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**INSIDE:** HOW TO BUILD A HUMAN BOMB ● NOTES FROM NO MAN'S LAND ● FASCISM WITH A SMILE ● DISNEYLAND BY THE TIGRIS ● FLEXIBLE FRIENDS

# The<sup>ColdType</sup>READER

WRITING WORTH READING ● ISSUE 27 ● JUNE 2008



## PROTECTING THE CANDIDATE

*“A guy looking like me shouldn’t have been able to walk ten feet from Bobby Kennedy for four blocks”*

# The <sup>ColdType</sup> READER



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## ISSUE 27 | JUNE 2008

- |   |                                       |
|---|---------------------------------------|
| <b>3. COVER: PROTECTING THE CANDIDATE</b>         | <i>Lawrence Houghteling</i>           |
| <b>7. LIBERALISM'S LAST FLING</b>                 | <i>John Pilger</i>                    |
| <b>11. ABU GHRAIB FILM OBSCURES TRUTH</b>         | <i>Sam Provan</i>                     |
| <b>15. WOULD YOU PUBLISH THIS PICTURE?</b>        | <i>Helen Thomas</i>                   |
| <b>17. HOW TO BUILD A HUMAN BOMB</b>              | <i>George Monbiot</i>                 |
| <b>18. BETRAYALS, BOYCOTTS &amp; BACKSLIDINGS</b> | <i>Andy Worthington</i>               |
| <b>26. FOOD FIGHT</b>                             | <i>Michael I. Niman</i>               |
| <b>31. HOW TO SURVIVE A GAZA REFUGEE CAMP</b>     | <i>Ramzy Baroud</i>                   |
| <b>34. WITH FRIENDS LIKE THESE</b>                | <i>Uri Avnery</i>                     |
| <b>48. FASCISM WITH A SMILE</b>                   | <i>Hal O'Boyle</i>                    |
| <b>40. MENTAL ILLNESS OR SOCIAL SICKNESS?</b>     | <i>Susan Rosenthal</i>                |
| <b>46. POT SMOKING: TRUTH &amp; LIES</b>          | <i>Paul Armentano/Mitch Earlywine</i> |
| <b>48. DISNEYLAND BY THE TIGRIS</b>               | <i>Felicity Arbuthnot</i>             |
| <b>55. FLEXIBLE FRIENDS</b>                       | <i>David Edwards</i>                  |
| <b>60. NOTES FROM NO MAN'S LAND</b>               | <i>Jeffrey St. Clair/Joshua Frank</i> |
| <b>64. PILLAGING AT THE PUMP</b>                  | <i>Greg Palast</i>                    |
| <b>66. THE VOTER FRAUD THAT DIDN'T EXIST</b>      | <i>Andrew Taylor</i>                  |
| <b>71. THE BIG PICTURE</b>                        | <i>Mark Hurwitt</i>                   |
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# PROTECTING THE CANDIDATE

The security of Presidential candidates is much more serious than in the days before Bobby Kennedy died, writes **Lawrence Houghteling**, who was in the streets of San Francisco during RJK's final motorcades

I know the African-American high school students I teach want very much to see the U.S. elect a black president, but they also fear that Barack Obama is going to be knocked off. I can't begin to tell you how many of them have told me something like, "Oh, they're gonna get him."

I understand their worry, obviously, and even share it a bit, but at the same time I'm hopeful, and pretty sure they're wrong. Look carefully at any film of Obama moving through a crowd, I tell them, and you'll realize he's surrounded by a phalanx of fit, unsmiling young and middle-aged men in suits, all of whom are avidly watching the crowd. Secret Service men. There are no guarantees in this political life – crazy John Hinckley got off a shot at Reagan, after all – but damned little gets by those human German Shepherds, and I believe I would feel safer standing in their midst than I usually do crossing New York's Third Avenue during rush hour.

And I tell my students that I can remember with great clarity (because in a very real sense I was there) the moment

when protecting American politicians became a much more serious matter than it had been before. I remember the night Bobby Kennedy died, and the day before.

\* \* \* \*

Forty years ago, in the late spring of 1968, I was a dropout, free of responsibilities, devoting each day to whatever struck my fancy.

Less than eight months before I'd been an upwardly-mobile young reporter for the *San Francisco Chronicle*. I'd gotten to accompany George Romney and an entourage of a couple of dozen national reporters as Romney visited our fair city's (black) Fillmore and (counter-cultural) Haight-Ashbury districts as part of his very public "exploration" of whether to become a presidential candidate. There may have been some people in our caravan through the slums of San Francisco who functioned as Romney's bodyguards; if they were there, they were certainly inconspicuous. There was no sense that a presidential candidate might be in danger.

**Look carefully at any film of Obama moving through a crowd, I tell them, and you'll realize he's surrounded by a phalanx of fit, unsmiling young and middle-aged men in suits, all of whom are avidly watching the crowd**

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Well, why not?  
After fortifying  
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president**

Within a few months, though, George had fallen victim to his tendency to say a truthful thing in an unguarded way. He admitted to reporters that he'd ceased being in favor of the war in Vietnam after figuring out that earlier he'd been persuaded to approve the war by generals in Vietnam who had "brainwashed" him. "Brainwashed"? So much for George's presidential bid.

About the same time as George was abandoning his presidential ambitions, I had run afoul of a growing realization that it was ridiculous for a fellow of 23 to pretend in daily newspaper articles that he knew everything ... when in fact he knew so very little. I left the newsroom in hopes I might learn something of the world.

Since leaving the *Chronicle* in March I had been from one end of the United States to the other, I'd met all sorts of savory and unsavory people, I'd fallen in love, and I'd even decided that I would settle down and start my very own commune. By early June, however, I had returned for no reason better than simple extra-vagance to good old San Francisco, where I was bunking quite happily with my old roommate, a police reporter at the *Chronicle*, and smoking amazing amounts of a psychedelic medicinal herb that was then quite popular.

This was my condition when I awoke late on the morning of June 1, 1968, turned on the radio, and happened to hear that Robert Kennedy was scheduled in a short while to ride in a motorcade through downtown San Francisco.

I was vaguely aware that this was the last day before the California primary. Bobby had to win, I knew. He'd been upset in the Oregon primary by Eugene

McCarthy two weeks before, and he was doing the Sacramento-San Francisco-Los Angeles shuffle on his way to his Victory Party in L.A. the next night.

You need to know that I come from a family that took its politics very seriously; I had been involved in politics ever since licking approximately 2,640 envelopes for Adlai Stevenson in '56; just because I'd turned recently to nirvanic non-involvement didn't mean I had no residual curiosity about America's political spectator sport. A parade? I thought. Well, why not? After fortifying myself with some of that psychedelic medicinal herb, I prepared myself sartorially for getting a look at a man I thought might well become president.

### **Appropriately scraggly**

Now I must tell you that I was a kid with a large sense of style, but that my style tended toward what the average joe might well perceive as obtuse. (And wasn't that the point, after all — *épater le bourgeois*, and all that?) My hair was already long enough to qualify me in most people's eyes as a hippie; my beard was appropriately scraggly; and to top off the look, I decided that day to wear — as a vest, hanging out over my often-patched jeans and shirt — the liner of some sort of military winter coat I'd scored, turned inside-out, the olive-drab smooth nylon inside and some scratchy, dirty-white fake fleece on the outside. At a husky 6-ft-2 (and even taller in my genuine made-for-stomping boots), I must have been quite a sight. I was hardly unique in 1968 San Francisco, but I did fancy my looks.

So, all dolled up, I set out for Montgomery Street, San Francisco's financial

district and the closest thing The City had to a skyscraper canyon. I arrived to find both sides of the street lined with eager crowds, and windows as far as I could see filled with on-lookers. I walked around a bit and learned that the motorcade was coming from the airport via the Embarcadero Freeway. They would exit the freeway at Broadway, go three or four blocks past trattorias and topless joints, turn left onto Montgomery, and come down the lower slopes of Telegraph Hill three blocks to Jackson. There the parade proper would start, on the flat southbound stretch which goes all the way down to Market Street. Somewhere before reaching Market the motorcade would turn right, go a couple of blocks to Grant and parade through Chinatown before heading back to Broadway, freeway and airport.

### **Standing on the trunk**

I was standing on the west side of Montgomery near Washington when we heard the sirens of the motorcade getting off the freeway. A minute later we could see them turning down the hill toward us, moving fairly slowly, a small squad of cops on motorcycles, a couple of police cars, and then a bunch of big black cars. The motorcade slowed way down when it got to the bottom of the hill near Jackson a block away, and as it approached me I could see that one of the cars was a huge convertible, and standing out on the trunk was Bobby Kennedy. Two huge guys – one of whom I recognized as Rosey Grier, the football player – were kneeling on the back seat of the car with their arms wrapped around the candidate to steady him and keep him from being pulled off the hood as individual

members of the crowd on the sidewalks, unrestrained by any barriers, rushed out into the street, reached out to touch one of Bobby's extended hands, and then retreated back to the sidewalks, creating a kind of wave that was moving towards me.

When the wave reached me I, too, rushed out toward Bobby, but unlike the others I made no attempt to touch him, contenting myself with looking into his face from very close up. I was amazed at what I saw: here was a man who had gone farther past exhaustion than I would have thought possible. I could see in his face what seemed to me to be a mingled glee and horror that his enervated condition had made it impossible for him to conceal. I was familiar with the expression “sanpaku eyes,” meaning that that a significant area of the white of each eye is visible below the iris and above the lower eyelid, a condition which is said to be a sign of great imbalance and poor health; and the first thing I noticed was that Bobby Kennedy's eyes were way beyond anything I'd ever seen as far as sanpaku-ness was concerned. The irises of his eyes seemed to be rolling violently upward, giving the impression that he was able to look out into the world only with great effort. Yet he kept grinning away and grabbing any hand that came near, and saying “Thanks for coming” and “Glad you could come” in that familiar voice, now worn to a rasp.

I started stepping back toward the curb, but somehow – I can't explain how it happened – I found myself instead walking beside the car. The crowds were staying on the sidewalks – except for those people who lurched forward to touch Bobby's hand and then lurched

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back – so there was a corridor on either side of the cars between them and the crowds. And somehow I started walking alongside Bobby's car. It was moving so slowly I could easily keep pace with it. I became a person walking ... walking very near ... to this very sanpaku Man Who Would Be President.

### **Doing cop stuff**

I was only eight or ten feet from Bobby. I kept walking at the same speed as the car. From time to time I looked over at him – he was doing the same stuff – but mostly I did – instinctively, I've always thought – cop-stuff: I examined the leapers as they rushed out from the sidewalks to touch Bobby's hand; I looked up at the windows of the high rises we were moving slowly by; I scanned the rooftops. As perhaps you can imagine, it was very exciting; I was in the middle of a maelstrom of swirling human energy, and I was watching history being made (while at the same time feeling a bit superior to it – the I Ching speaks of “youthful folly,” and there it is, folks). In addition, there was the element of danger – I knew that there was a possibility that I'd be grabbed and pulled away from Bobby. I don't believe we used the word “stalking” in those days, but we certainly knew the concept, and I knew what I was doing might easily be perceived as stalking. Which heightened the excitement. And also made me redouble my instinctive attempt to blend in as a cop, despite what I looked like.

I walked next to Bobby Kennedy's car for three or four blocks before I got bored and blended back into the crowd. I watched from the sidewalk as the mo-

torcade turned right a block ahead, headed for Chinatown and then the airport. I returned home to Peter's apartment. Peter had gone to work.

The next day was less exciting, until long after I'd gone to bed, well after midnight, when Peter returned from work making a gigantic racket. He seemed to be throwing things and shouting, and I got up to see what had happened, and got told that some motherfucker had killed Bobby. It made me sad, but I can't say I was surprised. The man I'd seen had been dangerously near the end of his tether, and terribly unguarded.

I kept thinking about how close I had gotten. Maybe my role-playing worked, and all the real bodyguards assumed that someone else had hired me, since I was so obviously doing protecting-the-candidate type things. Maybe.

Or maybe there just wasn't anybody in particular protecting the candidate. Either way, a guy looking like me shouldn't have been able to walk ten feet from Bobby Kennedy for four blocks. I think the people who have the job of keeping important political figures safe learned something that day and the following night. There may even have been someone in Bobby's retinue who remembered a crazed-looking desperado who walked a few feet from the candidate for a long time and made a bunch of people nervous. And maybe that became part of the lesson that helps keep Obama safe today.

One likes to feel one was of service. **CT**

*Lawrence Houghteling is a teacher at the Heritage School, a public high school in Spanish Harlem, New York*

# LIBERALISM'S LAST FLING

**John Pilger** looks back to his travels with Robert Kennedy to describe the false hope offered by politicians like Barack Obama

In this season of 1968 nostalgia, one anniversary illuminates today. It is the rise and fall of Robert Kennedy, who would have been elected president of the United States had he not been assassinated in June 1968. Having travelled with Kennedy up to the moment of his shooting at the Ambassador Hotel in Los Angeles on June 5, I heard The Speech many times. He would “return government to the people” and bestow “dignity and justice” on the oppressed. “As Bernard Shaw once said,” he would say, “Most men look at things as they are and wonder why. I dream of things that never were and ask: Why not?” That was the signal to run back to the bus. It was fun until a hail of bullets passed over our shoulders.

Kennedy's campaign is a model for Barack Obama. Like Obama, he was a senator with no achievements to his name. Like Obama, he raised the expectations of young people and minorities. Like Obama, he promised to end an unpopular war, not because he opposed the war's conquest of other people's land and resources, but because it was “un-

winnable”.

Should Obama beat John McCain to the White House in November, it will be liberalism's last fling. In the United States and Britain, liberalism as a war-making, divisive ideology is once again being used to destroy liberalism as a reality. A great many people understand this, as the hatred of Blair and new Labour attest, but many are disoriented and eager for “leadership” and basic social democracy. In the US, where unrelenting propaganda about American democratic uniqueness disguises a corporate system based on extremes of wealth and privilege, liberalism as expressed through the Democratic Party has played a crucial, compliant role.

In 1968, Robert Kennedy sought to rescue the party and his own ambitions from the threat of real change that came from an alliance of the civil rights campaign and the anti-war movement then commanding the streets of the main cities, and which Martin Luther King had drawn together until he was assassinated in April that year. Kennedy had supported the war in Vietnam and con-

**Robert Kennedy sought to rescue the party and his own ambitions from the threat of real change that came from an alliance of the civil rights campaign and the anti-war movement then commanding the streets of the main cities**

## KENNEDY'S LEGACY

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**The vacuities are familiar. Obama is his echo. Like Kennedy, Obama may well "chart a new direction for America" in specious, media-honed language, but in reality he will secure, like every president, the best damned democracy money can buy**

tinued to support it in private, but this was skilfully suppressed as he competed against the maverick Eugene McCarthy, whose surprise win in the New Hampshire primary on an anti-war ticket had forced President Lyndon Johnson to abandon the idea of another term. Using the memory of his martyred brother, Kennedy assiduously exploited the electoral power of delusion among people hungry for politics that represented them, not the rich.

"These people love you," I said to him as we left Calexico, California, where the immigrant population lived in abject poverty and people came like a great wave and swept him out of his car, his hands fastened to their lips.

"Yes, yes, sure they love me," he replied. "I love them!" I asked him how exactly he would lift them out of poverty: just what was his political philosophy?

"Philosophy? Well, it's based on a faith in this country and I believe that many Americans have lost this faith and I want to give it back to them, because we are the last and the best hope of the world, as Thomas Jefferson said."

"That's what you say in your speech. Surely the question is: How?"

"How?... by charting a new direction for America."

The vacuities are familiar. Obama is his echo. Like Kennedy, Obama may well "chart a new direction for America" in specious, media-honed language, but in reality he will secure, like every president, the best damned democracy money can buy.

As their contest for the White House draws closer, watch how, regardless of the inevitable personal smears, Obama

and McCain draw nearer to each other. They already concur on America's divine right to control all before it. "We lead the world in battling immediate evils and promoting the ultimate good," said Obama.

"We must lead by building a 21st-century military... to advance the security of all people [emphasis added]." McCain agrees. Obama says in pursuing "terrorists" he would attack Pakistan. McCain wouldn't quarrel.

Both candidates have paid ritual obeisance to the regime in Tel Aviv, unquestioning support for which defines all presidential ambition. In opposing a UN Security Council resolution implying criticism of Israel's starvation of the people of Gaza, Obama was ahead of both McCain and Hillary Clinton.

### Massaged message

In January, pressured by the Israel lobby, he massaged a statement that "nobody has suffered more than the Palestinian people" to now read: "Nobody has suffered more than the Palestinian people from the failure of the Palestinian leadership to recognise Israel [emphasis added]." Such is his concern for the victims of the longest, illegal military occupation of modern times. Like all the candidates, Obama has furthered Israeli/Bush fictions about Iran, whose regime, he says absurdly, "is a threat to all of us".

On the war in Iraq, Obama the dove and McCain the hawk are almost united. McCain now says he wants US troops to leave in five years (instead of "100 years", his earlier option). Obama has now "reserved the right" to change his pledge to get troops out next year. "I will listen to

our commanders on the ground,” he now says, echoing Bush. His adviser on Iraq, Colin Kahl, says the US should maintain up to 80,000 troops in Iraq until 2010. Like McCain, Obama has voted repeatedly in the Senate to support Bush's demands for funding of the occupation of Iraq; and he has called for more troops to be sent to Afghanistan. His senior advisers embrace McCain's proposal for an aggressive “league of democracies”, led by the United States, to circumvent the United Nations. Like McCain, he would extend the crippling embargo on Cuba.

Amusingly, both have denounced their “preachers” for speaking out. Whereas McCain's man of God praised Hitler, in the fashion of lunatic white holy-rollers, Obama's man, Jeremiah Wright, spoke an embarrassing truth. He said that the attacks of 11 September 2001 had taken place as a consequence of the violence of US power across the world. The media demanded that Obama disown Wright and swear an oath of loyalty to the Bush lie that “terrorists attacked America because they hate our freedoms”. So he did. The conflict in the Middle East, said Obama, was rooted not “primarily in the actions of stalwart allies like Israel”, but in “the perverse and hateful ideologies of radical Islam”. Journalists applauded. Islamophobia is a liberal speciality.

The American media love both Obama and McCain. Reminiscent of mating calls by *Guardian* writers to Blair more than a decade ago, Jann Wenner, founder of the liberal *Rolling Stone*, wrote: “There is a sense of dignity, even majesty, about him, and underneath that ease lies a resolute discipline... Like

Abraham Lincoln, Barack Obama challenges America to rise up, to do what so many of us long to do: to summon ‘the better angels of our nature’.” At the liberal *New Republic*, Charles Lane confessed: “I know it shouldn't be happening, but it is. I'm falling for John McCain.” His colleague Michael Lewis had gone further. His feelings for McCain, he wrote, were like “the war that must occur inside a 14-year-old boy who discovers he is more sexually attracted to boys than to girls”.

### **Backed by Wall Street**

The objects of these uncontrollable passions are as one in their support for America's true deity, its corporate oligarchs. Despite claiming that his campaign wealth comes from small individual donors, Obama is backed by the biggest Wall Street firms: Goldman Sachs, UBS AG, Lehman Brothers, J P Morgan Chase, Citigroup, Morgan Stanley and Credit Suisse, as well as the huge hedge fund Citadel Investment Group. “Seven of the Obama campaign's top 14 donors,” wrote the investigator Pam Martens, “consisted of officers and employees of the same Wall Street firms charged time and again with looting the public and newly implicated in originating and/or bundling fraudulently made mortgages.”

A report by United for a Fair Economy, a non-profit group, estimates the total loss to poor Americans of colour who took out sub-prime loans as being between \$164bn and \$213bn: the greatest loss of wealth ever recorded for people of colour in the United States. “Washington lobbyists haven't funded my campaign,” said Obama in January, “they won't run

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## KENNEDY'S LEGACY

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my White House and they will not drown out the voices of working Americans when I am president.” According to files held by the Centre for Responsive Politics, the top five contributors to the Obama campaign are registered corporate lobbyists.

What is Obama's attraction to big business? Precisely the same as Robert Kennedy's. By offering a “new”, young and apparently progressive face of the Democratic Party – with the bonus of being a member of the black elite – he can blunt and divert real opposition. That was Colin Powell's role as Bush's secretary of state. An Obama victory will bring intense pressure on the US anti-war and social justice movements to accept a Democratic administration for all its faults. If that happens, domestic resistance to rapacious America will fall silent.

### **War on Iran has started**

America's war on Iran has already begun. In December, Bush secretly authorised support for two guerrilla armies inside Iran, one of which, the military arm of Mujahedin-e Khalq, is described by the state department as terrorist. The US is also engaged in attacks or subversion against Somalia, Lebanon, Syria, Afghanistan, India, Pakistan, Bolivia and Venezuela.

A new military command, Africom, is being set up to fight proxy wars for control of Africa's oil and other riches. With US missiles soon to be stationed provocatively on Russia's borders, the

Cold War is back. None of these piracies and dangers has raised a whisper in the presidential campaign, not least from its great liberal hope.

Moreover, none of the candidates represents so-called mainstream America. In poll after poll, voters make clear that they want the normal decencies of jobs, proper housing and health care. They want their troops out of Iraq and the Israelis to live in peace with their Palestinian neighbours. This is a remarkable testimony, given the daily brainwashing of ordinary Americans in almost everything they watch and read.

On this side of the Atlantic, a deeply cynical electorate watches British liberalism's equivalent last fling. Most of the “philosophy” of new Labour was borrowed wholesale from the US. Bill Clinton and Tony Blair were interchangeable. Both were hostile to traditionalists in their parties who might question the corporate-speak of their class-based economic policies and their relish for colonial conquests.

Now the British find themselves spectators to the rise of new Tory, distinguishable from Blair's new Labour only in the personality of its leader, a former corporate public relations man who presents himself as Tonier than thou. We all deserve better. **GT**

*John Pilger's latest book, **Freedom Next Time**, is now out in paperback. His new movie is **The War on Democracy**. This article was first published in the *New Statesman**

**READ THE BEST OF JOHN PILGER**  
<http://www.coldtype.net/pilger.html>

# ABU GHRAIB FILM OBSCURES TRUTH

Abu Ghraib whistleblower **Sam Provance** sees a film about the infamous Iraq prison and comes away disappointed

*Note: Former Army Sgt. Sam Provance was the only uniformed military intelligence officer at Abu Ghraib who broke the code of silence surrounding the infamous prisoner abuses. He spoke out during the Army's internal investigation, at a congressional hearing and in press interviews. For his brave integrity, Provance was punished and pushed out of the U.S. military, clearing the way for the Pentagon to pin the blame for the sadistic treatment of Iraqi detainees on a handful of poorly trained MPs. Now, history is repeating itself in Errol Morris's supposedly hard-hitting documentary on the scandal*

Representatives for film director Errol Morris told me during pre-production that his film *Standard Operating Procedure* would be the very best documentary on the abuses of Iraqi detainees at Abu Ghraib – the one that would tell the whole truth.

I had pinned great hope on that, but it didn't turn out that way.

My perspective on the Abu Ghraib

scandal came from spending from September 2003 to February 2004 at the Iraq prison as a sergeant in Army Intelligence. Working the 8 p.m.-to- 8 a.m. night shift, it was impossible not to notice who was directing the operation. And I shared all this with Morris.

But now I've seen the film and I'm disappointed. Morris does little to get to the bottom of what happened. He muddies already opaque waters regarding who was actually responsible for the abuse of prisoners.

The film focuses on the awful photos, the people in them and those who took them. This perspective plays right into the hands of the cover-up artists. It perpetuates the myth that the abuses are rightfully laid at the feet of those impressionable, but very human, young soldiers.

Morris should have been looking up the chain of command; at the civilian and military officials actually responsible for ordering these Military Police Reservists to rough up prisoners.

A no-holds-barred documentary? Give me a break.

**This perspective plays right into the hands of the cover-up artists. It perpetuates the myth that the abuses are rightfully laid at the feet of those impressionable, but very human, young soldiers**

## DOCUMENTING ABUSE

**I witnessed for myself how civilian personnel, like Dugan, corrupted the military. Indeed, they were the genesis of the break from conventional interrogation techniques into what Vice President Dick Cheney hinted at when he spoke of the "dark side" of intelligence**

I was first put into contact with the makers of *SOP* while I was still in the Army. From the beginning, I was told this was going to be a huge project with the production support of Sony Pictures Entertainment; and that Morris, who had won an Oscar with his documentary, *The Fog of War*, would be at the helm.

This was to be the breakthrough investigation into what really happened at Abu Ghraib, who was responsible for the abuse and why it was ordered – the project that really got people’s attention, going where previous investigators and media had feared to tread.

Call me gullible but, believing this was to be a groundbreaking work, I fully cooperated with Morris. I assisted him in his quest for documents, videos, photos, notes and helped him contact fellow soldiers who were at Abu Ghraib and knew what happened.

When I was discharged from the Army in October 2006, I went to Boston for a two-day interview.

Morris asked me to sign several contracts before and after the interviews, and I did as he asked without paying much attention to them. I do remember however, that in one contract Morris agreed to pay me one dollar.

In any event, I never got the dollar, but was reminded of this last week when I read in the *New York Times* that others got paychecks for their participation.

I have never asked for or taken money for media interviews. To me, that undermines the process and trivializes the importance of the issues of torture and prisoner mistreatment and their meaning for the moral atmosphere in our

country as a whole.

When the film was finished, Morris told me he had intended to use some of the footage from my two days of interviews and the materials I provided, but decided in the end to “narrowly focus” on the Military Police. This, of course, is what so many others have done and is in the worst tradition of a Nixon-style “modified, limited hangout.”

### **Chain of Command?**

Here’s the oddest thing: Even though Morris’s lens is trained on the Military Police, he does find room for a civilian interrogator, Tim Dugan, who worked at Abu Ghraib for CACI, a contractor factory for civilian interrogators.

I witnessed for myself how civilian personnel, like Dugan, corrupted the military. Indeed, they were the genesis of the break from conventional interrogation techniques into what Vice President Dick Cheney hinted at when he spoke of the “dark side” of intelligence.

It was they who ordered the Military Police and some of my own unit’s Military Intelligence soldiers to “soften” the detainees for interrogation, and encouraged the behavior depicted in the photographs. I know; I was there. And, of course, I told Errol Morris.

So I was surprised, to say the least, to see Morris giving Dugan a place to contend that, essentially, the abuses were all the military’s fault.

Odd indeed. Even Maj. Gen. George Fay, whose investigation of Abu Ghraib left much to be desired, reported the pernicious effect civilian interrogators had on the impressionable and inexperienced soldiers.

Fay reported, for example that Daniel

Johnson, one of Dugan's CACI interrogator colleagues, whom I knew at Abu Ghraib, was using Spc. Charles Graner as "muscle" for his interrogations.

And yet, Morris describes Dugan as "remarkable." Remarkable, indeed, Errol.

Did no one tell you that CACI, Dugan and several of his fellow interrogators were sued by their victims in Abu Ghraib, seeking to hold them accountable for their behavior?

In the civil case brought by the Center for Constitutional Rights on behalf of Abu Ghraib prisoners, the lawsuit implicates Dugan in the abuse.

"CACI interrogator Timothy Dugan also tortured plaintiffs and other prisoners," the lawsuit alleges. "For example, he physically dragged handcuffed plaintiffs and other prisoners along the ground to inflict pain on them. He struck and beat plaintiffs and other prisoners. He bragged to a non-conspirator about scaring a prisoner with threats to such a degree that the prisoner vomited.

"When a young non-conspirator directed him to cease the torture and comply [with] Army Field Manual 34-52, Dugan scoffed at his youth and refused to follow the direction."

The lawsuit further alleges that Dugan took part in a CACI cover-up of when a detainee died by going through "the charade of interrogating a prisoner who was already dead as part of the conspiracy's efforts to conceal a murder." Dugan is accused, too, of threatening a fellow CACI employee who talked to investigators.

CACI has denounced the lawsuit as baseless, and the individual defendants were dismissed out on a technicality.

However, on Nov. 6, 2007, U.S. District Court Judge James Robertson in Washington denied CACI's motion for summary judgment and ordered a jury trial against CACI.

A criminal investigation is also pending in the Eastern District of Virginia concerning some of the CACI employees.

In SOP, Dugan presents himself as a whistleblower who tried to stop the abuses. He claims that he reported to his "section sergeant" that two Army female interrogators were stripping detainees naked as an interrogation technique, and how shocked he was to see this.

Dugan claims he got the brush-off; was told not to get involved. So who was this "section sergeant?" And is he/she above the law?

Why did Dugan not offer himself as a witness in any of the various investigations? Where has he been if he felt then the way he now says he did? Again, why sport the good-guy badge now?

I came away with the impression that Morris was unprepared for the interview and was being taken for a ride.

### **CACI's Defense**

For obvious reasons, CACI has gone to extraordinary lengths to separate itself from the horrors of Abu Ghraib, arguing that the military alone was at fault.

CACI recently announced the release of a book, *Our Good Name: A Company's Fight To Defend Its Honor And Get The Truth About Abu Ghraib*.

CACI contends strongly that its interrogators adhered to the military chain of command, something it has been feverishly trying to establish in the lawsuits against it.

And so, the behavior captured in the

**Why did Dugan not offer himself as a witness in any of the various investigations? Where has he been if he felt then the way he now says he did? Again, why sport the good-guy badge now?**

## DOCUMENTING ABUSE

**Even though it is now an established fact that between 70 to 90 percent of detainees at Abu Ghraib were completely innocent, something I learned directly on site, Dugan implies that the harsh interrogation practices applied there were legitimate – except of course for the failings of the military**

photos? That was the military's responsibility, not CACI's.

That is not what I observed from my ringside seat.

I told Morris that the reality was that the civilian contractors paid little heed to the military chain of command, and that they were the ones actually running the show. That didn't make it into the final version of *SOP*.

Even though it is now an established fact that between 70 to 90 percent of detainees at Abu Ghraib were completely innocent, something I learned directly on site, Dugan implies that the harsh interrogation practices applied there were legitimate – except, of course, for the failings of the military.

This myth-making is intended to hold CACI harmless and help it maintain its very lucrative government contracts. CACI International had \$1.6 billion in revenues in 2005. Folks have always told me it all has to do with money; I suppose they're right.

But Congress should be asking some simple questions. It should start by asking why civilian contractors are being employed in connection with the interrogation of persons under detention in wartime, a function which previously has been entirely in the hands of the uniformed military?

This could yield some interesting answers. Indeed, evasion of military rules

and discipline as well as avoidance of congressional oversight might be at the heart of the answers.

Morris takes pride in calling *SOP* a horror movie and – with the mood music and the needless slow-motion reenactments – he makes sure of that.

However, *SOP* does little more than humanize some of the “bad apples” (a good thing, I suppose), while gratuitously absolving the civilian interrogators actually responsible for fouling those apples.

But, wait. Abu Ghraib is not primarily about Military Police – or civilian interrogators. It is about the many thousands of wrongfully detained Iraqis – many of them abused, tortured and even killed. It is also about their families. What about their story?

Morris has called *SOP* just “the tip of the iceberg,” citing the unused volumes of material he's collected since production began. But Morris owed his viewers a glimpse of the whole iceberg, not just the small misleading piece that bobbed above the surface.

He has announced his next film project: a comedy. Go figure. **CT**

*Former Army Sgt. Sam Provanca was a hero of the Abu Ghraib scandal, the only uniformed military intelligence officer at the Iraqi prison to testify about abuses during the internal Army investigation*

## WRITE FOR OUR READERS

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# WOULD YOU PUBLISH THIS PICTURE?

**Helen Thomas** wonders why newspapers feel a need to shield readers from the horrors of a war waged in their name

Some readers resented *the Washington Post* for publishing last month an Associated Press photograph of a critically wounded Iraqi child being lifted from the rubble of his home in Baghdad's Sadr City "after a U.S. airstrike."

Two-year-old Ali Hussein later died in a hospital.

As the saying goes, the picture was worth a thousand words because it showed the true horrors of this war.

Neither side is immune from the killing of Iraqi civilians. But Americans should be aware of their own responsibility for inflicting death and pain on the innocent.

The *Post's* ombudsman, Deborah Howell, said about 20 readers complained about the photo, while a few readers praised the *Post* for publishing the stark picture on page one.

Some mothers said they were offended that their children might see the picture, though one wonders whether their youngsters watch television and play with violent videos in a pretend world.



**The photograph that appeared on the front page of the *Washington Post*.**

**Some mothers said they were offended that their children might see the picture, though one wonders whether their youngsters watch television and play with violent videos in a pretend world**

From the start of the unprovoked U.S. "shock and awe" invasion of Iraq on March 20, 2003, the government tried to bar the news media from photographing flag-draped coffins of American soldiers returning from Iraq. A Freedom of Information lawsuit forced the government to release pictures of returning coffins.

Howell said some readers felt the photo of the Iraqi boy was "an anti-war statement; some thought it was in poor

## FACE OF WAR

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**This makes me wonder why the media have shied away from telling the story about Iraqi civilian casualties. News people and editors were more courageous during the Vietnam War. What are they afraid of now?**

taste.” Well, so is war.

Howell said her boss, Executive Editor Len Downie, “is cautious about such photos.”

“We have seldom been able to show the human impact of the fighting on Iraqis,” Downie was quoted as saying. “We decided this was a rare instance in which we had a powerful image with which to do so.”

It’s unclear to me why this was deemed to be “rare.” After five years of war, there is finally one photo that is supposed to say it all?

Howell said she checked hundreds of U.S. front pages on the Internet but saw the AP photo nowhere else.

This makes me wonder why the media have shied away from telling the story about Iraqi civilian casualties. News people and editors were more courageous during the Vietnam War. What are they afraid of now?

Who can forget the shocking picture of the little Vietnamese girl running down a road, aflame from a napalm attack? And who can forget the picture of South Vietnamese police chief Nguyen Ngoc Loan putting a gun to the temple of a young member of the Viet Cong and executing him on a Saigon street?

I don’t remember any American outcry against the press for showing the horror of war when these photographs were published. Were we braver then? Or maybe more conscience stricken?

Of course, the Pentagon did not enjoy such images coming out of Saigon in that era. Most Americans found them appalling, as further evidence of our misbegotten venture in Vietnam. Americans

rallied to the streets in protest and eventually persuaded President Lyndon Johnson to give up his dreams of reelection in 1968.

Some Americans believe the media were to blame for the U.S. defeat in Vietnam. Nonsense.

Johnson knew the war was unwinnable, especially after the 1968 Tet offensive and the request by Army Gen. William Westmoreland for 200,000 more troops, in addition to the 500,000 already in Vietnam.

The Pentagon made a command decision after the Vietnam War to get better control of the dissemination of information in future wars.

This led then-Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld to create an office of disinformation at the start of the Iraqi war. It was later disbanded after howls from the media.

More recently we have seen the Pentagon’s propaganda efforts take the form of carefully coaching retired generals about how to spin the Iraq war when they appear on television as alleged military experts. The *New York Times*’s revelations about these pet generals have cast a pall over their reputations.

Too often in this war, the news media seem to have tried to shield the public from the suffering this war has brought to Americans and Iraqis. It’s not the job of the media to protect the nation from the reality of war. Rather, it is up to the media to tell the people the truth. They can handle it. **CT**

*Helen Thomas is a distinguished reporter for Hearst Newspapers.*

# HOW TO BUILD A HUMAN BOMB

Guantanamo Bay is killing people thousands of miles away, says **George Monbiot**

**W**hen we learnt early in May that Abdallah Salih al-Ajmi had blown himself up in Mosul in northern Iraq, the US government presented this as a vindication of its policies. Al-Ajmi was a former inmate of the detention camp at Guantanamo Bay. The Pentagon says that his attack on Iraqi soldiers shows both that it was right to have detained him and that it is dangerous ever to release the camp's prisoners<sup>1</sup>. On the contrary, it shows how dangerous it was to put them there in the first place.

Al-Ajmi, according to the Pentagon, was one of at least 30 former Guantanamo detainees who have "taken part in anti-coalition militant activities after leaving US detention"<sup>2</sup>. Given that the majority of the inmates appear to have been innocent of such crimes before they were detained, that's one hell of a recidivism rate. In reality it turns out that "anti-coalition militant activities" include talking to the media about their captivity in Guantanamo Bay. The Pentagon lists the Tipton Three in its cata-

logue of recidivists, on the grounds that they collaborated with Michael Winterbottom's film *The Road to Guantanamo*. But it also names seven former prisoners, aside from Al-Ajmi, who have fought with the Taliban or Chechen rebels, kidnapped foreigners or planted bombs after their release. One of two conclusions can be drawn from this evidence, and neither reflects well on the US government.

The first is that, as the Pentagon claims, these men "successfully lied to US officials, sometimes for over three years."<sup>3</sup> The US government's intelligence gathering and questioning were ineffective, and people who would otherwise have been identified as terrorists or resistance fighters were allowed to walk free, despite years of intense and often brutal interrogation. Should this be surprising? Without a presumption of innocence, without charges, representation, trials or due process of any kind, there is no reliable means of determining whether or not a man is guilty. The abuses at Guantanamo Bay not only deny justice to the inmates, they also

**Without a presumption of innocence, without charges, representation, trials or due process of any kind, there is no reliable means of determining whether or not a man is guilty**

## CREATING HATE

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**All evidence obtained in Guantanamo Bay, and in the CIA's other detention centres and secret prisons, is by definition unreliable, because it is extracted with the help of coercion and torture**

deny justice to the world.

Al-Ajmi, the authorities say, initially confessed in the prison camp to deserting the Kuwaiti army to join the jihad in Afghanistan<sup>4</sup>. He admitted that he fought with Taliban forces against the Northern Alliance. He later retracted this confession, which had been made “under pressure and threats”<sup>5</sup>. When the Americans released him from Guantanamo, they handed him over to the Kuwaiti government for trial, but without the admissible evidence required to convict him. Among his defences was that neither he nor his interrogators had signed his supposed testimony<sup>6</sup>. The Kuwaiti courts, without reliable evidence to the contrary, found him innocent.

All evidence obtained in Guantanamo Bay, and in the CIA's other detention centres and secret prisons, is by definition unreliable, because it is extracted with the help of coercion and torture. Torture is notorious for producing false confessions, as people will say anything to make it stop. Both official accounts and the testimonies of former detainees show that a wide range of coercive techniques – devised or approved at the highest levels in Washington – have been used to make inmates tell the questioners what they want to hear.

In his book *Torture Team*, Philippe Sands describes the treatment of Mohammed al-Qahtani, held in Guantanamo Bay and described by the authorities (like half a dozen other suspects) as “the 20th hijacker”. By the time his interrogators started using “enhanced techniques” to extract information from him, al-Qahtani had been kept in isolation for three months in a cell permanently flooded with light. An offi-

cial memo shows that he “was talking to non-existent people, reporting hearing voices, [and] crouching in a corner of the cell covered with a sheet for hours on end.”<sup>7</sup> He was sexually abused, exposed to extreme cold and deprived of sleep for a further 54 days of torture and questioning. What useful testimony could be extracted from a man in this state?

The other possibility is that the men who became involved in armed conflict after their release had not in fact been involved in any prior fighting, but were radicalised by their detention. In the video he made before blowing himself up, al-Ajmi maintained that he was motivated by his ill-treatment in Guantanamo Bay. “Twelve thousand kilometers away from Mecca, I realized the reality of the Americans and what those infidels want,” he said<sup>8</sup>. He claimed he was beaten, drugged and “used for experiments” and that “the Americans delighted in insulting our prayer and Islam and they insulted the Koran and threw it in dirty places.”<sup>9</sup> Al-Ajmi's lawyer revealed that his arm had been broken by guards at the camp, who beat him up to stop him from praying<sup>10</sup>.

### **Inhuman treatment**

The accounts of people released from Guantanamo Bay describe treatment that would radicalise almost anyone. In his book *Five Years of My Life*, published recently, Murat Kurnaz maintains that one of the guards greeted him on his arrival with these words. “Do you know what the Germans did to the Jews? That's exactly what we're going to do with you.” There were certain similarities. “I knew a man from Morocco,” Kurnaz writes, “who used to be a ship cap-

tain. He couldn't move one of his little fingers because of frostbite. The rest of his fingers were all right. They told him they would amputate the little finger. They brought him to the doctor, and when he came back, he had no fingers left. They had amputated everything but his thumbs." The young man – scarcely more than a boy – in the cage next to Kurnaz's had just had his legs amputated by American doctors after getting frostbite in a coalition prison in Afghanistan. The stumps were still bleeding and covered in pus. He received no further treatment or new dressings. Every time he tried to hoist himself up to sit on his pot by clinging to the wire, a guard would come and hit his hands with a billy-club. Like every other prisoner, he was routinely beaten by the camp's Immediate Reaction Force, and taken away to interrogation cells to be beaten up some more<sup>11</sup>.

Fathers were clubbed in front of their sons, sons in front of their fathers. The prisoners were repeatedly forced into stress positions, deprived of sleep and threatened with execution. As a senior official at the US Defense Intelligence Agency says, "maybe the guy who goes into Guantanamo was a farmer who got swept along and did very little. He's going to come out a fully fledged jihadist."<sup>12</sup>

In reading the histories of Guantanamo Bay, and of the kidnappings, extrajudicial detention and torture the US government (helped by the United Kingdom) has pursued around the world, two things become clear. The first is that these practices do not supplement effective investigation and prosecution; they replace them. Instead of a process

which generates evidence, assesses it and uses it to prosecute, the US has deployed a process which generates nonsense and is incapable of separating the guilty from the innocent. The second is that far from protecting innocent lives, this process is likely to deliver further atrocities. Even if you put the ethics of such treatment to one side, it is surely evident that it makes the world more dangerous. **CT**

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**Fathers were clubbed in front of their sons, sons in front of their fathers. The prisoners were repeatedly forced into stress positions, deprived of sleep and threatened with execution**

*George Monbiot's new book, **Bring On The Apocalypse**, was published last month. This essay originally appeared in London's Guardian newspaper*

# BETRAYALS, BOYCOTS AND BACKSLIDINGS

**Andy Worthington** analyses the continuing collapse of Guantanamo's military commissions

**"The law is clear. The Constitution is clear. International law is clear. Why don't we follow the law? Where is the justice?"**

Anyone who has kept half an eye on the proceedings at the Military Commissions in Guantanamo – the unique system of trials for “terror suspects” that was conceived in the wake of the 9/11 attacks by Vice President Dick Cheney and his close advisers – will be aware that their progress has been faltering at best. After six and a half years, in which they have been ruled illegal by the Supreme Court, derailed by their own military judges, relentlessly savaged by their own military defense lawyers, and condemned as politically motivated by their own former chief prosecutor, they have only secured one contentious result: a plea bargain negotiated by the Australian David Hicks, who admitted to providing “material support for terrorism,” and dropped his well-chronicled claims of torture and abuse by US forces, in order to secure his return to Australia to serve out the remainder of a meager nine-month sentence last March.

In the last few weeks, however, Cheney's dream has been souring at an even more alarming rate than usual. Fol-

lowing boycotts of pre-trial hearings in March and April by three prisoners – Mohamed Jawad, Ahmed al-Darbi and Ibrahim al-Qosi – the latest appearance by Salim Hamdan, a Yemeni who worked as a driver for Osama bin Laden, spread the words “boycott” and “Guantanamo” around the world.

Hamdan is no ordinary Guantanamo prisoner. It was his case, *Hamdan v. Rumsfeld*, that shut down the Military Commissions' first incarnation in June 2006, when the Supreme Court ruled that they were illegal, a decision that forced the administration to press new legislation – the Military Commissions Act – through a sleeping Congress later that year.

But Hamdan's fame meant little to him on April 29, when he too decided to boycott his trial, telling Navy Capt. Keith Allred, the judge in his last pre-trial hearing before his trial is scheduled to begin, “The law is clear. The Constitution is clear. International law is clear. Why don't we follow the law? Where is the justice?”

For his part, Capt. Allred did not give

up without attempting to persuade Hamdan that he should believe in the legal process before which he found himself. “You should have great faith in the law,” he said. “You won. Your name is all over the law books.” This was true, but it was little consolation for Hamdan, who was charged again as soon as the Commissions were revived in Congress. Nor could Capt. Allred’s addendum – “You even won the very first time you came before me” – sway him, even though that too was true.

Last June, when Hamdan appeared before Capt. Allred for the first time, in the first pre-trial hearing for his new Military Commission, Allred dismissed the case, pointing out that the Military Commissions Act, which had revived the Commissions, applied only to “unlawful enemy combatants,” whereas Hamdan, and every other prisoner in Guantanamo for that matter, had only been determined to be “enemy combatants” in the tribunals – the Combatant Status Review Tribunals – that had made them eligible for trial by Military Commission.

It was small wonder that Hamdan was despondent, however. Two months later, an appeals court reversed Allred’s decision, and Hamdan – twice a victor – was charged once more, and removed from a privileged position in Guantanamo’s Camp IV – reserved for a few dozen compliant prisoners who live communally – to Camp VI, where, like the majority of the prisoners, he has spent most of his time in conditions that amount to solitary confinement, and where, as his lawyers pointed out in February, his mental health has deteriorated significantly.

As he prepared to boycott proceed-

ings, Hamdan had a few last questions for Capt. Allred. He asked the judge why the government had changed the law – “Is it just for my case?” – and responded to Allred’s insistence that he would do everything he could to give him a fair trial by asking, “By what law will you try me?” When Allred replied that he would be tried under the terms of the Military Commissions Act, Hamdan gave up. “But the government changed the law to its advantage,” he said. “I am not being tried by the American law.”

#### **Col. Morris Davis condemns the Commissions (again)**

Hamdan’s eloquent and restrained explanation for his boycott was the most poignant event in his hearing, but it was not the most explosive. That accolade was reserved for Col. Morris Davis, the former chief prosecutor for the Commissions, who resigned noisily last October, citing political interference in the process. Once the Commissions’ stoutest supporter – in 2006 he told reporters, “Remember if you dragged Dracula out into the sunlight he melted? Well, that’s kind of the way it is trying to drag a detainee into the courtroom” – Col. Davis explained his Damascene conversion in an op-ed for the *Los Angeles Times* in December.

Laying into his chain of command, Col. Davis lambasted his immediate boss, Brig. Gen. Thomas Hartmann, who had recently been appointed as the legal adviser to the Commissions’ “convening authority” Susan Crawford, for politicizing the process, attempting to hold higher profile trials behind closed doors (whereas Davis insisted that transparency was “critical”). He also criticized

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## MILITARY ON TRIAL

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**"We can't have acquittals. We've been holding these guys for years. How can we explain acquittals? We have to have convictions"**

Crawford, a retired judge, who had served as Army counsel and defense department inspector under Dick Cheney in the first Bush administration in the 1980s, for overstepping her administrative role by "intermingling convening authority and prosecutor roles" and "perpetuat[ing] the perception of a rigged process stacked against the accused."

Col. Davis also delivered a particularly stern rebuke to Crawford's overall boss, the Department of Defense's chief counsel William J. Haynes II, pointing out Haynes' role in "authorizing the use of the aggressive interrogation techniques some call torture," declaring, "I had instructed the prosecutors in September 2005 that we would not offer any evidence derived by waterboarding, one of the aggressive interrogation techniques the administration has sanctioned," and declaring, unambiguously, that he resigned "a few hours after" being informed that he had been placed in a chain of command under Haynes.

On April 28, Col. Davis testified for Hamdan and reprised his complaints, telling Capt. Allred, as the *Washington Post* described it, that senior Pentagon officials, including deputy defense secretary Gordon England, had "made it clear to him that charging some of the highest-profile detainees before elections this year could have 'strategic political value.'" After pointing out that he had wanted to wait until both the cases and the entire Military Commissions system had "a more solid legal footing," he reiterated his complaints against Haynes, telling Navy Lt. Cmdr. Brian Mizer, Hamdan's military defense lawyer, what he had told *The Nation* in February: that, during a discussion of the Nuremberg

Trials, in which Davis had noted that there had been some acquittals, which had "lent great credibility to the proceedings," Haynes had told him, "We can't have acquittals. We've been holding these guys for years. How can we explain acquittals? We have to have convictions."

Col. Davis also defended his uncompromising opposition to the use of evidence obtained through torture, once more directing particular criticism at Brig. Gen. Hartmann. "To allow or direct a prosecutor to come into the courtroom and offer evidence they felt was torture, it puts a prosecutor in an ethical bind," he said, adding that, in response to his complaints, Hartmann had replied that "everything was fair game – let the judge sort it out." He added that Hartmann "took 'micromanagement' of the prosecution effort to a new level and treated prosecutors with 'cruelty and maltreatment,'" and explained that he "was trying to take over the prosecutor's role, compromising the independence of the Office of Military Commissions, which decides which cases to bring and what evidence to use."

### **Ali Hamza al-Bahlul and Omar Khadr**

A week later, on May 7, the boycott bandwagon rolled on when Ali Hamza al-Bahlul, another Yemeni, also refused to cooperate. Sitting alone in Camp Justice, Guantanamo's new courtroom, having spurned the assistance of his government-appointed attorney, al-Bahlul, who is accused of producing videos for al-Qaeda, and who famously boycotted his pre-Hamdan Commission hearings in 2006, essentially picked up where he left off over two years ago, proudly pro-

claiming his association with Osama bin Laden, and telling his judge, Army Col. Peter Brownback, “We will continue our jihad and nothing’s going to stop us. You must not oppress the people in the land. Your oppression against us and your support to the strategic ally in the region is what made me leave my house and today, I’m telling you, and you’re a man of law, if you sentence me to life . . . me and the others will be the reason for the continuation of the war against America.” He added that he did not intend to dispute any of the prosecution’s allegations. “I am responsible for my own actions in this world and the afterworld,” he said. “I don’t consider it to be a crime.”

While al-Bahlul’s words – delivered to full advantage from his sudden perch in the media spotlight – served only to underline, incongruously, the utter silence in which around 200 other Guantanamo prisoners are held (those considered less dangerous, or not dangerous at all, whom the administration has no intention of ever prosecuting), his words were almost immediately overshadowed when, the day after, Col. Brownback, who was on the verge of securing a dubious place in the history books by ruling that the trial of Omar Khadr – the only prisoner to date who has not boycotted his hearings – would go ahead in June, threatened his own boycott.

Furious that, despite repeated requests, the prosecution (led by Maj. Jeffrey Groharing) had failed to provide Khadr’s lawyers with their client’s Detainee Information Management System records, to analyze his treatment in an attempt to uncover reasons why incriminating statements – possibly obtained through torture – should be suppressed,

Col. Brownback declared, “I have been badgered, beaten and bruised by Maj. Groharing since the 7th of November to set a trial date. To get a trial date, I need to get discovery done.” He then ordered the government to provide the records by May 22, or, he said, he would suspend the proceedings entirely

While Khadr’s lawyer, Lt. Cmdr. William Kuebler, expressed skepticism about Col. Brownback’s exclamation, telling reporters, “What we’ve seen in this process is that military judges will give the defense pyrrhic victories when it doesn’t threaten the foundations of the system,” Brownback’s intervention at the very least delayed confirmation of his own notoriety. If he decides to proceed with the trial of Khadr, who was just 15 years old when he was captured after a gun battle in Afghanistan that left one US soldier dead, he will be the first judge since the Second World War to proceed with a war crimes trial against a prisoner who was just a child when he was captured.

### **Judge bars Commissions’ legal adviser**

The day after Col. Brownback’s shake-up of the prosecutors in Omar Khadr’s case, Capt. Allred, having mulled over Morris Davis’ complaints against Brig. Gen. Hartmann, surprised everyone, and threatened the Commissions’ teetering legitimacy once more, by disqualifying Hartmann from playing any role in Salim Hamdan’s trial. Clearly swayed by Davis’ testimony, Capt. Allred ruled on May 9 that he was “too closely allied with the prosecution,” as the *New York Times* described it, “National attention focused on this dispute has seriously called into

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## MILITARY ON TRIAL

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**The problem, as immediately became apparent, is that al-Qahtani, unlike the other five men, who were held for many years in secret prisons run by the CIA, was subjected to torture in Guantanamo, under a program devised specifically for him and approved by Donald Rumsfeld in late 2002**

question the legal adviser's ability to continue to perform his duties in a neutral and objective manner," Allred wrote, explaining that public concern about the fairness of the cases was "deeply disturbing," and that he did not find that Hartmann "retains the required independence from the prosecution."

The *Times* followed up with more excerpts from Capt. Allred's decision, which confirmed his support for Morris Davis' views. "Telling the chief prosecutor (and other prosecutors)," he wrote, "that certain types of cases would be tried and that others would not be tried, because of political factors such as whether they would capture the imagination of the American people, be sexy, or involve blood on the hands of the accused, suggests that factors other than those pertaining to the merits of the case were at play."

Capt. Allred also referred explicitly to Morris Davis' statement that Brig. Gen. Hartmann had put pressure on him to use evidence obtained through torture. Noting, as the *Times* put it, that "prosecutors have an ethical obligation to present only evidence they consider reliable," Capt. Allred wrote that directing the use of "evidence that the chief prosecutor considered tainted and unreliable, or perhaps obtained as a result of torture or coercion, was clearly an effort to influence the professional judgment of the chief prosecutor."

### **9/11 charges confirmed, but Mohammed al-Qahtani dropped**

While the administration tried to make light of Capt. Allred's ruling, arguing that it applied only to Hamdan's case, and that Brig. Gen. Hartmann's position was

secure, it was difficult not to whiff a stench of desperation in the Pentagon's announcement, just three days later, that a date had been set for the first pre-trial hearing of another group of prisoners – the alleged 9/11 conspirators, including Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, who confessed in his tribunal last year that he was "responsible for the 9/11 operation, from A to Z" – against whom charges had been announced in February.

Although it's almost certain that this decision – though perhaps rushed forward – had already been making its tortuous way through the necessary bureaucratic processes, its propaganda value was immediately undermined when it became apparent that, of the six men initially charged, one – Mohammed al-Qahtani – was missing from the final charge sheet.

As *Time* explained, the charges against al-Qahtani were dropped by Susan Crawford "without formal explanation," and Brig. Gen. Hartmann's offering – that the dismissal provided evidence of the "strength of the system and the careful, deliberative and fair legal process in place at Guantanamo" – was hardly sufficient to paper over the cracks. Although the charges were dismissed without prejudice, meaning that they could be reinstated in the future, nobody expects that this will happen.

The problem, as immediately became apparent, is that al-Qahtani, unlike the other five men, who were held for many years in secret prisons run by the CIA, was subjected to torture in Guantanamo, under a program devised specifically for him and approved by Donald Rumsfeld in late 2002.

The details of his ordeal are well

known, as *Time* published his leaked interrogation log in 2006, and even a military investigation in 2005, which stopped short of describing his treatment as torture, concluded that he had been subjected to abuse.

In the world of the Military Commissions, al-Qahtani's case was damaging for two specific reasons: firstly, because, although the other five men were tortured in CIA custody – and the CIA has publicly acknowledged that KSM was subjected to the torture technique known as waterboarding (a horrendous form of controlled drowning) – he and the others have been reinterrogated by “clean teams” of FBI agents, who have solicited confessions without resorting to torture, whereas al-Qahtani, according to his lawyers, has not.

Leaving aside for a moment the implausibility of somehow “purifying” confessions obtained through torture by using “clean teams” – and what it reveals, unintentionally, about the “dirty teams” whose activities are purportedly being airbrushed from history – the second reason for dropping charges against al-Qahtani only reinforces the legal netherworld in which the Commissions operate. According to their rules, the records of al-Qahtani's interrogations, which took place in Guantanamo, could be produced as evidence of torture, whereas those of the “high-value detainees,” interrogated by CIA teams in secret overseas prisons, can be overlooked, because, as *Time* put it, “Military courts oversee-

ing Guantanamo have indicated they cannot compel evidence from US intelligence agencies.”

In reality, of course, it's inconceivable that the trials of tortured prisoners – even those who apparently masterminded the 9/11 attacks – can actually proceed without torture being mentioned, but for now, at least, the administration is clinging to its “clean team” alibi, and hoping to minimize the fallout from Capt. Allred's latest ruling.

As for al-Qahtani, described by his lawyer, Gita Gutierrez, as a “broken man, broken by torture,” his only way out now is for the Saudi government to negotiate his repatriation. Gutierrez told *Time* that she was “extremely concerned about his ability to survive mentally and physically for much longer in Guantanamo,” and stated, unequivocally, that the dismissal of charges “clearly indicates the government's awareness that any and all statements obtained from Mohammed [al-]Qahtani were extracted by torture or the threat of torture.” Replace his name with that of Khalid Sheikh Mohammed or any of the other four men charged – Ramzi bin al-Shibh, Mustafa al-Hawsawi, Ali Abdul Aziz Ali, and Walid bin Attash – and you see the problem that faces the administration as it prepares for the most significant trial since 9/11. **CT**

*Andy Worthington is a writer and historian, and author of **The Guantanamo Files.***

**it's inconceivable that the trials of tortured prisoners – even those who apparently masterminded the 9/11 attacks – can actually proceed without torture being mentioned, but for now, at least, the administration is clinging to its “clean team” alibi**

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# FOOD FIGHT

From Haiti to Laos, people are starving – but they refuse to do it quietly, says **Michael I. Niman**

**Welfare never was about feeding the poor – it was about keeping the tattered fabric of society marginally intact**

I remember when President Bill Clinton ended “welfare as we know it.” His edict limited an American’s time on public assistance to five years. After that, well, you’re on your own.

I saw the writing on the wall: In five years our community would start coming apart. Though I wasn’t a welfare recipient, most of my neighbors were on one form or another of public assistance. People docilely put up with a lot – the loss of human dignity and rights, of housing security and leisure, and of everything else American that seems to have been tossed out the window in the generation since the “Reagan Revolution.” But trust me on this: No one will quietly starve to death or watch their loved ones starve to death. I moved.

Recently, a former neighbor of mine returned to her home to find her steel door kicked in, the wood frame in splinters. The only things missing were canned goods and the contents of her freezer. Her kitchen became someone’s Aldi’s. Her losses were about \$40 for the food and about \$500 for the door.

Welfare never was about feeding the

poor – it was about keeping the tattered fabric of society marginally intact.

Fast-forward from Bill Clinton’s America to the 21st-century world of global free trade and unregulated capital markets. In the last three years wheat prices have increased by more than 180 percent while corn prices have more than doubled. The global rice markets are in such chaos that it is nearly impossible to track prices, though by most indications they have at least doubled this spring. While rice, corn, and wheat may not seem that important to the meat-and-potatoes crowd, these three foods feed most of the world’s population. Without them, people die.

Here are some more numbers to put things into perspective. In the US, we spend, on average, about 11 percent of our incomes on food. When food prices rise radically, as they’ve just recently done, most Americans have a lot of wiggle room. We can eat ground beef instead of steak, or pasta instead of ground beef. There will always be ramen noodles. Middle-class Americans can trade in the SUV or the McMansion for a more

right-sized car or home when the going gets rough.

People born into the impoverished classes in third-world nations spend 50 to 80 percent of their income on food, according to the World Bank. They don't have the option to switch from fresh organics to Sam's Club bargain packs. Their choices are far starker.

Poor Haitians, for example, are switching from food to mud. Mud mixed with a tad of salt and a bit of vegetable shortening, then baked under the sun, makes for an emergency meal that wards off the physical pangs of hunger. Mud is heavy. It's filling. But if you eat it day after day, you get more and more tired, and then eventually you die.

But people don't starve to death quietly. Hence, Haiti's mud-bellied masses rose up against the only available targets — their own bankrupt government and whatever blue-helmeted UN peacekeepers they could find. The ensuing riots brought down the government and killed a UN peacekeeper, but they didn't reduce the prices of wheat, corn, or rice. Similar riots have recently wracked Egypt, Mexico, Yemen, Bangladesh, Mozambique, Uganda, Senegal, Ethiopia, Cameron, Thailand, Indonesia, and a half dozen other countries. Political unrest spurred by the high cost of food is even threatening to bring down the government in prosperous Malaysia. World Bank President Robert Zoellick warns that at least 30 countries are currently facing the potential for violent social upheaval.

The surge in commodity prices is the result of a perfect storm hitting our globalized economy and food distribution network. First, there's a drought in Aus-

tralia that decimated that wheat-exporting country's crop. Many climatologists link that drought to global warming, advising us to get used to such disruptions in global food supplies.

### **Hungry cars**

Then there's the Bush administration's push for corn-based ethanol production. About one quarter of the US corn crop is now distilled into ethanol in a carbon-intensive process that actually contributes more to global warming than oil while tainting farmland with oil-based pesticides and fertilizers. Pull into a Sunoco station and you're filling your tank with a 10 percent corn mix. "Gas" up a new tax-rebate-eligible "flex-fuel" SUV with pure ethanol and you've just consumed 450 pounds of corn. While bio-fuels done right do offer an ecologically less damaging alternative to oil, corn-based ethanol offers nothing but hunger, inflation, and environmental devastation.

The third component in this perfect storm is the nastiest. The fact that people have to eat hasn't escaped the hedge fund managers around the world. With the US dollar in freefall and with the Federal Reserve cutting interest rates radically, driving money out of banks and money market funds, money managers have been scouring the globe for safe havens for capital. Precious metals sufficed for a while, until their prices went unstably stratospheric. That leaves commodity futures.

Commodities are the things we just can't live without, like food and energy. And it turns out you can bet on them, just like on the stock market, by buying rights to future crops or products. In commodities markets such as the

**ve just consumed 450 pounds of corn. While bio-fuels done right do offer an ecologically less damaging alternative to oil, corn-based ethanol offers nothing but hunger, inflation, and environmental devastation**

## GLOBALIZATION'S VICTIMS

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**Commodity futures, especially food, quickly morphed from a safe haven to a lucrative investment, returning some of the largest profits in today's financial markets**

Chicago Mercantile Exchange, you can pony up your bets on such staples as butter, milk, “feeder” or “live” cattle, and of course pork bellies. Other markets around the world sell futures in cotton, lumber, electricity, soybeans, sorghum, rice, wheat, and corn. Things people can't live without. Things they will buy no matter where the price ceiling goes.

### **Nourishing your portfolio**

As traders and investors around the world moved their money into commodity futures, the market worked its magic and ran those prices up just like it ran up gold and silver – only people don't die when they can't afford gold and silver. Commodity futures, especially food, quickly morphed from a safe haven to a lucrative investment, returning some of the largest profits in today's financial markets. Hedge fund managers became the new superstars of the global financial markets, often building their hometown creds as “philanthropists” while literally making Haitians eat mud. I don't think even Marx foresaw this twist in global capitalism.

Food, not as a source of sustenance but as a market investment, seems to be riding a bubble right now, just as real estate was 10 minutes ago. Only this bubble isn't destined to burst anytime soon. We now know what people will pay for food – and I doubt we'll ever see the days of cheap food again. That means belt-tightening in the wealthy countries and starvation and war in the poor countries.

At the core of the current crisis of food insecurity is globalization. In the old days, around the world, most food staples were produced and consumed do-

mestically. Now, thanks in part to a shipping system built on cheap oil, most agricultural produce enters the world market, at least in concept: Though much of what people produce never leaves their country, the price is set globally as local farmers in, say, Honduras, bid for their nation's food against consumers in places like New York. The end result is that mud-eating Haiti uses scarce agricultural land to grow coffee, citrus, and sugar cane for the North American and European markets.

When the Bush administration's ethanol policies pushed corn prices up in the US, many wheat farmers switched to corn, exacerbating global wheat shortages. As wheat prices rose, hungry people started consuming more rice, whose price rose, causing them to feed yucky sorghum paste to their families, causing sorghum prices to spike. (No doubt the price of mud has risen as well. So stop bitching about the price of sea bass.)

Then there's China and India. As their economies grow, mostly off the backs of their disposable peasant workers, new privileged elites are emerging – and they want to eat meat just like Americans and Europeans. Add the US-government-subsidized American export of meat-based, fast-food culture to the developing world, and you're seeing a lot more meat-eating across the planet. This means a lot more demand for grain to feed cows, pigs, and chickens. Now the hungriest people in the world aren't just bidding against New York bakeries for grains, but against Nebraska feed lot operators as well. And we all know who wins and who dies.

Nouveau riche Chinese and Indians, like middle-class Americans, also want

cars. One impact on the global food chain is evident in Laos, where rice farmers have transformed their rice patties into rubber plantations to feed China's seemingly insatiable demand for rubber for tires, automotive belts, and hoses for both the domestic and global markets. The result is a severe rice shortage in Laos, where most of the population depends on rice for sustenance. Then there's the issue of fueling all these cars – which will create more market demand for cheap and dirty food-based biofuels.

### **Pigs like us**

This is not to say that Chinese and Indian consumers have any less right to stuff their guts with meat and drive corn-guzzling cars than we do. The problem is that the rapid, Wal-Mart-driven development of China and, to a lesser degree, India, means that there are now a hundred million more pigs like us. Quite simply, the world is too damn crowded and fragile to support more self-centered, hedonistic consumers.

This all comes back to the population issue. In the past, more demand for agricultural products meant more farming. The earth, however, is running out of productive land, with forests giving way to farms and farms giving way to urban development or ecological ruin. Traditionally the US served as the world's largest producer of grain. However, the US population jumped by 50 percent between 1960 and the present, reaching 300 million. That's 50 percent more people wanting to gas up their cars with ethanol, and 50 percent more people wanting that new suburban cul-de-sac home built on last year's corn field. The

new reality is that for the first time there is a scarcity of farmable land in North America.

Many people didn't see this coming, since the US birth rate stabilized a generation ago just shy of replacement value. Our population growth is due almost entirely to immigration. The problem for the rest of the world is that often when someone reinvents himself as an American, he transforms himself into a voracious consumer, devouring more than his share of the world's commodities and helping to drive up global food and fuel prices.

The resulting hunger and poverty causes more folks to migrate to the US and other developed nations, thus exacerbating the global problem and causing yet more environmentally disruptive migration. The corporate oligarchies that dominate politics in developed nations like the migrations, however, since they depress wages by increasing the supply of easily exploitable workers.

This migration has pushed the US to the limits of its environmental carrying capacity, causing it and other over-consuming nations to scour the globe for resources to feed their insatiable hunger. Hence, we import food from Haiti while China sets up rubber plantations in Laos. And people eat mud, sorghum, or nothing.

The reality is that we are a global village. Our food production and distribution networks are intertwined with mindboggling complexity. People across the world are all showing up hungry at the same global supermarket and bidding against each other for what's left on half-stocked shelves, or locked up in overstocked back rooms. But the playing

**The problem for the rest of the world is that often when someone reinvents himself as an American, he transforms himself into a voracious consumer, devouring more than his share of the world's commodities and helping to drive up global food and fuel prices**

# GLOBALIZATION'S VICTIMS

**People will starve. But they won't do it without a fight**

field isn't level. More than one billion of our global neighbors subsist on less than a dollar a day.

So at the end of our shopping trip, some of us will bitch about the price of milk, and how we spend so much on food that we can't afford a new car. Others might be lucky if they score the ingredients for a watery porridge.

This is the real face of globalization brought to us by the Global Agreement on Trade and Tariffs and the World Trade Organization: People will starve. But they won't do it without a fight. **CT**

*Dr. Michael I. Niman is a professor of journalism and media studies at Buffalo State College.*

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# HOW TO SURVIVE A GAZA REFUGEE CAMP

In an excerpt from his upcoming book, *101 Ways to Survive a Refugee Camp*, **Ramzy Baroud** tells what happened the day an Israeli bomb squad arrived outside his parents' home

**W**e waited breathless. Breathing heavily was hazardous under these somewhat exceptional circumstances. The Israeli army, my father often advised, was sensitive to the slightest movements or sounds, including a whisper, a cough, or God forbid, a sneeze. Thus we sat completely still. Muneer, my younger brother was entrusted with the mission of peering through the rusty holes in the front door. It bothered me that I was not the one elected for the seemingly perilous mission.

My father explained that Muneer was smaller and quicker, he could negotiate his way back and forth, seamlessly, between the observation ground and the room where everyone was hiding. The house's main door was riddled with holes; the upper half spoke of past battles between the neighbourhood's stone throwers and Israeli soldiers.

The holes on the lower half, however were not those of bullets, but rust and corrosion. These holes often served us well. Muneer would lie on his belly and peek through them; he followed the

movement of the soldiers as their military vehicles often used the space in front of our house. They pondered their moves from there, and often used our house's front step as a spot for lunch or tea. Worse, they often released their frustrations on the house's helpless residents, that being my family.

But this time the air is truly gloomy. Soldiers had never gathered in such numbers and remained for that long. Muneer, crawling back and forth, between the door and the kitchen – where we often hid, as it was the only room with a concrete ceiling, thus much safer than the rest of the house – reported increasingly disturbing news. “There are men in white.” He divulged the latest development with total bewilderment. “They are wearing masks. And there is a robot.”

For once, we felt in doubt of Muneer's version of events, which were most often sharp and truthful. Only my father seemed to understand. “Bomb squads,” he whispered. His words left us in a state of dread and speechlessness. The sheer terror that we felt at that moment was of

**Soldiers had never gathered in such numbers and remained for that long. Muneer, crawling back and forth, between the door and the kitchen – where we often hid reported increasingly disturbing news**

## LIVING DANGEROUSLY

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**Even if the bomb was diffused, the soldiers would most certainly round up all the youth in the neighbourhood, as they had done repeatedly, starting with us, and herd everyone into the military camp's temporary holding facilities**

a new kind; a bomb only a few feet away from our house, and we couldn't escape for snipers were positioned all across the street, on the water-tower, behind the graves, everywhere.

My mother hurried to her safe corner of reciting Quranic verses. She long argued that selected verses from the Quran were sure to create a protective shield between one and his enemies. My father was in no mood to scoff at her or anyone else. He looked as if he were in a trance. I cannot even begin to imagine what must've went through his head that day. He pulled a cigarette from a long, white pack of Kents and seemed past the point of ordinary nervousness.

Even if the bomb was diffused, the soldiers would most certainly round up all the youth in the neighbourhood, as they had done repeatedly, starting with us, and herd everyone into the military camp's temporary holding facilities. Torture and beating to glean information were surely to follow.

My mom was still in her corner, with audible words here and there breaking the frightening silence, things about God, and "my kids are the only thing I have in this life", and other supplications. My father called Muneer to join the rest of us, and decided to take on the mission of watching the events outside.

He laid face-down for a long time. A military helicopter hovered in place for a little while and then disappeared, perhaps following a moving target, I thought. Helicopters were the best way to chase down *fidayeen* – freedom fighters – as they sought escape in the refugee camp's orchards. Did they find the one who planted the bomb? But what about the bomb itself? News was

still scarce and my father was still laying on the chipped tiles behind the door.

Suddenly engines of military vehicles outside began charging one after the other. Some began moving away. The noise increasingly subsided. Foot soldiers seemed to be the only ones left behind. One could tell through the continuous murmurs and chatter.

### **Bag of trash**

The bewilderment intensified, although this time with some hopeful prospects. Are we really meant to survive the unfolding ordeal? My father began making his way back, crawling back to the kitchen. He often crawled that way to show off some of his training in the army many years back. We looked at him with inquiring eyes. My mother abandoned her figurative corner for a few moments, and joined us. "It's our bag of trash," my father said in a tone that was meant to dispel the mystery. "They thought our trash was a bomb."

My father opted to throw our trash in the street just hours earlier. Garbage accumulated for weeks in our house as the military curfew kept us indoors without a chance to step foot outside. So a few hours earlier, he did what we had urged him to do for days, since we couldn't cope with the suffocating odor. He opened the double doors for a few seconds and threw one black garbage bag as far as he could to the middle of the open space in front of the house. Little did he know that his desperado act would send the Israeli army on high alert; would invite bomb squads, helicopters and perhaps every available tank and military vehicle to our unsuspecting neighbored.

Within minutes, the serenity and silence of the military curfew was back. Except that watermelon rinds and my father's used Kent packs and other items, were scattered about the street. "Whose Goddamn idea was it to throw the trash in the street?" my father mumbled. No one answered. My father puffed on his cigarette and quickly delved into a contemplating mode. "I have never seen such military build-up since the war of '67," he said.

His surreal look was interrupted by one hardly audible chuckle, and that was enough to ignite a storm of laughter among my brothers and even my mother which lasted for a long long time.

I took my turn peeking through the rust holes to get a piece of the excite-

ment and follow the progress of the trash as it was scattered by the wind and hungry cats in every possible direction.

"Hey guys, the chains of the tanks softened the area outside. It should be really good for soccer when the curfew is lifted," I declared jubilantly.

And the curfew was indeed lifted – 40 days later. **CT**

*Ramzy Baroud* ([www.ramzybaroud.net](http://www.ramzybaroud.net)) is an author and editor of *PalestineChronicle.com*.

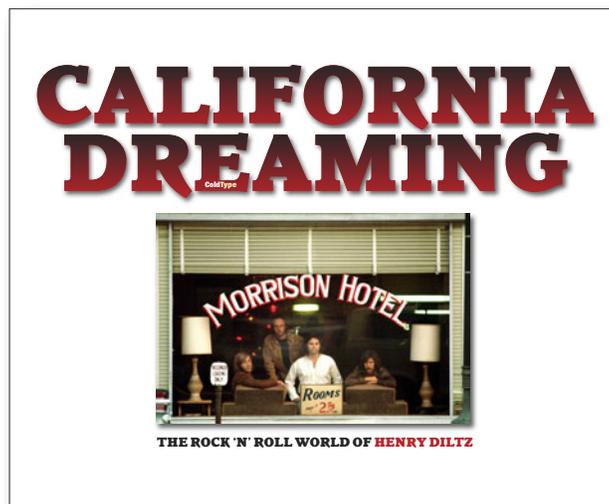
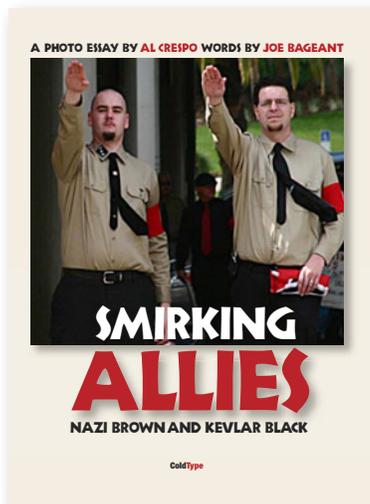
*His work has been published in many newspapers and journals worldwide.*

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***Palestinian Intifada: A Chronicle of a People's Struggle** (Pluto Press, London).*

**Within minutes, the serenity and silence of the military curfew was back. Except that watermelon rinds and my father's used Kent packs and other items, were scattered about the street**

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# WITH FRIENDS LIKE THESE

Uri Avneri has some caustic thoughts on the distinguished guests who helped celebrate Israel's 60th anniversary

**Oozing sanctimonious flattery from every pore, he forbade us, in the name of (his) God, to give up even one inch of the Holy Land and commanded us to fight to the last drop of (our) blood**

Lately Israel has been flooded with friends. The Great of the Earth, past and present, come here to flatter us, to fawn on us, to grovel at our feet.

“God, save me from my friends, my enemies I can deal with myself!” says an old prayer.

They disgust me.

Let's take for example the German Chancellor, Angela Merkel, who made the pilgrimage to Jerusalem. Her pandering was free of any criticism and she reached new heights of obsequiousness in her speech to the Knesset. I was invited to attend. I relinquished the privilege.

I shall also pass the pleasure when I am invited to the session with the hyperactive Nicholas Sarkozy, who will try to break the flattery record of his German rival.

Before that we were visited by John McCain's mentor, the evangelical pastor John Hagee, the one who described the Catholic Church as a monster. Oozing sanctimonious flattery from every pore, he forbade us, in the name of (his) God,

to give up even one inch of the Holy Land and commanded us to fight to the last drop of (our) blood.

However, not one of them has come close to George Bush. Approaching the end of the most disastrous presidency in the annals of the Republic, he really forced a lighted match into the hand of our government, encouraging it to ignite the barrel of gunpowder between our feet.

But the list of present-day leaders who participate in the pandering competition pales in comparison with the long parade of Has-Beens who lay siege to our gates.

A world-wide swarm of Has-Beens is flying from place to place like bees, all for one and one for all. They alighted in Jerusalem, on the invitation of Has-Been No. 1: Shimon Peres, a politician who in all the 84 years of his life has never won an election, and who was finally handed, out of sheer compassion, the largely meaningless title of President of Israel.

The common denominator of this group is that their prestige at home is close to nil, while their standing abroad

is sky-high. Their mutual adoration compensates them for the lack of respect in their own countries.

One of the senior members of this club is Tony Blair, who has been pushed from power in his own country but is not content to enjoy his pension and raise roses. As a consolation prize he has been granted the pleasure of playing around with our conflict. Every few weeks he convenes a press conference to present the good tidings of his phenomenal success in ameliorating the lot of the Palestinians, while the actual situation in the occupied territories goes from bad to worse. Our security establishment treats Blair like a bore who has to be thrown a crumb from time to time to keep him happy.

In the conference there were also some good people, but the scene was stolen by the Has-Beens, from the retired war criminal Henry Kissinger to the dethroned peace hero Mikhail Gorbachev (whom I still consider a hero for preventing bloodshed during the collapse of the Soviet empire). Pity to see him in this company.

All the participants in this orgy heaped mountains of fawning adulation on Israel. Not one of them had a word of criticism. No occupation. No settlements. No Gaza blockade. No daily killings. Just a wonderful, peace-loving state that the bad, bad terrorists want to throw into the sea.

Not one of the guests stood up to warn us against going on with the present policy. Not one of them stood up to proclaim the truth: that the continuation of this policy may lead our state to disaster.

He who has friends like these has no

need for enemies. A person who sees his friend playing Russian roulette and offers him bullets – is he a real friend? One who sees his friend standing on the brink of an abyss and tells him “go ahead” – is he a friend?

### Smell of corruption

Among the fraternity of flatterers, the ones that attracted the most attention were the Jewish billionaires from America (who also paid for the extravaganza).

Several of them were summoned to police headquarters immediately on arrival to give evidence on the affair that is rocking Israel now – the corruption investigation of Ehud Olmert.

A smell of corruption has accompanied Olmert right from his beginnings in politics, 45 years ago. But this time, the smell is overpowering. The police has made it known that the American-Jewish billionaire Moshe Morris Talansky has been supplying him with cash-filled envelopes for years.

Where have we seen this before? Of course, in American movies and TV series. Somebody opens a suitcase stuffed with bundles of banknotes. The donor invariably belongs to the Mafia, and the recipient is generally a corrupt politician. Can it be that Olmert has never seen these films – he of all people, who started his career with demagogic speeches denouncing “Organized Crime”?

But it is not Olmert who interests me in this affair so much as Talansky.

He belongs to a species of “Israel-loving” billionaires, most of them resident in the US, but also in Canada and Switzerland, Austria and Australia and other places.

They are all Israeli patriots. They are

**Our security establishment treats Blair like a bore who has to be thrown a crumb from time to time to keep him happy**

## MEET THE HAS-BEENS

**No billionaire ever lost money by keeping an Israeli general, supporting an Israeli politician or making a generous donation to an Israeli cause. Ego is ego, patriotism is patriotism, but business is business**

all philanthropists. All contribute millions to Israeli politicians. And almost all of them support our extreme Right.

What makes them run? What induces these billionaires to do what they are doing?

A research in depth discovers that a great many of them made their money in dark corners. Some are gambling barons, casino-owners with all the inevitable connections with violence, crime and exploitation. One at least made his fortunes from brothels. Another was involved in a scandal involving old people's homes. Yet another is a scion of a family who made their money bootlegging during prohibition days. Some are arms merchants of the most despicable kind, selling weapons to the political gangs which sow death and destruction in Africa.

But money, as is well known, does not smell.

Most of the multi-millionaires of this kind feel that they are not receiving the honor due to them. Their co-billionaires, high society people, treat them with disdain. A person reaching this position is not satisfied with money alone. He craves honor. Such honor can be bought in Israel, on the cheap.

### **Selling honor**

Israel is selling honor of all kinds, no questions asked. For a suitable donation, even a gambling-hell owner will be received by the Prime Minister, dine with the President, put his name on a university building.

(Once I wrote a light-hearted piece about the Third Temple, may God build it soon, Amen: the Rosenstein Holy of Holiest, the Rosenzweig altar, the Rosen-

berg cherubim, etc.)

Just after the Six-day War, during the great days of our generals, a new fashion spread among the best Jewish billionaires: to keep an Israeli general, in order to present him to friends as a pet. Some generals found no fault in this. It was owed to them, after all.

One billionaire kept Ezer Weizman, the Air Force hero (who had to resign from the presidency when it came out). Two billionaires adopted Ariel Sharon and set him up in the largest farm in the country. Shimon Peres was no general (and not even a soldier), but at least three billionaires took him under their golden wings.

No billionaire ever lost money by keeping an Israeli general, supporting an Israeli politician or making a generous donation to an Israeli cause. Ego is ego, patriotism is patriotism, but business is business.

That's where the corruption set in. A person who donates millions to a politician in Israel (or, for that matter, the US, or Italy or any other place on the globe) knows full well that he will get it back with interest. When the politician becomes a minister, or Prime Minister, or President, the supporter has hit the jackpot.

In politics there is no innocent donation. One way or another, the donor will reap his reward – many times over. That's true in the US, that's true in Italy, that's true in Israel, too. If the donor declares to the police that he has no business interests in Israel, all it means is that they must dig deeper.

The Olmert affair confirms anew what we have known for a long time: the fuel Israeli politics runs on is not just

money, but money from abroad. To win primaries and campaign in elections, a candidate needs millions, and these almost always come from foreign donors.

Foreign billionaires financed Olmert in the party primaries, and they financed him in the general elections, in which he was assured of becoming Prime Minister. After being elected, he started Lebanon War II, with all its death and destruction. It can be said: American Jewish billionaires killed the soldiers and civilians, Israeli and Lebanese, who lost their lives in the war.

### **Chutzpa of interference**

In his speech to the Jerusalem conference, Shimon Peres lauded Israeli chutzpa. What we need is more chutzpa, he said. That sounded fetching and naughty, but was pure poppycock. I want to speak about another chutzpa. Not metaphorical, but real. Simple chutzpa. The chutzpa of billionaires in New York and Geneva and all the other places who interfere in our elections and determine the fate of our nation. The chutzpa of donating for a war in which not their sons, but ours, are killed. The chutzpa of sending billions for the establishment of settlements in the occupied Palestinian territories, and especially in Jerusalem, which are put there for the

express purpose of preventing peace and imposing on us a permanent war, a war that threatens our future – not theirs.

Let's be clear: I am not criticizing well-meaning donors, who feel a moral need to contribute to a hospital wing or a university building in Israel. I appreciate people who send a few hundred dollars to a political cause close to their heart. I object to foreign billionaires who aspire to dictate the direction of our state.

Perhaps in other countries, too, politicians receive donations from foreign sources. But it is generally a marginal phenomenon. Here it is a major factor.

That is one of the ill effects of the definition of Israel as a "Jewish State". Because of this, these donors do not look like what they are – impertinent foreigners who interfere in our lives and corrupt our state – but like "warm-hearted Jews" who support a state that belongs to them as well.

Gideon Levy has recently written an article in which he begged them to "leave us alone". Being a less refined person than he, I shall say this in a ruder way: Go home and take your money with you. We are not for sale. Stop trying to manage our life (and death)! **CT**

*Uri Avnery is an Irgun veteran turned Israeli peace activist*

**Go home and take your money with you. We are not for sale. Stop trying to manage our life (and death)!**

**READ THE BEST OF JOE BAGEANT**

<http://coldtype.net/joe.html>

# FASCISM WITH A SMILE

A message from a TSA employee sets **Hal O'Boyle** off on another rant about airport security

**The problem is simple. Polite enforcement just makes creeping fascism worse. A cheerful smile on a fascist face doesn't change its nature. It makes it more dangerous by making it more tolerable**

**M**y last essay (*Creeping fascism*, Issue 26, April) suggested that readers who wanted to see all the elements of ham-fisted fascism in full operation need only visit an airport. Shortly afterward, I got a note from a Transportation Security Administration (TSA) employee. She politely defended her agency and her comrades.

I felt lousy that O'Boyle's inner smart ass had squeezed off a thoughtless screed against a group of hard working public servants. My correspondent reminded me that most of those in her position are friendly, polite, and conscientious. She's right. The rude, sarcastic agent I met in Ft. Lauderdale is the rare exception, not the rule. TSA agents are our friends and neighbors, coaches, scout masters and den mothers. They provide an important service and want to do so as well as they can. TSA agents are just doing their jobs. With understandable pride, she closed by inviting me to fly out of her airport to see the TSA at its best.

My mind flashed to a friendly, cheerful security check where the boots you

lick taste just like chocolate ice cream. I imagined a TSA wonderland where the official, witty repartee was so entertaining that "customers" ask for an extra pat down.

The problem is simple. Polite enforcement just makes creeping fascism worse. A cheerful smile on a fascist face doesn't change its nature. It makes it more dangerous by making it more tolerable. Fascist power depends on complacency and the general acceptance of a host of colossal lies. Fascist power is implemented by ordinary people who accept and repeat the lies in exchange for good jobs with excellent benefits. Never doubt that they will follow orders, with or without a smile.

Sending TSA agents to customer service seminars doesn't make the rest of us customers. Neither would putting yellow smiley face stickers on their Tasers. We're not customers. We're subjects; we're subject to search, subject to interrogation, subject to arrest. Our property is subject to confiscation. If you resist, you are subject to injury or death. It's for our own protection.

My TSA correspondent has bought into a constellation of false assumptions which her employer hopes Americans will also accept. Chief among them are the two monster whoppers, that terrorism is unspeakably dangerous, and that our government offers protection from it.

People constantly evaluate risks and the precautions to take against those risks. It's only in places where our government has full responsibility for our safety, such as airports, that the evaluation of risk departs from reality. Even the most casual analysis shows that airport security is an elaborate exercise in political theater, not public safety. The TSA does not provide protection. It provides obedience training. There is no rational connection between the risk of a terrorist attack on an airliner and the breathtaking effort we invest in avoiding one.

### **Terrorism not a danger**

Government statistics clearly show that terrorism is not very dangerous. It is nowhere near dangerous enough to justify having thrown away over \$100 billion and most of the Bill of Rights in fighting it since 2001.

According to CDC statistics it would take a successful 911 attack every month to make terrorism as dangerous as driving to work. You are three times more likely to die falling out of bed, six times more likely to drown in your bathtub, and 1200 times more likely to choke to death than you are to die in a terrorist attack. The chances of death by poisoning are 5000 times greater.

If our safety is so important why isn't the government spending billions to root out e coli from the food supply instead of

searching and bossing around air travelers? Why aren't we tearing out every bathtub in the nation? It's because airport security isn't about safety, it's about obedience.

The second lie, that our government can protect us from terrorism, especially in air travel, is equally ludicrous. Private security experts have called the TSA a steel door on a grass shack. Passenger screening has become a bizarre, pointless ritual. We genuflect to the patron saints of past failed terrorism, taking off our shoes, dumping containers of hair gel, tossing nail files and souvenir penknives. Only compulsory government sponsored "safety" checks would include such ridiculous, ceremonial humiliation.

No terrorist worthy of the label would think the best way to put a bomb on a commercial airliner was to sneak it into the passenger compartment. Although if we are to judge by the number of tests the TSA has failed, it could be done without much trouble.

Nor is any group of passengers ever again likely to allow a plane to be hijacked. If there is a next time, it will take a lot more than a few swarthy guys with box cutters to commandeer a plane full of able bodied passengers.

Government airport security is an unquestionable success. The success is not, however, in providing public safety, but in spreading fear, grooming complacency, and training us to unquestioned acceptance of authority. The smile on the fascist face simply makes our training less obvious and more palatable. **CT**

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**No terrorist worthy of the label would think the best way to put a bomb on a commercial airliner was to sneak it into the passenger compartment. Although if we are to judge by the number of tests the TSA has failed, it could be done without much trouble**

# MENTAL ILLNESS OR SOCIAL SICKNESS?

**Susan Rosenthal** looks at the way healthcare corporations are reaping the rewards of invented psychiatric disorders

**While medical diagnoses are based on science, psychiatric “diagnoses” are not at all scientific. They do not reveal what is wrong, what is the preferred treatment, and what is the likely outcome**

**W**hen you are sick or injured, you want to know what’s wrong and what can be done. You want a diagnosis. A correct diagnosis reveals what is wrong, what is the preferred treatment and what is the likely outcome. For example, a diagnosis of pneumonia indicates a serious lung infection that can usually be cured with antibiotics.

While medical diagnoses are based on science, psychiatric “diagnoses” are not at all scientific. They do not reveal what is wrong, what is the preferred treatment, and what is the likely outcome. Nor are they reliable. Different psychiatrists who examine the same patient typically offer different “diagnoses.” Moreover, psychiatric “diagnoses” move in and out of favor, depending on a variety of social factors.

Psychiatric “diagnosis” is actually a labeling process, where the patient’s symptoms are matched with a grouping of symptoms listed in the American Psychiatric Association’s Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Psychiatric Disor-

ders (DSM). As we shall see, this psychiatric “bible” was developed and is maintained by financial and political interests.<sup>1</sup>

Before the 20th century, life stresses were generally seen as spiritual problems or physical illnesses, and people turned to religious advisors and physicians for help. Medical doctors treated “hysteria” and “nerves” as physical problems. Psychiatry was restricted to the treatment of severely disturbed people in asylums.<sup>2</sup> The first classification of psychiatric disorders in the United States appeared in 1918 and contained 22 categories. All but one referred to various forms of insanity.

In 1901, Sigmund Freud revolutionized psychiatry by breaking down the barrier between mental illness and normal behavior. In *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life*,<sup>3</sup> Freud argued that commonplace behaviors – slips of the tongue, what people find humorous, what they forget and the mistakes they make – indicate repressed sexual feelings that lurk beneath the surface of normal behavior.

By linking everyday behavior with mental illness, Freud and his followers released psychiatry from the asylum. Between 1917 and 1970, as psychiatrists cultivated clients with a broad range of problems, the number of psychiatrists practicing outside institutions swelled from eight percent to 66 percent.<sup>4</sup>

The social movements of the 1960's opposed psychiatry's focus on inner conflict and emphasized the social sources of sickness instead. Dr. Alvin Poussaint recalls the 1969 convention of the American Psychiatric Association (APA).

"After multiple racist killings during the civil rights movement, a group of black psychiatrists sought to have murderous bigotry based on race classified as a mental disorder. The APA's officials rejected that recommendation, arguing that since so many Americans are racist, racism in this country is normative."<sup>5</sup>

### **Growing the industry**

In 1980, the APA overhauled the DSM. The task force established to create the new manual declared that any disorder could be included,

"If there is general agreement among clinicians, who would be expected to encounter the condition, that there are significant number of patients who have it and that its identification is important in the clinical work it is included in the classification."<sup>6</sup>

In other words, the new DSM was not based on science, but on the need to maintain existing patients and include new ones who might seek help for any number of problems. A profitable and self-perpetuating industry was born. The more people could be encouraged to seek treatment, the more conditions

could be entered into the DSM, and the more people could be encouraged to seek treatment for these new conditions.

By 1994, the DSM listed 400 distinct mental disorders covering a wide variety of behaviors in adults and children. Significantly, racism, homophobia (fear of homosexuality) and misogyny (hatred of women) have never been listed as mental disorders. In 1999, the chairperson of the APA's Council on Psychiatry and the Law confirmed that racism "is not something that is designated as an illness that can be treated by mental health professionals."<sup>7</sup> Homosexuality was listed as a mental disorder until activists campaigned to have it removed.<sup>8</sup> The women's liberation movement condemned labeling symptoms of oppression as mental illnesses. *In They Say You're Crazy: How the World's Most Powerful Psychiatrists Decide Who's Normal*, Paula Caplan explains,

"In a culture that scorns and demeans lesbians and gay men, it is hard to be completely comfortable with one's homosexuality, and so the DSM-III authors were treating as a mental disorder what was often simply a perfectly comprehensible reaction to being mocked and oppressed."<sup>9</sup>

Caplan describes efforts to prevent "Masochistic Personality Disorder" from being included in the DSM. This disorder assumes that women stay with abusive spouses because they like to suffer, not because they lack the resources to leave. Despite protest, "Masochistic Personality Disorder" was added to the 1987 edition of the DSM, although it was later dropped.

The inclusion of "Pre-Menstrual Dysphoric Disorder" (PMDD) in the DSM

**The new DSM was not based on science, but on the need to maintain existing patients and include new ones who might seek help for any number of problems. A profitable and self-perpetuating industry was born**

**Has it become normal to be mentally ill, or has the definition of mental illness expanded beyond reason? Both could be true**

also raised a protest. According to Caplan, “The problem with PMDD is not the women who report premenstrual mood problems but the diagnosis of PMDD itself. Excellent research shows that these women are significantly more likely than other women to be in upsetting life situations, such as being battered or being mistreated at work. To label them mentally disordered – to send the message that their problems are individual, psychological ones – hides the real, external sources of their trouble.”<sup>10</sup>

As soon as PMDD was listed in the DSM, Eli Lilly repackaged its best-selling drug, Prozac, in a pink-pill format, renamed it Serafem, and promoted it as a treatment for PMDD. By creating Serafem, Lilly was able to extend its patent on the Prozac formula for another seven years.

### **A marketing gold mine**

The DSM is a marketing gold mine for the drug industry. The FDA will approve a drug to treat a mental disorder only if that disorder is listed in the DSM. Therefore, each new listing is worth millions in potential drug sales. Most of the experts who construct the DSM have financial ties to pharmaceutical companies, and every new edition of the DSM contains more conditions than the previous one.

Once the DSM lists a new mental disorder, drugs for that disorder are heavily marketed for everyone who might fit the symptom checklist. (Doctors are also encouraged to prescribe these drugs for “off-label use,” which means to anyone they think might benefit.)

Not surprisingly, the numbers of people “diagnosed” with a mental condition rise rapidly after a drug is approved

to treat that condition.

In 2005, a major study announced that “About half of Americans will meet the criteria for a DSM-IV disorder sometime in their life...<sup>11</sup> How is this possible? Has it become normal to be mentally ill, or has the definition of mental illness expanded beyond reason? Both could be true.

Capitalism damages people in many ways. It’s also true that the more people can be labeled as sick, the more profits can be made from selling them treatments. In *Creating Mental Illness*, Alan Horowitz warns,

“...a large proportion of behaviors that are currently regarded as mental illnesses are normal consequences of stressful social arrangements or forms of social deviance. Contrary to its general definition of mental disorder, the DSM and much research that follows from it considers all symptoms, whether internal or not, expected or not, deviant or not, as signs of disorder.”<sup>12</sup>

Most people know the difference between normal behavior (such as grief over the death of a loved one) and abnormal behavior that could indicate an internal disorder (such as prolonged grief for no apparent reason). However, the DSM does not consider what happens in people’s lives. With one exception (Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder), the DSM lists and categorizes symptoms outside of any social context. As a result, DSM-based surveys artificially increase the numbers of people suffering from mental disorders and, therefore, the market for drug treatments.

DSM-inflated rates of mental illness are typically accompanied by the warning that not enough people are getting

treatment,<sup>13</sup> which serves to further expand the market for drugs. The question of whether all these people are actually sick is never raised, nor is the question of whether their symptoms might be linked to physical illnesses.

Many physical diseases generate psychological symptoms. Researchers estimate that from 41 to 83 percent of people being treated for psychiatric disorders are actually suffering from misdiagnosed physical diseases like hypo- or hyper-thyroidism, heart disease, immune-system diseases, nervous system diseases (including multiple sclerosis) and cancer.<sup>14</sup> Undiagnosed and untreated, these physical diseases can progress to cripple or kill. Furthermore, psychiatric drugs can worsen physical diseases, sometimes fatally. None of these “costs” are borne by the pharmaceutical industry – the most profitable industry in America.

### **Social control**

Psychiatry has a long history of medicating the oppressed, including children, for social control.<sup>15</sup>

Schools force youngsters to sit still in closed rooms for long periods of time and force-feed them information that has no connection to their lives. Those who rebel are diagnosed with mental disorders (Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, Conduct Disorder, Oppositional Defiant Disorder, etc.) and forced to take mind-altering drugs. To preserve a crazy-making system, the healthy child must be made “crazy.”

Using DSM criteria, at least six million American children have been diagnosed with serious mental disorders, triple the number in the early 1990’s. The rate of boys aged 7 to 12 diagnosed with Bipolar

Disorder more than doubled between 1995 and 2000 and continues to rise.

A 2007 survey of 8- to 15-year-olds discovered that nine percent met the DSM criteria for attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). The survey found that fewer than half of these children had been diagnosed or treated, “suggesting that some children with clinically significant inattention and hyperactivity may not be receiving optimal attention.” Noting that poor children were least likely to receive medication, the authors of the study recommend “further investigation and possible intervention.”<sup>16</sup>

Instead of addressing the oppressive social conditions that agitate children, psychiatry imposes conformity through medication. To force compliance with this oppressive system, access to insurance benefits, medical care and social services depends on “having a diagnosis.”

Most of the symptoms listed in the DSM describe human responses to deprivation and oppression (anxiety, agitation, aggression, depression) and the many ways that people try to manage unbearable pain (obsessions, compulsions, rage, addictions). Depression is strongly linked with poverty,<sup>17</sup> and alleviating poverty can lift depression.<sup>18</sup>

The suffering of war veterans is labeled as a mental disorder (PTSD) instead of the inevitable consequence of war. These soldiers are sick because they have been violated. Their symptoms express their anguish and outrage at the barbarism they witnessed and perpetrated on others. What’s sick is sending good people into the hell of war.

Schizophrenia is designated as a men-

**Schools force youngsters to sit still in closed rooms for long periods of time and force-feed them information that has no connection to their lives. Those who rebel are diagnosed with mental disorders and forced to take mind-altering drugs**

**Under capitalism, addressing the social causes of illness is politically risky and unprofitable. So psychiatry extracts the individual from society, splits the brain from the body, severs the mind from the brain and drugs the brain**

tal illness that is assumed to be genetic. However, studies from several countries show that living in a city gives a person a higher probability of developing schizophrenia than having a family member with the disease.

Moving from rural to urban centers increases the risk of developing schizophrenia, while moving in the other direction reduces the risk.<sup>19</sup> City living is associated with increased stress and trauma<sup>20</sup>, exposure to lead infection,<sup>21</sup> malnutrition,<sup>22</sup> and racial discrimination<sup>23</sup> – all of which are linked with higher rates of schizophrenia.

Under capitalism, addressing the social causes of illness is politically risky and unprofitable. So psychiatry extracts the individual from society, splits the brain from the body, severs the mind from the brain and drugs the brain.<sup>24</sup>

### **A sick society**

Capitalism is a system that requires the majority to have no control over their lives and to believe that this condition is normal. Therefore, all reactions to inequality and deprivation must be viewed as signs of personal inadequacy, biological defect, mental illness – anything other than reasonable responses to unreasonable conditions.

During slavery days, experts argued that Black people were psychologically suited for a life of slavery, so there must be something wrong with those who rebelled.<sup>25</sup> In 1851, the diagnosis of “drapeomania” (runaway fever) was developed to explain why slaves try to escape.<sup>26</sup>

Not much has changed. Today, exploitation and oppression are considered normal, and those who rebel in any way are considered to be sick or deviant

and in need of medication or incarceration.

What’s the diagnosis for a sick society? We know what’s wrong. Most people are kept in sick social conditions so that a few can maintain their wealth and power. What is the treatment? Putting human needs first would eliminate most human misery. Who will deliver the medicine? The majority must organize to take collective control of society.

I don’t expect this diagnosis to appear in the DSM anytime soon. **CT**

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**Most people are kept in sick social conditions so that a few can maintain their wealth and power. What is the treatment? Putting human needs first would eliminate most human misery**

# POT SMOKING: TRUTH AND LIES

**Paul Armentano and Mitch Earlywine**  
reveal the truth behind some hysterical headlines

**It sounds alarming at first, but a closer look at the evidence reveals that there's less here than the headlines imply**

Smoking pot won't make you crazy, but trying to find the truth behind the recent rash of headlines regarding a supposed link between cannabis and mental illness might.

According to the Associated Press and other news sources, a new study in the British medical journal *The Lancet* reports that smoking cannabis – even occasionally – can increase one's risk of becoming psychotic. It sounds alarming at first, but a closer look at the evidence reveals that there's less here than the headlines imply.

First, there is no new study. The paper published in *The Lancet* is a meta-analysis – a summary of seven studies that previously appeared in other journals, including some that were published decades ago. Second, the touted association between cannabis and mental illness is small – about the same size as the link between head injury and psychosis. Finally, despite what some new sources suggest, this association is hardly proof of a cause-and-effect relationship between cannabis and psychosis.

So why the sudden fuss?

Part of the answer is political. New British Prime Minister Gordon Brown longs to stiffen penalties against marijuana users. One way to justify this move involves convincing the public that *The Lancet* proved that puffing the weed will make you batty. Of course, that's not what the article says at all.

In fact, investigators actually reported that cannabis use was associated with a slight increase in psychotic outcomes. However, the authors emphasized (even if many in the media did not) that this small association does not reflect a causal relationship. Folks with psychoses use all intoxicants more often than other people do, including alcohol and tobacco.

## **Symptoms of distress**

Cannabis use can correlate with mental illness for many reasons. People often turn to cannabis to alleviate the symptoms of distress. A recent study performed in Germany showed that cannabis offsets certain cognitive declines in schizophrenic patients. Another

study shows that psychotic symptoms predict later use of cannabis, suggesting that people might turn to the plant for help rather than become ill after use.

Perhaps the most impressive evidence against the cause-and-effect relationship concerns the unvarying rate of psychoses across different eras and different countries. People are no more likely to be psychotic in Canada or the United States (two nations where large percentages of citizens use cannabis) than they are in Sweden or Japan (where self-reported marijuana use is extremely low). Even after the enormous popularity of cannabis in the 1960s and 1970s, rates of psychotic disorders haven't increased.

Despite this evidence, we'd like to spread the word that cannabis is not for everybody. Teens should avoid the plant. Folks with a predisposition for mental illness should stay away, too. This potential for health risks in a few people, however, does not justify criminal prohibitions for everyone. (We wouldn't pass blanket prohibitions against alcohol sim-

ply to protect pregnant women, for example.) The underground market does an extremely poor job of keeping marijuana out of the hands of teens and others who should stay away from it. A regulated market could better educate users to potential risks and prohibit sales to young people.

Consequently, the review in *The Lancet* suggests that if cannabis really does alter risk for mental illness, we can't leave control of sales to folk who are willing to break the law. Instead, a taxed, regulated, age-restricted market is our best chance to keep any negative consequences of marijuana under control. **CT**

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**The underground market does an extremely poor job of keeping marijuana out of the hands of teens and others who should stay away from it**

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# DISNEYLAND BY THE TIGRIS

Theme parks and skateboards come before hospitals, schools and orphanages in the new Iraq, writes **Felicity Arbuthnot**

**All now lie in ruins, the might of the two 'most professional armies in the world', apparently able only to blow up bridges, not build them, orphan not heal, bereave, destroy and devastate, poison and pollute**

Iraq, before the holocaustal 13-year embargo, the 2003 illegal invasion and subsequent countrywide massacre and reign of terror over its population, was – according to United Nations indices – a largely developed country.

Having nationalised its oil, revenues were utilised for modernising infrastructure, health and education (the latter two of high standard and free.) All now lie in ruins, the might of the two 'most professional armies in the world', apparently able only to blow up bridges, not build them, orphan not heal, bereave, destroy and devastate, poison and pollute.

Iraq now lies at the bottom in every aspect of UN indices, its sick untreated, its children uneducated, the 'cradle of civilisation' victim of a scorched earth policy – from its agriculture, date and citrus groves to its archeological wonders. The orphans, traumatised, displaced, widowed, mutilated, beheaded, fleeing, stateless, dead – in just five years – equal history's most chilling infamies.

From June 1, add starvation. The food

rations, already cut to the barest minimum, of woeful quality and beset by (US overseen) governmental corruption, but on which much of the population exists, are to be abolished.

Additionally, in the nightmare scenario of everyday life in the democratic freedom of occupied Iraq, is a vast unknown: the number of amputees and limbless, liberated from arms, legs or both, by an eye-watering array of weapons.

But in the true tradition of 'only in America' fantasies, the US has a make believe answer. Not refurbished hospitals and schools, not clean water coming out of dysentery-, typhoid- and cholera-inducing taps, not welcoming and healing orphanages for the estimated 4.5 million traumatised orphans they have created, not centres for and training of staff and technicians to provide prosthetic limbs for maimed children and adults. Baghdad instead, is to have a Disneyland theme park (on appropriated land.)

"Iraq's daily realities of death, destruction and torture are replaced by fantasies made in America.

“The imagery and motion simulations intended for Iraqi children are to provide a “human face” to the American invaders and breaking down the reality between ... reality and dreams. The objective is to replace reality with a dream world.” – See *War Propaganda: Disneyland goes to war torn Iraq*, by Michel Chossudovsky: <http://www.globalresearch.ca/index.php?context=va&aid=8837>)

### Building palaces

A constant refrain during the embargo years, in media parroting Washington and Whitehall’s propaganda, was that the ever busy Iraqi President, when not personally making fairy story weapons of mass destruction, or throwing babies on bonfires, or putting fellow citizens through shredding machines (that one courtesy of the reality-challenged British MP, Ann Clwyd) was that he was “building palaces whilst his people starve.” Culturally, it is incumbent upon leaders to leave behind something more magnificent than their predecessor and in dark times they also provided work to a swathe of the population, as did maintenance, care of and repair to historic sites, of whose responsibility for and guardianship Iraqis are acutely aware.

That these great state buildings (and archeological wonders) are now squatted by illegal invaders, in contravention of yet another swathe of international law, seemingly does not strike lawmakers by the Potomac or the Thames as either ironic or criminal. But now a land grab is about to take place comparable to the ‘purchase’ of Manhattan Island from the Lenapes Indians for \$24 worth of beads and trinkets in 1626, the best real estate deal in history.

In an ‘agreement’ with the ‘Mayor’ of Baghdad, the 50-acre Zawra Park is to be developed into a trashy Disneyland by the Tigris, complete with malls, hotels, housing, amusements, entertainment and a museum. Iraq’s National Museum with its millennias of treasures and the National Library’s irreplaceable ancient volumes and manuscripts were looted and destroyed under US watch in 2003. A replacement by a Disneyland version is a concept devised by the seriously psychologically challenged.

A skateboard park will introduce the residents of a city thought to have been first settled 8,000 years before Christ, to the culture of inner city USA. Announcing his plans in Baghdad, financier Llewellyn Werner stated: “I’m not here because I think you are nice people. I think there is money to be made here ... I wouldn’t be doing this if I wasn’t making money.”

Speculating as to what the ‘agreement’ with the ‘Mayor’ might have been, might stray in to libel land. Zawra Park, however, has a special place in the heart of Baghdadis. Its great zoo, summer theatre, children’s game area, fountains, lakes, coffee shops, restaurant, sculptures, monuments and Olympic swimming pool, became somewhat run down during the embargo, but nothing could take from its great, expanses of lushness, its acres of skyward stretching ancient palms. Wonders in which generations of children, become adult, become mother, father, grandmother, grandfather, great grandmother ... had played and revisited throughout their lifetime.

Will Mr Werner and his RSE developers call in General Petraeus’s boys with chain saws to destroy groves which have

**A skateboard park will introduce the residents of a city thought to have been first settled eight thousand years before Christ, to the culture of inner city USA**

**Will Mr Werner and his RSE developers call in General Petraeus's boys with chain saws to destroy groves which have witnessed hundreds of years of Mesopotamia's history, to make way for make believe tack?**

witnessed hundreds of years of Mesopotamia's history, to make way for make believe tack? General Petraeus is a 'big supporter' of the project. And destruction is his business.

The zoo in Zawra Park became one of the poignant symbols of the embargo years. With every kind of diagnostic aid and treatment vetoed for patients, by the UN, the needs of the zoo animals came low down the priority list. But Dr Adil Salman Musa, zoo director, loved them all. He tried to create better conditions for the great brown bear, whose mate had died for lack of treatment. Year after year, the bear lay, seldom moving, except to occasionally roll in her great pool of filthy water (repairs for pipes, were impossible). She was clinically depressed, said Musa.

The lion, too, had lost his mate and his roars of grief rang across the great Park, from within his spacious den. He refused to come out and roam between the sun dappled and abundant greenery of his territory. Musa communicated with colleagues across the world for help with his animals and birds, the swinging, chattering monkeys, the array of vibrant coloured rare birds. But, like the people, they were trapped by the embargo's all pervasive, silent decimation.

As parents took their children to the orphanages, unable to afford to feed them, promising to collect them when the embargo was over, families also took their domestic pets to the zoo, vowing the same. Dogs and cats looked wistfully through the bars and canaries in every paint box hue, perched on their indoor trees, tweeted and soared.

Dr Musa dreamed of the embargo's end, always planning for what it would

bring to his zoo, his improvements, and work with rare and endangered species again with breeding programmes to swell their numbers.

When one of the three remaining Bengal tigers, Mendouh, became ill, Dr Musa somehow acquired enough vital antibiotics to inject her. But there were no anesthetic darts available. 'I held her tail, while the vet gave her the injection', he said, adding: "This is a very dangerous practice." He risked much for his beloved animals.

On September 17, 2003, six months into the occupation, American soldiers had a drunken party in the park. One tried to feed Mendouh through the bars. Predictably, she bit him. The soldier shot her.

And what has happened to the lynx? On one visit, rounding a corner, I came on a surreal sight : a lynx, in a miniature carved palace, carpeted, with adequate food, looking, I thought, distinctly smug. Noting the plaque above the spacious area, the penny dropped. The lynx was a gift to the zoo, on a recent anniversary, from Saddam Hussein's eldest son, Uday.

'What happens if the lynx dies?' I asked. The young zoologist walking with me looked over his shoulder, then whispered: "Madam Felicity, we all run a very, very long way."

### **Cheyney in the swim**

On 9th May, Dick Cheney, appearing on the Paul Gallow Show in Mississippi, told Americans that the proposed development was a sign that things in Iraq were "going swimmingly." The Pentagon is fast tracking this development as a centrepiece for the new Baghdad in

the new Iraq. Legalities, as ever, have not appeared on the agenda. Pentagon-backed purloining of a vast swathe of municipal reality with the collusion of the occupying forces is yet another shocking grand theft.

But a word of warning. The Islamic fundamentalists who the invaders brought in with them, who behead women for wearing make up or western clothes – or just not covering from head to toe – and abhor theatre, art, dance, entertainment, music and alcohol, will not take kindly to this project. Contractors should have up to date life insurance. A lot of heads will roll between conception and possible completion.

And about those 200,000 free skateboards, the Baltimore Project which provides prosthetic limbs to Iraqi children, wrote, in July 1996, of just one child's transformed life:

“Not only can he now ride a bicycle like other boys his age, but more importantly he can go to school. There are no wheelchair ramps in Iraq, no buses equipped with lifts, no way to ease a child back into the world after amputation.”

The obscenity of this project – undertaken before the provision of limbs, wheelchairs, clean water, hospitals,

schools, sufficient food and decontamination of the radioactive waste – from weapons designated three times by the United Nations as weapons of mass destruction which litters the country and the region from US and UK weapons, beggars belief. When Medical Aid for Iraqi children sent children's wheelchairs after the invasion, the US Army disappeared them. But with countless hundreds of thousands of legless, limbless children, throughout Iraq, resultant from their actions, not medical help, but free skateboards can be funded.

Oh, and where do you put your elbow pads, when you have no elbows?

Battery Park in Manhattan is named after the British battery stationed there, its monument marking the monumental disgrace upon which New York City was founded. Hard to know what to call the modern day equivalent, perhaps the 'Grand Theft Experience Park.' Suggestions welcome. **CT**

*Felicity Arbuthnot is a journalist and activist who has visited the Arab and Muslim world on numerous occasions. She was also senior researcher for John Pilger's ward-winning documentary, **Paying the Price: Killing the Children of Iraq***

**When Medical Aid for Iraqi children sent children's wheelchairs after the invasion, the US Army disappeared them**

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# I SING OF TOILET SEATS

**Fred Reed** reads a new book about excessive military spending and is not impressed by some of the information

**Cartoons by editorial idiots showed the Secretary of Defense with a toilet seat hanging around his neck. You could get one at Home Depot for \$9, was the implication, yet the Navy paid \$640. Bad old Navy**

I want my money back. I recently bought *The Complex*, by Nick Turse. It purports to deal with the militarization of American society, its economy, education, and so on. I can think of no more important topic. The militarization is happening. Huge sums go for weapons we don't need to fight enemies we don't have. Much of this waste is hidden in plain sight: What the press ignores doesn't exist. The militarization now segues into the establishment of a full-blown national-security state, with further huge sums going to Homeland Security et al. The subject is ripe for a grown-up book.

But no. *The Complex* reads like a compendium of Google searches intended for a high-school newspaper. I spent 30 years covering the military and constantly saw the same appalling ignorance of weaponry, tactics, technology, history, the same missing of the important to concentrate on absurdities, the borderline dishonesty, the almost willful journalistic incompetence. Turse is par.

The \$640 toilet seat. Oh god. There it was, page 83. It rose from the page like

the stench from some fetid bog. Practically forever I had to hear about that seat from crusading 12-year-olds at the *Washington Post*. It has probably given me PTSD.

## **The \$640 toilet seat**

You've heard this? The Navy was supposed to have bought a toilet seat for \$640 for one of its aircraft. Cartoons by editorial idiots showed the Secretary of Defense with a toilet seat hanging around his neck. You could get one at Home Depot for \$9, was the implication, yet the Navy paid \$640. Bad old Navy.

The airplane in question was a PC3 Orion, a Lockheed Electra modified for long flights over the ocean in search of submarines. Such a plane needs a toiler for the substantial crew operating the avionics. You don't put a heavy porcelain toilet in an airplane. Do the toilets on airliners look like the ones in your home? The "toilet seat" in question was a complex injection-molded device with the plumbing in it, constituting most of the toilet. It was not remotely what one

thinks of as a toilet seat. Yet Turse, like almost all of the reporters at the time, wants you to think it was. It makes a better story.

I remember that someone went to various makers of complex plastic things and asked for bids. They came in close to what the Navy paid.

On and on goes this drivel. Turse speaks also of the \$7,600 “coffee maker” bought by the Air Force. One thinks of course of the glass-and-plastic thing on the kitchen counter. Seven thousand green ones for that? Bad old Air Force.

Actually it was a massive stainless-steel appliance to make coffee for people aboard a C-5, a very large transport aircraft. Short of getting the specs and hiring an aircraft engineer and an industrial cost estimator, I have no way of knowing what it should have cost – probably \$7,600 – but the thing bore no faint resemblance to what one thinks of as a coffee maker. But then, Turse bears no faint resemblance to what one thinks of as a reporter. Conservation of symmetry.

### **Nonsense stories**

As a reporter, I tracked down dozens of these horror stories, and they were almost always nonsense. There was the \$17 (or was it \$27?) bolt the Navy bought. The implication in the press invariably was that it should have cost twelve cents in your local hardware store. The actuality:

The Navy had an attack plane, the A3, which, like probably all aircraft, used some nonstandard parts. One of these was a bolt for the nose gear. When the Navy, or an airline, buys a plane, it assumes a certain useful life. After all, aircraft don't last forever. In this case it may

have been 20 years. The Navy bought sufficient bolts to last that period.

Then Congress slepped the bird. (A verb from Service Life Extension Program.) The A3 would remain in service for a few more years, three I think. The Navy had run out of bolts and needed a few more.

Now, if you need, say, 29 unusual bolts, you have two ways of buying them. You can order 10,000, in which case mass production will keep the cost to \$1.20 each, but then you pay 10,000 times \$1.20. (Aircraft quality bolts cost more than the ones you have in your washing machine. Probably a good idea.) Or you can have a machine shop make them more or less by hand as a special order. They then cost \$17 each times 29. The latter is far cheaper, but the price per bolt is much higher. This happened. Much too difficult for reporters, and it would never occur to them to ask.

I made the foregoing numbers up, and this many years later won't swear by the details, but they illustrate the principle. This, for my 30 years in the trade, was the level of reporting. No research, no understanding, and no thought of asking the military for its side.

Why does this happen? Logically, either Turse knows his stories are phony – i.e., he's lying – or he doesn't know his subject and didn't bother to find out. I scent the latter. Never suspect mendacity, I say, when overwrought bafflement is a plausible explanation. Reporters are easily fooled, intellectually lazy, and combative. It's a dangerous combination.

The usual result is that they become wildly partisan and attack rather than cover. Turse fits the pattern. He has a

**Turse speaks also of the \$7600 “coffee maker” bought by the Air Force. One thinks of course of the glass-and-plastic thing on the kitchen counter. Seven thousand green ones for that? Bad old Air Force**

## BEHIND THE NUMBERS

**When there is so much that could be written of the Pentagon's domestic imperialism, so many good questions to be asked, and instead I get the fable of the toilet seat, it annoys me**

whole chapter on the “lavish” life of the military, which lives “high on the hog.” What? The military doesn’t live high on the hog. I’ve been on more military bases than Turse has IQ points – this means, I’ll guess, at least 30 bases. In fact I spent my high school years on a base (Dahlgren Naval Proving Ground, as it was then called.) Comfortable middle class, except when in the field.

Has this thunderstorm of righteousness ever spent a week in a tank in the Korean winter, when ice is hard as steel and frigid wind howls by like something that wants to bite? It didn’t strike me as very high on the hog, but perhaps the

Army has a low hog.

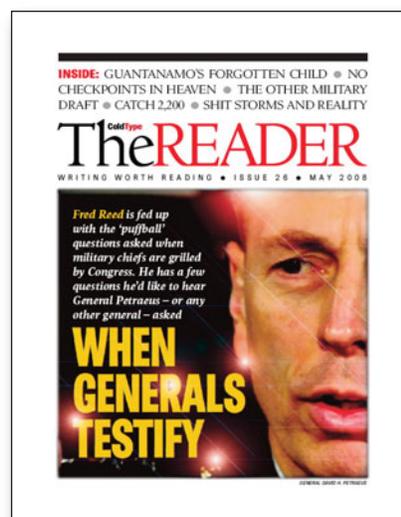
Maybe I’m boring the reader. Sorry. But I weary of child reporters aflame with indignant confusion. When there is so much that could be written of the Pentagon’s domestic imperialism, so many good questions to be asked, and instead I get the fable of the toilet seat, it annoys me.

I want my money back.

**CT**

*Fred Reed has worked on staff for Army Times, The Washingtonian, Soldier of Fortune, Federal Computer Week, and The Washington Times. His web site is [www.fredoneverything.net](http://www.fredoneverything.net)*

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# FLEXIBLE FRIENDS

David Edwards on the British newspapers *The Observer*, *The Independent* and the myth of a media spectrum

In a BBC interview in 1996, Andrew Marr, then of the *Independent*, described the ‘spectrum’ of media available to the British public:

“We have a press which has, it seems to me, a relatively wide range of views – there is a pretty small ‘c’ conservative majority, but there are left-wing papers, and there is a pretty large offering of views running from the far right to the far left, for those who want them.” (<http://www.zmag.org/Chomsky/interviews/9602-big-idea.html>)

The “left-wing papers” Marr had in mind were the *Guardian*, the *Observer*, the *Independent* and the *Independent on Sunday*.

It is interesting to consider Marr’s comments in light of the April 10 announcement that Roger Alton, formerly editor of the *Observer*, will become editor of the *Independent* this month. Alton resigned from the *Observer* last year after rumours of a ‘civil war’ with the *Guardian*. There were also allegations that, in 2002, the *Observer* had suppressed important testimony on Iraq’s alleged weapons of mass destruction

even as it was publishing false stories from intelligence sources. It was claimed that Alton’s political editor, Kamal Ahmed, had helped Blair’s aides with one of their infamous “dodgy dossiers” on Iraq’s WMD – Ahmed also resigned. Alton and Ahmed have both denied the claim. Geoffrey Levy wrote in the *Daily Mail*:

“Alton’s real mistake, it seems, was in supporting the Iraq war. This attitude never went down very well at Guardian House, and led to a more localised conflict, which has turned the two newspapers into what one senior journalist described as ‘hotbeds of fear and loathing.’” (Levy, ‘Fear and loathing in Farringdon Road,’ *Daily Mail*, October 25, 2007)

It is a bitter irony that Alton will soon be editing the *Independent*, which opposed the Iraq war.

In January 2006, Stephen Glover, the *Independent*’s media commentator, wrote of the *Observer*: “one looks in vain to its heart for that old voice of principle and conviction, as well as intellectual distinction. I am not sure that Mr Alton, charming and gifted man though he un-

**There were allegations that, in 2002, the Observer had suppressed important testimony on Iraq’s alleged weapons of mass destruction even as it was publishing false stories from intelligence sources**

## LIBERAL MEDIA?

**For purposes of 'niche marketing', senior journalists are of course very keen to distance themselves from the idea that they represent elite interests. Instead, the focus is very much on high ethical ideals**

questionably is, believes in very much". (Glover, 'Colourful – and that's not just the *Observer* editor's language,' *The Independent*, January 16, 2006)

So was the *Observer* under Alton really to the left of the media spectrum? In responding to the question of whether he would take the *Independent* further left, Alton commented recently:

"I wouldn't have regarded myself as the most leftwing person... Left and right are effectively meaningless terms now. I wouldn't define myself by those terms and I don't think a newspaper should either." (Stephen Brook, 'Alton aims to make Indy "indispensable,"' *The Guardian*, April 10, 2008)

He added:

"I would like to include a bit more luxury and have a sense of specialness."

Certainly the words "left" and "right" are "effectively meaningless" in today's media. But then it is the media's self-assigned task to render just about every issue meaningless. As ever, Noam Chomsky is on hand to restore some common sense to the debate:

"If the left means anything, it means it's concerned for the needs, welfare, and rights of the general population." (<http://www.zmag.org/ZMag/july00barsamian.htm>)

### **News coverage and the social elite**

The fact is that the general population is not well represented within elite journalism. In 2006, research conducted by the Sutton Trust found that 54% of Britain's leading news journalists were educated in private schools, which account for 7% of the school population as a whole. In addition, 45% of the country's leading journalists had attended Oxbridge. Sir

Peter Lampl, chairman of the Sutton Trust, asked:

"[Is] it healthy that those who are most influential in determining and interpreting the news agenda have educational backgrounds that are so different to the vast majority of the population?"

He also asked:

"Is news coverage preoccupied with the issues and interests of the social elite that journalists represent?" (The Educational Backgrounds of Leading Journalists, Sutton Trust, June 2006; <http://www.suttontrust.com/reports/Journalists-backgrounds-final-report.pdf>)

Alton's dismissal of 'left' and 'right' as meaningful terms is surely an example of exactly that. Lampl will not have been surprised to learn that Alton's father was a distinguished Oxford don and that Alton was privately educated at Clifton College before attending Exeter College, Oxford.

For purposes of 'niche marketing', senior journalists are of course very keen to distance themselves from the idea that they represent elite interests. Instead, the focus is very much on high ethical ideals. Simon Kelner, Alton's predecessor as *Independent* editor, explained in 2005 what the name 'Independent' meant to him:

"...there will be no retreat from the qualities that have underpinned *The Independent* since its launch. As we approach the general election, the role for an independent paper, one that is not driven by proprietorial agenda and that has no party allegiance, is as great as ever." (Kelner, 'The *Independent*: a new look for the original quality compact newspaper,' *The Independent*, April 12, 2005)

This is the same myth propounded by Robert Fisk, who commented in 2003:

“I work for a British newspaper called *The Independent*; if you read it, you’ll find that we are.” (<http://www.robert-fisk.com/demnow-RF-interview25mar2003.htm>)

The reality is rather less glorious. Former *New Statesman* editor Peter Wilby wrote recently of Alton and Kelner’s close friendship:

“Both have political views that may be described as flexible or undogmatic, depending on how you look at it.

“True, one committed his paper to supporting the Iraq invasion, the other to opposing it. But given different circumstances, it is easy to imagine either of them deciding on the opposite course. Many friendships were ruptured by Iraq. That between Alton and Kelner survived – another example of how similar they are.” (Wilby, ‘It is. Is he?’ *The Guardian*, April 14, 2008; <http://www.guardian.co.uk/media/2008/apr/14/the-independent.pressandpublishing>)

The problem is that many people believe the *Independent* is a principled voice of left-leaning liberalism. Wilby quietly demolished this illusion:

“[T]he *Independent*’s founders never intended it to be a left-wing paper. Their preference, in the late 80s, was for Thatcherism with a human face. They expected to gain most readers from the *Telegraph* and *Times*. As it turned out, they found leftwing journalists more willing to join their venture and acquired more readers from the *Guardian* than from other papers. The editorial line remained pro-market and generally pro-foreign intervention, but compassionate towards the poor (in a vague sort of way)

and leftish on social issues such as race, crime and smacking. Its position, in many respects, anticipated Blairism. Alton, who in 2006 described hostility to Blair as ‘quite baffling’, could claim to echo the founders’ views more closely than Kelner has done.”

Writing in the *Guardian*, Stephen Brook noted that Kelner, now the *Independent*’s managing director and editor-in-chief, “has basically outsourced the *Independent*’s marketing department to Freud Communications, run by the well-connected Matthew Freud”:

“Freud will help to fashion the message that it connects directly with brand-conscious, upscale, young, high-earning readers.” (Brook, ‘Upward and onward for the *Independent*’s revolutionary,’ *The Guardian*, April 13, 2008)

The reality, then, is of a corporate cynicism that places advertising revenues attracted by “brand-conscious, upscale, young, high-earning readers” above the grave problems that afflict and threaten the “needs, welfare, and rights of the general population”. This is the actual and metaphorical bottom line.

### Claim and counter-claim

As we discussed on March 5 ([www.medialens.org/alerts/08/080305-flat-earth-news.php](http://www.medialens.org/alerts/08/080305-flat-earth-news.php)), in the autumn of 2002, former CIA analyst Mel Goodman told *Observer* correspondent Ed Vulliamy that the CIA believed Iraq did not possess weapons of mass destruction. Goodman was speaking out at a time when such revelations might have derailed Blair’s plans to go to war the following spring, with unknown consequences for Bush’s war plan. Over the next four months, Vulliamy submitted

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## LIBERAL MEDIA?

**Vulliamy replied with what can only be described as an angst-ridden email, but insisted the contents were not for publication**

seven versions of the story for publication – the *Observer*, led by Alton, rejected all of them. I wrote to Vulliamy on February 27:

“I’ve been reading Nick Davies’s account of how your reports on Mel Goodman’s revelations were rejected seven times by the *Observer*. Did you try to publish the pieces elsewhere? Why did you not resign in protest at these obvious acts of censorship on such a crucial matter?”

Vulliamy replied with what can only be described as an angst-ridden email, but insisted the contents were not for publication. I wrote again on February 28:

“Can I ask, also off the record (just out of human interest), what reasons did they give you for not publishing? You’re a major journalist on the paper, this was cast-iron testimony from a credible, named source – what on earth did they say?”

Vulliamy said he would answer my questions later (again, off the record). I received no further reply. I wrote again, and he again said he would reply. I wrote again on April 21 and he told me he was busy and again promised more later.

Media Lens associate editor, David Cromwell and I also wrote to Roger Alton on April 21:

“Congratulations on becoming editor of the *Independent*. In his book *Flat Earth News*, Nick Davies describes how the *Observer*’s Ed Vulliamy told him about his autumn 2002 conversations with former CIA analyst Mel Goodman. It seems Goodman was willing to go on the record in telling Vulliamy that the CIA believed Iraq had *no* weapons of mass destruction. Vulliamy says he submitted

seven versions of this story to the *Observer* over a period of four months and it was rejected every time. Is this true? If so, why did the *Observer* reject the story? Was this not a crucial story offered at a crucial time by a highly credible journalist citing credible sources?”

Alton replied on April 25:

“Hi there ... I do not start there for some months though and am not the editor of the *Independent* now. As for your other point, so it was my old pal Ed who grassed me up eh?? Lordludvaddock, what a surprise ... like Falstaff and Prince Hal eh??

“Now, I don’t know anything about this tale ... while I think an editor should read, or try to read, all the 250,000 – odd words that go into an edition of the *Observer*, I would not expect them to read all the several million words that are submitted each week ... as I understand it, this story was not used by the desk, on journalistic grounds, and indeed this was a decision taken by a very anti-war executive. . .

“There was an article setting all this out in a recent edition of *Press Gazette*, which I am sure you can easily find...”

### **Remarkable unawareness**

How remarkable that Alton is unaware of the Mel Goodman “tale”. We can find nothing in *Press Gazette* that explains why seven versions of Vulliamy’s article were rejected over four months. We approached several of the journalists involved for comment on this bizarre response, none was forthcoming.

In 2004, we asked Alton about the *Observer*’s performance on Iraq in 2004. He responded:

“I think our reporting on Iraq was ex-

ceptionally fair. Journalism is by definition a first draft of history. It is rough and ready, people doing their best under trying circumstances often. We faithfully reported claim and counter claim in the build up to Iraq. With exceptional journalists like Peter Beaumont, Jason Burke, and Ed Vulliamy our news, feature and commentary coverage was fair, thorough and unbiased.” (Email to Media Lens, August 17, 2004)

Ironic words in light of what we know now. A year earlier, a journalist at the *Observer*, who asked to remain anonymous, wrote to us:

“Your media alerts and website have afforded me great solace and insight over the last eighteen months — making me feel less alone and more angry as the wretched failure of the ‘fourth estate’ to hold our ‘leaders’ to account becomes increasingly apparent.” (Email to Media Lens, March 2003)

### Career damage

On reflection, it seems naïve to imagine that free speech will flourish under corporate capitalism. It is true that we do not face the kind of physical threats offered by a totalitarian system – but so what? For most people, the threat of serious damage to a lucrative, high status career is enough to ensure their silence.

In the last decade of corresponding with journalists we have found that they often do behave as though they were living in a police state, or at least in a state policed by corporate power. Many are privately supportive and helpful. Indeed, many journalists who might be

expected to be fierce opponents of our work, are in fact enraged by the mendacity and destructiveness of the media employing them. But they tell us their comments must be off the record; that they are not willing to comment over the internet (which is surely monitored); that they will help us only on condition that their names be concealed. Could it be more obvious that journalists do not feel free to write the truth about Alton and Kelner, and much else, because of the likely professional consequences?

Earlier, we cited the biting criticisms of Alton made by the *Independent’s* Stephen Glover in 2006. Hugo Rifkind of the *Times* recalled these comments this month and noted that Glover had also written that the *Observer* under Alton was “bursting with stuff I do not want to read”.

“And, his new Editor may surmise, would not wish to write”, Rifkind commented wryly, hinting that Glover may pay a price for his earlier candour. (Rifkind, ‘Write and wrong,’ *The Times*, April 11, 2008)

We spend our time well when we recall that Alton and Kelner have edited two of the Great White Hopes of the British liberal press – newspapers which many people believe are deeply concerned about the needs, welfare, and rights of the general population. **CT**

**David Edwards** is co-editor, with **David Cromwell** of the London media watchdog, *Media Lens*. Their latest book is ***Guardians of Power: The Myth Of The Liberal Media*** (Pluto)

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# NOTES FROM NO MAN'S LAND

In the introduction to their new book, *Red State Rebels*, **Jeffrey St. Clair** and **Joshua Frank** invite us to meet the forgotten people who inhabit the rural heartlands of the United States

**We are children of the wasteland. The rural outback. Where folks carry guns and use them**

**W**e are not supposed to exist. According to the political Steinberg map of the nation, we come from no man's land, fly-over country, the unredeemable middle, where political progressives are as rare as a Hooters in Provo, Utah.

We are children of the wasteland. The rural outback. Where folks carry guns and use them. Where fenced compounds and utopian communes exist side-by-side with a cyanide heap-leach gold mine. Out here cell phones don't work. Not yet, anyway. And some of us would like to keep it that way.

Frank grew up on the wheated plains of eastern Montana. St. Clair hails from the humid cornfields of central Indiana. These states span the glaciated heart of the continent, a region carved and ground-smooth by the weight of ice. From a distance, the terrain of the Great Plains appears homogenous.

From a distance so do its politics and demographics. You must look closer to discover the diversity, the radical nuances.

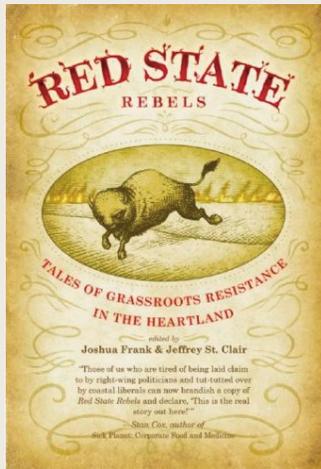
Even the Republicanism of Indiana, sired as it was by the rigid Lutheranism of German immigrants, is wildly different from the libertarian, anti-government Republicanism of Montana and the Rocky Mountain Front. They are not one. Except on the two-color map of American politics, or Barack Obama's electoral playbook, which writes off this vast region almost completely.

Neither of us fit in the geo-ideological matrix contrived by the mainstream political establishment. Neither do thousands of others, left, right and anarcho-libertarians, who reside in the forgotten midsection of the nation.

## **Footsteps of David Koresh**

And not all of us are children of Ken Kesey and Ed Abbey. Some follow in the footsteps of David Koresh, Reies Tijerina, Randy Weaver, Elvira Arellano or Mary Dann.

A Red States rebellion is breaking out. It's been going on for some time. Since Reconstruction in the South and even longer in the West. The true West of Wyoming and Utah, Idaho and Arizona.



**RED STATE REBELS**  
*Jeffrey St. Clair & Joshua Frank*  
 Published by AK Press  
 \$16.95 (US)

Where the stakes are high and the odds are long. And the battles are waged over the essentials of life: water, food, wilderness, human liberty.

Take abortion. Largely cast as an urban issue by the flyover press, the real crisis and militant resistance is happening in Utah, South Dakota, Mississippi and Idaho-states where unwanted pregnancy rates are high and abortion clinics are sparse and marked for extermination.

Consigned to death row, the loneliest and most forbidding place in America? Fighting for your life against the conveyor-belt execution industry of Texas is qualitatively different from the struggle in Illinois or California where activists and Ivy-league trained litigators are lined up to give aid. In the grim chambers of the row of interior America you can't expect to enjoy the right to a competent lawyer, a fair judge or crusading jour-

nalism students. It's just you against the death machine.

Or try being an environmentalist in the toxic towns of Libby, Montana or Tonopah, Nevada, where cancer rates are soaring, the death threats don't stop at prank calls and the cops are more likely to kick your ass than rush to your defense. It's a lonely and dangerous struggle. But people are doing it. Thousands of them. Fighting as if their lives depended on it – which, of course, they do.

Out here there are no fixed blueprints for resistance. No organizational flow charts for how to plot a rebellion. No focus groups or pulse polls or field-tested PR strategies or genteel formalities for grant applications. Marx would be confused. The human spirit is the best guide. When Peabody Coal announces its intention to evict your grandmother, dynamite her hogan and strip-mine the family sheep pasture, you don't have time to consult Weiden and Kennedy for how to spin it to your advantage or wait around for a year on the infinitesimal chance that Pew Charitable Trusts might drop you a few bucks. You must act. As a group if you can, unilaterally if necessary. Militantly if you must.

### **People under assault**

While the Forest Service sparks a chain-saw in the outback of Wyoming no progressive from Vermont is going to stop them from ravaging the countryside. That job is left to the people who inhabit the places that are under assault day in and day out.

When the ATF or FBI come busting through your kitchen door, rousting you at gunpoint from your bed, roughing up

**try being an environmentalist in the toxic towns of Libby, Montana or Tonopah, Nevada, where cancer rates are soaring, the death threats don't stop at prank calls and the cops are more likely to kick your ass than rush to your defense**

## ANOTHER COUNTRY

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**This is the game plan the Feds have used since the inception of our so-called constitutional republic, and there have always been bloody consequences. Smoke out the non-conformists, or better yet, murder them**

your children, accusing you of being a rightwing crazy, an illegal immigrant or an animal liberation terrorist, the ACLU isn't likely to speed to Wallace, Idaho to bail you out of jail and make your case a cause celebre for constitutional rights. In fact, the FBI could burn down your house, incinerate dozens of women and children, and good liberals in New York and San Francisco will say you had it coming. They already have. See Waco and Ruby Ridge; Cove-Mallard and Wounded Knee.

This is the game plan the Feds have used since the inception of our so-called constitutional republic, and there have always been bloody consequences. Smoke out the non-conformists, or better yet, murder them. Of course there is a silver lining for the rest of us, and that's that these brave rebels are the true heart of the nation. The people who bring about real change. They are the freedom fighters. They are the sons and daughters of César Chávez and Leonard Peltier. Without them, the government's assault on its citizens and the environment would largely go unchecked.

Voting on Election Day, seen as one of the only ways to democratically vent our collective disgust, doesn't always do much good. In fact most of the dissidents in Red America don't vote at all. And for good reason. They know the system is rigged. Besides, they don't trust the government or its policies anyway. They see what it has done for their families and loved ones, and that's not much. They recognize they didn't enjoy the benefits of those federal tax cuts. They know their hardware shop went under because Wal-Mart moved to town. They see that their Grandpa lost

the family homestead because industrialized farms began receiving huge subsidies from Washington. And they sure as hell don't trust the so-called liberal establishment. Why should they? Life under Hillary's husband wasn't any better than it has been under Bush. The resistance isn't always about revolution; it's about maintaining a semblance of dignity in a world where such a thing is in short supply.

### **Farmers against Monsanto**

That's why there has been a resurgence of organic farming in the Red River Valley of North Dakota where farmers like Todd Leake are fighting Monsanto and supporting their families through farmer's markets and community supported agriculture. If you want to learn about the negative effects of genetically modified crops, you don't need to consult a study by a scientist from Berkeley, just talk to the Nelson family of Amenia, North Dakota who stood up to Monsanto after the company sued them for patent infringement.

Or take a trip down to Colorado where feisty environmentalists are fighting the moneyed interests of billionaire Red McCombs who is trying to build yet another sprawling ski resort in the heart of the Rockies. These radical greens are fighting McCombs in the courts and may soon plant their bodies on Forest Service roads to block his bulldozers. Since we're here, may as well take a trip due west to the outback of Escalante, Utah, where Tori Woodard and Patrick Diehl routinely receive death threats for their environmental activism. A few years back, a band of local yahoos vandalized their home, threw bottles of beer through

their front windows, kicked in the front door, trashed the garden, and cut the phone line to their house. It takes real guts to stand up in the distant belly of the beast, where defending the Earth usually results in a face-to-face confrontation with a bulldozer, a taser or a shotgun.

Down in Texas, not far from where the government burned the Branch Davidians alive, anti-death penalty advocates spared the life of Kenneth Foster, who was to be put to death for a murder he didn't commit.

Or traverse Interstate 10 to New Orleans where passionate groups of local citizens, without much help from the Federal government are slowly rebuilding their forgotten neighborhoods. Many lost everything in the devastating, preventable Katrina floods of 2005. But they refuse to give up. Since we are in Louisiana, why not roll on over to the tiny town of Jena where protests rage on over the racist incarceration of six black

youths who were unfairly incarcerated for beating a white kid.

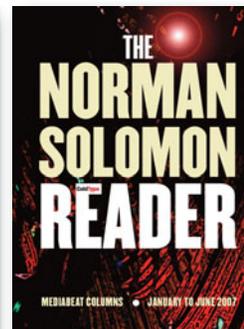
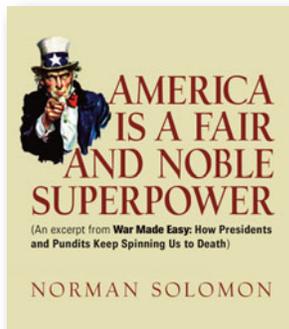
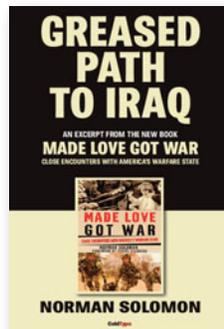
This book offers a just a few snapshots of the grassroots resistance taking place in the forgotten heartland of America. These are tales of rebellion and courage. Out here activism isn't for the faint of heart. Be thankful someone is willing to do the dirty work.

Nope, we're not supposed to exist. But here we are, in the flesh, with mud on our boots and green fire in our souls – living examples of what Greil Marcus calls the Invisible Republic. Deal with it. **CT**

*Joshua Frank was born and raised in Montana. He is co-editor of Dissident Voice, and is author of Left Out! How Liberals Helped Reelect George W. Bush. Jeffrey St. Clair is co-editor of Counterpunch and is author of Been Brown so Long it Looked Green to Me, Born Under A Bad Sky, and co-author of End Times. He hails from Indiana.*

**Many lost everything in the devastating, preventable Katrina floods of 2005. But they refuse to give up**

## THE BEST OF NORMAN SOLOMON



<http://www.coldtype.net/solomon.html>

# PILLAGING AT THE PUMP

**Greg Palast** shows the price of oil has been boosted again and again by keeping a tight rein on Iraq's output

**In 1991, output was again limited, this time by a new red line: B-52 bombings by Bush Senior's air force**

In a hotel room in Brussels, the chief executives of the world's top oil companies unrolled a huge map of the Middle East, drew a fat, red line around Iraq and signed their names to it.

The map, the red line, the secret signatures. It explains this war. It explains this week's rocketing of the price of oil to \$134 a barrel. It happened on July 31, 1928, but the bill came due now.

Barack Obama knows this. Or, just as important, those crafting his policies seem to know this. Same for Hillary Clinton's team. There could be no more vital difference between the Republican and Democratic candidacies. And you won't learn a thing about it on the news from the Fox-holes.

Let me explain: In 1928, oil company chieftains (from Anglo-Persian Oil, now British Petroleum, from Standard Oil, now Exxon, and their Continental counterparts) were faced with a crisis: falling prices due to rising supplies of oil; the same crisis faced by their successors during the Clinton years, when oil traded at \$22 a barrel.

The solution then, as now: stop the flow of oil, squeeze the market, raise the

price. The method: put a red line around Iraq and declare that virtually all the oil under its sands would remain there, untapped. Their plan: choke supply, raise prices rise, boost profits. That was the program for 1928. For 2003. For 2008.

Again and again, year after year, the world price of oil has been boosted artificially by keeping a tight limit on Iraq's oil output. Methods varied. The 1928 "Red-line" agreement held, in various forms, for over three decades. It was replaced in 1959 by quotas imposed by President Eisenhower. Then Saudi Arabia and OPEC kept Iraq, capable of producing over 6 million barrels a day, capped at half that, given an export quota equal to Iran's lower output.

In 1991, output was again limited, this time by a new red line: B-52 bombings by Bush Senior's air force. Then came the Oil Embargo followed by the "Food for Oil" program. Not much food for them, not much oil for us.

In 2002, after Bush Junior took power, the top ten oil companies took in a nice \$31 billion in profits. But then, a miracle fell from the sky. Or, more precisely, the 101st Airborne landed. Bush declared, "Bring'm

on!” and, as the dogs of war chewed up the world’s second largest source of oil, crude doubled in two years to an astonishing \$40 a barrel and those same oil companies saw their profits triple to \$87 billion.

In response, Senators Obama and Clinton propose something wrongly called a “windfall” profits tax on oil. But oil industry profits didn’t blow in on a breeze. It is war, not wind, that fills their coffers. The beastly leap in prices is nothing but war profiteering, hiking prices to take cruel advantage of oil fields shut by bullets and blood. I wish to hell the Democrats would call their plan what it is: A war profiteering tax. War is profitable business – if you’re an oil man. But somehow, the public pays the price, at the pump and at the funerals, and the oil companies reap the benefits. Indeed, the recent engorgement in oil prices and profits goes right back to Bush-McCain “surge.” The Iraq government attack on a Basra militia was really nothing more than Baghdad’s leaping into a gang war over control of Iraq’s Southern oil fields and oil-loading docks. Moqtada al-Sadr’s gangsters and the government-sponsored greedsters of SCIRI (the Supreme Council For Islamic Revolution In Iraq) are battling over an estimated \$5 billion a year in oil shipment kickbacks, theft and protection fees.

*The Wall Street Journal* reported that the surge-backed civil warring has cut Iraq’s exports by up to a million barrels a day. And that translates to slashing OPEC excess crude capacity by nearly half. Result: ka-BOOM in oil prices and ka-ZOOM in oil profits. For 2007, Exxon recorded the highest annual profit, \$40.6 billion, of any enterprise since the building of the pyramids. And that was BEFORE

the war surge and price surge to over \$100 a barrel. It’s been a good war for Exxon and friends. Since George Bush began to beat the war-drum for an invasion of Iraq, the value of Exxon’s reserves has risen – are you ready for this? – by \$2 trillion.

Obama’s war profiteering tax, or “oil windfall profits” tax, would equal just 20% of the industry’s charges in excess of \$80 a barrel. It’s embarrassingly small actually, smaller than every windfall tax charged by every other nation. (Ecuador, for example, captures up to 99% of the higher earnings).

Nevertheless, oilman George W. Bush opposes it as does Bush’s man McCain. Senator McCain admonishes us that the poor widdle oil companies need more than 80% of their windfall so they can explore for more oil. When pigs fly, Senator. Last year, Exxon spent \$36 billion of its \$40 billion income on dividends and special payouts to stockholders in tax-free buy-backs. Even the *Journal* called Exxon’s capital investment spending “stingy.”

At today’s prices Obama’s windfall tax, teeny as it is, would bring in nearly a billion dollars a day for the US Treasury. Clinton’s plan is similar. Yet the press’ entire discussion of gas prices is shifted to whether the government should knock some sales tax pennies off the oil companies’ pillaging at the pump.

More important than even the Democrats’ declaring that oil company profits are undeserved, is their implicit understanding that the profits are the spoils of war. And that’s another reason to tax the oil industry’s ill-gotten gain. Vietnam showed us that foreign wars don’t end when the invader can no longer fight, but when the invasion is no longer profitable.

**CT**

**The Iraq government attack on a Basra militia was really nothing more than Baghdad’s leaping into a gang war over control of Iraq’s Southern oil fields and oil-loading docks**

*Greg Palast is the author of **Trillion Dollar Babies**, on Iraq and oil, published in his New York Times bestseller, **Armed Madhouse**.*

# THE VOTER FRAUD THAT DIDN'T EXIST

Indiana's new voting laws will disenfranchise poor people, but won't prevent most voter fraud, says **Andrew Taylor**

**In some vague, unspecified manner, the fight against voter-fraud is sometimes framed as a corollary effort in the "War on Terror"**

**O**n April 28, The US Supreme Court voted 6-3 to uphold Indiana's Republican-sponsored voter ID law (SEA 483). The law requires the presentation of a government-issued photo ID at the polling place before one can cast a vote. For those without a driver's license, a state issued voter ID is available from the BMV if one can present the requisite materials, such as a birth certificate or a passport. Complaints were filed by Indiana Democrats who claimed that the law disenfranchises voters and discriminates against those with specific political inclinations.

The hysteria about voter fraud has reached a preposterous crescendo in recent years. In some vague, unspecified manner, the fight against voter-fraud is sometimes framed as a corollary effort in the "War on Terror." From the manner in which these concerns are framed by pundits – Republicans, mostly – carry on, you'd think that voter fraud is the greatest threat to American democracy out there today.

While fraud has certainly occurred in the past, the number of votes known to

be fraudulent in the modern era are dwarfed in number – we're talking many orders of magnitude here – by the number of votes lost due to ballots invalidated on technical grounds (dimpled chads and the like). Sadly, there is all too little discussion of this very serious problem in the mainstream media. The fact that significant portions of the population are denied the right to have their vote count due to inadequate polling conditions seems to be of little concern to either party. America is too busy shaking in its collective boots as Al-Qaida goes to the polls disguised as your deceased Uncle Jebediah to re-elect Ted Kennedy.

Given this hysteria, it is all the more curious that the Indiana law does not protect against most forms of voter fraud. It contains no provisions which would prevent fraud perpetrated via voter registration, nor does it affect mail-in/absentee ballots. It is only concerned with "in-person voter impersonation at polling places," about which even the Supreme Court majority decision admits, quoting directly, "The record con-

tains no evidence of any such fraud actually occurring in Indiana at any time in its history.”

That’s right. The law is designed with the exclusive intent of preventing the one form of voter fraud known not to be a threat to the State of Indiana.

The decision begins by explaining that, in determining the constitutionality of the law, the Court must weigh its inconvenience, i.e., the new burdens it places upon voters, against the necessity of preventing the criminality it seeks to eradicate. A direct application of this principle would yield this simple result: some, perhaps many, people will be inconvenienced by a law meant to solve a problem which is historically non-existent.

Yet the authors of the majority decision avoid making this self-damning comparison by quickly moving on to discuss, in an obfuscatory manner, the numerous examples of voter-fraud perpetrated throughout American history. Reading the footnotes, however, shows that virtually all of these cases involve fraud through means other than in-person voter impersonation. To cite that specific tactic in any widespread scheme, the Court has to go back to 1868. In modern times, it mentions one – one – confirmed example of in-person fraud in the entire country, during a gubernatorial election in Washington in 2004. The rest of the whopping horde of 19 “ghost voters” in that election voted by mail-in ballot.

In essence, this law is correcting a problem that is, for all intents and purposes, non-existent, and which at any rate could be effectively prevented by asking a voter at the polling site to sign

a log-book which matches their signature with the one in the voter registry (as is done every time I’ve voted here in New York, and as was done in Indiana before the introduction of the voter ID law).

### **Discriminatory nature**

Justice Scalia’s own addendum to the decision, while citing a long parade of precedents, essentially makes the point that simply because a new voting regulation happens to inconvenience a certain portion of the populations – even if that is a “protected” population – it is not necessarily unconstitutional if the complaining voter cannot demonstrate discriminatory intent.

This seems like sound (if highly debatable) reasoning, so long as you overlook the clearly discriminatory nature of the law. And yet, what is the purpose of the law, if not to discriminate? It does not prevent any form of known fraud. It is universally favored by one party, and universally opposed by the other. Those most affected by it – the poor, aged, and those otherwise immobile – are those most likely to vote Democratic. It has no conceivable purpose aside from reducing the number of voting Democrats.

The motivations behind the bill become even more transparent when one considers the “remedies” offered to citizens of Indiana under the law’s provisions to accommodate those for whom obtaining the free photo ID is either too burdensome, or who find having their image taken to be religiously objectionable. They may, it is stated, cast a mail-in ballot, or, if turned away at the polling site, apply for a provisional ballot. The obvious effect of this law will therefore

**It does not prevent any form of known fraud. It is universally favored by one party, and universally opposed by the other. Those most affected by it – the poor, aged, and those otherwise immobile – are those most likely to vote Democratic**

## THE NUMBERS GAME

**Across the country, provisional ballots cast by legitimately registered voters are thrown out by the bucketful**

be an increase in the use of such ballots. As journalist Greg Palast has noted in *Armed Madhouse* and elsewhere, these types of ballots are far more likely to be discounted as “invalid” due to pernicious technical quibbles (stray marks, and so forth) than ballots filled out on site at the polls. In some districts, they are many times more likely to be thrown out. And these ballots, especially provisional ballots, are cast overwhelmingly by minorities in poor neighborhoods.

This is all part, in other words, of a concerted effort on the part of Republican activists to push Democratic-leaning neighborhoods into less reliable and more frequently challenged (and defrauded) forms of voting to suppress their numbers.

In his dissenting opinion, Justice Souter, joined by Justice Ginsberg, notes the following:

...a State may not burden the right to vote merely by invoking abstract interests, be they legitimate [...] or even compelling, but must make a particular, factual showing that threats to its interests outweigh the particular impediment it has imposed. The State has made no such attempt here, and as to some aspects of its law, it has hardly even tried.

### **Consider the facts**

Poor, old, and disabled voters may find the trip to the BMV prohibitive. Skeptics who argue that “if you can get out to vote, you can get to the BMV,” might want to consider the following: there are far more polling places than there are BMV branches. In many counties, the ratio is 1 BMV for every 12 polling places. In Henry County, there is 1 BMV for 42 polling sites, in Lake County there is one

for every 70, and in Marion County, the ratio is 1 for every 75. Many Indiana counties have only very limited forms of public transportation, with 10% of all Indiana voters living in counties that have no public transportation systems at all.

And what of the provisional ballots offered to registered voters who present themselves at the polls without a photo ID, or who object to being photographed on religious grounds? After casting their ballot, the voter must appear within 10 days before a circuit court clerk or a county election board, and sign an affidavit. This must be done every time such a person wishes to vote. There is only one county seat in each county. Are those dedicated souls willing to make this journey rewarded by having their votes counted? The text of the dissenting opinion notes the following about the 2007 Marion county municipal elections, held under the new ID law:

Thirty-four provisional ballots were cast, but only two provisional voters made it to the county clerk’s office within 10 days[...]All 34 of these voters appeared at the appropriate precinct. 33 of them provided a signature, and every signature matched the one on file; and 26 of the 32 voters whose ballots were not counted had a history of voting in Marion County elections.

This is not some aberration unique to Indiana. Across the country, provisional ballots cast by legitimately registered voters are thrown out by the bucketful. Ditto mail-ins. This is why you hear a lot about them, in glowing terms, from the political Right, and why you will not hear much about the need to increase voter-access to on-site polling sites, longer hours, or weekend polls.

They, quite simply and blatantly, do not want certain people to have their votes counted.

This Supreme Court decision is not a matter of some hair-splitting quibble over arcane legal theories. Both the majority and the authors of the dissent invoke a very straightforward and well established principle of relative harms. The simple fact is that the authors of the majority opinion are only pretending to apply it, and the dissenters actually do.

I suppose we should not be surprised. The vast majority of discussions and political crusade that emanate from above in the name of “defending democracy” and “making every vote count” are put forth in the interest of subverting democracy. When, for instance, Hillary Clinton wants to “count the votes” in the Florida and Michigan primaries, which she initially agreed would not count (as did everyone else in the DNC), it’s not “democracy” that motivates her, but rather opportunism at the cost of democratic fairness.

In the disputed 2000 presidential election, both George W. Bush and Al Gore lobbied the Court, not for “democracy” or “making sure every vote counted,” though both disingenuously claimed that this was their goal, but for a standard of vote-counting that would supposedly work out in their favor (neither candidate actually proposed a state-wide recount of all votes – which not only would have been the most fair proposition, but which, we now know, would have resulted in a Gore victory).

In the case of “voter fraud” the non sequitur between illness and remedy is even more “non.” More and more discrepancies between exit polls and out-

comes, and reports of long lines, accessibility problems, and other forms of disenfranchisement abound on live television each and every election eve. Yet, where does the discussion always turn, within hours, just as the tension and frustration reaches a crescendo? It’s that bogeyman du jour, voter fraud. It’s almost as if they want us to believe that the reason the lines are so long, and that so many ballots are thrown out, is that there are so many impostors out there.

### **Commonsense solutions**

If the State of Indiana was truly interested in preventing voter fraud, it would have passed a law that actually addresses it. There are a few commonsense methods for doing this. If the state feels that it needs to lay down stricter requirements, these requirements should be applied to new registrants at the point of registration, not to previously registered, legitimate voters, and they should be phased in over a reasonable period of time.

Furthermore, the burden is on the state to maintain the integrity of its own records by, for instance, updating the registry database to match it against a list of recent death certificates. Furthermore, any further legal restrictions on voter registration and identification should logically attempt to minimize reliance on those methods of voting most frequently defrauded, not encourage them, which is essentially what Indiana’s law actually does.

Even if one were to defend Indiana’s Voter ID law as constitutional, one would still be faced with the fact that it is, in practice, counterproductive, since it discourages the use of the least-de-

**It’s almost as if they want us to believe that the reason the lines are \ so long, and that so many ballots are thrown out, is that there are so many impostors out there**

## THE NUMBERS GAME

**Because Indiana has failed in its obligation to remove dead-people and non-residents from its voter rolls, it has decided to make voting more restrictive for legal, living residents**

frauded form of voting (in-person poll attendance) and encourages the use of methods known to be more easily and more commonly defrauded.

But such incompetence, it appears, is not unusual for the government of the State of Indiana, about which the National Government filed a complaint:

“Indiana has failed to conduct a general program that makes a reasonable effort to identify and remove ineligible voters from the State’s registration list; has failed to remove such ineligible voters; and has failed to engage in oversight actions sufficient to ensure that local election jurisdictions identify and remove such ineligible voters.”

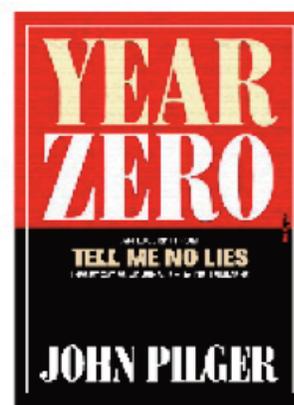
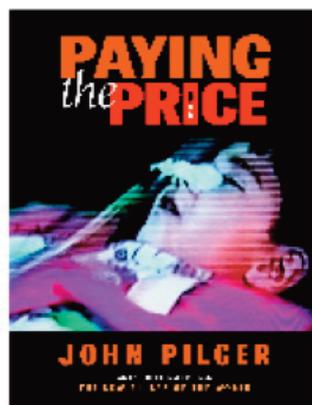
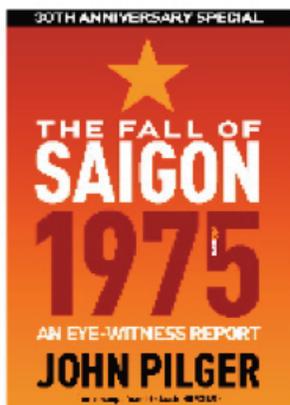
In other words, because Indiana has failed in its obligation to remove dead-people and non-residents from its voter

rolls, it has decided to make voting more restrictive for legal, living residents. This is looking-glass legislation at its best.

Thanks to the Indiana government’s laziness, incompetence, and disregard for the needs of its most vulnerable citizens, the most right-wing Supreme Court in memory has been handed the means render “constitutional” the most restrictive voter ID law in the country, a de facto poll tax, thus setting a precedent for the rest of the country to follow. **CT**

*Andrew Taylor is the Associate Editor of the online literary magazine Menda City Review, and a senior contributing editor at Cyrano's Journal. He is the author of numerous short stories, published both online and in print. His political blog is <http://oni-bh.blogspot.com>*

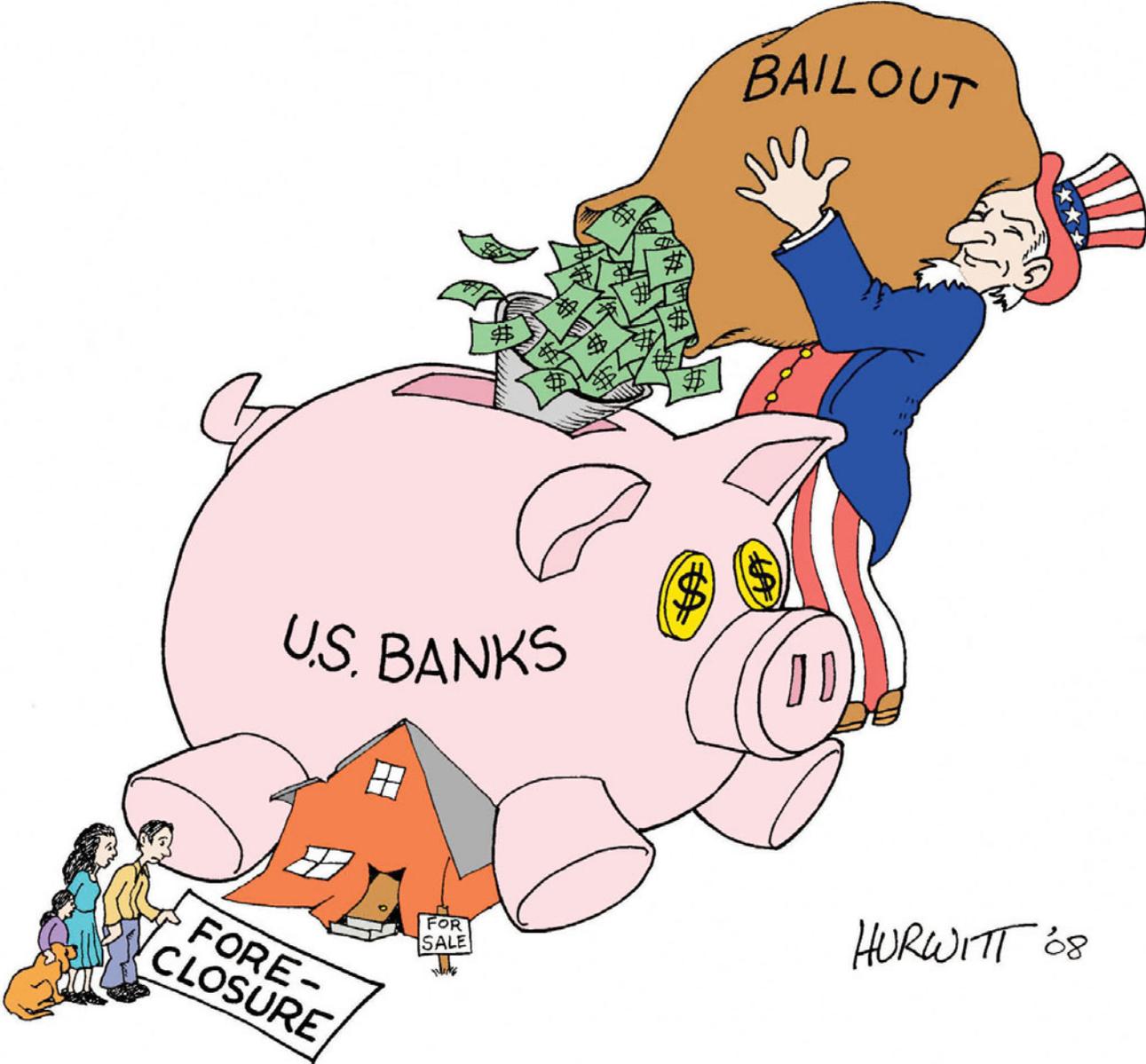
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