

The NSA Does Not Care About Your Personal Life. Sorry.



By [Brian Frydenborg](#) October 5, 2013

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The NSA revelations [of late](#) seem to have really struck a raw nerve with [millennials](#), apparently [reducing](#) President Obama's [support among](#)

[them](#). At least online and in the media (certainly on this site), many millennials seem to be vocal critics of these NSA policies and are taking up the banner of civil liberties. The criticism is not necessarily a bad thing and the support for civil liberties is generally a good thing, and to be applauded. At the same time, *South Park*, as it frequently tends to do, was able to present these issues in a unique light that provided some much needed skewering when it comes to the self-righteousness with which they are discussed.

Some perspective is sorely needed on this whole NSA thing. Enter Eric Cartman.

In this season's premiere, Cartman accurately exhibits the online exhibitionism that characterizes millennials above any other generation. Millennials are the most open, sharing-with-the-public generation on record. They [consistently are happy to broadcast](#) all manners of [intimate and personal details online](#) where pretty much anyone, [including employers](#), can and do see them. This includes [sexting](#), which [often involves](#) sending [naked pictures of yourself](#) to that special, or semi-special, someone, and the practice [isn't infrequent among](#) either [teens](#) or [college students](#).

That's what makes Cartman so funny in this episode. In the beginning, he's SO mad about the NSA spying scandal, yet he is having his conversations about this on speakerphone (much to the annoyance of Kyle).

Cartman starts to organize action against the NSA, but all by advertising on his blog and online. "Did you guys read [1984](#)?" he asks on speakerphone. "I didn't read it either, but I saw the puppet show version at Casa Bonita."

Nervous that the NSA is spying on his phone and social media conversations, he starts to share pretty much all his thoughts through a new online service called "Sh*tter," which, through antennae installed in his head, broadcasts his thoughts in his voice out loud, online, and to anyone else on "Sh*tter."

He finally decides to go to the NSA (undercover, of course) and this is where it gets really funny. In a true mockery of the paranoid fantasy some have of the NSA, thousands of bureaucrats go through every email and text and tweet of Americans, looking for threats.

After dealing with one such threat, Cartman is dismayed to find that the NSA file on him is small and that he is deemed "fat and unimportant."

Furious that he is not deemed an imminent national security threat, Cartman literally "blows his whistle" to call out the NSA, whereby the NSA reveals that it has Santa hooked up to a central computer, so they can know for sure who's naughty, and who's nice.

What I loved about this is how much young people today seem to think it's all about *them*. Well, it's not all about *you*. The NSA doesn't care about *you*. It's trying to keep the country safe from attacks, not spy on your dates. No one is rounding up political protesters, and if that ever happened, the outcry would be so great that the NSA might even be disbanded.

It's unrealistic to think that, in our system, some 1984 or [Stalinist](#)-style spy game is being waged against America's citizens by its own government. Only 12 instances of personal abuse in 10 years came [up in a review](#), and while the system needs to be more open and transparent, including [the FISA court](#), and while there should be more safeguards, *South Park* can hilariously show Americans that their government is far less interested in our personal lives than we think.