

Y'all ever heard the story about the boiling frog? Should you decide to boil a frog, you can't drop the thing straight into boiling water 'cause it'll sense how hot the water is and leap away. But you can put the frog in lukewarm water and slowly increase the temperature until it comes to a boil. The gradual change is imperceptible to the frog, so it stays put with disastrous consequences, and if it ever realizes that the water is boiling, it's already too late. Now, I know this isn't exactly the frog-leg-eatingest crowd, and I'm still not entirely sure why the frog has to be alive during this whole process. Also, as it turns out, the story's of dubious origins but the point remains: it's really hard to get folks to accept big changes all at once. You gotta do it a little at a time. People aren't frogs, but you still gotta ease 'em into big change, especially if it leads them in a direction they don't particularly want to go. People are kinda funny, though. We all have our own boiling points, that point we get led to that just isn't acceptable. Drop us in those waters, and we revolt immediately. Slowly turn up the temperature, and we're eased into compliance with little resistance. I know things are moving fast these days, but the fast-moving nature of all this belies the incremental rise in temperature aiming to boil us all. If you know what your boiling point is, great. Maybe we've already passed it and you're mad as hell. Maybe we haven't yet, but you're watching and ready for when we get there. But if you haven't defined that boiling point, that line you will not cross, if you haven't done that yet, I encourage you to define it, and define it soon. Like, today.

Let me put it this way. Our entire population's sitting in that big pot together, and the temperature's rising. If we get to 211 degrees and someone proposes adding just one more degree, 212 doesn't sound that much worse than 211. It's only one degree after all, and since we've already been led one degree at a time up to 211, we'll be more willing to accept 212 when it's time. After all, what harm could just one more degree do? But define it ahead of time, and when 212 arrives, you'll see it for what it is, the difference between being very hot and sterilizing heat. In other words, what is your line? Is there anything that could happen that would make you stand up? If you've heard people use words like "fascist" or "authoritarian" or "dictatorship" and just don't see it, consider your way of life in this beautiful country and define exactly what, for you, would be a bridge too far, the line you will not cross, the 212-degree boiling point at which you think we're in trouble. I said do this today. I mean today because the temperature in this pot changes every day, sometimes multiple times in one day. And once you've defined that line, hold to it. Propagandists will continue to paint every change as justifiable. It's imperative you know what's beyond justification ahead of time.

A quick example: An acquaintance told me that the current expulsion of immigrants without hearings to a prison no one leaves alive in another country is not the same as Hitler expelling undesirables without trials to death camps in Poland. His reasoning, I kid you not, was that 1) Hitler used trains 2) El Salvador isn't Poland 3) our immigrants aren't the same kind of people as their undesirables were and 4) just because no one ever leaves alive doesn't mean it's a death camp, even though that's literally the definition.<sup>1</sup> I know this guy. Five years ago, shoot, maybe even six months ago, he never would've argued in favor of this, but the temperature's risen just slowly enough for him to get on board. Imagine how differently he might've felt if he'd named his boiling point line months ago.

There's this great quote from Maya Angelou, "when people show you who they are, believe them." Especially now, with a political world eat up with doublespeak, it's imperative we pay attention to what we witness, not just what we're told. And yes, that includes this very moment. Don't just trust me. Check this stuff

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<sup>1</sup> <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/us/dictionary/english/death-camp>

for yourself. Watch the unedited videos. Read publications outside your normal comfort zone.<sup>2</sup> If you're feeling brave, read foreign sources. You've got an entire community of brilliant minds right here in Hamilton, people who specialize in recognizing boiling frogs. Ask what they see. You've also got people living here who fled oppressive regimes. See what they're afraid of. I'll be honest, we crossed my boiling point a long time ago. My line was Jesus, so reframing Christian behavior as Western Civilization's greatest weakness and discarding Jesus as woke was too much for me.<sup>3,4</sup> I don't know what yours will be. I don't know what it should be, but if your line is Jesus, too, well, we've already crossed it.

I'm not gonna give you a full rundown of headlines this week, but there are a few I want to highlight. ICE is getting in the habit of scheduling regular immigration appointments as traps. Immigrants following the correct legal process are getting arrested for showing up to meetings they're supposed to show up to.<sup>5</sup> If deporting only so-called "illegals" was your line, we've already crossed it. In one raid, ICE snatched a baby out of its mother's arms.<sup>6</sup> In another, they slammed a sixteen-year-old girl's face onto the pavement.<sup>7</sup> In another, they detained a mother and her newborn baby immediately after the baby was born in the hospital.<sup>8</sup> If, for some reason, deporting only men was your line, we've already crossed it. In Georgia, ICE detained a teen described as "the most precious human" because she turned right on a red light where there was a "No Right On Red" sign. Don't worry, though, she's in the same detention center her dad was sent to after getting pulled over for speeding.<sup>9</sup> If "only violent offenders" was your line, we've already crossed it. Civil Rights era desegregation laws are falling, artifacts are being removed from the African American History Museum, and teaching about America's role in the Trans-Atlantic slave trade is now defined as "ideological indoctrination."<sup>10,11,12</sup> A judge and a mayor've been detained by ICE.<sup>13,14</sup> The government's suicide hotline for LGBTQ+ youth is on the chopping block.<sup>15</sup> If only focusing on immigrants was your line, we're crossing it now.

On a related note, have y'all heard of the Trevor Project? The Trevor Project is an independent nonprofit that provides additional suicide prevention resources for LGBTQ+ youth. If you visit their website, a little window pops up that says, if you need a quick exit from their site, "Press the ESC button three times."<sup>16</sup> I want that to sink in. To put a fine point on it, one of the primary resources to keep queer kids from killing themselves knows that, in some households, getting caught with that website open could have devastating consequences. If

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<sup>2</sup> <https://ground.news/> and <https://www.allsides.com/unbiased-balanced-news> are imperfect but useful resources to begin searching out diverse news sources. <https://www.bbc.com/> is also helpful but is far from an unbiased source.

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.npr.org/2025/03/22/nx-s1-5321299/how-empathy-came-to-be-seen-as-a-weakness-in-conservative-circles>

<sup>4</sup> <https://kadeyoung.com/about/>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.npr.org/2025/04/24/nx-s1-5372694/immigration-lawyers-warn-detention-risk>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.masslive.com/worcester/2025/05/baby-involved-in-worcester-ice-arrest-safe-with-its-mother-minor-released-from-custody.html>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.nbcboston.com/news/local/harrowing-video-shows-worcester-police-hold-girls-face-on-ground-during-ice-operation/3708641/>

NOTE: I originally preached this and the previous example as two separate incidents but have since received clarification that the two examples are from the same event. *Mea culpa*.

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/newborn-us-citizen-guatemalan-mom-detained-faces-deportation-rcna204727>

<sup>9</sup> <https://newschannel9.com/news/local/from-traffic-stop-to-ice-custody-dalton-student-now-in-limbo-family-wants-answers-immigration-customs-enforcement-whitfield-county-georgia-law-enforcement-illegal-immigration-undocumented-migrants>

<sup>10</sup> <https://apnews.com/article/school-segregation-order-civil-rights-justice-department-7fc5e2e4ef8e9ad4a283f563c042ae7>

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cly5xx017vko>

<sup>12</sup> <https://capitalbnews.org/trump-executive-orders-black-americans/>

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/03/restoring-truth-and-sanity-to-american-history/>

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cly5xx017vko>

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.ctvnews.ca/world/article/new-jersey-mayor-arrested-at-ice-detention-centre-he-has-been-protesting/>

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.axios.com/2025/04/23/lgbtq-hotline-funds-eliminated-hhs-draft-leak>

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.thetrevorproject.org/blog/what-to-know-about-988-funding/>

continuing to give kids the support they need to survive to adulthood was your line, well, we're about to cross it.

Back before Jesus was crucified, the crowds asked "How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the messiah, tell us plainly." I gotta imagine Jesus was a little confused, maybe even frustrated. He did miracle after miracle, preached like a prophet, had God's voice boom from the heavens calling him God's son twice, and still people didn't believe. He said, "I have told you, and you do not believe. The works I do ... testify to me, but you do not believe." How much more could he possibly show them before they perked up and paid attention? In my lifetime, it's never been more important to believe Jesus is who he says he is. And who he says he is includes the great collection of humanity who believe in him, regardless of where we come from. We're all members of this body, nothing new there, that's about as ancient as our theology gets. And y'all, members of this body are being snatched away, though as of yet, none that sit in our pews. Maybe that's a line for some of you? Jesus also said, of the sheep who follow him, none will be snatched away from his hand. We are marked as Christ's own forever, we are parts of this body, and every other part of this body is supposed to help keep it intact. The reality, though, is that most of us just watch as ICE amputates one toe at a time. How many are you willing to lose before you believe?

Name your line now. Name it, and hold it fast. Believe people when they show you who they are. And remember, you are always Christ's. No matter what's done to you, no one can take that away. You are Christ's own forever. They may snatch you away from home, car, or sidewalk, but they can never snatch you away from Jesus. Y'all, the temperature is rising, and our great human body is threatened. So many've been snatched away, so many lines crossed, so many lives broken. Believe people when they show you who they are. Watch them, pray for them, challenge them, but please, for the sake of Christ's body, believe them.