

# Trump's Shithole Country



Pres\*dent Trump

So a couple of days ago our Pres\*dent expressed his knowledge of world geography by referring to all African nations, the Central American nation of El Salvador, and the island nation of Haiti, as “shitholes.” This presumably also referred to the people native to those countries, as trump used his “shithole” comment to prove why those people should not be allowed to emigrant to the United States of America.

I have something to say about this.

I know a family who are natives of the Republic of The Gambia, which happens to be an African nation. They have an amazing (to me) life story. The husband grew up on a farm helping his dad, then went to college and earned a degree in Information Technology (IT). He had a girlfriend but wanted his family to live in America. So each year he entered the “Visa Lottery” and after his third annual try won a visa. He emigrated to America and immediately applied for a green card. After two years he earned permanent legal residency. He immediately returned to Gambia and married his girlfriend, then came back to America.

He worked and waited for his five year’s minimum residency, then applied for citizenship. Once an American citizen he brought his wife over (in trump’s words “chain immigration”) to America. They settled down here and started a family.

Although the husband has an IT degree he started a landscaping business as he loves working with soil and plants. His wife works at a senior citizen center local to their home. As of this writing, they have three lovely children. These honest, hard-working people are among the kindest, most polite people I know; full of life and love.

I know a young woman who is native of the Democratic Republic of The Congo, another African nation. She was adopted by an American family as a minor, through a religious group, and brought to America. At the time she was adopted she was living with her Grandmother as her parents had died. At the age of seventeen she was working full-time at a hotel local to her home and going to college. She later dropped out of college, managed to earn her seaman's card and landed a job on a Cruise Ship as housekeeper. After working on the Cruise Ship for several years she landed a job with an airline as flight attendant. As with the family from Gambia, this young woman is a pure joy to be around. She is full of life and love, a hard worker who lights up the lives of everyone around her.

I've tutored English as Second Language (ESL) students over the past year. My recent student is a young woman (younger than me) who moved here with her husband from the Republic of El Salvador about 20 years ago. I think they may have come here under the El Salvador refugee program but I have never asked. After arriving in America her husband started a roofing business and she started a house cleaning business. neither of them spoke any English when they arrived, and her husband still doesn't. They have four children, all born here in America and all in public schools, and help translate for the parents.

Over the past year my student has gone to a private language school and received tutoring as she needs to learn English for her business and to help her husband. She told me that her first cleaning customer used to keep a Spanish-English dictionary in the house to help communicate. She is a sweet

and hard-working woman, unfailingly polite, and is very proud when she masters another small bit of English.

These are the people I know from the countries trump considers "shitholes." I have a different perspective. The "shitholes" I see include the trump family, and the many people (mostly all Republicans) who are supporting and enabling the trumps. These people are turning our once great United States of America into a "shithole."

We have entire cities of Americans [drinking poisoned water](#) because of Republican policies. We have an entire island of Americans who [lack electricity and running water](#) months after a hurricane devastated their island, with no relief in sight, because of Republican's neglect. Our nation has the "[highest rate of maternal mortality in the industrialized world.](#)" Our average life expectancy has [declined for the second year in a row.](#) We currently rank [31 in the world](#), above Cuba but below Costa Rica.

Our national railway system is a joke, with our trains derailling at speeds of 30 miles per hour. Meanwhile, over in China, in the space of about ten years that country has developed the most [extensive high-speed railway system in the world](#), with the fastest trains and still improving. Our [infrastructure is close to failing](#), with no serious plans by our Republican-controlled Government to fix it anytime soon.

[Our poverty rate is increasing](#); In 2015, 13.5% (43.1 million) Americans lived below our poverty rate. I won't even get into our children learning "active shooter" drills in grade school, a direct result of NRA-directed Republican policies allowing any psycho access to military-grade weapons. Or that we [experienced 1,156 mass shootings in 1,735 days.](#)

So excuse me, but just maybe trump, his Republican enablers and strap-hangers and sycophants, might want to stop and look around before calling one-third of the world's nations

“shitholes.” We’re not doing a great job of taking care of our own, and our own people are voting with their feet. In 1999 the [US State Department estimated there were between three to six million American’s living abroad](#). In 2016, estimates were nine million Americans had voted with their feet and moved abroad.

We should feel grateful that people of other nations continue to see us as that “Shining City on a Hill,” with Lady Liberty still standing in New York harbor as a global symbol of freedom and hope. I have to wonder how much longer other people will see us that way.

*Edited for format and grammar: January 14, 2018*

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## Are We A Police State Yet?



Unfriendly Cop

This past Sunday, a paying passenger was forcibly removed from a United Airlines (UA) flight in Chicago’s O’Hare Airport, in the process beaten and his face bloodied by airport security officers removing him. The paying passenger’s crime, the reason for this violent removal from an aircraft after being seated? UA needed the seat so some of their own employees

could travel instead.

The President of UA, and lots of otherwise normal people, are currently defending the actions of these security officers.

In what world does a business claim the fucking right to deny service to a customer who has ALREADY PAID FOR SERVICE?

In what world does that same business get Government law enforcement, hired and paid for by the Government of the People, By the People, For the People, to do their bidding in a purely commercial squabble with a customer WHO HAS ALREADY PAID FOR SERVICE?

In what world does Government-paid security officials claim the right to forcibly beat up a non-violent unarmed person who has in fact done nothing except EXPECT TO RECEIVE SERVICE FOR WHICH HE HAS ALREADY FUCKING PAID FOR?

In what world do people in authority, both Government and Senior Executives of the business involved, defend the actions of beating up an American Citizen/Paying Customer for EXPECTING SERVICE FOR WHICH THAT CUSTOMER HAS ALREADY FUCKING PAID?

Apparently, this is the world we are now living in.

Although it may be relevant that the passenger who was removed was a [69 year-old ethnic Asian doctor](#), and needed to get home on schedule to attend to patients who depended upon him, it's beside the point. It may be relevant that although [Contract of Carriage Rule 25 allows an airline to refuse passage to a paying customer, rule 21 actually applies](#) because the customer was already seated and had extenuating circumstances why he should not be forced to give up his seat; it doesn't fucking matter.

What matters is that an American citizen paid airfare to a commercial entity for a flight home, boarded the airplane and

was seated, then told to give up his seat and wait for another flight so an employee of that commercial entity could fly instead. When the American citizen refused, employees of that commercial entity called in Government law enforcement officials who beat him up and forcibly dragged him off the airplane, simply because a commercial entity asked them to.

What matters even more is that people in authority, both commercial and Government, are defending these actions.

This is what a police state with no regard for "Rule of Law" looks like. We as a nation have gone pretty far down that rabbit hole, and I'm not sure how we find our way back out.

***Editor's Update, April 12:*** After watching the [video of this passenger being forcibly removed](#), what disturbs me the most is actions of the other passengers. Although they did take video footage, NOT ONE PERSON attempted to intervene with law enforcement.

While I can almost excuse the passengers for being frightened of arrest if they intervened; where the fuck was the airline crew and pilot? The pilot was ultimately responsible for his plane and passengers, why didn't he/she intervene? In my opinion, the flight crew is just as responsible for this atrocity as the cops, and should be held equally responsible.

As for the other passengers; when do we reach a point when witnessing blatant abuse of power by law enforcement rises to the level where citizens have the "right," the obligation, to physically intervene? At what point does people of a "free society" have an obligation to take back power from Government officials representing We the People?

Related Stories:

- New York Post: [Dragged passenger kicks and screams his way off overbooked flight](#)
- Law Newz: [Cops' Side of Story About Viral United](#)

# We Are All Immigrants



Statue of Liberty

All four of my grandparents were immigrants. One, my maternal grandfather, entered the US “illegally.” Both my first and present wives are immigrants. My first wife left the Philippines during the final years of the Marcos dictatorship, at a time when conditions in that country were rapidly deteriorating.

The decree Pre\*ident trump issued this past Friday, blocking all Muslims of seven nations from entering America, deeply and personally offends me.

As I think about what trump’s decree means to us as a nation, my insides burn. We are all immigrants from other countries. Our parents, grandparents, great-grandparents, or maybe even

further back, packed up everything they could carry and took a chance on traveling to a distant land in the desperate hope they could build a better life for their children. Those people, every one of them, demonstrated more courage than our current pre\*ident will ever display or even understand.

I remember Winnie entering America for the first time in Los Angeles International Airport. [After a 20 month struggle](#), she finally obtained her visa on her first try at the US Consulate in Guangzhou and purchased her ticket here the very next day.

Her point of entry was Los Angeles International Airport (LAX), the International terminal. I flew to Los Angeles the day before her arrival and stayed with my brother and family. The next evening we all went down to LAX, arriving about two hours before Winnie's scheduled arrival. Then we waited.

I knew when Winnie's plane had landed and people were clearing customs because of the many Chinese people coming out. So many of them were young women with a baggage cart loaded with cloth bags stuffed full. These were all women like Winnie coming to America to be with their new husbands, seeking a better life, and carrying everything they now owned.

Our identity as Americans are bound up as a nation of immigrants, a nation that welcomes in the tired, the poor, the huddled masses yearning to breath free. The people of past generations and the people trying to come here today are what our country stands for. This is who we are.

*Not like the brazen giant of Greek fame,  
With conquering limbs astride from land to land;  
Here at our sea-washed, sunset gates shall stand  
A mighty woman with a torch, whose flame  
Is the imprisoned lightning, and her name  
Mother of Exiles. From her beacon-hand  
Glows world-wide welcome; her mild eyes command  
The air-bridged harbor that twin cities frame.*



*“Keep, ancient lands, your storied pomp!” cries she  
With silent lips. “Give me your tired, your poor,  
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,  
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.  
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me,  
I lift my lamp beside the golden door!”*

*Emma Lazarus, 1883*

No person, even if they happen to temporarily occupy our White House, has the right to deny what America is all about. We as Americans are now facing a test; do we continue to stand for freedom and liberty for all who have the courage to ask? Or do we throw up a wall and hide behind it, quivering in the fear that new immigrants might bring new ideas and new customs and new ways of thinking.

I know on which side I stand.

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## A Day To Stand Up



Woman in Pink

Yesterday our national nightmare started, and today is the first day for American's to stand up and let the world know that this is not who we are. I cannot get to the Women's Watch on Washington event, so I'm going to have to do what I can to show my support. Consider this simple post on my bit of Cyberspace as my contribution to the cause.

This post is my way of showing that Trump does not represent me. Anyone who supports Trump does not speak for me. I believe America is better than the image Donald Trump described in his Inauguration Speech and better than the America he depicted while campaigning for the right to represent us on the world stage.

He won the right to represent our nation, our country, on a technicality. He may indeed represent the beliefs of some American's, but thankfully those Americans are in the minority. Those beliefs are not and never will be mine.

Donald Trump brings a lot of negative baggage into the White House. Just a few of his most recent and ongoing legal (ethical) issues include:

- At present The [FBI is leading a multi-agency investigation](#) into possible links between Russian officials and Trump during his campaign.
- As of 12:01 PM yesterday afternoon, [Trump is violating the emoluments clause](#) of our Constitution.
- There is an [ongoing investigation by the Attorney General of New York City on the Trump Foundation](#).
- There are [workman's liens and potential lawsuits pending against Trump over his renovation of the Old Post Office Building](#) in Washington D.C.
- Again as of 12:01 yesterday afternoon he [opened a](#)

[contract violation with the GSA over his operation of that building lease.](#)

- He has a [sexual assault lawsuit filed against him](#) just this past week over actions that allegedly occurred several years ago.

A large part of my anger towards the people who voted for Trump, and continue to support him, condemned Secretary of State Hillary Clinton as “unfit for President” for her alleged ethical violations that approach insignificance in comparison to those of Trump’s. Any attempt to point this out to Trump supporters feels as if I’m speaking to people occupying an alternate space-time continuum.

I don’t know how we can fix this, and I don’t know how we can come together again as a nation and family and friends. Maybe we cannot, and perhaps not bridging the gap between two diametrically different and opposed worldviews is what this country now needs to do.

I simply do not know.

I do know that singer [Pat Benatar](#) is one of my favorites. Her small contribution to today’s Women’s Watch on Washington was to release a song specifically for the event. I’m ending my post with her music because I can’t think of any better way to end it.

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# The Last Week of Obama’s

# Presidency



President Barack Obama

Not only is today a national holiday celebrating the life of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., it also happens to be the last week of the presidency of Barak Obama. On this day of remembrance, I need to share my thoughts on our regrettably too-soon-to-be former President.

I have not always agreed with the policies of the Obama Administration. I feel that President Obama has been too accommodating to Republicans, too willing to compromise away progressive, liberal, beliefs. His administration has been too hard on legitimate “whistleblowers,” and vastly increased the “surveillance state” bequeathed by the Bush jr. administration. Not only did his administration not completely pull out of Afghanistan, but he also expanded our middle east involvement through bombing and special forces campaigns in Yemen and Pakistan.

On the flip side; Obama has worked hard to create public policy that benefits American families. While I’m not a big fan of the Affordable Care Act (I think we should have a single-payer “Medicaid for All program), it is far better than what we had before, and irrevocably established the precedent that managing medical care is a proper function of Government.

I also feel that Obama appointed capable people to his

administrative positions, people who took their responsibilities seriously and performed their jobs to their best abilities.

Despite my criticisms, I deeply admire Obama as a person. I consider one measure of a man is his family. Barack Obama, by every sign, loves his family and cares for his wife and children. There has never been any hint of extra-marital affairs or other improprieties. His daughters have grown up in the public eye with grace and style. First Lady Michelle has spent much time working to improve the nutrition and early education of America's children and has conducted herself with grace and poise.

But it has been in Barack Obama's personal conduct that I have grown to admire him the most. I don't forget how the Republican Party, and Republican hanger-on's, have treated Obama from the day he established a national presence. Republican's have excelled in the politics of personal destruction since at least the Nixon presidency, but their treatment of Obama hit new lows.

I don't forget the statement made by then-Republican minority leader Mitch McConnell (R – KY) towards President Obama of ["The single most important thing we want to achieve is for President Obama to be a one-term president,](#) in 2010." This at a time when we were facing the worse economic crisis since the Great Depression.

I don't forget our President [heckled and called a liar,](#) during his 2009 State of the Union speech by Congressman Joe Wilson (R-SC). Although Wilson did apologize afterward, he also used this incident to fund-raise.

I don't forget then-Arizona Governor Jan Brewer publicly [sticking her fingers in President Obama's face,](#) shouting at him, at the Phoenix airport. Then she and the Republican party used the incident to fundraise.

Finally, I don't forget the years that Republican's questioned Barack Obama's real birthplace. Even after our President had released his long-form birth certificate showing he was born in Hawaii, which is and was then an American State, Republican's continued to challenge him and the legitimacy of his presidency.

I could post images of our President that floated around Cyberspace these past years, some of which are so obviously racist, as an American I sometimes felt ashamed. However, I'm not going give these pictures cred by posting any on my site. I will offer a [link to Mr. Google](#), so my readers with a strong enough stomach can browse at their pleasure.

Beyond the personal abuse, our President also had to endure the abuse and racism directed towards his wife and daughters. Whatever one might think of an elected public official, un-elected families are expected to be off-limits.

Through all this abuse, Barack Obama showed unflappable dignity and grace. He never publicly attacked the people mocking him. Obama never gave the appearance of taking actions that retaliated against critics. He continued to "bend over backward" to accommodate people mocking him. For all his efforts to work with Republicans, Obama received no praise and credit from them. Nothing he ever did to adapt their policies was enough, even when he [supported the very policies Republicans had supported just a few years earlier under Bush](#).

Honestly, I do not think I could have shown such grace to people mocking my family and me, the way Barack Obama has. I have to admit; Obama has now become a role model for me in conducting myself in public. But, his is a standard I doubt I'll ever meet, and I'm ok with that.

So on this national holiday celebrating the life of one extraordinary man, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., I want to

remember the service of another remarkable man, President Barack Obama.

Thank you, sir, for your service these past eight years.

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## What Happens Next?



### Our National Loss

It's still difficult for me to process all my emotions from November's election results. Feelings of dread about what happens next; feelings of loss for what could have been; feelings of disbelief knowing that so many of my fellow Americans voted for a person that represents the worst side of humanity; I'm trying to process all these feelings running on the same track. Underneath all of these is a feeling of deep anger at the people who believed Trump was anything more than a master con artist who says anything he has to, to get what he wants, and does whatever suits his ego.

I had many bitter fights with many members of my family, and many friends including people I've known for up to forty years, in the weeks leading up to this election. I could never understand how these people could support a man who encouraged hatefulness and resentments in his supporters. At the same time, it was hard for me to defend Clinton as I've never been

a fan of either Bill or Hillary.

Although I think Bill Clinton did a reasonably good job during his two terms as President, I never respected that he pushed aside core Democratic, Liberal principles in favor of Republican "Conservative Lite" policies. He left the Democratic party weaker after his eight years in office than when he entered. The party has never really recovered.

As for Hillary; I never doubted that she is intelligent and competent. But her entire career, she has always taken the safe, non-confrontational, path as a public official instead of standing up for core Liberal principles. Her vote for Bush Jr's war on Iraq remains, in my opinion, her defining moment; a moment when she could have stood up and made a difference, taken a stand and said "No." But with her "yes" vote she failed our nation, she failed the Democratic Party, and she failed herself. Although I voted for her in this election, I could never with clear conscience endorse her.

Although I could never endorse her, I did my best to defend Clinton against the stupid crap floating around cyberspace. The increasingly more bizarre attacks over her God Damn e-mails eventually overwhelmed me with the sheer volume of hysteria. The number and twisted misinformation of the memes floating around frequently left me feeling as if I had fallen down a rabbit hole and was living in Alice's world. The level of vitriol people expressed against her, and President Obama, routinely left me baffled. I often felt as if these people were truly living in an alternate reality.

My first thought, on knowing that Clinton lost, was to apologize to Winnie for what her adopted country had just done.

So one month later here I am, watching a man with no personally redeeming values, a man who I would never invite into my home for dinner, playing at President-elect and making



mockery of our government with his cabinet appointments. Now news is breaking that Russia directly meddled with our election for the specific purpose of getting Trump elected. If true, then America has just lost a war and been conquered by a foreign, hostile, government. We lost a war in cyberspace that our annual one Trillion dollars in military spending never even saw coming.

Two days after the election, this e-mail arrived in my inbox:

*Belize Property demand explodes over 800%*

*The SURGE continues!! As we reported yesterday, while we anticipated that the election results would drive a surge in the Belize real estate demand, we never imagined it would come so fast and so strong. Our website and phones continue to explode with serious interest from Americans from both camps!*

*As the news has been reporting, concerned Clinton supporters are looking to expatriate in record numbers. We are experiencing that same surge as our website traffic increased over 800% since the election.*

*The Trump supporters are also driving incredible demand as they're taking advantage of this "once in a lifetime" investment opportunity. They too recognize that there will undoubtedly be an increase in the value of international real estate as a result of the massive expatriation and they're positioning themselves to profit from it.*

*The situation has created a "perfect storm" and we're confident that it will result in a rapid and sharp increase in the real estate values in Belize. Regardless of which camp you're in, we STRONGLY encourage you to take a closer look at the real estate opportunities that currently exist in Belize before it's too late.*

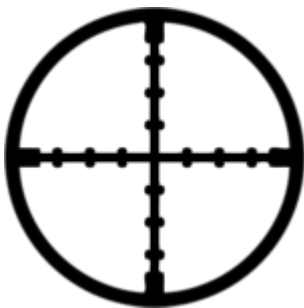
*Our friendly and informative representatives are standing by to help guide you through the process and to assist with any*

*questions that you may have. As always, we appreciate your interest and look forward to assisting you in making your dream of owning real estate in paradise a reality!*

So, with this e-mail, I know I'm not the only person in America who feels the dread of coming events. I honestly do not know what happens next, but I do know that we are all in for a very bad time.

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## **A Reasonable Price?**



Gun Sight Crosshairs

In considering America's latest record-setting mass murder of unarmed people – the Orlando nightclub shooting of June 12- I have to once again ask this question;

*“Is a periodic mass murder of innocent people inside homes, churches, schools, shopping malls or other public places, a reasonable price to pay for the unrestricted right of anyone to own as many guns, of any type, that they desire?”*

I have quite a few family and friends on Facebook who are part of the “pro-guns (guns everywhere for everybody)” crowd, and we have had several major “debates” concerning guns over these past years. Some people have dropped me as a result of my

opinions, and I've dropped a few people as well. This is in addition to the numerous "debates" I used to have over gun violence when I was a regular poster in the comments section of our local newspaper.

I've been periodically posting this question to my Facebook page starting with the Aurora Theater shooting (July 20, 2012). The first time I posted this question I had some interesting reactions. A couple of people took extreme offense at my question, posting replies that I was asking a "trick" question as shootings would not be possible without guns. One person actually posted a simple "yes" as response, while several others posted a simple "no."

I did have a chat with the person who posted "yes" after the Newtown Sandy Hook school shooting (December 14, 2012). The person had three school-age children, and I noted a sharp difference in his position on guns, but not enough as he then wanted to have school teachers armed.

I've re-posted my question to Facebook several other times over the past few years, after some particularly gruesome mass-shooting. I no longer receive any "yes" responses, and most of the "pro-guns" crowd seem to ignore my post completely.

So it is time for me to ask this question again in my personal piece of cyberspace:

*"Is a periodic mass murder of innocent people inside homes, churches, schools, shopping malls or other public places, a reasonable price to pay for the unrestricted right of anyone to own as many guns, of any type, that they desire?"*

I look forward to answers.

For further reading, here is a [timeline of US Mass Shootings](#) from 1982 through 2016 as published by "[Mother Jones](#)"

magazine.

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# In Honor of Dr Martin Luther King, Jr



## Dr. Martin Luther King's Celebration of Life

Today is the national holiday honoring the birth of Martin Luther King Jr, the man who forced America to examine our history of racism for a short while. I was only 12 years old when he was cut down in the prime of his life, but I remember the day of his assassination just as clearly as I remember the day President Kennedy was cut down.

There isn't much I can add to today's discussion, other than the issue of racism is one that personally impacts me. My first wife was a dark-skinned Filipino immigrant, who was routinely confused for any one of a dozen different nationalities. I had direct experience with racism by being with her, and being part of her Filipino family.

My present wife is a Chinese immigrant, and once again I've directly experienced the impact of racism against her both as [institutional discrimination](#), and personal discrimination against her that [infuriated](#) me. I have frequently made the

observation that in the year I was born, both of my marriages were illegal (miscegenation) in about 16 states of these United States.

Opposition to racism, and the concept of giving people a fair chance to excel (or not excel) based on their abilities and not by race, religion, skin color, or creed, go right to the core of my inner being. The older I get, and the more that people like asshole Donald Trump and his corrupt sidekick Ted Cruz become accepted as mainstream personalities, the stronger my opposition to racism becomes.

I don't have much more to add, other than a post of the YouTube video of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr's iconic speech "I Have A Dream."

Rest in peace, Dr. King. Your time on this earth was too short, but your legacy still lives on.

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## A Deeply Personal Decision



Rainbow Stars and Stripes

Yesterday the U.S. Supreme Court ruled 5 – 4 in the case of *Obergefell v. Hodges* that the Government cannot prevent same-sex couples from marrying. Their decision came down to an entirely appropriate application of the Fourteenth Amendment

to our Constitution.

To hear Conservatives wailing and gnashing their teeth, one might think the End Times have arrived. I guess for them, it may have.

Section One of the Fourteenth Amendment to our US Constitution (Bill of Rights), created as a result of the Civil War and reconstruction, reads:

*All persons born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States and of the State wherein they reside. No State shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States; nor shall any State deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws.*

To my non-legally-trained-mind, this is pretty straightforward. This amendment was the basis of the 1967 ruling in *Loving v. Virginia* that declared the Government could not prevent people of different races from marrying. Given that my first and present marriages to Asian women would have been [illegal in thirteen states](#) at the time I was born, I've always considered the freedom to marry whom I chose to be a very personal issue.

I've read the various Republican/Conservative reactions to this *Obergefell v. Hodges* ruling with amusement and some sense of comeuppance. I was living in Mississippi in 2004 when, as part of the presidential elections, the state Republicans put a referendum on the ballot amending the state constitution to define marriage as between one man and one women. At the time there was never a question on the outcome of this referendum. I openly mocked this amendment, taking a lot of heat from the numerous Conservatives of whom I worked with, and I publicly

predicted that within ten years the referendum change would be invalidated.

I was wrong in my prediction; it took eleven years. But thirteen states had already acted on their own to recognize same sex marriages (but not Mississippi) before yesterday, so I guess I was almost correct.

It seems a lot of Republican/Conservative reaction to *Obergefell v. Hodges* centers on "States Rights"; these Republicans/Conservatives insist the states have the right to decide if they want to not comply with our Constitution and Bill of rights. Which I find amusing given that Republicans/Conservatives are consistently running around demanding that the Government has to comply with our Constitution and Bill of Rights. Apparently except for when Republicans/Conservatives don't like the outcome. Whatever.

Of all the reactions I've read, the one I find most startling is from Senator Dan Coates (R- Indiana) which reads:

*Decisions of faith are the most personal and precious we make in this lifetime. Guided by my Christian faith, I believe that marriage is a solemn covenant made between a man and a woman before God. I also believe we should live our lives rooted in love and respect for our neighbors, regardless of their personal decisions or religious convictions.*

*It is my long-held opinion that this deeply personal issue – which divides many families and friends – should be decided by the voters in each state. Now that the Supreme Court has imposed its own definition of marriage, we must ensure that religious freedom is protected across America. Established in our nation's founding days and sustained for over 200 years, religious liberty is at the very core of our system of government and our way of life. All people of all faiths must have the right to exercise their faith within the bounds of our justice system.*

It seems to me that if a decision is “*deeply personal*” it should be decided by the individual. Not the federal Government, not the state government, not the local government, and not the fucking next-door neighbors. If we were to truly practice “*lives rooted in love and respect for our neighbors, regardless of their personal decisions or religious convictions,*” Government officials like Senator Coates should be demanding that Government stay the fuck out of people’s personal lives, and show respect to the concept that a person’s freedom and liberty end at the tip of their nose.

Having “religious faith” doesn’t give people special rights to discriminate. Under our system of laws, if one doesn’t approve of a certain lifestyle then one simply **doesn’t have to live that way!** I don’t know why this is such a hard concept for some people to understand.

No one has any business deciding whom other consenting adults may chose (or not to choose) to sleep and live with. If a person feels “threatened” by an adult who chooses to sleep with another adult(s) of the same sex, perhaps that person should do a little soul searching on the assumptions of their own sexual preferences. I can’t help but notice how many [anti-gay politicians over the past several years have been outed as closeted gays.](#)

So to the many thousands of people across these United States for whom yesterday was their chance to marry the person they love; congratulations! May you live happily forever-after with your chosen partner-in-life.

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# A Lifetime Of War



## Memorial Day

Last week the Washington Post ran a blog post titled "[Washington Post Story: Here's how much of your life the United States has been at war.](#)" The author Philip Bump used a chart to show the percentages of a lifetime an American has spent at war, based on their ages.

This got me thinking about just how many American wars I've experienced during my lifetime.

I was born in 1956, near the end of the [Baby Boomer generation](#), a generation defined as the years of 1946 – 1964. My generation in itself was an offshoot of World War II and our returning American veterans, which included my father and most of my uncles.

Quickly following cessation of active shooting in World War II, the United States and the newly formed Soviet Union entered into the nuclear-armed [Cold War](#) starting in 1947. Despite some extremely tense moments during those years, including the October 1962 [Cuban Missile Crisis](#), we managed to not actually launch nuclear-tipped missiles at each other and not actually end human civilization as we know it.

I do remember the "[Duck and Cover](#)" drills we used to have in school, and the television ads encouraging us to know where our nearest nuclear fall-out shelters were. Even though I was only six years old at the time, I can remember my school

teacher's grim faces during the Cuban Missile Crisis and the hushed whispers they were exchanging as we practiced our Duck and Cover drills. Those regular school Duck and Cover drills lasted until I was in fifth grade, in 1966.

Historians consider the Cold War as officially ending in 1991 when the Soviet Union dissolved, 34 years after it started. I remember the near-surrealistic images of the Berlin Wall being torn down by German citizens in 1989.

Layered on top of the Cold War we had the [Korean War](#). The active shooting lasted from 1950 to 1953, before I was born, but this war has never officially ended. We continue to remain at a truce, but in a state of war, with North Korea on behalf of our ally South Korea, and the Demilitarized Zone is one of the most heavily fortified borders in the world today. On occasion over the years this truce has become tense, as the recent sinking of a South Korean Patrol Boat by North Korea indicated. The Korean War has now effectively involved the United States military forces for 65 years.

After ending active shooting in Korea, we sent in troops and [Intervened in Lebanon](#) in 1958.

We sent in proxy troops trained by our Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), and supported by our military, to invade Cuba in the [Bay of Pigs Invasion](#) in 1961.

Immediately after the Bay of Pigs fiasco, we became involved in Southeast Asia, in the action that has become known as the [Vietnam War](#). Although focused on Vietnam, our military also became involved in the [Cambodian Civil War](#) (which included enthusiastic aerial bombing campaigns, helped create the Khmer Rouge and triggered [Cambodian Genocide](#)). We also "secretly" became involved in the [Laotian Civil War](#) during those years.

The Vietnam war and our side conflicts in Southeast Asia lasted from 1962 – 1975, 13 years.

Not content to only be involved in only one war at a time, we became involved in the [Dominican Civil War](#) between 1965 to 1966.

Until 1974, we had a mandatory conscription policy for military service, otherwise known as "The Draft." Our involvement in Vietnam almost torn apart our nation with protests from young men who saw no reason to be drafted and forced to go overseas to the meat-grinder that was Vietnam. The outcome of those protests, besides ending our involvement in Vietnam, was to end our policy of mandatory conscription. The Draft ended in 1973, just before I enlisted in the Navy, but mandatory registration with the Selective Service System continues. Ending The Draft and mandatory conscription meant relaying on an all-volunteer military force, with the impact that the war's we've fought since 1974 appears to be largely invisible to most Americans.

Having ended our involvement in Vietnam, we sent our military back into Lebanon as part of a [multinational force](#) between 1982 – 1984.

We invaded the Caribbean island nation of [Grenada](#) in 1983.

We invaded and occupied the Central American nation of [Panama](#) between 1989 – 1990. A feature of this invasion and occupation was arresting the *de facto* Panamanian leader, general, and dictator Manuel Noriega; a man we had originally installed and propped up as Panama's leader.

Just as the Cold War was winding down we became involved in the [Gulf War](#) of 1990 – 1991, what has now become known as our first war in Iraq. As with Panama in 1989 – 1990, the Gulf War was about fighting a dictator (Saddam Hussein) that we once helped install and support as Iraq's leader.

We followed the active shooting portion of the Gulf War with the [Iraqi No-Fly Zones Conflict](#) starting in 1991. This No-Fly conflict only ended with the second Iraqi war in 2003, lasting

12 years.

Immediately following our first Iraqi War, we became involved in the [Somali Civil War](#) of 1992 – 1995. This war gave us the movie “[Black Hawk Down](#),” which is all that most Americans seem to know about this particular war.

We involved ourselves in a civil war in [Haiti](#), the poorest nation in the Western Hemisphere, between 1994 – 1995.

While our troops were in Haiti, we also sent troops to fight in [Bosnia](#) between 1994 to 1995.

Following our involvement in Bosnia, we fought the [Kosovo War](#) between 1998 – 1999.

Our [Global War on Terror \(GWOT\)](#) officially started on September 11, 2001, with the World Trade Center and Pentagon terrorist attacks. Fighting GWOT officially ended in 2013 when President Obama announced we would be pursuing specific enemies instead of using the War On Terror as a tactic.

Alongside GWOT, we went to war in [Afghanistan](#) as a result of the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks. This war continues to the present, now 14 years and counting.

President G.W. Bush took us into our second war with [Iraq](#) in 2003, which officially ended in 2011. We left that nation in chaos, which continues to this day and is now considered responsible for the general instability in the Middle East.

We effectively went to war in [North-West Pakistan](#) for the purpose of hunting down terrorists starting in 2004. This war primarily involved US Special Forces and remotely operated drone aircraft, and continues to the present. We’ve also become involved in hunting terrorists in the middle-east nation of [Yemen](#) using drones and Special Forces.

We became involved in yet another civil war, this time in

[Libya](#), in 2011.

Last year we started what looks to be a protracted military intervention against the [Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant \(ISIL\)](#).

So, in my lifetime I have never actually know a single year when our nation was not involved in some type of war or military conflict. I think this is something worth considering on this Memorial Day holiday.

I think it is worth considering just what we as a nation could be if we weren't spending our national wealth, and the lives of our American citizens, on wars without end.

Other References:

[Wikipedia: List of Wars Involving The United States](#)

[Wikipedia: Conscription in the United States](#)

*Crossposted on Daily Kos at "[A Lifetime Of War.](#)"*