

ON MARCH 10TH 2025,

**THE UNITED STATES OF
WAS ADDED TO**

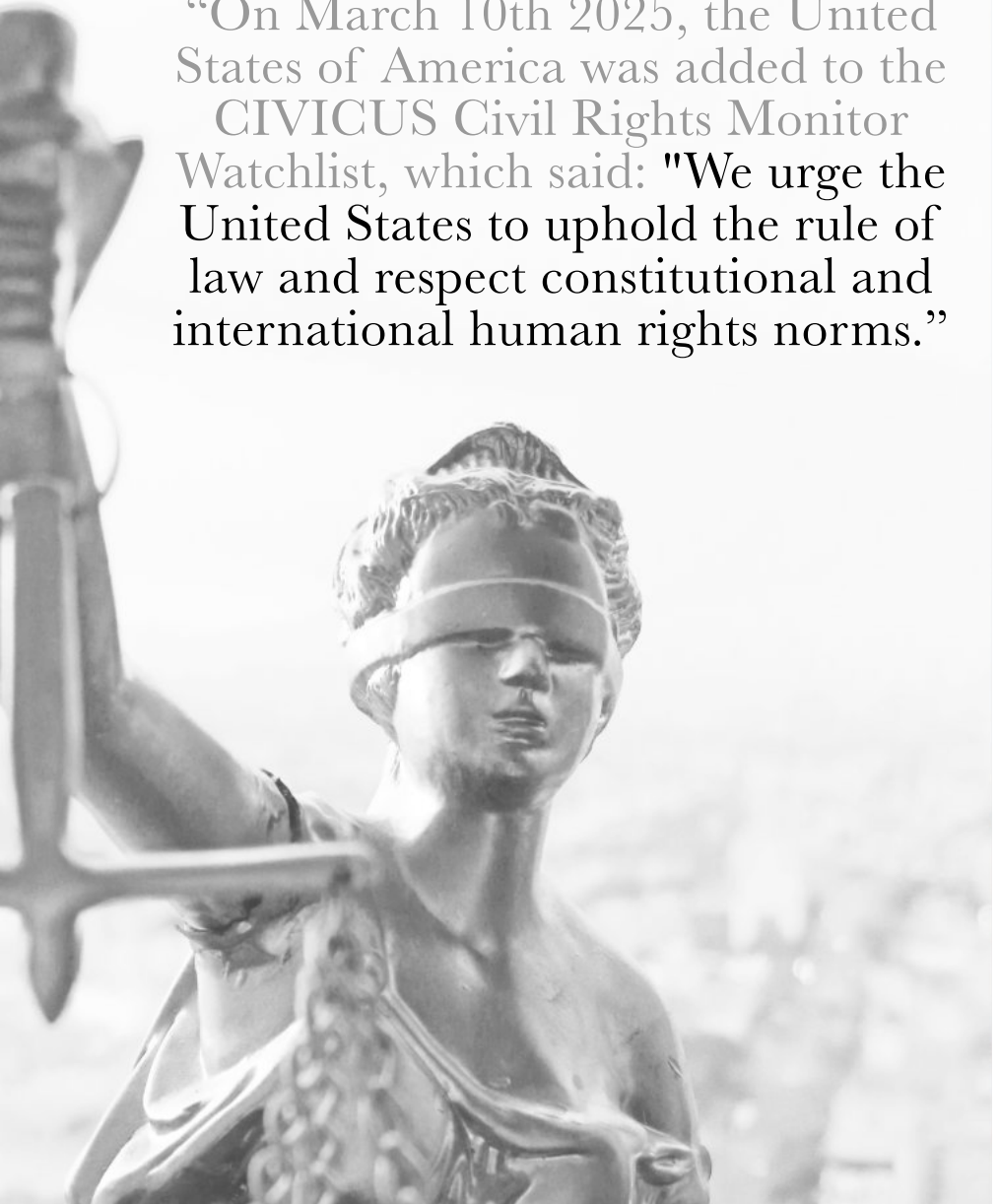
CIVICUS CIVIL RIGHTS MONITOR

D.O.U.G.H.

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FREE!

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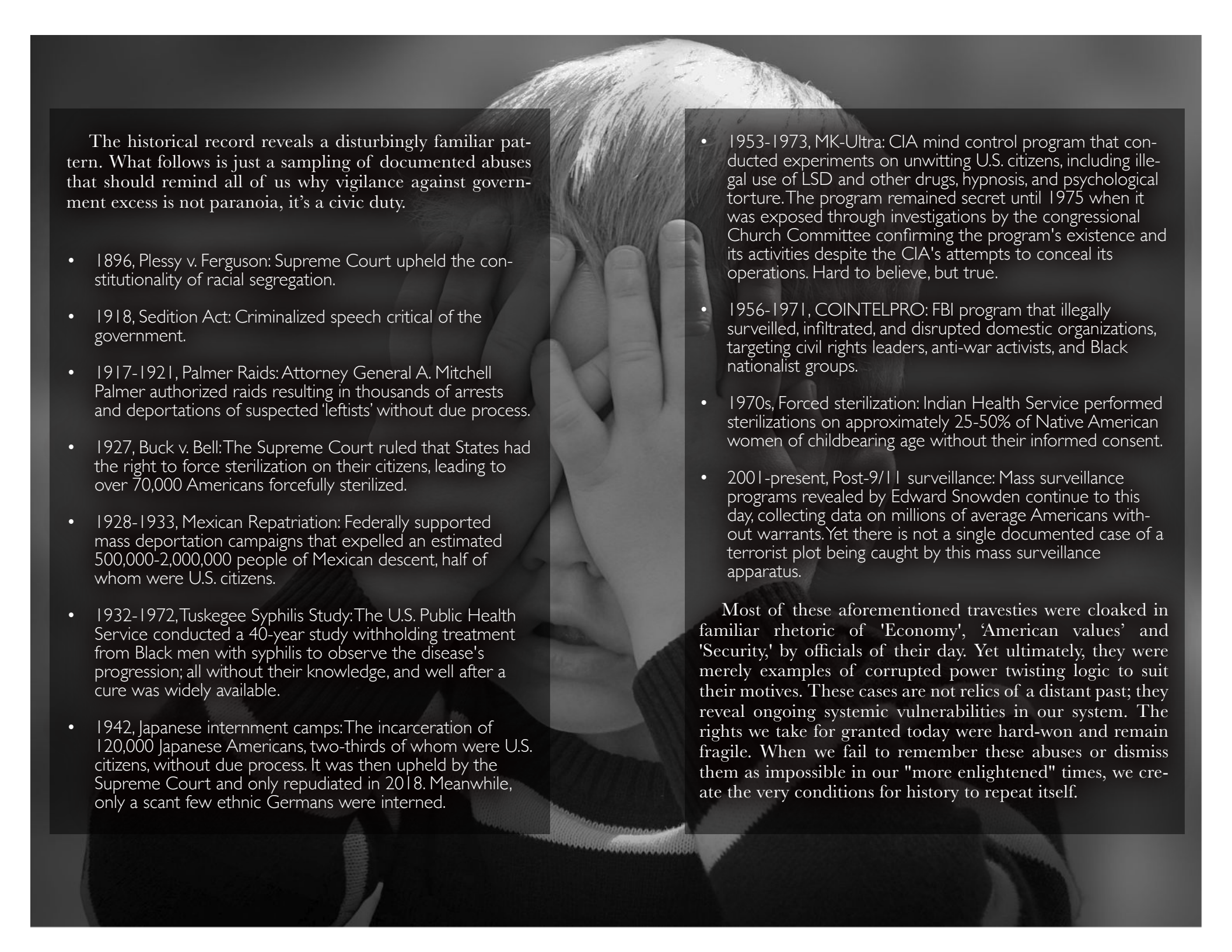
**IS THE CURRENT GOVERNMENT UNPRECEDENTED?
IT SHOULD BE...**

On March 10th 2025, the United States of America was added to the CIVICUS Civil Rights Monitor Watchlist, which said: "We urge the United States to uphold the rule of law and respect constitutional and international human rights norms." The stated reasons:

- Mass firings of federal government employees and replacement with administration loyalists in key positions
- Takeover of Justice Department and FBI among others by objectively unqualified administration loyalists
- Executive orders threatening constitutional freedoms of assembly, expression, and association
- Crackdowns on protesters with arbitrary penalties and student visa cancellations
- Introduction of restrictive protest laws in at least 12 states, including criminalization of masks at demonstrations
- Arbitrary freezing of federal funding for organizations supporting marginalized communities
- Haphazard dismantling of USAID and suspension of international cooperation initiatives
- Cessation of funding for organizations supporting sexual and reproductive freedoms
- White House control over media access to presidential briefings
- Barring of Associated Press journalists from briefings
- Forcible removal and intimidation of journalists covering topics not in favor with the current administration

Americans now face a watershed moment to defend democratic principles. When the United States is added to a global civil rights watchlist, we must recognize the gravity of what international observers call "an assault on democratic norms."





The historical record reveals a disturbingly familiar pattern. What follows is just a sampling of documented abuses that should remind all of us why vigilance against government excess is not paranoia, it's a civic duty.

- 1896, Plessy v. Ferguson: Supreme Court upheld the constitutionality of racial segregation.
- 1918, Sedition Act: Criminalized speech critical of the government.
- 1917-1921, Palmer Raids: Attorney General A. Mitchell Palmer authorized raids resulting in thousands of arrests and deportations of suspected 'leftists' without due process.
- 1927, Buck v. Bell: The Supreme Court ruled that States had the right to force sterilization on their citizens, leading to over 70,000 Americans forcefully sterilized.
- 1928-1933, Mexican Repatriation: Federally supported mass deportation campaigns that expelled an estimated 500,000-2,000,000 people of Mexican descent, half of whom were U.S. citizens.
- 1932-1972, Tuskegee Syphilis Study: The U.S. Public Health Service conducted a 40-year study withholding treatment from Black men with syphilis to observe the disease's progression; all without their knowledge, and well after a cure was widely available.
- 1942, Japanese internment camps: The incarceration of 120,000 Japanese Americans, two-thirds of whom were U.S. citizens, without due process. It was then upheld by the Supreme Court and only repudiated in 2018. Meanwhile, only a scant few ethnic Germans were interned.

- 1953-1973, MK-Ultra: CIA mind control program that conducted experiments on unwitting U.S. citizens, including illegal use of LSD and other drugs, hypnosis, and psychological torture. The program remained secret until 1975 when it was exposed through investigations by the congressional Church Committee confirming the program's existence and its activities despite the CIA's attempts to conceal its operations. Hard to believe, but true.
- 1956-1971, COINTELPRO: FBI program that illegally surveilled, infiltrated, and disrupted domestic organizations, targeting civil rights leaders, anti-war activists, and Black nationalist groups.
- 1970s, Forced sterilization: Indian Health Service performed sterilizations on approximately 25-50% of Native American women of childbearing age without their informed consent.
- 2001-present, Post-9/11 surveillance: Mass surveillance programs revealed by Edward Snowden continue to this day, collecting data on millions of average Americans without warrants. Yet there is not a single documented case of a terrorist plot being caught by this mass surveillance apparatus.

Most of these aforementioned travesties were cloaked in familiar rhetoric of 'Economy', 'American values' and 'Security,' by officials of their day. Yet ultimately, they were merely examples of corrupted power twisting logic to suit their motives. These cases are not relics of a distant past; they reveal ongoing systemic vulnerabilities in our system. The rights we take for granted today were hard-won and remain fragile. When we fail to remember these abuses or dismiss them as impossible in our "more enlightened" times, we create the very conditions for history to repeat itself.

We see evidence of this vulnerability today: hate crimes against minorities have reached modern highs; death threats against polling officials and judges have risen dramatically—all in lock-step with current political rhetoric. Meanwhile, the watchdog organizations within the federal government meant to defend us have been eviscerated, and the programs designed to protect our most vulnerable have been systematically weakened or removed.

History demonstrates that civil rights infringements in democracies rarely stem from logic and reason, but rather from fear, bigotry, or a lust for control, usually enabled by a frightened populace swayed by populist rhetoric.

So each generation believes itself the most enlightened one, while falling prey to its own biases. Our defense against this pattern is critical thinking—an essential skill rarely taught in schools or even discussed in earnest. But without it, we remain vulnerable to manipulation and deception.

So remember this: question your assumptions, look for alternative interpretations, and try to falsify your beliefs. There is no shame in not knowing, no weakness in changing position, no dishonor in forging a new path forward. Regardless of how you voted or where you stand on polarizing issues, we are Americans first—



not merely Republicans or Democrats, but fellow citizens bound by shared principles, including respect for those with whom we disagree.

Civil rights matter not just for some, but for all. Protect them vigilantly and never assume they're secure. Democracy thrives only through your active participation. History has repeatedly shown that the only path to preserve our own freedoms is to defend the rights of others.

So what can we do? Speak up! Every conversation is an opportunity to heal our rapidly eroding democracy. Our voices in unison are a powerful tool against corruption, but we must always stand united:

- Speak with neighbors, friends, and relatives about the state of our nation and what you're doing to help
- Support independent journalism that holds power accountable. They need us now more than ever
- Contact your representatives and demand adherence to the principals of the Constitution
- Share factual information about threats to civil liberties
- Refuse to accept the normalization of democratic backsliding. Keep your head up

This transcends party affiliation. Together, we must build a democracy that is just for ALL—for democracy lives only through our active participation. Our Constitution begins with "We the People" because an engaged, informed citizenry is the ultimate defense against autocracy. Like generations before us, we possess the collective power and moral obligation to defend our democratic inheritance from those that would usurp it.



deptofdough.org

Email: rise@deptofdough.org

Bluesky: [@deptofdough.bsky.social](https://bsky.app/profile/deptofdough.bsky.social)

Instagram: [@deptofdough](https://www.instagram.com/deptofdough)

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P.O. Box 23

Interlaken, NY 14847