



## **Chomsky on forgotten hero and whistleblower David Hale**

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**Paul Jay (PJ):** Hi, I'm Paul Jay. Welcome to theAnalysis.news. I'll be back in just a few seconds with Noam Chomsky and Daniel Ellsberg.

Noam Chomsky and Daniel Ellsberg are great inspirations for me, and I know for millions around the world. Both in their 90s, they spend countless hours studying newspapers and books, writing and answering emails, all so they can continue to better understand and change the world. There's no giving up in their DNA.

Dan sent Noam and I a copy of an incredible handwritten letter from whistleblower Daniel Hale sent to the judge at his trial for leaking classified documents that exposed the lies surrounding American drone warfare. Hale was sentenced to almost four years in prison. At his sentencing hearing, Hale told the judge:

"I am here because I stole something that was never mine to take — precious human life. I couldn't keep living in a world in which people pretend that things weren't happening that were. Please, your honor, forgive me for taking papers instead of human lives."

**PJ:** Two Daniels, one leaked the pentagon paper, and Daniel Hale. Both exposed the lies of the American war machine. So, Dan, tell us about this letter from Hale and a little bit about the Hale case.

**Daniel Ellsberg (DE):** Funny, when you mentioned two Daniels, it occurs to me that when I saw that amazing letter, the stunning letter just the other day, actually, from Daniel Hale to his charge at the sentencing, he said, "forgive me, your honor, for taking paper that are documents showing our assassination program in Iraq and Afghanistan instead of human lives," as he said. This is the person who had earlier been involved in taking human lives, participating in the process by helping identify from thousands of miles away on computer

screens targets for our drone program. He revealed documents that were classified. And for which he's in prison now for revealing it.

Showing that this supposedly very accurate weapon of war, without collateral damage, very precise, hellfire missiles from our drones, was actually killing more than 17 untargeted people, non-combatants for every targeted combatant that was identified. In other words, they went to other homes, and there were people with them. They were murdering a lot of non-combatants, including the ones they were targeting to a considerable extent, who was identified by very vague, broad notions. In fact, at one point, every male between 15 and 45 was regarded as an enemy combatant in that area for the purpose of the body count.

Well, having participated in that and spent sleepless nights over having actually observed these people, in effect, from close up on the screen in a way that pilots at high altitudes or zipping by at low altitudes never have a chance to see their victims. Here you were, seeing them in their everyday activities and then eventually marking them with death and actually seeing that death.

As he pointed out, that involved many of his [inaudible 00:03:43] with post-traumatic stress syndrome, PTSD, and beyond that, a moral injury— a feeling of having participated in something against their values and what they were supposed to do in ways that marked their lives, and shaped their lives. He eventually felt he must expose this and try to change it. As I was saying at the very end of his letter, having described this change to a point where he felt he must reveal these truths in the hope of changing them, he says, “Forgive me, Your Honor, for taking paper.” He was quoting, probably consciously, another Daniel, Father Daniel Berrigan, who said in Catonsville in court or I think at the time when they were burning draft board with homemade napalm and gasoline, they put [inaudible 00:04:46] in to make it into napalm. “Forgive us for burning paper instead of children.” I think he was actually quoting that. It shows the contagion of courage, of moral courage, and not in response to moral injury and that of others that do allow for the hope of change in the world. Daniel Hale has been for a long time a hero of mine since I first heard of what he had done. He revealed a lot of documents to Intercept and to peers, part of these extensive documents showing our program of murder in this drone program. I admired him for that. When I read this statement just the other day, I identified with him in a way that I— there are really only two other people that I think of: Chelsea Manning and Ed Snowden, who had gone through the same arc of experience that I had as did Daniel Hale. The difference today from a Julian Assange, who was an enabler or facilitator of whistleblowing as a publisher, different background, or my friend and hero, Noam Chomsky, they had not been on the inside of this process, and they had not gone through the same arc of change that I did with these two others. So I've long said that I identified more with Chelsea Manning and with Ed Snowden than with any other people that I knew of on Earth.

I now add to that, having read this amazing letter, which I encourage everyone to read, it's inspiring, Daniel Hale as well. I identify with him in symbol. It seems funny to identify with a hero of mine, but it means I identify with the best part of myself. We share that, I think. We went through the same experience.

The last thing I was looking for here earlier was a book I found the other day, Noam, from our friend Howard Zinn who we both know. Noam often expresses the kind of optimism that I find hard to express, let's say, to people, and Noam does. Daniel exemplified something that Howard was describing here; in a way that now I can share with Noam this kind of hope. The question is, how do you find hope in terms of what we've been discussing: climate, nuclear, going back to the old way of thinking as [Mikhail] Gorbachev was describing it, of armed adversaries in the world trying to achieve their own security on the expense of others, most likely on their own.

I knew that Zinn had often described hope, but here's a full quote that I hadn't seen before. "TO BE HOPEFUL in bad times is not just foolishly romantic. It is based on the fact that human history is a history not only of cruelty, but also of compassion, sacrifice, courage, kindness. If we see only the worst, it destroys our capacity to do something. If we remember those times and places—and there are so many—where people have behaved magnificently, this gives us the energy to act. And if we do act, in however small a way, we don't have to wait for some grand utopian future. The future is an infinite succession of presents, and to live now as we think human beings should live, in defiance of all that is bad around us, is itself a marvelous victory." Well, to realise that there exists young Americans like Daniel Hale does give me that basis of hope which Noam has so often referred to.

**PJ:** Noam.

**Noam Chomsky (NC):** Well, it is indeed, as Dan said, a stunning letter. I hope it gets to be widely read. In many respects, one is a demonstration of the kind of integrity and courage that Dan— a different Dan — that Dan Ellsberg revealed when he opened the way to exposing the lies and crimes of the state at a very grave personal cost, that opened a way for others to do the same.

This case is different. This is a man who went through self-torture as he began to try to come to terms with the crimes and atrocities that he himself was engaged in as a part of the drone killing system. With eloquence and insight, he reveals this course that he went through and also exposed the ultimate horrors of this mass assassination campaign. It's part of a policy that began in the late '60s. Recognition that there were people like Dan who were not going to tolerate it any longer. Recognition that the soldiers in the field were not going to fight this war. To the great credit of the American Army, it collapsed. To its great credit, soldiers simply refused to fight. They turned on their officers instead and went into drugs as some way to avoid the horrors of mass slaughter and destruction of civilian societies. The United States Army and government learned something that every imperial power had always understood. You cannot fight a colonial war with a civilian army. They're just not going to accept it. You have to fight a colonial war with hired killers.

One of the things that Hale mentions in this letter is that in the field, there were more so-called contractors than soldiers. That means mercenaries. People like the French Foreign Legion or the British Gurkhas, they understood— the British and the French are predecessors and immediate predecessors in imperial violence— that you cannot fight a colonial war against

the civilian society, with young people that you just take off the streets and expect them to do it. The best of them, like Hale, go through the internal torment that he went through to end what he was doing and to expose it to the world. Others, like the soldiers in the field, they just refuse to fight.

So now the U.S. way of war is finally to emulate the imperial predecessors in the field: hired killers, mercenaries, French Foreign Legion, South African killers, anybody you can wound up. Then by using modern technology to distance the public from the atrocities they're carrying out. Drone warfare is a way of insulating the public from our mass atrocities. Just imagine what it would be like if we were— suppose, let's say, Iran had the capacity to murder people who are considered to be a threat to them. That's what drone warfare is. Somebody in Washington says, "I think this person is a potential threat. Let's blow them away and anybody else who happens to be around them." Well, suppose Iran took that, adopted it, and was able to carry out that policy. There are plenty of people they could assassinate, like practically the whole American political class; media, journalists, editors, and Congress. All of them pose a severe threat to Iran and don't hide it. They talk all the time about how all options are open. Israel wants to assassinate nuclear scientists, about a dozen of them. Fine, we think that's a great achievement. Suppose Iran started doing that to us. Suppose we were living in communities where you don't know if one minute from now, a couple of guys across the street are going to get blown away by a drone you can't hear. You're living with that constantly.

Well, that's the U.S. way of war. Imagine ourselves as the victims of it instead of the perpetrators. All of this is part of those things. The war is somewhere else. We don't have to worry about it. Well, Daniel Hale was one of those who said, "yes, we do have to worry about it." He went through personal torment, exposed it to the American population, and suffered the punishment that honest people of integrity often do. He is sitting in a federal prison. He puts it with extreme eloquence and insight. And it [the letter] should be read.

**PJ:** We're going to post that letter on the website. If you come to this story, where the headline will be about Daniel Hale, go down where you see the transcript section, and we'll have the whole letter of Hale to the judge. Dan, some final thoughts about this?

**DE:** So many things that Noam raises. Let me mention, although most tempted to [inaudible 00:16:03] and with Noam's eloquent statement, but I will say this, we have a phenomenon in the last few months, six months, that I don't know any person that accept in the American precedence that Noam refers to as the movement inside the army: Veterans Against the War, and Vietnam Veterans Against the War. Russian soldiers sent into Ukraine are finding that these people speak Russian or Ukrainian and do not welcome them with sweets and flowers as we foolishly expected in Iraq. Apparently, the intelligence services in Moscow foolishly predicted to [Vladimir] Putin that they would be welcomed in Ukraine. Soldiers were not even told they were going to Ukraine in the first place and then were told these bullish tales that they would be welcomed as liberators, and that is not true. Many of them have been surrendering or are coming out and saying, "this is wrong. I can't do this." But that happened

with Nazi soldiers in World War II. I didn't hear of it, and this is something where the Americans led the way. Five thousand young Americans like Randy Kehler, Bob Eaton, David Harris, and others went to prison to protest a war that was wrong. Many in the army actually were also refusing at that point. That's happened in the latest wars, too— in Iraq. And people like Hale and others refused what they were doing.

So we have this strain, America as a basis for hope about humanity. On the other side, it is so tempting to our leaders, and these forces have gone to— it's not hypothetical; I think it's almost inevitable that what no one talks about is imitated by other powers. I think it'll be used even on our border, frankly, by people who like Trump and others, DeSantis right now, talking about closing the border with Mexico, Guatemala, and to other immigrants. There already are rules for surveillance in that [inaudible 00:18:40], better than a wall. And will those not be armed eventually? I think that it's highly likely that we'll see this war, these assassinations brought home to our own borders, our own country, and even inside the borders, in the city.

So again, this old way of thinking armed with new technology is extremely tempting. Which tempted Barack Obama to become what he called himself later “surprisingly good at killing,” and who assassinated an American citizen Anwar al-Awlaki with a drone in Iraq because he didn't like what Awlaki was saying which was calling for jihad indeed, but in terms, it probably would have been upheld under the first amendment in this country. But he wanted him silenced, so he assassinated him with a drone on target by order. Then for reasons that had never become clear, he assassinated his 16-year-old son. Again an American citizen born in this country killed without any due process filed for the jury investigation weeks later looking for his father actually and presumably accompanying somebody. They were not otherwise clear why he was killed.

Well, that has happened to so many, and it confronts Americans and others who use this technology with a face-to-face killing from thousands of miles away that otherwise was suffered only by killers on the ground: Face to face; not by Air Force people. Hale was in the Air Force, and they don't see it.

Being that, he realized this was wrong— “what I'm doing, what these other people are doing is wrong, and I must tell the truth that our leaders are determined to conceal from our people,” and that's why he's in prison. That's why John Kiriakou went to prison. The one person in the CIA who went to prison in connection with the torture program by the CIA- clearly a criminal and illegal in every respect- in fact, Kiriakou exposed, rather inadvertently actually, the name of a torturer, so he had to go to prison. That's the tradition that needs changing.

**Paul Jay:** Thanks, Noam. Thanks, Daniel. Thank you for joining us on theAnalysis.news.

**END**