

What are they doing to other people? What does that mean if they are using the violent force of government unjustly against him? This is a breach. This body has not seen such a breach in my lifetime or longer where the executive has treated an honorable Member of this body in this way.

That should be enough, but our colleague correctly points out that if we are in an environment where that is happening to a U.S. Senator, what does it say—if the Government of the United States is unjustly taking violent action against a U.S. Senator, dear God, what does it mean for other Americans? That is what ALEX PADILLA asked today.

Now, I will tell you this: This is not an isolated incident. That is the challenge. We have already seen the actions taken against a mayor, a local government official who himself was forcibly handcuffed, dragged into a police vehicle, held for hours as a prisoner, and then, when he finally got before a judge, that judge reprimanded this administration for an abuse of their power.

ALEX PADILLA sees this with the violation of the due process rights of individuals going on in this country. ALEX PADILLA sees this with a mayor in America unjustly incarcerated, handcuffed, held.

This is the challenge we have in this moment.

I love this quote by my favorite author, James Baldwin, who wrote this letter the night authorities came and arrested Angela Davis.

He said:

If they come for you in the morning, then they will come for me at night.

This administration, in its abuse of power, in the audacity of handcuffing, of violently assaulting, of forcibly pushing to his knees and onto his stomach a U.S. Senator—what does that say?

We all gather right there as Senators to raise our hand and swear our oath to uphold the Constitution, but we are not the only ones. Members of the Supreme Court do that. They are not the only ones with Members of this body; administrative officials do that as well. We are bound by the laws of this land.

The terrifying thing for every American should be a government that is not restrained by the law, a government that misuses its power—and not just its power; its power to use violence unjustly against its citizenry. That is when we slip away from our democratic ideals, from our constitutional principles, and slide towards an authoritarian government that wants to make its people heel before them, kneel before them.

That is what I physically saw with my own eyes—a Member of this body being driven to his knees for asking a question, for standing up to speak truth to power. What was the response? The response was violence—being dragged out of that room, being forced to his knees, being thrown prostrate, and being handcuffed.

Here is the thing that frustrates me the most: Is this another day where the lead stories will be about the actions of this administration? We have seen a week where it is violating a tradition that has gone back before I was born where the Federal Government activating Federal troops in a community goes through—in fact, I know the statute: title 10, section 12406—that they should go through the Governors, work in coordination with them. But, no, this was a provocative incident, moving military troops at the expense of taxpayers into a community where even the leader of the police department says this is wrong.

All of this, from the beginning of our week to this unprecedented action of violently removing a U.S. Senator from a Federal building, from a room, thrown upon the ground, driven to his knees, and handcuffed—this is all purposefully being done in our country by a President that has a different view of his authorities as President; that if a judge criticizes him, he believes it is wrong.

He drew reprimand from the Supreme Court for his calling out Justices whose opinions he disagrees with. This is a President that doesn't believe in the checks and balances of our Constitution.

But the frustrating thing about all of this is that it is distracting us—this dangerous, violent distraction—from the bill we should be discussing on this floor about the ripping away of healthcare from millions of Americans, the cutting of food stamps for millions of children, the cutting of services for disabled Americans, the cutting of support for our senior citizens.

This monumental moment, the biggest transfer of wealth from working people in America to millionaires and billionaires; this moment that should be dominating our attention and our focus; this imminent bill that is being debated and discussed here in the Senate right now that has such incredible consequences, putting \$2.4 trillion more of debt in our country and raising the energy costs on the average American by hundreds of dollars; this bill that would raise the premiums of people in our Nation by hundreds of dollars; this bill that merits debate and discussion because it is so violative of our common values; this bill that takes food away from the hungry, healthcare away from the sick, and takes working people and makes their challenges harder, all to give more tax cuts to billionaires and drives up our deficit by the trillions—that should be the central conversation in our country.

But this President, almost as if he knows the unpopularity of his bill, the betrayal of his bill, is misusing, abusing his powers and trying to change the conversation in the most despicable of ways; abusing his authority, treading on our traditions, violating our Constitution, and now perhaps one of the greatest violent assaults on a Member of this body by the executive.

This is not metaphorical; this is literal. A Member of this body, after identifying himself, was physically and forcibly dragged out of a room in a Federal building, and then, when the doors were closed—you can see it on the camera—the Federal Government, the executive branch, taking a Member of this body, a Member of the U.S. Senate, a coequal branch of our government, and driving that man to his knees, slamming him upon his face, and wrenching his arms behind his back. That is what we are talking about in this body right now.

This is a dangerous time in America. When the President from the Oval Office says almost daringly “Do not protest my parade,” warns people about protests—and this is the thing the President of the United States doesn't understand about this country: When a President is violating norms and traditions and violating our Constitution, dissent is not unpatriotic; protest is not un-American; silence is unpatriotic.

This is a time where protest is justified. Peaceful protest is necessary and vital. This is a time where speaking up and exercising your constitutional principles—like freedom of speech, like freedom of assembly, like the right to petition your government—is demanded by our democracy.

When you have a President that so flagrantly violates the checks and balances—so much so that the authorities today kept a Senator from stepping forward and asking questions to an executive official and is met by violence—this is exactly the time that our Founders saw that we must stand up and speak up and protest peacefully and let our voices be heard because silence in a time like this is complicity.

My colleagues on the other side of the aisle have to see this. It doesn't take that much mental acuity to understand that if this was the Biden administration or the Obama administration and an official used their security detail to put another person in this body—to put a Senator from the other side of the aisle on their knees and in handcuffs, we would see outrage.

This is not about left or right; this is about right or wrong. And today, we saw a deep, grave wrong heaped upon not just this body but, as ALEX PADILLA wrote so eloquently, upon the ideals. Because if you could do this to a U.S. Senator, then you can do it to another American.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Connecticut.

ALEX PADILLA

Mr. MURPHY. Mr. President, Senator BOOKER and I have now spoken multiple times on the floor. The Senator from California has been here multiple times. We are doing so because we saw the look in our colleague's eyes as he was being violently thrown out of that room. You lost contact with his eyes in the hallway as he

was being pushed stomach-down onto the ground and handcuffed.

One of our colleagues suggested that Senator PADILLA got what he wanted. If you saw Senator PADILLA's eyes, if you saw ALEX's eyes as he was being pushed out of that room, you saw a man who did not expect to be treated that way. He thought that he was coming to register his dissent, his objection, to something deeply serious and illegal that was happening in his State. He had a responsibility as a Senator to speak truth to power.

So we are here on this floor speaking repeatedly in hopes that at some point, some of our Republican colleagues, whether here or in other public statements, will register some degree of concern for what happened to their colleague.

We lose our democracy if we lose our ability to dissent.

In 1722, in a newspaper started in Boston by the name of the New-England Courant—one of the country's first newspapers—a series of essays began to appear that were speaking to some really radical ideas for 1722. This is 20 years before Thomas Jefferson was born. This was 50 years before Thomas Paine wrote "Common Sense."

This is 1722, and the author's name is Silence Dogood. Silence Dogood writes in the New-England Courant:

Whoever would overthrow the Liberty of a Nation, must begin by subduing the Freedom of speech; a Thing terrible to Publick Traytors.

Silence goes on to say:

This sacred Privilege [of free speech] is so essential to free Governments, that the Security of Property, and the Freedom of Speech always go together; and in those wretched Countries where a Man cannot call his Tongue his own, he can scarce call any Thing . . . his own.

In 1722, this was a radical idea, this idea that a tyrant must control the freedom of thought with violence in order to maintain control of the people.

The New-England Courant was owned by a man named James Franklin, and he probably didn't know that Silence Dogood was a pseudonym for his 16-year-old brother named Benjamin Franklin. That is Benjamin Franklin writing in 1722, 16 years old.

Whoever would overthrow the Liberty of a Nation, must begin by subduing the [Freedom] of Speech.

What happened to Senator PADILLA today, it does stand in context. I say again, it does matter that on that day in which violence was used against the U.S. Capitol as a means to try to upset our democracy was cheered on by a President who then pardoned those violent rioters.

It stands in the context of the arrest of a mayor in New Jersey and a Congressperson seeking to do normal and regular oversight. It stands in context with the use of the FCC to try to intimidate and harass news stations that carry coverage unfavorable to the President and stands in context of the

banning of outlets having access to the White House or the Pentagon simply because they don't write things that are favorable to the President or use terms that are favorable to the President.

If we lose our democracy, it is not likely that there is going to be this one moment, this one day, this one fight. It won't be like other revolutions where the Parliament building gets burned down or a coup occurs. No. It will be that, over time, the message has been sent that if you speak up against the government, there is a price to be paid, and that price involves violence. But if you use violence on behalf of the government, it will be excused.

And so why we are still on this floor tonight is, sure, we have immense respect for our colleague, and I believe he has respect across the aisle. Senator PADILLA is a decent human servant who doesn't deserve to be treated that way. We are here because he is our friend and our colleague. But we are also here because too many in this body take for granted that this democracy is natural, that it is just going to hang around, no matter the threats.

The effort that this administration is undergoing to excuse and normalize violence when it happens in advancement of the administration's political priorities and then to suppress nonviolent speech in a multitude of ways when it objects to this administration's priorities, it sends a message to the public about what you can get away with and what you can't get away with.

Now, I don't think this will be the result. I don't think the American people will be bullied into silence. I do not believe they will watch that clip of ALEX PADILLA being forced to the ground and handcuffed and decide to stay home. No, I think, in fact, the opposite will likely happen. I think more Americans will be out there protesting this government. I think more Americans will decide to be present this weekend, to stand up for the right of free speech.

But if that were to be the case, it would be the exception to the historical rule, because in most countries when a ruler uses violence in order to suppress dissent, it works. People decide that they don't want to risk the fate of ALEX PADILLA. They don't want to be on the ground with their hands forced behind them and put into handcuffs. They stay home, and they just let the tyranny wash over them, their community, and their country.

We are not there yet. I don't mean to exercise hyperbole. What I seek to say is that we should not take this democracy for granted and that there can be—history tells us there often is—a deep impact when violence is used against those who are protesting the regime. It becomes normalized. And it ends up scaring many people into a dissent away from civic participation, and that is where our democracy dies.

This sacred privilege, the privilege of free speech, the privilege to protest your government—says 16-year-old

Benjamin Franklin—"is so essential to free Governments, that the Security of Property, and the Freedom of Speech always go together."

Men cannot be prosperous, he says, without having access to the freedom of expression.

Senator PADILLA was doing his job. Sure, you can decide that he was being disrespectful. That is not illegal. You could decide that he, in the alternative, should have waited until the press conference was over. But nothing he did warranted the treatment he got.

And when you stand it side by side with the pardoning of the January 6 protesters, the attempt to bully the free press into toeing the administration's line, the deployment of the National Guard and the Marines to a protest in California that was largely peaceful and, basically, just encompassed 1 or 2 square blocks, nobody mistakes what that agenda is about. That agenda is about trying to bully the American people into silence.

And once again, the first several comments from our colleagues justifying the handcuffing and violence to Senator PADILLA simply because they believe he was disrespectful paints a really dangerous picture of where we are headed.

Senator BOOKER is right. The focus should be on the violence that is being done to the American people's healthcare right now. We are debating a bill right now, as we speak, to rip healthcare away from upwards of 15 million Americans. That is extraordinary. That is a healthcare catastrophe. That is not just 15 million people losing their healthcare. That is hospitals, drug treatment centers, health clinics shutting down when you pull almost a trillion dollars out of the Medicaid system.

There is a new budget analysis today that shows that the poorest 30 percent of the country, 40 percent of the country, will be poorer after this bill passes, just so that the richest 10 or 20 percent can get a massive new tax cut. In fact, the richest people in this country will get an average \$270,000 tax cut. Literally, a transfer of wealth from the poorest people in this country—people who are working minimum wage jobs are going to be poorer after having passed this bill in order to enrich the folks who are doing super well, and we are going to add \$3 trillion to the deficit—just going to put it on our kids' credit card.

That is, maybe, the most unpopular piece of legislation that has ever come before the U.S. Senate. That is an agenda that you can probably only impose on the Nation by force—by force—because if people have the right to protest, if they have the ability to stand up to the most massive transfer of wealth from the poor and the middle class to the rich in the history of the country, it might not pass. That protest movement might be big enough in order to change the minds of enough Members of this body so that that agenda might pass.

It may be that that bill is so unpopular that the only way that you can get it to pass is by using violence and the threat of violence to suppress protest and free speech.

So we are still here, hours after this incident, because we care about our colleague, because we believe this is ultimately going to do immense damage to this institution that we love.

I have done hard work with many of my Republican colleagues. I deeply care about many of my Republican colleagues. I don't know all of them well, but I know enough of them to know that there are patriots; there are people who believe that America matters more than our party.

I showed that video to several of my Republican colleagues as we were leaving the Chamber today. I saw their jaws drop. I know their human reaction to what they saw. But I also know that there is a tendency in this version of the Republican party to circle the wagons around one message. If Democrats say X, then Republicans have to say Y.

That doesn't have to be the case every time. It just doesn't.

There can be true things. And a true thing is this: That was an excessive, impermissible amount of force that was used on Senator PADILLA today. We can say that together.

Even if you agree with the President on his decision to deploy the National Guard, even if you hate every single one of those protesters, even if you don't like Senator PADILLA—which is hard because he is a freaking hard guy not to like. But even if you believe all those things, you can say that what happened today is not all right and that the White House should admit that; that there should be an apology; and that there should be protocols set in place to make sure that if a U.S. Senator shows up to a public event—he didn't bust into a private meeting. This was a press conference designed to be public, to transmit public information. He wanted to make sure that that was accurate information. Maybe you don't like the way that he did it, but what he did is not illegal. What he did does not deserve that treatment. We can decide that that is wrong. We can recognize the danger to this concept of free speech, defended in 1722 by a 16-year-old Benjamin Franklin, is serious enough for us to speak together with one voice.

So my Republican colleagues may think that we are belaboring the point, but this is an important moment for the Senate and for the Nation.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Jersey.

ALEX PADILLA

Mr. BOOKER. I am grateful for the recognition.

I know we have been talking here for quite some time about an incident that is unprecedented—I would imagine in generations here—that a U.S. Senator,

today, in a Federal building, going to ask questions to a Federal official in the executive, is forcibly handled, identifies himself as a U.S. Senator, and is pulled out of the room. Doors close, and as we saw from another camera, he is forcibly driven to his knees and thrown upon his face with his arms wrenched behind him and handcuffed. It is such a breach to have one of our Members of this body treated in such a way for, as one of the officials from the Department of Homeland Security says, for being “disrespectful and performative.” Well, if that is a reason for people to be thrown on the ground, forcibly handcuffed, most of this body would have had that experience.

This is something far more serious when we see that overstep of power. I have seen this with LAMONICA MCIVER, doing her oversight authority, being caught up in a storm of officials going to arrest a mayor who then the judge said clearly was wrongfully arrested.

We have seen this in the overstepping of the bounds of propriety. But this act of violence against a Member of this body demands a response.

We have seen what happens when government abuses their power, when they engage in violent actions against their citizenry. Indeed, we have seen this in its extreme cases, time and time again, throughout our history, unfortunately, in the labor movement, in the suffrage movement, in the civil rights movement.

We know that when State officials in Alabama met John Lewis and marchers across the Edmund Pettus Bridge, they were met with such violence that the intention there was to suppress our freedoms.

We are in a time now where we are seeing protests planned all across the United States of America, with hundreds of protests coming this weekend. As ALEX PADILLA, himself, has asked: If they can do this to a U.S. Senator, what does that say to the average American who wants to exercise their constitutionally protected rights to protest, to petition their government, to speak up?

More than this, ALEX PADILLA, in this body, has come in a very unusual way. He is the son of Mexican immigrants—a short-order cook and a woman who cleaned homes. In this environment, where we have seen our immigration enforcement officials not going after criminals or gang members or people that are somehow threatening us but going to separate families, taking away a mother from her children, taking away people dropping off their kids at school, going to work sites or places like Home Depot where people stand looking for work, going after agricultural workers—this is a moment where we see good-faith people peacefully protesting and having the courage to stand up to the most powerful person in the world, the President of the United States.

Yet, again, we see an example where that President is willing to abuse their

authority in an act that is ensured to be an attempt at intimidation.

If ALEX PADILLA, a U.S. Senator, can be dragged from a room in a Federal building for asking questions, thrown upon the ground and handcuffed, what does it say to the traditions in our Nation that are one of the reasons why we are all here?

Because our government does have its limits—it is not unchecked power. The President is not the King. Insulting him is not a crime.

Look, I have been disappointed, as I have seen in joint statements and I have seen this in State of the Union Addresses, behavior from people that I don't find justifiable within the Chamber. I remember when a South Carolina Congressman heckled the President of the United States. I heard it in one of Trump's addresses—people yelling things at the President.

Is that, in a democracy, sufficient provocation to arrest Senators or Congress people who are “disrespectful,” as ALEX PADILLA was accused of being, as if that is a justification to be thrown upon the ground and violently handcuffed?

We have certain exalted ideals and principles in a democracy. In fact, fundamental to our democracy, written in our founding documents, over 200 years old, was this ideal of certain inalienable rights of the people. Our Bill of Rights enshrines—before even the ratification of our Constitution by States, it was demanded that we have a Bill of Rights that guarantees certain principles before a government. Our design of our government was to provide checks and balances because of how much our Founders feared excesses and abuses of power.

These are constitutional principles now that, today, in the most dramatic of fashion, are under attack. We, as a Nation, have elevated the ideals of the ability of American citizens to speak truth to power, to protest, to stand peacefully and forcibly in defiance of abuses of power.

And, today, in this body of 100, we have seen one of our Members, the son of Mexican immigrants, the son of a short-order cook and a woman who cleaned houses in the most noble of fashions—who invested themselves in our common dream, who invested themselves in our ideals, who raised an extraordinary young man who has lived his life in service of others, starting in Los Angeles, starting as a city councilperson in that very city, a graduate of MIT—face an indignity and an assault and violence that should not be tolerated on anybody in this body.

That is an executive overreach by the President of the United States, and it is happening within a pattern of conduct—a mayor in Newark arrested, rebuked by a judge that the authorities of the executive were overstepped; LAMONICA MCIVER, a Congresswoman, brought up on charges as she was caught in a storm of officials rushing to arrest—wrongfully arrest—that