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Will an ICE Agent Get Away with Murder in Minneapolis?

And Can We Save Our Democracy?

A Message from the President of Americans Against Gun Violence
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On May 25, 2020, Minneapolis police officer Derek Chauvin killed George Floyd by kneeling on his neck and obstructing his airway for nine minutes while Floyd lay on the ground with his arms pinned behind his back with handcuffs. I believe that most of us who viewed the cell phone videos that were taken by bystanders of this killing and posted online didn't have to wait for a formal investigation or a jury verdict to conclude that this was an act of murder. The videos were both sickening and damning. About a year later, after a three week trial, a Minnesota jury came to the same conclusion.¹ Derek Chauvin was convicted of murder and sentenced to 22 years in state prison.²

On January 7, 2026, less than two miles from the site where George Floyd was murdered, an ICE agent, later identified as Jonathon Ross,³ killed a 37 year-old woman, Renee Nicole Good, by shooting her in the head as she was trying to drive away from the scene of an ICE "operation". A video that was taken by a bystander and that was posted online and broadcast by numerous media outlets on the day of the killing, like the video of George Floyd's murder, is both sickening and damning.⁴ I believe that most reasonable people who viewed this video probably came to the conclusion that I did - that death of Renee Good, like the death of George Floyd, resulted from an act of murder.⁵

The video shows the SUV driven by Renee Good waiting to turn right onto a partially snow-covered street. Ms. Good waves another vehicle to pass in front of her. A pickup truck, though, pulls up and stops near her driver side door, and two masked ICE agents get out of the truck. As the agents approach her vehicle, one of them orders her to "Get out of the f---ing car," and tries to force her door open. Jonathon Ross, who had already been walking around Good's SUV from the other

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side, is standing near the left front fender at this point. Renee Good begins to drive forward, steering away from Ross and the other two ICE agents, and as she does, Ross fires three shots at her in rapid succession. Good's SUV leaves the field of the video screen briefly as the videographer focuses on Ross. The camera then focuses back on the SUV which has crashed into another vehicle parked next to a snowbank a short distance away. In the brief interval between the time that shots are fired and the time of the crash, another video released a few days later includes the sound of a male voice, reportedly that of Ross, muttering, "F--king bitch."⁶

Department of Homeland Security (DHS) secretary Kristi Noem was in Texas when the Minneapolis killing occurred. Speaking at a press event near the Texas border while flanked by border guards, Noem said of the shooting:⁷

It was an act of domestic terrorism....A woman attacked them and those around them and attempted to run them over and ram them with her vehicle. An officer of ours acted quickly and defensively shot to protect himself and the people around him.

Donald Trump posted on social media:⁸

I have just viewed the clip of the event which took place in Minneapolis, Minnesota....[T]he woman driving the car was very disorderly, obstructing and resisting, who then violently, willfully, and viciously ran over the ICE officer, who seems to have shot her in self defense. Based on the attached clip, it is hard to believe he is alive, but is now recovering in the hospital.

Speaking at a press conference. Minneapolis Mayor Jacob Frey responded:⁹

They are already trying to spin this as an action of self-defense. Having seen the video myself, I want to tell everybody directly, that is bulls--t....And I have a message for ICE. To ICE, get the f--k out of Minneapolis.

Conservatives were quick to criticize Mayor Frey for his use of profanity.¹⁰ The mayor responded:¹¹

I'm so sorry if I offended their Disney princess ears, but here's the thing — if we're talking about what's inflammatory, on one hand you got someone who dropped an f-bomb, and on the other hand you got someone who killed somebody else.

I haven't yet come across any criticism from conservatives regarding the ICE

agent's order to Ms. Good to, "Get out of the f--king car," or the "F--king bitch" expletive after she was shot. On the contrary, the conservative media outlets have carefully avoided including any mention of these obscenities in their coverage of the killing. Similarly, JD Vance made no comment concerning the "F--king bitch" utterance when he reposted the video that contained it. Instead, he claimed that the video supported the Trump administration's contention that Jonathan Ross killed Renee Good in self-defense.¹²

It probably would have been better for Mayor Frey to choose his words more carefully in order to keep the focus of his comments on the fact that an ICE agent had just shot and killed an innocent resident of his city rather than diverting attention to his own profanity. I agree in principle, though, with the point the Mayor was making – and with his outrage.

The word, "obscene," is usually reserved to refer matters of a sexual nature, but the word is also defined as a descriptor of something that is "offensive or disgusting by accepted standards of morality and decency."¹³ According to this definition, I would argue not only that the killing of Renee Good was obscene, but that the blatant lies by Trump, Vance, and Noem in an attempt to exonerate Jonathon Ross and vilify Renee Good are obscene. (Other Trump sycophants were quick to join this obscene chorus.)¹⁴

I see no evidence whatsoever on the initial cell phone video or other videos and still images posted later online to suggest that Renee Good intentionally struck any ICE agent with her car or tried to "ram" or "run over" anyone. As noted above, Jonathon Ross is shown in the initial video standing near the front left fender of Good's SUV, but just before he shoots her, he steps aside as Good turns the car away from him and begins to drive forward. Another video from a different angle that was released later shows that the left front fender of Good's SUV may have made contact with Ross as she started to drive away, but if it did, it was at a very low speed, and Good was clearly steering the car away from Ross.¹⁵ Neither video captures the full path of Good's SUV between the time she was shot and the time her SUV crashed into another parked vehicle. During that time, though, it can't be alleged that Good's SUV was under her control since she was almost certainly already comatose as a result of being shot in the head. A review of all the publicly available video coverage of the incident by both the New York Times and ABC News also found no evidence that Renee Good intentionally threatened or struck an ICE agent with her vehicle.¹⁶

Far from being the evil person that Trump, Noem, and Vance portray, Renee Good was a mother of three children, including a six year old son she had reportedly

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dropped off at school shortly before she was killed.¹⁷ She had a bachelor's degree in English and had won a prestigious prize for her poetry.¹⁸ Friends, family, and neighbors described her as "a very welcomed member of our community," "a warm and loving mother," "one of the kindest people I've ever known," "extremely compassionate," and "an amazing human being."¹⁹ It was reported that she was a member of the board at her son's elementary school and had engaged with other board members in discussions concerning how to aid immigrants in constitutionally protected, non-violent resistance to aggressive, unconstitutional ICE tactics; and that she may have been participating in such resistance efforts on the day she was killed.²⁰ The specific nature of the "operation" that ICE was conducting in her neighborhood is unclear, but it had been reported the day before Good was killed that approximately 2,000 ICE agents and other DHS personnel had stormed the city and were going door to door to carry out the "largest immigration operation ever."²¹

Renee Good was also a U.S. citizen, born in Colorado, a point that was emphasized in some news reports.²² The issue of whether she was a U.S. citizen, though, is irrelevant to the fact that regardless of citizenship or immigration status, Ross had no legitimate reason to shoot and kill her.

According to some reports, Jonathon Ross, had been involved in another incident in Bloomington, Minnesota, on June 17, 2025, in which it was alleged that he'd gotten his arm stuck in a car window during an ICE arrest and had been dragged 100 yards when the vehicle sped away.²³ I won't go into detail in this message concerning this allegation, but I've reviewed the video and still photos that accompany these reports.²⁴ It's my impression based on my decades of experience as an emergency physician that the relatively minor injuries to Ross's upper extremities that are documented in the reports are consistent with him smashing and reaching through a car window. If he had actually been dragged 100 yards with his arm trapped in the window as the car sped away, though, I would have expected him to have suffered far more serious injuries than the ones documented in the reports. But even if Jonathon Ross had previously been dragged 100 yards by a car with his arm stuck in a broken window in a previous incident, it would not be justification for shooting and killing Renee Good on January 7, 2026 as she began to drive forward while steering her SUV away from him.

One week after Jonathon Ross killed Renee Good, Fox News reported that Ross had suffered "internal bleeding to his torso" as a result of being struck by Good's SUV, citing DHS Assistant Secretary Tricia McLaughlin as confirming this claim.²⁵ DHS had previously stated that Ross was treated at a hospital on the day he killed Good and released the same day. I've participated in the evaluation and treatment

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of many patients with all kinds of internal bleeding during my career as an emergency physician, but the phrase, “internal bleeding to the torso,” is one I’ve never heard before. I also don’t recall any patient with significant “internal bleeding” ever being treated and released the same day. Finally, based on all the videos I’ve reviewed, if Good’s SUV did make contact with Ross as she was trying to drive away, it would have been at such a low speed that worst injury I would have expected Ross to suffer would have been a minor bruise unless he had some serious pre-existing clotting disorder.

The videos of the killing of Renee Good sparked outrage and protests not only in Minneapolis but in other cities throughout the United States.²⁶ Minnesota Governor Tim Walz urged Minneapolis protestors to remain peaceful, warning them:

Do not take the bait. Do not allow [the Trump administration] to deploy federal troops into here. Do not allow them to invoke the Insurrection Act. Do not allow them to declare martial law. Do not allow them to lie about the security and the decency of this state.²⁷

Waltz also spoke, though, about the disturbing similarity between the Trump administration’s defense of the shooting and the passage in George Orwell’s prophetic dystopian novel, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*:

“The Party told you to reject the evidence of your eyes and ears. It was their final, most essential [command].”²⁸

Following the murder of George Floyd in 2020, federal and state officials cooperated in investigating the killing and in prosecuting the perpetrator. In addition to being convicted by the state of Minnesota on murder charges, Derek Chauvin was also prosecuted by the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) for depriving George Floyd of his constitutional right to be free from an officer’s use of unreasonable force.²⁹ In the case of the killing of Renee Good, though, Minnesota state officials revealed the day after the shooting that federal investigators were not cooperating with the Minnesota Bureau of Criminal Investigation. Instead, federal officials had told them that the FBI would be conducting the investigation of the killing entirely on its own.³⁰ JD Vance went so far as to claim that Jonathon Ross had “absolute immunity” from prosecution by the state of Minnesota because he was “a federal law enforcement official engaging in federal law enforcement action.”³¹

Minnesota Attorney General Keith Ellison³² and other legal experts³³ disagreed with Vance’s claim but acknowledged that a lack of federal cooperation would make it much more difficult for the state of Minnesota to investigate the case and

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prosecute Ross. Ellison stated that the order to prevent federal investigators from cooperating with state investigators had apparently come directly from Trump himself. Two days after the killing, when Trump was asked by reporters if he would agree to share the results of an FBI investigation with Minnesota prosecutors, Trump replied, "Normally I would, but they're crooked officials."³⁴ Ellison committed, though, to working with Hennepin County Attorney Mary Moriarty to conduct a parallel state investigation of the killing even if the FBI persisted in refusing to cooperate with his office.³⁵

FBI director Kash Patel and U.S. Attorney General Pam Bondi have been remarkably silent concerning the killing of Renee Good.³⁶ Given the history of the pair's fawning obeisance to Trump, it was exceedingly unlikely from the outset that the FBI would conduct a thorough and objective evaluation of the killing or that the U.S. Justice Department would prosecute Ross even if the FBI found overwhelming evidence that death of Renee Good resulted from an act of murder. Not surprisingly, it was reported on January 12 that the Trump administration had ordered the U.S. attorney's office in Minnesota not to investigate whether Jonathon Ross had committed a federal crime but to instead investigate whether Renee Good and her widow had ties to domestic terrorist organizations.³⁷ To their credit, six career prosecutors in the Minnesota U.S. attorney's office resigned after receiving this directive.

As of the date of this writing, no state or federal criminal charges have been filed against Jonathon Ross. On January 12, though, Minnesota Attorney General Keith Ellison filed a federal lawsuit against DHS asking the court to issue a temporary restraining order in the short term to halt all ICE operations in the both Minneapolis and Saint Paul and to declare the unprecedented surge of thousands of ICE agents into the Twin Cities unconstitutional and illegal in the long term.³⁸ In a detailed document posted on the state's website, AG Ellison pointed out the tremendous harm done by the massive ICE deployment, including the death of Renee Good, and the blatant hypocrisy in the claims by Trump and his sycophants that the purpose of the deployment was to fight corruption and crime caused by illegal immigrants. Clearly, the document points out, the purpose of the deployment is to punish Trump's political enemies in a state that he continues to falsely claim that he won in the 2016, 2020, and 2024 presidential elections.

The day after Minnesota filed the lawsuit against DHS, Kristi Noem announced that DHS was terminating protected status for Somali refugees in the United States. Noem stated:

Temporary means temporary. Country conditions in Somalia have improved to the point that it no longer meets the law's requirement for Temporary

Protected Status.³⁹

The blatant hypocrisy of Noem's statement is evidenced by the statement on the U.S. Department of State travel advisory website:

Do not travel to Somalia due to crime, terrorism, civil unrest, health, kidnapping, piracy, and lack of availability of routine consular services.⁴⁰

It's clearly no coincidence that there's a large Somali refugee population in Minneapolis and that one of Trump's fiercest critics in the U.S. House of Representatives is Democrat Ilhan Omar, who is a native of Somalia. Omar immigrated legally to the United States in 1995 and became a naturalized citizen in 2000. She has represented Minnesota's Fifth Congressional District, which includes the city of Minneapolis, since 2019. Trump has described Somali's in general as "Garbage," and has said of Representative Omar, "She's garbage; her friends are garbage."⁴¹

On January 14, U.S. District Judge Katherine Menendez, who had been appointed by President Biden, announced that she would not grant the temporary restraining order requested by AG Ellis to halt ongoing ICE operations in the Twin Cities, but she noted that her refusal to grant the temporary restraining order should not be considered a "prejudgement" on the merits of the rest of the case.⁴² On January 16, in response to a lawsuit against DHS by six Minneapolis residents who alleged they were illegally detained or arrested by ICE agents, Mendez did grant a temporary restraining order barring ICE agents from detaining or arresting protestors unless they were committing a crime or obstructing officers.⁴³ Menendez set a timetable of January 18 for the federal government to respond to the Minnesota state lawsuit and January 21 for Minnesota to reply to the federal response. In the meantime, however, the Trump administration has sent approximately 1,000 more ICE agents into Minneapolis,⁴⁴ and Trump has threatened to invoke the 1807 Insurrection Act and deploy U.S. military troops into the city.⁴⁵ Also, the DOJ has announced that it's pursuing criminal investigations against Minnesota Governor Tim Walz, AG Keith Ellison, Hennepin County Attorney Mary Moriarty, Minneapolis Mayor Jacob Frey, and St. Paul Mayor Kaohly Her, alleging that these officials have interfered with federal law enforcement.⁴⁶ Governor Walz commented, "The only person not being investigated for the shooting of Renee Good is the federal agent who shot her."

It's difficult to overstate the importance – not only to Minnesota and its Twin Cities, but to our entire country - of the question of whether Jonathon Ross will be prosecuted and convicted for killing Renee Good.

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From the point of view of our country's epidemic of gun violence, ICE tactics have opened a whole new category of officer-involved shootings. Ninety-five percent of people in the United States who are killed by law enforcement officers are killed with guns.⁴⁷ Although the manner in which George Floyd was killed was an exception to this rule, the high profile nature of the George Floyd murder served as a catalyst for nationwide reforms in law enforcement policies concerning the use of all forms of lethal force, including guns. An in-depth study conducted by researchers at Stanford University found, for example, that by 2025, 93% of the police departments in the nation's 100 largest cities had policies prohibiting their officers from shooting at fleeing suspects unless the suspects posed an imminent threat to officers or others around them.⁴⁸ If ICE had such a policy and Jonathon Ross had followed it, Renee Good would still be alive today. The Stanford researchers specifically noted, though, that during the 2024 presidential campaign, Trump had explicitly stated his intention to "give our police their power back" and to "give them immunity from prosecution." The authors concluded that given Trump's current control of the executive and legislative branches of our government, "federal legislative initiatives to regulate police practices are effectively foreclosed for the foreseeable future."⁴⁹ (The Stanford authors didn't mention that Trump also has virtual control over the judicial branch of the federal government, including three justices Supreme Court justices (Gorsuch, Kavanaugh, and Coney Barrett) he nominated and three others (Roberts, Alito, and Thomas) who also almost always side with him.)

It's worth mentioning at this point that it makes no sense for a law enforcement officer to shoot at the driver of a vehicle that the officer believes is about to run over him or her. The vehicle will still continue on its path even if the officer fatally wounds the driver. In fact, if the officer shoots the driver in the head, the fatally injured driver may reflexively step harder on the gas as a result of what is known as "decerebrate posturing."⁵⁰ Instead of wasting time shooting at the driver, the officer should try to jump out of the way or take refuge behind a large fixed object.

It also endangers bystanders when an officer shoots at a vehicle that is driving away from him or her. If the officer succeeds in seriously wounding the driver, the vehicle will continue out of control and may kill or seriously injure bystanders in its path. If any of the officer's shots miss the driver, they may hit bystanders either directly or by ricochet.

In the case of Renee Good, not only was there no legitimate reason for Ross to shoot her from the point of view of self-defense, by intentionally shooting her in the head as she driving away from him, Ross endangered everyone in the potential path of her SUV. The one fortunate aspect of the killing is that Good's SUV crashed into an unoccupied, parked vehicle instead of striking one of the many

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bystanders in the area.

A study by the Wall Street Journal (WSJ) analyzed 13 incidents since July of 2025 in which ICE or Border Patrol agents shot at civilians inside their automobiles.⁵¹ In addition to Renee Good, one other person was killed, and at least six others were wounded. Five of the people who were shot were U.S. citizens. One of the drivers in the 13 incidents was later discovered to have had a concealed handgun in her car, but the driver, a woman who is a U.S. citizen, never brandished the gun during the incident despite being shot by the agent.⁵²

The DHS claimed that all 13 shootings were justified. Six people were charged with assaulting a federal officer, but charges were later dropped in three of the cases, including the case of the woman with a gun. The WSJ report doesn't state whether the other three people were convicted. No federal agent was charged with a crime.

Video records were publicly available in four of the 13 shooting incidents, but relevant agencies wouldn't release videos to the WSJ in the other cases. The WSJ reported that in all four cases in which videos were available, the characteristics were the same:

Agents box in a vehicle, try to remove an individual, block attempts to flee, then fire.

Based on their investigation, the WSJ authors might have reasonably added another sentence to the above summary: "Then DHS lies about what happened."

The other fatal shooting described in the WSJ report occurred in the Franklin Park suburb of Chicago on September 12, 2025, during a large ICE operation in the Chicago area.⁵³ An undocumented 38-year-old immigrant from Mexico, Silverio Villegas Gonzalez, was pulled over by ICE agents after dropping his two young children off at school. As the agents attempted to force Mr. Gonzalez out of his car, he started to drive away, and as he did so, one of the agents shot Gonzalez in the neck.

DHS claimed the ICE agent who shot Gonzalez suffered serious injuries as a result of being dragged by the car. Video footage, though, doesn't clearly show either of the officers being hit or dragged by the car.⁵⁴ After Gonzalez was shot, his car crashed into a truck. Another video shows the two agents, with no signs of injury except for a small tear in one of the agent's pantlegs, trying to pull Gonzalez's lifeless body out of his car. When a city police officer arrived at the scene, the agent who was later described by DHS as sustaining serious injuries

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told the police officer, "I got a cut, nothing major."⁵⁵

DHS also claimed that Gonzalez was "a criminal illegal alien with a history of reckless driving." In fact, though, Gonzalez had worked as a cook in the Chicago area for 20 years and had no criminal record other than minor traffic offences.⁵⁶ Illinois Governor JB Pritzker called for an investigation of the killing, but the Franklin Park Police Chief said he would not investigate a federal officer.⁵⁷ DHS issued a press release one week after the shooting entitled, "DHS Sets the Record Straight on Gross Smears Against Ice Officer Who Was Seriously Injured in Line of Duty and Shooting in Chicago During Traffic Stop."⁵⁸ Needless to say, the agent who killed Mr. Gonzalez was never charged with a crime.

I believe that if Jonathon Ross is not prosecuted for murder, as the crime is defined under Minnesota law,⁵⁹ for killing Renee Good, and that if the courts don't halt the Trump administration's assault on cities and states governed by Trump's political opponents, it will send the message to Trump and his administration, to ICE and Border Patrol officers, and to all U.S. residents, that armed federal agents can literally get away with murder as they implement the Trump administration's fascist agenda; and that any one of us who they perceive to be standing in their way is at risk of being persecuted, at best, and getting shot and killed, at worst.

I'm not being cavalier in my use of the term, "fascist agenda." In March of last year, I wrote an essay entitled, "When Fascism Comes to America." In that article, I noted that during just the first few months of his second presidency, Trump and his administration had already demonstrated characteristics in most of the 14 categories described in a study of notorious 20th Century dictators, including Adolph Hitler.⁶⁰ Within a short time of my essay being published on the website Common Dreams in April,⁶¹ Trump and his administration had demonstrated characteristics in every category. The "ICE operations" orchestrated by Trump and his MAGA disciples in Minneapolis and other large U.S. cities are typical of the behavior of fascist regimes.

Fascist regimes identify scapegoats as a unifying cause. They promote bold-faced lies in an effort to rally the people into a unifying patriotic frenzy over the need to eliminate an invented common threat or foe, such as racial minorities and liberals. And they promote the lies that it's necessary to sacrifice human rights in order to achieve security; that government agents who violate human rights are patriots; and that those people who dissent from government propaganda or resist human rights violations are traitors.

In the case of ICE operations, Trump and his sycophants promote the bold-faced lie that undocumented immigrants are disproportionately responsible for crime in

our country. It has been well-documented, including in previous studies sponsored by the National Institute of Justice, that undocumented immigrants have a lower rate of involvement in criminal activity, including violent crime, than U.S. born residents.⁶² They also have a lower rate of criminal activity than Trump himself, who was convicted in May of 2024 of 34 felony counts of falsifying business records in order to cover up hush money payments to an adult film actress for an alleged affair;⁶³ and who almost certainly would have been convicted of election interference for his efforts to overturn the result of the 2020 presidential election had his cronies on the Supreme Court not granted him immunity from prosecution.⁶⁴

Trump and his administration also promote the lie that the “radical left” is responsible for most political violence in the United States. For example, immediately following the killing of Renee Good, Trump posted on social media:

The reason these incidents are happening is because the Radical Left is threatening, assaulting, and targeting our Law Enforcement Officers and ICE Agents on a daily basis. They are just trying to do the job of MAKING AMERICA SAFE.”⁶⁵

In fact, however, a study by the Cato institute found that lethal political violence in the United States was committed by individuals or groups with right-wing affiliations six times more often than by those with left-wing affiliations.⁶⁶ Furthermore, the lawsuit filed by Minnesota against the DHS points out that if the purpose of ICE operations was to make America safe, Trump would be ordering large scale ICE operations preferentially in cities governed by his political allies.⁶⁷ Instead, he’s been ordering them almost exclusively in cities and states governed by his political opponents.

Trump and his sycophants have repeatedly described ICE agents as being “patriots,” while accusing those who oppose ICE operations as being “domestic terrorists.” It should be remembered that Trump also called the January 6 insurrectionists “great, great patriots.”⁶⁸

Following the killing of Renee Good, Representative Jamie Raskin of Maryland, the leading Democrat on the House Judiciary Committee, sent a letter to Attorney General Pam Bondi and DHS Secretary Kristi Noem asking how many January 6 insurrectionists had subsequently been hired by their agencies.⁶⁹ Raskin noted in his letter that DHS recruiting materials for ICE agents contain rhetoric similar to that used by white supremacist organizations like the “Proud Boys.” He also noted concern that DHS was offering a \$50,000 signing bonus and a “relaxed vetting process.” Following the announcement of the signing bonus, a message appeared

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on a social media account linked to the Toledo, Ohio chapter of the Proud Boys, “Toledo Boys living high on the hog right now!”⁷⁰

In his letter to Bondi and Noem, Raskin cited two known examples of January 6 participants having been hired by the DOJ. Prior to being granted clemency by Trump, Jared Wise was standing trial for taking an active part in the insurrection. Wise entered the Capitol building illegally and was recorded on law enforcement bodycams taunting police, calling them “Nazis,” and yelling “Kill ‘em, kill ‘em, kill ‘em,” as other rioters physically attacked officers. After being granted clemency by Trump, Wise was hired by Bondi as a senior advisor in the DOJ.⁷¹

The second example cited by Raskin was an attorney named Ed Martin who live-tweeted from the insurrection that it was like “Mardi Gras in DC.” Raskin noted in his letter that Martin is now head of the DOJ Weaponization Working Group.

In his letter to Bondi and Noem, Raskin also provided innumerable well-documented examples of gross abuses of the constitutional rights of U.S. residents, including citizens and non-citizens alike, committed by the ICE agents that Trump and his disciples call “patriots.” Instead of responding with the information Raskin requested, though, concerning the numbers and identities of January 6 insurrectionists who have subsequently been hired by the federal government, DHS assistant secretary Tricia McLaughlin responded with the accusation that Raskin’s letter was “reckless, disgusting, and unhinged.”⁷²

I believe that the people who Trump and company accuse of being “domestic terrorists” for opposing his fascist agenda are the true patriots in our country. In my opinion, it’s the “ordinary” people, like the late Renee Good, who stand up for the constitutional rights of everyone in our country who deserve the accolades. The individual constitutional rights that are being trampled by Trump and his agents include, but are not necessarily limited to, the Article I, Section 9 constitutional guarantee of the right of *habeas corpus*, the First Amendment rights to free speech, freedom of the press, freedom of peaceful assembly, and freedom to petition the government for redress; the Fourth Amendment protection against unreasonable search and seizure; the Fifth Amendment guarantee of due process and protection against self-incrimination; the Sixth Amendment guarantee of a speedy and public trial and representation by counsel; the Eighth Amendment prohibition against cruel and unusual punishment; and the Fourteenth Amendment right to equal protection under the law. The Minnesota lawsuit against the DHS also notes that the Trump administration’s deployments of masses of federal agents into states without the states’ consent is a violation of the Tenth Amendment guarantee of state sovereignty.

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I'm not the first person to make the case that Donald Trump is a fascist. Veteran journalist Bob Woodward, best known for teaming with fellow journalist Carl Bernstein in investigating and reporting the 1972 Watergate scandal that led to the resignation of President Richard Nixon, wrote in his 2024 book, *War*, about a conversation he had in March of 2023 with retired Army General Mark Milley. Trump had chosen General Milley as Chairman of the Joint Chief of Staffs during his first presidency. Woodward quoted Milley as telling him:

I had suspicions when I talked to you [in 2021] about his [Donald Trump's] mental decline and so forth, but I now realize he's a total fascist. He is the most dangerous person to this country.⁷³

Woodward wrote that General Milley paused, then reiterated, "A fascist to the core!" Following his description of the above conversation with General Milley, Woodward added, "I will never forget the intensity of his worry."

General Milley had been photographed on June 1, 2020, walking beside Trump in military fatigues toward Lafayette Square in Washington DC where the National Guard, under Trump's orders, forcibly removed demonstrators who were protesting the murder of George Floyd five days earlier. During a commencement speech to graduating students at National Defense University ten days later, though, Milley angered Trump by publicly issuing an emotional apology to the graduates and the American people for accompanying Trump to Lafayette Square. Milley told the graduates:

I should not have been there. My presence in that moment and in that environment created a perception of the military involved in domestic politics. As a commissioned uniformed officer, it was a mistake that I have learned from, and I sincerely hope we all can learn from it. We who wear the cloth of our nation come from the people of our nation, and we must hold dear the principle of an apolitical military that is so deeply rooted in the very essence of our republic.⁷⁴

In his retirement speech in September of 2023, Milley made an obvious allusion to Trump's dictatorial aspirations, stating that military members take an oath to defend the country against all enemies, foreign and domestic, and adding:

We don't take an oath to a king, or a queen, or to a tyrant or dictator, and we don't take an oath to a wannabe dictator.⁷⁵

Within hours of Trump taking office again in 2025, General Milley's portrait vanished from the hall in the Pentagon where it had been hanging beside the portraits of other past chairs of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Trump's Defense

Secretary, Pete Hegseth, subsequently announced that he was revoking Milley's security clearance, cancelling the security detail that was assigned to protect Milley from an assassination threat by Iran, and ordering an investigation into allegations that Milley had engaged in unauthorized communications with Chinese military leaders.⁷⁶

Despite Trump's obvious anger at being called a fascist by General Milley, Trump seemed surprisingly jovial after his meeting on November 21, 2025, with newly elected New York Mayor Zohran Mamdani, who had referred to him as a "fascist" and as a "threat to democracy" during his mayoral campaign. At a press event immediately after the unexpectedly cordial meeting, as Trump was seated at his desk in the Oval Office with Mamdani standing beside him, a reporter asked Mamdani if he still felt that Trump was a fascist. Before Mamdani could reply, Trump laughed and said, "That's OK, you can just say yes."⁷⁷

Following the killing of Renee Good, however, Trump no longer seemed to be in a joking mood about being called a fascist. On January 9, the White House posted on its website a list of quotes from 57 highly critical elected officials under the title, "57 Times Sick, Unhinged Democrats Declared War on Law Enforcement."⁷⁸ The quotes include a relatively mild one from Mayor Mamdani to the effect that ICE enforcement "is an attack on us all." The list also includes far more pointed quotes, though, including quotes from Minnesota Governor Tim Walz and others likening ICE to Hitler's "Gestapo;" quotes from Illinois Governor JB Pritzker and others likening the Trump regime in general to Hitler's fascist regime in Nazi Germany; and quotes from California U.S. Representative Eric Swalwell and others likening ICE agents to the KGB in former Soviet Union and to secret police in other authoritarian regimes. The "57 Times Sick" list also includes many more quotes condemning ICE for creating terror and operating in a cruel, violent, lawless, and unconstitutional manner. At the bottom of the "57 Times Sick" list is the statement in bold letters, "I STAND WITH ICE," and a picture of Donald Trump.

It's of note that while Trump claims that his critics are "unhinged," he and his administration provide no evidence to refute any of the 57 critical quotations. I don't think it's "unhinged" or extreme to point out the well-documented similarities between the Trump administration and previous fascist dictatorships in other countries. On the contrary, I believe it would be dangerous and naïve to ignore them.

The United States of America is currently at a precarious tipping point. Our system of government has never been completely democratic, nor have we ever fully embraced the "truths" that our country's founders famously declared to be "self

evident" in the Declaration of Independence. Anyone with a rudimentary awareness of U.S. history should know this. But for most of our country's history, we were making slow, stuttering progress toward these ideals. That changed during Trump's first presidency. And now, a year into his second presidency, our country is closer than ever to becoming a fascist dictatorship. The question that all of us who value democracy and basic human rights and decency are grappling with is, "What can we do, both as individuals and in concert, to reverse our country's rapid decline from a flawed democracy toward a full-fledged fascist dictatorship before it is too late?"

I wish I had a simple answer to this question, but I don't. The main point, though, is that we must not allow ourselves to be silenced or otherwise intimidated into standing passively by as the Trump administration takes our country down the fascist path. Silencing, intimidating, and persecuting dissenters is what all fascist dictators try to do.

Trump's "57 Times Sick" list, Representative Raskin's letter to Bondi and Noem, and the Minnesota lawsuit against the DHS all give me hope that our elected officials are becoming more aware of Trump's overtly fascist agenda and more emboldened to resist it. One thing we can all do is to check to see if our own elected officials are on the "[57 Times Sick](#)" list, and if they are, send them our thanks and congratulations. If they're not on the list and they haven't already publicly condemned the killing of Renee Good and the ICE raids in Minneapolis in some other way, we can urge them to show more political courage.

And whether or not they're on the "57 Times Sick" list, we can all [contact our federal elected officials](#) and urge them to do everything within their power to ensure that the DOJ prosecutes Jonathon Ross for the killing of Renee Good. We should also ask our elected federal officials to do everything within their power to ensure that ICE agents be thoroughly vetted before they're hired; that they operate in accordance with the law, the Constitution, and basic principles of human decency; that they be unmasked; and that they be required to have functioning bodycams and their names on their uniforms during all ICE operations. In addition, we should ask our elected officials to do everything within their power to ensure that Donald Trump can't use ICE raids as a tool to punish his political enemies.

I think we should also be inspired by the memory of Renee Good to try to do more ourselves at a personal level to thwart Trump's fascist agenda, including the punitive ICE raids. It's exceedingly unlikely that Renee Good intended to be a martyr, and it's also unlikely that prior to the instant that she saw Jonathon Ross pointing his gun at her face, she ever considered that she might be risking her life by protesting at the site of an ICE raid. Although Renee Good will always be

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remembered as a martyr, I believe we should also remember that she was an “ordinary” person who took the extra-ordinary time and effort to participate as a member of the board at her son’s elementary school in developing legal, non-violent strategies to protect members of her community from illegal and unconstitutional ICE tactics; and that she also took the extra-ordinary time and effort to show up at an ICE raid after dropping her son off at school in an attempt to do whatever she could to help protect her neighbors.

Organizations and networks are springing up all across our country for the purpose of protecting immigrants and providing services for them. Depending on our own personal skill sets, we can all get involved in these organizations and networks in one way or another. There’s an organization in my own community, for example, that has set up a rapid response network that keeps people informed about ICE activities in our area; that provides information about constitutional rights and how to assert them; that provides legal assistance for individuals detained or arrested by ICE; and that even helps immigrants with home and auto repairs and grocery shopping. There’s also a student-run free medical clinic in our community where most of our patients are undocumented – and incredibly appreciative – immigrants. One of our patients recently asked a student volunteer, “¿Por qué todo el mundo está tan amable?” (Why is everybody here so nice?)

These are all what I believe to be good ideas in addition, of course, to participating in marches and other non-violent forms of public protest against Trump’s fascist agenda. You probably can think of other good ideas of your own. Before I conclude this message, though, I’ll address what I believe to be a very bad idea.

A friend recently told me that he’s considering going out and buying a gun. I told him I thought that was a bad idea for a multitude of reasons that I’ve discussed in previous Americans Against Gun Violence president’s messages, including [my last message](#) concerning the fraudulent misrepresentation of the Second Amendment by the late Charlie Kirk. The claim that the Second Amendment was intended to confer a right to armed insurrection is absurd; and even if the Amendment was intended to confer such a right, it’s absurd to believe that armed civilians could overthrow our current tyrannical federal government with all the U.S. military might under its control. And as far as protecting yourself against ICE agents goes, it’s fortunate that the woman described in the Wall Street Journal report who had a concealed handgun in her car never brandished her gun, even after being wounded by the ICE agent. If she had grabbed her gun, she would almost certainly be dead now. I recommended to my friend that instead of buying a gun, he buy a new cell phone with a better camera and more memory.

I’ll conclude this message with a quote from the late Senator Robert F. Kennedy

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(Robert F. Kennedy senior, that is, not his son, RFK junior, who might have turned out differently if his father hadn't been assassinated when he was 14 years old).

Senator Kennedy delivered a speech in Capetown, South Africa in June of 1966 that is highly relevant to the situation in the United States today. The [entire speech](#) is worth reading, but I'll quote just one sentence here. Kennedy said:

Each time a [person] stands up for an ideal, or acts to improve the lot of others, or strikes out against injustice, [that person] sends forth a tiny ripple of hope, and crossing each other from a million different centers of energy and daring, those ripples build a current which can sweep down the mightiest walls of oppression and resistance.⁷⁹

Thanks for your support of Americans Against Gun Violence. And thanks for creating a "ripple."

Sincerely,

Bill

Bill Durston, M.D.
President, Americans Against Gun Violence

Note: Dr. Durston is a former expert marksman in the U.S. Marine Corps, decorated for "courage under fire" during service in combat in the Viet Nam war. After his military service, Bill became a medical doctor and worked as a board-certified emergency physician for more than 30 years. He now volunteers as a preceptor at a student-run free clinic that is affiliated with the University of California, Davis, and that treats undocumented immigrants.

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