

# Whose Country Is this? Is the Constitution Even Welcome Here Anymore?

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*“The first time it was reported that our friends were being butchered there was a cry of horror. Then a hundred were butchered. But when a thousand were butchered and there was no end to the butchery, a blanket of silence spread. When evil-doing comes like falling rain, nobody calls out ‘stop!’ When crimes begin to pile up they become invisible. When sufferings become unendurable the cries are no longer heard. The cries, too, fall like rain in summer.” — Bertolt Brecht, Selected Poems*

There are days I wake up, and I’m not sure what country I live in anymore.

There are days I wake up and want to go right back to sleep in the hopes that this surreal landscape of government-sanctioned injustice, corruption and brutality is just a really bad dream.

There are days I am so battered by the never-ending wave of bad news that I have little outrage left in me: I am numb.

And then I get hold of myself, shake myself out of the doldrums, and remind myself that it’s not yet time to give up: America needs our outrage and our alertness and our tenacity and our fierce determination to remain a free people in a land where justice matters.

This is still *our* country.

Don’t just sit there.

Do something.

When you hear that [the U.S. government “lost” 1,475 migrant children within its care over a three-month period](#), in some cases [handing them off to human traffickers](#), don’t just chalk it up to incompetent bureaucrats.

The Trump Administration’s [plan to separate immigrant children from their parents at the border](#) should outrage anyone with a moral conscience, especially in light of the government’s latest revelation that it is unable to account for the whereabouts of 1500 of those children.

Mind you, this is not just a Trump problem. A recent report indicates that under President Obama’s watch, migrant children were allegedly beaten, threatened with sexual violence and repeatedly assaulted while under the care of Customs and Border Protection (CBP) officials. According to *Newsweek*,

[“Border authorities were accused of kicking a child in the ribs and forcing a 16-year-old girl to ‘spread her legs’ for an aggressive body search.](#) Other children accused officers of punching a child in the head three times, running over a 17-year-old boy and denying medical care to a pregnant teen, who later had a stillbirth.”

ACT. It doesn’t matter what your politics are or where you stand on immigration issues. There are some lines that should never be crossed—some government actions that should never be tolerated or justified—no matter what the end goal might be, and this is one of them. Demand that Congress stop playing politics and endangering children’s lives.

When you read that Attorney General Jeff Sessions [wants police to use stop and frisk tactics randomly against Americans](#) without even the need for reasonable suspicion, don’t just shake your head disapprovingly.

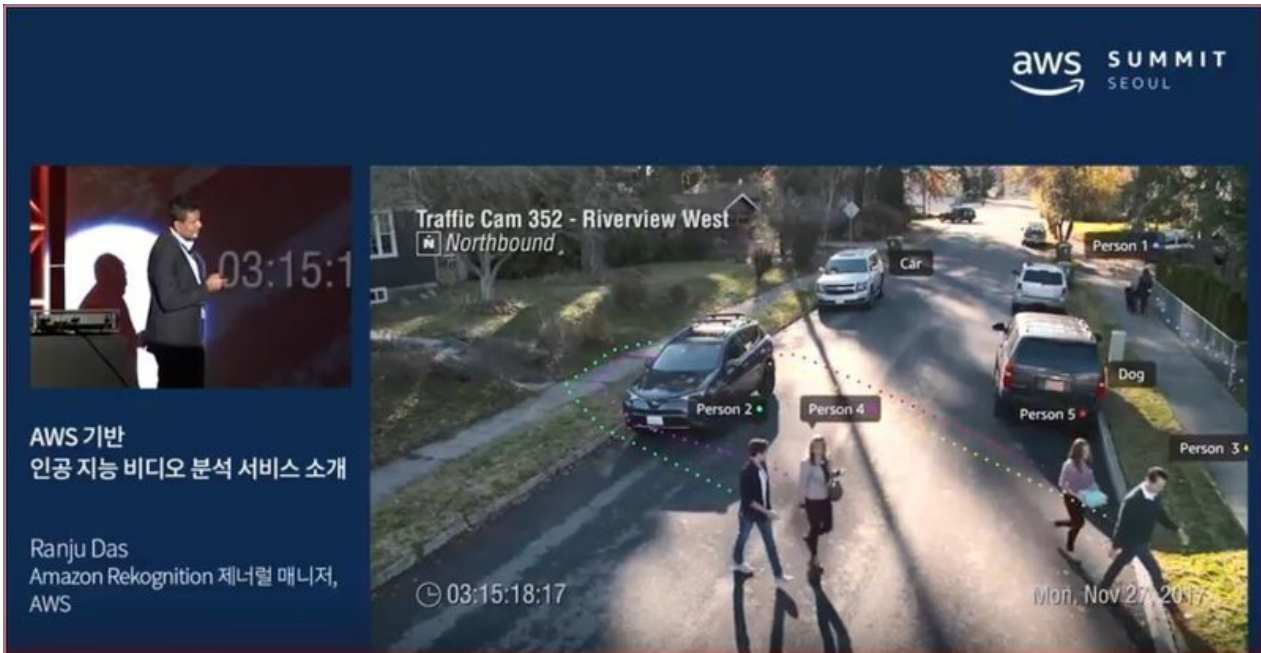
ACT: Call the Justice Department (202-353-1555) and read them the Fourth Amendment:

“The right of the people to be secure in their persons, houses, papers, and effects, against unreasonable searches and seizures, shall not be violated, and no Warrants shall issue, but upon probable cause, supported by Oath or affirmation, and particularly describing the place to be searched, and the persons or things to be seized.”

After you watch the video of how the Transportation Security Administration, unfailingly tone deaf to the spirit of the Fourth Amendment, [subjected a 96-year-old World War II veteran in a wheelchair to a patdown](#) that left no part of her body untouched, don’t just seethe in silence.

ACT: [Contact your representative in Congress](#) and [file a complaint](#) on the TSA’s egregious practices. When old women and little children are being groped by government agents, things have gone too far. In light of revelations that the TSA “has [created a new secret watch list to monitor people who may be targeted as potential threats at airport checkpoints simply because they have swatted away security screeners’ hands or otherwise appeared unruly,](#)” you can expect even more headache-inducing behavior in the near future.

When you find out that Amazon is selling police [real time facial recognition software](#) that can scan hundreds of thousands of faces, identify them, track them, and then report them to police, don’t just shrug helplessly.



In this video, Amazon’s Ranju Das demonstrates real-time facial recognition to an audience. It shows video from a traffic cam that he said was provided by the city of Orlando, where police have been trying the technology out. (Amazon Web Services Korea via YouTube/Screenshot by NPR)

ACT: Harness the power of your wallet to urge Amazon to favor freedom principles over profit motives. It’s only a matter of time before these programs are used widely here in the U.S. They are already being used and abused abroad.

For instance, Amazon’s Rekognition software was [used by broadcasters to identify attendees at the royal wedding](#) of Prince Harry and Meghan Markle. Chinese police have used similar facial recognition tools to scan crowds at rock concerts, malls and gas stations in order to catch alleged lawbreakers. Just recently, Chinese police used the technology to capture a suspect who had been living under a pseudonym after he [failed to pay for \\$17,000 worth of potatoes](#). Chinese schools are even employing the [facial recognition cameras in classrooms](#) to alert teachers to students who aren’t paying attention.

When you hear [Sessions bragging about how much he loves civil asset forfeiture](#), which allows the government to seize Americans’ personal property—money, cars, homes and other valuables—without having to first prove that any criminal conduct has taken place, don’t just take his word for it.

ACT: Do your own research. You’ll soon discover that because of the corruption that surrounds this abusive program, countless innocent Americans have been robbed blind by government agents out to get rich at their expense. Billions of dollars have been taken without probable cause. Anthonia Nwaorie, a Texas nurse who had saved up \$41,377 to start a medical clinic for women and children in Nigeria, [had her life savings seized by Customs Agents who refused to return the money unless she agreed to pay their “expenses.”](#) Six months later, even though Nwaorie was never charged with a crime, she’s still waiting to get her money back.

When you hear about armed [Denver police pulling a gun on a school official and conducting a classroom-to-classroom search for a missing student](#) at an area high school, don’t just

thank your lucky stars your childhood was more idyllic. Likewise, when you hear that the [lieutenant governor of Texas thinks the solution to school shootings is fewer school doors](#) (entrances and exits), don't just marvel at the short-sightedness of government officials.

ACT: Say "enough is enough" to government-sponsored violence. The systemic violence being perpetrated by agents of the government has done more collective harm to the American people and our liberties than any single act of terror or mass shooting. Violence has become the government's calling card, starting at the top and trickling down, from the more than 80,000 SWAT team raids carried out every year on unsuspecting Americans by heavily armed, black-garbed commandos and the increasingly rapid militarization of local police forces across the country to the surveillance drones that are already crisscrossing American skies.

When you read about how 28-year-old Andrew Finch of Kansas [answered a 5 pm knock on his front door only to be shot in the head and killed ten seconds later by a police sniper](#) because a SWAT team responded to a prank "swatting" phone call with full force, don't just tsk-tsk over the senseless tragedies arising from militarized and police and overzealous SWAT teams. Not only did police refuse to identify the officer who pulled the trigger, but he was also never charged with Andrew's death.

ACT: [Demand accountability](#). If any hope for police reform is to be realized, especially as it relates to how SWAT teams are deployed locally and holding police accountable for their actions, it must begin at the community level, with local police departments and governing bodies, where citizens can still, with sufficient reinforcements, make their voices heard.

The rise of SWAT teams and militarization of American police—blowback effects of the military empire—have unfortunately become entrenched parts of American life. SWAT teams originated as specialized units dedicated to defusing extremely sensitive, dangerous situations. As the role of paramilitary forces has expanded, however, to include involvement in nondescript police work targeting nonviolent suspects, the mere presence of SWAT units has actually injected a level of danger and violence into police-citizen interactions that was not present as long as these interactions were handled by traditional civilian officers. Nationwide, SWAT teams have been employed to address an astonishingly trivial array of criminal activity or mere community nuisances: angry dogs, domestic disputes, improper paperwork filed by an orchid farmer, and misdemeanor marijuana possession, to give a brief sampling. In some instances, SWAT teams are even employed, in full armament, to perform routine patrols. All too often, botched SWAT team raids have resulted in one tragedy after another for American citizens with little consequences for law enforcement.

When you find out that [police and other law enforcement agencies are accessing the DNA shared with genealogical websites and using it to identify possible suspects](#), don't offer up your DNA without some assurance of privacy protections.

ACT: Protect your privacy. It's not just yourself you have to worry about, either. It's also anyone related to you who can be connected by DNA. These genetic fingerprints, as they're called, do more than just single out a person. They also show who you're related to and how. As the Associated Press [reports](#),

"DNA samples that can help solve robberies and murders could also, in theory, be used to track down our relatives, scan us for susceptibility to disease, or

monitor our movements.”

By accessing your DNA, the [government will soon know everything else about you that they don't already know](#): your family chart, your ancestry, what you look like, your health history, your inclination to follow orders or chart your own course, etc. Capitalizing on this, [police in California, Colorado, Virginia and Texas use DNA found at crime scenes to identify and target family members](#) for possible clues to a suspect's whereabouts. Who will protect your family from being singled out for “special treatment” simply because they're related to you? As biomedical researcher Yaniv Erlichwarns, “If it's not regulated and the police can do whatever they want ... they can use your DNA to infer things about your health, your ancestry, whether your kids are your kids.”

In the face of [DNA evidence that places us at the scene of a crime](#), [behavior sensing technology](#) that interprets our body temperature and facial tics as suspicious, and government surveillance devices that cross-check our [biometrics](#), [license plates](#) and DNA against a growing database of unsolved crimes and potential criminals, we are no longer “innocent until proven guilty.”

Finally, when you hear someone talking about how [two American citizens in Montana were detained by a Border Patrol agent because he overheard them speaking Spanish](#) at a gas station, don't just shake your head in disgust.

**The American Civil Liberties Union said Monday it is looking into an incident in which a Border Patrol agent [detained and questioned a woman and her friend](#) — both U.S. citizens — when he overheard them speaking Spanish at a gas station in Montana.**

The incident occurred early Wednesday morning at a convenience store in Havre, Mont., a town in the northern part of the state, near the border with Canada.

Ana Suda said she and her friend, Mimi Hernandez, were making a midnight run to the store to pick up eggs and milk. Both are Mexican American and speak fluent Spanish, and they had exchanged some words in Spanish while waiting in line to pay when a uniformed Border Patrol agent interrupted them, Suda said.

“We were just talking, and then I was going to pay,” Suda told The Washington Post. “I looked up [and saw the agent], and then after that, he just requested my ID. I looked at him like, ‘Are you serious?’ He's like, ‘Yeah, very serious.’ ”

Suda said she felt uncomfortable and began recording the encounter with her cellphone after they had moved into the parking lot. In the video Suda recorded, she asks the agent why he is detaining them, and he says it is specifically because he heard them speaking Spanish.

Screenshot from The Washington Post

ACT: Remind yourself (and those around you) that despite the polarizing, racially-charged



rhetoric being tossed about by President Trump, this is still a nation whose strength derives from the diversity of its people and from the immigrants who have been seeking shelter on our shores since the earliest days of our Republic. As President Ronald Reagan recognized in one of his last speeches before leaving office:

“We lead the world because, unique among nations, we draw our people—our strength—from every country and every corner of the world. And by doing so we continuously renew and enrich our nation... Thanks to each wave of new arrivals to this land of opportunity, we’re a nation forever young, forever bursting with energy and new ideas, and always on the cutting edge, always leading the world to the next frontier. This quality is vital to our future as a nation. [If we ever closed the door to new Americans, our leadership in the world would soon be lost...](#) Those who become American citizens love this country even more. And that’s why the Statue of Liberty lifts her lamp to welcome them to the golden door. It is bold men and women, yearning for freedom and opportunity, who leave their homelands and come to a new country to start their lives over. They believe in the American dream. And over and over, they make it come true for themselves, for their children, and for others. They give more than they receive. They labor and succeed. And often they are entrepreneurs. But their greatest contribution is more than economic, because they understand in a special way how glorious it is to be an American. They renew our pride and gratitude in the United States of America, the greatest, freest nation in the world—the last, best hope of man on Earth.”

As I make clear in my book [Battlefield America: The War on the American People](#), if the freedoms enshrined in the Bill of Rights, the first ten amendments to the U.S. Constitution, are to mean anything anymore—if they are to stand for anything ever again—then “we the people” have to stand up for them.

We cannot allow ourselves to be divided and distracted and turned into warring factions.

We cannot sell out our birthright for empty promises of false security.

We cannot remain silent in the face of ugliness, pettiness, meanness, brutality, corruption and injustice.

We cannot allow politicians, corporations, profiteers and war hawks to whittle our freedoms away until they are little more than empty campaign slogans.

We must stand strong for freedom.

We must give voice to moral outrage.

We must do *something—anything—everything* in our power to make America free again.

As Reagan recognized,

“If we lose this way of freedom, history will record with the great astonishment that those who had the most to lose did the least to prevent its happening.”

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