to leave you with is the same thing that Edward Snowden has left with me, I think, and with all of us, hopefully, which is that courage *is* contagious, and it is up to all of us now to follow on with what he has started.

Thank you!