

Alan Shore's closing argument

Alan Shore: When the weapons of mass destruction thing turned out to be not true, I expected the American people to rise up. Ha! They didn't.

Then, when the Abu Ghraib torture thing surfaced and it was revealed that our government participated in rendition, a practice where we kidnap people and turn them over to regimes who specialize in torture, I was sure then the American people would be heard from. We stood mute.

Then came the news that we jailed thousands of so-called terrorists suspects, locked them up without the right to a trial or even the right to confront their accusers. Certainly, we would never stand for that. We did.

And now, it's been discovered the executive branch has been conducting massive, illegal, domestic surveillance on its own citizens. You and me. And I at least consoled myself that finally, finally the American people will have had enough. Evidentially, we haven't.

In fact, if the people of this country have spoken, the message is we're okay with it all. Torture, warrantless search and seizure, illegal wiretappings, prison without a fair trial - or any trial, war on false pretenses. We, as a citizenry, are apparently not offended.

There are no demonstrations on college campuses. In fact, there's no clear indication that young people seem to notice.

Well, Melissa Hughes noticed. Now, you might think, instead of withholding her taxes, she could have protested the old fashioned way. Made a placard and demonstrated at a Presidential or Vice-Presidential appearance, but we've lost the right to that as well. The Secret Service can now declare free speech zones to contain, control and, in effect, criminalize protest.

Stop for a second and try to fathom that.

At a presidential rally, parade or appearance, if you have on a supportive t-shirt, you can be there. If you are wearing or carrying something in protest, you can be removed.

This, in the United States of America. This in the United States of America. Is Melissa Hughes the only one embarrassed?

Alan sits down abruptly in the witness chair next to the judge

Judge Robert Sanders: Mr. Shore. That's a chair for witnesses only.

Really long speeches make me so tired sometimes.

Judge Sanders: Please get out of the chair.

Alan: Actually, I'm sick and tired.

Judge Sanders: Get out of the chair!

Alan: And what I'm most sick and tired of is how every time somebody disagrees with how the government is running things, he or she is labeled unAmerican.

U.S. Attorney Jonathan Shapiro: Evidentially, it's speech time.

Alan: And speech in this country is free, you hack! Free for me, free for you. Free for Melissa Hughes to stand up to her government and say "Stick it"!

U.S. Attorney Jonathan Shapiro: Objection!

Alan: I object to government abusing its power to squash the constitutional freedoms of its citizenry. And, God forbid, anybody challenge it. They're smeared as being a heretic. Melissa Hughes is an American. Melissa Hughes is an American. Melissa Hughes is an American!

Judge Sanders: Mr. Shore. Unless you have anything new and fresh to say, please sit down. You've breached the decorum of my courtroom with all this hooting.

Alan: Last night, I went to bed with a book. Not as much fun as a 29 year old, but the book contained a speech by Adlai Stevenson. The year was 1952. He said, "The tragedy of our day is the climate of fear in which we live and fear breeds repression. Too often, sinister threats to the Bill of Rights, to freedom of the mind are concealed under the patriotic cloak of anti-Communism."

Today, it's the cloak of anti-terrorism. Stevenson also remarked, "It's far easier to fight for principles than to live up to them."

I know we are all afraid, but the Bill of Rights - we have to live up to that. We simply must. That's all Melissa Hughes was trying to say. She was speaking for you. I would ask you now to go back to that room and speak for her.