

April 14, 2025

Dear Stevenson City Council Members,

I understand a storm has arisen as the result of Council Member Lauser choosing to bear her breasts at an event in downtown Stevenson last month. The storm has unleashed all the latent fears so many Americans harbor about the human body. Equal parts fascination and repulsion. And, now, it appears a petition is circulating—something to the effect of stopping public exposures and the promotion of extremist views of Lucy Lauser. It sounds as if the petition gatherers want to spank Ms. Lauser in a public fashion as the petition in and of itself has no real teeth.

Sigh. So much to unpack, including America's love/hate affair with the naked body.

In case people have been living inside a cocoon, they might be shocked to know that naked protests are ubiquitous and take place all over the world (and have done so for a very long time). Last month in Paris, more than 100,00 people took part in a Women's Day March; several dozen of them were bare-breasted women with various condemnations of fascism painted on their bodies.

Does it get people's attention? Yes. Is it provocative? Of course, that is the point.

I'm going to quote from Philip Carr-Gomm's book, *A Brief History of Nakedness*, as he says it far better than I.

*Nakedness makes a human being particularly vulnerable, but in certain circumstances strangely powerful, which is why it has become so popular as a vehicle for political protest. By exposing the human body, protestors convey a complex message; they challenge the status quo by behaving provocatively, and they empower themselves and their cause by showing that they are fearless and have nothing to hide. But at the same time they reveal the vulnerability and frailty of the human being.*

For some people, it comes down to squeamishness about the naked body. The petitioners seem to believe children are being groomed or damaged by such exposure. Or that nakedness equals obscenity. But, let's talk about real obscenity. During the Biden presidency, someone erected a large sign in their yard in town that said, "Fuck Biden". It was on a public street, near Stevenson elementary school and I'm sure the majority of those students could read those words. I consider that far more damaging to children than seeing a naked body. That was an offensive message that stayed up for far too long. Another obscenity: the fact that our current President disrespectfully refers to poor countries as "shit hole countries". Or that he brags about foreign leaders "kissing his ass" over tariffs. Those were crude and profane public statements made by a sitting President.

Or, let's take a really deep dive. Real obscenity is the Israeli government bombing and murdering Palestinian civilians in Gaza. (Bombs courtesy of US military aid. Our tax dollars at work.) U.S. abandonment of Ukraine. The defunding of U.S.A.I.D. Pardons issue to January 6 violent criminals. These are real obscenities with far-reaching consequences.

So, let's get a little perspective.

I'd like to believe that this storm is a tempest in a teapot, if I wasn't worried about people threatening Ms. Lauser. Or tempers rising and increased political violence.

Please do the right thing, Council Members. Reject parochial thinking. Focus on real problems in the community, not made up ones. Protect vulnerable members of our community and the 1<sup>st</sup> amendment.

Sincerely,  
Laura Paxson  
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