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■ In my opinion

Not in our house



JENNIFER MCBRIDE
QUASHING DISSENT

Fool me once, shame on you. Shame on the American people for letting a culture of torture become quick-fixed with a few mock trials. Despite the fact that the current regime has undermined the war on terror by reminding the anti-American world just how hypocritical we are, the voters seemed unwilling to oust President Bush, even when taking into consideration the horrors of Abu Ghraib. At the very least, the president could offer himself some deniability by outsourcing the torture as well as the tech jobs — but what do you expect from a government that can't even figure out how to bribe somebody properly?

Fool me twice...

What did you think would happen in a closed camp of prisoners who are unable to see the light of day, much less a lawyer? The fact that Mr. Rumsfeld was keeping such respected organizations as the Red Cross away from our detainees might have been a clue that something was wrong — there is a reason that due process is so heavily enthroned in the constitution: The government was considered untrustworthy.

The outrages at Guantanamo Bay have gone horribly underreported in the media. The New York Times tells horror stories gleaned from anonymous interviews of the overseers of a dark process of systemic humiliation, where one in six prisoners faced illegal treatment. The only dishonor here is to America, where the shores that are supposed to be sweeping bastions of liberty have become nesting places for the apathetic shells of men and women who don't seem to give a damn about enemas forcibly administered, Meow Mix commercials played at maximum volume and people under the aegis of a government lolling pitifully about in its own feces.

Apparently, all those wonderful values preached from every single politician's pulpit can be swept under a throw rug. The U.S. signed a

declaration of human rights admitting that some civil liberties have no borders and that basic humanity cannot be taken away with a label of "enemy combatant." Most of our treaties, our world obligations, might as well include the words: "as if."

It is time to face up to a couple of myths: One, that the American people are the most generous in the world. We may talk big, but our pitifully small foreign aid budget may not swell much despite tsunamis. The U.S. pledged \$1.1 billion to the city of Bam, Iran, rocked by earthquakes in 2003, but, according to the Economist, only \$16.7 million ever managed to make its way to the humanitarian coffers because tax cuts are apparently more important than human lives, as long as those lives are far enough away that the media forget them after the cameras are gone.

Another myth is the idea that our military can do no wrong. How can you trust an organization to police itself when torture occurs not once, but twice, months apart in two different places? National security is the first priority of any government, but if there is so little to be gained, why are we embarrassing ourselves, generating more guerilla fighters and destroying our ability to negotiate with the world if those actions can't even guarantee us a little safety?

I'd bet money that more Americans can name the football teams in the playoffs than can discuss the details of any of those resoundingly important issues, which is perhaps why the Republicans in Congress are happily licking President Bush's

cowboy-booted feet. Their cowardice sickens me and makes me ashamed I ever considered myself a conservative. Where is the backbone of the Grand Old Party? Where is the backbone of the people who voted for them? Can't anyone outside of newspaper editorial pages at least pretend to care about the qualifications of a man who called the Geneva Conventions "quaint" and "obsolete?"

The Bush Administration's protection of rights has been less than rabid, and Congress has still failed to establish an independent watchdog group that can monitor the government properly. President Bush has graciously gummed the wheels by setting up his own committee, but somehow their autonomy strikes me as less than complete — it might have something to do with the fact that the oversight board has no power of subpoena. Federal judges appointed one after another tear up our civil rights like predators, and the administration is trying to anoint W. David Hager, a doctor who refuses to prescribe birth control prescriptions to unmarried women, as head of the FDA's Reproductive Health Drugs Advisory Committee. These actions are pretty much uncontested in favor of tongue-biting party loyalty. Courage in the Senate is apparently a dish served ... well, never.

If Congress continues this phenomenally appalling trend of rights-shredding that makes the Supreme Court look like a bunch of hippies, we inflammatory columnists may all be facing manacles by 2008. Freedom of speech and religion are already on the chopping block.

One thing is certain: I'd prefer Miss Beazley, President Bush's newest Scottish terrier, to be attorney general over Mr. Gonzales. If the American people knew a thing or two about pride, they'd be willing to scream with one voice: "not in our house."

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INBOX

LTD charges higher prices for lower quality service

I am addressing the fact that for the last two years the LTD bus service has increased our prices and decreased our bus service. In other words we are paying more and getting less. And now they want to cut the drivers' pay and benefits—to what end? I thought LTD was the community's transit service provider, but it seems more like LTD is in the business of creating grandiose public works projects instead of serving their customers wants, which is decent bus service like we used to get.

The following is taken from a poster displayed prominently all around LL Bean in Freeport, Maine and also is displayed where I work. I think that Mr. Hamm and other board members need to be reminded just why they are there and why LTD exists:

What is a customer? A customer is the most important person ever in this office ... in person or by mail. A

customer is not dependent on us ... we are dependent on him. A customer is not an interruption of our work ... he is the purpose of it. We are not doing him a favor by serving him ... he is doing us a favor by giving us the opportunity to do so.

Judy Young
Eugene

LTD drivers only want what management owes

If I were to ask, "Would you like your employer to pay for all your benefits?" I doubt the response would be, "No, I love having wages deducted from my check." People have been led to believe that they are not worthy, that they are undeserving of the employers paying for their benefits. It saddens me people feel this way.

The goal of the LTD labor strike is not just about us; we're fighting for the good of the American labor force. Our direction takes us toward no employee contributions being the norm.

Rebecca Emerson
LTD Bus Driver

OREGON DAILY EMERALD LETTERS POLICY

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■ Editorial

LTD drivers might strike; Torturer gets ten years

LTD leadership has one last chance to prevent strike

The Emerald fully supports Lane Transit District drivers, and other union members, in their struggle with LTD leadership.

Today the two sides will sit down for one more try at mediation. The main issue in the dispute involves health care coverage: Union employees want to keep the benefits that they currently enjoy, while LTD insists it cannot afford to do so.

We hope that an understanding will be reached so that a strike can be avoided. But if LTD refuses to meet the union's demands, the Emerald fully supports a strike, even though the impact would be very costly to University students and the Eugene community as a whole.

According to an Emerald report (ODE: "Eugeneans back LTD drivers at demonstration," Jan. 14), LTD gets over a half-million dollars in student fees to provide students with free, unlimited rides. Nearly 3,000 University students and employees use the bus to get to and from campus. Lane Community College students would be also be severely impacted if a strike occurs.

We hope the LTD will refund student fees if bus service is shut down. We hope that University students will attempt to carpool to school. And we hope that the community will not blame the union for the added frustration. We must stand in solidarity with the drivers as they fight for the rights that all workers deserve: a family wage, health benefits and respect.

Let the punishment fit the crime; justice must prevail in abuse cases

Charles Graner received a sentence of 10 years for his role in the abuse at Abu Ghraib. Many Iraqis are disappointed at the sentence, some saying that he should serve his sentence at Abu Ghraib enduring the torture he inflicted on the prisoners under his care. Others have argued that he was simply doing what he was told, and should not be culpable for following orders.

The sentence was an appropriate beginning. Graner deserved a decade for his immoral actions. He is a remorseless, sick man incapable of shame. After his sentence, Graner actually said, "I did not enjoy it." Right. That is why he was posing and smiling in those photos behind a mountain of naked prisoners. I'm sure it was pure hell for him.

Justice will not be served, however, if the prosecutions end here. Graner was not acting alone. He was a morally-challenged proxy for an evil scheme developed and condoned by his superiors. Those up the ladder must also be made to pay for their actions if this ruling is going to convince the Iraqi people and the world that we are serious about spreading the idea of liberty and justice for all.

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