



National Headquarters
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Chicago, IL 60615
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March 10, 2016

The Honorable Sheri Pym
United States Magistrate Judge
Central District of California
3470 12th Street
Riverside, CA 92501

Dear Honorable Judge Pym:

Terrorism, both domestic and global, is on the rise. We mourn the loss of life of our fellow citizens in San Bernardino last December. We are steadfast in supporting legitimate law enforcement measures to root out terrorism and protect our national security.

Dr. Martin Luther King would often say, "Where we stand in times of controversy is a measure of our character. Some leaders only follow opinion polls. Others stand up for their principles, refuse to compromise, and mold opinion."

In these difficult times, the government, courts and private companies must stand up and uphold – however unpopular – our First Amendment rights, our right to privacy and basic individual freedoms guaranteed to us under the US Constitution.

Other writers will weigh in on the intricacies of technology and privacy rights. What I want to bring to the forefront of this legal debate is the impact and implications this case has on civil rights and our historic civil rights movement.

This case cuts right to the heart of our right to live free from unwarranted government surveillance. It is a matter of deep personal concern to me - given the past and present illegal and unwarranted spying and surveillance of civil rights organizations, much conducted under the guise of national security.

The FBI infiltrated the SCLC, and used wire-tapping and personal threats against Dr. King – part of the relentless efforts by J. Edgar Hoover, with the support of the US government agencies, to discredit him Dr. King and the civil rights movement.

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The FBI's COINTELPRO campaign spied on, infiltrated and disrupted domestic civil rights and political groups. Rainbow PUSH Coalition and I, personally, have been subject to spying and surveillance, and more recently, there have been accounts of surveillance of the Black Lives Matter movement and activists.

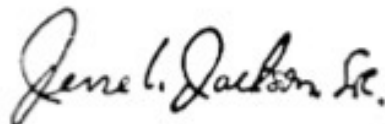
What is also fresh in many people's minds is how major tech and telecom companies – as disclosed by Edward Snowden – collaborated with the National Security Agency in a global surveillance operation to obtain private information from millions of American people about their phone calls and internet activity.

If the government prevails against Apple, it is my fear that it will accelerate – and make easier – government efforts to “hack” into the legitimate activities of civil rights organizations and activists. This week's revelation of the government's use of drones to conduct domestic spying – purportedly legally – shows how vulnerable every day Americans are to surveillance and spying.

That is why Rainbow PUSH opposes the FBI's demand that Apple create new software to enable the government to access information from its iPhone(s). It represents an unprecedented government over-reach that threatens the civil liberties and privacy rights of all Americans. I am also concerned about the government's argument that its demand of Apple is for “one time only, one device only.” It has been reported that the government has already requested that Apple unlock its iPhones in nine other cases.

At great risk, CEO Tim Cook and Apple are standing up not just for their company, but for every day civilians who cringe at the thought of the government compromising theirs and our security and violating their privacy rights and individual freedoms. Rainbow PUSH supports the formation of a digital security commission. Hopefully such a commission will set policy that protects personal freedoms and privacy, and that respects both civil liberties and the needs of law enforcement and national security.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jesse L. Jackson Sr." The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Reverend Jesse L. Jackson, Sr.
President and Founder
Rainbow PUSH Coalition