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When I make films, I witness and record moments of uncertainty that unfold in real time. The future is unknown, often full of risk for the people I document. When I edit those moments months or years later, the future has transpired and the uncertainty is transformed into a plot: a narrative in which decisions that were vast and multiple are reduced to one—the path taken, not the many paths untaken. But the drama, the life pulse of any story, lies in the uncertainty of the moment, the choices, doubts, fears, desires, and risks of how to act and act again.

I wrote this journal in Berlin between November 2012 and May 2013. I had relocated to Berlin after six years of being detained every time I entered the United States. I was looking for a place to edit without fear that my footage would be taken at the border. The act of writing this journal made me nervous.

In May 2013, I bid the journal in Berlin. I rediscovered it in 2015 while preparing for this book and exhibition.

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Nov. 4, 2012

Berlin—
I haven’t written in over a year for fear these words are not private. That nothing in my life can be kept private.

Nov. 5, 2012

I’ve been thinking about the “disposition matrix” and how that could be incorporated in the film. Is that what Binney was talking about in terms of CIA hit squads? Did he help to build the matrix? How deep does the matrix go? Is there a connection between surveillance and the kill matrix? Does everything feed it? Is it narrow or broad?

Nov. 7, 2012

Beyond the rendition and black sites, was there a totally different program that has not been reported? And could Binney have real knowledge of it?
Nov. 8, 2012

I want to do the Guantánamo film. The goal would be to make audiences feel the passage of time. To come to terms with what it means to be indefinitely detained without charge. To die in prison at thirty-six. To wait for someone to come home. A story about the terror of the war on terror.

I'm still thinking of doing a project with Boumediene. He has haunted me since I met him. Not a literal narrative—his experience would be subtext. Not one-to-one—it needs to flip and make us care in new ways. A parallel narrative that is about who we could be, casting a man who experienced who we have become.

Nov. 18, 2012

On Monday I had a nightmare that has hung with me for days. I was being detained on a U.S. military base. First I tried to escape in a truck and was caught at the gate. They tried to blindfold me w/goggles and put a straightjacket on me. I resisted, so they tried to drug me, but I wouldn't lose consciousness. At some point I stole a walkie-talkie and reported that there was a kidnapping/hostage situation, but they changed the channel of the frequency. They tried to give me food, but I went on a hunger strike. There was another journalist I saw. I asked him to report that I was being kidnapped.

Evening—
The antagonist of the film is the state. That liberates the film from the rabbit holes of individual plot threads. It can reach a general conflict of individuals all fighting the state and the state as a secret dark force that tries to destroy anyone who challenges it.

Dec. 2, 2012

Watched the footage of Adnan Latif's brother I filmed in 2007. Everything is foreshadowed in the conversation, including Adnan's death five years later. I also watched again Obama on closing Guantánamo. That will be the opening, then a text card about Adnan's death, then
2007 footage, then something to show the passage of time to convey being detained for twelve years without charge. End on Adnan’s body returning home. I should raise questions about whether it was suicide or an overdose.

Dec. 15, 2012

Adnan’s body will be returned today. The working title is Death of a Prisoner, but that might be wrong. It might codify his position at Gitmo, suggest a legal system that doesn’t exist. Today Mohammed, Adnan’s brother, will go to the ministry of the interior to try and receive the dead body.

If only I could sleep I’d be happy in Berlin.

Dec. 20, 2012

My laptop keeps mysteriously running out of space even though it has 16 GB free.

Dec. 25, 2012

I woke up thinking about the NCTC emails. What is the link to “Hollywood folks”?

I should ask Murat Kurnaz if he ever learned the identity of the man who died hung by his arms in Kandahar. I’ll need to fact-check that or put a text card saying the identity is unknown. Perhaps list confirmed deaths during interrogations? It is all about asking people to imagine the existential hell. If that space can be accessed—the connection to that experience—then what is said might have impact. Ultimately it is about that expression. To say something in a way that moves people. It is not a device, it is the gauge of the quality of the work itself.

Dec. 31, 2012

New Year’s Eve in Berlin. Just back from CCC. Interviewed Binney.
Got closer, but still don't have the details. He won't go into the methods of taking people out.

I should do something to mark the New Year.

Jan. 1, 2013

Finally was able to see Yemen video of Adnan's body. The body was returned in a black plastic bag with Adnan's ISN# and his date of death on a tag. They didn't even write the man's name. It is unimaginable. January 22, 2009, is the date Obama promised to close the prison.

Jan. 2, 2013

Yesterday I edited Adnan's uncle over the body bag. It is heartbreaking.

Jan. 6, 2013

Death of a Nation
Death of a Prisoner
My Wish Is to Die
A Man Escaped
A Death Foretold
08Sep2012 #156

Read NYT article on Kiriakou. Binney probably has the same level of FBI scrutiny. They are probably listening and watching in the same way. It is a lesson to never trust a feeling of safety or reduced pressure because they can and will go after you at any moment.

Doing this film makes me really think about working in other ways. Ways that come faster and have a direct expression and reach audiences. It also reveals the power of images to tell the news in ways that have to be confronted emotionally.

Not sure about the title—is it too benign? If he is a "prisoner," does he cease to be a human being?
Jan. 12, 2013

Published *Death of a Prisoner* yesterday.\textsuperscript{11} I'm exhausted. I think it is powerful. I have no perspective.

Jan. 13, 2013

Aaron Swartz killed himself on Friday.\textsuperscript{12} Tragic.

Jan. 17, 2013

Just received email from a potential source in the intelligence community. Is it a trap, is he crazy, or is this something real? He is asking for some secure setup before communicating. I need to create a new key pair for this. Why would he contact me?

Feb. 6, 2013

Contacted again by "Citizen Four." I am not even sure how much I can/should write here. If he proves what he claims, the story is huge. The focus of the state and state power against individuals resisting. C4's narrative also provides a driving plot/mystery.

I cannot begin to comprehend the magnitude of what he is saying: "I know how it will end for me."

Feb. 7, 2013

Started rereading *1984*. It is strange—I remember it so well. And now to be in Berlin, it comes full circle. Berlin, Bowie. I don't think I'll ever have another project like this, touching so many chords of my memory. Citizen Four—this narrative focuses the film around the power of the state. I should rewatch *The Man Who Fell to Earth*, *2001: A Space Odyssey*, and *All the President's Men*. 
Feb. 9, 2013

Jesus, I have no idea what I am about to enter into. I’m still not sure it is for real. I won’t know until I do the verification. I still wonder if they are trying to entrap me, Jake, or Julian. Julian would be the likely target. I really have to decide who I want to bring in and how I want this to unfold. Should I work the material into the film? Or is it too newsworthy and needs to be more immediately released? Do I document the vetting and verification?

I can’t do this alone, I know that.

My work might get shut down by the government.

Feb. 11, 2013

I read the news in fear of an arrest. It still could be a shakedown targeting Julian or Jake. Watching what I’ll do with the material. It really is a drama to understand the possible motivations/goals. I take it at face value, but why? He could have approached the NYT or the Washington Post for maximum exposure. Why reach out to a filmmaker? Because I’ve been targeted? Because he has already gone down other paths? Because he doesn’t have what he claims? Honestly, if he is legit I am seriously in over my head. I have no legal team, no editorial backup.

Feb. 14, 2013

It will be a story for sure, I just don’t know how much I want to be in it, though it might be unavoidable if/when C4 is arrested. Reading 1984 again is somehow an extension of my reality. God, I’m tired. Will I ever be able to sleep again?

Feb. 16, 2013

“Your worst enemy, he reflected, was your own nervous system. At any moment the tension inside you was liable to translate itself into some visible symptom.” — 1984
I am battling with my nervous system. It doesn’t let me rest or sleep. Eye twitches, clenched throat, and now literally waiting to be raided. I really need to prepare for that. Binney’s foot was cut off on Wednesday. Our bodies betray us. I should rewatch Blue, White, Red.\textsuperscript{14}

Is C4 a trap? Will he put me in prison?

\textit{Feb. 17, 2013}

Who is he? Where does he go to email? Does he have family, kids? Is he sitting silently in meetings knowing he will betray his colleagues? Does he like the danger? Was he once a rebel—what is his narrative desire? Is he fulfilling that by reaching out to me? He says he is under investigation—how does he know? Is he being followed? Does he follow me, see what I say and do? Does he want to meet? What does he want?

\textit{Feb. 20, 2013}

Found another flat for March/April. Off the grid at the moment unless I’m being physically surveilled. I will try to keep it disconnected for as long as possible. No phone, Wi-Fi.

I dreamt I was sent dozens of packages. Mountains of material. Still no email from C4—the last one was over a week ago.

\textit{Feb. 23, 2013}

I’m at the point in 1984 where they rent the room: Winston sees the rat. The book is terrifying and so relevant to today. The fear of an all-knowing state. Doublespeak. Reading the newspaper about kill lists. For what? The “enemy” does not threaten to destroy us. It is just being used to justify a growing surveillance state.

“We lost the war.”

Evening—
If this leak is for real, I might want to stagger release. The question is,
Will I be immediately arrested? Raided? Will I be able to continue to edit and finish the film?

Feb. 24, 2013

It has been two weeks since I’ve heard anything from Citizen Four. I hope that isn’t a bad sign. He told me not to worry if I don’t hear from him. If the leak is significant, I might be safe publishing it, but I would also bring down the world’s eyes on me. God, my life is really over in terms of privacy. It is terrifying to think I might never feel confident I’m not being watched.

If I have addresses of interception points, these can be a narrative thread.

Feb. 25, 2013

I think waiting for Citizen Four is distracting me from being able to focus.

I’m at the point in 1984 where they have been arrested. I’m dealing with really dark forces.

Feb. 26, 2013

Why the fuck am I making long-form documentaries when other ways of working are so much more energizing?

I really want to do the installation project of hanging screens in a warehouse. So that entering it is like a torture chamber.

I’d like to do a drive-in theater across from the NSA. That property for sale—project the film across the street in an outdoor projection. Maybe there is a way to rethink the drive-in concept. To broadcast the audio over radio that can be picked up on phones and have the film projected at different locations.
March 5, 2013

If I can do this warehouse idea, that would be exciting. Entering a room of hanging screens like a slaughterhouse. They have many headphones, creating a landscape of voices trying to be heard. White-noise effect. The viewer is then compelled to listen, to find which picture goes with which headphones.

March 10, 2013

I don’t know what I’m feeling. I moved, which has thrown me into a dive—why am I here, what am I doing? I don’t feel good or grounded. I’m off balance.

I finished 1984 last night. The ending I remembered so vividly. The mask with rats, the betrayal, and the meeting with Julia, who also betrayed him. The ability to change what someone feels. In some ways that is happening to me—I am fighting, but they’ve gotten inside so that I don’t know if anyplace is private. If anyplace is safe. I’m trying to keep this new flat off the radar, so no phone, no connecting to the Internet without Tor. I’ve created my own isolation, so they win. They always win. I can fight all I want and I will lose. I will be destroyed, paranoid, forsaken, unable to sleep, think, love.

Jake said something like, “It’s PTSD without the post-.” It doesn’t end. But it is not just this project, it is Iraq, Yemen, the border, and now the NSA. It is cumulative.

March 11, 2013

I really feel like I’m underwater. There is pressure in my head. I’m trying to figure out if it is in my head or the apartment. I can hear the sound of my blood moving through my veins. Jesus, what the fuck is happening?

Working on Manning audio today. It is important to publish.
March 12, 2013

Manning video released today. I focused on Manning's entrance into the military and his response to the Apache video. What it shows is that people cannot remain silent.

March 16, 2013

"Crypto Wars 2"—that is what Jake said the film was about when we first met. I didn't understand it. He was thinking ahead of me. In a way this should feel like a sci-fi manifesto, a futurist story or puzzle. Not an educational tool but a revolutionary tool kit. I should build a map. Instructions.

March 17, 2013

Nightmare: Running from someone with T. T. We were climbing, and then I look out the window to see the Freedom Tower under construction at eye level. I panic/vertigo. I can only imagine falling. I'm frozen. Woke in a sweat.

Installation project: I want a space that looks down, like a factory floor. The headphones hang from wires, so people can only move in certain straight lines if they want to see other images. People might need to switch positions, creating a social exchange. From above you witness and decide if you want to descend into the viewing area. That is the only way you'll be able to hear, so people will.

Since the headphones are hung from above, people will need to reach up and pull them down. Each headphone has multiple channels that sync with different projections. The viewer will be able to switch audio channels. From above, you hear white noise of all the headphones playing.

I should think about using NSA material in the exhibition. To draw people in and break news. To mirror the themes of the surveillance mechanism. Maybe an art exhibition could do that—both create an aesthetic experience and reveal information that evokes an emotional response.
March 18, 2013

*V for Vendetta* last night—all about how governments lie.

*My Country, My Country* seems so naïve in retrospect. As if appealing to people's consciences could change anything. Ten years into this war it is obvious there are other forces at work.

March 20, 2013

The tenth anniversary of the Iraq War.

I really need a plot throughline that will give mystery and suspense. It will ground the rest of the film. If/when the information is released I need to calibrate the effect. What if he is arrested? What if he is an FBI informant? There is a danger working with news events—they lose their meaning once public. I need to make sure everything has bigger social and human meaning.

March 26, 2013

Chilling email from Citizen Four. He says I'll receive the link in seven days. He says the hard work is done, but the dangerous work is still ahead. He assures me that if he is detained or killed, I will still receive the archive. He says this will happen if our adversaries are more successful than we are. He says the archive can't be sanitized without raising questions of authenticity. He is prepared for the consequences of the disclosure. I really don't want to become the story, but I might not be able to stop that if this archive is as detailed as he has indicated. Am I being led down a dead end? Being played by some rogue actor?

As this insanity unfolds I'm reading Doctorow's *Homeland*, which feels like a mirror of the exact fucking reality I'm living in. National-security leaks, detentions, threat of death, keys passing.

Jake says my friends will be targeted and that I can't protect them. He says it is bigger than anything WikiLeaks has done. More top secret and
that the backlash is the sort of thing people get killed over. Trillions of dollars of investment.

I told Jake I would take the heat. He said that isn’t possible, and that everyone I know will be subjected to pressure and that I should warn Katy."

March 30, 2013

Day six of the seven-day window given by Citizen Four to receive the link. Yesterday read the section in Homeland where Marcus is kidnapped and interrogated. The book feels like a fucking manual. Totally nuts. The stuff when his computer starts talking to him reminds me of when I started filming with Binney and the crashes I experienced. The screen going totally pink and turning off.

March 31, 2013

Received the link last night. “Astro Noise.” I am downloading it right now. It is at 90%. My vision is starting to telescope, but I feel calm. I slept long, until 10 am. The next step is to verify the hash. I don’t have a clue, but I’ll try to troubleshoot. Tonight I should watch 2001: A Space Odyssey. Seems fitting with all these blinking screens. What if I’m being played? It is hard not to get paranoid. I’m probably too trusting. I believe Citizen Four’s story. It connects w/me, but what does that mean? How can I trust this person who approached me out of the blue?

95%

Download failed. Attempting again. This is intense—potentially downloading NSA files on Easter Sunday in Berlin.

The file is downloading now.

April 1, 2013

I should know what Astro Noise contains before involving anyone else. It is all a bit overwhelming. I could now be in possession of NSA
secrets. Without the key I won't know. I filmed the downloading and the verifying of the hash.

I finished reading *Homeland* and watched *2001*. As I was filming the screen I thought about *Exact Fantasy* and working with primary documents. Seeing *2001* gave me chills. My parents took me. I still remember it. I wonder how old I was?

God, I really need to find a way to offload stress. If this file is for real it is a huge story, which I've documented and will also break. I have no editorial support to handle this.

*April 2, 2013*

Audio recording/print script (edit)
✓ Digitize Astro Noise download
✓ Reply renovation
   Review footage log and prioritize scene to prep work memo
   Copy + distribute Astro Noise

If I go to NYC in April I should meet with Jay Sanders regarding the installation project.

*April 3, 2013*

Yesterday I was dizzy w/anxiety. I reread some of the letters. If Citizen Four provides documentation, it's a total bombshell. "SSO," "Special Source Operations." Sleep was horrible again. It is getting worse. The funny thing is that I'm sure I'll look back on this as just the best time. Being in Berlin, having a great story. There is so much to appreciate that I should try to let the anxiety go. What is the worst they can do?

*April 4, 2013*

Finally had a good night's sleep. Traveling to London this weekend to film Julian. Of course, the pattern of the timing will make it look like I am going to give him the Astro Noise file. If and when there is a
grand-jury investigation of this leak, that timing will be used. Narratives can be spun. I doubt Citizen Four has any idea I know Julian.

Notes:
Architectural plans=source
Disaster=come home
Renovation taking longer=delay
Recycled=multiple
Carpenter quit=not received
Co-op=gov.

April 5, 2013

Yesterday I prepped letters. I pray I’m not the cause of Citizen Four’s arrest. Big story today about the military’s secret new cyber rules of engagement. It is increasingly hard to see how any of this has a positive ending.

April 6, 2013

The sound of the blood moving in my brain wouldn’t stop. I need to decide what to carry today. Very strange—I’m less worried about crossing borders in Europe than in the U.S. But still I need to consider the danger of taking a computer. This is all total madness—this level of feeling watched. And feeling I could be causing harm to others.

April 14, 2013

Nightmare: I was in a building with a courtyard. We hear a sound, and it is a spaceship flying in the courtyard looking for someone to kidnap or kill. Not clear which. The people with me hide, and then I realize I need to document what is happening. So I get to an area where I can see the machine and take a photo inside the pilot’s cabin. The camera has a flash, so I see the faces in the photo. But the flash also means they know they’ve been seen. I run, and then realize I should upload the photo fast, before they catch me. I send it to D. The photo is a big story. It reveals evidence of a program the USG wanted to keep secret. I am on the run.
April 18, 2013

If I tried to make a fiction, I’d be interested in C4. Actually, I’d love to do a doc/vérité while he is still inside. Still unknown. For instance, does he have children? How does he manage to live pretending? Living a double life? Risking so much?

April 29, 2013

Returned from NYC yesterday. Very intense trip—meeting with Glenn, Jake, Jameel/ACLU.22 Received the most detailed outline from C4. Jake raised question about entrapment. My instincts say the source is legit. Glenn is on board and ready, but totally clueless on the security-technical side of things. He expressed belief that to get traction, we need to show either that Congress is being lied to or illegal actions. Jameel said the same. It is about changing the political climate, not about legal questions of standing. In the wake of Boston, this will be really hard to do.

Jake was more freaked out—very aware of the danger this could open. He said I needed to follow absolutely strict security. That I am a target they would do anything to compromise. If C4 is legit and has documentation, he is right.

Jake emailed—he and A. were followed after I left.

Citizen Four wrote to disassociate metadata again. Email now is “everyone.” I am “Sound and Vision.” He wanted to give me the option to decide on my own terms whether to claim involvement. He says, “Every trick in the book will be used to look into this,” and that we are in uncharted territory.

What is this film really about? It might be about the courage to resist power. That is the theme that runs throughout. It is also about a revolutionary historical moment when a new technology emerges that shifts the balance of power. But really it is about resistance. Surveillance is the organizing theme, or the prism, through which we observe resistance.
I wonder what Julian’s plan was that day in the hotel room? Was there an escape plan?

May 3, 2013

I can’t hear. The sound of blood rushing in my veins has gotten worse. It began when I moved in March. The sensation of being underwater and removed from reality. I feel more removed and isolated. I keep waiting for my ears to pop and to return back to reality, but maybe that won’t happen. I can’t sleep and now I can’t hear.

Bart Gellman reached out to ask about collaborating. I hate Time magazine. I can’t make commitments until I know more.

May 4, 2013

No email today. Last night I read a post about the “Citizen’s Committee to Investigate the FBI” and it made me think that’s what this is—but for the NSA. It would truly be incredible if he is never discovered. Like Deep Throat. That would just blow a hole into all this secrecy culture. That one among them had turned, but they couldn’t identify him.

It is hard to imagine it ends here. I will probably be subpoenaed. Of course I won’t comply, but that might mean I have to seriously consider the idea of going to jail to protect him. I need to make sure that if that happens, the film will be completed. It can’t happen before.

May 5, 2013

Fuck—I have to make one of the most important decisions of my life and there is no one I can talk to. C4 wants to release an FAA 702 document quickly before the key. He says I shouldn’t release it and that it can’t be traced back to him. Is this the game, the trap?

I need to think what makes sense in the long term. What will create the most attention and also give me space to keep working? When this gets investigated, what decision makes the most sense? What decision will
bring maximum awareness? And maximum public outcry? Maximum
government response?

C4 asked me to put a target on his back. To not protect his identity. He
also said he would never commit suicide. What kind of fucking world is
this that everyone in my film says this to me?

I need to ask everything now before the key arrives. He said contents
of Astro Noise will make the Pentagon Papers and Manning’s leak look
like idle gossip. Jesus. I am totally over my head. Listening to Binney
you realize what these people are capable of. Thirty-seven years of
service and they show up w/guns drawn. These people are evil. What
world have I entered? Will I ever escape?

“Once the payload moves from ciphertext to plaintext, the life I have
lived is finished. Whether scorned power ends it through imprisonment
or violence is of little interest. I am not afraid.”—C4

May 8, 2013

Met w/lawyer. Legal protections in Germany are good if the U.S. tries
to issue a subpoena.

Bart is pushing hard for direct contact. Of course he is doing his job,
but I should be careful and not agree to anything without understanding
the consequences. I should control distribution carefully once it
gets into plaintext. Jesus. My life might soon be over or become very
public. I should prepare myself.

May 10, 2013

Citizen Four agreed to meet for interview. All will move fast now.
Everything has to be secure before we meet, otherwise we would be a
perfect target if they thought it could be stopped. They’d call it a con-
spiracy. It would be so easy to frame. I’m already on a watch list. They’d
say I’m acting as an agent.
May 11, 2013

I might travel Thursday or Friday. Hopefully shoot on Sunday. Return Monday or Tues. I should spend the weekend working on questions. Ideally this would happen in a house in the country.

I should really consider doing the interview alone.

—What do you think they will do to you?
—Explain to me what you think they will do to you.
—Explain to me why you decided to become a whistleblower.
—Can you walk me through how you were able to retrieve this data/archive?
—Tell me what the archive contains.
—Tell me what you know about Stellarwind.
—Tell me what you know about the Ashcroft hospital visit.
—Can you explain the secret interpretation of Section 215 of the Patriot Act?
—Explain to me who in Congress know what you are revealing.
—Explain to me what you think is illegal in these documents.
—Explain why you are not afraid.
—Explain why you decided not to leak the archive to MSM, such as the NYT.
—What do you think they’ll do to me?
—What frightens you the most?
—Some people will accuse you of being a traitor. What do you say to them?
—Explain how this information can be used to win.
—Who is implicated in criminal activities?
—Tell me what “Treasure Map” is.
—Explain Bill’s role in the NSA. What were his skills?
—Explain why you don’t try to escape or seek asylum.
—What do you know about the Utah facility?
—Explain why they are building it and what it will do.
May 12, 2013

My heart is beating out of my chest. The pressure of putting this all together is enormous.

They are going to come after me with all their aggression to stop the spread. The trick will be to make it a scandal before Citizen Four gets caught. Otherwise the leak gets framed as treason/attack on national security. Either way, this will not be at all fun. They will prosecute me, right? I really do need a press organization backing me on this. I do want to get out of this one alive, so I have to be careful. I’ll go to jail to protect the First Amendment, but I don’t want to do something that invites them to indict me.

God, but seriously, my life in the U.S. is over after this, right? How will I be able to live there?

May 13, 2013

SILVERSHOT did the setup for Glenn. He should be on encryption by Thursday. Thank god. No word from Citizen this weekend. I hope my last email didn’t push him away. Asking to meet is risky I know, but how can I not ask? I don’t know the level of surveillance he is under. He says he can’t travel undetected. What does that mean? I assume he lives near Fort Meade.

May 15, 2013

The plans arrived, so I should have them tonight and can begin distribution. I should write down the hotels I can call from NYC to find a place to copy everything.

I should also destroy this fucking notebook.

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I flew to New York later that day. Two weeks later I flew to Hong Kong with Glenn Greenwald to meet Edward Snowden.
NOTES

1. In 2006, I was placed on a government terrorist watch list after making My Country, My Country, a film about the Iraq War. Since then, I have been detained and interrogated more than forty times at the U.S. border. In 2015, I filed a Freedom of Information Act lawsuit against the Department of Homeland Security, the Department of Justice, and the Office of the Director of National Intelligence to request my files. In October of that year, I received a first release of heavily redacted FBI documents that reveal I was the target of a classified grand-jury investigation. Several of these documents appear in this volume on pages 193–201.

2. The disposition matrix is a database of people that American intelligence agencies see as terrorists. People in this database are selected according to criteria from the Obama administration to create a list of people whom the U.S. targets for capture or assassination. Most often they are killed by drone strike. President Obama makes the final decision on every list.

3. William Binney worked for the NSA for more than thirty years. He was the agency’s technical director. He left the NSA in October 2001, right after 9/11. Before leaving, he discovered that the social-graphing program he designed, ThinThread, was being used to spy on U.S. citizens. He and other NSA employees filed complaints internally. I began filming him in 2011. One of the first things he said to me was, “I want you to know I will never commit suicide.”

4. Death of a Prisioner (2013) was a short film I made for the New York Times about Adnan Latif, a Yemeni prisoner who was found dead at Guantánamo Bay in September 2012. When I learned about his death, I contacted the Times because I had visited and filmed Adnan’s family in Yemen five years earlier.

5. Lakhdar Boumediene was rendered by the CIA in Bosnia and spent seven years at Guantánamo without charge. He was on a hunger strike for two years. He was released following his 2008 Supreme Court victory in Boumediene v. Bush. I filmed him in 2009, weeks after his release.

6. In 2010, after finishing The Oath, I was contacted by a producer in Hollywood who was doing consulting for the National Counterterrorism Center, or NCTC. She wanted to put me in touch with G. from NCTC to see my film. G. wrote to request a DVD and put me in touch with a woman, R., who handles “outreach to Hollywood folks.” I never heard from them again after her email. I assume they looked into their database and realized I was on the NCTC terrorist watch list.

7. Murat Kurnaz is a former Guantánamo prisoner I filmed in 2009. He was tortured in Afghanistan.

8. Chaos Computer Congress, or CCC, is an annual hacker conference in Germany.

9. All prisoners at Guantánamo are assigned an Internment Serial Number, or ISN.


12. Aaron Swartz was an Internet prodigy and activist who committed suicide while facing prosecution and potential decades in jail for logging into an MIT server and copying academic journals that were largely funded by taxpayer money. The site he logged into, JSTOR, eventually opposed his being prosecuted.

13. I began filming Jacob Appelbaum and Julian Assange in 2011 in the aftermath of WikiLeaks’ publication of war logs and U.S. State Department cables. A secret grand-jury investigation into Wikileaks was launched, which was the reason I relocated to Berlin to edit. The secret investigation is still open, five years later.


15. I began filming the NSA’s Utah Data Center in 2011. The NSA didn’t yet have
security because the building was under construction, so I was able to get close. The neighbors next door let me film from their property. They told me that a highway would soon come through their land. They also told me that their son had been in an automobile accident and that they had to sell the piece of land rather than build a new house and retire there. I considered trying to purchase the land and turning it into a research center to study the NSA, but I never followed up on the idea. I was too freaked out by the thought of being across the street from the data center storing everyone’s communications.

16. In 2013, a source leaked an audio recording to the Freedom of the Press Foundation of Chelsea (then Bradley) Manning’s statement during then-ongoing court-martial proceedings. In it, Manning discusses how she felt when she saw the “Collateral Murder” video, which shows journalists and children being gunned down in 2007 in Baghdad by an Apache helicopter gunship. I made a short video, titled Providence, using Manning’s audio recording as the voice-over. It was released by the Freedom of the Press Foundation on March 12, 2013.

17. When I traveled to Iraq in 2004 to film My Country, My Country, I never imagined things like the drone assassination program.

18. Cory Doctorow’s Homeland (2013) is a work of fiction about a massive leak of classified documents.

19. Katy Scoggin served as co-producer on CITIZENFOUR.

20. Encrypted files cannot be opened without a “key,” or passphrase, to unlock them. I did not have the key.

21. Exact Fantasy is a film I made in 1996 about letters written to celebrities.

22. I had several meetings in New York to discuss Citizen Four and make plans if the documents were real. I also warned several people whom I knew would be targeted if Citizen Four were legit and his claims were accurate.

23. In May 2012, I filmed Julian Assange in a hotel room in London as he disguised his appearance before seeking political asylum from Ecuador.

24. Barton Gellman is an investigative journalist. I met with him in February 2013 when

I first started to receive emails from Citizen Four. At that time he was a contributing editor at large for Time magazine.

25. I later learned this document was a slide deck from the top-secret Prism program that revealed details about nine internet companies and how they shared information with the NSA.

26. SILVERSHOT was a code name for Micah Lee, a technologist whom Snowden contacted to reach me. Snowden assigned code names for people he communicated with—mine was DARKDIAMOND.