



TSA: Back to the Abyss

Throughout history and around the world, suppliants have groveled to potentates for the most basic of rights and common decency. Whether it was Queen Esther beseeching King Ahasuerus not to murder an entire people or commoners in Rome hankering to wear purple, subjects have always endured atrocities and degradation from their rulers.

Then came the American Revolution. Men slogged their way out of slavery's abyss to stand gloriously upright and proud. They determined to live free of government, of its insults and whims, its permits, bloodsucking, and torture. And they codified this resolution in the Constitution. No longer would they beg for their rights, nor for common decency.



Alas, we've tumbled from that shining mountaintop back into the abyss. And nowhere is our fall more dramatic than at the airport, thanks to the Transportation Security Administration (TSA).

Passengers line up where their masters command, shed their shoes and coats, and empty their pockets. Then they docilely wait for said masters to ogle and sexually assault them.

Nor is this mortification enough. The TSA attacks survivors of cancer, soaking them with the contents of their stoma-bags. It demeans patients of elective surgery who harm no one but themselves. It persecutes practitioners of various religions and desecrates their sacred emblems.

We might hope such outrages would provoke rank rebellion, if not from the population as a whole then at least from the injured. Nope. Instead, they and their lobbyists go hat-in-hand to Our Rulers, begging for the most basic of rights and common decency. Listen and you'll hear humble whispers of "Milord" and "if it please your most supreme majesty."

Victims Who Are Willing

First, but by no means the only one up, is Thomas Sawyer. You remember him: "He was left humiliated, crying and covered with his own urine," as MSNBC put it last November, when the TSA's employees manhandled him and broke the exterior bag that has replaced his bladder.

An earlier tyrant opined that "when you have to kill a man it costs nothing to be polite." But TSA's savages spared Sawyer no courtesy whatever as they slaughtered his dignity. "Due to his medical condition," MSNBC reported, "Sawyer asked to be screened in private. 'One officer looked at another, rolled his eyes and said that they really didn't have any place to take me,' said Sawyer. 'After I said again that I'd like privacy, they took me to an office.'"

Imagine the cruel imbecility of pretending that a 61-year-old man who's just informed you he has a "medical condition" is a terrorist. Even the most hard-hearted assailant might be tempted to release his



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quarry under those circumstances. Not the TSA. It had only begun to torment Sawyer.

"Sawyer wears pants two sizes too large in order to accommodate [his] medical equipment," MSNBC explained. "He'd taken off his belt to go through the scanner and once in the office with security personnel, his pants fell down around his ankles. 'I had to ask twice if it was OK to pull up my shorts,' said Sawyer."

That was his second mistake; his first was entering American aviation's *stalag*. But good gracious, once in it, don't whimper and plead. That only encourages the sadists running the place.

"Every time I tried to tell them about my medical condition," Sawyer continued, "they said they didn't need to know about that.... One agent watched as the other used his flat hand to go slowly down my chest. I tried to warn him that he would hit the bag and break the seal on my bag, but he ignored me. Sure enough, the seal was broken and urine started dribbling down my shirt and my leg and into my pants." Sawyer summarized his agony at the TSA's hands — agony that our taxes buy to the tune of \$7 billion annually: "I was absolutely humiliated, I couldn't even speak."

Still, he was far gentler with the TSA than it had been with him. "I am a good American," he said, citing the most infuriating equation of our age: that patriotism requires our endorsing unspeakable barbarity. To this he added the most infuriating propaganda of our age: that the TSA's "patriots" and their unspeakable barbarity protect us. "I want safety for all passengers as much as the next person.... But if this country is going to sacrifice treating people like human beings in the name of safety, then we have already lost the war."

Between the nationwide publicity and the complaints Sawyer wrote various politicians, the TSA deigned to notice the peon it had abased. Indeed, its chief, John Pistole, even phoned Sawyer.

And that attention from the TSA was all it took to lull this "absolutely humiliated, speechless" serf. "First [Pistole] apologized," Sawyer told MSNBC. "And I thanked him." *Thanked* him? Yes. "Then I told him off a bit." Oh, the *lese majesty*! "And he said, 'Tell me more. What do you think needs to be done?'"

I know: You're hoping the next words out of Sawyer's mouth will be "ABOLITION, you unconscionable pervert!" Instead, he swallowed the bait, though he's old enough to know better. "It made me feel good," Sawyer glowed. "It means that my voice was heard all the way up to Washington." The poor soul. "He suggested to Pistole that TSA screeners undergo more training to better understand travelers with medical conditions. 'I offered to attend a general staff meeting to show the staff what an ostomy bag is and help with that training,' Sawyer said."

Picture a general staff meeting for the guards at Auschwitz: "What the Torah Is, and How to Better Understand Prisoners Reading It." Perhaps training was all the Nazis needed to metamorphose from murderous monsters into semi-civilized slime.

Or perhaps the slaves should wise up and realize that sociopaths who will sexually molest an older gentleman in the first place, let alone a patient recovering from cancer, who will ignore his repeated requests to raise his britches and to avoid his stoma-bag, are irredeemably evil. They are thugs and tyrants, as addicted to their specks of power as Obama is to his tons of it. "Training" won't begin to reform them. Which is why Sawyer should agitate for the TSA's extinction, not gloat that it inclines an ear with a wink and a smirk.

Nonetheless, the *Lansing State Journal* tells us that on January 25, Sawyer, his wife, "Bladder Cancer Advocacy Network co-founder Diane Zipursky Quale and network Executive Director Claire Saxton"



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prostrated themselves before several of the TSA's honchos. Presumably, they begged for a decency common among even the foulest humans but one unknown to the political class.

More faith in the utterly impossible comes from the National Center for Transgender Equality (NCTE). It, too, believes it can train and educate the TSA. No doubt it clings to such fantasy because of the unique horrors confronting "trans people — and gender non-conforming people regardless of whether they are trans-identified" at checkpoints: "Transportation Security Officers (TSOs) are trained to look for ... things that are different than expected," the NCTE's website advises. "More specifically, in terms of the scanners, which allow them to see all your body contours ... , they are looking for foreign objects.... They can ... see — and overreact to — binders, packers, wigs, breast forms.... Any of these things, while completely legal to travel with, may attract attention of TSOs and lead to increased scrutiny of your person." Breathing more easily are "trans people who have genitals and chests that generally fit with what most TSA agents would expect," but "realistically, ... that's not most of us."

Yet another reason to stick with the identity the good Lord gave you. Does embarrassment come any more excruciating than TSA's yahoos yukking it up over your fake and obviously constructed equipment? Meanwhile, the NCTE has "been working with the TSA on trans education for several years.... We are hopeful that the TSA will soon issue guidance and training for their officers about transgender people and our issues."

That's the level of credulity we'd expect from folks who insist cosmetic surgery can turn women into men and vice versa. And they stand about as much chance of changing their chromosomes as they do of the TSA's extending basic decency to "transgender people."

Meanwhile, the NCTE continues imploring the TSA for the most basic of rights and common decency regardless of the agency's obvious treachery: "A butch woman in a man's suit [was] flagged as suspicious because the scanner people decided she was a woman in a man's suit." But "how [would] the person looking at the scan ... know that a traveler was presenting as a man or woman[?] The person looking at the scan from a remote location is only supposed to know what is on the screen shot of your naked body. So if she thinks the person has 'female body parts,' she should have no other information to contradict that; she has not seen your ID or your ticket or what clothes you are wearing." Ah, but what the TSA says and what actually happens are seldom if ever the same. The NCTE might more properly ask how hard the TSA's "scanner people" laughed at the "butch woman" and how long they harassed her.

Instead, the group assures its constituents that when the TSA sexually assaults them, they "have a right" to a molester "of the same gender 'as you are presenting.'" *Biiiiiig* comfort. Why doesn't the NCTE devote the energies it's wasted on cajoling brutes to grow a heart to demanding their elimination instead? What do the TSA's victims have against its abolition?

Also begging the agency not only for basic decency but for rights the Constitution specifically guarantees is The Sikh Coalition. Their knees should have tired by now, because they've been bowing before the TSA for years. But no. They continue kowtowing while informing their co-religionists "to be prepared for the 'reality that Sikhs should now always expect to be secondarily screened at American airports,'" according to www.sify.com.

The TSA's excuse? The turbans male Sikhs wear as a religious requirement. The agency claims these "*dastars*" could hide explosives, as could just about everything in the TSA's world, from shoes to snow-globes to thermoses. And so it orders Sikhs to remove their headgear, which the faithful consider as



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humiliating as stripping naked. Then they must surrender the turban for inspection. That's as sacrilegious to a Sikh as Andres Serrano's "art" is to Christians. And the Constitution absolutely prohibits such abuse.

No matter; the TSA's insouciance toward the First Amendment means that "Sikhs should now expect to be secondarily screened 100 percent of the time at American airports, even after passing through so-called Advanced Imaging Technology (AIT) machines," the coalition cautions. But at least it calls the TSA on one of its many lies: "Although [the agency] publicly asserts on its website that such machines can see through 'layers of clothing,' the TSA has made clear in both word and practice that such machines are not powerful enough to see through Sikh turbans.... This means that, for Sikhs, the new AIT machines will lead to more — not less — screening of turbans."

Is the coalition urging abolition of the TSA? Of course not. Rather, "it is working with key lawmakers to change" the policy regarding turbans. All while the TSA sexually assaults Sikhs and everyone else.

The common decency and basic rights that the Sikhs, the NCTE, and Sawyer hope to win reside not in laws and policies but in the market. Only when airlines themselves protect their inventory and customers, rather than depending on the State to do so, will aviation's security become civilized.

Obtaining Decent Treatment

That's because the TSA — and government in general — relies on compulsion and taxes, not on the willing participation of the free market. The latter's voluntary exchange, profits, prices, supply, and demand turn ordinary entrepreneurs into geniuses who practically read our minds to give us what we want, even as the TSA forces us to accept what it dishes out.

We take it for granted that when we need milk, we can buy it at the supermarket. And not only that, we'll have our choice of whole, 1%, 2%, skim, even chocolate, buttermilk, or half-and-half, in a variety of sizes.

But how does the grocer know you and I — and 14 other folks that evening — will purchase half-gallons of whole milk? What if he himself drinks only skim and ordered that alone from his supplier? What if he tried to sell liver-flavored milk, or milk dyed his favorite color? How does he know precisely what you and I and scores of other customers want to buy, in the proper quantities?

Profits, prices, supply, and demand. To profit, the grocer must attract customers by offering what we want to buy; to determine our needs and desires, he heeds fluctuations in price and what they tell him of our demand — and he does it all with a smile and a "thanks for your business!" Otherwise, we'll forsake him for his competitors.

But bureaucracies operate outside of profits, prices, supply, and demand. They give us what *they* decide we should have because taxes support them, not the profits that reward entrepreneurs for correctly estimating our preferences. However outraged we may be at the TSA's groping, the agency's "profits" don't suffer because politicians, not passengers, determine and authorize its budget every year. And those authorizations continue compensating the TSA no matter how much it angers and insults us.

The American Revolution rescued us from slavery's abyss; markets keep us free. There's no room on Mt. Liberty for the TSA.

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