

The Stench of American Hypocrisy: Crimes of Torture and “The American Dream”

Part II

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In a recent column, “The Stench of American Hypocrisy,” I noted that US public officials and media are on their high horse about the rule of law in Burma while the rule of law collapses unremarked in the US. Americans enjoy beating up other peoples for American sins. Indeed, hypocrisy has become the defining characteristic of the United States.

Hypocrisy in America is now so commonplace it is no longer noticed. Consider the pro-football star Michael Vick. In a recent game Vick scored 6 touchdowns, totally dominating the playing field. His performance brought new heights of adulation, causing National Public Radio to wonder if the sports public shouldn’t retain a tougher attitude toward a dog torturer who spent 1.5 years in prison for holding dog fights.

I certainly do not approve of mistreating animals. But where is the outrage over the US government’s torture of people? How can the government put a person in jail for torturing dogs but turn a blind eye to members of the government who tortured people?

Under both US and international law, torture of humans is a crime, but the federal judiciary turns a blind eye and even allows false confessions extracted by torture to be used in courts or military tribunals to send tortured people to more years in prison based on nothing but their coerced self-incrimination.

Compare Vick’s treatment of dogs with, for example, the US government’s treatment of Canadian “child soldier” Omar Khadr. Khadr was 15 when he was captured in Afghanistan in 2002, the only survivor of a firefight and an air strike on a Taliban position. He was near death, with wounds to his eyes and shoulder and shot twice in the back. The Americans accused the boy of having thrown a hand grenade during the military encounter that resulted in the death of a US soldier.

Omar Khadr

As there was no witness to support the accusation, Khadr was tortured into submission. He was beaten, deprived of sleep, left hanging with his arms chained above his head, hooded and threatened by dogs. The National Post of Canada (Nov. 6, 2010) reports: “His chief interrogator at Bagram admitted to telling the teenage boy that unless he co-operated, he would be sent to a U.S. prison, where a group of black men would gang rape him to death.”

Despite this and other evidence that Khadr was coerced by torture into agreeing that he killed a U.S. soldier during a military firefight that left Khadr all but dead, U.S. military judge

Col. Patrick Parrish ruled that Khadr's "confession" had been freely given and could be used to convict him in court.

The charge against Khadr is an invention. We don't know whether Khadr was a combatant or just happened to be in the place where the American attack took place.

Khadr is accused of "murder in violation of the laws of war." Such a crime does not exist. Soldiers who are enemy combatants are not tried for killing one another. As the Americans had pulled Khadr's "crime" out of a hat, they definitely needed a guilty plea. Shortly before the "trial," the Americans told Khadr that if he did not plead guilty and escaped conviction, they would hold him indefinitely in a torture prison as an enemy combatant.

This is the behavior of Nazi Germany. When German courts freed Nazi victims from false charges, the Gestapo simply picked up the cleared defendants when they left the court house and sent them to camps or prisons.

At the last minute new charges appeared out of thin air in order to beef up the nonexistent case against Khadr. He was forced to admit to killing two Afghan soldiers and to sign away his right to sue his jailers for torturing him. In court, Col. Parrish repeatedly emphasized that Khadr admitted his guilt freely of his own accord. In other words, Parrish lied in court by presenting a coerced confession as "willingly given." This is typical of US prosecutors.

In a powerful editorial, "Stalin Would Have Been Proud," the National Post of Canada said: "what it really was, was a show trial. . . . They could have told him to confess that he had simultaneously piloted all four hijacked planes on 9/11, and he would have done it."

The National Post goes on to say that Stalin's torture techniques, which "inspired the standard operating procedures at Abu Ghraib, Bagram, Guantanamo and the secret black sites, were not designed to elicit truth. They were designed to produce false confessions."

The Americans need false confessions in order to maintain fear of terrorists among the deceived population and in order to cover up the US government's crimes of torture.

If a case can be worse, it is the case of the young American educated neuroscientist, Dr. Aafia Siddiqui. Read Yvonne Ridley's account in *Cage Prisoners*, February 12, 2010.

Siddiqui and her three young children were kidnapped. Siddiqui was tortured and abused by the Americans and their Pakistani puppets simply because Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, according to Wikipedia her second husband's uncle, mentioned her name during one of the 180 times that he was waterboarded. Reminds me of reports by Soviet dissidents that when they were being tortured by the KGB, they tried to remember names on gravestones to give to the authorities, and when they couldn't they gave whatever names popped into their memories.

Siddiqui's young children apparently are still missing. While she was in detention, Siddiqui herself was shot in the stomach by an American soldier, allegedly after she managed to seize his rifle and point it at him. This absurd story was enough for federal judge Richard Berman to sentence her to prison for 86 years for assault with a deadly weapon and attempting to kill U.S. personnel. Obviously, Berman knows where his bread is buttered, and it is not by justice.

We imprisoned Michael Vick, because he tortured dogs. But Department of Justice (DOJ) officials John Yoo and Jay Bybee, in close collaboration with the George W. Bush White House and VP Dick Cheney's office, fabricated the argument that US and international laws against torture do not apply to the US president. Yoo and Bybee were found by the DOJ's Office of Professional Responsibility to have violated professional standards. However, DOJ official David Margolis reduced the charges to "exercised poor judgment." This despite the fact that Yoo actually asserted to an Office of Professional Responsibility investigator that Bush's powers as commander-in-chief provided Bush with the authority to unilaterally order, without recourse to law, the mass murder of civilians.

Vick didn't get off with "exercised poor judgment." In US "justice," torturing dogs is a worse crime than torturing people.

In the US, if you torture a dog you go to prison, but if you are a member of the government you can give a green light to torture, and your reward will be to be appointed professor of law at the "liberal" University of California, Berkeley (Yoo) and to the federal bench (Bybee).

With so many executive branch known criminals running around at large, what did the lobbyists' representatives, aka the US Congress, do? They excoriated Charles Rangel, the black US Representative from Harlem.

What had Rangel done? Had he indulged in even more heinous acts of torture, rape, and murder than the executive branch officials? No. Rangel helped a school raise money, and as the school was going to name itself after him, Rangel "benefitted personally" from using the power of his office to help the school to raise money. Rangel also committed another grave crime. He used a New York apartment, which was designated for residential use only, as a campaign office. Rangel also failed to pay income tax on rent from a condo in the Dominican Republic, most likely an insignificant sum of which an 80-year old man run off his feet by his demanding job might not have been aware.

Because of these "serious crimes," the House Rules Committee concluded that Rangel brought discredit upon the House of Representatives.

I mean, really, how many things can you think of that are of less consequence than Rangel's transgressions? We have a Congress that is bought and paid for by lobbyists, whose every vote is lobbyist determined by campaign contributions that financially benefit the Representatives and Senators. But Rangel is guilty because he helped a school raise money?

We have a Congress that has forfeited its power to declare war and sits complicit while the president not only usurps its power but uses illegitimate power to commit war crimes by launching naked aggressions on the basis of lies and deception.

We have a Congress that turns a blind eye to criminal actions by the president, vice president, and executive branch, including violations of US statutory law against torture, violations of US statutory law against spying on Americans without warrants, and violations of every legal protection in the Bill of Rights, from the right of privacy to habeas corpus.

The hallmarks of the remade US legal system, thanks to the "war on terror," are coerced self-incrimination and indefinite detention or murder without charges or evidence. "Freedom and democracy" America has resurrected the legal system of the Dark Ages.

But Rangel who helped a school is stripped of his Ways and Means chairmanship and censored by the bought-and-paid-for-Congress. One has the impression that Rangel must have done something far more serious, such as criticize the illegal wars or the banksters' rip-off of American taxpayers. Or do we simply have a case of white people ganging up on a black?

With the criminal mega-rich banksters, thanks to their agents ensconced in the US Treasury, regulatory agencies, and the Federal Reserve, free of regulatory oversight, on whose head does regulation fall? It falls on 13-year olds who sell cupcakes in public parks.

In Westchester County, New York, New Castle Councilman Michael Wolfensohn called the police on 13-year olds Andrew DeMarchis and Kevin Graff for selling cupcakes, cookies, brownies and Rice Krispie treats in a Chappaqua park. The kids were guilty of being vendors on town property without a license.

The kids were making about \$100 a day and had capitalist dreams of starting a business. But regulation stopped them cold. A license cost between \$150 and \$350 for a scant two hours, and a \$1 million insurance certificate is also required.

So banksters, who were able to purchase with campaign contributions, and who knows how much in under-the-table-payoffs, the repeal of the depression era banking regulations and then some, are scot free after having robbed taxpayers of bailout funds and their pension retirements. But the cupcake business of two 13-year olds is closed down.

What does it say about a population of 300 million that fails to see the hypocrisy in this?

Has a more insouciant population ever existed?

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