No Place to Hide: Edward Snowden, the NSA, and the U.S. Surveillance State

Proposed by Kim Jensen
Date of Proposal: May 2014, carried forward to 2015 by the reading committee
Author: Glenn Greenwald
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272 pages
There is a paperback edition out now.

“In May 2013, Glenn Greenwald set out for Hong Kong to meet an anonymous source who claimed to have astonishing evidence of pervasive government spying and insisted on communicating only through heavily encrypted channels. That source turned out to be the 29-year-old NSA contractor Edward Snowden, and his revelations about the agency’s widespread, systemic overreach proved to be some of the most explosive and consequential news in recent history, triggering a fierce debate over national security and information privacy….Now for the first time, Greenwald fits all the pieces together, recounting his high-intensity ten-day trip to Hong Kong, examining the broader implications of the surveillance detailed in his reporting for The Guardian, and revealing fresh information on the NSA’s unprecedented abuse of power with never-before-seen documents entrusted to him by Snowden himself.

Going beyond NSA specifics, Greenwald also takes on the establishment media, excoriating their habitual avoidance of adversarial reporting on the government and their failure to serve the interests of the people. Finally, he asks what it means both for individuals and for a nation’s political health when a government pries so invasively into the private lives of its citizens—and considers what safeguards and forms of oversight are necessary to protect democracy in the digital age. Coming at a landmark moment in American history, No Place to Hide is a fearless, incisive, and essential contribution to our understanding of the U.S. surveillance state.”

Endorsements

“Impassioned . . . gripping . . . Greenwald amplifies our understanding of the N.S.A.’s sweeping ambitions . . . and delivers a fierce argument in defense of the right of privacy.”

“Provides an excellent overview of the NSA’s still-classified activities and lack of legal controls, putting the pieces together in a way that daily journalism cannot.”
—The Economist
"Reads like a thriller . . . With heart-pounding suspense, John le Carre-like intrigue and Jeffersonian fidelity to the principles of human freedom . . . No Place to Hide is also a morality tale about the personal courage required of Snowden and Greenwald and his colleagues to expose government wrongdoing and the risk to their lives, liberties and properties in doing so."
—Judge Andrew P. Napolitano, FOX News

“A fascinating read that adds much to the debate on national security and privacy.”
—Los Angeles Review of Books

What Makes this a Good CBC Book?

1. This book is still timely, provocative, exceptionally well-written, and is of vital interest to all U.S. citizens who should consider the implications of the evidence presented here. I think it’s a ‘must read’ to understand the country and the world that we live in. This book is quite brief and an instructor can also choose to teach certain useful sections. It can be used in many disciplines including English, Journalism, Theatre, Mass Communication, Philosophy and Ethics, Reading, Speech and Communication, ESOL, Criminal Justice, History, Psychology, Sociology, Business and Management, SAIT, Cyber security, the Sciences, Math, and many more.

This book is useful in that it addresses critical thinking; research and writing; and references our GenEd competencies: personal and professional ethics; information literacy; scientific reasoning; technology; critical analysis; local and global diversity.

2. In terms of accessibility for students—I can’t think of a book that could introduce such a complex topic in such an accessible, readable way. I think our students and community will be very interested in reading and talking about this book and the discussions and debates that it will generate. It may be controversial, but it’s a discussion that all Americans should probably be having.

3. In terms of event planning, it is conducive to lively debates, student projects, field trips, service learning or community activism projects, lectures, film showings, art and theatre productions, science or computer presentations. Glenn Greenwald may be available to speak, but if not we could certainly get his research partner Laura Poitras or other important investigative journalists James Bamford or James Risen. We are right up the road from the NSA, so if someone would like to invite a knowledgeable employee to come to CCBC defend the NSA’s practices, that would make for some interesting programming.

4. Does this text possibly have a related theatre or film piece?

Laura Poitras' documentary entitled “Citizenfour” is out now, a screening of this film would be a wonderful part of the activities planned around the book. “Citizenfour” is essentially the same story in a film format and adds a face and a context to the book. The beautiful and moving film about spying in the GDR before the fall of the Berlin Wall called The Lives of Others is a remarkable film and makes for great comparative discussions and analysis.

5. Explain the ways that it is related to current social issues.

Obviously the NSA spying issue remains important to the social and political debate right now. No matter what you think of Snowden himself, there is no getting around the fact that this
bulk data collection and spying IS happening and it is ubiquitous. It would be tremendously exciting year to engage in a year-long discussion of the implications of these revelations. Greenwald frames the discussion in pivotal and interesting ways that touch on broader issues of thought control, social control, the role of the media collusion, and much more.

6. Describe how it is easily tied into existing CCBC events and clubs such as the Spotlight Speakers Series, Closing the Gap initiative, Creative Writing Forum, Women’s Studies Club, etc. etc. I can see collaborations with many of the existing clubs and areas, especially International Education Week, Creative Writing Forum, and Spotlight Speakers, and ISEJ, just to name a few.

7. This book can be read very quickly. I read this in two sittings. It is gripping and engaging.

8. Has this text been used successfully in the classroom? –I’m not sure. It’s only a year old.