

## Introduction

“Overgrown military establishments are, under any form of government, inauspicious to liberty, and are to be regarded as particularly hostile to republican liberty.” George Washington

You are listening to Religion Roundtable, the most controversial show on radio. I'm Sankara Saranam, the author of God Without Religion.

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God Without Religion is a multi-award winning book that the religious hope you never read. Here is this week's reason why:

## 12 My Comments/News

I've received a lot of great feedback about this show, and how important it is for this type of material to be covered with intellectual integrity, but the general gist is that this show is about a lot more than simply centralized religion.

And that's true. It is about the dangers of centralized power, whether in a politician or party, a corporation, religious synods, a media conglomerate, the medical establishment, or even an institution of higher learning that dishes out accreditation.

This show is about revealing all the connections between centralized powers, and how those powers narrow our sense of identity when we distance our power and give it to those institutions.

So I've been asked, why call it Religion Roundtable? A friend of mine suggested that a name for this show might be The Nexus. Has a nice ring to it, and it might even fit.

Because perhaps one of the most dangerous nexus we face today, and needs constant exposure, is the connection between militarism and the US government.

If you look back at the decline of past civilizations, a common sign of decay is the establishment of permanent military borders.

Politicians argue for staying the course in Iraq, and call the opposition cowards, not realizing their very position is a symptom for the decline of a society, and they are the cowards for not fighting big money.

Right now, the United States operates between 700 and 1000 military bases all over the world. The cold war is over, terrorism is not conducted by rogue states, and yet we actively maintain this permanent military frontier. Why?

We have to follow the money. We spend more on our military than all other nations combined. We make weapons and sell them to our allies and even to our enemies. We like to play both sides because there's more money to be made that way.

At this point, the military industry dragon has a life of its own, and it's probably the case that no president can slay it. Of course, this exorbitant spending puts us in serious debt. It means we look for wars of choice. It means candidates who are willing to support wars of aggression are more likely to get campaign contributions. Candidates who don't support a president's private army go begging.

As for nexuses, it means we have a media that sanitizes what happens when those weapons are pointed at human beings. It means our intellectual development as a society is thwarted, lest we use it too much and analyze the long-term consequences of war as a means of resolving conflicts of interest or put a value on human life.

Voltaire once remarked that murder is legal as long as it is accompanied by the blare of trumpets. So this alliance between the government and the military industry means that we glorify murderers as heroes and make war palatable, even tasty.

Now, at about at this point in the discussion the spiritually ill warmonger argues that we live in a dangerous world (never mind that it's made more dangerous by our manufacturing and selling tons of weaponry) and that we spend so much money to defend ourselves.

That is a lie. We spend that much because the people who make money from manufacturing weapons put politicians, and career

decision-makers, in seats of power. We need enemies. We seek hegemony. We have created economic opportunity out of war.

Funding a campaign is a business investment, and that is the danger when capitalism, which concentrates wealth in the hands of the few, clashes with a republic: Capitalism distances the power of the electorate from the legislature by bought politicians following the will of the rich instead of the will of the people.

Of course, the will of the people is subverted by a sibling corporate entity: the media. Not that the will of the people is worrying anyone with real power. Not only can it be subverted, but the determination of that will, as expressed in voting, is routinely twisted.

As the old saying goes, if voting made any difference, they wouldn't let us do it.

No matter who wins elections, the centralized powers win because they are the very system in place.

It's the same old story, just with new names for the players. Before it was kings and emperors and noble blood lines, which are all malarkey. The first king was just a bandit who started threatening people with violence unless they paid him for his protection. And protection from what? Himself and other jerks with horses and knives.

Today, that payoff is called taxes. And our taxes are going more and more to the blacksmiths who forge the swords for the king's army, and it goes to perhaps the biggest up down socialist organization in this country: The US Armed Forces. There's a reason why the Founding Fathers did not want standing armies: They are a bane to republics.

But the Founding Fathers made a fatal assumption when they drafted the Constitution. They assumed that everyone would actually prefer a republic to fascism, or to the tyranny of kings. Sure, no one wants a king. Instead, every fat cat wants to be a king. This country did not survive the fat cats.

And yet here we are today supposed to support our troops.

Of course, that line and thousands like it is for the intellectually dumbed down. Do I support our troops? I can't answer the question because it contains a non sequitur.

The question begs a yes or a no. In doing so, it implies that if I am against wars of aggression, against outlandish weapons purchases, I must not care if largely poor youth, who were born in my neck of the world, are injured or die while using those weapons at the behest of politicians who are in the pocket of money-hungry corporate leaders.

It also implies that if I do not want the youth of the Americas to be hurt or murdered, I must then be in support of them murdering people born in another neck of the world.

So it is a simplistic question that never fails to hook simpletons. It is not even a question: It is itself propaganda. It is yet another lie to support the military industrial complex and its seeming determination to financially ruin this country.

Martin Luther King said that the means by which we live have outdistanced the ends for which we live. We have guided missiles and misguided men.

The means of an economic elite are manufacturing weapons and making war. These are some of the misguided men who run the world. They suffer from spiritual sickness. The range of their sense of self is limited, but the range of their weaponry is nearly unlimited.

Their spiritual illness infests a large portion of the human race with the same narrow sense of identity, and they have allies – both willing and oblivious ones – in religious and spiritual circles.

But promise lies in that the power still rests in the hands of the people, the laborers – the people who actually create wealth.

Coming up, we're going to have on Swami Beyondananda, who is going to show us how we can laugh at our current political plight.

## 12 Minutes Guest/Skit/Callers/E-mails

(707) 525-0711 Steve Bhaerman

“We must guard against the acquisition of unwarranted influence by the military-industrial complex. The potential for the disastrous rise of misplaced power exists and will persist.” Dwight D. Eisenhower

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Joining us now is author and political humorist Swami Beyondananda. You can visit him at [www.wakeuplaughing.com](http://www.wakeuplaughing.com) where you can read his 2006 State of the Universe Address. The Swami believes that this country needs an up-wising.

Swamiji, welcome to the show.

So what's the state of the universe these days?

People blame Bush for a lot, ignoring the historical evidence that Bush is just the latest, though maybe the most extreme, expression of American imperialism, and they also ignore that we always get the leaders we deserve. I think Bush reflects us perfectly.

You say something similar. You wrote: “We need a new precedent because if we only do things the way we've always done them, we will only get what we've always gotten. Choose a new precedent, and a new President will follow.”

I take it you're saying the outer conditions reflect the inner self. So what is the new precedent?

When you look at our state of things, the odds don't seem to be in our favor, though you feel confident that they are.

What gives you that confidence?

I want to go into more detail about the new precedent you have in mind. On the Counterpunch web site, a succinct list of what Bush has done appears. But I read that list and I consider it all the things we have done. Under Bush, we

--attacked and took over 2 countries.

--spent the U.S. surplus and bankrupted the US Treasury.

--shattered the record for the biggest annual deficit in history.

--set an economic record for the most personal bankruptcies filed in any 12 month period.

--set the record for most campaign fund raising trips by any president in US history.

--in his first two years in office over 2 million Americans lost their jobs.

--set the all-time record for most real estate foreclosures in a 12-month period.

--appointed more convicted criminals to administration positions than any president in US history.

--set the record for the fewest press conferences of any president, since the advent of TV.

--signed more laws and executive orders amending the Constitution than any other US president in history.

--dissolved more international treaties than any president in US history.

--made his presidency the most secretive and unaccountable of any in US history.

--appointed the richest cabinet of any administration in US history.

- have all 50 states of the Union simultaneously struggle against bankruptcy.
- attacked AND military occupied of a sovereign nation against the will of the United Nations and the vast majority of the international community.
- compelled the United Nations remove the US from the Human Rights Commission.
- compelled the United Nations to remove the US from the Elections Monitoring Board.
- removed more checks and balances, and have the least amount of congressional oversight than any presidential administration in US history.
- rendered the entire United Nations irrelevant and withdrew from the World Court of Law.
- refused to allow inspectors access to US prisoners of war and no longer abides by the Geneva Conventions.
- the first president in US history to refuse United Nations election inspectors access during the 2002 US elections.
- the all-time US (and world) record holder for most corporate campaign donations.
- set the all-time record for the number of administration appointees who violated US law by not selling their huge investments in corporations bidding for gov't contracts.
- removed more freedoms and civil liberties for Americans than any other president in US history.
- entered office with the strongest economy in US history and in less than two years turned every single economic category heading straight down.

Now again, to me we have to take collective responsibility for allowing this guy to be in power. I talked in the first segment about how the rich screw the poor in this country, but collectively all Americans screw the poor in other countries. So with all the things that we are doing, how on earth do we get a new precedent?

We've got a corrupt plutocracy in power, fascism or corporatism (same difference), cronyism, a military industry out of control, etc. These are serious obstacles to the progress of the human race.

But you say that seriousness is one of the major causes of truth decay on the planet.

No one has to sell me on the therapeutic benefits of laughter. But tell us why this is a time for laughter as part of active citizenry, and how it works to change our direction and expand our sense of self, fix our priorities, or as you put it, cure erectile dysfunction?

"When the weapons of mass destruction thing turned out to be not true, I expected the American people to rise up," Shore tells the jury. "Ha! They didn't.

"Then, when the Abu Ghraib torture thing surfaced and it was revealed that our government participated in rendition, a practice where we kidnap people and turn them over to regimes who specialize in torture, I was sure then the American people would be heard from. We stood mute.

"Then came the news that we jailed thousands of so-called terrorist suspects, locked them up without the right to a trial or even the right to confront their accusers. Certainly, we would never stand for that. We did.

"And now, it's been discovered the Executive Branch has been conducting massive, illegal, domestic surveillance on its own citizens. You and me. And I at least consoled myself that finally, finally the American people will have had enough. Evidently, we haven't.

"In fact, if the people of this country have spoken, the message is 'we're okay with it all.' Torture, warrantless search and seizure, illegal

wiretappings, prison without a fair trial – or any trial, war on false pretenses.

“We, as a citizenry, are apparently not offended. There are no demonstrations on college campuses. In fact, there’s no clear indication that young people seem to notice.

“Well, Melissa Hughes noticed. Now, you might think, instead of withholding her taxes, she could have protested the old-fashioned way. Made a placard and demonstrated at a Presidential or Vice-Presidential appearance, but we’ve lost the right to that as well.

“The Secret Service can now declare free-speech zones to contain, control and, in effect, criminalize protest. Stop for a second and try to fathom that. At a presidential rally, parade or appearance, if you have on a supportive T-shirt, you can be there. If you are wearing or carrying something in protest, you can be removed.

“This, in the United States of America. This in the United States of America. Is Melissa Hughes the only one embarrassed?”

### 12 Minutes Guest/Skit/Callers/E-mails

“The professional military mind is by necessity an inferior and unimaginative mind; no man of high intellectual quality would willingly imprison his gifts in such a calling.” HG Wells

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You have a DVD out called Tickling the Body Politic. You consider it “An effective treatment for Irony Deficiency, Truth Decay and the lingering symptoms of Mad Cowboy Disease!”

How would you describe this treatment?

You write about the Not See menace in this country, the people who just will not see what is going on, and its parallel with the Nazis. What is it and how do we overcome it?

You observe somewhere that millions of Americans are waking up to what this administration and past administrations have done in the name of America. But some political analysts argue that while we are indeed awakening, we're only awakening just as the guillotine is about to chop our heads off. You believe that we are awakening perhaps on the way to the cutting block. What gives you that confidence?

We are all seeing this struggle, which you frame as the rule of gold versus the Golden Rule.

A listener out there wants to know what part she or he can concretely play in this comedy of errors we are all in. What would you suggest?

Bush cuts \$71 million (44% reduction) from the funds for the New Orleans branch of the Corps of Engineers. Because of the cuts, "Major hurricane and flood protection projects will not be awarded to local engineering firms. ... and a study to determine ways to protect the region from a Category 5 hurricane was shelved."

But before the 2004 election Bush awarded \$31 million disaster relief to Florida, a swing state, which didn't even experience hurricane damage.

Meanwhile there was that \$500M Alaskan bridge to no where debated in the congress that perhaps a few dozen people needed.

So what's the message you got from Katrina?

I have a friend who refuses to be at all active in trying to better our society. He believes that, in fact, we should help make sure that those in power cross the line even more because then we start shooting them all the sooner. Even respected authors like Chalmers Johnson believe that the end of the USA is coming and that perhaps only a military coup might save us, though he doesn't bet on it.

But you say that we need a spiritual evolution rather than a physical revolution. Maybe we need both?

12 Minutes Guest/Skit/Callers/E-mails

“Military intelligence – a contradiction in terms.” Oswald Villard

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By all accounts worthy of a functioning human brain, George Bush, who is a reflection of us to some degree, is guilty of war crimes.

In 1945, Justice Jackson of Nuremberg fame wrote: “If we can cultivate in the world the idea that aggressive war-making is the way to the prisoner's dock rather than the way to honors, we will have accomplished something toward making the peace more secure.”

What do you say? Should we just forgive Bush, and by extension ourselves, or vote for congressmen who vow to go from impeachment right to criminal proceedings?

While I feel that we get the leaders we deserve, at the same time, we can distinguish between the Bush rogue regime and millions of Americans who all but violently oppose it.

Jackson again: “These [Nazi] defendants were men of a station and rank which does not soil its own hands with blood. They were men who knew how to use lesser folk as tools. We want to reach the planners and designers, the inciters and leaders without whose evil architecture the world would not have been for so long scourged with the violence and lawlessness, and wracked with the agonies and convulsions, of this terrible war. ...We have here the surviving top politicians, militarists, financiers, diplomats, administrators, and propagandists, of the Nazi movement. Who was responsible for these crimes if they were not?”

Now, the war on terror is not yet World War II, but according to the Nuremberg Charter, a war of aggression doesn't become so only after several million deaths.

So, isn't it meaningless to punish the soldiers responsible for murdering a handful of civilians when you've got a whole sea of blood without any justice? You know the old saying: "The more people one kills, the less likely one is to be punished."

Italian dictator Benito Mussolini called fascism an "illiberal and anti-liberal" rule in which the corporation is king and religion is a tool of the all-powerful state. He equated corporatism with fascism.

We have a highly secretive presidency, there's talk of prosecuting journalists for exposing government wrongdoing, behind the façade of national security of course, NSA wiretapping, and the president subtly and overtly threatening congresspersons who might think to hold him accountable for his crimes.

Do we live in a fascist state?

On the one side we have Patrick Henry's stirring Revolutionary War cry: "give me liberty or give me death," and on the other Sen. Pat Roberts's: "You have no civil liberties if you are dead."

Now obviously Roberts is what you would call a fossilized fool. But we seem to be following his mantra. Are we betraying the legacy of America by not overthrowing the corporatocracy?

Closing

Thank Swami Beyondananda

Thank callers

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