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How We're Restoring the Republic with Truth and Fearlessness **by Karen Kwiatkowski**

The following is a transcript of a speech given at The Future of Freedom Foundation's June 2007 conference, "Restoring the Republic: Foreign Policy & Civil Liberties" held in Reston, Virginia.

Jacob Hornberger: I'd like to welcome all of you to our evening session of our conference, Restoring the Republic of Foreign Policy and Civil Liberties. Again it's very nice to have you all here. It's a very exciting event for us and we'd like to make it as nice and enjoyable as we can for you. I think most Americans realize that something's wrong with our country; that we're moving in a wrong direction, a bad direction. And yet a lot of people are looking sort of through a glass darkly as to what the reason for this is. That's the purpose of this conference, to bring together 24 of the finest, most committed, passionate principal speakers in our country, libertarians, liberals, and conservatives alike, diagnose the problem that's facing our country, and provide the prescription for how we get out of this morass.

Our speaker this evening is Karen Kwiatkowski. It's a real honor to have Karen with us. She's a retired Lieutenant Colonel from the United States Air Force. She received her Master of Arts degree in Government from Harvard University, her M.S. in Science Management from the University of Alaska, and a Ph.D. in World Politics from Catholic University of America. Her final military assignment was in the Office of the Secretary of Defense in the Pentagon. She left the military to speak out against U.S. foreign policy, policy of interventionism. Her articles since then have appeared on LewRockwell.com, *American Conservative*, Salon.com, Antiwar.com and others. She played a featured role in the movie documentary *Why We Fight*. And I think you'll find that she, along with our other speaker, Robert Scheer, share a common characteristic with the 22 other speakers at this conference, and that is that all of them are imbued with a deep sense of passion and commitment to getting this country back on the right track toward freedom and prosperity and peace. Please welcome Karen Kwiatkowski.

Karen Kwiatkowski: Thanks. Thank you. Thank you very much. It is a great honor to be here, to be invited to say a few words and to be in the company of what is really fundamentally the vanguard of American freedom. If we indeed restore the Republic in one form or another here in the United States, it will be directly due to the people sitting here today. For Jacob Hornberger to have gotten everyone in the same room to talk seriously about this topic, this close to Washington, D.C., is remarkably visionary. Considering the very real threat the people in this conference pose to the political and economic status quo is also very courageous.

Two questions have to be asked and answered before I can share how, in my view, we are restoring the Republic. And in spite of what I'm about to say in the next few minutes, I usually believe in happy endings, so please hold that thought if you will. First we must ask what is or was the American Republic? Second, assuming we can define the American Republic, can it really be restored?

The outline and definition of the American Republic were put forth in clear terms by the Articles of Confederation. In 1777 this document created a limited and circumscribed government for the United States. The states themselves would be independent, peaceful, and would not conduct their own foreign policy, including the making of war. The 8th article of the confederation called for the states to voluntarily fund the federal government for the common defense and general welfare and to pay recently incurred war debts. The means for assessing this pact reminds me a little bit of Marx's old ideal, from each according to his abilities and to each according to his needs. But it was also fair. It is the way that churches, synagogues, and mosques informally communicate to their congregation what should be offered for the common good. This voluntary method encourages individual generosity as well as thrift and accountability in the recipients.

I'm not a constitutional scholar and I'm not a historian, but it seems to me that the agreement put forth in the Articles of Confederation established a classical and workable republic, and that is a mixed constitutional government that embodies civic duty, virtue, and social cohesion and where there is a high devotion, fidelity, and regard for the rule of law. One thing comes through for all types of republican forms of government, and this is the idea of partnership, consenting, agreeable, aware, and free partnerships between large and small states, between those people and states with very different talent, skills, and resources that join together for peacefulness and profitability. The articles put forth such a partnership with a presiding administrative president. This worked well for the vast majority of Americans who were extremely busy at the time. They were working hard building farms, homes, families, and industries and learning how to be free. They were learning how not to be European peasants and serfs, and yes, how not to be noble.

But some Americans existed who, like modern neoconservatives, had a bit too much time on their hands, perhaps too much theoretical education, and not enough humility. These Americans were beholden to grander, nobler ideas of government. They only needed a bit more

governmental power to see their ideas implemented. These are the Federalists. We can view the Federalists as reactionary, those who seek to restore conditions to those of a previous era. They wanted the late 18th century America to marshal her vast resources and potential under the guidance of a much stronger central state. These reactionaries in many ways wanted America to emulate the busy, central decision-making bodies that ran the empires of Europe.

In this round the Federalists won. The Articles were abandoned and we got a Constitution. The Antifederalists barely saved the Republic with a slim and ultimately weak set of restraints on central government power. We called it a Republic, but like the transmogrified central state to which we would all later pledge allegiance, it did not exist for free enterprise, human partnership, and individual liberty. Most Americans are taught that the Articles of Confederation failed specifically on issues of federal revenue shortfalls, currency controls, and interstate trade. Our ancestors were told that a strong federal government would solve all these problems. Who would question that today? Well let's see. The federal revenue demands are fully and righteously met each year with excess monies bountifully returned to the people. We certainly have no domestic or internal concerns with our currency, a lovely paper dollar that, to paraphrase Humpty Dumpty in Lewis Carroll's 1871 *Through the Looking Glass*, is worth exactly what the U.S. Government bureaucrats say it is worth. And lastly, interstate trade is so much better off as a result of a strong federal government. Everyone knows that, right?

Well, the Cato Institute did a study back in 1987 examining the pervasive administrative restrictions regulating all aspects of commodities and services exchanged between American states. These administrative barriers are considered rent-seeking behaviors. And these behaviors have steadily proliferated over the past 200 years. Furthermore, adjudicating interstate trade restrictions has been the primary focus of the Supreme Court throughout its existence. This internal trade protectionism costs a lot of money, matching dollar for dollar the cost of trade protectionism at the national level. The authors of Cato's 1987 study concluded that these costs are exactly what the Commerce Clause of the Constitution was designed to prevent. Twenty years ago Cato called for this aspect of the Constitution to be repaired. Naturally it was not. Today with the rise of the Internet as a new marketplace, states are even more interested in manipulating and restricting interstate trade, not less.

To answer the first question, we did have a radically fresh Republic under the Articles. But with the Constitution we received a new road map, one that in the mind of Jefferson and others would not stand beyond a generation or so. With the discard of the Articles and the independent libertarian thinking that was their underpinning, this country would be placed on a path to a place noted for its lack of civic duty, virtue, and social cohesion, a place where politicians balance their cravenness with arrogance and are wholly contemptuous of the rule of law. In other words, it would bring us to Washington, D.C. today.

The second question is about the possibility of restoring the American Republic. Just as the Federalists argued in the 1780s, many today argue that it would be impossible and inadvisable to recreate or rejuvenate a confederation form of government, that original style of American self-government. But would it really be folly to have a country of our size and wealth embody real freedom? Would it be folly to establish a strictly legitimate and strictly limited federal state? Would it really be folly to restore the style of justice that existed before the establishment of the Supreme Court? It is possible that a loose confederacy of variously governed states may actually be the very best match in the 21st century with our instantaneous global communication and our extensive and productive communities enhanced and supplemented by extensive and rich virtual networks.

Even as libertarians and others rightfully rue the Leviathan, we live in a world where in real terms we are today better equipped and more capable of decentralized self-government than at any previous time in human history. Today in the United States unlimited information is instantly available to old and young. To the formally educated and the illiterate, to the fact finder and the politician, the entrepreneur, the scientist, the worker, and the business mogul, this wonderful 21st century may be exactly what the Antifederalists envisioned. I'm often reminded of the famous quote from the 1993 movie remake of *The Last of the Mohicans*. A Loyalist commander asked "and who empowered these colonials to pass judgment on England's policy and to come and go without so much as a by your leave?" Cora Monro answered "They do not live their lives by your lead, they hack it out of the wilderness with their own two hands, bearing their children along the way."

Mostly due to modern technology we have today outstanding decentralization, mobility, unleashed human creativity, and if we need it, anonymity. We have the wilderness. We have or can get what we need to live our lives and control our destiny. We can hack out our own lives. We may be taught to live our lives at the direction and by the permission of government, but in fact we don't have to. The business world has streamlined. Businesses have energetically embraced continuous learning, instant information, and constant competition. They have decentralized as they have focused simultaneously on both the individual worker and individual customer. But our government presumes no competition, ignores or denies the availability of instant and rich information and the truth behind it. Our government resists continuous learning and resents such learning by its subjects. The American Government, for all its reinvention and customer service mantras, remains antiquated, slow, third rate in everything it does. This is true even where it spends most of its time and resources. Iraq and Afghanistan stand as bloody testaments to this abject mediocrity.

In contrast to the world of business and invention, the U.S. Government is becoming more intensely stupid, more remarkably incompetent, and more of a problem for all who suffer it. So then is it possible to restore the Republic, to go back to a former model, or perhaps to create a new

model of an American Republic? Yes it is. Governments are made of people and people ultimately shape or abandon their government. I don't know what form a restored Republic would take. How small could Washington, D.C. get and what would it take to shrink it down? When the small-government Republicans to whom Reagan gave voice and imagination, although little else, when they got to Congress, they found that instead of shrinking government all they could do was make it even more massive. We now recognize that that's all they truly wanted to do.

Bob Higgs has written extensively on the process by which this occurred. The nature of the state is to grow, to cultivate events and activities that ensure its continued growth, and to grow even more, even as it strangles and starves its erstwhile host. And yet as Lew Rockwell has written most eloquently, the miracle of freedom is that even as our own government has grown beyond all expectations, the level of free enterprise and productivity, the inventiveness and exuberance of mankind, has outpaced that government growth by leaps and bounds. Thus I believe America was once a republic, can be again, albeit in various forms.

How might we get there? First of all I don't exactly know. But here are several ways to consider. One way would be to do as the Federalists did 230 years ago. They believed that the Confederation had failed. They convened, ostensibly to restore the Confederation and make it better. Then by dark of night these leaders threw away the Articles and started fresh with a new document, a more executive presidency, a different congress and the Supreme Court. Absent the mild restraint offered by the first ten amendments, these leaders had created a nascent European kingdom, complete with an adoring court and agreeable jesters. I think it is clearer and clearer each decade and each day that the Constitution has failed to give us a Republic. Or as Ben Franklin suggested, maybe it did, but we failed to keep it.

So really the Constitution as a document has failed to deliver a government that embodies civic duty, virtues, social cohesion, and where there is a high devotion, fidelity, and regard for rule of law. The idea of an organized revolutionary change formulated through meetings of wealthy, powerful men, a new constitutional convention, perhaps may at first glance seem somewhat absurd; yet when you think about it, this is exactly how our government operates every day of the week in every administration. We speak of the neoconservative hijack, we bemoan the long-term direction of our national and international policies put forth by the so-called establishment. In fact, from the beginning the making of national policy has been done and is always done through secretive conventions of wealthy elitist and well-placed men.

This is also how our nation decides to go to war. As George Tenet's new memoirs and his recent interviews confirm, a decision to invade and occupy Iraq was made in secret and unaccountably, by powerful people who are themselves unaccountable to either government agencies, the law, the facts, or the people of the United States. And as George W. Bush himself noted a few years ago, and I quote, "maybe somebody needs to explain to me why they say something, but I don't feel like I owe anybody an explanation." Miraculously George captured the

failure of the Republic in one easy-to-understand sentence. Could a new kind of constitutional convention for a new Republic be organized by freedom lovers or classical liberals or libertarians? Just as the Federalists locked the doors and changed the agenda, so might we. Ah to have the power to do just that and to save the world.

But we don't have that power, nor should we want it. If we were to act and observe that kind of centralized power is never what it seems. Another way to restore the Republic is more painful and more cruel, and not just to government bureaucrats and the subsidy-dependent population. This way requires nothing more of us than to simply stand aside and watch as the American experiment collapses, to do nothing as the Republic turns to democracy and then to tyranny. If we survive that last horrific phase with sanity and health intact, we can promote ideas in republican forums of self-government for whatever remains. We could find ourselves in a new Athens, meeting with our neighbors to decide everything. Or we could find ourselves on a new creek, obeying natural law and honoring moderation in all things, or perhaps in a militaristic oligarchy called New Sparta. Or we could find ourselves slaves and helots without a hope in the world.

A front-page headline a few weeks ago read, Americans feeling low, burdened by an inability to live as we desire, to produce and to benefit from that production as we want and beaten down by taxes, regulation, and inflation. Many Americans already feel like slaves and helots in a tyranny beyond their control. But I think we are not helots and slaves, not yet. And that American Government that seems so overwhelming and tyrannical, so powerful, is actually as weak here at home as it is in Iraq and Afghanistan. There is another way we can restore the Republic. We don't have to wait. We don't have to organize or enter into armed revolution. We don't even have to formally design a plan of attack. It won't be easy. But on the other hand it won't be that difficult. We are doing it now.

I want to share something that jumped out at me again from a recent newspaper article. An 86-year-old Belgian school teacher was recognized by Israel for saving 300 children from the Nazis. In 1942 Andrée Guelen Herscovici witnessed a Gestapo raid on her school. She then joined an underground rescue organization and for more than two years she quietly worked with other like-minded people to save these Jewish children from an evil state that would've seen their lives destroyed. During the ceremony she said, and I quote, "What I did was merely my duty. Disobeying the laws of the time was just the normal thing to do."

This would be the first step in restoring a Republic which is, after all, simply government by the people. We are those people. Our government's authority is fundamentally constrained by us. It is constrained by how we choose to submit to its orders, by how completely we embrace its narrative and by how easily we are convinced of its often perverted logic. America has had a long and vibrant history of ignoring government mandates in favor of justice and harmony and righteousness. I think this is in part due to our Christian heritage, where one humbly renders unto

Caesar, his, but unto God, hers. I was just checking to see if you were listening and you were. You were. Very good. Very good.

Seriously, the ideas that men and women can choose their path, and that goodness and mercy are not owned or even understood by the state, are powerful foundations of republicanism. The American immigration debate provides a way to think about the current generation of Andrée Herscovici. In some border states, churches are creating a kind of underground railroad for mothers and fathers about to be separated from their U.S.-born children due to our government's current interests in being seen as tough on illegal immigration. At the same time and in the same places we have the Minutemen, who voluntarily patrol private and public lands along the Southern border, raising awareness of a law that the U.S. Government has made but for whatever reason refuses to enforce.

The Minutemen and the safe haven churches disagree on each other's mission. But because they represent people acting without government mandate, they're both held in equally high contempt by the U.S. Government. What does this have to do with a restored Republic? Here we have simple, principled people who recognize their government is wrong or unwise on this issue or that. Then simply, often secretly, they take positive action to do the right thing. Usually they don't act alone and they don't have to. That's the funny thing about righteous ideas. They have a vibrancy and a shine we don't find in government legislation or leadership. We can't all run underground railroads or guard the borders in such a direct and immediate way, but more of us can speak out. And I don't mean in front of large groups or at rallies, not that there's anything wrong with that. We can speak out in ways that matter in our own lives and livelihood.

And when we have extremely bad federal policies, we see people in every generation doing just that. The Pentagon Papers were released in early 1971 by Daniel Ellsberg, incidentally with the help of a friend, Tony Russo. These 7,000 pages of incriminating government information, given to a media willing, at that time, to do its job, were instrumental in eventually ending the American part of the carnage in Vietnam. Ellsberg's life was made a living hell, his professional reputation ruined, and he and Tony were charged with espionage, theft, and conspiracy. Think about the more current example of the Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo whistleblowers. Because of their courage, the whole country knows what we did, and are still doing, in our international prison camps.

Two innocent and uncharged people: Former Army Staff Sergeant Samuel Provance was instrumental in exposing the torture that was going on in Abu Ghraib. As a result of his efforts, he writes, "the Army then demoted me, suspended my top secret clearance, and threatened me with ten years in a military prison if I asked for a court martial. I was even given a gag order." Former General Janis Karpinski experienced much the same treatment. So said Army Reserve Specialist Joe Darby and Marine Staff Sergeant Jim Massey: Telling the truth about government abuses and illegalities saves lives, but it can be a real career killer.

Think about Navy Lieutenant Commander Matthew Diaz, a modern echo of Daniel Ellsberg. His truth telling was on a topic that three years into the Iraq war, the so-called War on Terror, the media was finally ready to use. Commander Diaz, a lawyer posted for 6 months in Guantanamo, Cuba, spent a few minutes at his government computer on a Sunday night in January 2005. He'd printed off a list of 550 detainees, including their nationalities and other information. He sent this information in the mail to an organization that was at the time unsuccessfully suing the federal government for this information. For releasing the names of uncharged and unrepresented detainees held by the United States Government at Gitmo, Diaz was charged with failing to obey a lawful regulation, conduct unbecoming an officer, and wrongfully transmitting classified information. His court martial began a few weeks ago, and needless to say his career as a military lawyer is over.

In government service telling the truth is a rare luxury. It is never the norm. There is always a price paid by the honorable people who follow their conscience and upbringing. Most government employees follow a don't ask, don't tell policy. For every concern about dishonesty and unconstitutional behavior I had in my final year in the office of the Secretary of Defense in 2002 and 2003, I heard men and women of insightfulness and patriotism voice twice as many such complaints. So where are all these people? They are preserving their careers. And this is done for many reasons. But mainly because they choose to put their lives above the lives of people they don't know and will never meet, and such self-interest is not only understandable, it is fundamental to freedom.

But when the self-interest is exercised within the fraudulent economy of government employees and beneficiaries, it becomes the key to tyranny. Here's how it works. George Tenet has recently told us all that in effect, and I quote, well, my paraphrasing quotes, "I would've liked to prevent the slaughter of innocent people, ours and theirs, but no one would listen to me anyway so what would be the point?" Another rube of tyranny is Congressman Dick Durbin. Durbin recently came clean about 2002 and 2003, and I quote, "The information we had in the intelligence committee was not the same information being given to the American people. I couldn't believe it. I was angry about it. But frankly I couldn't do much about it because in the Intelligence Committee, we're sworn to secrecy. We can't walk outside the door and say the statement made yesterday by the White House is in direct contradiction to classified information that's been given to this Congress."

Well at least he was angry about it. George Tenet and Dick Durbin are typical of literally thousands of people in all parts of the Pentagon, in the State Department, in the Department of Energy, in the mainstream media, in the rest of the U.S. Congress and its extensive staff. Few if any stood up with information in time that could've saved lives and prevented a major war and the destruction of a country. The sad thing is all of these don't ask, don't tell folks actually

thought the only country being destroyed by their inaction was Iraq. Was it a law or regulation that reined them in? Fear of retribution? No other possible way of making a living? I think not.

I've given it some thought, and from my own experience the only thing stopping folks from speaking the truth when it would do some good is a cherished personal belief that they have no right to do so. Like ancient Greek slaves, they're not separate in race or creed, in form or intelligence from their masters or any other citizen. Then as now, the masters encourage submission, and these employees willingly agreed to be enslaved. In retrospect, what possible harm would've been caused by Durbin or Tenet or Colin Powell freely acting on the information they had? Think about it. No harm at all, only good, and they would've had their honor and their legacies intact.

If government bureaucrats and political appointees were only robots obeying rules 1, 2, and 3, we would not have had this illegal war in Iraq. These laws, paraphrased, are first, do no harm through action or inaction; second, obey orders only if they do no harm through action or inaction; and third, protect oneself if possible only if still obeying laws 1 and 2. Perhaps a few simple rules for individual behavior would've been far more useful in restoring the republic than grand governmental models and long detailed constitutions that few understand or care about.

Beyond doing the right thing and speaking the truth early and often with a confident disregard for the immediate consequences, is there anything else we can do to restore the Republic, to contain or destroy the Leviathan? I think there's one more thing we can all do. And this is at once the most difficult and yet also the easiest. We must separate ourselves from this nonrepublican government. If you cannot live your values and do your government job at the same time, leave the job. If you wish to pay fewer taxes, then find a way to pay fewer taxes and keep more of your own earnings. This may be earning less rather than more, living well rather than high on the hog. It means turning away from government services and from the seduction of so-called government benefits of education, welfare, government lottery, even government booze and drugs. If you must interface with government, do so as a master, not a slave, and encourage everyone you know to do the same.

When opportunities to parent come along, when we see opportunities to provide guidance, wisdom, reflection, and assistance to others, we must guide and assist with the underlying goal of restoring the Republic. The Census Bureau will count us again in 2010. It is already complaining that people live in strange household combinations, with many addresses or none, with many phone numbers, or for 15 percent of us, with a cell phone number that they can't find. Even with its record-shattering budget for 2010, the Census Bureau doubts they'll know much more about the public part of the Republic than they know now.

Even as technology allows government to be more intrusive, that allows individuals to become ever more nimble, anonymous, and flexible, at least if we're not willingly cultivating our own slavery, it is possible, and we are increasingly seeing evidence of this phenomenon, even in

Washington. George W. Bush, facing a disastrously failed campaign of occupation in Iraq, asked for a so-called War Czar. Many private phone calls were made in hopes of getting a volunteer front man for America's micromanagement of neocolonialism. Not a soul would sign up to serve the president. A few weeks ago, an active-duty three star general agreed to be tasked, meaning only that he hasn't quit yet.

Many in the Bush-Cheney national security team have become casualties of investigations, criminal trials, personal scandals, and less publicly, their loss of faith in the king. We hear that Cheney himself was recently overruled by a four star admiral on strategies for a hot war with Iran. Bureaucrats and cowards like to say if I quit, some other yes man will rise up to take my place. Now this is true up to a point, but the power of government is inversely proportional to the number of people saying, simply, no thanks. It is happening as we speak. A quiet refusal to take orders, a refusal to serve the government is not just for generals and admirals. In an age of expensive higher education, ROTC scholarships are going unfilled. Recruiters work overtime to bring in fewer and fewer young people. American mothers and fathers love their children, and whether evangelical or agnostic, Republican or Democrat, they are telling their children to wait before signing up for the military, to stop and think before throwing their life into the empty, soul-destroying bloody gristmill of imperialism. They may not use these words, but the sentiments are the same. The sentiments are the same. Like the sheep Americans are often accused of being, they're beginning to understand their children are the targets of a hungry government wolf.

Do I have any more substantial ideas for restoring a Republic beyond doing the right thing? Speaking out against tyranny and living our lives by no one's lead as free men. It is possible that in doing these things we could be charged and imprisoned, as are many of our military truth tellers. We could be vilified and maligned in living our lives as free men. We may risk temporary difficulties from our shaking, tremulous, fearful government. But if we live free we will have a Republic, even if it may seem to be at times a Republic of one. A revolution or a collapse, some cosmic act that rips Washington, D.C. from its moorings and sends it swirling off into the Atlantic, each of these would be exciting no doubt. But to passively wait a month, a year, or a lifetime for what may happen in the larger human organization, is not a productive way to live. We are already restoring the Republic if we live, work, and play as if we had one. We restore the Republic by living free.

Those here today are already doing this. Our example, our existence, in many ways restores the Republic every minute of every day. Earlier I mentioned the Lewis Carroll story *Through the Looking Glass*, referring to words that mean whatever we say they mean. In this context, Humpty Dumpty goes on, the question, he says, is which is to be master, that's all. Let us be outraged when our republican freedoms are infringed upon. Let us be righteously angry when some government entity presumes that we are the slave in the relationship. Let us be that nobility

to whom the king genuflects and of whom he is afraid. If we live free, even as we hack that life out of a political wilderness, we will restore the Republic and usher in the next big thing, a peaceful, honorable, and enviable Republic that we will be proud to call home. Thank you.

Q: Thank you so much Karen. Would you consider being a running mate with Ron Paul?
<Laughter> I do have a question or perhaps a suggestion.

Karen Kwiatkowski: I support Ron Paul. I'll do anything Ron Paul asks me to do. Go ahead, there's your answer.

Q: I was in hopes that you would have a little bit better to say about Ronald Reagan. Surely there are millions in Eastern Europe who are eternally grateful for what he was able to do. And could I suggest a book, or a couple of books, by Peter Schweitzer, who described in great detail what Reagan was able to do and how he did it? Thanks ever so much for being here.

Karen Kwiatkowski: And I appreciate -- I do want to say something about Ronald Reagan. I come from a family of people that adore Ronald Reagan, and I am actually one of those people. I actually, in my dissertation, every chapter heading was a Reagan quote. And I found some really wonderful -- I have huge respect for him, but in terms of delivering small government, this is my -- maybe- maybe not so much.

Q: Was there any intimidation or threats from the Department of Defense in the last few years of your work there?

Karen Kwiatkowski: Since I left the Pentagon, no, and because I pretty much expedited my own, you know, exit, I was luckily -- and this is something, you know, I was ready to retire. I had just -- I had come right on to my retirement date. I moved it up as early as I could and I got out with basically a good deal, which is a lot more than can be said for so many people that are -- have their -- basically their whole lives destroyed. They didn't do anything to me. I was incidentally denied my end of tour medal from the Pentagon and I didn't feel too bad about that.

Q: I wanted to ask you in this present war situation we're in -- of course it's a creation of the neoconservatives. And it seems like the one place they haven't been able to make inroads is into the senior officer corps of the military. If that had happened, I'm afraid we might not be meeting here today. Do you think that assessment is correct, that they haven't been able to do that?

Karen Kwiatkowski: Yeah, I think the neocons have it, and partly because none of them ever wore a uniform in their life, so there's no shared value whatsoever between the senior military and the neoconservatives. However, to suggest that it is the senior military that is somehow holding back these neoconservatives would be wrong. They're not. Admiral Fallon specifically is pushing back because I believe he does not want to see the United States Navy embarrassed by something Cheney will push him into, not because it's an unconstitutional, unwarranted, you know, illegal act that Cheney wants to do with Iran. No, I wouldn't give him too much credit. But it is true that I think there's mutual contempt between neoconservative

ideologues and senior military members. However, we know who bends to whom, and it is the military that bends to the politicians, and those politicians are neoconservatives still at this point.

Q: Two questions: Could you clarify what you mean by wilderness? Where's our wilderness? Number two: I have been distressed by the lack of faith in the power of the vote. I've heard so many people I mean going out and canvassing neighborhoods, looking for -- to sign petitions, of young college graduates who will not sign petitions today and who will not vote. That's their way of protesting.

Karen Kwiatkowski: On the first thing, in the wilderness, I mean, I don't know how many people saw the movie *Last of the Mohicans*, the one with Daniel Day-Lewis. I mean, like, we have that movie and I've seen it like six times. So the wilderness, obviously a physical wilderness, but the wilderness I'm talking about is really a wilderness of ideas. What we are saying here in this room and on this weekend and what the people here write about and give speeches about elsewhere, these are, you know, radical, radical ideas that challenge the status quo, and they are not welcome. As much as we've seen the treatment of Ron Paul, the ideas that he puts forth are frightening, and so we have a wilderness that we live and move in of ideas and we're gonna win this one, okay. But it's gonna be a lot of work and we're gonna feel alone I think, so that's kind of what I was getting at.

Now as far as the voting, you know, I can't help you there. Because I actually -- I do vote, but I consider it a ceremonial vote or a ritualistic vote. I don't believe in the power of voting. I believe in the power of walking. And I think if those young people are living their lives in a way that in some ways devalues government, rejects government, shows some form of contempt for the state, even if they don't understand that that's what they're doing, I'm kind of cool with that.

Q: You were talking about government people blowing the whistle, and I got one on my mind and she would love to blow the whistle, but unfortunately George Bush and John Ashcroft have slapped a gag order on her. I'm speaking about Sibel Edmonds. I'm wondering if you ever met Mrs. Edmonds?

Karen Kwiatkowski: Mm-hm. Yup.

Q: What advice would you give to her to say, you know, Sibel, you're going to take a lot of trash, but, you know, the information you have could be quite informative to the American public?

Karen Kwiatkowski: I don't understand gag orders. I'm the kind of person that all my life they told me I talk too much, and so a gag order -- is that -- what, you're gonna make me stop talking? I don't get that. So I don't understand the legality of the whole gag order thing. However, I can't advise another person 'cause it's their thing. Sibel has a young child who's not even in school yet. I believe her husband works for -- his job I think is vulnerable to being destroyed by these people, so she's obviously -- if she's honoring this gag order, whatever they're threatening her with, whether it's 200 years in jail and I don't know what they're threatening her with, but

whatever it is, she has to make that decision. What we need to do is get lots and lots of people who have lots and lots of gag orders so that some of those crazy people who have nothing to lose and are really, really mad and have some kind of weird attitude, that hey I don't care what the government says, I'm gonna do the right thing -- and Sibel is one of these people. But we need the larger group of people.

I don't understand gag orders. I'm not a lawyer. In fact David could probably explain a gag order process. I don't know how it works. I think that -- I just don't understand it. I think I would have to experience the -- and I say this totally ignorantly since it hasn't happened to me, but I think if they told me I had a gag order, I would just plead I don't understand what you're telling me. Oh, you mean I'm not supposed to say this? And then I would say it and I would say it a hundred thousand times. And just to see what would happen. And maybe I would disappear into some black hole. I don't know. I can't advise other people. I give Sibel huge, huge, huge credit. I mean she has done wonderful, wonderful things for whistleblowers everywhere, and I'm sure that her efforts have brought forth lots of new whistleblowers who, some of which will ignore the gag order. That's stupid. I don't understand why the government -- well, yeah I do -- 'cause I heard Bob Higgs. I know why the government does it. But, you know, I -- it's a sad situation. But she is a -- definitely a valuable person and a person of the moment.

Q: My name is Michael and I want to say that was an excellent speech. I'm concerned with the young people of our country. They're not interested in politics whatsoever. Most young people my age wouldn't understand what you said through this great speech. I would like to ask you for some advisement on how to get them involved and perhaps lead them away from all this hiphop music and drugs and rings on their car. What do you think about that?

Karen Kwiatkowski: Well I teach in a high school now, just -- this is my first year doing this and -- 'cause I have teenage -- I have four children, two of which are still teenagers. And I just love their attitude that is naturally antiauthoritarian. I love it. Now I don't necessarily love it when it's directed towards me and I'm trying to be an authoritarian. I don't like that, but in general young people -- I agree. Poorly educated, yeah, that's a problem. Not understanding the big words, yes, that's a problem. But their attitudes are very precious because their attitudes are very, I think, conducive to living free. Their attitudes are very much me oriented. Well there's something to be said for that. Their attitudes are to question authority. Naturally.

Now we spend many, many millions and probably billions of dollars trying to beat that out of them. We don't want them to question authority in the public schools, but, you know, they do it anyway in spite of our efforts, which to me is a testimony to some of the stuff I'm talking about today. I don't think they need to be involved in politics. I'm kind of leaning towards the idea that they walk away from it. Politics is, you know, if you're really devoted to that, does it not really hide some sort of latent love of power over other people? I don't know. I would not encourage them to do that. I would encourage them to develop their knowledge and develop their attitude

and develop their argumentative ability to actually cultivate an even greater and more sophisticated contempt for authority. And I think that would be a good step. I mean -- in fact I like the young people.

And I'll tell you, if you listen to rap, I mean there's a lot of bad words, yes, we don't want to listen to, but there is a huge amount of disrespect for the status quo. There's a lot of other disrespect that's not good. But there's a disrespect for the status quo. There's a disrespect for rules that make little sense. And that's a good thing. That's a healthy thing. So it's like anything, you know, focus on the good and develop that. And that's how I would, you know, address that. And again, in an individual sense, learn everything you can. The fact that you're here listening to these people, I mean, my God, is worth a college education just this weekend I think.

Q: Thank you Karen. And no I don't understand gag orders either, but I have no doubt that they have one purpose. And that is to protect government wrongdoing from being disclosed to the American people.