

The Pamphlet for the Power of Awareness: Overcoming Surveillance Capitalism Presentation

By: Scott Larson

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Welcome and thank you for showing up for this event!

Hint

- You can use the backside of the pamphlet to write down questions
- The Presentation should take around an hour to complete
- There will be about 40 minutes at the end of the presentation for questions
- The presentation slides and the pamphlet will be available on my website after the presentation. Use the QR code at the bottom of the presentation to use the form get on my mailing for the links to the materials and notifications about future events. I'll be hosting a zoom presentation of this material in the near future so if you are interested in attending again online or know people that might be interested send them a link to the form.

Outline

[Introduction](#)

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[My Story](#)

[Philosophy of Technology](#)

[Why am I doing this?](#)

[What I don't like about modern technologies](#)

What is Surveillance Capitalism?

Closing Thoughts (Awareness and Empowerment)

Conclusion

Reflections and Questions

Synopsis

I am a computer professional who has been serving Santa Rosa and the surrounding areas since 2007. I have skills in investigative hardware/software problem-solving and in writing about the benefits and harms of technology.

2026 is going to be a difficult time. Political and social divisiveness is at an all-time high. In this presentation, I explore the pervasiveness of certain consumer products, focusing on the ethical and political ramifications of these products being designed and deployed as a benefit while, at the same time, secretly being used to enrich capitalists and by extension, its partners at the expense of society.

To help us through this year and to improve our democracy, I advocate for improving education in social and political awareness by drawing on aspects of consciousness that promote self-determination, encouraging people to make informed choices in difficult situations rather than accepting what is.

Summary

This presentation is a primer on the adverse effects of Surveillance Capitalism.

Surveillance Capitalism is a system or a set of technologies that aim to glean information from society to profit from individual behavior. Having these systems in place reduces freedom in our society and is a hallmark of Authoritarianism.

Without awareness and action, all kinds of law-abiding behaviors, like protests, are criminalized by governments and corporations that work together to deploy surveillance technologies in an effort to streamline commerce, or, in worst-case scenarios, steal resources from the public. When technology becomes open to surveillance activities, it becomes easier for criminal actors, in and outside the country, to target the vulnerable, like the elderly and children. Let's work together to make our societies safer by understanding these threats.

Behavioral Awareness

Ultimately, these harms are brought about by our cultural pathologies. Here are some psychological profiles that I think keep these problem going (Please note that many of these are cultural problems that we need to, but are not easy to, resolve by changing our behavior, little by little, on an individual level and stop waiting for others to save us):

- **Externalizing Responsibility:**
 - Blaming other people and institutions for the cause of the problem and not taking responsibility for our part in creating, or allowing the problem to exist (I.E: choosing to ignore the problem by making excuses that its too hard, or it's too time consuming to resolve)
 - Marginalizing people you don't agree with, or that have a different viewpoint/political stance than you by engaging in, or Indulging in weapons of mass distraction: Attacking people that are using politically incorrect wording, or attacking points of view you don't like. There is a time and place for everything, Not every situation is an excuse to further your political viewpoint and in many cases, this behavior ends up causing divisions and sidelining resolutions
- **Social Norms Acquiescence:** Going along with cultural norms that put you in a divisive position of being right and others being wrong with the aim of dominating a person or situation. Psychologically we are wired to

move towards ego stability. When situations present themselves that threaten this stability, we tend to attack the situation or messenger

- **Sentimental Behavior Indulgence** : Feeding off of outrage emotionally as a way to feel like something is being done while outwardly doing nothing to decrease the level of harm. Disregarding external circumstances by refusing to realize that the world is shaped by individual action. Self-righteousness can inadvertently generate cruelty in our society on a large scale. The circumstances around these behaviors might look different for everyone. The important point to be aware of is that difference is an asset for strong societies. We all have varying kinds of skills because of our differences. Let's all work together even if we disagree on certain points.
- **Responding to National or Regional calls for safety**: By demanding safety, or going along with calls to increase safety from the chaos of the world we make the world more susceptible to authoritarians and therefore more dangerous. Avoid the psychological pull to feel safe during dangerous times. Studies show that the perception of feeling safe promotes a false sense of security and increases a willingness to obey in advance. Calls to support initiatives, or bills to increase security at the expense of freedom falls under this category, makes us less safe and takes individual agency away from people and gives it to authoritarian leaders and institutions that may have agendas that run contrary to our own.

See the "Source Material" section below for sources I draw from on these topics to craft these suggestions.

Resources (To Learn More)

[Understanding the Neuroscience, epistemology, and the metaphysics of the choices we make](#)

Learn how our reliance on excessive left brain thinking is negatively shaping our future and how to deploy more right brain thinking

- **The Matter With Things: Our Brains, Our Delusions, and the Unmaking of the World** (<https://www.amazon.com/Matter-Things-Brains-Delusions-Unmaking/dp/1914568060>)
- **Iain McGilchrist on Civilization and the Divided Mind Interview** (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R3jxINCMdRY>)

Philosophy of emerging technologies

- **Ethics of Emerging Technologies: Scientific Facts and Moral Challenges** (<https://www.amazon.com/Ethics-Emerging-Technologies-Scientific-Challenges/dp/0471692123>)

Surveillance Capitalism

- **High tech is watching you** (<https://news.harvard.edu/gazette/story/2019/03/harvard-professor-says-surveillance-capitalism-is-undermining-democracy/>) | Business School professor emerita says surveillance capitalism undermines autonomy – and democracy
- **Shoshana Zuboff on surveillance capitalism** (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hIXhnWUmMvw>)
- **Algorithms rule us all** (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NFF_wj5jmiQ)
- **The politics of platform power in surveillance capitalism: A comparative case study of ride-hailing platforms in China and the United States** (<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/20594364211046769>)

Courses

- **Freedom Training** (<https://freedomtrainers.net/trainings/>) Learn how to refuse to cooperate with official policies and actions nonviolently. Freedom Training helps us learn how to take away our acquiescence at a massive scale, where undemocratic actors can be stopped in their tracks.

Organizations you can Support

- **Fight for the Future** (<https://www.fightforthefuture.org/>) | We harness the power of the Internet to channel outrage into action, defending our most basic rights in the digital age.
- **Freedom House** (<https://freedomhouse.org/>) | Freedom House is the oldest American organization devoted to the support and defense of democracy around the world. It was formally established in New York in 1941 to promote American involvement in World War II and the fight against fascism
- **Hanna Arendt Center** (<https://hac.bard.edu/>) | The Mission of the Hannah Arendt Center at Bard College is to create and nurture an institutional space for bold, risky and provocative thinking about our political world in the spirit of Hannah Arendt.
- **American Promise** (<https://americanpromise.net/>) | The "For Our Freedom" amendment is a proposed addition to the U.S. Constitution designed to regulate political spending, ensuring that election expenditures can be limited to protect free speech, fair elections, and political participation. It aims to empower states to regulate campaign financing, **countering the effects of decisions like Citizens United**

Possible solutions

This technology, and how it's being used to surveil society and to take away choice is being accelerated by our current political and cultural climate. This started happen with the advent of the internet and has sharply increased in pace with AI.

The The Hannah Arendt Center for Politics and Humanities released an interesting [article](https://medium.com/amor-mundi/expropriation-notes-on-the-revolution-to-come-1e4de79a693b) (<https://medium.com/amor-mundi/expropriation-notes-on-the-revolution-to-come-1e4de79a693b>) on the problem recently that I think has the potential to improve our situation.

The problem is that we have lost our ability to speak and be heard and if we want those conditions to return, we need to form councils grounded in the

experience of people acting together.

Supporting alternative businesses & Unsubscribing from bad actors

- **Cut Off the Spigot** (<https://cutoffthespigot.com>) | A search engine that looks category by category to find alternatives to badly behaving companies, big corporations, and private equity firms.
- **Resist and Unsubscribe** (<https://www.resistandunsubscribe.com/>) | Americans are feeling powerless to thwart the Trump administration's assault on our nation's values. Praised by tech CEOs, surrounded by sycophants, and** enriched by his return to the White House, the president's actions march on unchecked. Americans, however, have a powerful weapon that has been hiding in plain sight.

Specific reference sources on how these technologies are used

(List abuse sources for: License Plate readers, facial recognition and search/ai)

- **Face Off: Law Enforcement Use of Face Recognition Technology** (<https://www.eff.org/wp/law-enforcement-use-face-recognition>) | The adoption of face recognition technologies is occurring without meaningful oversight and being used
- **Facebook–Cambridge Analytica data scandal** (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Facebook%E2%80%93Cambridge_Analytica_data_scandal) | How data collection was used to influence the 2016 presidential elections

Source Material

Understanding how Surveillance Capitalism Works

- **The age of Surveillance Capitalism** (<https://www.amazon.com/Age-Surveillance-Capitalism-Future-Frontier/dp/1610395697>), Shoshana Zuboff

Behavioral Awareness

- **Responding to National or Regional calls for safety** | I use this study (<https://news.clemson.edu/the-safer-you-feel-the-less-safely-you-might-behave/>) to show that reduce harm can actually promote a false sense of security and increase risky behavior.

Presentation Links

- **"The Secret Meeting that Changed Rap Music and Destroyed a Generation"** (<https://www.hiphopisread.com/2012/04/secret-meeting-that-changed-rap-music.html>)

Song Against War and Corruption

- For What It's Worth - Buffalo Springfield
- Imagine - John Lennon
- Eminence Front - The Who

Contact Information

I am a Local Computer Technician who has an interest in empowering people with technologies that enable autonomy.

You can find out more about me on my website <https://scottRlarson.com>.

You can email me at inquiries@scottRlarson.com

If you are interested in a philosophical take on this subject, check out my **"Andor In Our Time"** (<https://www.scottrlarson.com/tags/andorinourtime/>) video essays on how the Andor TV series from Disney has lessons to teach us about getting more involved in civics.

If you want to learn more about my journey from Windows to Linux, or these technologies you can visit my website and check out my articles on the subject. (scottRlarson.com)

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**News Letter Sign-up
QR CODE**

