

Internet Raises \$80K for Hot Dog Vendor Mugged by Government

Like all entrepreneurs, Beto Matias saw an opportunity to support his family while simultaneously creating value for his community.

Finding a prime spot right outside UC Berkeley's football stadium, Matias began selling his craft hot dogs to willing consumers. No one complained about the quality of Matias' hot dogs, nor did anyone have any objections to his presence outside of the stadium. But that didn't stop the state from intervening.

Street Theft

Officer Sean Aranas approached Matias as he was going about his business and asked to see identification. Matias, in complete compliance with the officer's demands, began sifting through his wallet in search of his identification. But this is where the story took a devastating turn.

Before Matias was given the opportunity to hand Aranas his ID, the wallet was ripped from his hands. And instead of merely examining his identification, Officer Aranas proceeded to confiscate the \$60 Matias had in his wallet at the time. It was not until after this strong-arm mugging that the officer finally explained to Matias that he was being cited for failing to obtain a business permit.

Luckily, one of Matias' customers filmed the entire encounter on his smartphone and the video has since gone viral.

Martin Flores knew something wasn't right when he saw the officer reach for Matias' wallet. Thankfully, as so many of us

are trained to do in the digital age, he pulled out his smartphone and immediately began documenting the encounter. And he did so just in the nick of time.

In Flores' footage, viewers see the wallet physically taken from Matias as his hard-earned money is stolen right before his eyes. In the background, Flores can be heard saying, "That's not right."

Flores even took his role in the matter one step further and while filming, inquires why the officer deemed it necessary to target this innocent vendor over the loud display of public intoxication that was occurring directly across the street. The only response Aranas supplied Flores with was, "Yeah, well he doesn't have a permit. He doesn't have a permit."

Penalized for Hard Work

To be sure, Matias never denied his lack of a business permit. But he was shocked and taken aback by Aranas' actions. To be handed an arbitrary citation is one thing, but to have your cash simply snatched by an officer of the law is especially egregious.

Matias later told Telemundo 48:

"I had already shown him my ID. They saw that I was not doing anything wrong, neither stealing nor anything, I was just working to support my family."

Unfortunately, this kind of thing happens every day.

The most innocuous activities now require state permission: from selling hot dogs to [playing tennis](#). No one can economically survive without a job. And yet, for many, our government makes it impossible to do so without first running an obstacle course of red tape. For a country founded on freedom of opportunity, something has gone horribly wrong.

In the American workforce, over 30 percent of jobs require an occupational license before an individual can legally earn a living. To make matters worse, many of these permits and licenses target those in the most vulnerable socioeconomic brackets. Not only are these licenses often expensive and require a great deal of paperwork, they are completely arbitrary.

As often as “public health and safety” is cited as justification, licensing does very little to ensure this. It doesn’t matter how well-intentioned the state may be, a permit cannot prevent food poisoning. Occupational licensing has, however, been extremely successful in limiting the number of individuals entering a given work sector. It has also helped protect established industries from unwanted competition, for example, shutting down a “rogue” hot dog vendor operating without a license.

But of the many things licensing does, protecting the consumer is most certainly, not among them.

The market has its own means of protecting consumers through feedback. Even before platforms like Yelp and Google allowed for a free flow of review culture, word of mouth has always served to help keep business owners accountable.

Additionally, consumer loyalty says a lot about a product or service. This is not the first time Matias has sold hot dogs from his cart, and his consumers keep coming back. And “shockingly” enough, no one has died or even reported any instances of foodborne illnesses.

The quality of a service speaks for itself, and this is something that cannot be obtained through a government license.

Outsourcing Justice

Stories like Matias’ occur every day in this country.

Unfortunately, many victims of state abuse are never vindicated. But our digital age is changing all this.

Not only is video footage like Flores' helping to keep law enforcement accountable for their actions, but crowdsourcing is helping to right the wrong done to Matias, something the state is unlikely to do anytime soon – or ever.

After the footage went viral, social media activists started a [GoFundMe](#) page to mitigate the financial losses felt by Matias and his family. The original fundraising goal was set at \$10,000. But since the campaign's launch on Monday morning and the continuous sharing of the footage of the encounter with the officer, over \$80,000 has been raised to help cover Matias' pay for legal fees and recoup his losses. And the donations keep pouring in.

As for the officer involved, an online petition calling for his immediate termination has already garnered 20,000 signatures. However, the university seems apathetic to the entire incident, claiming that the officer was conducting business as usual.

A representative did make a [statement](#) saying:

We are aware of the incident. The officer was tasked with enforcing violations related to vending without a permit on campus. UCPD is looking into the matter."

In other words, Officer Aranas was "just doing his job." And unfortunately, the promise of the UCPD "looking into the matter," does little to calm the fears of many Americans who are tired of having to read about these stories on a weekly basis. Even worse, are the many Americans forced to become part of this narrative as a result of bureaucratic licensing.

But fortunately, social media has acted as the arbiter of justice. And while Officer Aranas' future in law enforcement

is probably just as secure as it was before the incident occurred, at least voluntary crowdsourcing has provided the means to keep the Matias family afloat and perhaps, help him expand his venture and add even more value to his community.

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