

## Mapp v. Ohio / Background •

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As you read the background summary of the case below, look for the **important vocabulary terms**. You can find definitions for these terms on the separate vocabulary handout.

Dollree Mapp lived in Cleveland, Ohio. One day, the police broke into Mapp's house to look for a **suspected** bomber. Mapp had refused to let the police into her house earlier because they did not have a **search warrant**. When the police broke in, they showed Mapp a piece of paper. They said the paper was a search warrant, but they would not let her see it.

The police searched Mapp's house without her permission. They looked in her room, her daughter's bedroom, the kitchen, the living room, and the basement. In the basement they found a trunk. Inside the trunk were **obscene** pictures, photographs, and books. The police did not find the bomber, but they arrested Mapp anyway. They said she broke the law by having obscene materials.

The court found her guilty. Mapp then **appealed** her case to the Supreme Court of Ohio. She said that her rights were violated in the search. The Supreme Court of Ohio said that the actions of the police were probably illegal. However, they also said that the **evidence** (the illegal obscene materials) the police found could be used against Mapp, even though the search itself may have been illegal. Mapp then appealed her case to the Supreme Court of the United States.

The Fourth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution protects people from **unreasonable** searches by the government. In Mapp's case, the U.S. Supreme Court had to decide when a search is legal and whether evidence from an illegal search could be used in a criminal case. In 1961, the Supreme Court ruled in the case of *Mapp v. Ohio*.

### Questions to Consider

1. Was Mapp right to not let the police enter her house? Why or why not?
2. Was there anything unreasonable about the police search of Mapp's house? Explain.
3. The U.S. Supreme Court must protect both individual people and society. In this case, whom do you think they should protect first? Mapp? Society? Explain your answer.