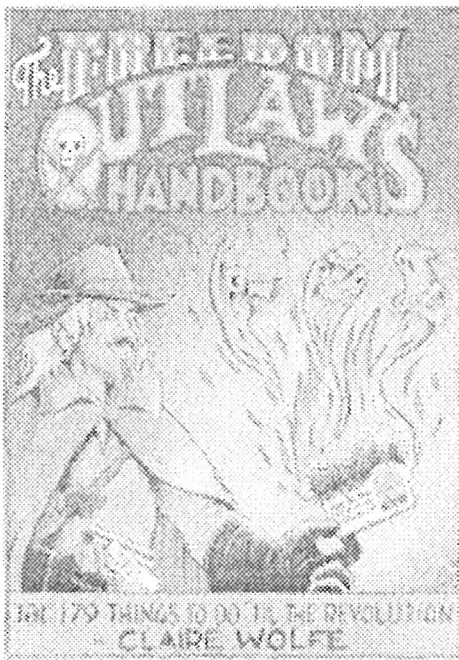


Wolfe, Claire. **The Freedom outlaw's handbook: 179 things to do 'til the revolution.** Port Townsend, WA: Loompanics, 2004. 186p ISBN 1-55959-241-X paper \$20.00



American culture currently finds itself in an odd position. On one hand, we live with constant threats of invasion to our privacy. Identity theft is a growing problem, the Patriot Act dictates that the government has license to legally snoop into our reading interests, and Internet trading results in our personal information being spread about and sold to other companies.

On the other hand, we find ourselves living in a culture of fear, constantly on the alert for terrorists, kidnapers, child molesters, and, of course, the big, bad government. Should we be working to protect our freedom and privacy, or should we be resisting the urge to lock our doors, arm ourselves, and strap ourselves and our children into seatbelts and helmets just about everywhere we go? Lean too far to one side, and you risk being branded as paranoid, but lean too far to the other side and you might ultimately pay an awful price for your naïveté.

Claire Wolfe, who previously wrote *101 Things to Do 'til the Revolution* and *Don't Shoot the Bastards (Yet)*, has taken those two books out of print, and compiled their ideas (along with some new ones) into *The Freedom Outlaw's Handbook: 179 things to Do 'til the Revolution*. Wolfe also produces a web blog, "Wolfesblog" (<http://www.claire-wolfe.com/blog.html>), and writes frequently for *Backwoods Home* magazine, *S.W.A.T.* magazine, and the organization Jews for the Preservation of Firearms Ownership. She also recently published her first novel, *RebelFire: Out of the Gray Zone*. Wolfe's writings are both deathly serious and bitingly funny, and it is tough not to be drawn into her world. And, yes, she lives in a cabin in the woods, owns several guns, stockpiles food, silver, and gold, and refers to Social Security Numbers as "slave brands."

She also makes a lot of sense. Wolfe recommends living frugally and without debt, being self-reliant, refusing to hand out personal information without good reason, and resisting blind faith in governmental agencies. She implores us to turn off our televisions, connect with our communities, and use alternative sources of energy and power. Then again, she goes on to suggest keeping an arsenal of "basic weapons," having food and disaster kits handy in case of a biochemical or nuclear attack, and learning how to change your identity in case the need arises. In her chilling chapter on self-reliance, Wolfe even states that "the first thing you have to ask yourself is: Could I eat Fido or Fluffy if things got really bad?" Don't panic—Wolfe herself admits that she'd sooner starve than eat her pets, and points out the necessity of adding a long-term supply of pet food to the stockpile. Still, this stuff is a bit harder to digest than the idea of installing solar panels or unplugging the TV. Perhaps Wolfe is right—perhaps we do live under constant threat of attack and invasion, both personal and global. Perhaps preparing for the worst is simply realistic. But is living this way truly healthy? Is it better to sleep with the doors unlocked, defying the culture of fear, or are we just sheep who can't be bothered to panic until the barn is on fire?

Of course, this is a book of suggestions, not commands, and any of us are free to pick and choose as we please. Wolfe even identifies three types of activists—agitators, ghosts, and moles—and tailors her suggestions to these types. We can't all be agitators, and most of us probably wouldn't enjoy it much, but more covert resistance activities suitable to moles or ghosts might seem more manageable and

realistic. So, if you're not ready to bury guns and gold in the dirt outside your handmade cabin, you might still want to be a little more cautious with your personal information and try to consume a little less.

The Freedom Outlaw's Handbook is worth a read, if not for the suggestions, then at least to help us determine how we really feel about Big Government. And, should our inner libertarian become outraged, a list of

things we can do about it is right there. On the other hand, those of us who decide that stockpiling food and medicines isn't worth it might at least decide to turn off the television and purchase a compost bin. Either way, at least something is getting done. —Jennifer Downey

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