



# Patriot, Watch Your Back!

THE FIGHT AGAINST USA PATRIOT ACT CONTINUES — ARE YOU IN?

BY BOBBIE WILLIS

"Presidents come and go, but I stand with the Constitution..."

-DAWN BALZANO PEBBLES

**M**ore than 10 years ago, during the Gulf War/George Bush I crisis, I sat with friends in the UC San Diego Price Center auditorium waiting to hear a spoken word performance by former Dead Kennedy's frontman Jello Biafra. As a tag-along, I didn't know much about Biafra and was unsure of what to expect.

So it was a little alarming when, in the middle of our pre-show chitchat, the house lights dropped to darkness, spotlights beamed up to balcony level, and a dozen agent-types in motorcycle boots, leather pants, leather gloves, trench coats, and Ray-Bans sauntered forth, assembling themselves at attention above and surrounding the audience. They looked down at us with what felt like menace and disgust behind the lenses of those dark glasses. One last spotlight lit up big and bright from above, down to a raised walkway, and out came Biafra, also garbed agent-style. He bellowed into a microphone:

"We interrupt this program with a special

happening?"

Though the government today hasn't necessarily adopted the Ray-Ban drama and caricature of Biafra's performance, I have thought often of the prophetic nature of that opening monologue — and there isn't anything even uneasily funny or giggly about it now.

In the fervor to "fight terrorism" since Sept. 11, the current administration has adopted the USA PATRIOT Act (UPA), which allows governmental access to more and more information, not only about possible terrorists, but about each and every one of us. Everyday citizens become increasingly exposed in terms of private information; the Bill of Rights is sidelined in the name of "protection;" and this administration seems to function deeper and deeper in secrecy and shroudedness. They may not be dropping the lights and bellowing into microphones, but this is really happening. The time to fight is now.

include Hope Marston and Dawn Balzano Peebles of LCBORDC, Fahrid Hassan, owner of Ali Baba's Restaurant on River Road and Cara List of the Oregon Library Association. They've come together out of love of country and in defense of the Bill of Rights.

The Bill of Rights protects us from those who would govern with too heavy a hand. It gives the American public a voice in the processes of government. The Bill of Rights protects regular people and their property, should there be any run-ins with the fed's (or even with more local branches of the government — hello, EPD).

The Bill of Rights guarantees, among other things, each of us security in our homes, safe from unreasonable search and seizure. It guarantees that the government must have probable cause and a court order before we have to submit ourselves or our property to search and seizure. It guarantees our right to bear arms, should we choose. It guarantees us due process of law — that we cannot be punished, or have things taken away from us without the process of a fair and open trial. It guarantees each of us a speedy trial; an impartial jury; the right to confront witnesses against us; equal protection under the law. It guarantees us freedom of speech, freedom to assemble and to petition the government for redress of grievances.

It's important to be clear about these rights, that *we have them*, because they're just about the only things between us and the prying eyes and ears of the current administration. And with the fear, confusion and mixed information following Sept. 11, we could be in grave danger of having these rights pulled right out from under us, leaving us wondering, "Hey, didn't this [fill in a governmental act of privacy invasion] used to be unconstitutional?" Used to be, until UPA.

The UPA widens the scope of the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act (FISA) and weakens 15 privacy laws. Law enforcement agencies can now cast much wider nets, with far fewer checks and balances to ensure that innocent people aren't getting caught in those nets.

According to Marston's forum presentation, the UPA allows law enforcement to take all sorts of liberties with your actual liberty: They may tap your phone lines and monitor your Internet use; they may even

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**EVERYDAY CITIZENS BECOME INCREASINGLY EXPOSED IN TERMS OF PRIVATE INFORMATION; THE BILL OF RIGHTS IS SIDELINED IN THE NAME OF "PROTECTION," AND THIS ADMINISTRATION SEEMS TO FUNCTION DEEPER AND DEEPER IN SECRECY AND SHROUDEDNESS.**

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bulletin. America is now under martial law. All constitutional rights have been suspended. Stay in your homes, do not attempt to contact loved ones, insurance agents or attorneys. Shut up ..."

"Obey all orders without question. The comforts you demanded are now mandatory. Be happy. At last, everything is done for you."

In the gray light of the spot-lit auditorium, I remember turning to my friend and sharing an uneasy giggle, then an exaggerated grimace of, "What is this?" But I was momentarily shaken, spooked by the words, "America is now under martial law. All constitutional rights have been suspended." My stomach knotted; I wondered, "Is this really

## FRIDAY NIGHT FREEDOM FIGHT

It's 7 pm on a late-June Friday night that is perfect, except that it is hotter than Hades. It's a night you might expect to find people sipping amber ales on the back porch at High Street, or heading to the coast with the kids for a weekend of camping.

It's not a night you'd expect people to be congregating around the fight for the Bill of Rights. Yet here they are, in the Annex on River Road, a little over two dozen people — including County Commissioner Bobby Green — gathered for the Lane County Bill of Rights Defense Committee's (LCBORDC) public forum, "Assaults on Human Rights Since September 11." Speakers