

showed in Olympia, WA, that we are big enough to take it, that we know that if somebody disagrees with us, we are not going to get them thrown out.

And in this case, to have a U.S. Senator handcuffed and thrown to the ground is disrespectful. It is an atrocity. We need to understand how this is happening and if this administration or this side of the aisle thinks that is the way you treat the voice of a U.S. Senator expressing dissent.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maryland.

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ALEX PADILLA

Ms. ALSOBROOKS. Mr. President, I stand today, and I am shaking. I am so angry. I am so enraged with the treatment that I witnessed today of my colleague Senator PADILLA. This is not the America—this is not the America—that each of us comes here each day to stand on behalf of.

There are some who are saying they don't recognize this America, and I want to ring the bell today for all who are watching, for all who are listening. We have now crossed a line.

This is a dangerous day in the history of our country. When a Senator who was in a Federal building, where he had a right to be, to do an oversight responsibility on behalf of the citizens who have elected him to the Senate of the United States, and when he was there to carry out his duties, he was there peacefully, and he decided to ask a question.

And in Donald Trump's America, asking a question and pushing back caused him to be manhandled for the whole world to see—manhandled, treated like a person who had come off the street. The thuggish behavior that I saw today is absolutely unacceptable.

To put hands on this peaceful man, who is not only a Senator, he is a father, and he is a husband. He is a person. He is a venerable part of our society, who was there on behalf of the people who have elected him and who was treated violently today.

You could see his hands up in the air. You could see his hands up in the air. And that was not enough. He was taken to the ground, and he was handcuffed.

And what was the explanation that was given?

It was an explanation that any reasonable person can look and know will be a full-on lie: that he looked like an attacker.

Well, if this doesn't cause every person under the sound of my voice to shudder today, I don't know what to say about it, because today it is Senator PADILLA, and—do you know what?—tomorrow, it can be any one of us.

This is not what democracy looks like. This is anything but a democracy. The right to free speech is sacred in our country. The right to free speech is sacred, and today we watched it violated in horrible ways that we will account for.

We, as a country, if we continue along this road, I tell you, we will account for it. It was Dr. Martin Luther King who said that the arc of the moral universe is long, but it does bend toward justice.

This injustice cannot stand. This cannot stand. And I tell you, America, let's be careful. We cannot continue along this road. We absolutely cannot. We must continue to encourage and allow free speech. It is the right of every person in this country.

Today, I am sickened, and I am angry, and something must happen. These people must be held to account for what happened to Senator PADILLA today.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Delaware.

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ALEX PADILLA

Ms. BLUNT ROCHESTER. Mr. President, you can see and feel and hear the anger, the disappointment, and the concern for the future of our country.

Senator ALEX PADILLA is probably one of the first people that took time to sit down with me as a freshman Senator to prepare me for this job. He serves this body and his State with intelligence and with grace and with poise. So to see my colleague pushed, manhandled, taken to the ground, arms put behind his back—this person who anyone who meets will say is more of a gentle giant than someone who deserves that kind of treatment.

It blows my mind. I think that is the thing. I am shocked. I am numb. I am angry. I think part of it is because Senator PADILLA is a Senator, but there are people every day right now across this country who are facing this kind of concern about their treatment when peacefully trying to exhibit the voice of America. But also, for him, he was just doing his job of oversight.

Similarly, some of us also have spoken up about LAMONICA McIVER from New Jersey, also a Member of Congress doing her job—oversight.

If we don't have that ability as Senators and Congresspeople, what does that mean for all of the citizens of this country?

So in this moment, this is a pivotal moment. This is an opportunity for our leadership here in this Chamber as well as the other Members on the Democratic side and the Republican side to say: This is unacceptable. That is really what this is about.

When the incident happened, we were all on this floor, and I remember seeing the video and the shock that I felt. It literally took my breath away. And I turned to other Members on the floor to say: Have you seen this? And they had not seen it. I walked across the aisle to my Republican colleagues. Republican colleagues had not seen it. And there was a sense of shock as well.

So what remains to be seen is what we do with that shock, what we do with that indignation, what we do with the

fact that ALEX PADILLA was doing his job on behalf of his constituents and on behalf of this country. That is what remains to be seen: Where do we go from here?

You have heard folks talk about free speech, peaceful assembly, the ability to do our job of oversight, but ultimately what this is about is the foundation of this country.

I am just shaking my head. I am shaking my head, but I am also resolute in the fact that we were called here for this moment. As bad as things may be, as bad as they may seem, we were called here for such a time as this, and the question is, What do we do with this time?

So I ask my colleagues again on both sides of the aisle to speak up against not only this incident but the incidents that we are seeing across this country. I ask my colleagues to come together on behalf of not only the American people but the democracy on which this country stands.

I will continue to stand with ALEX PADILLA. I will continue to stand with those folks around this country who are facing this same kind of unacceptable behavior.

Lastly, I would also mention that we do have a role and a responsibility. There are three branches of government. Thank God for the courts right now holding it down. But this moment is the moment. There won't be a light switch that says "Oh, democracy is gone." That is not how it happens. I have heard my good friend CHRIS MURPHY talk about that, that it is piece by piece, moment by moment, we see it chipped away.

Well, we have an opportunity and a responsibility to make sure we do not let this slip away.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Delaware.

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ALEX PADILLA

Mr. COONS. Mr. President, having just viewed a video of my friend and colleague Senator ALEX PADILLA being manhandled, thrown to the ground, and handcuffed after identifying himself as Senator ALEX PADILLA and attempting to ask a question of Secretary of Homeland Security Kristi Noem in Los Angeles, I am shaken, I am angry, and I am gravely concerned about our path forward in this body and our Nation.

Democracy is a gift hard won and hard earned by the sacrifice of millions who have served, fought, and died, some in moments of tumult and challenge on the beaches of Normandy, on the fields of Gettysburg.

From the very beginning of our Nation until this moment, millions of Americans have stepped forward and said: I will risk it all so that my children and those I do not know can live free lives. Knowing the burdens of tyranny, knowing what it meant to live under the heel of a King, our forefathers risked everything.

In nations around the world that I have visited on your behalf as a Senator, people yearning for freedom and people recently free have come and spoken about how much the American example means to them.

Earlier this year, I was at a global security conference, concerned about what was happening in our Nation, about our division in the dialogue, and I heard three young parliamentarians from other countries talk about how hard they were working.

Part of our job as Senators is to ask hard questions. It is to pose challenges. It is to test the Cabinet of the President, to visit Federal facilities, to ask questions that are sometimes uncomfortable or unwelcome. Just this week, I was at three committee hearings and had three members of the Cabinet in front of me. Did they want to answer my questions? Probably not, but they did.

If a Senator of the United States who identifies himself as a Senator—in at least the video I just saw—gets handled this way, gets thrown to the ground and handcuffed, what is happening to those who have no such title or voice? If this gentle and decent and caring man is treated this way, what is happening along the margins in the dark spaces in the places we cannot see?

So I call on my Republican friends and colleagues to look hard at this moment and say: What comes next? What comes next? Are we to be at risk of arrest if we threaten to ask a question or deign to interrupt? Is our very service here as Senators hanging in the balance in this moment? As we all learn more of the facts of what happened in Los Angeles, the future of what will happen here in our country and in the world will wait on your answer.

Was this an overresponse? Was this a misuse of force? Was this a disrespect of the very Senate itself? Is this a moment when, as our Founders who wrote the Federalist Papers dreamed, my colleagues in the Senate will show their loyalty to the role, to the check and balance, to the independence of the Senate, more than they will show their loyalty to their party and their President and demand an answer, an apology, and a different path forward? Or is this a moment when all of us will watch this video of our friend—a member of the Judiciary Committee, a representative, a Senator of Los Angeles and the State of California—being roughly mishandled and say: Huh, too bad. At least it wasn't me.

If we answer this moment with silence, we will be damned, and our children and the world will say: They didn't really mean it.

The members of my family who served in the U.S. military knew that signing on that line meant being willing to give everything, and I believe and have been told that they understood that service to be in service of freedom—not in service of any particular President or party, any particular State or moment, but in service of democracy.

Democracy is a fragile flower, and around the world, people look to what we do to know what they should do. There are petty, tin-pot dictators, authoritarians, and strongmen around the world who will watch this video and be encouraged and think this is the way to silence their critics.

I can't image a Member of this Chamber who knows ALEX PADILLA, who has had the blessing of sitting with him in moments when he is asked questions or engaged in discourse, who thinks of him as anything other than a reasoned, reasonable, mild-mannered Senator. But even if he were not, even if he were outspoken, loud, aggressive, annoying, the title "Senator" and the role we have should entitle him to ask a question at a press conference. If the result is this mistreatment, heaven help us all, and heaven help our democracy.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. HUSTED). The Senator from New Jersey.

#### ALEX PADILLA

Mr. BOOKER. Mr. President, I want to thank the Chair.

Clearly, the voices of my colleagues and I are calling this what it is, which is a crossroads for this body.

One of our Members—it matters not what their party—who was in their State was forcibly removed when he was asking for accountability from the executive branch. He was taken out of that room forcibly by multiple men, who then—even when he identified himself, even when he was pulled out of that room, he was then forced to the ground, pushed upon his face, his hands wrenched behind his back, and he was put in restraints.

This is a crossroads for this body. This is not a partisan issue; it is one about who we are as a body. Will we let the abuses of the executive branch physically take a Member of this body and drive them to the ground and put them in restraints?

And why? Why? Well, we are starting to get answers already. Here is Tricia McLaughlin, who is the Assistant Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security. This is her statement.

Senator PADILLA chose disrespectful political theatre and interrupted a live press conference without identifying himself or having his Senate security pin on as he lunged toward Secretary Noem.

Mr. PADILLA was told repeatedly to back away and did not comply with officers' repeated commands. @SecretService thought he was an attacker and officers acted appropriately.

The statement concludes that:

Secretary Noem met with Senator PADILLA after and held a 15 minute meeting.

We know this is not true because we hear with our own ears on the tape Senator PADILLA identifying himself; further "disrespectful political theatre" is not a justification to remove a U.S. Senator in their own State at a public press conference and violently

push them out of the room, drive them to the ground, put them on their stomach, and handcuff them.

Disrespectful behavior? This is our democracy. You have a right to speak up. You have a right to free speech. You have a right to stand and do the job that you swore an oath in this Chamber to do, to uphold the Constitution of the United States of America. And one of your jobs is to provide a check and a balance to the administration. One of your jobs is to give accountability to the administration.

I know the other 99 Members of this body, and if disrespectful behavior is a justification for violent reprisal from the administration, how many Members of this body—how many Members of this body—would be subjected to that?

This is a farce of a justification and, therefore, we are at a crossroads. Will my colleagues on the other side of the aisle—will my Republican colleagues—justify the treatment of one of the Members of this body, justify the violence against one of the Members of this body, justify a Member of this body being thrown upon the ground and put in handcuffs—for what? For disrespectful behavior.

If you think it stops with one, you are inviting it for the all because it does not. You are inviting it for every Member of this body.

If the Obama administration or the Biden administration said that a Senator on the other side of the aisle was being disrespectful and threw that Senator violently onto the ground and put him into handcuffs, this body would be full of my colleagues on the other side of the aisle condemning what the Biden Justice Department did or the Obama Justice Department.

This should not be about partisanship; this should be about patriotism. This should not be about tribalism; it should be standing up and being a leader in this moment.

This is wrong. This violence is wrong.

But let me be more personal. I tried to understand why this particularly upset me, and I think my colleague from Delaware spoke to that because of ALEX PADILLA's reputation in this body of being a kind and gentle person. We all know him, the goodness and the decency that he has. He is not one of the louder Senators. He is not one of the performative Senators. He has a reputation, as my colleague from Delaware said, on both sides of the aisle for being a gentle man.

But I think what was really hard for me to see was that a Member of this body was driven to his knees and made to kneel before authorities. That is what got me. I think when I saw him driven to his knees forcibly, something there got me.

You see, we know ALEX PADILLA's story. It is an unusual story for this body. His family came here as Mexican immigrants. His father was a short-order cook. His mother cleaned homes. They did those jobs that don't always