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Federal Bureau of Investigation Director Robert Mueller testifies during a hearing before the House Intelligence Committee on Capitol Hill on Wednesday July 24, 2019, in Washington, D.C. (Newscom/Sipa USA/Ken Cedeno)

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July 25, 2019
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We were hoping for Jack Nicholson, but we got a somewhat addled Jack Webb instead.

Democrats and anti-Trumpists hoped that Robert Mueller's July 24 congressional testimony would break out in a cinematic "A Few Good Men" moment, when Mueller would stare down Republicans who refuse to face Trump's crimes with a "You can't handle the truth" line.

That hope quickly vanished.

Mueller was more akin to Sgt. Joe Friday of the old Dragnet television show, a cop with little pretension, ready to stretch only to one-word answers based on the data in his carefully-compiled report that few have actually read. Mueller was clearly uncomfortable, trapped by Justice Department regulations which, as a good, competent prosecutor, he was obligated to follow. Mueller is a Lion in Winter, clearly ready for retirement, yet willing to do his patriotic duty this one last time.

As drama, it was lacking.

"Robert Mueller is a traditional prosecutor's prosecutor who speaks through his charging decisions in the form of indictments and actions in court. No one should have realistically expected him to deviate from that role today. He stuck to his script/report as he said he would do," Hank Shea, a former prosecutor and senior distinguished fellow at the University of St. Thomas Law School in Minneapolis, told NCR.

Shea, one of the hundreds of professional prosecutors who signed a letter noting that Trump would very well have been indicted if he were not president, said that few are likely to change their minds.

"We are likely to see the public returning to the silos in which they found themselves before today's hearing except for the relatively few undecided citizens who are now better informed about the Special Counsel's findings than they were before today," he said. The talking heads on Fox News after the testimony confirmed that insight.

So at the end of the day's events, we remain pretty much where we were before. Trump's apologists continue to ignore the volumes of evidence of obstruction of justice crimes, and the cozy, if not criminal, cooperation with Russian efforts to subvert our elections. There is strong reason to believe that the Electoral College

elected a rapist, a racist, a torturer of migrant children, but damn, the stock market keeps going up, and he is transforming the Supreme Court. Republicans, with rare exceptions, refuse to see that this corpulent emperor clearly has no clothes.

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So the dramatic moment will not happen. It's clear that Mueller was highly conscious of the limits of his role. As a straight-shooter investigating a gang that clearly knows no boundaries, it proved to be a theatrical disadvantage.

But this is not show biz. What remains is our responsibility. Investigations will continue but are unlikely to result in impeachment. There remains the opportunity presented by the 2020 elections. Yet even that is foreboding, as Mueller noted during his testimony that Trump will be eligible to be indicted after he leaves office.

How far will this man go to hold on to power, when his choice is the White House or a nicely-fitted orange jumpsuit? From what we have seen so far, Trump recognizes few boundaries, a record that should send shudders down the spines of Americans who believe this is a republic worth saving. It remains to be seen whether Americans are up to handling this terrible truth.

A version of this story appeared in the **Aug 9-22, 2019** print issue under the headline: After Mueller hearing, can Americans handle the truth?.