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Frontiersman

Facing the truth, however great the cost.

August 2004

Prisoner Abuse, Abu Ghraib and USA

Anonymous, By Request

When I saw the scenes of American soldiers mistreating Iraqi prisoners in Abu Ghraib prison, I asked myself how my countrymen and women could behave in such a fashion. It didn't compute.

When I read, however, that the guards over there worked at home predominantly as prison guards, things began to fall into place. Our prisons are notorious for their brutality and inhumanity. From a lack of rehabilitation to routine mistreatment to the pervasive practice of prison rape, it's an ugly picture. According to Dostoyevsky, one can tell the character of a country by knowing the character of its prisons. We fare poorly by that measure. What follows is an excerpt from a letter from Equal Justice USA, a project of the Quixote Center, a peace and social activism NGO in Hyattsville, MD, www.quixote.org. Note the bios of the accused Abu Ghraib prison guards.

Imagine: a prisoner dumped in scalding water so hot that his skin peeled off. Prisoners left outside naked in the rain for days. Prisoners forced by guards to play Roman gladiator games against each other. Inmates made to strip and crawl naked on the ground while guards prodded their backs and genitals with stun guns.

Scenes from Iraq?

No. While tales of similar abuse of Iraqi prisoners have plastered the headlines in recent weeks, these are ordinary scenes from American prisons. From California to Texas to Pennsylvania, such abuse is routine....

With the Iraqi prison scandal, the cycle of violence of our criminal justice system has come full circle. It's no coincidence that the abuse abroad looks so much like that at home. Some of the key

actors in the Iraqi arena come right out of the U.S. criminal justice system:

- *Spc. Charles Graner* appears in some of the worst photos from Iraq. He is a guard from Pennsylvania's Greene County State Correctional Institution, home to the state's death row and notorious for reports of beating, humiliation, and other inhumane treatment of prisoners. Nick Yarris, who was released from Pennsylvania's death row in January after being exonerated for a crime he did not commit, remembers Graner as "violent, abusive, arrogant and mean-spirited." According to Yarris, Graner was directly involved in physically assaulting prisoners on several occasions.

- *Sgt. Ivan "Chip" Frederick* is the senior of six non-officers charged with mistreatment at Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq. Frederick was a civilian corrections officer at Buckingham Correctional Center in Virginia for six years. He contends that he raised his concerns about the treatment of prisoners in Iraq to his superiors and was simply told not to worry about it. His commander, on the other hand, holds him and Graner responsible for much of the abuse.

- *Lane McCotter* was hand-picked by Attorney General John Ashcroft to direct the reopening of the Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq and trained the guards there. McCotter has a long history in the U.S. criminal justice system. He resigned under pressure as the director of the Utah Department of Corrections after a schizophrenic inmate died while shackled, naked, to a restraining chair for 16 hours. His business, Management & Training Corporation, runs 13 private prisons in the U.S. and was criticized by the Justice Department for unsafe conditions in their Santa Fe, NM jail....

Especially troublesome is the appointment of Lane McCotter by Atty. Gen. Ashcroft, one more reason why Ashcroft is the most dangerous cabinet officer since Ed Meece and James Watt. ∞

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Source: Liberty Artworx, Scott Bieser, Proprietor
<http://www.libertyartworx.com/>

Fahrenheit 9/11

A Review by Don J. Cormier

Director Michael Moore's filmic polemic, *Fahrenheit 9/11*, tells a tale of evil in high places, and paints a sensationally derogatory portrait of President George W. Bush. Currently breaking box-office records around the country and the world, it may well influence the outcome of the November presidential elections. According to Moore, Bush must go because:

1. During the 70s and 80s, the Bush family and close Bush associates developed strong financial ties with the Saudi ruling class, including the wealthy bin Laden family. The ties became so close that the Bush clique became in effect a "fifth column" for the Saudi royal family.

2. The Bush-Saudi clique adopted the goal of deposing Saddam Hussein and getting control of Iraq's oil long before the terrorist acts.

3. During the 2000 presidential race, Bush knew that he would win Florida, because his brother, Jeb Bush, had installed a system of voter qualification which would "accidentally" disenfranchise hundreds of probable democratic voters. Also, the woman in charge of counting votes in Florida was the head of Bush's election committee.

4. After being installed in office, Bush and his

advisors Condoleeza Rice and Colin Powell downplayed or ignored obvious indications that the U.S. would be attacked by Islamic terrorists. At best, that indicates incompetence. At worst, it could mean that the Bush-Saudi clique knew about Osama Bin Laden's plans didn't interfere so there would be a plausible excuse for war in the Mid-East.

5. Shortly after the 9/11 attacks, while virtually all non-military flights were canceled, members of the Bin Laden family were jetted out of the U.S., with little or no questioning.

6. When it was publicly revealed that a majority of the 9/11 hijackers were Saudi nationals, the U.S. government attempted to investigate inside Saudi Arabia, but that was resisted by the Saudi government.

7. The war in Afghanistan was not primarily motivated by a desire to find Osama Bin Laden or to destroy Al Qaeda. Rather, the Bush-Saudi clique wanted to remove the Taliban government, which was uncooperative in regard to an oil-pipeline project.

8. Under Saddam's regime, most Iraqis had more safety and prosperity than they do today.

9. The U.S. troops in Iraq are behaving in cruel and brutal ways that will probably generate long-lasting hatred of Americans and increase the likelihood of terrorist attacks.

10. The Bush clique is restructuring the U.S. economy in ways that will eliminate jobs, and tend to coerce poor people into "voluntarily" joining the military.

11. At the same time that Bush publicly praises the military, he wants to cut pay and benefits for enlisted people and their families.

12. The Patriot Act is being used to harass and intimidate opponents of the Bush regime.

If this tale of villainy is true, then Bush and his cronies should be thrown in jail. The question is, should this litany be taken at face value?

Conservative commentators such as Bill O'Reilly, Rush Limbaugh, and Christopher Hitchens have accused Moore of lying. While Moore may be somewhat faulty in his statements, it seems to me that he cannot be too far off the truth, because the bulk of his footage is taken from standard news sources such as →

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CNN, ABC, and the BBC. I remember seeing at least one of those news clips when it was first broadcast. For the most part, Moore does not seem to be fabricating anything, but merely interpreting public data in a way that demonizes George W Bush. Interpretation is the key — Moore's case is based entirely on circumstantial evidence which, as every fan of crime fiction knows, is open to interpretation. Bush's supporters are trying to explain away everything in terms that make Bush look like a saint — but which spin is more plausible? Ultimately, *Fahrenheit 9/11* is no more irrefutable than a prosecuting attorney's opening speech.

In terms of craft, the film is a great achievement. It would not surprise me if Moore goes down in cinematic history with Sergi Eisentien and Leni Riefenstahl as a master of propaganda. *Fahrenheit* evokes laughter, tears, and rage — the lodestones of both entertainment and politics. One particular sequence stands out for its artistry and also because it explains

the film's title.

When the film presents the World Trade center attack, Moore shows none of the familiar footage of the towers burning and collapsing. Instead, the screen goes dark and the soundtrack plays a confused mixture of cries, police radio calls, rumbling, and sirens. After a few seconds, images of the aftermath begin to appear on the screen. Among them are long-held shots of the New York sky, filled with millions of office documents from the towers, fluttering down with the ashes. This image of smoke and paper probably suggested Ray Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451*, a tale of book burning and dictatorship. In a story that appeared in the June 23-29 issue of *Metro Silicon Valley*, Moore was quoted by author Geoffrey Dunn as saying "*Fahrenheit 9/11* is the temperature at which *freedom* burns." While we can all hope that this statement is mere liberal rhetoric, evidence is accumulating which suggests that it is the terrible truth. ∞

Letters to the Editor

[Response to *Intolerable in Any Denomination*, July 2004, page 1]

A thought on modifying the noise statutes to accommodate religious announcements:

Do not.

There is too much noise in our environment to allow any more.

If you grant a variance for one religion, you must also do it for all religions, sects, and cults. I am sure there are many groups that would like to announce their presence to their neighbors aurally, loudly, and repeatedly. Expect protests by non members or unauthorized aural broadcasts by the irate.

To the protest that a voice may not be heard above the ambient noise (for instance traffic noise), you should reply that the less intrusive technology of a paging system would be sufficient to inform all believers without intruding upon the serenity of non believers. A paging system could simultaneously trigger every believer's pager. These systems have been used for decades to remind people of meetings, appointments, etc. If they complain that their religion does not use technology, then remind them that loudspeakers are technological.

—Sir James the Bold

The CIA Ate My Homework — Well, I see that the "blame it all on the CIA" organ grinder is running full tilt. Oh please give me a break! President Bush, along with his henchmen, Cheney, Rumsfeld and the Neocons, made it clear to George Tenet what was wanted — "evidence" of a Saddam/Al Qaeda plot and WMDs (but they didn't ask explicitly, for heavens sake! Got to preserve that plausible deniability.) — and Tenet delivered. Then, when the whole thing went sour, the poor man fell on his sword.

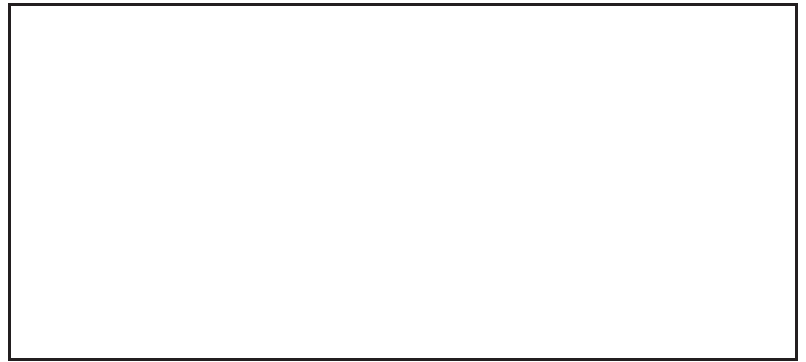
So now we get to listen to Bush cry crocodile tears for a while, not to mention the bogus high dudgeon of Republican Senators and the sniveling of the Democrats (enough to make me hurl), until the whole thing blows over: unless, of course, Iraq **really** goes South; then the tears will be real. (Actually, the families of killed and wounded soldiers and Iraqi civilians are crying real tears already. We do well to remember that.) Do I sound angry? I am. I **hate** this sort of manipulation. It's been going on since the beginning of the Cold War — heck, since the beginning of the Republic. Presidents want to pursue sleazy foreign policy adventures that they could never sell on the merits. So, they lie and connive and create *fait accompli* in order to get their way. Dizzgusting! —John C.

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Nation in Distress

An economy that must
continue to grow in
order to function at all is
a terminally flawed
economy.



Acknowledgments

My thanks to the following: Sir James the Bold, SantaClara Bob, Lady Jan the Voluptuous, Joseph, of Northridge, California, and Sir Donald the Elusive. —editor

Buck Hunter Shoots Off His Mouth

Dear Buck

I'd like to find a source of mohair, for yarn. Any suggestions? —Fabric Freak

Dear Fabric Freak

I don't know of anybody who raises moes.

A little lemon and seltzer will remove those pesky ink stains after you've been fingerprinted. —Martha Stewart

Frontiersman

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Signs Found in Kitchens

Original Source Unknown. Forwarded by Don G.

- A messy kitchen is a happy kitchen, and this kitchen is delirious.
- Blessed are they who can laugh at themselves for they shall never cease to be amused.
- Countless numbers of people have eaten in this kitchen and then gone on to lead normal lives.
- Help keep the kitchen clean — eat out.
- No husband has ever been shot by his wife while he was doing the dishes.
- Thou shalt not weigh more than thy refrigerator. ∞

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