

“If You’re Going to Kill Me Look Me in the Eye” : *Uncivil Liberties* Humanizes the Struggle for Freedom

By Kevin Barrett, <http://www.truthjihad.com>

9/11 epitomized the ongoing breakdown of human relationships in post-industrial civilization—especially the breakdown in trust between government and governed.

Polls taken between 2004 and 2007 show that [half of New Yorkers](#), and [36% of US residents overall](#), think their own leaders actively or passively conspired to murder thousands of their fellow citizens on September 11th, 2001—while only [16% of Americans think the government is telling the truth about 9/11](#). A very recent (2007) poll shows that nearly two-thirds of Americans [“think it is possible that some federal officials had specific warnings of the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks on New York and Washington, but chose to ignore those warnings.”](#)

While 9/11 brought public distrust of government to a near-critical mass, it also highlighted the government’s contemptuous mistrust of its own citizens. Leaving aside the question of governmental complicity in 9/11, which would have been motivated by leaders’ fears that the public could not be trusted to support necessary wars “absent some catastrophic and galvanizing event such as a New Pearl Harbor,”^[i] the continuing barrage of government lies post-9/11, along with the controlled demolition of civil liberties and the inauguration of a surveillance state, clearly shows that the US government no longer trusts its own people.

The growing breach of trust between government and governed forms the backdrop of the amazing 2007 film [Uncivil Liberties](#). I call it amazing because this film has seemingly come out of nowhere, on a near-zero budget, to become, as far as I know, the only feature film besides [V for Vendetta](#) that does justice to our post-9/11 predicament.

Like *V for Vendetta*, *Uncivil Liberties* shows us freedom-loving antigovernment rebels waging war on the post-9/11 fascist regime. But the comparison is ironic, because in many ways *Uncivil Liberties* is the anti-*V for Vendetta*. Where *V* offered high-budget fast-paced fantasy, *Uncivil Liberties* uses low-budget leisurely-paced deadpan realism. While *V* is really about one character, Evie, with everyone else, whether superhero, villain or bystander, playing a foil of one kind or another, *Uncivil Liberties* examines the complex web of relationships between several fully-humanized characters. And whereas *V* can be misread as advocating violence, *Uncivil Liberties* clearly reveals the pitfalls awaiting any violent attempt to overthrow the post-9/11 neocon fascist state.

The ultimate pitfall, the film suggests, is that violence, whether that of the government or its freedom-fighter enemies, represents the supreme breakdown of trust between one human being and another. As the film’s repentant ex-freedom-fighting-assassin puts it, “there’s no system—it’s just *people*.” Responding to the government’s loss of trust in the

people by strategically killing government officials, the film suggests, simply heightens the breach of trust between human beings that is the root of the problem.

It is in its depiction of human relationships, in the context of a tightly-plotted thriller, that *Uncivil Liberties* really shines. Cross-cutting is an editing technique common to thrillers (cut back and forth between the girl tied to the railroad tracks and the hero fighting to rescue her) and character dramas (cut between Smith's view of Jones, and Jones' view of Smith). In *Uncivil Liberties*, director Tom Mercer skillfully weds the two, moving both plot and character forward as he cross-cuts between and among anti-government rebels and their government enemies, fully humanizing characters on both sides in a way rarely seen in American films.

(Those accustomed to Hollywood's star-driven good-guys-vs.-bad-guys shoot-'em-ups may take some time being drawn in to the film's measured pacing and un-slick acting style, which employs low-key soft-spoken realism to highlight the importance of human relationships in a world in which human relationships are disintegrating.)

The only beef I have with *Uncivil Liberties* is that most of the violence it portrays is coming from the anti-government side—a complete reversal of reality. [Governments murder tens of thousands of people](#) for every one killed by an anti-government rebel, because [psychopaths gravitate to high positions in government](#), especially in the military and intelligence bureaucracies. Compounding this misleading portrayal of who's behind most violence is the way the film plays with the utterly spurious post-9/11 linkage between violence and “Islamic fundamentalists,” only half-debunking that [odious blood libel](#). (Though half a debunking is better than none, I guess.)

But in the end, the film's success as a humanizing work of art and sharp-eyed political commentary far outweighs its potential to mislead. Its message to the 9/11 truth movement and other forces of freedom is simple yet profound: *Stay human and win the “enemy” over—especially the geeks!* Like Steve Alten's brand-new 9/11 truth thriller [The Shell Game](#), *Uncivil Liberties* suggests that former government bad guys and computer whizzes can become our best allies if we let them. By avoiding violence, exercising empathy and compassion, and communicating effectively, freedom-lovers can not only further their cause, but also help rebuild the network of trusting human relationships that makes freedom possible in the first place.[\[ii\]](#)

[\[i\]](#) The Project for a New American Century, *Rebuilding America's Defenses*, September 2000, p. 51.

[\[ii\]](#) This dependence of freedom on human relationships based on love and trust may explain why freedom candidate Ron Paul spells *revolution* with love embedded in it.