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**The Revolution Will Be Twitterized  
Color of Law  
By David A. Love, JD  
BlackCommentator.com Editorial Board**

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If I learned one thing from the recent rebellions in Iran, it is this: the Iranian people have a lot of heart. These are folks you would want with you when times get tough. Strong folks, to be sure, particularly the women. They have endured beatings from the Ayatollah's paramilitary motorcycle gang, the Basij. And some took bullets for the cause for which they were fighting. The graphic videotaped killing of a young woman, 26-year old [Neda Soltan](#), by sniper fire became a painful symbol of the struggle for democracy in that country.

The masses fighting against the military in the streets of Tehran and other Iranian cities knew what to do when their rights were at stake. It was an appropriate reaction by an outraged public to a stolen election, in which incumbent president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad was fraudulently reselected by the religious rulers to another term of office. Despite the groundswell of support for reformist candidate Mir Hossein Mousavi, the regime informed the people that Ahmadinejad won in a landslide. But it is really about more than that now, as this is a part of a resistance movement which was years in the making. And in that regard the people's democratic tendencies and thirst for human rights provide a spectacular model for all of us to follow.

Iran's citizens exist in a regressive theocracy that has carved out a paltry window for democracy in the form of these sham elections. They decided they were tired of living in a repressive society, a nation-as-prison branded as an international pariah and a sponsor of terrorism. They decided they grew weary of living in a place in which people are disrespected and disregarded, where women are second or third class citizens who are beaten in the streets with sticks like dogs, and brownshirt thugs mete out street justice on behalf of the religious elite.

But in the U.S., a putative democracy, when elections are stolen, the people retreat into a world of escapism and multimedia diversions, of celebrity gossip and reality television, of mindless consumerism (at least before the recession hit), and become

sidetracked by issues of little or no concern. In November 2008, however, they appeared to take back their democracy, although the jury is still out.

The Iranian theocratic establishment responded to their people's cries with brutality through the barrel of the gun. Unprepared for the first ever revolution conducted through Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube, through text messaging, cell phones and camera phones, the regime of Ayatollah Khomeini cracked down on political dissidents. It imprisoned reform leaders and journalists, jammed the phone lines, and waged a media blackout on coverage of the protests. And demonstrators were threatened with the death penalty. But what we all soon learned was that the world is one big network. You cannot hide the truth in a technological world with a 24-hour news cycle. Independent citizen-journalists still got the word out to the greater global community.

Iran's religious rulers have a problem: their moral bankruptcy, corruption and illegitimacy have been revealed for all the world to see. They are trapped in the 1979 revolution which unseated the Shah - Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi, a puppet monarch installed by the Americans and the British - from power. And oddly, the current regime remains fixated with a revolutionary mindset in which the U.S. is the great Satan, and the U.S., Britain and the European nations are to blame for the current unrest.

Now granted, the U.S. and Britain have to shoulder much blame for what has happened in Iran over the years. In 1953, the CIA and British SIS staged a coup d'état, in which Mohammed Mossadeq, the democratically-elected prime minister of that country, was overthrown (Mossadeq was a nationalist who was committed to nationalizing the country's British owned petroleum industry). Installed by his Western puppet masters, the Shah - with his personal opulence, autocratic rule, suppression of political dissent, and regime of violence - paved the way for the Islamic revolution that overthrew him and cast him into exile. The protests against the Shah in the streets in 1979 mirror the protests against the rule of the mullahs today in 2009. And as Malcolm X would say, chickens came home to roost.

But it would seem that blaming the U.S. and others can only go but so far. And those in the streets who want relations with America apparently are not buying that worn out message. The Iranian revolutionary government suffers from the same disease that infects many other revolutionary regimes, and it harkens back to a theme in George Orwell's book, [\*Animal Farm\*](#) - revolutions can produce governments that are just as oppressive as, if not more malicious and loathsome than, the regimes they replaced. Throw off one yoke of oppression, and replace it with another, only under a different name or shape or color. Oddly, the [Iranian constitution](#) provides for a number of freedoms, including the protection of human dignity, equality before the law for men and women, freedom of belief, freedom of the press, of association and assembly, a ban against torture, and no arrests without due process. But you would not know this these days, as rhetoric and reality have parted ways, and staying in power is more important than following the will of the people, and even their own laws.

President Obama, whose Cairo speech surely provided a catalyst for the Iranian protests that followed, issued the following statement:

*"The Iranian government must understand that the world is watching. We mourn each and every innocent life that is lost. We call on the Iranian government to stop all violent and unjust actions against its own people. The universal rights to assembly and free speech must be respected, and the United States stands with all who seek to exercise those rights."*

*As I said in Cairo, suppressing ideas never succeeds in making them go away. The Iranian people will ultimately judge the actions of their own government. If the Iranian government seeks the respect of the international community, it must respect the dignity of its own people and govern through consent, not coercion.*

*Martin Luther King once said - "The arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice." I believe that. The international community believes that. And right now, we are bearing witness to the Iranian peoples' belief in that truth, and we will continue to bear witness."*

Applying Dr. King's message of human rights to the streets of Tehran, Obama's message is a cautionary one, yet a hopeful one. No one knows what will happen next, and this is for Iranians to decide. But surely, repressive regimes everywhere are observing the Twitter revolution taking place in Iran, where brutality and injustice can no longer take place in dark, secret, hidden dungeons like the old days. Those were the days when the law was the law because the angry and sadistic old crackpot at the top said it was so, and everyone else be damned.

But now, the people beg to differ.

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