

Support Our Whistleblowers 

By

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Renegade, rebel, hero, patriot, traitor are just some of the terms used to describe the historic practice of disseminating information from various public or private entities to the people, best known as “whistleblowing.” The origins of the term whistleblower, comes from a time before radio where one would blow a whistle to bring attention to a crime being committed. It is a term that has always been related to alerting the public or organizations to crimes, misconduct, fraud, mismanagement, or any egregious acts that were being carried out by people or groups at the time. Whistleblowers can be found internationally and the judgments made about them vary in different societies, cultural contexts, and individual experiences.

Whistleblowing raises concerns that motivate legal action to protect whistleblowers as well as to wage war against them. Whistleblowing is far more nuanced than the act of revelation. It carries profound psychological impacts before and after their action is complete. In systems where misconduct can run unchecked and run rampant, it is time to create structures as well as art in which people are offered adequate protections for their actions. Whistleblowers are typically the first ones in a hierarchy to witness and bring attention to illegal activity as well as to be first to suffer consequences such as job loss, demotion, and legal action.

Whistleblowing is the act of revealing information to a party unaware or currently in a state of inaction about any present wrongdoing within a hierarchy. Whistleblowers can act individually or within a group of like-minded people seeking to commit themselves to reveal the truth. The manner of disseminating information can be completed internally within the hierarchy or through outsiders in hopes of bringing attention and more importantly action to their complaints.

A route that people can take to support whistleblowers to raise awareness and visibility of their plight is through making art surrounding the subject of whistleblowing or about specific

stories. In recent years stories depicting whistleblowers have taken place heavily within cinema whether it be a biopic or even a documentary. Films such as *Silkwood*, *The Whistleblower*, *Citizen Four*, and *The Report* humanize their subjects allowing an audience to understand and attempt to perceive the whistleblower outside of literature and newsreels. Especially as new generations grow older it gives people the opportunity of connecting to whistleblowers from the past, stories that have lost their fizz in the media, and instead of being lost to time cinematic depictions preserved in time, serve as a conduit for immersing someone into the past and allowing them to glean into hierarchical issues of that time.

In cinematic depictions, whistleblowers tend to be portrayed usually as a hero battling injustice within institutions that are supposed to uphold moral values. For example, in *Silkwood* and movies like *The Report*, some of the common themes depicted are hierarchical conflict with senior members as well as their contemporaries exemplifying how one's workplace can become hostile towards them and how authoritative figures can act to stifle the power of the whistleblower through demotions or punishment. Retaliation for their actions is core to the story and for capturing the intrigue of the audience by trying to put the audience right next to the whistleblower throughout the piece so that they can empathize with the whistleblower. A dissenting opinion for whistleblowers in cinema is the artistic liberty that is taken by its creators which may seek to embody these experiences but nonetheless adapt their perspective and emotions to the piece which is why these pieces are so striking but also skewed in a sense and in certain ways is a distortion of reality.

An artist that exemplifies work supporting free information and whistleblowing is Trevor Paglen. Paglen's work is concentrated on illicit practices carried out mainly by the US government. Through the written word as well as the camera lens Paglen is "documenting the

American surveillance state of the 21st century. From his vantage points at various public locations, he photographs distant military facilities, capturing extreme telephoto images of stealth drones” (“Trevor Paglen.”) and even contributed as a cinematographer on Citizen Four. It is through Paglen’s work that the public can begin to think for themselves and consider questions about data collection, hierarchical power as well as human rights. Working on Citizen Four is a direct effort in assisting and supporting the actions of the whistleblower, Edward Snowden, as his wish was to publicize information reports through media for the public and Paglen did so in a manner that was respectful to the whistleblower (Limpong, Andrew.)

Benjamin Franklin was one of the first whistleblowers in American History demonstrating the historic precedent of whistleblowing in the United States. Franklin, blew the whistle on colonial governor Thomas Hutchinson of Massachusetts who was sending false information to England urging that “repressive measures be taken to maintain colonial subjection.” The local representatives for Massachusetts were outraged and petitioned England for the removal of Hutchinson and were replaced by another man. Franklin’s experience highlights the plight of whistleblowers to come as he advocated for the identity protection for the person that handed him the incriminating letters about Governor Hutchinson. Franklin was also an ‘object of scorn’ and at the time was stripped of his position as Postmaster General for his participation in calling out Governor Hutchinson. (Looby, Christopher)

The backlash against whistleblowers can be found internationally but in the case of The United States, the Espionage Act of 1917 has been used to wage war against whistleblowers for over one hundred years. This law was created during World War One to prevent any spying, literature, thoughts, or opinions that would negatively impact the war effort and this law has been amended throughout the years to serve those in power in fear of losing the reins of control. This

act of legislation is used in recent years to severely limit the free speech rights of small groups of people for the apparent interest of the majority (DeWitt, Petra).

The Espionage Act allows the government to prosecute anyone who can be seen as posing a clear and present danger to the welfare of the state. Daniel Elsberg, Thomas Drake, Chelsea Manning, Julian Assange, and Edward Snowden are by far some of the most well-known whistleblowers affected by the Espionage Act. The individuals mentioned above all revealed classified information that was highly critical of US war efforts or government programs that were violations of apparent American ideology and regardless of the truth or wrongdoing exposed this law was used to viciously attack Elsberg, Drake, Manning, and to this day continually against Snowden and Assange. The Espionage Act is almost like a precision point form of Martial Law, “instead of protecting individual freedoms from the abuses of an oppressive government, the act and its interpretation in the courts established society’s well-being as more important than individual rights, especially speech deemed potentially harmful to the nation’s security,” and by national security in today’s context, it means if the government is waging war whether it be kinetic warfare or ideological if an individual’s interference is perceived as a threat that person can be victimized by the government (DeWitt, Petra).

However, regardless of the backlash cast against these famous whistleblowers, their actions can inspire others. Daniel Elsberg in contemporary contexts was a huge inspiration for many as he revealed the horrors of the Vietnam War. (Clear and Present Danger I think) Edward Snowden has said himself that the actions of Chelsea Manning were inspiring for him to consider his position (Gerstein, Josh). These examples provide that the actions done by whistleblowers inspire others to speak their minds to bring attention to issues in their workplace.

The world of whistleblowing is full of motion picture-worthy scenarios, but it is vital to recognize examples that could apply to the common person because they represent commonplace conflicts with which one could easily find oneself to be involved in. For example, a psychiatrist, Dr. Jose Matthews was employed at a local Veterans Affairs hospital had blown the whistle in 2014 for abhorrent workplace practices. One of the most egregious offenses cited was that “the St. Louis VA psychiatry unit were shortchanging veterans by working half days,” which undermines the health of the local community. Dr. Matthews is noted in this case because he felt that his employer retaliated against him by demoting him “for the second time” since his complaint was filed. It is important to note that Dr. Matthews was one of the sixty-seven whistleblowers that year who were trying to speak out about issues in their organization and faced retaliation from their employer (Bernhard, Blythe).

In another local case, a whistleblower's actions in their school led to a change of policy in their organization. A student teacher for Southeastern Louisiana University, Cynthia Thompson who reported on public prayers being held by the school. The school reached a settlement with Thompson which included their re-enrollment back into the school’s program after she complained of being “flunked” by the school after speaking out. The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) investigated and banned the reported practices in the school. Joe Cook, assistant director from the ACLU said “this affirmed the right of free speech for students who want to exercise their fundamental right to speak out in a manner of public interest”, and because of Thompson’s actions change was enacted within an organization they served in to extinguish practices unnecessary for educational purposes. This victory may be small and went down a path that caused unfair treatment for Thompson but nonetheless created an outcome that served to be good for the public (Student Whistleblower Gets Another Chance).

All whistleblowers are affected by what is known as the psychological contract which breaches into a person's life in a myriad of ways for better or worse. The psychological contract is “an implicit, and unwritten, understanding between an individual and their organization, based on beliefs, and perceptions, about what obligations each party expects to give and receive (Scheetz, Andrea M, and Timothy J Fogarty). A psychological contract is alive in present in all employees but in citizens as well pertaining to our perception of the world that we live in, relating to but not limited to our government, jobs, and even our loved ones, it’s a fancy way of describing our ideals that may be fulfilled or tarnished leaving a person traumatized or satisfied. An important factor that is symbiotic of the psychological contract is organizational citizenship which entails behaviors outside one’s personal responsibility that serve to improve the hierarchy. When one begins to think of terms of psychological contracts one may start to understand the action or inaction of others (Scheetz, Andrea M, and Timothy J Fogarty).

A violation of a psychological contract can take a toll on an employee so much that it demotivates them reporting wrongdoing within their hierarchy. In hierarchies related to business, Joseph Schumpeter says the “creative destruction” “endemic” of capitalism causes hierarchies to adapt in radical ways or be erased from the markets resulting in organizational changes that oftentimes would be the destruction of the original psychological contract. The breaking of this contract is usually emotionally traumatic making the employee grow disinterested in the hierarchy. Since reporting violations such as fraud or other mismanagement is not an employee’s direct responsibility, their likelihood of going out of their way to assist a hierarchy that is currently failing them becomes more unlikely. This may sound exciting for the irresponsible manager whose job is to ensure the success of the company but creates another problem where

within a hierarchy money must be spent on other departments that have to regulate things such as fraud instead of its current employees (Scheetz, Andrea M, and Timothy J Fogarty).

Organizational workplaces can invest in a work environment that is far more favorable for increasing employee reporting of malpractice within the hierarchy. Whistleblowers are responsible for approximately forty percent of fraud reports in a company. Acts of organizational citizenship behaviors contribute to these kinds of reports as they are decisions that oftentimes bring attention to specific dangers in their workplace. To have sufficient organizational citizenship is to have intact psychological contracts. In periods of stress, employers could check in with their employees on an emotional level to see if improvements could be made to make the worker feel valued or safe for instance. It is in the act of communication where the managers can assess their employee's feelings to orchestrate an environment that works best for everyone involved. Managers need to have discussions with their employees because, "the eyes and ears of honest employees motivated to protect the company from fraudsters is the first and best line of defense" (Scheetz, Andrea M, and Timothy J Fogarty).

The action of whistleblowing is a paradox for certain members of the hierarchy. In an age where legal protections have advanced in several ways for whistleblowers, many companies "are required to protect the individuals that attack them" especially when it is tarnishing the organization's image. (Cailleba, Patrice, and Sandra C Petit) Senior members within the hierarchy are charged with the responsibility of upholding the current interests of an entity they work for as well as actively protecting the person that is potentially going to disrupt the entity's aspirations. With identity being a major contention of whistleblower's rights, the paradox thickens as an official is supposed to not reveal "the enemy at the gates" to their peers. Although many entities may seek to destroy a whistleblower to preserve their public dignity it may be in

their best interest to properly handle the situation internally so that the public fallout is not nearly as damaging. “If Society is to promote democratic ideals and individual commitment, it is crucial to stand up for whistleblowers, who are the very incarnation of this” (Cailleba, Patrice, and Sandra C Petit), which is why when we fail whistleblowers, we as a society are also failing the system that is supposed to hold us together. The conundrum that faces superiors may be a challenge, but it is one where that person can choose to side with democratic values or not.

The United States Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) exemplifies a proactive measure in aiding incentivization for whistleblowers to protect against major cases of fraud within the US. Shortly after Black Tuesday, the SEC was commissioned by the US government to prevent massive fraud to evade disasters like the Great Depression. Legislation which the SEC enforces is to award whistleblowers who report an excess of one million dollars in fraud and will be granted financial compensation for their efforts in alerting the government to the fraud (SEC). In 2018 there was a record of over Fifty-million dollars allotted to a whistleblower for reporting knowledge unknown to the SEC (SEC). Even more recently in October 2020 an agency that detected fraud was awarded over sixty million dollars for their work. It could be argued that such high compensation for a report could lead to perhaps ill intentions for some whistleblowers, but these reports can save our economy billions of dollars from frauds of this scale. An important addition to mention in this program is that it is a common part of the practice for the SEC to not disclose any personal information related to the whistleblower which is immensely important in protecting the whistleblower from any potential blowback from their choices.

In an era of truthiness where passionate opinions can be formed from pieces of misinformation some media abuse the term whistleblower as well as draw power away from its sense of authenticity. A very recent and strong example of this is the viral video known as

Plandemic, which details a “conspiracy theory that Anthony Fauci of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, billionaire Bill Gates and various other malefactors are spreading a manmade novel coronavirus because they enjoy making people sick and hope to profit on an eventual vaccine,”(Drehle, David V), which features supposed whistleblower, Judy Mikovitis. The director uses Mikovitis’ apparent expertise to push ideas such as closing the beaches to the people because according to her the ocean carries ‘microbes’ that would help in the fight against Covid-19. Propping up people like Mikovitis takes away from the legitimacy of other whistleblowers allowing the term to become politicized to support unsubstantiated anti-vax ideology. Situations like Plandemic will spur up more and more often within the world of modern media and the answer for the solution should not result in silencing voices but educating minds(Drehle, David V).

In addition to the subject of truthiness, certain actions completed by whistleblowers will have a varying cultural perspective depending on where one lives in the world where the reporting may be skewed by their press. For example, there was a comparative analysis interested in noting the differences between how The New York Times and The People’s Daily, an acclaimed newspaper column based out of China reported on the evolving case of Edward Snowden. The analysis states that both newspapers covered the situation quite neutrally but there are some interesting differences in reporting styles. A difference listed was that The New York Time’s used far more ‘conflict framing’ in their articles, which is more of a focus on disagreements people or groups may be having whereas The People’s Daily wrote their stories significantly more than the New York Times with far more ‘morality frames’ and ‘responsibility frames’ which is “a way of attributing responsibility for a cause or solution to either the government or to an individual or group”(Chu, Wentau).

Another major difference between The New York Times and The People's Daily was their sources. The Times' main sources were "U.S. officials, Experts, Local media/Journalists, Russian officials, and Barack Obama, using far more US officials in their coverage. The People's Daily "relied mainly on other officials, Experts, Local media/ Journalists, U.S. officials, and Russian officials" but used far more international officials than The Times in their reporting. This study shows how the Snowden case in The Times was far more of a domestic issue for the US whereas The People's Daily frequent incorporation of international officials views the Snowden situation as more of an international affair.

Although it was not included in their text the analysis also found that the "People's Daily used photos of banners calling Snowden "Hero" or demanding for his freedom or thanking him for his brave acts." After evaluating the differences, the analysis found that some central differences in reporting arise "from national interests, positions and cultures" which demonstrates that when digesting a news story, no matter how unbiased the sources were or how generally neutral the publications read, the framing of the story is affected by these factors, adding a bit of a smokescreen to what the truth may really be in media and for whistleblowers, once again politicizing their actions for an audience (Chu, Wentau).

Supporting our whistleblowers is deeper than the act of revelation. No one is born destined to be a whistleblower and it is a responsibility that in many occasions is a burden for most people. Psychologically, whistleblowing stems from the corruption of our ideals and becomes something that one can live with or find a way to find balance within their hierarchy. Individuals must stand up for their fellow cohorts when wrongdoing of any kind is discovered. If and whenever possible artists should take the opportunity to aid a person who's trying to get their story out when no one will listen. Additionally, societies must be aware of how those in power

can carry endless and brutal legal action against a whistleblower for trying to democratize information even if it's in the interest of the public good which ironically will be the very reason claimed to carry out retaliation against the whistleblower. Whistleblowers exist in a system of checks and balances where accountability is needed most as well as serving as damage control for when the will of a hierarchy begins to violate the one's it is supposed to serve. An artist could be a step removed from the hierarchy they critique but like a whistleblower, the artist addresses similar issues to add to the culmination of accountability and awareness to the endangerment that hierarchies impose upon civilians.

In August of 2020, I knew I was going to be featured in an online web gallery and since the inception of this project, I already knew that I wanted the medium of my piece to be a video. What I desired to discuss regarding themes and concepts was the first conflict I encountered so I created a list of subject matter that I thought was interesting. The topic that captured my attention was the act of whistleblowing as well as whistleblowers themselves. Whistleblowing was something I felt I could maintain my excitement for as well as it is a subject I had been familiar with for several years. The idea that a single or several individuals' actions could lead to a change or at the very least a change in public perception about a person or an entity is very inspirational as the feeling of being powerless is such a common and debilitating affliction. It also strikes me that whistleblowing can be a divisive subject especially when it involves governments as if some people do not want to be privy to important information about the dealings of the officials. The subject matter is fruitful in its coverage so when I began to dive into the research there was a large cache of information that stimulated my desire for continual discovery.

In the early stages of researching, I discovered many whistleblowers who got into headlines but were not capturing national attention. Which is understandable since my attention span could be very short so why should societies be any better nevertheless the idea of Local Whistleblowers was very interesting to me since most whistleblowing cases I was familiar with were stories of espionage or sensitive government information. There were plenty of stories that I came into contact with that featured motion picture-worthy scenarios such as James Hansen who outed NASA and the Bush administration in reference to climate change. Yet, one thing that was inspiring was the stories of teachers who spoke out about their faculty, psychiatrists who complained about working conditions, students who saw a fraught system and reported on it. The local whistleblowers remind me that institutions at any level have things to hide and just like the

most powerful establishment, e.g. the United States government these local institutions have often exercised abuse of power by penalizing their local workers.

At this point after a lot of my preliminary research was well underway I imagined my project would take the shape of a narrative film with an actor. I began watching videos to try to find a way to visually portray what I wanted to discuss. One of the most central things I was looking for was something that seemed visually appealing and simultaneously something that appeared to be pretty low budget. Some pieces I took inspiration from were Ari Aster's *Basically*, *C'est La Vie*, DIS's *You've Wasted a Good Crisis*, Jordan Strafer's *PEP*, and Trevor Paglen's work. I also viewed an assortment of feature-length movies about whistleblowers to view how they treat the subject. These views aided me in beginning to imagine how I could realistically produce something within the confines of a global pandemic and especially a severely limited number of potential collaborators which would be a requirement for this project.

I strongly desired to create something with a character with a long monologue with a long list of locations. I was going to write a script and find a crew to assemble. Yet during a pandemic, my accessibility to a full crew was severely limited since the people that I could collaborate with were scattered across New York which meant that planning a shoot that would more than likely require over three days of shooting as well as traveling to many different locations would be a big ask and tough to coordinate with everyone's busy schedule.

Finding an actor was also tough, I reached out to a few places online with no response and received some interest from some 'actors' but they were people that were interested in acting but have no acting experience. These people were blasé about the project as they were hard to get in touch with and seemed more excited about the offer than actually working for several shooting days and showing up for rehearsals as well. I considered using backstage, an online platform

where it is easy to find actors. I was apprehensive about recruiting strangers since at this point there were no vaccines and working with a stranger seemed like risky business. The main reason being that I had no impression of how they conducted their personal lives and could be out exposing themselves to whoever and then arriving at my set infected.

I had been working on a script for a while and strongly disliked most of what I was producing, it was a struggle to come up with a good story I was excited about. My laptop is shot so I can't take it out anywhere so I always had to write inside where I live which was becoming sort of a prison, I felt stuck. I remembered in my research reading about the costly business of off-label marketing in the pharmaceutical industry. I called my father who was a pharmaceutical representative for Merck and asked him about the subject, he shared a lot of details about off-label marketing.

I thought that I could make a character based on some of the reports I read about a whistleblower in the industry and it was easier to think of this character as a real person, what their life may have been like since I can remember what it was like for my Father as I was growing up. I tried to imagine what would happen to my father if he had blown the whistle on a company as powerful as Merck pharmaceuticals. I thought about how anxiety-inducing it would be if they didn't know it was him but they were still keeping their eyes open as to who it could be.

After creating a script even though I was not entirely impressed with its quality I felt that I had enough to start considering how I was going to shoot it. Also, around this time I saw the documentary *Welcome to Chechnya* by David France. This feature documentary employed the use of deep fake technology to mask the identity of their subjects. A deep fake is when a subject's face is replaced by a different subject's face in either photo or video. Deep fakes

completely alter the original subject's identity which seemed to be a perfect tool since the character I created was a whistleblower who had not been discovered. If this person were to tell their story it would make sense that they would want their identity to be protected which is a major concern for many whistleblowers. I was ecstatic when I saw deep fakes in *Welcome to Chechnya* since this visual device connected well with my subject matter in regards to concealing one's identity. I thought that the use of a deep fake could uplift my visual strategy and would be a lot more effective for the visuals for the story. However one of my concerns was that I was not using it to protect someone's identity compared to *Welcome to Chechnya* where this decision was far more crucial for the subjects involved.

What changed my mind? Well after thinking it just seemed to me that deep fakes were a cinematic device and for years the visual language in cinema on record has been something that is open-sourced and has evolved where many don't even question what is being borrowed anymore. From something as simple as the Kuleshov effect, where reaction shots for the first time are established, to the use of Green Screen, Prosthetics, Expensive Cranes, etc. Someone did it first and another person thought to themselves well that's a good idea let me try it. That's part of the beauty of innovations in filmic language.

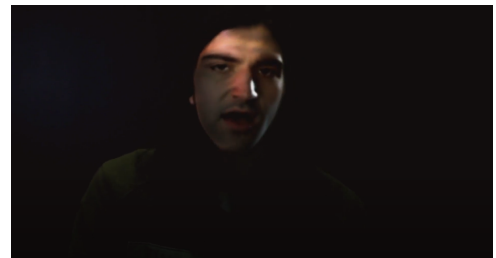
I also thought about how conventional it became for documentaries to hide people in shadows or to simply blur a person's face which further removes a viewer from the subject matter and distorts their connection. The deep fake was perfect since most of the facial expressions could be maintained, a human face would be there instead of shadows or blurry pixels.

Then there were concerns of course on how a deep fake I could make would turn out. After watching an interview with David France where they showed how they captured deep fakes which used a nine-camera setup while subjects pantomimed. I only had access to one

camera which was a limiting factor when comparing our processes. France also had access to someone who was an extraordinary programmer who built a program to conduct deep fakes which for me was daunting.

I looked up various software, even considered After Effects plugins which ranged from forty dollars to about two-hundred dollars.. The more affordable plug-in did not appeal to me since the results seemed quite robotic. I discovered Deep Face Lab on Github and spent time watching people make deep fakes. It was free and from what I observed was that the results were pleasing. It did come to my attention that deepfakes would take a significant amount of time to process. I decided to do a test. I took two old videos, in this case, each video I selected were from two different cameras, two different locations, light, etc. It took around a day to process the deep fake and the results were pretty good, not completely satisfying since the movements of the mouth were rather unnatural. I then screen-tested it and had a little over ten people watch the first experiment.

The reactions to my experiment were pretty good. Most people seemed to notice there was something off about the face, some people were pretty quick to ask about the deep fake although they expressed they were on the fence about asking because they weren't completely sure. This information was positive since the worst outcome would have been that this makes me uncomfortable or who is that man who glued someone else's face onto their own like Hannibal Lector.



For shooting the deep fake I hypothesized that I would get the best results if I had control over the environment in which I was shooting in. I contacted a sound stage and booked an

appointment. The sound stage was a perfect fit since there were no windows and only artificial lighting. There was the added benefit of the sound stage being equipped with a green screen so that I could then edit it in backgrounds and have this character traverse through many different locations which would help maintain the visual appeal of the piece.

I never found an actor and at this point, I knew the script the best so I decided that I would play this character. I could not remember the lines either in time for the shoot so I found a teleprompter online for free and fed the script into that and would go over the lines again and again. I struggled with my performance at times, my first few takes were quite stoic, unenthusiastic, and overall just boring. I managed to get a couple of takes where I actually employed a better use of my vocal inflection and was more emotional about what I was speaking about. Acting in my piece definitely helped the immersion for myself but I truly would have liked to have been able to work with an actor in a collaborative effort.

There were around three camera setups that day, we had access to the space for about four hours. Each setup there was a simple protocol to help ensure that the deep fake would come out as best as possible. First I would frame a shot and have the person who was going to have their face placed over mine sit there for at least twenty minutes since that is the recommended amount of time you wanted to get visual data for a decent deep fake. They would sit there and I had them make all sorts of facial expressions as well as having them read the script off the teleprompter to further assist in collecting visual data, to increase the similarities in our facial movements.

After they pantomimed for those twenty minutes I would step in and do my lines in the same exact spot, got someone to record sound so the audio quality was satisfying.

Then I would change the position of the camera and have my deep fake volunteer sit in, pantomime for twenty minutes, get the data, and then I would do my performance. I was able to do a closeup, a medium close and a wide shot. I also had some time to get b-roll. The b-roll was an act of improvisation. Since I did not plan out the b-roll I used a hammer for example that was already at the sound stage, I danced, stared into the camera, and performed random physical movements so that the edit could go a little bit more smoothly which was crucial since I was severely limited in shots and angles. If I chose to set up an angle such as a profile I knew that the software I was dealing with would have a very difficult time mapping the face onto it so everything had to be done in frontal shots.

I like to say that doing Deep fakes is a lot like baking a cake. You have the ingredients but you're still not sure how it will turn out, minor things can change the outcome. Firstly, the shot of the closeup I discovered that the setup did not work, it sucked, most of the face was changed but it just looked really bad, this was disheartening because this shot was planned to help evoke a two-camera interview setup. Fortunately the wide and the close up turned out pretty great so those were very usable. The faces on those shots had a minimal amount of distortion and the mouth movements seemed to be very natural. The b-roll took a long time to process and a lot of the b-roll footage had a lot of distortion issues so whatever b-roll I had was pretty limited after the deep fake process was complete. I would say on average a clip would take about a full day to process into a deep fake so in total deep faking all of the clips took over a week.

After the deep fakes finished processing I began my first attempt in editing my footage into a sequence. I quickly realized that editing sequentially with the script was not working. I felt that the sequence of the script felt like an emotionally exhausting public service announcement. I would highlight the parts of the script that were covered and tried to save the script in the edit.

Also since I had a very limited amount of shots the edit was looking very boring so I started to scale into my images and move the subject to different parts of the screen so that there was more movement. After that, I had some footage I had shot with a drone and I added that to the green screen background which definitely made the visual presentation more exciting to view.

After the first edit was complete I went to a couple of respectable artists whose opinion I valued and they shared some extremely valuable critiques. For example, none of them knew it was a deep fake and they suggested to outwardly say it was a deep fake somewhere in the video. They shared a similar concern that I had that it was too much of a public service announcement and that the fictional elements of the story were the strongest. This critique was probably the hardest to deal with since I already had used all of the fictional elements from my script. Lastly, they did not fully agree with the drone shots as the background.

After digesting what was said about the first edit I went out and filmed more background shots at this location, a large business complex where there was a case of corporate fraud so it felt like a fitting place to shoot. I spent several hours stealing shots in the parking lot, all around the building, and other neighboring offices. These locations felt more appropriate since these could be believable spaces that the character would be occupying. I struggled with adding more fiction to the story. There was a consideration of fitting more fictional elements via voiceover but there was not a lot of space to fit that and make it work in my opinion.

I decided to shoot again and outlined some new fictional experiences for my character. However, this time I had recently bought lavalier microphones so I was able to run sound for myself, I had someone sit in for me so I could set up the shot and I improvised what I had outlined for a little over a half-hour. It took some time to imagine myself as this character, there were a couple of good takes, some shots looked sloppy so there was a small amount of footage

that even looked usable in my opinion. I processed the usable footage into a deep fake and it turned out pretty well, save for a few digital artifacts but even in the feature documentary that inspired me there is the occasional digital artifact so in essence, it was a viable shot.

Although this shot was not filmed in a sound stage, it was a different setting, with no green screen, a different outfit, this shot clashed with everything else so I did not really see a way where I could intercut it that well. Although I'm sure there would have been a way to intercut but ultimately I decided it would be a better fit for this shot to be the ending. Since it was so visually different from the rest I realized that I had to find an effective way to segway to this moment. Which is when sound and text came into play. Finding music was challenging for the green screen monologue as I searched for music that was in the public domain where options are limited and unfamiliar. After trying out many different electronic songs, obscure experimental compositions none of which was fitting this section of the piece I discovered that jazz music was something that was working. I applied a jazz song I found and that became the music for the first portion of the green screen. The ending scene was particularly easy to imagine what could fit for it. I searched a lot of classical music featuring violins, pianos and found a song that was light, melancholy, bittersweet and it fit this section to my satisfaction.

Afterward, I made the decision to add text at the beginning of the video as well as text in between the green screen arc and the ending arc accompanied by fading into the new music. My desire for the text was not to be heavy-handed and to have especially when it came to disclosing that a deep fake had been applied to this footage. For the exposition, I decided to say "identities have been altered for the sake of storytelling," which I hoped implied



that there was a fictional element as well as an indication that the subject's identity had been altered. I did not want to say outwardly that it was a deep fake because it felt like spoon-feeding information and I try to respect my audience's intelligence as well as deep fake being a term that often has negative connotations.

In the final edit of the video, there was a myriad of changes from the first cut. This time I really increased the number of times I scaled into the subject where at first I was far more conservative with punching in. I assembled a sequence where it looked visually satisfying without any b-roll which was a good sign since the b-roll was going to serve to enhance whatever was already there. The b-roll is what really took the video to the next level as some of that footage matched what was being discussed on screen. It also allowed me to use takes where the performance was stronger and have other visuals as a twenty-second clip took place. Since b-roll was a bit of an afterthought, during the edit I discovered if I could go back to the sound stage that I would film way more b-roll to better match the story because by the end of the first arc I was running out of usable b-roll. After the edit I reviewed the video a dozen times trying to look for any issues, the rhythm, the cuts, and the length all seemed to be in good shape.

The next step was to premiere the video at the virtual web gallery, now titled, "Your Cars Extended Warranty". I believe the screening went well and I received some positive feedback from the audience. It was a very rewarding experience to finally have it screened but at the same time, it felt insignificant. I say insignificant because so much time and energy went into this project for a five-minute screening which passed by in a flash and then the next video played. Yet, it is what I expected because I would like to be able to submit this work as an experimental piece to some film festivals and if I created a video that was too long it would hinder this project's ability to continue to live on. If the piece were any longer I think it would have dragged

on longer than necessary so by having it be finished in under five minutes was overall the right decision in my mind. I still have many sections of the script that never made it into the final cut but for the aforementioned reasons, they just were not effective enough to survive.

Reflecting on my work I feel that I used my position as an artist to create conversation about my concerns regarding whistleblowing with my audience. Perhaps most whistleblowers may not be able to make art about their experiences but at least I can say that I did a service to help amplify their cause. Work surrounding whistleblowers will continue to have to be covered in response to the ongoing war that is being waged against the democratization of information which is a struggle I am happy to add myself into. Unless there is some sort of divine intervention I expect that institutions will not cease from protecting themselves and penalizing those who speak out when leaks occur, especially in a time when the institution perceives itself at a point of criticality. My art is not the answer to the conflict but it is a statement that is superior to 'no comment', a phrase that is abused by hierarchies and often creates a seemingly endless amount of informational purgatories that stave off resolutions from hierarchical conflicts. The act of supporting whistleblowers should not be divisive, it should be unanimous.

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