# My Conversion Experience

I have a somewhat unique perspective on this time of transformation. A quarter-century ago, in 1988, I morphed from being a spy and secret intelligence professional into being a champion for public intelligence in the public interest. When I say "public intelligence," I refer to decision-support that is open: ethical sources, ethical methods, ethical objectives. Decision-support (or intelligence) is not information; it is not even specialized information such as operating manuals, finance newsletters, or anything that is broadcast or used by more than one person.

Decision-support (intelligence) is information that has been deliberately collected, processed, analyzed, and presented in response to a specific intelligence requirement from a specific person or decision-making organization. Without the requirement, it should not be done and has no value. Public intelligence thus refers to doing for the public—using only legal and ethical sources and methods. This is what the $80-billion-a-year U.S. secret intelligence community does—very badly—for only one person, the President of the United States of America.[1]

Here is how my metamorphosis happened:

At the age of thirty-six, it was my privilege in 1988 to be invited by the leadership of the Marine Corps Intelligence

Division[2] to help create the Marine Corps Intelligence Center, at the time the newest intelligence capability in the United States. Because it was the newest facility, I was able to take a "clean sheet" approach to the challenge, resulting in a situation where the analysts had better desktop workstations and a better culture than elsewhere in the secret world, at that time an archipelago of disconnected capabilities.

I came to the position with decades of overseas experience as the son of an oil engineer, as an infantry officer, and as a clandestine case officer (spy) for the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). I was a Reagan Republican, believing in the importance of the U.S. government and the USA as forces for good. It never occurred to me to question policies that were being devised "in my name," such as trickle-down economics (a false flag for what is really concentration of wealth) or the continued commitment to U.S. global hegemony and support to forty-two of the forty-four dictators on the planet.[3] I never stopped to consider the deeper implications of how the secret world did what it did, why the secret world did what it did, or the effect of the secret world—and its military-industrial "big brother"—on humanity.

As the senior civilian, both the Special Assistant and the Deputy to Colonel Walter Breede, III, USMC, I was responsible for a $20-million budget to create a state-of-the-art covert intelligence facility with access to all secret messages summarizing intercepted telephone calls and other forms of communication (from the National Security Agency), to imagery of military and other "high-priority" targets (from the National Reconnaissance Office), to messages

offering reporting from clandestine Human Intelligence (HUMINT), the latter from my former employer, the Directorate of Operations of the CIA.

In a corner of the top-secret facility put into the basement of a building in Quantico, Virginia, I placed a single computer with access to the Internet. In that time, 1988, "the Internet" had not developed and was not as common as it became in the 1994–1996 timeframe, when individuals rather than organizations became the primary drivers of Internet connectivity. In that earlier context, the Internet was relevant to Marine Corps intelligence largely because of a single service with the marketing title of "The Source," and as a means of access to commercial services then in gestation for the larger public, such as LEXIS-NEXIS and a handful of online information sources and databases.

Imagine my surprise, having spent $20 million to give our analysts the best workstations possible, including complete access to all secrets costing the taxpayers billions, when I noticed the analysts standing in line for the one computer with Internet availability.

When I inquired, I learned that despite having complete access to all available secrets (which turned out to be extremely limited, neither "all" nor in many cases actually "secret"), the intelligence services did not process, scrutinize, or analyze vast troves of information that could be collected on Third World places of concern to the U.S. Marine Corps—places like Burundi, Haiti, and Somalia. In other words, the U.S. intelligence community was not about and not capable of doing decision-support to the

Marine Corps. This is when I realized that the entire secret intelligence community was a "paper tiger"[4] that existed to channel money from the taxpayer to favored corporations (the ones paying off members of Congress), without being held accountable for actually producing intelligence!

I was stunned. In an instant, my belief in the efficacy of gathering secret information evaporated. I realized that we—the actual workers of U.S. government—were looking through the wrong end of the telescope. We were investing vast amounts of effort and energy in stealing specific classified information from "denied areas" such as China and Russia, while ignoring the vast amount of available open-source information about everywhere else. In this context (the context of information and intelligence) "open source" means information that is ethically and legally available to the public in more than 183 languages—information that the U.S. intelligence operation, with its obsession on secrecy, ignores. This includes information available from commercial sources, educational databases, social networks, and journalists in various regions.

Put in the bluntest possible terms, what I discovered was that the U.S. secret intelligence community was collecting only information it considered secret, while ignoring the eighty to ninety percent of the information in the world, in all languages, that was not secret. I understand why they do this now: they are under the mistaken impression that they are about secrets rather than decision-support (intelligence); and they believe that their consumers, who have access to all open sources, are responsible for their

own collection, processing, and analysis of open sources of information.

Others have realized this before me (for example, the Ellsberg to Kissinger quote in Chapter 1), but I am the one who took that realization the next step and began creating a viable alternative to the secret dysfunctional world that right now consumes a percentage of taxpayer funds vastly disproportional to its efficacy. In fact, if you focus on the CIA's drone program for killing people without due process, violating all manner of international conventions, you could reasonably say that secret intelligence and secret operations are actually our own worst enemy.

What the secret world does not realize is that the consumers of intelligence do not understand how to achieve intelligence, which is the *result* of applying a process that demands enormous professionalization and discipline if it is to be effective as decision-support: requirements definition, collection management, single-source discovery and validation, multi-source fusion, automated and human processing, automated and human analysis, and finally, visualization and presentation to a human "decider." At this point the craft of creating a single image that takes thirty seconds to appreciate can lead to the "decider" reading the rest of the page in three minutes and "getting it," i.e., being able to use the intelligence gathered to arrive at an answer, or to avoid costs and gain advantage toward specific objectives.

In that moment of my realization, the modern Open-Source Intelligence (OSINT) movement was born in

the sense that I, a single individual then in public service, decided to make it my life's mission to take the craft of intelligence (decision-support) to the next level. It became my goal to teach governments how to leverage open sources of information, and to recognize that all the instruments of national power—every Cabinet Department, every agency—needs intelligence support, and they need intelligence support that is public in nature.

## Weaknesses in the World of Secret Intelligence

Fast forward to 2008: General Tony Zinni, USMC (Retired), is on record as stating that when he was Commander-in-Chief of the U.S. Central Command, he received, "at best," four percent of the information he needed from secret sources and methods—four percent![5] This four percent costs the taxpayer today more than $80 billion dollars a year, spent mostly on corporate vapor-ware (vast programs going through the motions that fail to deliver ostensibly desired capabilities), a waste that is compounded by employees and computers going through the motions of collecting vast amounts of information that is never analyzed or studied. The National Security Agency, for example, processes less than five percent of what it collects, and for most matters, less than one percent.[6] No one is held accountable for the cost of the collected material that is never processed or analyzed.

From 1988 to 1992, still a civil servant, I spent four years

trying to get the secret intelligence world to focus on open-source intelligence. At the time—and still today in 2012 as I finalize this book—the U.S. intelligence community classifies the results of its minimalist OSINT activities, claiming that the mere fact that the U.S. government is interested in X, Y, or Z makes it "secret." I spent those four years, part of my total twenty years in direct public service, trying to show how information-sharing and harmonization of policies, purchases, and day-to-day behavior—especially overseas—could be substantially improved by doing decision-support that was *not* secret, meaning OSINT, with the obvious benefit that it could be shared with the public, with foreign governments, non-governmental organizations, and all others.[7]

As the second-ranking civilian in Marine Corps Intelligence, I was a member of a number of national-level committees, including the Foreign Intelligence Requirements and Capabilities Plan committee, and I was able to propose a shifting of attention toward open sources of information and the Third World. I was, however, ignored. Even when the full weight of the U.S. Marine Corps was behind an initiative—for example, to redirect one third of the National Intelligence Topics to the Third World and "most likely" conflicts instead of "worst case" conflicts (then the Soviet Union, today China)—the national security complex refused to budge.

In 1992, frustrated by the unwillingness of the secret bureaucracy to shift even a modicum of resources away from the denied-area targets (places such as China, Iran,

and Russia where the CIA has no capacity to operate with impunity as it does everywhere else) to what is called Global Coverage (the other ninety-nine percent—a notable analogy to the modern Occupy movement), I prevailed on my flag officer, the Director of Intelligence for the U.S. Marine Corps, to allow me to organize a conference on OSINT.

The CIA—home of the Foreign Broadcast Information Service and hence the only real OSINT unit in the secret world—was nominally responsible for OSINT as it relates to secret sources and methods. CIA operatives said they would attend only if the conference were held at the secret level and only U.S. citizens with security clearances were permitted to attend. Recognizing the idiocy of this position, I appealed through channels to Admiral Bill Studeman, USN, then Deputy Director of Central Intelligence, and at his direction the CIA attended the first truly open-to-all, multinational conference in the history of the secret world. I expected a hundred and fifty participants, but about six hundred and fifty showed up, with about seventy-five of those being contractors signing up at the door in a wild panic over possibly missing out on the next "big thing." Also attending were fifteen Swedes led by Dr. Stevan Dedijer, the founding father of what was then called Business Intelligence.[8]

It is important to observe that business, competitive and/or commercial intelligence operations are not the same thing as industrial espionage. The first three are defined by their practitioners as being totally focused on the use of open sources and ethical methods. Today the

definitions have morphed, and business intelligence refers to comparisons of the results of data-mining to internal information; competitive intelligence refers mostly to studying one's competitors; and commercial intelligence is the new term that integrates "360-degree awareness" with a commitment to carefully study public needs, public environments, and all possible opportunities, not just threats.

The conference took place over three days in early December 1992. Alvin Toffler was sent a copy of the *Proceedings* by a participant who knew him, and this became the foundation for his chapter, "The Future of the Spy," in *War and Anti-War: Survival at the Dawn of the 21st Century*.[9]

More than forty countries participated. I believe the very high level of participation was due to our openness to all comers, and the diversity that responded to that wide-ranging invitation. By being open, we attracted a diversity of viewpoints that the CIA had never been able to muster because its obsession with secrecy channels its work into "bilateral" relationships and very narrow information-sharing exchanges. I now realize that one reason the CIA fails so consistently is that it never gets a grip on the whole picture. Because of the fragmentation of knowledge and its separation into particular domains that do not communicate with each other, the CIA is down in the weeds, uncovering little secrets that are out of context, without a larger sense of the coherent whole. The CIA is also terribly dependent on foreign liaison services (the secret intelligence elements of other governments) for most of what it claims to have acquired via clandestine methods. Due

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to a hyper-focus on disconnected information, no one in the secret world has a grip on global reality, let alone the capacity to access crucial information in the 183 languages we do not understand. Decades later, I would help pioneer Information Operations (IO), which is best understood as all information in all languages meeting the needs of all people. Here is an unattributed quote that puts the relationship among secret intelligence, open intelligence, and information operations in context:

> Secret intelligence is ten percent of all-source intelligence, and all-source intelligence is ten percent of Information Operations.[10]

Here I will just emphasize that it includes public intelligence in the public interest, with the goal of synthesizing a vast amount of information to provide a meta-perspective on world affairs as well as decision-support to every person on every issue of importance to them. IO is something we can all do for ourselves (e.g., crowd-sourcing of answers), though in the U.S. government it has been corrupted to mean secret intelligence and secret control of all communications, to include even spying on every citizen without regard to the rule of law.

To my surprise, after the success of the December 1992 conference, when I went to obtain permission for a follow-on conference as I had for the first event,[11] the Marine Corps lawyers refused to allow me to organize another conference, claiming that a "reasonable man" would think the conference was successful because I was a civil

servant abusing my position to influence others to attend. I resigned from a very promising civil service tenured position to become a one-man small business educating mostly governments about the urgency of their getting a grip on OSINT. It took me twenty years to realize that I should have focused on teaching the public how to do public intelligence in the public interest, not on teaching brain-dead organizations how to capture and then make secret what the public and most of their clients (whose needs are not being met now) need to know.[12]

## OSINT Rises to the Challenge

In 1995 I was invited to testify to the Aspin-Brown Commission (formally known as the Commission on the Roles and Capabilities of the U.S. Intelligence Community). This Commission was created as a gesture after then Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney and then Senator John Warner (R-VA) conspired to destroy the National Security Act of 1992 as developed by the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence and the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence. As Senator Warner blatantly made clear, he would not stand for "right-sizing" anything based in Virginia because right-sizing was code for down-sizing.

The Commission did well. Its report and recommendations were sound, but easy to ignore. A series of Directors of Central Intelligence, including George "Slam Dunk" Tenet, refused to implement any changes of substance.

With respect to their inquires into OSINT, they had

four witnesses. Tony Lake, then National Security Advisor, testified behind closed doors but is said to have admitted that he called his friends directly to obtain alternative viewpoints unburdened by secret sources and methods. A representative from the David Sarnoff Laboratory in Princeton testified (I do not make this stuff up) that he was not sure what OSINT was, but high-definition television would make it better. A representative of the RAND Corporation then testified to the effect (remember this was in 1995) that everything the U.S. government needed to know was on the Internet and they knew where to find it.

Then I testified, introducing the members of the Commission (among whom former Congressman Lee Hamilton and General Lou Allen, USAF [Retired] were the most attentive) to the debilitation inherent in a narrow focus of secret sources and methods, and the opportunity costs of ignoring all that could be done with open sources and methods. I drew on my second graduate thesis, written for the University of Oklahoma, regarding what was collected by three overseas embassies where I had worked, concluding that Washington was operating on two percent of the available relevant information (collecting twenty percent overseas, in the process spilling eighty percent of that in how it was or was not sent back). At the end of the day General Allen asked me if I was willing to do a benchmark exercise, one man and a telephone against the entire U.S. secret world including the CIA, NSA, NRO, and the Defense Intelligence Agency, as well as the many other secret elements in the military, law enforcement,

and so on. I agreed. He turned to Britt Snider, the Staff Director for the Commission, and said something along the lines of "Today is Thursday. By ten o'clock on Monday I want everything the secret world has on Burundi. Mr. Steele, you have until ten o'clock on Monday to prove your point."

I was on my way to Las Vegas for a conference, so I called my assistant and had her fax five telephone numbers to my hotel, and I spent Friday on the telephone begging for free support from five major commercial enterprises; later we added a sixth. By ten AM on Monday, this is what was delivered to the Commission:

- From **LEXIS-NEXIS,** the names and contact information for the top international journalists reporting on Burundi and Rwanda, each available for direct interview to elicit the eighty percent that journalists do not publish but is often the most valuable information, centered on corruption.
- From the **Institute for Scientific Information** in Philadelphia, citation analysis[13] identifying the top hundred (most frequently cited) scholars on Burundi and Rwanda, each in contact with the unpublished field experts, all of them available for interviewing, with unique ground-truth perspectives unachievable through secret sources and methods.
- From **Oxford Analytica** in the United Kingdom, twenty two-page executive summaries previously written for the most senior levels of government and industry on

the implications of the genocide and surrounding insta-
bility in Burundi and Rwanda, locally and for the rest
of humanity.

■ From **Jane's Information Group,** which kindly called in
an analyst for the weekend, a complete order of battle
for the armed unconventional tribes including descrip-
tions of their "technicals" (e.g., Toyota pick-up trucks
with mounted machine guns). At this time the CIA was
still focusing on uniformed forces associated with col-
lapsing governments, and had no idea how to assess the
non-governmental forces in conflict.

■ From **East View Cartographic** in Minneapolis, a com-
plete inventory of Russian military 1:50,000 combat
charts (maps) with contour lines. The U.S. government
never took the Third World seriously and still today does
not have usable maps for ninety percent of the world.

A few weeks later I was able to add SPOT Image, a
French satellite imagery company, to my list of contribu-
tors. They had all of Burundi in satellite imagery at the
1:10 meter level (sufficient for updating 1:50,000 combat
charts), cloud-free, and in the archives (cheaper than
fresh collection).

The U.S. government was able to produce only a flawed
regional economic study and a small bland map of the
region. I knew they would fail going into the exercise for the
simple reason that the secret world is completely inatten-
tive to the Third World and to issues not having to do with
"super-threats" (real and contrived). These "super-threats"

at the time included China, Iran, and Russia. Government agencies obsess on "secrets for the President" and on the handful of "denied area" countries that are considered to be a nuclear threat; their work is worthless when it comes to providing decision-support on everything else to everyone else. Since 2001 government intelligence has obsessed on terrorist groups and the "Global War on Terror," a war that I, as a former spy on terrorists, once described on Fox television as a fake war. I was not invited back.

Over the next seventeen years, as Chief Executive Officer for Open-Source Solutions Network, Inc. (until 2010), with one full-time employee (me), I served as the Johnny Appleseed for OSINT. In the 1990s I introduced twenty governments to the concept through invited seminars within the host country, and over that time I also directly trained 7,500 mid-career officers from across sixty-six countries, influencing many others through a free online website.[14] There were two partial success stories, but only partial. They were a 2000 appearance at a NATO gathering (sixty-six generals and colonels who did *not* get it, but the host did) and a 1997 audience with General Peter Schoomaker, then Commander in Chief of the U.S. Special Operations Command. He got my point in less than five minutes and ordered the creation of what has proven to be the only effective OSINT unit in the U.S. government to date, J-23. For many years this branch answered forty percent of all intelligence requirements from across the entire global special-operations world for under $10 million annually.[15] Of the other sixty percent, I estimate that

the secret world answered one third, and the other two thirds went unsatisfied, in large part because the secret world is much less capable than people realize.

As a side note, OSINT does not make all spying and secrecy obsolete. What it does do is raise the standard for government intelligence while demandin*g that we produce intelligence for everyone.*[16]

In 2000, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) invited me to brief all the heads of military intelligence across all the NATO countries as well as the Partnership for Peace countries, the latter consisting of Eastern European countries no longer in the Soviet orbit.

OSINT handbooks were written, one for the Defense Intelligence Agency, another for NATO, a third for the Special Operations Forces (Civil Affairs). Budget allocations for OSINT grew over time, but to my great distress, the concept of OSINT was corrupted immediately. Instead of actually nurturing direct open access to external experts with real language and cultural qualifications, the government bureaucracies I was dealing with allocated hundreds of millions of dollars to what we call "butts in seats"—citizens with clearances who surf the Web.[17]

## The Co-Evolution of OSINT

In 2002 I found Tom Atlee through his book, *The Tao of Democracy: Using Co-Intelligence to Create a World That Works for All,*[18] and he subsequently spoke in 2004 to the multinational open-source conference that I had started in

1992. If the failure of the secret world as manifested in the Marine Corps Intelligence Center had opened my eyes, Tom's book and his general representation of the culture of *co-evolution* that Stewart Brand, Howard Rheingold, and others pioneered in earlier decades gave me the light on the path.[19]

Co-evolution is a concept that embraces millennia of natural development, where both animal and plant life change and grow through complex ecologies of interactive support—they evolve *together*, to the point that one cannot live in isolation from the other (or more than one other). The bottom line: "community" is not an elective, it is a requirement for the evolution and survival of humanity. We have been deconstructing community for centuries and separating from nature, only to recognize now that our salvation as a species lies in reconnecting with our natural roots.

Because of Tom Atlee I began to read much more broadly, and over the course of a decade or more I have embraced several distinct clusters of advanced thinking. They form the foundation—the human shoulders upon which I stand as I offer this *Open-Source Everything Manifesto* in service to humanity. Three of these schools of thought focus on humanity, and two focus on Earth as a whole. My point in mentioning them involves the importance of open-source everything in context—our humanity, our Earth.

It is these five communities that have inspired me toward my latest emphasis: holistic analytics and multinational information-sharing and sense-making.

I credit Buckminster Fuller and Russell Ackoff with my

realization that instead of focusing on reforming government and how government does intelligence, I needed to focus on re-empowering the public, routing around government, and using public intelligence to harmonize all interested groups irrespective of their "organizational" character. Later it was Tom Atlee who connected me to the modern pioneers of co-creation. It took me twenty years to "absorb" what they were saying, as I gradually realized that I was—as Russell Ackoff puts it—striving to do the wrong thing righter (improve government) instead of doing the right thing (help the public self-govern).[20]

## *World Brain Community and Consciousness Community*

Two of the communities draw in part from the work of French mystic Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, and they came together in the first manifesto from Evolver Editions, *Manifesto for the Noosphere: The Next Stage in the Evolution of Human Consciousness,* by Mayan scholar and visionary José Argüelles.[21] This book can be construed as a modern reclaiming of the age-old wisdom that asserts the holistic nature of life, the deep integration of individual consciousness with a cosmic consciousness, and the richness of paranormal, quantum, and even intra-terrestrial intelligence. Everything is alive—everything is connected—everything has a spirit—we are One, but only when we rise to the challenge of *being* One.

I think of the first of these two groups—the one focused on the World Brain as an objective—as the "World

Brain Community," a more Western, analytic/justice, data-oriented community that seeks to connect all human minds to all information in all languages all the time. Meanwhile, "Consciousness Community," the term I use for the second group—which is focused on elevating human consciousness as an objective—for me represents a more Eastern, intuitive, and spiritual, process-oriented community that seeks to restore all elements of the human spirit, reestablishing the balance between the male *techne* and the female *psyche*,[22] while better integrating humanity into both the natural time-energy cosmology of the Earth and the infinite cosmology of All.

Within the Consciousness Community I confess there are so many I do not know, having come to this community only in the past decade, but I single out Herbert Marcuse,[23] whom I studied in depth in the 1970s, and much more recently Tom Atlee, Barbara Marx Hubbard (*Conscious Evolution*), Juanita Brown and David Isaacs (*World Café*), Harrison Owen (*Wave Rider*),[24] and in the practical application arena, Sandy Heierbacher, pioneering catalyst of the National Coalition for Dialog and Deliberation.[25]

Within the World Brain Community I hold in the highest regard H.G. Wells (*World Brain*), Buckminster Fuller (*Ideas and Integrities*), Medard Gabel (*Designing a World that Works for All*), Hans Swegen (*Global Mind*), Howard Bloom (*Global Brain*),[26] and the more recent pioneers of the collective wealth, Alvin Toffler (*Revolutionary Wealth*), Barry Carter (*Infinite Wealth*), Yochai Benkler (*Wealth of Networks*), and Thomas Stewart (*Wealth of Knowledge*).[27]

There are many others, such as Russell Ackoff (*Redesigning Society*), John Warfield (*A Unified Systems Engineering Concept*), and in this era Kent Myers (*Reflexive Practice*).[28] These books are but a small sample of the 1,700-plus non-fiction books I have reviewed at Amazon, reading in ninety-eight categories.[29]

## *Dignity and Diversity Community*

There is a third human-centric community that I think of as the Dignity and Diversity Community. Others call this group the Bottom of the Pyramid or the Three Billion Poor. This community understands that the one unlimited resource we have is the human brain, and that absent a global program to embrace, educate, and elevate those at the bottom of the pyramid, no amount of "consciousness" and no amount of "analytics" is going to create a prosperous world at peace. Here I want to single out just three in this community: Robert Fuller, Dee Hock, and C.K. Prahalad.[30]

The easiest way to understand the importance of this community is to combine two quotes, the first from Shervin Pishevar, founder of OpenMesh Project, and the second from James Bamford, a scholar-journalist who for decades has exposed the National Security Agency using only legal, ethical sources of information to illustrate the fraud, waste, and abuse that the NSA actually is (spending as it does vast sums of the citizens' hard-earned money without actually contributing any intelligence of note to anyone including the President).

Humans are the routers.

Eventually NSA may secretly achieve the ultimate in quickness, compatibility, and efficiency—a computer with petaflop and higher speeds shrunk into a container about a liter in size, and powered by only about ten watts of power: the human brain.[31]

### *Bioneers Community and Ecological Economics Community*

The next two communities among my valued resources are the Bioneers Community and the Ecological Economics Community. I know too few of the Bioneers but deeply admire all they have done, and particularly those who have pioneered Bio-Mimicry, defined as our acknowledgement of intra-terrestrial intelligence, including our understanding that the Earth and its natural systems have vastly more "sense" ingrained in their every atom than we have as a species. Bio-Mimicry is our path back to integral consciousness.

In the Ecological Economics Community I single out Herman Daly (*Ecological Economics*, *For the Common Good*), who developed valuation methods leading to "true cost" economics. Among many others who followed related but distinct paths are Paul Hawken (*Ecology of Commerce, Natural Capitalism*) and most recently Charles Eisenstein (*Sacred Economics*).[32]

## The Role of Hackers

Let me explain the role that hackers, as well as the act and ethos of hacking, have played in radicalizing my vision and showing me the absolute need for an *Open-Source Everything Manifesto.*

By coincidence or divine circumstance, different groups converged on "open" in the 1980s and 1990s. Open software was the biggest of the movements, showing tangible value from its beginning. In my view, citing Richard Stallman as an example, open software can be considered a huge "hack." Stallman has been honored by Hackers on Planet Earth (HOPE) and is widely considered to be a hacker. In the specific case of HOPE, he is recognized for having broken the back of corporate ownership of the software commons, enabling billions of people to enjoy the capabilities of software—and to contribute their cognitive surplus toward improving that open-source software—so as to create a multi-billion-dollar industry that is open and very much in the public interest.[33]

A good "hack" is doing something better than it has ever been done before, with fewer resources. Hackers are like astronauts, pushing the edge of the envelope, going where others have not gone before, or have gone in a wasteful or unproductive manner. Good hackers are able to find flaws in commercial software based on their superior skills in relation to those who coded the software in the first place. Hacking is good. It keeps the cutting edge sharp. Anyone who does not understand

that is part of the industrial-era baggage that is holding us back.[34]

Hackers see things that others do not. For this reason, they are not only very good at creating elegant, lean code, but they are equally adept at finding flaws in code, and particularly flaws that would allow an unauthorized person to take over or exploit the code without others knowing—generally with some financial loss incurred by the firm being violated.

As an intelligence professional formerly in the civil service of the U.S. government, I was among the early pioneers in seeing the severe dangers of proliferating buggy software. I was a member of the national Information Handling Committee, and I recall a major national security agency, very competent in the software arena, briefing us to the effect that in one year they found more than five hundred embedded Trojan Horses, viruses, and forms of malicious mischief in shrink-wrapped software and hardware arriving at their loading dock. In 1994 I wrote the original letter to Marty Harris, then in charge of the National Information Infrastructure, warning of the dangers and providing a $1 billion a year proposal[35] that drew on the deep knowledge of Jim Anderson at the National Security Agency, Winn Schwartau (author of *Terminal Compromise* and *Information Warfare: Chaos on the Electronic Superhighway*), and Bill Caelli, a professor based in Australia and along with Jim and Winn, one of the top people at the time in the emergent arena of computer security.

This matters because the U.S. government ignored us, just as the U.S. Congress ignored Winn when he testified in 1990–1991 on the coming tsunami of bad code and huge flaws in all systems. Had they listened, instead of spending $15 billion a year today for the Cyber-Command and a range of poorly conceptualized, poorly designed, and very badly implemented programs, we would today have an open-source cyber-solution in place, with all bugs being quickly eradicated through the application of the open-source everything philosophy.

It was Winn Schwartau who recommended me to HOPE. I was the very first speaker in 1994, and I've been invited back to speak at every conference since then (they are held every two years). In the same time frame, I was elected (it is an honorary society) to the Silicon Valley Hackers Conference started by Stewart Brand and have been part of that community ever since.

Hackers have the "right stuff." Hackers are about integrity combined with intelligence. Integrity in the hacker sense is concerned with transparency, truth, and trust, and with feedback loops that are complete, uncorrupted, and visible. Integrity involves seeing the whole, appreciating the whole, and respecting the nuances and complexities of the whole—in other words, *Integrity at Scale,* the title of a book by Steven Howard Johnson.[36] Just as we are now shifting from an Industrial Era sense of self as "ME the Consumer" toward a Cosmic Era sense of self as "WE the Community," so also do hackers change the "design culture" of a society. Occupy is a culture hack, not a political or economic movement.[37]

I am a patriot. I have always sought to serve my country, in theory a Republic. Learning that secrecy was evil rather than good was my first step. From there it was a steady march toward open-source everything. Now I see all the evil that secrecy enables in a corrupt Congress, a corrupt Executive, a corrupt economy, and a corrupt society. I see that the greatest service I or any other person can render to the Republic is to march firmly, non-violently, toward open-source everything. Winston Churchill had it right when he famously gave a university speech, striking the lectern three times with his walking stick, repeating each time with clarity and integrity: "Never Give Up."

*BigBatUSA: We the People*
*Reform Coalition*

This is a model for what an honest, intelligent presidential candidate should offer. We should not be electing anyone who cannot produce a coalition cabinet and balanced budget in advance of election and via transparent means. We should be looking for a president who can eliminate the tax burden on all Americans, while also standing firmly for True Cost Economics. We should be looking for a president committed to zero inflation and full employment for all U.S. citizens. We should be looking for a president who upholds the Constitution and the sovereign will of the people over that of the bureaucracies and crime families.

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My email is robert.david.steele.vivas@gmail.com. I live to see the day when we restore the Republic.