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IN THE SUPREME COURT OF THE UNITED STATES

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BRIGHAM CITY, UTAH, :  
Petitioner :  
v. : No. 05-502  
CHARLES W. STUART, ET AL. :  
- - - - -X

Washington, D.C.  
Monday, April 24, 2006

The above-entitled matter came on for oral  
argument before the Supreme Court of the United States  
at 10:03 a.m.

APPEARANCES:

JEFFREY S. GRAY, ESQ., Assistant Utah Attorney General,  
Salt Lake City, Utah; on behalf of the Petitioner.  
PAUL J. MCNULTY, ESQ., Deputy Attorney General,  
Department of Justice, Washington, D.C.; on  
behalf of the United States, as amicus curiae,  
supporting the Petitioner.  
MICHAEL P. STUDEBAKER, ESQ., Ogden, Utah; on behalf of  
the Respondents.



1 P R O C E E D I N G S

2 (10:03 a.m.)

3 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: We'll hear argument  
4 first today in Brigham City, Utah v. Stuart.

5 Mr. Gray.

6 ORAL ARGUMENT OF JEFFREY S. GRAY

7 ON BEHALF OF THE PETITIONER

8 MR. GRAY: Mr. Chief Justice, and may it  
9 please the Court:

10 In cases involving safety exigencies, an  
11 officer's actions should be judged against a single  
12 objective standard of reasonableness, that is, whether  
13 the facts and circumstances known to the officers at  
14 the time of entry would warrant a reasonable person in  
15 believing that immediate intervention is needed to  
16 preserve the peace and protect others from harm. When  
17 officers have reason to believe that violence is  
18 imminent or ongoing, they meet that standard.

19 In this case, the Brigham City officers  
20 responded to a complaint at 3:00 a.m. and, upon  
21 arriving, witnessed a violent and tumultuous struggle  
22 between four adults and a teenager. The officers --  
23 when the juvenile threw a punch is when the officers  
24 acted and thereby prevented injury. This is exactly  
25 what we would expect officers to do.

1 JUSTICE SCALIA: What were they doing in the  
2 yard anyway? This sort of occurred to me. They  
3 couldn't have seen that until they went into the fenced  
4 backyard violating the curtilage of the property. How  
5 -- was that justified?

6 MR. GRAY: Yes, it was justified. At that  
7 time what they heard from the curb side and then from  
8 the front was the same kind of violence going on. They  
9 heard that from -- from the time they arrived all the  
10 way. They -- they heard the thumping, the shouting,  
11 someone saying, get off me, stop, stop. And so what  
12 these officers were doing, in the course of that, is  
13 investigating that -- that, and it led them to the  
14 backyard.

15 Now --

16 JUSTICE SCALIA: Is any less required to --  
17 to go into the curtilage than is required to go into  
18 the house?

19 MR. GRAY: No.

20 JUSTICE SCALIA: No. It's the same test?

21 MR. GRAY: Yes. And again, that was --

22 JUSTICE SCALIA: So you say that even if he  
23 didn't see him throw the punch and -- and draw blood,  
24 they could have gone in just because they heard  
25 somebody say, stop, stop, get off me?

1 MR. GRAY: It's our position that they could  
2 have, though that's a much closer case. In this case,  
3 the officers acted in a very guarded manner. I mean,  
4 they -- they proceeded and they investigated step by  
5 step and, in fact, did not enter until a punch was  
6 thrown and there was --

7 JUSTICE SOUTER: So what -- what you're  
8 saying is they've got to have a reasonable ground to  
9 take the first step. That may not be a reasonable  
10 ground to have taken the second step right then and  
11 there, but it's the same reasonableness standard.

12 MR. GRAY: Yes, it is.

13 JUSTICE SOUTER: That's -- that's --

14 MR. GRAY: Yes.

15 JUSTICE GINSBURG: One thing that was left  
16 out of the succession of acts -- Utah provides for  
17 telephone warrants, and there was no attempt to do  
18 that. Once they checked to -- to determine that there  
19 was probable cause to enter, they could have called for  
20 a warrant, but they didn't. Is there a reason why they  
21 didn't?

22 MR. GRAY: Yes. The reason is where there's  
23 a violent situation, things can change in seconds. I  
24 mean, it can turn deadly in seconds. They don't have  
25 time. Even though a telephonic warrant would certainly

1 be a more speedy process of getting a warrant, it's not  
2 speedy enough where punches are being thrown. I mean,  
3 it can turn deadly, one blow could give someone a  
4 concussion or even rupture a spleen.

5 JUSTICE SCALIA: Well, you don't -- you don't  
6 really mean that if they saw somebody inside with a gun  
7 and they heard him saying, I'm going to shoot you in 2  
8 minutes, since they could have gotten a telephone  
9 warrant, they would have to had to get a telephone  
10 warrant?

11 MR. GRAY: No, not at all.

12 JUSTICE SCALIA: I mean, you -- you don't  
13 want the -- the telephone warrant requirement to -- to  
14 up the ante on -- on what it takes to -- for the police  
15 to go in without a warrant, do you?

16 MR. GRAY: No. In fact, precisely for that  
17 reason, the officers would not need a telephonic  
18 warrant in that situation no more than they would need  
19 a telephonic warrant in this situation. Time is of the  
20 essence. Violence --

21 JUSTICE SCALIA: But it wouldn't be of the  
22 essence if you know you have 2 minutes. You know I'm going  
23 to kill you in 2 minutes.

24 MR. GRAY: Well, that -- that's --

25 JUSTICE SCALIA: Do you really want the

1 policeman to say I got 2 minutes, you know, dial in and  
2 get a warrant? That's ridiculous.

3 (Laughter.)

4 MR. GRAY: That -- that would be assuming --  
5 that would be assuming that you could take someone who  
6 is threatening in that manner at his word. I don't  
7 think that's something the officers could -- could  
8 afford to do.

9 JUSTICE GINSBURG: Are the police instructed  
10 -- the city police instructed about when the telephone  
11 warrant procedure is appropriate?

12 MR. GRAY: That I -- I do not know. I assume  
13 so. They have procedures in place, but that I do not  
14 know.

15 JUSTICE ALITO: When you speak about a  
16 violent situation, would that be limited -- would that  
17 apply here just because a punch was thrown, or would it  
18 be enough that the officers saw some men restraining  
19 the young man, or would it be enough if there were  
20 violent words being exchanged?

21 MR. GRAY: With -- with violent words,  
22 generally not, though if it's accompanied with a show  
23 of immediate force or violence, then yes, in that  
24 situation.

25 In this situation, I believe that officers

1 could have entered prior to the punch being thrown.  
2 What they witnessed is -- is this violent struggle  
3 between four adults and a teenager. They had no idea  
4 whether or not they were trying to molest the -- the  
5 teenager or whether the teenager was an intruder or  
6 what happened. But they could tell that it was  
7 violent. They knew that alcohol was involved based on  
8 the circumstances as they approached.

9 JUSTICE KENNEDY: Did they know that minors  
10 were involved? The record doesn't show that, at least  
11 in the preliminary direct exam of the officer.

12 MR. GRAY: That minors were involved?

13 JUSTICE KENNEDY: Yes. I mean, they knew  
14 that once they got into the backyard. Did they know  
15 before they got into the backyard?

16 MR. GRAY: They knew that minors --

17 JUSTICE KENNEDY: Or did they just know that  
18 minors stay up late at night?

19 MR. GRAY: They knew that minors were in the  
20 backyard. They -- they witnessed the two juveniles.  
21 They did not know that --

22 JUSTICE KENNEDY: But that's after they went  
23 into the backyard.

24 MR. GRAY: No. They saw that from the  
25 driveway, through the -- the slit -- slit -- slats in

1 the fence.

2 JUSTICE KENNEDY: They could see that they  
3 were minors.

4 MR. GRAY: Yes, yes.

5 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: How much -- you've  
6 been focusing on the violence because of the punch  
7 being thrown, but I gather they were called originally  
8 because of concern about the noise and disturbance of  
9 the peace and all that.

10 MR. GRAY: Yes.

11 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Is that a sufficient  
12 basis for them to have gone into the backyard and  
13 proceed from there?

14 MR. GRAY: Well --

15 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: They're just  
16 shouting. There are five people in the house shouting.  
17 It's 3:00 in the morning or whatever. Is that -- is  
18 that enough?

19 MR. GRAY: Probably not, certainly not where  
20 the State is -- where the State offers as -- as the  
21 proffered justification safety, it would not be enough.  
22 That would be a different justification for their  
23 actions. Certainly where they're disturbing the  
24 neighbors, we would argue that the expectation of  
25 privacy had diminished in that home because of that

1 disturbance. But again, where the State -- or where  
2 the city is offering as a justification safety, that  
3 would not be sufficient to go in.

4 JUSTICE SOUTER: No, but if -- if the -- if  
5 the complaint were -- were simply a complaint of noise,  
6 and they got to the -- the gate, the back fence, and  
7 they could hear all the racket inside and there didn't  
8 seem to be any practical way to get people to come to  
9 the fence to talk to them, wouldn't they have had the  
10 right to go through the gate and at least go up to the  
11 door and bang on the door?

12 MR. GRAY: Yes.

13 JUSTICE SOUTER: So they could have gotten  
14 through the curtilage. They could at least have gotten  
15 to the back door based entirely on noise.

16 MR. GRAY: Yes.

17 JUSTICE SOUTER: Okay.

18 MR. GRAY: Yes.

19 JUSTICE SCALIA: Except that there was a  
20 front door, which they approached first. As I recall,  
21 they left one of the officers in the front.

22 MR. GRAY: Yes.

23 JUSTICE SCALIA: So they could have banged on  
24 the front door.

25 MR. GRAY: They -- they could have, though

1 the evidence was that -- and the trial court found that  
2 it was so loud and tumultuous that nobody would have  
3 heard it or probably would not have heard it.

4 JUSTICE STEVENS: But I'm a little puzzled.  
5 If the noise is the cause of their being there and if  
6 the noise is so loud at 3:00 in the morning that it's  
7 still continuing and nobody can hear the knock on the  
8 door -- they knock on the door several times and shout  
9 -- would they not have the right to go in then to quell  
10 the noise?

11 MR. GRAY: Absolutely. All that I am  
12 maintaining is that they would not be justified under a  
13 safety exigency to go in. Certainly to -- as far as  
14 disturbing the peace, then yes, but not where the  
15 proffered justification is safety.

16 JUSTICE STEVENS: So if you're going to rely  
17 on the safety and the -- safety and the danger of harm,  
18 how serious does the harm have to be? And I use the  
19 word harm as defining the -- the threshold for this  
20 kind of entry. What if a father was spanking his child,  
21 for example?

22 MR. GRAY: No. Spanking of a child would  
23 not. There's no indication under most circumstances of  
24 an intent to injure or abuse. Now, of course, if there  
25 are circumstances that would suggest abuse, then

1 officers could go in.

2 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Doesn't yelling so  
3 loudly you can't hear police knock at the door at 3:00  
4 in the morning suggest that violence is at least  
5 imminent or may well be associated with what they're  
6 hearing?

7 MR. GRAY: It certainly approaches that, but  
8 again, what we would maintain is there probably has to  
9 be more than simple shouting. If -- if it's  
10 accompanied by threats or a show of force or violence,  
11 then certainly they could go in.

12 JUSTICE SCALIA: Is there, in addition to the  
13 safety rationale which you're -- justification, which  
14 you're arguing here -- is there a justification to go  
15 in to stop an ongoing felony whether safety is involved  
16 or not?

17 MR. GRAY: Yes.

18 JUSTICE SCALIA: Is -- is that a separate --

19 MR. GRAY: Yes. That --

20 JUSTICE SCALIA: I mean, you see a guy  
21 turning out counterfeit dollar bills, \$100 bills, and  
22 can you go in right away if you see him doing that?

23 MR. GRAY: Well, it's a crime ongoing, in  
24 progress. So there certainly could be made an  
25 argument. Now, whether or not there's an exigency, I

1 think that's doubtful because police could secure the  
2 scene and secure a warrant and then execute that  
3 warrant.

4 JUSTICE SCALIA: Well, I mean, but if that's  
5 the case, you have a much easier argument. Wasn't  
6 there an assault here? There was clearly an assault.

7 MR. GRAY: Yes, and certainly where officers  
8 have reason to believe that there's an ongoing assault,  
9 officers can enter.

10 Now, one of the problems with the Utah  
11 Supreme Court's holding in this case --

12 JUSTICE GINSBURG: In connection with the  
13 answer you just gave, it doesn't matter then? If it's  
14 an ongoing crime, they can go in? It doesn't matter  
15 whether it would be a misdemeanor or a felony? It  
16 doesn't matter how grave the crime is?

17 MR. GRAY: Well, this Court in Welsh  
18 indicated that minor offenses -- you couldn't rely on  
19 the exigent circumstances exception, or at least it is  
20 what it suggested. But certainly an assault, under  
21 Utah law, is a class B misdemeanor, punishable by up to  
22 6 months in jail, and that's certainly of sufficient  
23 gravity to justify officers entering.

24 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Any kind of assault.  
25 I gather it's an assault if you're just sort of a

1 couple of guys pushing each other back and forth.

2 MR. GRAY: Well, under Utah law, an assault  
3 is defined as unlawful force or violence so as to --  
4 with an intent to do bodily injury. Now, pushing --  
5 there's not that there.

6 Now, one of the chief problems or primary  
7 problems with the Utah court's decision in this case is  
8 it creates a complicated and confusing bifurcated  
9 standard that forces officers unrealistically to choose  
10 between roles, to choose whether or not they are going  
11 to enter and act as caretakers or enter and act as law  
12 enforcement officials.

13 Well, the reality -- first of all, it's --  
14 it's very difficult for officers to try to make those  
15 kind of judgments in the heat of the moment, and this  
16 is precisely the kind of a -- the kind of case where  
17 that would be impossible to achieve because officers in  
18 this case are acting clearly under both roles. They're  
19 stopping crime and they are also protecting others from  
20 harm. We want officers to rescue people from harm when  
21 they have a reasonable basis to do it, not wait until  
22 you have to call an EMT. That's what Mincey provides.

23 And if there are no further questions, I  
24 would reserve the remainder of my time.

25 JUSTICE STEVENS: Let me just ask this one

1 question, if I may, if you have -- did the other side  
2 preserve the right to challenge this entry under the  
3 Utah constitution?

4 MR. GRAY: No, they did not, and -- and the  
5 Utah Supreme Court recognized that.

6 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Thank you, counsel.  
7 General McNulty.

8 ORAL ARGUMENT OF PAUL J. MCNULTY  
9 ON BEHALF OF THE UNITED STATES,

10 AS AMICUS CURIAE, SUPPORTING THE PETITIONER

11 MR. MCNULTY: Thank you, Mr. Chief Justice,  
12 may it please the Court:

13 The Fourth Amendment does not require police  
14 officers to stand by and be a spectator to escalating  
15 violence in the home when such an officer has an  
16 objectively reasonable basis to believe, given the  
17 totality of the circumstances, that prompt action is  
18 necessary to prevent imminent harm.

19 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: So if there were no  
20 punch in this case, would they have had a sufficient  
21 basis? 3:00 in the morning, loud shouting. Can they  
22 conclude, based on their experience, that's likely to  
23 escalate into violence and enter on that basis?

24 MR. MCNULTY: Yes, Mr. Chief Justice. In  
25 these facts, the Government suggests they would.

1           The -- under the Fourth Amendment, a police  
2 officer may enter a residence --

3           JUSTICE KENNEDY: Well, that's just because  
4 it's loud? Suppose they were just singing and  
5 laughing?

6           MR. MCNULTY: Well, it would depend on -- if  
7 -- if words are going to be the key --

8           JUSTICE SCALIA: One thing leads to another.  
9 Right?

10          MR. MCNULTY: Well, that's correct. It  
11 depends upon, of course, what those words are. It's  
12 really a combination of the words and the context of  
13 the words. Here you have --

14          JUSTICE KENNEDY: So there has to be some  
15 indication of the likelihood of escalation into  
16 violence?

17          MR. MCNULTY: Correct, Your Honor. That's --  
18 that's --

19          JUSTICE STEVENS: Well, why? What if they're  
20 just so loud that it's perfectly obvious they're  
21 keeping -- getting -- the neighbors are awake and  
22 disturbed by it. Does it have to be a threat of  
23 violence?

24          MR. MCNULTY: Well, Your Honor, if there's a  
25 loud noise alone, certainly the neighborhood shouldn't

1 have to be a hostage to that noise, and the police  
2 officers may be acting reasonably to do what is  
3 necessary to end that noise. But it's going to --

4 JUSTICE STEVENS: So then it doesn't matter  
5 what's being said.

6 JUSTICE KENNEDY: So then it does matter.

7 MR. MCNULTY: But the -- what's being said  
8 may determine -- may determine -- whether or not entry  
9 is necessary to respond to an imminent threat where a  
10 prompt response is critical.

11 JUSTICE STEVENS: It may determine what is  
12 necessary to prevent harm, but what if it's not  
13 necessary to prevent harm, just necessary to prevent  
14 noise?

15 MR. MCNULTY: Then it may still be  
16 reasonable. It may still be reasonable, Your Honor.

17 JUSTICE STEVENS: It seems to me the harm  
18 inquiry in this case is, you know, sort of superfluous.  
19 We don't even have to look at that.

20 MR. MCNULTY: I agree, Your Honor. It may be  
21 that the -- the noise alone could justify the  
22 circumstance. Certainly we wouldn't want a test that  
23 excluded words only --

24 JUSTICE SCALIA: Well, no. You -- you don't  
25 want to say that. The noise alone wouldn't justify

1 going in without knocking as would the -- a scene of a  
2 violent event occurring. Certainly you'd have to knock  
3 on the door. Now, if they didn't hear you and the only  
4 way to get their attention to stop the noise is to go  
5 in, fine, but wouldn't you have to knock on the door  
6 real hard before you went in to stop the noise?

7 MR. MCNULTY: Justice Scalia, in most cases a  
8 knock on the door would -- would be appropriate thing  
9 to do.

10 JUSTICE SCALIA: Not appropriate. Necessary.

11 JUSTICE KENNEDY: Necessary.

12 MR. MCNULTY: Well, it may very well be  
13 necessary depending upon the totality of the  
14 circumstances.

15 JUSTICE SCALIA: I hope so. I mean -- people  
16 --

17 JUSTICE STEVENS: Yes, but we've got a case  
18 in which knocking on the -- the noise is so loud nobody  
19 can hear the knock.

20 MR. MCNULTY: That's why a knock on the door  
21 may not always be the right thing to do. In some cases  
22 it could be a futile gesture. In this case, the police  
23 announced themselves and were not heard because of that  
24 tumultuous --

25 JUSTICE STEVENS: And they did knock on the

1 door, yes.

2 MR. MCNULTY: They entered and announced  
3 their presence, and they were not heard when they did  
4 that. So the knock is -- is normally the appropriate  
5 course, but in certain circumstances, the knock may  
6 either be futile, it could be dangerous, depending upon  
7 what was happening, and it certainly could waste some  
8 time if it was a dire emergency.

9 The -- under the Fourth Amendment, a police  
10 officer may enter a residence without a warrant when a  
11 reasonable officer could conclude, given again all the  
12 circumstances, that an impending threat to life or  
13 safety justifies immediate intervention and the scope  
14 of the intrusion is reasonable in relation to the  
15 nature of the emergency.

16 Whether the officer was subjectively  
17 motivated to enforce the law or render aid has no  
18 relevance in a constitutional inquiry. Volatile  
19 situations involving violence in the home can escalate  
20 in -- in seconds, and the on-the-scene, split-second  
21 judgment about exactly when the police officers should  
22 intervene is precisely what the totality of the  
23 circumstances test has long addressed and resolves the  
24 balance of the Fourth Amendment values.

25 And this Court's recent decision in Georgia

1 v. Randolph contains a clear expression of concern for  
2 the need for the police to take prompt action to  
3 prevent harm in domestic violence cases.

4 In this case --

5 JUSTICE GINSBURG: This wasn't -- this wasn't  
6 a domestic violence case. It wasn't anybody inside  
7 calling the police and crying, danger, rescue me. It  
8 was an outsider who complained about the noise. So I  
9 am wondering why you are emphasizing the prevent  
10 somebody from being hurt instead of they're disturbing  
11 the peace and the police have a right to protect the  
12 neighborhood. It seems to me that that's an easier  
13 argument to make.

14 MR. MCNULTY: It is, Justice Ginsburg, to  
15 look at the -- the threat to the quiet of the community  
16 as one aspect of this. But the case contains even  
17 more. The case contains a punch that did some harm to  
18 another person in a kitchen setting where there is a  
19 strong possibility of escalating violence. It's the  
20 additional facts of that violence that was a potential  
21 there, added to the noise and the evidence of underage  
22 drinking, that made the totality of the circumstances  
23 objectively reasonable for the officers to --

24 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Well, counsel, let's  
25 suppose you have a police officer who knows there's

1 evidence in this house, but he doesn't have probable  
2 cause to get a warrant. And he also knows that the  
3 family is going to be reenacting the murder scene from  
4 some movie as part of the family reunion. And so he's  
5 there just at the time where the -- in the scene the  
6 one guy says, and now I'm going to kill you with this  
7 knife, and he says, ah, and he goes in.

8 Now, subjectively we know that he has no  
9 basis for fearing violence, but a reasonable officer on  
10 the scene, hearing somebody say I'm going to kill you  
11 with this knife, would have a basis for entering.

12 So under your test, is that entry permissible  
13 or not?

14 MR. MCNULTY: Permissible, Mr. Chief Justice.

15 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Really.

16 MR. MCNULTY: Because there the officer is  
17 unaware of the fact based upon the -- as I understood  
18 the facts presented, unaware of the fact that that is  
19 not --

20 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Oh, no. He knows.  
21 He knows. He heard this is what they do at the family  
22 reunion. They always reenact this.

23 (Laughter.)

24 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: So he knows that  
25 there's no -- well, but that's the difference here

1 between looking at the subjective motivation or what an  
2 objective, you know, officer would understand.

3 MR. MCNULTY: If the officer has specific  
4 information --

5 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Right.

6 MR. MCNULTY: -- a fact knowing that this is  
7 not truly an imminent threat or necessary to prompt a  
8 quick response, then that would be a fact in the  
9 totality of the circumstances that wouldn't justify.  
10 But, on the other hand --

11 JUSTICE SOUTER: So you're saying the  
12 objective -- the -- the objective officer always knows  
13 at least as much as the officers actually know.

14 JUSTICE SCALIA: A good way to put it.

15 MR. MCNULTY: The -- the officer knows --

16 JUSTICE SOUTER: Isn't -- isn't that your  
17 standard?

18 MR. MCNULTY: Well, if -- I'm not sure if I  
19 understand the question. Would you please repeat it?

20 JUSTICE SOUTER: Yes. I -- I thought you  
21 were getting to the point of saying that on the  
22 objective test that you urge, the officer -- the  
23 objective police officer who sets the standard is  
24 deemed to know at least as much as the officer on the  
25 scene actually knows. In other words, we don't exclude

1 information --

2 MR. MCNULTY: Right.

3 JUSTICE SOUTER: -- from our objective test  
4 when the officer actually has that information.

5 MR. MCNULTY: That's correct.

6 JUSTICE SOUTER: Okay.

7 MR. MCNULTY: What makes it difficult at  
8 times is that you often have two officers. One may  
9 know something, another may not know it. And that's  
10 why objective information is --

11 JUSTICE SCALIA: Except I -- I don't think we  
12 look to whether he knew that this was a family  
13 reenactment. I think we look to the facts that he had  
14 -- that had come to his attention which caused him to  
15 believe that this was a family reenactment. I mean,  
16 you know, if he had read it in a newspaper or something  
17 else. The facts are -- are what matter and not --

18 MR. MCNULTY: Thank you, Justice Scalia.  
19 That's -- I agree that that is going to -- even what  
20 the officer believes he knows may be subject to error,  
21 and therefore, the objective test pulls us out of this  
22 question of knowing the officer's mind and allows us to  
23 look at the totality of the circumstances, what really  
24 was occurring and determine whether or not the  
25 reasonable officer would be able to enter

1 constitutionally under those circumstances.

2           And here again is the -- a situation where  
3 there was mounting evidence, and the court in Utah  
4 wanted to make the motivation of the officer a  
5 significant factor in determining whether or not the  
6 officer could enter. Specifically, the court looked to  
7 the motive or intent of the officer to render aid as  
8 one way to analyze the situation. And the government  
9 argued that those distinctions -- or the distinction  
10 between rendering aid or entering for a law enforcement  
11 purpose is really a -- an unnecessary distinction  
12 because the officer, as the counsel for the State has  
13 argued, is acting in a split-second situation, seeking  
14 -- thank you very much, Mr. Chief Justice.

15           CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Thank you, General.

16           Mr. Studebaker, we'll hear now from you.

17           ORAL ARGUMENT OF MICHAEL P. STUDEBAKER

18                           ON BEHALF OF THE RESPONDENTS

19           MR. STUDEBAKER: Mr. Chief Justice, and may  
20 it please the Court:

21           There's two bases or two exceptions which  
22 would allow somebody to enter into somebody's home,  
23 which are before the Court today, one being the  
24 emergency aid exception to the warrant requirement, the  
25 other one being exigent circumstances requirements for

1 the warrant.

2 Under the facts of this case, neither one of  
3 those situations apply. Under exigent circumstances,  
4 there has to be probable cause to enter, and there has  
5 to be a warrant to enter. And if neither one of those  
6 -- actually under exigent circumstances, there has to  
7 be probable cause and there has to be the requirement  
8 that there be imminent danger basically to evidence or  
9 to the person. And if there's not exigent circumstances,  
10 and the officers have an obligation to obtain a warrant  
11 based upon probable cause to enter the home.

12 JUSTICE SOUTER: What -- what --

13 JUSTICE GINSBURG: I thought that probable  
14 cause was conceded, and I thought that the Utah courts  
15 didn't question that there was probable cause.

16 MR. STUDEBAKER: Your Honor, the -- what  
17 happened was that the Utah courts found that the  
18 probable cause was there for the emergency aid  
19 exception, but I believe under the exigent  
20 circumstances requirement -- or the exception, that  
21 probable cause was not there to get out -- or actually  
22 to get into the home on the situations.

23 But even if probable cause is conceded, the  
24 fact is that the facts of the case don't rise to the  
25 level of requiring such as immediate entry into a home

1 to bypass the warrant requirement.

2 JUSTICE SOUTER: May -- may I just get back  
3 to your general statement? Do I understand you to say  
4 that if they arrived on the scene and, you know, a  
5 really wild party was going on at 3:00 a.m., they knock  
6 at the door, nobody answers the door, they can't hear  
7 it for all the screaming and the music and so on, that  
8 under those circumstances, the police could not go in  
9 to -- to quiet things down?

10 MR. STUDEBAKER: Correct, Your Honor. They  
11 would actually have to go out and get a warrant to  
12 enter the home. There's not an exigent circumstance  
13 under the facts that you presented which would require  
14 them to enter the home and bypass the warrant  
15 requirement. It's not severe enough under those facts.

16 JUSTICE ALITO: Let's say they -- they see a  
17 fight going on. What kind of calculation do you think  
18 has to go on in the mind of the officer? They have to  
19 think, well, let me look at these people. Do they look  
20 like they're -- they're strong enough to really hurt  
21 each other? How likely is it that they're going to  
22 grab some object that's lying around, a knife, a  
23 baseball bat, or something, and -- and escalate the  
24 violence? What -- what sort of thought process do you  
25 think a reasonable officer is supposed to go through in

1 that situation?

2 MR. STUDEBAKER: Justice Alito, what the  
3 officer is required to do is to weigh the totality of  
4 the circumstances and make a decision based upon the  
5 totality of what they see. And unfortunately, these  
6 situations are always fact-intensive based upon what's  
7 seen on the scene. And in the case presented here  
8 before the Court, none of those facts are presented  
9 that -- that would actually weigh and that was going to  
10 escalate into that type of situation.

11 The officers actually had personal, firsthand  
12 knowledge of the events that were happening. They  
13 stood outside the home. They watched the event  
14 transpire through the window. The exigency was over  
15 when the officer entered the home.

16 JUSTICE BREYER: Why can't you? Is there any  
17 case or anything that says you don't look at the whole  
18 circumstance to decide if it was reasonable to enter?  
19 I mean, suppose I just wrote an opinion, for a  
20 hypothetical's sake, that says, look, there was so much  
21 noise at 3:00 in the morning nobody could even hear a  
22 knock and he looks in the window, sees one of the -- a  
23 kid there being held, who's obviously been drinking  
24 under age. He takes a swing at somebody else and pokes  
25 him in the nose and blood starts to run or -- and under

1 those circumstances, of course, it was reasonable to go  
2 in. End of the matter.

3 MR. STUDEBAKER: Except for the fact, Your  
4 Honor, I mean, the -- the situation we have is that is  
5 -- it would depend on whether it's an ongoing situation  
6 or not. And in the facts presented here, it was not an  
7 ongoing situation. It ended and then the officer --

8 JUSTICE BREYER: You mean -- you mean the  
9 noise stopped?

10 MR. STUDEBAKER: It -- shortly after the  
11 smack in the face by the juvenile, Your Honor, the  
12 officer entered the home, and by his testimony, it  
13 abated right after he entered the home.

14 JUSTICE BREYER: No. The question is whether  
15 he could go into the house, and are you saying that  
16 before he went into the house, all the noise stopped?

17 MR. STUDEBAKER: It had not stopped. No, it  
18 had not, Your Honor.

19 JUSTICE BREYER: Okay. So my question is I'm  
20 interested in the law of it. Why can't I -- what's --  
21 what -- the -- the Constitution says reasonable or  
22 unreasonable, forbids an unreasonable entry, search.  
23 So this doesn't seem unreasonable. A policeman isn't a  
24 lawyer. He just has to do what's reasonable in the  
25 circumstance. It's a huge -- well, I would be

1 repeating myself. But what I want to know is what in  
2 the law makes that opinion wrong?

3 MR. STUDEBAKER: Your Honor, what makes that  
4 opinion wrong, based upon the facts that were  
5 presented, is the fact that the -- there was no warrant  
6 achieved in the situation. If the officer is entering  
7 under exigent circumstances --

8 JUSTICE BREYER: And there are two reasons  
9 why he didn't want to go get a warrant. It would take  
10 about half an hour, at which time all the neighbors are  
11 awake, and they have to lose an hour of sleep. And in  
12 addition to that, the underage drinking will continue  
13 for another half an hour or an hour. And in addition  
14 to that, somebody else might get poked in the nose. So  
15 those are the reasons why -- or worse. So those are  
16 the reasons why he thought it was reasonable to go in.

17 MR. STUDEBAKER: That may be what he thought,  
18 not the officer --

19 JUSTICE BREYER: Those are the reasons why it  
20 was reasonable to go in.

21 MR. STUDEBAKER: Yes, Your Honor.

22 JUSTICE BREYER: Now, what's wrong with that  
23 opinion?

24 MR. STUDEBAKER: What's wrong with the  
25 opinion, Your Honor, is it still requires a warrant

1 under the situation.

2 JUSTICE BREYER: Now, suppose I were to say  
3 at the end of that it doesn't require a warrant because  
4 it was not unreasonable objectively to go in under  
5 those circumstances. What I'm looking for you to do is  
6 to tell me why.

7 MR. STUDEBAKER: Your Honor, the -- if  
8 they're going to enter the home, there has to be,  
9 obviously, a serious situation that's going to arise.  
10 And so with the -- the presentation which you  
11 presented, it's not serious enough to require the  
12 sidestepping of a warrant in the situation.

13 JUSTICE SCALIA: Mr. Studebaker, I'm not sure  
14 that even the noise wasn't enough to justify what the  
15 police did here. As -- as I recall, they -- before  
16 they went in, they -- they heard all this noise and  
17 they saw the punch. They pushed open the screen door  
18 and announced that they were the police. Okay?

19 MR. STUDEBAKER: Yes.

20 JUSTICE SCALIA: And then only went in when  
21 nobody heard them. Then they shouted even louder,  
22 police. I'm not sure that -- that just the noise  
23 wouldn't be enough to allow that. If you can't hear  
24 the policeman from the door, who's coming to check  
25 about a 3:00 a.m. noisy party, you don't hear his knock

1 on the door, can the policeman not open the door and  
2 shout, police? Is that an unreasonable search and  
3 seizure.

4 And then if you don't hear that, can he take  
5 two steps into the house? He's -- he's not looking  
6 under the carpets. He's not looking in the desk  
7 drawers. He's just shouting police so that he can  
8 bring to the attention of the people there the fact  
9 that there's been a complaint from the neighbors and  
10 you have to knock off the noise. I -- I would think  
11 that's perfectly reasonable. Never mind the punch in  
12 the nose.

13 MR. STUDEBAKER: Justice Scalia, and you  
14 asked whether I thought it was reasonable or not, and I  
15 would say it's not. The -- the -- to bypass that  
16 warrant requirement, to enter the home under an exigent  
17 circumstances, which is what they were there for, it's  
18 got to be more serious than a -- a loud party, the  
19 situation.

20 And ironically, the -- the testimony of the  
21 officer, which I guess there was a dispute about  
22 whether that was there or not because it's not  
23 specifically in the findings that the trial judge made  
24 or the two appellate courts ruled on -- but if the  
25 officer entered the home and shortly after that, I

1 mean, he opened the door, according to his testimony,  
2 and announced, basically raised his voice, and they  
3 heard him, why cannot he have done that outside the  
4 home? And that's the situation. This wasn't a serious  
5 enough situation that he couldn't have made the effort  
6 to make his presence known outside.

7 JUSTICE SCALIA: They didn't hear him when he  
8 -- when he just opened the screen door. He had to step  
9 in a few more -- a few more steps. Then they finally  
10 heard him. That's his -- the way I understand these  
11 facts.

12 MR. STUDEBAKER: And, Justice Scalia, he also  
13 had to raise his voice, and our contention --

14 JUSTICE SCALIA: Of course, he had to raise  
15 his voice. I mean, there was a lot of noise going.

16 It just seems to me so unreasonable, when a  
17 policeman comes to tell people they're making too much  
18 noise and the neighbors have complained, that he can't  
19 do the minimum that's necessary to get their attention  
20 so he can tell them that. He has to go get a warrant  
21 to tell them that the neighbors are complaining about  
22 too much noise? That just seems absurd.

23 MR. STUDEBAKER: Yes, Your Honor, he would  
24 have to get a warrant. And -- and the requirement --

25 JUSTICE BREYER: Does it say that in a case

1 somewhere, or is that just your opinion?

2 MR. STUDEBAKER: It's my opinion, Your Honor.

3 JUSTICE BREYER: All right. Now, what I  
4 would like to know is what does it say in a case  
5 because I -- I agree, at 3:00 in the morning, it might  
6 not appear to many people to be unreasonable when the  
7 party is so loud that no one can sleep, that they have  
8 to take an extra hour or half an hour or 40 minutes to  
9 just tell the people inside the house, knock it off.  
10 Now, is there a case somewhere that says -- I guess, we  
11 could take a poll or something, but is there a case  
12 that casts some light on this?

13 MR. STUDEBAKER: Your Honor, I believe Mincey  
14 itself requires the -- the seriousness of the offense  
15 be evaluated, and further --

16 JUSTICE BREYER: Which case?

17 MR. STUDEBAKER: Mincey v. Arizona.

18 JUSTICE BREYER: Was that involving a -- is  
19 that in this Court? Yes?

20 MR. STUDEBAKER: Yes.

21 JUSTICE BREYER: And was that involving a  
22 party or noise, or what was it involving?

23 MR. STUDEBAKER: No, it was not involving a  
24 party or noise.

25 JUSTICE KENNEDY: No. It involved -- it

1 involved a homicide, but there, the search in question  
2 took place after the premises -- after the entry, after  
3 the premises were secured. The entry was never in  
4 question in Mincey.

5 MR. STUDEBAKER: Correct.

6 JUSTICE KENNEDY: What was in question was  
7 the search after the premises had been secured.

8 MR. STUDEBAKER: Correct, and --

9 JUSTICE KENNEDY: And I don't see how that  
10 helps you because here, in the course of securing the  
11 -- the premises, they had all -- all the evidence they  
12 needed.

13 MR. STUDEBAKER: And -- and to answer the  
14 Court's question, there is nothing that I'm aware of  
15 where this Court has come out and said that a party is  
16 --

17 JUSTICE KENNEDY: So Mincey doesn't help.

18 MR. STUDEBAKER: Correct. And so we --

19 JUSTICE BREYER: I mean, I wouldn't want this  
20 to be the party case. This also involves violence and  
21 it also involves underage drinking and all three are  
22 there together.

23 But I guess a policeman, where he sees or  
24 hears or knows a crime is going on, can take steps to  
25 try to stop it so that it doesn't have to continue.

1 And is there any case that says it depends on how  
2 serious a crime? Is there a case that says if it's a  
3 sort of minor crime, like a disturbance of the peace,  
4 you have to permit it to continue, but if it's a major  
5 crime like homicide, you don't have to?

6 MR. STUDEBAKER: I don't believe there's  
7 anything that specifically says that, Your Honor. No.

8 But there are cases out there that say that  
9 under the exigent circumstances, it's got to be a  
10 serious situation, and the question then becomes is --  
11 is the situation -- is the party -- is the loud noise  
12 complaint serious enough to warrant entering into the  
13 home. And no, we would say it's not, Your Honor. It  
14 doesn't rise to that level, especially considering the  
15 fact that the exigency that the officers relied upon,  
16 the smack -- and it was over. The situation was  
17 already under control.

18 JUSTICE SOUTER: Well, it was -- it was over  
19 until somebody threw the next punch. They don't know  
20 what's going to happen the next. The kid broke away  
21 from the four people who were trying to restrain him  
22 once. Presumably he might be able to do it again.  
23 Maybe one of the four who were restraining him might  
24 come up with the idea that the best way to stop him  
25 from throwing another punch was to throw one at him.

1 The -- the police cannot make -- it seems to me on the  
2 facts in -- in this record, could -- could not  
3 reasonably draw the assumption that there was no risk  
4 of further violence. Am I going wrong somewhere?

5 MR. STUDEBAKER: Not completely, Justice  
6 Souter. But we do have a situation where only he broke  
7 free from one of the adults, not three of the adults.  
8 He was still under control in this situation. And he  
9 had gotten his hand free and smacked one of the other  
10 adults, the one who was the victim in this situation.

11 So the officers -- unlike some situations  
12 where they're called out and they wander on a  
13 situation, the officers in this case had personal  
14 knowledge of what was going on. They stood outside the  
15 home and watched the event transpire. And so they  
16 really need to wait and observe what's going to happen  
17 and wait till the last second before they need to go  
18 in. In this situation, there was nothing that would  
19 demonstrate in the facts that it was going to escalate  
20 at all.

21 JUSTICE GINSBURG: You don't -- you can't  
22 attribute what you just said to the trial court, and  
23 you emphasize the trial court's findings. The trial  
24 court said about what went wrong what the police should  
25 have done, as required under the Fourth Amendment, was

1 knock on the door. The evidence is there was a loud,  
2 tumultuous thing going on and that the occupants  
3 probably would not have heard him. But under the  
4 Fourth Amendment, he has an obligation to at least  
5 attempt before entering. Now, that's a statement that  
6 what went wrong was they didn't knock even though it  
7 was likely a futile act.

8 Do you -- do you agree that that's a correct  
9 statement of the law, that what the police didn't do  
10 that they should have done was knock?

11 MR. STUDEBAKER: Yes, Justice Ginsburg, they  
12 should have knocked. They should have made that effort  
13 first.

14 JUSTICE SCALIA: Why isn't screaming, police,  
15 enough? I mean, as I understand the facts, he first  
16 opened the screen door. Now, is -- is that an entry?  
17 He didn't go in. I assume the screen door opens out.  
18 Most screen doors open out. He opened the screen door  
19 and shouted, police. Now, that -- that doesn't count?  
20 he has to knock on the screen door instead, even  
21 though they're more likely to hear him if he opens the  
22 screen door and yells, police? Why doesn't that meet  
23 the requirement? I -- this -- why is the trial court  
24 obsessed with knocking?

25 (Laughter.)

1 JUSTICE SCALIA: I don't understand that.

2 MR. STUDEBAKER: Your Honor, and I think the  
3 reason the -- the trial court and -- is concerned about  
4 the knocking issue is it's, if you will, the baseline  
5 requirement under the Fourth Amendment, under the facts  
6 of this case, was to make their presence known by  
7 knocking.

8 JUSTICE SOUTER: No, but the -- as I  
9 understand the -- the trial court, he accepted the  
10 probability that the knock would be futile, and yet he  
11 thought as a formality it was nonetheless required. A,  
12 do you understand the trial court to have taken that  
13 position? And B, if it did, do you believe that is  
14 correct as a statement of Fourth Amendment law?

15 MR. STUDEBAKER: I'm sorry, Justice Souter.  
16 I didn't catch the first A part.

17 JUSTICE SOUTER: Well, did -- do you  
18 understand the trial court to have taken the position  
19 that even though the knock would probably have been  
20 futile, the police were required to -- to make it  
21 anyway, to knock anyway?

22 MR. STUDEBAKER: That is what the trial court  
23 --

24 JUSTICE SOUTER: And -- and do you understand  
25 that to be a Fourth Amendment requirement, i.e., no

1 futility exception?

2 MR. STUDEBAKER: I do, Your Honor, and I know  
3 that that's a -- a complicated issue, but it's still a  
4 requirement. But further, the court -- the trial court  
5 --

6 JUSTICE SOUTER: Why should there be no  
7 futility exception?

8 MR. STUDEBAKER: Well, even if there is, Your  
9 Honor, the trial court did not just say that -- there  
10 -- he -- the evidence was gone because of the failure  
11 to knock. The trial court found that the exigencies,  
12 as well as the appellate courts, didn't rise to the  
13 level which would require entry into the home.

14 JUSTICE SOUTER: Well, that -- that may be on  
15 your argument that noise is never sufficient to  
16 dispense with a warrant requirement. But it seems to  
17 me that in -- in the reasonableness analysis that the  
18 trial court was going through, the trial court was  
19 saying even if it would probably be futile, it is not a  
20 reasonable entry without a knock. And -- and I take it  
21 you -- you accept that and you think the trial court  
22 was correct, that there is no futility exception.

23 MR. STUDEBAKER: I -- I agree, Your Honor,  
24 and this is why. Under, I believe, *Wilson v.* --

25 JUSTICE SOUTER: Why -- why should we require

1 a -- a futile act in the name of reasonableness?

2 MR. STUDEBAKER: Your Honor, first, it  
3 wouldn't have taken any effort at all to follow through  
4 on this, and even though this Court has ruled that, you  
5 know, there is mandatory knock and announce -- or  
6 requirement, with some exceptions, I don't believe that  
7 this is one of those exceptions.

8 JUSTICE SOUTER: No one is denying that. I  
9 mean, we've had a knock and announcement requirement  
10 for 900 years.

11 MR. STUDEBAKER: Correct.

12 JUSTICE SOUTER: But the question is do you  
13 have to knock and announce when, on the facts before  
14 you, it is apparent that nobody will hear the knock and  
15 it will just be a wasted gesture.

16 MR. STUDEBAKER: Yes.

17 JUSTICE SOUTER: Why?

18 MR. STUDEBAKER: Because, Your Honor, it's  
19 our position that it's one of the -- the threshold  
20 requirements to protect somebody when they're inside  
21 their home is to make that effort.

22 JUSTICE SOUTER: But isn't the standard of  
23 the Fourth Amendment a reasonableness standard, and  
24 isn't there something bizarre about saying  
25 reasonableness requires a totally futile gesture?

1 MR. STUDEBAKER: That was the finding of the  
2 court, Your Honor, the trial court, that it was futile.  
3 But, again, when an officer is placed in that  
4 situation to say that if an officer can decide whether  
5 something is futile or not, that could actually -- then  
6 that exception, if we're not careful, absorb that rule.  
7 So I --

8 JUSTICE SOUTER: Well, yes, that's why courts  
9 review these things.

10 MR. STUDEBAKER: Correct, and that is --

11 JUSTICE SOUTER: And if the court says, yes,  
12 based on the evidence before me, it would have been  
13 futile, do you think Fourth Amendment reasonableness  
14 requires the court and ultimately the officer to demand  
15 the knock anyway?

16 MR. STUDEBAKER: Personally? Yes. Legally?  
17 No.

18 JUSTICE SOUTER: Okay.

19 MR. STUDEBAKER: I mean, I am not going to  
20 try -- but, again, this Court -- the -- the courts  
21 below did say that that exigent circumstances didn't  
22 rise to the level --

23 JUSTICE GINSBURG: Where did the -- where did  
24 the trial court say that in the findings of fact?

25 MR. STUDEBAKER: I'm sorry, Your Honor?

1 JUSTICE GINSBURG: I'm looking at the  
2 findings of fact. They're in the petition appendix at  
3 page 46 and 47. I don't see anything that has been  
4 specifically identified by the finder of fact as  
5 inadequate, other than the failure to knock. Where --  
6 where did the -- where does the court say it doesn't  
7 rise to the level of exigent circumstances?

8 MR. STUDEBAKER: Your Honor, if I look at  
9 paragraph 5 of the joint appendix -- or I'm sorry -- of  
10 the -- of the order, it says, at that point in time the  
11 court finds no exigent --

12 JUSTICE SCALIA: Where is it? Where is it?

13 MR. STUDEBAKER: I'm sorry, Your Honor. In  
14 the petition for cert filed by the State of Utah, and  
15 it would be appendix page 47.

16 JUSTICE GINSBURG: Yes, but what it says  
17 right after that to explain is it would have been  
18 sufficient. What he -- what he should have done was  
19 knock, and that would have supplied all that was  
20 necessary.

21 MR. STUDEBAKER: Your Honor, and again, this  
22 isn't the, maybe, best worded order that the city had  
23 prepared in this case when they -- when the -- it was  
24 actually the city that prepared this, Petitioners.  
25 When I look at it, I look at two different sentences

1 there. There was no exigent circumstances, and  
2 further, what he should have done was knock.

3 But further, the two appellate courts that  
4 heard this matter before, did rule on the exigent  
5 circumstances because that's what the Petitioners in  
6 this Court had brought before the appellate courts, and  
7 they found that in both the Utah Court of Appeals and  
8 the Utah Supreme Court, that the exigent circumstances  
9 weren't sufficient enough.

10 JUSTICE SCALIA: You know, maybe -- maybe  
11 you're taking our announce and a knock -- knock and  
12 announce requirement too -- too seriously or too  
13 literally. I mean, if a police officer comes up and  
14 the door is open, what does he have to do? Lean over  
15 and knock on the side of the door? Can't he shout,  
16 hello, police? Don't you think that satisfies a knock  
17 and announce requirement?

18 MR. STUDEBAKER: Your Honor --

19 JUSTICE SCALIA: You really think you got to  
20 knock even when the door is open.

21 MR. STUDEBAKER: Your Honor, under the  
22 situation, he's got to make his presence known.

23 JUSTICE SCALIA: Okay. And he did that here.

24 MR. STUDEBAKER: And --

25 JUSTICE SCALIA: He stood at the door. He

1 opened the screen door and said, police --

2 MR. STUDEBAKER: And --

3 JUSTICE SCALIA: -- which he thought would be  
4 more effective than knocking on -- on the -- you know,  
5 the -- the edge of a screen door, which doesn't make a  
6 very good knock.

7 (Laughter.)

8 MR. STUDEBAKER: And once he raised his  
9 voice, though, Your Honor, and -- and made himself a  
10 little bit more vocal, then they noticed him there.  
11 And the --

12 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: But they still didn't  
13 stop. I -- I read somewhere in the facts that only  
14 gradually, as each participant in the melee became  
15 aware of his presence, did they sort of stop. It  
16 wasn't that as soon as he entered, everything quieted  
17 down immediately.

18 MR. STUDEBAKER: Chief Justice, like you say,  
19 once they made their presence known, it dissipated.  
20 The -- the position would be if they can make their  
21 presence known inside the home, they can make their  
22 presence known outside the home and still protect that  
23 sanctity of the home that we're trying to insure that  
24 people are protected in within their home.

25 JUSTICE GINSBURG: Well, there seemed to be

1 agreement that they couldn't have made their presence  
2 known because the noise inside was so loud that they  
3 would not have been heard.

4 MR. STUDEBAKER: That's what the -- the lower  
5 courts have found to be true. But Justice --  
6 currently, Justice Ginsburg, they found it to be true  
7 that the exigent circumstances we're not met under  
8 these facts. It wasn't serious enough to enter the  
9 home without the warrant, and I think that's the pivot  
10 point. Where is that line on the exigent  
11 circumstances? And our position would be that that  
12 line -- that it's got to be serious, it's got to be  
13 imminent, it's got to be an ongoing situation,  
14 something where somebody is either going to get  
15 seriously injured, evidence is going to be destroyed,  
16 somebody is going to flee.

17 JUSTICE ALITO: Well, was there anything in  
18 the facts that a reasonable officer would know from  
19 looking in the window to suggest that these -- the  
20 adults were not -- did not have the intention of  
21 inflicting some sort of serious injury on this young  
22 man that they were restraining?

23 MR. STUDEBAKER: Based upon the officer's  
24 testimony at the suppression hearing, Your Honor, it  
25 would be that did they not have a serious intention to

1 harm him is the fact that, one, there was nothing  
2 showing that they were actually doing anything more  
3 than restraining them, that juvenile. There's nothing  
4 in the record that shows that they were beating on him,  
5 that they were molesting him, or you know --

6 JUSTICE ALITO: They had -- did they have any  
7 reason to know why they were holding him?

8 MR. STUDEBAKER: I would say that they would,  
9 Justice Alito, and this is why. You know, all that  
10 they were saying was they were trying to get the -- the  
11 juvenile to calm down. They were trying to get him to  
12 settle down. This was a situation where the officer  
13 testified that -- at the suppression hearing, that  
14 there was alcohol involved, that there was a minor.  
15 Those types of situations don't demonstrate the fact  
16 that this was an ongoing violent situation.

17 Again -- and then further, the officers were  
18 called out for a party. They weren't called out for a  
19 fight in progress or -- or some type of physical  
20 altercation. They were called out because somebody had  
21 a loud disturbance going on. And those facts in my  
22 mind's eye don't rise to the level and would show the  
23 officer -- especially when the officer is standing  
24 outside the home watching this event, that there's  
25 nothing that -- that would rise to the level of

1 entering the home under the exigent circumstances.

2 JUSTICE GINSBURG: The Utah Supreme Court  
3 seemed to be puzzled by your failure to raise the Utah  
4 protection against the -- the counterpart to the Fourth  
5 Amendment. They seemed to suggest that their own  
6 constitution afforded greater protection to the privacy  
7 of the home. Was there a reason why you argued only the  
8 U.S. Constitution and not the State constitution?

9 MR. STUDEBAKER: Justice Ginsburg, I was not  
10 the trial counsel below or at the appellate court, so I  
11 cannot determine what his matter was or what -- what  
12 his basis was for that decision. And it -- then it  
13 would appear that you're correct in the fact that the  
14 Utah Supreme Court is concerned upon that issue. But  
15 the fact is that it seems to have been briefed under  
16 the Fourth Amendment, has come up under the Fourth  
17 Amendment issues, and so that's what we're -- we're  
18 looking at.

19 And even though a State, obviously, can give  
20 more protections to its citizens under a State  
21 constitution, the Fourth Amendment is still a -- if you  
22 will, a baseline requirement, and it still applies to  
23 Federal criminal courts.

24 JUSTICE STEVENS: May I ask? I don't think  
25 the charges are in the record. At least I missed them.

1 They were charged with -- what are the charges and how  
2 -- what were the penalty for what the defendants were  
3 exposed to? There's been no trial. They -- they  
4 suppressed the evidence. I suppose the proceedings  
5 were dismissed, were they?

6 MR. STUDEBAKER: Your Honor, the proceedings  
7 have been dismissed against my clients. That is  
8 correct.

9 And to answer the Court's question, the  
10 charges that they were facing was intoxication -- no.  
11 I'm sorry. Disorderly conduct, intoxication, and  
12 contributing to the delinquency of a minor.

13 JUSTICE STEVENS: What are the penalties for  
14 those charges?

15 MR. STUDEBAKER: Worst case scenario, Your  
16 Honor, they could be charged with up to 6 months in the  
17 county jail, each one consecutive to each other.

18 JUSTICE STEVENS: That's the major matter  
19 we're resolving today.

20 MR. STUDEBAKER: Yes, Your Honor.

21 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: What is the actual  
22 evidence that was suppressed? And to what extent is  
23 that evidence that wasn't available just from looking  
24 in through the door?

25 MR. STUDEBAKER: Mr. Chief Justice, the

1 evidence was -- that was suppressed was everything that  
2 the officer or officers saw once they entered the home  
3 and/or heard once they entered the home, basically  
4 anything that they obtained once they entered the home.  
5 The answer to Your Honor's --

6 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Couldn't they have  
7 gotten all -- wouldn't he have been able to testify to  
8 all of that without even entering the home?

9 MR. STUDEBAKER: They could have, Your Honor.  
10 However, they -- they did not. The prosecutor at the  
11 time didn't proceed under that issue. I'm not aware of  
12 why he did, but what we have, though, is obviously that --  
13 that may have happened. And as the Court addressed  
14 previously, there may have been then an issue related  
15 to the curtilage which would have had to have been  
16 addressed or discussed.

17 JUSTICE STEVENS: Yes, but among the evidence  
18 they did have were the two -- two teenagers are  
19 drinking beer in the backyard. So they pretty clearly  
20 had the alcohol -- they could have gotten that in  
21 evidence.

22 MR. STUDEBAKER: It could have, Your Honor,  
23 but I don't know why it did not except for the fact  
24 that it could have been built into the curtilage --

25 JUSTICE STEVENS: This wasn't kind of

1 constructed as a test case, by any chance, was it?

2 MR. STUDEBAKER: No, it was not, Your Honor.

3 Not at all. But --

4 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Well, not by you.

5 MR. STUDEBAKER: No, it was not, Your Honor.

6 That's correct.

7 What we have, Your Honors, is a situation  
8 where under the exigent circumstances, it did not rise  
9 to the level which would require the -- the officers to  
10 enter the home without getting a warrant.

11 And in the alternative, if they look at  
12 emergency aid, to enter the home under the emergency  
13 aid doctrine, which would be the equivalent in our  
14 opinion to a special needs assessment, then we have to  
15 look at probable cause. We have to look at their  
16 intent to enter because there's no probable cause to  
17 enter if they're performing that caretaking role to  
18 protect people.

19 Obviously, the ultimate concern in -- in any  
20 type of situation is somebody's sanctity of their home.  
21 It becomes a weighing situation where trial courts are  
22 -- are being charged to weigh the evidence, weigh the  
23 credibility of the people who testify, and then also  
24 take into account the constitutional protections which  
25 the parties are awarded.

1           And we believe that based upon the facts and  
2 the evidence that were -- was presented, that the three  
3 different Utah courts that heard this matter were  
4 appropriate in their -- in their suppression decisions.

5           Thank you.

6           CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Thank you, counsel.

7           Mr. Gray, you have 6 minutes remaining.

8           REBUTTAL ARGUMENT OF JEFFREY S. GRAY

9           ON BEHALF OF THE PETITIONER

10           MR. GRAY: Just a matter of clarification  
11 initially. Disorderly conduct is a class C  
12 misdemeanor, punishable by up to 90 days in jail under  
13 the -- how it was charged here. Also intoxication is a  
14 class C misdemeanor, and contributing to the  
15 delinquency of a minor is a class B misdemeanor,  
16 punishable by up to 6 months in jail. So that's --  
17 that's what -- but the officers -- and again, this case  
18 isn't about what they were ultimately charged with.  
19 It's whether or not they had a reasonable basis to  
20 believe that immediate intervention was necessary.

21           JUSTICE STEVENS: Don't you think the  
22 evidence that was available without going in the house  
23 would have supported all those charges?

24           MR. GRAY: Not the intoxication. The  
25 intoxication has to be --

1 JUSTICE STEVENS: But two teenagers in the  
2 backyard were intoxicated.

3 MR. GRAY: The -- the juveniles. But the  
4 defendants in this case were the adults inside the  
5 home.

6 JUSTICE STEVENS: Oh, they charge that the  
7 adults were intoxicated.

8 MR. GRAY: Yes.

9 JUSTICE STEVENS: Well, that's a serious  
10 crime in Utah I guess.

11 (Laughter.)

12 MR. GRAY: We anticipated that comment  
13 actually.

14 (Laughter.)

15 MR. GRAY: And --

16 JUSTICE STEVENS: And what's your response?

17 (Laughter.)

18 MR. GRAY: Normally -- normally intoxication  
19 -- we think of it as -- as public intoxication, and --  
20 and that's where it's usually prosecuted and where we  
21 find it. But intoxication that can become an offense  
22 where it disturbs others outside of the home, and  
23 that's what happened here.

24 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Counsel, you have --  
25 you have two questions presented. The second is

1 whether this was sufficiently -- sufficiently exigent  
2 to fall under the exigent circumstances. But the first  
3 was whether the test should turn on the officer's  
4 subjective motivation. I haven't heard much  
5 about that this morning. How is that presented on  
6 these facts?

7 MR. GRAY: Well, the court created two  
8 different tests. The Utah court created two different  
9 tests. And under the one test, it examined whether or  
10 not the officers were primarily motivated by a desire  
11 to arrest or search for evidence. Now, the court, the  
12 Utah Supreme Court, concluded that they did -- that  
13 they were -- their motives were primarily law  
14 enforcement motives because they did not render aid.  
15 And this Court has repeatedly held that an officer's  
16 subjective motives play no part in the objective  
17 reasonableness test, and it should not do so here.

18 Justice Ginsburg, you indicated that there  
19 was no -- no suggestion of domestic violence. The Utah  
20 Supreme Court actually acknowledged that where violence  
21 is seen in a home between adults and, for example, a  
22 younger person, that there would be reason to believe  
23 that domestic violence is possibly present. And that's  
24 what -- now, the court refused to look at that because  
25 there was no finding that the inhabitants or the --

1 those involved were actually cohabitants.

2 Of course, this Court has never required that  
3 officers have a certainty of the situation, only a  
4 reasonable belief, and they clearly have that.

5 And in any event, whether or not it's  
6 domestic violence or some other type of violence, it's  
7 something that I believe this Court in *Mincey*  
8 recognized, that officers can and -- and probably  
9 should -- maybe they didn't go that far, but it would be  
10 our position that officers should intervene in the face of  
11 violence, and that's what the officers did here.

12 JUSTICE GINSBURG: My point was simply that  
13 this was not a 911 call from a distressed spouse. This  
14 was a neighbor saying they're keeping me up at night,  
15 so that the -- the police response was to the noise,  
16 not to the violence.

17 MR. GRAY: The initial response was clearly  
18 to the noise, but once the officers arrived, it became  
19 apparent that there was violence ongoing in the house  
20 and that's how the officers proceeded.

21 If there are no further questions, we would  
22 ask the Court to reverse the decision of the Utah  
23 Supreme Court. Thank you.

24 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Thank you, counsel.

25 The case is submitted.

1                   (Whereupon, at 10:58 a.m., the case in the  
2 above-entitled matter was submitted.)  
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