

Renee Good was murdered and that needs to be acknowledged

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I cannot be alone in thinking that 2026 is already proving to be a very long year. The killing of Renee Good by ICE operatives in Minneapolis has only intensified the sense that this year began badly and threatens to become worse.

This was murder

I use the word murder advisedly. We do not need a court, a hearing, or the verdict of a jury to understand what happened. The evidence is in the public domain. A woman, plainly frightened, attempted to leave a situation in which she did not wish to remain. She posed no threat. She was shot dead by an ICE agent as she tried to drive away. That this was murder is, to my mind, beyond serious doubt.

The shock is compounded by the location. It is only a few years since George Floyd was killed, barely a mile from where Renee Good died. If there was any lesson to be learned from that atrocity, it appears to have been ignored by elements of far-right law enforcement in the United States. Worse still, the administration's response made an already appalling event still more disturbing.

Falsehood after falsehood was advanced about Renee Good's actions, despite video evidence being available for all to see. Those claims were repeated by the president, the vice-president, the president's spokesperson, and others. Every one of them was contradicted by the evidence we all could see.

From murder to political execution

Then came what was presented as justification. J. D. Vance asserted that Renee Good was part of the far left and an organised opponent of what Donald Trump seeks to achieve. No evidence was offered. No legal framework was invoked, but the implication was unmistakable: her political opposition was, in his view, sufficient reason for her death. What was already a murder was reframed, by his words, as a political execution.

In doing so, Vance made explicit where he and the Trump administration now stand on democratic rights in the United States. Opposition is no longer something to be

tolerated. It is something to be eradicated.

I very much doubt that J. D. Vance knows what Renee Good's political opinions actually were. I am not claiming I do. I suspect she was categorised on the basis that she was a poet, and therefore assumed to be dangerous, an agitator, a threat. I have not read her poetry and cannot comment on it. But what is implicit in Vance's remark is deeply troubling nonetheless: the suggestion is that thought itself is an act of opposition, and that thinking differently from the administration is sufficient to justify summary killing.

What legitimacy looks like when it is lost

I am shocked, saddened, and appalled. I feel a genuine sense of grief for someone I never knew, alongside deep sympathy for her children, her family, her friends, and her community. There was no justification for what happened. There never could be.

When a government believes it can kill members of its own population and then lie about it as if this were its right, it forfeits any claim to legitimacy. A government that behaves in this way ceases to be an agent of the public good and becomes a public enemy. That is now the position of the Trump administration. There can be no excuse for its conduct, no exoneration for those who committed or excused this act, and no tolerance for the continuation of such rule.

There is, of course, little that most of us can do directly to change outcomes in the United States. Boycotting US goods may offer a form of protest, but in a globalised economy, it is difficult to do so meaningfully. Economic pressure alone is insufficient in any case. What is required is moral leadership against a government that has gone profoundly wrong.

This is where there is something I can do. I can write to my MP and, through them, press the Prime Minister to condemn what has happened, to denounce a government that has permitted and excused this killing, and to reconsider the UK's relationship with the United States. That relationship is still described as "special", but in practice, it has become deeply toxic because of what it now embodies.

There can be no special relationship with a government that endorses violence against its own people, justifies murder for political reasons, and shows careless indifference to democratic representation. It is clear that the Trump administration is actively seeking to undermine democracy itself. Unless and until Keir Starmer says this plainly, through his words and actions, he will be aligning the UK with oppression and tyranny.

That alignment can be challenged. I would urge readers to write to their MP, asking them to share their concerns with the Prime Minister and to request a response. There is a ChatGPT prompt reproduced below to assist in doing so. Copy and paste this post into ChatGPT as a start, or, of course, start from scratch with your own thoughts and keyboard.

The wholly unnecessary and unwarranted death of Renee Good demands nothing less. Even as we fear the consequences of the actions that led to her killing, and the rhetoric that has followed, we must recognise that what is at stake is not only the well-being of people in the United States, but the safety of all people and the supposed security of democratic societies everywhere.

Renee Good should not have died. We can say "never again" and work toward that goal. It is the least we can do.

Taking further action

If you want to write a letter to your MP on the issues raised in this blog post, there is a ChatGPT prompt to assist you in doing so, with full instructions, [here](#).

One word of warning, though: please ensure you have the correct MP. ChatGPT can get it wrong.

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