

June 23, 2015

Someone who is objective and qualified to know, has written about more of the devastating results of this president. Michael Oren's book is reviewed by Matthew Continetti.

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*Reading Oren's new memoir Ally, it's clear that Israel has been on her own since the day Obama took office. Oren provides an inside account of relations between the administration of Barack Obama and the government of Bibi Netanyahu, and his thesis is overwhelming, authoritative, and damning: For the last six and a half years the president of the United States has treated the home of the Jewish people more like a rogue nation standing in the way of peace than a longtime democratic ally. Now the alliance is “in tatters.”*

*Oren is not a conservative looking to make a political issue of support for Israel. Indeed, by Washington Free Beacon standards, he's something of a squish. The author of a classic history of U.S. involvement in the Middle East and a sometime professor at Yale, Harvard, and Georgetown, Oren served for five years as a contributor to the New Republic, has contributed to the New York Review of Books, and supports what he calls a “two-state situation” focused on institution-building and economic aid to the West Bank. He's a member of the Knesset, but not of Netanyahu's Likud Party. He joined the comparatively dovish Kulanu Party last December.*

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Michael Rubin posts on the reception of Oren's book by the administration.

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John Hinderaker says the president has disgraced himself again.

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*"I have had to make statement like this too many times. Communities like this have had to endure tragedies like this too many times," Obama said. "We don't have all the facts. But we do know that once again, innocent people were killed in part because someone who wanted to inflict harm had no trouble getting their hands on a gun."*

*Murder is a terrible thing, but thankfully, the homicide rate in the United States is dropping. It was lower in 2014 than in 2013, and lower in 2013 than in 2012. Today, it is only about half what it was during the Clinton administration. In the intervening years, private handgun ownership has exploded. Many argue, and statistics support the claim, that broader gun ownership has contributed to this stunning reduction in the homicide rate. ...*

The president is hostage to a fact free brain so David Harsanyi tries to help. President Barack Obama responded to the horrific shooting at a historic black church in Charleston that left nine dead with an earnest statement—well, other than that contention that was completely untrue.

*Once again, innocent people were killed in part because someone who wanted to inflict harm had no trouble getting their hands on a gun. ... We as a country will have to reckon with the fact that this type of mass violence does not happen in other advanced countries.*

*Let's set aside the assertion that it's too easy to obtain guns in America and deal with the implication that we are somehow uniquely violent or that "mass violence does not happen in other advanced countries." The president has made this claim in various ways and with various qualifiers.*

*Parlez vous Hebdo? Because surely the president recalls that in January of this year two gunmen entered the office of a satirical magazine in France with an assortment of guns and murdered 11 people (and injured 11 more). After leaving, they killed a police officer. And in a marketplace catering to Jews another five were murdered and 11 wounded. France is, allegedly, an advanced country, is it not? Perhaps if Obama had attended the anti-terror rally in Paris like every other leader of advanced countries did, his recollection would be sharper.*

*It only takes some quick research to discover that rampage killers, acts of terror (as the Charleston shooting most certainly is), school attacks, spree killers are not unique to the United States. ...*

**Ilya Somin** writes on the tenth anniversary of the infamous Supreme Court Kelo decision.

*June 23 marks the 10th anniversary of Kelo v. City of New London, when the Supreme Court held in a 5-4 ruling that government could use eminent domain to take private property for “economic development.” At issue in the case were 15 homes, including a little pink house owned by Susette Kelo, in the city of New London, Conn., which wanted to transfer the properties to a private nonprofit with plans to revitalize the area. But after the court ruled and the houses were razed (with the exception of Ms. Kelo’s, which was moved at private expense), those plans fell through.*

*The condemned land remains empty, housing only a few feral cats. After Hurricane Irene in 2011, the city used it as a dumping ground for debris. Yet the first real development since the Supreme Court’s controversial decision might now be on its way: New London Mayor Daryl Finizio, who was elected in 2011 as a critic of the government taking, recently announced [a plan](#) to turn the former site of Ms. Kelo’s house into a park that will “serve as a memorial to all those adversely affected by the city’s use of eminent domain.”*

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## Free Beacon

### [‘We’re On Our Own’](#)

**Michael Oren reveals how Barack Obama tore apart the U.S.-Israel alliance**

by Matthew Continetti

By the summer of 2013, President Obama had convinced several key Israelis that he wasn’t bluffing about using force against the Iranian nuclear program. Then he failed to enforce his red line against Syrian dictator Bashar Assad—and the Israelis realized they’d been snookered. Michael Oren, the former Israeli ambassador to the United States, recalls the shock inside his government. “Everyone went quiet,” [he said in a recent interview](#). “An eerie quiet. Everyone understood that that was not an option, that we’re on our own.”

Reading Oren’s new memoir [Ally](#), it’s clear that Israel has been on her own since the day Obama took office. Oren provides an inside account of relations between the administration of Barack Obama and the government of Bibi Netanyahu, and his thesis is overwhelming, authoritative, and damning: For the last six and a half years the president of the United States has treated the home of the Jewish people more like a rogue nation standing in the way of peace than a longtime democratic ally. Now the alliance is “in tatters.”

Oren is not a conservative looking to make a political issue of support for Israel. Indeed, by *Washington Free Beacon* standards, he’s something of a squish. The author of a [classic history of U.S. involvement in the Middle East](#) and a sometime professor at Yale, Harvard, and Georgetown, Oren served for five years as [a contributor to the New Republic](#), has contributed [to the New York Review of Books](#), and supports what he calls a “[two-state situation](#)” focused on

institution-building and economic aid to the West Bank. He's a member of the Knesset, but not of Netanyahu's Likud Party. He joined the comparatively dovish Kulanu Party [last December](#).

Oren's credentials and relationships make him hard to dismiss. "The Obama administration was problematic because of its worldview: Unprecedented support for the Palestinians," [he told Israeli journalist David Horovitz, another centrist, this week](#). Obama and his lieutenants, including Hillary Clinton, have often behaved as if the Palestinians don't exist—Palestinian actions, corruption, incitement, campaigns of de-legitimization and terrorism are overlooked, excused, accommodated. Oren tells the story of what happened when Vice President Joe Biden asked Palestinian president Mahmoud Abbas to "look him in the eye and promise that he could make peace with Israel." Abbas looked away. The White House did nothing.

It was Israel that had to agree to a settlement freeze before the latest doomed attempt at peace negotiations; Israel that had to [apologize for possible "mistakes" against the Gaza flotilla](#); Israel that had to close Ben Gurion airport; Israel that faced a "[reevaluation](#)" of her diplomatic status after Bibi's reelection. Obama addresses the bulk of his lectures on good governance and democracy and humanitarianism not to the gang that runs that West Bank, nor to the terrorists who rule Gaza, but to Israel. During last year's Gaza war, the State Department was "[appalled](#)" by civilian casualties inflated and trumpeted by Hamas propagandists. Oren points out that in the past the president had used the word "[appalling](#)" to describe the atrocities of Muammar Qaddafi. Qaddafi and the IDF—two peas in a pod, according to this White House.

What Obama wanted was to create diplomatic space between America and Israel while maintaining our military alliance. Oren says military-to-military relations are strong, but the diplomatic fissure has degraded Israel's security. America, he says, provided a "Diplomatic Iron Dome" that shielded Israel from anti-Semites in Europe, at the U.N., and abroad whose goal is to delegitimize the Jewish State and undermine her economically.

This rhetorical missile shield is slowly being retracted. The administration threatens not to veto anti-Israel U.N. initiatives, Europe is aligning with the Boycott Divestment Sanctions (BDS) movement, and anti-Israel activism festers on U.S. campuses. Obama's unending criticism of Israel, and background quotes calling Israel's prime minister a "[chicken-shit](#)" and a "[coward](#)," provide an opening for radicals to go even further.

The diplomatic rupture endangers Israel in another way. It preceded Obama's [quest for détente with Iran](#), Israel's greatest enemy and most pressing threat. Oren was outraged in 2013 when he learned [that the administration had been conducting secret negotiations with the mullahs](#). Now, with the United States about to clear the way for Iranian nukes and flood the Iranian economy with cash, Israel is all the more at risk.

"Obama says Iran is not North Korea," [Oren said](#), "and Bibi says Iran's worse than 50 North Koreas. It all comes down to that." Fixated on striking a deal, Obama is preparing to concede the longstanding demand that Iran disclose its past nuclear weapons research, is ignoring the issue of Iranian missile development, and is standing idle as Iran props up Assad, arms Hezbollah with rockets, and promotes sectarianism in Iraq. Israel is hemmed in—by Iranian proxies and Sunni militants on its borders, by the threat of a third intifada on the West Bank, by global nongovernmental organizations, by a condescending, flippant, and bullying U.S. president whose default emotional state is pique.

As if to make Oren's case for him, the Obama administration responded to the publication of *Allly* with neither silence nor a reiteration of American policy toward Israel but with vituperation, demanding that both Kulanu Party chairman Moshe Kahlon and Prime Minister Netanyahu

apologize for criticisms Oren had made. [Kahlon sheepishly distanced himself from Oren](#), and Netanyahu [won't comment publicly](#), but the episode illustrates precisely the model of U.S.-Israeli relations outlined in this book: [A "family" argument where the criticism runs in only one direction](#). On the one hand, when the supreme leader of Iran calls [John Kerry a liar](#) and details [plans to destroy Israel](#), the Obama administration brushes it off. On the other, when a former ambassador writes a memoir based on a diary he kept while in office, the administration loses its mind.

The alliance has faltered to such a degree that Oren is morose. He wonders whether Israel is in the same precarious position it was in 1967, before the Six Day War, or in 1948, when it came close to never being born. Neither option is comforting. David Horowitz asked him, "Are people going to look back in a few years' time and say, 'This is what they were talking about in Israel as Iran closed in on the bomb and they were wiped out?'" Oren's response: "It's happened before in history, hasn't it?"

It has. And it may happen again. But whatever happens, thanks to Michael Oren, history will know that an inexperienced and ideologically motivated president drove a lethal wedge between the United States of America and the young, tiny, besieged Jewish State.

## Contentions

### [U.S. Hypocrisy on Oren's Memoir](#)

by Michael Rubin

The Obama administration is [reportedly furious](#) with Michael Oren, a former Israeli ambassador to the United States, for publishing a behind-the-scenes account of U.S.-Israeli relations during the early portion of President Obama's administration. Suffice to say, the Oren memoir did not stick to Obama administration talking points.

The umbrage that Obama administration officials and the State Department take is just a bit hypocritical. After all, multiple Obama administration officials were veterans of earlier administrations and, during the Republican interlude, wrote books. For example, former George H.W. Bush and Bill Clinton administration diplomat Dennis Ross castigated Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in *The Missing Peace*, his 2004 memoir of behind-the-scenes efforts to win Palestinian-Israeli peace. For example, he wrote for just one example, "What went wrong? To put it simply, Netanyahu was not willing to concede anything." Never mind Yasser Arafat's terrorism and two-faced behavior; it was Netanyahu's fault. How awkward, then, it must have been to return to Obama's National Security Council to work on Middle East issues after having badmouthed Netanyahu, who had also returned to office in the meantime.

Not all indiscretions emerge in book form. Martin Indyk, director of foreign policy at the Brookings Institution, served as the Obama administration's Special Envoy for Israeli-Palestinian Negotiations from 2013 to 2014, after having earlier served in the Clinton administration as an assistant secretary of State. In between his two stints in government, Indyk penned a book openly badmouthing Netanyahu, whom he compared to a "winter's chill" before the "spring warmth" of Ehud Barak's election. Indyk, who in his capacity with Brookings had accepted Qatari money before and after his government service, wasted little time bashing Netanyahu [openly](#), [on background](#), and with [little discretion](#).

Then there was Samantha Power. Years before she became the U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, she [called for a U.S. military invasion of Israel](#). Awkward. The badmouthing goes further. There were Obama's [open-mic insults](#), and the Netanyahu-baiting [offered on background](#) to *de facto* administration stenographer Jeffrey Goldberg.

Indeed, while the White House and State Department might now treat Oren with opprobrium, it has been the Obama administration that has taken elementary school playground name-calling to a new level. During their initial presidential and vice presidential election campaign, both Obama and Joe Biden repeatedly badmouth Afghanistan President Hamid Karzai. Now, there is much to criticize with regard to Karzai, but the two never considered that Karzai would read every insult they hurled; the working relationship never recovered.

Should Oren have written about his experiences so directly and so soon after his tenure? It's indiscreet and a tad obnoxious, but Obama and his aides must remember that those who live in glass houses should not have thrown stones in the first place. Such memoirs are a phenomenon of democratic political culture. But, then again, that may be what Obama most resents.

## Power Line

### [Barack Obama Disgraces Himself Again](#)

by John Hinderaker

I haven't written anything about the murders in Charleston, mostly because I haven't had time. I expect to talk about the murders tomorrow on the Laura Ingraham show, where I will be guest hosting. I would encourage you to tune in for that. In the meantime, one obvious point can be made: Barack Obama has [disgraced himself](#), once again, by trying to make political hay out of the murders:

"I have had to make statement like this too many times. Communities like this have had to endure tragedies like this too many times," Obama said. "We don't have all the facts. But we do know that once again, innocent people were killed in part because someone who wanted to inflict harm had no trouble getting their hands on a gun."

Murder is a terrible thing, but thankfully, the homicide rate in the United States is dropping. It was lower in 2014 than in 2013, and lower in 2013 than in 2012. Today, it is only about half what it was during the Clinton administration. In the intervening years, private handgun ownership has exploded. Many argue, and statistics support the claim, that broader gun ownership has contributed to this stunning reduction in the homicide rate.

In this particular case, an uncle of the murderer, Dylann Roof, has said that he got the gun—a .45 handgun, apparently—from his father as a birthday present. Is Obama proposing legislation that would make it illegal for a family member to give another family member a firearm? If so, that proposal would be brand new. The Democrats have never had such a law on their wish list.

The facts as reported are sketchy and may prove to be entirely wrong, but if the father bought the gun to give to Dylann as a present, I think it would be an illegal straw purchase. On the other hand, if the father had owned the gun for a while, it would be legal to give it to his son. So if Obama is proposing legislation, what is it, and how does it differ from existing law?

“Let’s be clear. At some point we as a country will have to reckon with the fact that this type of mass violence does not happen in other advanced countries,” Obama said. “It doesn’t happen in other places with this type of frequency. And it is in our power to do something about it . . . At some point, it’s going to be important for the American people to come to grips with it and for us to be able to shift how we think about gun violence collectively,” he said.

Charlie Hebdo, as some wag noted, was unavailable for comment. “Mass violence” happens in lots of countries; more important, the homicide rate in the U.S. is about average, ranking higher than some western countries that have less demographic diversity, but much lower than Russia, most of Africa, the Caribbean, and most of Latin America. The assertion that we have a unique problem with “gun violence” is simply false.

Obama does not specify, naturally, how we should “shift how we think about gun violence collectively.” He is just trying to fire up his base, not to achieve anything constructive. But here is an idea: news reports indicate that South Carolina law prohibits carrying concealed firearms in churches. The one thing that undoubtedly could have stopped the deranged and reportedly drug-addled Dylann Roof is a couple of parishioners with guns. Somehow, though, I don’t suppose that is the “shift” that Obama had in mind.

## **The Federalist**

### **Actually, President Obama, Mass Killings Aren’t Uncommon In Other Countries**

by David Harsanyi

President Barack Obama responded to the horrific shooting at a historic black church in Charleston that left nine dead with an earnest statement—well, other than that contention that was completely untrue.

Once again, innocent people were killed in part because someone who wanted to inflict harm had no trouble getting their hands on a gun. . . . We as a country will have to reckon with the fact that this type of mass violence does not happen in other advanced countries.

Let’s set aside the assertion that it’s too easy to obtain guns in America and deal with the implication that we are somehow uniquely violent or that “mass violence does not happen in other advanced countries.” The president has made this claim in various ways and with various qualifiers.

*Parlez vous Hebdo?* Because surely the president recalls that in January of this year two gunmen entered the office of a satirical magazine in France with an assortment of guns and murdered 11 people (and injured 11 more). After leaving, they killed a police officer. And in a marketplace catering to Jews another five were murdered and 11 wounded. France is, allegedly, an advanced country, is it not? Perhaps if Obama had attended the anti-terror rally in Paris like every other leader of advanced countries did, his recollection would be sharper.

It only takes some quick research to discover that rampage killers, acts of terror (as the Charleston shooting most certainly is), school attacks, spree killers are not unique to the United States.

In 2011, a deranged Anders Behring Breivik killed eight people by setting off a van bomb in Oslo, before going on to murder 69 more people, mostly children, at a summer camp. This is the

single worst shooting spree incident in history. Obama surely remembers that he left the White House and visited the Norwegian ambassador's residence to offer his condolences.

It takes only a rudimentary search to find out that mentally unstable killers can be found anywhere. In February of this year, nine people were killed in Czech Republic spree killing. In Erfurt, Germany, a couple of years ago, an expelled student murdered 13 teachers, 2 students and a policeman. That same year, in the Serbian village of Velika Ivanča, a gunman shot and killed 14 people—many of them his own relatives— and a Russia gunman opened fire with a semi-automatic rifle killing six people. A couple of years before that, in England, a lone gunman killed 12 people and injured 11.

Advanced countries or developing ones, it's the same thing. In 2013 a mentally unstable man in Rio de Janeiro killed 12 children and seriously wounded another 12. And you might remember that China had an outbreak of mass stabbings, hammer and cleaver attacks not long ago. You don't need guns to kill people. One man stabbed 22 children by himself. Two attackers killed 29 people and injured 143 at Chinese railway station last year.

It should be noted that not that long ago advanced nations in Europe were busy throwing people into ovens or starving millions on purpose. The idea that violence is uniquely American is best left to fringe leftists on college campuses. Moreover, as The Associate Press reported in 2012, many experts contend that mass shootings are not growing in frequency at all. One has data that shows that mass shootings reached their peak in 1929 and have declined steadily since. Overall, gun violence has also been declining since 1993.

Now, even one shooting is a tragedy. What happened in Charleston is horrifying and heartbreaking, and there's nothing wrong with having a debate about how to avoid shootings in the future. As for the frequency of these events, there can be a host of reasons why we might have more rampages. Maybe we're freer and this puts us in more danger. Maybe we need better mental health policies. Maybe, as the president argues, we have access to too many guns. I don't think so, but make that argument rather than trying to score political points with a falsehood.

**Update:** Most of the pushback on social media claims that I'm being unfair to Obama. The president, they argue, is saying that we have a higher frequency of shootings, not that mass shooting are a predominately American event. (Even then, he might not be right.)

It's clear Obama is stressing separate points, and without doubt the perception he's trying to create is that this *type* of "mass" violence is something that almost never happens anywhere else. It's nothing new for him. Here's his tweet from the speech yesterday:

"This type of mass violence does not happen in other advanced countries." — The White House (@WhiteHouse) June 18, 2015

At the very best, as Politifact might put it, his comments are half true. I've gone back and read Obama's remarks over the years on gun issues and he's always tossing around this idea. Sometimes he interchanges mass violence and all gun violence. Sometimes he compares us to the "developed world" and sometimes he compares us to the "advanced world"— it's difficult to understand what countries he's talking about. But he doesn't always throw a qualifier in about frequency or anything else.

So if you don't like the quote today, here is one from last year:

My biggest frustration has been that this society has not been willing to take some basic steps to keep guns out of the hands of people who can do just unbelievable damage. We are the only developed country on earth where this happens. And that it happens now once a week. And it's a one day story."

This "society" has a problem. We are the only developed country on earth where this happens. Untrue.

**WSJ**

### **Lessons From a Little Pink House, 10 Years Later**

***Since the Kelo decision, 45 states have passed laws reforming eminent domain, with mixed results.***

by Ilya Somin

June 23 marks the 10th anniversary of *Kelo v. City of New London*, when the Supreme Court held in a 5-4 ruling that government could use eminent domain to take private property for "economic development." At issue in the case were 15 homes, including a little pink house owned by Susette Kelo, in the city of New London, Conn., which wanted to transfer the properties to a private nonprofit with plans to revitalize the area. But after the court ruled and the houses were razed (with the exception of Ms. Kelo's, which was moved at private expense), those plans fell through.

The condemned land remains empty, housing only a few feral cats. After Hurricane Irene in 2011, the city used it as a dumping ground for debris. Yet the first real development since the Supreme Court's controversial decision might now be on its way: New London Mayor Daryl Finizio, who was elected in 2011 as a critic of the government taking, recently announced [a plan](#) to turn the former site of Ms. Kelo's house into a park that will "serve as a memorial to all those adversely affected by the city's use of eminent domain."

It would be a fitting tribute. Although the Supreme Court's decision in *Kelo* was consistent with precedent, it was nonetheless a serious error.

The Fifth Amendment allows governments to take private property only for "public use." Until the early 20th century most courts interpreted those words to cover things such as roads or power lines—projects owned either directly by the government or by private owners who have a legal obligation to serve the entire public, such as utility companies.

This limited understanding of "public use" predominated at the time of the founding, and also when the Fourteenth Amendment made the Bill of Rights applicable to state governments in 1868. "The despotic power, as it is aptly called by some writers, of taking private property, when state necessity requires, exists in every government," Supreme Court Justice William Paterson, an influential signer of the Constitution, wrote in a 1795 case. "It is, however, difficult to form a case, in which the necessity of a state can be of such a nature, as to authorise or excuse the seizing of landed property belonging to one citizen, and giving it to another citizen."

By the 1950s, however, the original meaning of "public use" had been largely abandoned. Legal elites came to believe that government planners should have nearly limitless authority to take property to promote growth and combat blight afflicting the urban poor.

The *Kelo* majority concluded that virtually *any* potential public benefit qualifies as a “public use”—even if the government cannot prove that the benefit will ever materialize. The development project for which the homes in New London were taken quickly fell apart, as critics had predicted. When the Connecticut Supreme Court, which heard *Kelo* before it reached the U.S. Supreme Court, upheld the takings in 2004, Justice Peter Zarella offered in his dissent the prescient warning that there was “scant evidence to suggest that the predicted public benefit will be realized with any reasonable certainty.”

Condemnations based on economic development and blight often harm the very communities they are intended to help. Since the 1940s, hundreds of thousands of people—most of them poor racial minorities with little political influence—have been displaced by such takings. Often their property has been transferred to well-off developers or other influential private interests. Victims of eminent domain often cannot even vote against the local politicians who authorized the takings. By the next election, they may have already lost their homes and been forced out of the community.

In addition to the direct destruction they cause, such uses of eminent domain impede long-term development by undermining America’s historically strong property rights—long an important incentive for investment.

All of this suggests that *Kelo* should be opposed not only by judicial originalists, but also by those who subscribe to “living Constitution” theories that emphasize the need for courts to protect “discrete and insular minorities” who cannot fend for themselves in the political process.

Although *Kelo* was a painful defeat for advocates of property rights, it led to important progress. The ruling generated an enormous backlash: More than 80% of the public disapproved of the court’s decision. The opposition cut across racial, partisan and ideological lines. *Kelo* was denounced by such unlikely bedfellows as Ralph Nader, Rush Limbaugh and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People.

Since 2005, 45 states have passed laws reforming eminent domain. Some of these reforms, unfortunately, only pretend to restrict takings for economic development. Many states, such as Colorado and Texas, still allow eminent domain to eliminate “blight,” which is defined so broadly that almost any area can be condemned. Nonetheless, real progress has been made in numerous states, such as Arizona and Florida.

The debate over *Kelo* also broke the seeming consensus on “public use” among jurists and scholars. Before *Kelo*, most experts believed that the debate had been conclusively settled in favor of governments’ power to take property for virtually any purpose. No informed observer would make that claim today. Several state supreme courts have rejected *Kelo* as a guide to the interpretation of their state constitutions’ “public use” provisions.

*Kelo* and its aftermath are far from the end of the struggle to restore constitutional protection for property rights. But when future generations visit the park where the little pink house once stood, they may well remember this case as the end of the beginning.

*Mr. Somin, a law professor at George Mason University and adjunct scholar at the Cato Institute, is the author of “The Grasping Hand: Kelo v. City of New London and the Limits of Eminent Domain” (University of Chicago Press, 2015).*

people who think you should be able to own guns



GEORGE WASHINGTON



THOMAS JEFFERSON



JAMES MADISON



ABRAHAM LINCOLN



MAHATMA GANDHI



MARTIN LUTHER KING JR.

people who think you shouldn't



KING GEORGE III



ADOLF HITLER



JOSEPH STALIN



MAO ZEDONG



KIM JONG IL



BARACK OBAMA

Any questions?





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