



Image from IMDb

Carl Landauer

Tante Frieda

Was it in the Cleveland garden apartment
where my parents,
two years away from New York,
lived cocooned by the extended family
of Spieglers and Dannhausers,
the Cleveland *mishpacha* they loved?
I don't know how the news came,
notice of my father's failed security clearance,
the requisite for continuing work at the NACA
that predecessor of NASA in Cleveland
before space was added to aeronautics.
However delivered, it was life-wrenching
for the German-Jewish refugee
who had come to the U.S. and loved his country.

Did it involve his dissertation advisor,
Wendell Furry, the Harvard professor
later hounded in both the House and Senate?
Was it a seemingly trivial call his brother asked him
to make on a trip to California,
possibly to somebody on somebody's list?

My father moved to assemble a large portfolio,
a brief for his loyalty and patriotism,
starring his service in the Navy
and all the indicia of an exemplary life.
Fear became the atmosphere.
Unable to discuss anything in their kitchen,
“Tante Frieda may be listening”
became their code to continue at a whisper
on the steps or in the street.

Through my youth my mother
instructed me never to sign a petition
especially when you don’t know its source,
that fifties focus on front groups.
But somehow the paranoia followed me
even today as petitions pester inboxes
and mostly threaten simply to proliferate,
but my schooled anxiety
shadows my thoughts
and lives with all those new
worries about surveillance
of every step online.
It is again a time when parents
school their children
with fears to haunt their futures.

We’ll Walk Hand in Hand

How could it be? All the networks
that night in November 2016
called the race for Trump.
Susan and I, curled up on our bed,
needed something, found a
black-and-white video of
Joan Baez in London
—it was 1965—
with her guitar, adjusting the strut
and singing “We shall Overcome.”
So young, so sweet, so innocent.

She knew the pain,
Bull Connor unleashing dogs
in Birmingham,
Chaney, Goodman, and Schwerner
killed in Neshoba County,
strange fruit still ripening.
But there was the utter beauty of
Baez's voice, of her hope.
Such hope that didn't know
the future. We both cried
and cried, and played it again.

The Bill of Rights as such document hereby is, and shall be, redacted and expanded by executive order of the President

(A poem in prose)

Amendment I

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion other than establishing the true Christian faith, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof including the right and duty of tradesmen or retailers to greet customers of their trade or retail with "merry Christmas" and to pipe in endless loops of Bing Crosby; or abridging the freedom of speech by corporations in the form of payments, directly or indirectly, including by any cryptocurrency sponsored by the President or his family to any person standing for election under Articles I and II hereof, or of the press to such extent as the press is supportive of the President and willing to follow every change in the President's stated position; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble without whistles, and by the President to petition the Government for a redress of grievances, which grievances shall be deemed true and correct without the determination of any jury or other trier of fact.

Amendment II

Without regard to a well regulated militia [_____], the right of the people to keep and bear Arms, shall not be infringed including such parts or mechanical devices as may be employed to assemble automatic weapons.

Amendment III

No Soldier or federal employee or contractor wearing tactical gear shall, in time of peace be quartered in any house, without the consent of the Owner, nor in time of war, but in a manner to be prescribed by [____] any person acting for and on behalf of the President.

Amendment IV

The right of [] persons having served as President to be secure in their persons, houses, papers, and effects, including the toilet of such person having served as the First Lady against unreasonable searches and seizures, shall not be violated, and no Warrants shall issue [] except by such persons acting for and on behalf of the President.

Amendment V

No person who is or was the President shall be held to answer for a capital, or otherwise infamous crime []; nor shall any person who is or was the President be subject for the same offence to be twice put in jeopardy of life or limb or even once; nor shall be compelled in any criminal case to be a witness against himself, nor be deprived of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor shall private property of such person be taken for public use, without just compensation.

Amendment VI

In all criminal prosecutions of a person who is or was President, acknowledging that no criminal prosecution may be made regarding the exercise of such person's executive Powers nor employing any record or information of such exercise as evidence in any criminal prosecution of such person, the accused shall enjoy the right to a speedy and public trial, by an impartial jury of the State and district wherein the crime shall have been committed, which district shall have been previously ascertained by law, and to be informed of the nature and cause of the accusation; to be confronted with the witnesses against him; to have compulsory process for obtaining witnesses in his favor, and to have the Assistance of Counsel for his defence in addition to the Assistance by any and all political appointees, whether or not having "acting" titles, and career staff of the Department of Justice.

Amendment VII

In Suits at common law, where the value in controversy shall exceed twenty dollars, the right of trial by jury shall be preserved, and no fact tried by a jury, shall be otherwise re-examined in any Court of the United States, than according to [] the discretion of the Supreme Court upon any legal theory or no legal theory.

Amendment VIII

Excessive bail shall [] be required, [] excessive fines may be imposed, [] cruel and unusual punishments may be inflicted.

Amendment IX

The enumeration in the Constitution, of certain rights, shall not be construed to deny or disparage others retained by the people, except as set out in any executive order issued by the President or social media post of the President including the words “effective immediately.”

Amendment X

The powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the States, are reserved to the States respectively, or to the people, except as set out in any executive order issued by the President or social media post of the President concluding with “Thank you for your attention to this matter.”

Carl Landauer, a visiting scholar with UC Berkeley’s Institute for South Asia Studies and contributing editor for *Poetry Flash*, taught history at Yale, Stanford, and McGill. His book of poems on film adaptations of literature, *The Reel and the Paperback: Refracted Ekphrases*, will be published by Sagging Meniscus Press in Fall 2027. His poems have appeared or will appear in the *Kenyon Review*, *Exacting Clam*, *VerseVille*, *Poetry Flash*, *Santa Clara Review*, *Bangalore Review*, *Great Cities: London, Remember When* (anthology), and the Mary McCarthy Society website. He has written critical analyses of the Heritage Foundation’s *Mandate for Leadership 2025: The Conservative Promise* (“Project 2025”) published by *Public Seminar* and of President Trump’s National Security Strategy published by *Verfassungsblog*.