

The Moral Blackmailing of the American People

Lincoln's warning of 1838 echoes: 'there is no grievance that is a fit object of redress by mob law.'

[The New York Sun](#), by [Josh Hammer](#), 10, 2026

Pictured at right: A protester at the scene following a suspected shooting by an ICE agent during federal law enforcement operations on Jan. 7, 2026 , Minneapolis, MN.



In Springfield, Illinois, in 1838, a young Abraham Lincoln delivered a powerful speech decrying the “ravages of mob law” throughout the land. Lincoln warned, in eerily prescient fashion, that the spread of a then-ascendant “mobocratic spirit” threatened to sever the “attachment of the People” to their fellow countrymen and their nation. Lincoln’s opposition to anarchy of any kind was absolute and clarion: “There is no grievance that is a fit object of redress by mob law.”

Unfortunately, it seems that every few years, Americans must be reminded anew of Lincoln’s wisdom. This week’s lethal Immigration and Customs Enforcement standoff at the Twin Cities is but the latest instance of a yearslong baleful trend.

On Wednesday, a 37-year-old activist, Renee Nicole Good, was fatally shot by an ICE agent in Minneapolis. Good, who had barricaded her vehicle in an attempt to obstruct an active law enforcement operation, ignored agents’ requests to exit the vehicle and instead directed her car at one of the agents. Good actually then hit the agent, who was briefly hospitalized for his injuries. Yet before she could do even more damage, the agent shot and killed Good.

The federal government has called Good's encounter "an act of domestic terrorism" and said the agent shot in self-defense. Suffice it to say Minnesota's Democratic establishment does not see it this way.

Minneapolis's mayor, Jacob Frey, responded to the deployment of 2,000 immigration agents in the area and the deadly encounter by telling ICE to "get the f— out of Minneapolis," while Governor Tim Walz called the shooting "totally predictable" and "totally avoidable." Mr. Frey, who was also mayor during the George Floyd-inspired mayhem of 2020, has lent succor to the anti-ICE provocateurs, seemingly encouraging them to make Good a Floyd-like martyr and riot accordingly.

As for Mr. Walz, he's right that this tragedy was eminently "avoidable" — but not for the reasons he states. If the Biden-Harris administration hadn't let in untold millions of unvetted illegal aliens, and if Mr. Walz's administration hadn't conveniently overlooked hundreds of Minnesotans — of mixed immigration status — defrauding taxpayers to the tune of billions of dollars, ICE never would have embarked on this particular operation.

National Democrats took the rage even further. Following the fateful shooting, the Democratic Party's official X feed promptly tweeted, without any morsel of nuance, that "ICE shot and killed a woman on camera." This sort of reckless fear-mongering may have already inspired a crazed activist to shoot three detainees at an ICE facility at Dallas last September while targeting officers; similar dehumanizing rhetoric about the National Guard perhaps also played a role in November's lethal shooting of a soldier at Washington, D.C.

Liberals and open-border activists play with fire when they so casually compare ICE, as Mr. Walz previously has, to a "modern-day Gestapo." The fact is, ICE is not the Gestapo, President Trump is not Hitler, and Charlie Kirk was not a goose-stepping brownshirt. To pretend otherwise is to deprive words of meaning and to live in the theater of the absurd.

But as dangerous as this rhetoric is for officers and agents, it is the moral blackmail and "mobocratic spirit" of it all that is even more harmful to the rule of law.

The implicit threat of all so-called sanctuary jurisdictions, whose resistance to the federal government smacks of John C. Calhoun-style antebellum “nullification,” is to tell the feds not to operate and enforce federal law in a certain area — *or else*. The result is crass lawlessness, Mafia-esque shakedown artistry and a fetid neo-confederate stench combined in one dystopian package.

The truth is that swaths of the activist left now engage in these sorts of threats as a matter of course. In 2020, their monthslong rioting following the death of Floyd led to upward of \$2 billion in insurance claims. In 2021, they threatened the same rioting unless the cop from the fateful Floyd traffic stop, Derek Chauvin, was found guilty of murder. In 2022, following the unprecedented (and still unsolved) leak of the draft majority opinion in the *Dobbs v. Jackson Women’s Health Organization* Supreme Court case, pro-abortion activists protested outside many of the right-leaning justices’ homes, hoping to induce them to change their minds and flip their votes. And now, ICE agents all throughout the country face threats of violence — egged on by local Democratic leaders — simply for enforcing federal law.

In “The Godfather,” Don Corleone referred to this sort of thuggery as making someone an offer that he can’t refuse. We might also think of it as Lincoln’s dreaded “ravages of mob law.”

Regardless, a free republic cannot long endure like this. The rule of law cannot be held hostage to the histrionic temper tantrums of a radical ideological flank. The law must be enforced solemnly, without fear of favor. There can be no overarching blackmail lurking in the background — no Sword of Damocles hovering over the heads of a free people, ready to crash down on us all if a certain select few do not get their way.

The proper recourse for changing immigration policy — or any federal law — is to lobby Congress to do so, or to make a case in federal court. The ginned-up martyrdom complex that leads some to take matters into their own hands is a recipe for personal and national ruin. There is nothing good down that road — only death, despair, and mobocracy.