



American Expression E0647 Julian Assange

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Julian Assange is an Australian journalist, computer programmer, and the founder of WikiLeaks, an international organization known for publishing classified and confidential information from anonymous sources. Born on July 3, 1971, in Townsville, Queensland, Australia, Assange gained prominence as a prominent whistleblower and transparency advocate.

Assange founded WikiLeaks in 2006 with the mission of providing a platform for whistleblowers and insiders to leak sensitive documents from governments, corporations, and other organizations, with the goal of promoting transparency and accountability. WikiLeaks gained global attention in 2010 when it released a massive trove of classified U.S. military and diplomatic cables, known as the "Cablegate" leaks. This release revealed confidential communications and sensitive information, sparking debates on government secrecy and civil liberties.

Assange's work with WikiLeaks earned him both admirers and critics. Supporters praised him for shedding light on hidden truths and alleged government wrongdoing, while critics accused him of endangering national security and compromising the safety of individuals named in the leaked documents.

In 2010, Swedish authorities issued a European Arrest Warrant for Assange on allegations of sexual misconduct. He sought refuge in the Ecuadorian Embassy in London in June 2012 to avoid extradition to Sweden, asserting that he feared being handed over to the United States, where he could face prosecution for his involvement in the WikiLeaks releases. Assange remained in the embassy for nearly seven years until April 11, 2019, when he was arrested by British authorities after Ecuador withdrew his asylum status. He was subsequently found guilty of breaching bail and sentenced to 50 weeks in prison.

In May 2019, the United States Department of Justice unsealed an indictment charging Assange with multiple counts related to the unauthorized disclosure of classified information. The U.S. government alleges that he actively conspired with former U.S. Army intelligence analyst Chelsea Manning to hack into classified computer systems and leak sensitive documents.

Assange's extradition to the United States was initially halted in January 2021 by a British judge, citing concerns over his mental health and the risk of suicide if he were to be sent to the U.S. to stand trial. However, the U.S. government appealed the decision, and Assange's legal situation remained uncertain.

Throughout his legal battles, Assange has garnered significant international attention, with debates focusing on freedom of the press, government transparency, and the implications of prosecuting journalists for publishing classified information.

In conclusion, Julian Assange is an Australian journalist and the founder of WikiLeaks, known for its controversial role in publishing classified information from anonymous sources. His work has sparked debates on government transparency and freedom of the press, and he has faced legal challenges and criticism for his actions. Assange's extradition to the United States remains a contentious issue, raising important questions about the intersection of journalism, national security, and the protection of whistleblowers.

#### Questions for Discussion

1. What are your thoughts on the role of organizations like WikiLeaks in promoting transparency and accountability in government and corporate sectors? Do you believe that the publication of classified information serves the greater good, or do you see potential risks and consequences?
2. The case of Julian Assange has raised complex legal and ethical questions surrounding freedom of the press and the prosecution of journalists. What are your views on the balance between national security concerns and the protection of whistleblowers and journalists who expose government secrets?
3. The WikiLeaks "Cablegate" leaks in 2010 triggered widespread debates on the right to privacy and the impact of digital data leaks. How has this event influenced the way governments and organizations handle sensitive information, and what measures have been taken to prevent future large-scale leaks?
4. Julian Assange sought asylum in the Ecuadorian Embassy to avoid extradition, citing concerns over potential prosecution in the United States. What are the implications of this situation on the concept of diplomatic asylum and the rights of individuals facing extradition?
5. The international response to the Julian Assange case has varied significantly, with some viewing him as a whistleblower and others as a criminal. How does the perception of Assange's actions differ across different countries and cultures, and what do these varying perspectives reveal about global attitudes toward government transparency and freedom of information?