**Citizenfour**

In the documentary, a US government lawyer presented the argument that the “justification for everything since the September 11 attacks is terrorism. Everything is in the name of national security, to protect our population. In reality, it’s the opposite. A lot of the documents have nothing to do with terrorism or national security, but with competition between companies and with companies’ industrial, financial or economic issues” (1:27:00). These two points are necessary to help guide the process of examining Snowden’s decision to leak the data and the motivation for mass surveillance from the US. Disregarding the ‘it’s the opposite’, we can see a clear initial argument from both parties. The similarity between them is that in either case they are storing information and documents from third-parties rather than just storing meta-data as they claim.

There are similarities between Butler’s ‘Frames of War: When is Life Grievable’ and Citizenfour. Butler writes, a subject or an individual living in a state “belongs to a politics driven by horror at the thought of the nation’s destructibility” (Butler, 48). The state itself is fearful of actions that can lead to the downfall of the state, and “asserts its own righteous destructiveness at the same time as it seeks to immunize itself against the thought of its precariousness” (Butler, 48). The measures they use to protect themselves against this fear are better off than the destruction of the state itself. Therefore, the state is justified into using these values. This justifications are born out of the fear that exists against some other state or possibility.

Snowden, in the documentary, also comments on the fear that exists within the US government, and their fear drives them to towards mass surveillance. He commented on their technical ability to transfer 100s of gigabytes of data through their network, and being able to create a very personal profile of each individual that showcased their interests. This project was called XKeyscore, “the US government’s defense was that it was not invading the content of communications, just taking the metadata” (1:28:00). They were just looking for patterns in those communications such as sex, race, and many other attributes rather than saving those communications. This will help them be more alert about the common trends in patterns, and in their belief solve the ‘nation’s destructibility’. It is ‘righteous destructiveness’ for the freedom of the individuals in the state, but attempting to ‘immunize’ itself against this destruction it foresees.

In addition, Butler writes “we do not need to know in advance what "a life" will be, but only to find and support those modes of representation and appearance that allow the claim of life to be made and heard” (Butler, 181). The government does not primarily contextualize each citizen, but creates a model of them through their data, which allows them to hear their actions. The point Butler makes it slightly different to the point made, but the same theory can be applied to the age of big data and the attitude of people towards it.

Moreover, at some moments in the documentary it seemed very clear that the government was incredibly proud of the achievements they had made in mass surveillance. Snowden also seemed incredibly fascinated to tell individuals the kind of technologies he had access to. This was similar to Larkin’s point of view on the buildup of technology infrastructure, and it creating a split. Larkin writes, “visual and spectacle and political ritual... where the public display of colonial authority is made manifest” (Larkin, 18). The spectacle that was revealed by Snowden created this ‘public display of ... authority’, and questioning of the power the government could have.