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Impressions and Notes From a Day at the Chelsea Manning (formerly Bradley Manning) Trial

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Note: So much has happened since I first wrote this on day 34 of the trial on Tuesday, August 13, 2013, including Manning's sentencing, her closing statement [2], and post-trial request to refer to her by her new name as she transitions to living as a woman [3]. Out of respect, I have gone back and changed names and pronouns (except in the italicized sections where I quote others at that time). This article is a personal commentary with notes from the day in trial that I witnessed; my reflections on race, class, and radical mental health are at the end.



“I want people to see the truth ... regardless of who they are ... because without information, you cannot make informed decisions as a public.” – Chelsea Manning weeks after she leaked the “Collateral Murder” video and just days before military police arrived to arrest her on May 29, 2010.

Introduction

I feel that I have gone through an emotional ordeal. And it's been just ONE day, one day, of my life, that I visited what Chelsea Manning has been going through since June 3, when her trial finally started after being held for three years, one of those years in solitary confinement. I was there at her trial in Fort Meade, 9:30 am to 5 pm today, and I feel sick from the constant stream of questions. I've never heard so many questions in all my life. The day was long, emotional; intense; boring at times; and riveting at others. I was glad to flee at the end of the day to eat: to see the sun, the blue, the clouds, finally to come home to my home. I want to be clear, I in no way blame Manning, from the comforts of my home, for apologizing for her actions in [exposing war crimes](#) [4]: I would be completely out of line to do so! That didn't stop her personal statement, when it came, after hours of grueling testimony, to hit like a karate chop in the guts.

Arriving in Camp Meade

I got a ride to Camp Meade with activists from Baltimore. They told me this was the day Chelsea would testify, a big day in a long case where she has been kept silent and no one has heard her voice, besides the one smuggled out recording where she said this was an act of consciousness. They said she was well spoken and clear in what she had done and why, but that the prosecutors had tried to paint her as someone who had no friends, who was shy and isolated, which was not true. One of my travel companions, Ryan, told us how mental health issues are often used against soldiers. For example, bogus pre-existing conditions are claimed so veterans can be denied benefits. Interestingly enough, half of today would turn out to be testimony from psychiatrists.

This was the first time I had come to the court. There were members of the Bradley Manning Support Network, many local, older, predominately white peace activist who came to support her, and folks from outside of Maryland as well, donning black t-shirts with the word “truth” written on them to sit in the courtroom.

At the beginning of each day they announced how many people were there to watch. Manning's lawyer had stated it gave her support. As someone who remembers with shock when the [Collateral Murder](#) [5] [video](#) [6] was released 3 years ago, which exposed a U.S. Apache helicopter crew in Iraq delightedly firing upon unarmed civilians, I felt like I should come be a witness. Knowing that only those of us in attendance would ever hear this, as recording devices were forbidden from the courthouse, I took notes all day long. I will include my notes in this essay, as a “word sketch,” similar to how many artists sat in the courtroom and sketched since cameras were not permitted. My individual perspective is as a fresh face in this case where many have worked to support her for long.

Navigating our way from Baltimore city, to the suburbs, and onto the army base was unfamiliar territory for most of us. Yet I felt an immediate familiarity. This was a world I knew. My grandmother lived in this area and had been proud to be a secretary for a doctor, at Fort Meade,

when she was younger. My mother's first job options were between Fort Meade, Curtis Bay, and Westinghouse and she got the job at Westinghouse where they replied first. She met my father who was a technical writer there. When I was eight we moved to a base in Germany, where my father worked for the military.

I know that all these people working for a paycheck do not always agree with their superiors, or even believe in the objectives of their employers—although they won't publicly state it or deeply consider these issues either.

The soldiers in fatigues who guided us to the overflow cabin (the courthouse and overflow trailer were full!) were very polite, helpful and friendly. The activists were also extremely friendly as they greeted and oriented us. It reminded me again of my childhood experiences overseas, that sense of belonging and community among fellow Americans, which many struggled with once they came back to the U.S. and/or left the military and were suddenly left alone to figure out everything on their own.

First Psychiatrist

Not having the pressure of being in the courthouse, or the ability to send Chelsea Manning good vibes, we settled into the cabin with our notebooks and sketchpads, after young men in fatigues went through our personal belongings. It felt less intrusive than airport security. One of the soldiers commented "this is cool" to a woman's duct tape wallet. She in return offered a friendly explanation how her boyfriend made it for her.

When we sat down to the trial a friendly air continued as we watched the lawyer joke with the psychiatrist when he needed his reading glasses, "I'm fighting that myself" and "nice glasses"—created chuckles all around. This comment gave a sense of humanity in a serious place. When would the questioning turn hard and to what end was this friendliness? I thought.

The questioning began. A friendly interrogation, where everyone answered anything asked, that lasted all day. Actually the questions began even earlier, from a personal perspective, from when our car entering the checkpoint of the military base: we were asked for our identification cards as well as the car's title and paperwork. The driver of our party told the security officer that we were going to the trial, offered this information without him even asking for her destination, then afterwards joked/worried her mother's work car would be on a secret file now.

These are my notes from the first psychiatrist's testimony:



Are these your notes?

Did he have issues at work?

Trust issues?

He was a bit guarded with me at first. But we always worry—anyone spilling their guts at first sight is never a good sign; nor is total guardedness.

The psychiatrist went through a long period of answering questions to identifying his background, schooling, and credentials.

The psychiatrist seemed to not remember many things, relying on his notes, and also on diagnosis, criteria, had a strong sense of profession and kept to it. He was on the spot after all. I didn't realize the questioning lawyer was the defense lawyer and thought that he was trying to trick the psychiatrist. I kept expecting it to turn out like a TV show where three seemingly unrelated facts are joined into a shocking conclusion. But no, each question just led to another question. There was no small detail left unturned as they tried to paint a fair assessment of her mental health.

I was surprised that a psychiatrist could reveal all one's personal records. Isn't there something called a doctor-patient confidentiality? And if this is the case, well of course one would be guarded when sent to the psychiatrist in the army. So being guarded seemed to me like a good response. Actually, everything they said about Chelsea Manning didn't seem out of place. What became clear to us was everything, and I do mean everything, a human feels can be a diagnosis. I doubt anyone could stand up under that scrutiny. It would just depend who was scrutinizing and for what end. Where was this all leading?



Anxiety disorder

Questioning his identity

At first I wrote he may have a personality issue, but later ruled out personality issue

Continued being guarded

Typically people resist or deflect hot topic buttons issues

Persistent anxiety about performance

Concern about his job

Hypersensitivity/super critical of self—"don't remember why I noted it. Something like, he was never good enough"

Discuss future plans: go to school, maintain security clearance as it opens up a lot of doors

Personality disorder

To be honest I don't remember why I wrote this. Probably it was a non-specified personality disorder. This is a horrible/catch all diagnosis.

He would talk about the Intel world. People moving for power and what is power.

He would stop and think about what he said before he said it, like I am, careful about what he was projecting. Still filtering. Guarded.

Well, hot damn, no doubt! I think, hearing all this read out in court. Is there no doctor-patient confidentiality in the military?



he continued to resist issues

the Intell world is pretty isolating, limiting what you can share

I was his therapist but he was still guarded with me

Who does he share with?

Occupational diagnosis.

The workplace became more of an issue, how isolated he felt.

He kept doing the same thing and expecting different results. He was not real flexible.

He talked about his relationship ending. Problems and then they broke up. That was his first

“ relationship. That he felt alone.

Did he share any gender issues?

We did talk about some gender issues.

Gender identity disorder

Criteria to meet this diagnosis was enough to meet it

Email from exhibit

I think it further isolated him and made him have to think how to fit in

At that point the military was less friendly to gays.

Again – he was taking a chance with that to tell me

He could have been court marshaled.

So to share that with anyone was extremely difficult.

I think he had little to no support base in a hyper-masculine environment

It appeared he felt better after sharing his gender identity disorder

It was a relief

Gender is a core issue

In the future I don't think it will be so much

Could this process make someone feel alone, to struggle, in the workplace?

Absolutely

Does explain the initial trust issues

Hard to say, could be a lot of things, but that could be a big one

It's an extremely difficult thing, gender issues in a military environment

Pattern of problematic, issues, red flags.

At this point it was close to lunchtime. We broke for a short while and came back with questions from the prosecution, which struck us as comical since the prosecutor seemed so very unintelligent. He seemed unknowing of mental health issues and looking for any road to take the context and use it to their benefit.

This questioning was shorter.

My notes from the prosecution are:

“ **Did he think he was special?**

Defense: “I don't think we ever talked about ‘special’.”

I had been suspicious of the defense lawyer, at first, when I hadn't realized he was on Manning's side: thinking that his line of calm sensible questioning was going to be used to boomerang this all into insanity. But life isn't actually that tricky.

The prosecutor wasn't very slick; he actually sounded pretty stupid.

He tried to get the psychiatrist to read something that was buried in a pile of papers. When he couldn't properly point out what he wanted the psychiatrist to read, the judge asked him to state it in a question. The prosecutor then questioned the psychiatrist about Manning calling her fellow soldiers "ignorant rednecks" (where, it wasn't clear. In an email or a forum?).

The psychiatrist paused and said calmly:

"I can't say I haven't called my peers in [the] military rednecks . . . when I was frustrated."

Everyone laughed. This felt pretty wild when he said that. And maybe the psychiatrist was on Manning's side, or he was being fair and professional. He was very careful in how he answered questions.

He was questioned more about if someone says they are super-intelligent—if that means that they are a narcissist.

The lawyer was trying to conclude that Manning was in fact an anti-social narcissist who thought he was better than everyone else.

It was a long morning of grilling and I still wondered where it was all going and why all of this was happening before Manning's speech. Many seemed to feel this line of questioning made Manning seem sympathetic, that she was a young person that had made a wrong decision under stress. I didn't understand this, because for one, I thought Manning was on trial because of the information that she leaked. And I did not feel comfortable with this intense examination of her mental health. Although like everyone, I felt I learned something more about psychiatry.

Into the Courthouse

We went straight to the courthouse at lunch (instead of going out to eat like some others since food is not allowed past security). It was first come, first served, and we wanted to get a badge to enter the courthouse.

It seemed to happen very quickly, and I was scared at first to go in, where I knew I had to be on my best behavior or be a bad reflection on Manning's case. I was the last one in the door and found a seat at the back corner. It was different to be in the actual court room than to view it from the cabin. It was a little harder to hear. I was not sure how to send supportive energy to Manning. Also it just felt so small, such a small room. Was that Manning to the left? That small shaved head with one circle of her glasses showing in profile? The judge's head just came up over the huge desk.

In front of two sets of four rows of seating were a few different booths for lawyers, security, and workers I would think, with a booth and computers. Half the room was the court and half was set up for the viewing public. Security was in casual clothes and much of the small room was activists, witnesses, or reporters. There were a few folks in army fatigues. I would estimate there were 50 people in attendance to view. The majority were white and older peace activists, of that number were approximately four to five people of color in the crowd. Also almost all, but not entirely, of the soldiers, lawyers, and everyone in the court case appeared to be white, as were the soldiers who

managed us into and out of the courthouse, overflow trailer, and extra cabin.

The room was smaller, less imposing, than I thought it would be. There were wood booths that slightly resembled church pews, a blue rug, light tan walls, dots of lights across the ceiling.

Forensic Psychiatrist

The second psychiatrist started with explaining his credentials, schooling, experience, and job description. This doctor explained that he had no patient confidentiality, was a specialist answering for the court, an advocate for unbiased opinions in Manning's mental health evaluation. He said he spent 100 hours reviewing school records, medical records, background, and context of Manning's case.

His mental health report began with the fact that Manning had been to a primary practice doctor—not a psychiatrist—on her 18th birthday.

In general, Manning was diagnosed with anxiety, for which her doctor had prescribed Lexapro for anxiety and panic attacks. According to the psychiatrist, to say that Manning had adjustment issues was an under-statement.

The psychiatrist met with Manley for 21 hours over the course of seven days.



*Is this adequate time?
Will you explain the interview process?
The importance of this process?*

Gender Dysphoria

The psychiatrist gave his diagnosis that Manning had gender dysphoria, which is a new diagnosis in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) he uses, newer than the diagnosis of gender identity disorder—which was what it used to be called. Manning also had some symptoms of Aspergers, but fell short of a full diagnosis. She also had symptoms of fetal alcohol syndrome.

He went on to explain that gender dysphoria is not the same things as homosexuality. Gender identity is how one identifies as male or female. It is basically established within the first three years of life—how much is biological and environmental is hotly contested. Discussions over the last 100 years show how much we don't understand, and how complicated this is.



Someone with gender dysphoria will feel that they are born the wrong gender and desire to be the other gender and not the one they were born. It shows itself in childhood.

How common is this?

1/7,000-1/3,000, activists have been influencing the number.

Gender is very much a core of our identity as individuals and when that is off keel, to use a



military expression, it can offer a lot of distress. Questions of self-worth, depression, and guilt. In adults you can dress like the other gender and you may have surgery.

Personality Traits

Most people have some abnormal personality traits, especially during stress. Like for example, being tired causes you to act out more. If there are a lot of these and they go on for a long time, they turn into a personality disorder.

I did not diagnose him with a personality disorder.

Why are you sure?

He didn't meet the criteria.

He does have a lot of stressors: alcoholic parents, homelessness, absent dad.

He has a little bit of abnormal personality traits: narcissism, arrogance, grandiose thoughts, post adolescent idealation, acting out when he is upset, irritability, mood swings, and under extreme stress: suicidal ideation.

But he does not have a disorder conduct or anti-social disorder.

Post Adolescent Idealation

This is a time where people become more focused on making a difference, as they are not really the best at anything as a group, the way they once were as a child. Thinking they can make a difference in the world. This leads to lots of riots on college campuses.

It would exaggerate to make you think that you can cause a difference in the world—to take a stand—narcissistic personality types are more like this.

You feel like you can make a difference.

Stressors

Bradley was always more into cyber world/chat room. He felt a comfortable anonymity to be who he wanted to be.

He has very limited social support. He doesn't go to his parents, he doesn't have those kind of parents, in fact they turn to him for support. All his friends abandoned him. And then there was "Don't Ask/Don't Tell." In the height of his emotional distress – sent email – when he went on leave and lived as a woman. He sent a picture of himself as a woman to master sergeant Edwards.

The G.I. Bill was his main driver that brought him in to the military—he was very intelligent; and his socio-economic level would make going to college a challenge without it. Primary desire was to hold onto that, it was very important.



His boyfriend, his first long time relationship struggled, and fell apart. Sending emails daily to no response.

Raised by alcoholic parents. Took care of his severely alcoholic mother who was non-functioning was of significant distress.

What degree of stress?

Very high.

Decision making influence by post adolescent idealation

He became more isolated. He didn't feel he could reach out. And then his grandiosity, his post-adolescent idealation—his decision making was influenced by post-adolescent idealation. He was under severe stress at the time. He became very enthralled with the idea of injustice, righting wrongs, obligations, conflicts.

His friend Danny Clark was unavailable to him. He felt a moral dilemma. If he could have talked to him and he told him not to do it, he wouldn't have. He thought his leaked information would really change how people saw war. That crowd sourcing—on these important documents—would lead to great good. He talked about War Gaming—which the psychologist said he didn't really understand what that is—that if the public saw this—they would come to analyze against this and future wars. And be utilized by the people.

His little world, impaired his thinking, the significance. In reality [leaking the information to wikileaks] hadn't nearly the impact he thought: of ending war.

Self-insight and personality traits

He does recognize that he has a temper, has some insight.

If you had a lot of insight—you would probably stop what you are doing. Most people don't see their own bad personality traits. You need an outsider to see it.

He wanted to make a difference

He hadn't figured out his role in the world. Wanted to make a difference in computer programming—he knew he wanted to do something great—but he wasn't sure yet what that was. Morals and ideology without looking at the big picture and understanding the consequence of his actions.

He's very consistent, personality and beliefs.

90 minute break for opposition—back at 3 pm.

Notes from Cross Examination:





With gender dysphoria, would you get an honorable discharge?

Yes

***Narcistic?
Grandiosity?
Arrogance?***

Correct

Post adolescent idealation – what age does that happen at?

Early adult. 18-24

How many have it?

Its common

Is he seeking personal recognition?

No, not a driving factor.

Deliberate, calculating, research, he's a hacker

Why did he tell Lamo what he did, was he seeking personal recognition?

No.

Maybe validation.

Morality.

If he saw something would he do something again, if it were against his morality?

Pretty sure he would.

Judge's Questions



Aspergers?

Delay. On the spectrum.

*Social cues and social interactions
Difficulty in picking up social cues.*

*Try really hard to fit in conversations,
Awkward,
People make fun of him,
He would shy back
—sister would say so*

“ doesn't manifest stippies

What are stippies?

repetitive or stereotypical movements. like rocking

The Defense lawyer asks: Would you like to know more about fetal alcohol syndrome too?

Exposed to a significant alcohol in utero

Born at 6 pounds, significantly underweight, but full term

Facial features, small stature, the familiar border upper lip and nose to lip groove is minimal

I knew he had fetal alcohol syndrome the first time I looked at him

Intelligence—book knowledge very high, not as high knowing how to put things in practice

Sister's Testimony

She is a small blond with bobbed hair, from Oklahoma, who answers every question, matter of fact, without hesitation.

“ Casey. Brad's sister born in 1976.

Married.

Husband.

Job.

Kids.

Stay at home mom.

So you have the hardest job (or something like that) (haha laughs room)

Large family – mother from Wales.

Mother can read but not sure if she can write

Dad's family is smaller

Growing up you think its normal

But when I got to be around 13-14

it dawned on me it's a problem

Hard alcohol

Rum & coke or vodka & something

Every day drunk mom

Dad functional alcoholic

Weekends – drinks harder to relax from his job

Alcohol + mom = friendly, social, sad, depressed; and then when she wakes up the next day, mid-morning or at lunch, she is very mean. Screams to get her cigarettes or a cup of tea.

Guess because she is hung-over.

Alcohol + dad = jovial and then more quiet

Mom starts drinking at lunchtime



*11 year old she took care of Bradley Manning when mom was sleeping/passed out
excited when mom woke up so she could go swimming, I guess be a kid
I learned to drive when I was 11
She got real nervous. Mom just didn't want to drive.
When she was 15 he was 4
Happy kid, played outside
Had trucks, played in the dirt*

*She moved out at 18, 19
Had a disagreement with her dad
School and working
He's 8
Didn't see brother
Cuz didn't want to see parents
Dads job travel
Kid's cuisine microwave
Dad set her up
Had her move back in, so he could leave*

*Moved back in
Mom took bottle of Valium and woke her up and told her
She called poison control and took her to the hospital
Dad didn't want to get in the back and make sure her mother kept breathing
And didn't want to drive because he was drunk
So sat up front, she drove
And Bradley, at age 12
Had to make sure she was still breathing in the back
Because his dad didn't want to do it
Dad left
Mom in psychiatric ward
Paxil*

I'm feeling sick, listening to someone's whole life story like this.



*Anytime I left she threatened to kill herself
Missed a lot of school, called in at work, withdrew from school
So I left to go work
Because she was always threatening to kill herself, anyway
I had to go to work
Mother violent when drinking. She's little, I pushed her, defending myself
Her mother fell down, broke her tailbone
Brad was there
Their mother was screaming
She put a blanket on her, on the floor
To sleep on the floor*



Brad was 12, 13

She told him to go to sleep, to go to his room, or come upstairs to hers

And sleep on her floor

He came upstairs

The next morning the sister was asked to leave

Did your brother have friends?

I heard stories of them but never saw them.

Sometimes he hung out at the pet store, where she worked

She worried their mother would lean on him heavily,

The way she had on her.

Next time she saw him was at her wedding.

Father and new wife and son

They ask so many questions. I feel sick. So many personal questions, one after another.



Their stepmother didn't like another woman's kid in the house

He was kicked out after a year.

He didn't want to be a burden,

When at 18, he slept on her couch for a few days

He left.

They pull out photographs.

Manning's sister never cries until this moment. She pulls out the tissues now.

The court is showed a slide show of photographs: baby Brad in a box with older sister, at six months old.



Is that your room?

Yes. I was really into horses.

Picture of her at the prom.

In their house after they moved

How much land?

5 acres

Swing set



Did he play sports?

No

Why?

I think for the same reason as me. Driving back and forth was an inconvenience

How far was the school?

4 miles.

There are more photographs, this time a cat and puppy.



He loved that puppy.

Computer, from an early age.

My wedding

At Vegas

Why did you choose Las Vegas?

A lot of folks flying in, we thought it would be better flying into Las Vegas than Oklahoma City

(There's a group laugh here, in the courtroom.)



Did you stay in touch over the last three years?

Periodically

He has matured.

It's amazing.

It's a lot easier to hold a conversation with him.

He has really matured.

What do you do you hope for your brother now?

I hope he can be who he wants to be . . .

After her Sister's Testimony

Everyone is crying.

There is barely a dry eye.

There is a quick 5-minute break.

We get up when told to; and go outside.

I use the bathroom.

We have waited all day. It's around 4 pm, but we weren't permitted to bring cell phones into the courtroom or viewing areas so I don't know what time it is. It's time to go back in. One more speaker before Chelsea. We were worried for a while that it would take up all the time, the other speakers, and we would not hear Manning today. We want to hear what she has to say. "Boy this would be the time," said one of the supporters waiting, "to have Brad go on next after that."

And when we go back into the courtroom, Chelsea is called to the stand. Everything is slow and then it happens so quickly.

Chelsea (then Bradley) Manning



*First honor,
I'm sorry my actions hurt people,
Hurt the United States
I was dealing with a lot of issues
At the time.*

*That is clear to me, through self-reflection
And testimony I saw
Sorry for the unintended
I thought it would help people
Not hurt people*

*How could I, a junior analyst, ever
think I could change the world -
for the better?*

Here, I thought, I heard a gulp of sadness in her voice.



I should have worked within the system.

*I want to go forward. I understand
To pay the price
I want to go to college,
Have a meaningful relationship with my sister.
I have flaws and issues
I want to be a better person
I hope you let
Me
Return to a
Productive place
In society.*

Manning was so tiny and her testimony was so quick. She walked quickly up and back. She addressed her testimony to the judge. She first apologized to the judge, and looked up from her

paper to her as she read her testimony.

I think: She's terrified. She just wants out and will say anything. How much did they torture her?

Debbie, Manning's Aunt



Lawyer

Fanny Mae

Security work for mortgage loans

Ask questions about Manning's Mother:

She seemed nice

Doting on baby

Is this going to be the "it's all the mom's fault" defense? Is that what they are doing here now?



She was drinking, I didn't think of it

Her family

Didn't have a lot of money

But seemed relatively normal

What did you mean they didn't have a lot of money?

They lived in a row house

Seemed small, for 9 children

I think it was hard for her to be isolated

She was a social person, used to Wales, all her family

Dad was away on jobs

Mom isolated

Didn't drive

She would call in the evening: not make a sense

It turned into a joke: don't pick up the phone in the evening

And find out it's her on the phone.

If you want to talk to her—call during the day.

I didn't really notice she was drinking too much

Until my husband told me he was buying a

12-pack for her, everyday when she was

staying with us.

Did you talk to her about her drinking?

How long did she stay with you?

She drank really heavily during her first trimester

As a two year old he only ate baby food and milk

Hope Casey doesn't resent him; she has to take care of him

“ So much

Why did you move back?
When did your brother remarry?
Did you know the second wife?
Did you know her a little bit?
How would you describe her?

She was very cold
She only liked her son

How did Susan describe the divorce?

I'm getting beaten down by all these questions. I want to go.

Manning's dad was shitty. I guess this is the story of how she became homeless. First, the Aunt tells how her dad didn't fly with Manning; didn't feed her after the wedding in Las Vegas. So she got her some McDonalds for New Years. And then later how the Aunt took Manning in:

“ *He was exhausted*
Hyper
At the breaking point
said he would look for work the next day
I gave him a week's rest first
He looked like he hadn't eaten

He took a rest

And improved
Got a job with Starbucks
Maybe he could go to community college in the spring
He liked Starbucks
He's very responsible
They liked him
She didn't have to wake him up
He was already gone at 5 am, used to taking care of himself
He was still young
18
a hyper person



*followed current events in the world
always wanted
to eat at McDonalds
and live on caffeinated beverages
Brad you wouldn't be as hyper
If you didn't drink all those
Caffeinated beverages*

*Dad didn't want to fill out the form
For college
That all the parents have to fill out
It took him all semester to get \$1,000
He really liked college
He didn't realize how much
Work it was
He thought he could still work and go to school*

Did he come to you? Say that he had decided to join the Army?

*Yes, he asked me to meet him at the diner
When he told me I was surprised
I don't think it's a good fit for you, Brad.
Well, I'm already in it, he said
So I didn't push anymore*

Why didn't you want him in the Army?

He was a hyper kid, and so small, I thought he would get picked on.

Did Brad tell you why?

*He wanted the G.I. Bill to go to college
He listened to his father*

Is it always like this in court? You can't bring in recorders? When is the transcript available? This is exhausting. What about the life of those killed in that video she exposed? What story doesn't have some abuse in it?



Did Brad ever tell you he was gay?

Not then

***When did you find out he was arrested?
What did you think?***

Shocked



***When did you hear from him?
Have you noticed a change?***

*Oh yea. Calmer. More like a grown up.
Appreciates what he has
That there are people who love him
He realizes that now
He's more mature*

What's your hope?

*I hope some day in the future he can go out and
have a good life again –
get his education and contribute
He had a very hard start to
His life
He thought he was doing the right thing
and wasn't thinking clearly.*

Prosecution and defense consulted for five minutes (and spoke for a few minutes afterwards), but we left.

It was over
We wanted to go outside
Under the blue sky
On the green grass
Under the clouds
On the beautiful day
We were hungry and wanted
To eat our food.
We wanted to go home.

I took off my truth shirt. I said I didn't believe in it anymore. Not that I didn't believe in the truth. But that I didn't believe the truth was that Manning did the wrong thing!

What Did I Expect?

It's over. What we were waiting for? What did I think would happen? I had no idea. Only now it's clear to me. The defense already pled guilty. I suppose I don't know that much, I've just heard things Manning said before, so I expected her somehow to be a martyr? a champion, even after being held for three years before her trial, after being tortured; after being isolated; and after sitting through all this.

Twenty-five years old. My daughter's age. Arrested at 22. The defense's plan appears to say anything that they think the judge wants to hear, to plead for mercy. To make this stop.

I think this may be a white thing, the "I'm sorry" defense. I think it's easier to do when you are white and look like Manning, especially when you look like her sister, who is a more charismatic witness

then her aunt; and you speak paycheck (or what is more often called proper) English; and you fit other white middle-class cultural markers in dress and mannerisms.

This “I’m sorry” narrative might work for white folks. I wonder how it would work in other trials? I don’t think that everyone’s sister gets to show their baby photos and tell their life story with the same results. I think often that space is not even extended to people of color. I think back to the way that Trayvon Martin’s friend was portrayed in court [7].

White people know how to lie to authority. This is because they have been taught what kinds of lies that whiteness allows and because whites are taught that other whites in authority will give them the benefit of the doubt. People of color know they will not even be listened to when telling the truth, and so silence is best. Everyone subordinate tries to give those in authority what they want, but there is a difference in outcome, in what is allowed, depending upon, for one factor, the color of your skin.

White people are beaten, tortured, abused, and broken. But when they are broken they will more likely be allowed back into the system. People of color are also beaten, tortured, abused, and broken—but they are more quickly killed, as if their lives don’t matter, by Empire.

The message of being white is to do what you are told, or else. Take your opportunities; conform, assimilate, and be the aggressor OR you will be a victim. I have found the white people around me can more easily understand how to lie to authority, doing what you have to do, saying what others in power want to hear, when they are under suspicion. (They also can fear authority less, and call upon them for help quicker.) So to be a white person in a system of white supremacy means that you will be more easily accepted when you beg for mercy.

This sounds harsh to say about a young person who has been tortured [8] and held in prison for three years awaiting this trial; who has had a hard life and who has just had to endure sitting and listening to every single personal detail of her life publicly scrutinized; but this is what came to me as an observer in the court that day. I felt a lot of sorrow but I also could not help but to notice the difference that whiteness made.

I say this not to lessen the respect for Chelsea Manning, but to increase, if that’s possible, respect and support for her, and illuminate for what she has stood up to expose and the personal price that she has paid in order to do it. She did not deny the truth to maintain the privileges that she had gained, and was trying to gain. That if she is being used as an example to us to be afraid to also tell the truth, we should also understand the truth, as much as possible?in order to not be afraid, and organize together, in order to support the truth. To understand how we are divided, and used, and what it means to be a young, low-income, transgender, white person in this country and the fact she is just a person, she has every right to that, she is not our fantasy of resistance but also that she is a person that risked destroying patriotic fantasies for exposing ugly truths and believed that the truth did have value to be known.

Conclusion Thoughts?Reality Wars

I was raised in the white middle-class (by parents raised working-class), and taught and have heard all my life, that you have to do things, and live your life, in ways you don’t want to because if you don’t, you will be poor. Poverty is the threat. You may not like how things are, but if you don’t do what you are told –that yes, might ultimately be at the expense of others, especially those in

other countries abroad and marginalized communities at home—you will lose what you do have now; you will have much worse. Your very life will be at risk.

Also another thread that runs along in these American reality/dream narratives is that if you are poor you are a bad person: it is your own fault.

But there is no one reality, and we humans have the ability to take part in creating our own reality just as much as different factors can come to change what we know as our reality. Life holds out many possibilities and when all choice, all disobedience, all questioning, all expression and freedom of information are threatened—and every human behavior a diagnosis—then we are in a time of not just information wars, but reality wars.

Many people in the U.S. are too busy—consumed, surviving day-to-day—with their personal lives to pay attention to what is going on in the news. And the news is just depressing and overwhelming anyway, which will impact the little happiness they have. So they tune it out. They feel to be informed is depressing because they can't do anything: they can't change any of these problems for the better. They can't make a difference. But this is the biggest lie of all. We can always do something. We in the U.S. have been conditioned, and dare I say it, crushed, to feel that we cannot.

Chelsea Manning made a choice to free information we would have never seen. It is our choice to be informed of what she released to the public, and she is paying the price. We can see how we can [support her](#) [9]. It is a democratic ideal to believe in the power of the people. The majority of older folks from the peace movement show us that believing you can make a difference is something that never goes away.

At the very least, make the choice to not be depressed by information in this information age, to not numb and tune out, every time, to take care of yourself and find ways you can read and stay informed without feeling overwhelmed.

Information is essential to a Democratic society. Information is power. Resistance is not futile. The Military-Industrial Complex is not the only narrative. Justice is not a fantasy and grim suffering not the only reality. This is our time. Another world is possible.

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If you would like to review any of these testimonies more in depth, there is a more complete transcription [here](#) [10].

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[2] <http://www.commondreams.org/view/2013/08/21-7>

[3] <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/aug/22/bradley-manning-woman-chelsea-gender-reassignment>

[4] <http://www.bradleymanning.org/press/update-81513-facing-90-years-in-prison-bradley-manning->

makes-plea-for-leniency-reactions-and-reports

[5] http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2010/04/05/wikileaks-exposes-video-o_n_525569.html

[6] <http://www.bradleymanning.org/learn-more/collateral-murder-video>

[7] <http://www.crunkfeministcollective.com/2013/06/28/to-rachel-jeantel-with-love/>

[8] <http://www.dailykos.com/story/2012/12/01/1166253/-The-Torture-Techniques-Used-on-Bradley-Manning>

[9] <http://www.bradleymanning.org/>

[10] <http://www.bradleymanning.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/08-14-13-PM-session.pdf>