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Torture in Iraq

By TEAGUE NEAL
The Tattoo

The nightmare at Abu Ghraib has caused the world to look with disgust at a vast outpouring of prison photos, videos and previously secret information that has undermined whatever legitimacy the war in Iraq may have possessed.

The abuse "was just horrific," said Tiffany Abdool, a 16-year-old who attends Oakville Trafalgar High School in Ontario, Canada.

"I mean when you saw those pictures it showed you how cruel Americans can really be, like no offense to them, of course, but still that was just mean and cruel," she said. "I was shocked and appalled."

These dreadful pictures from the Iraqi prison are enough to make anyone sick to his stomach. They clearly raise serious questions for the people who are supposed to be taking care of our safety and bringing war-torn dictatorships into a new era democracy and to justice, leaders who should have known better.

We are supposed to believe from the White House that this is a breaking news story - and for the public, it is. But this "breaking news" can actually be

traced back to April 2003 when the International Red Cross and other humanitarian aid organizations complained about the inhumane and illegal abuse happening in the Iraqi prisons controlled by Americans and their allies.

Even before the Red Cross issued warnings, the Bush administration was creating the conditions that led to the brutality in Iraq. In the midst of the war in Afghanistan after the September 11, 2001 terror attacks, U.S. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld said that enemy combatants picked up in the fighting "will be handled not as prisoners of war because they're not, but as unlawful combatants. As I understand it technically, unlawful combatants do not have any right under the Geneva Convention."

With that decision to ignore the treaty provisions, Rumsfeld essentially justified doing anything to prisoners who came into American hands during the wars waged by President Bush.

With Rumsfeld's tacit endorsement, American and British soldiers sexually, emotionally and physically abused Iraqi prisoners of war, forcing them to assume sexual positions, wear green garbage bags over their heads, face vicious dogs and more.

"I thought that it was absolutely disgusting and sick that anyone would think of doing something like that," said Erica Bros, a 17-year-old at Lorne Park High School in Mississauga, Ontario.

Just consider the photo showing a naked Iraqi male prisoner, terrified and cornered while American soldiers with big smiles on their faces surround him with vicious guard dogs baring their teeth at the man. How would they like to be him?

Yet Bush, who apologized for the crimes, can still call Rumsfeld a "really good defense secretary" despite it all.

Please! I think the word horrific may be too light on him for allowing the unspeakable to happen in Iraq, literally.

The Geneva Convention must be followed word for word by countries holding prisoners of war, with no exceptions.

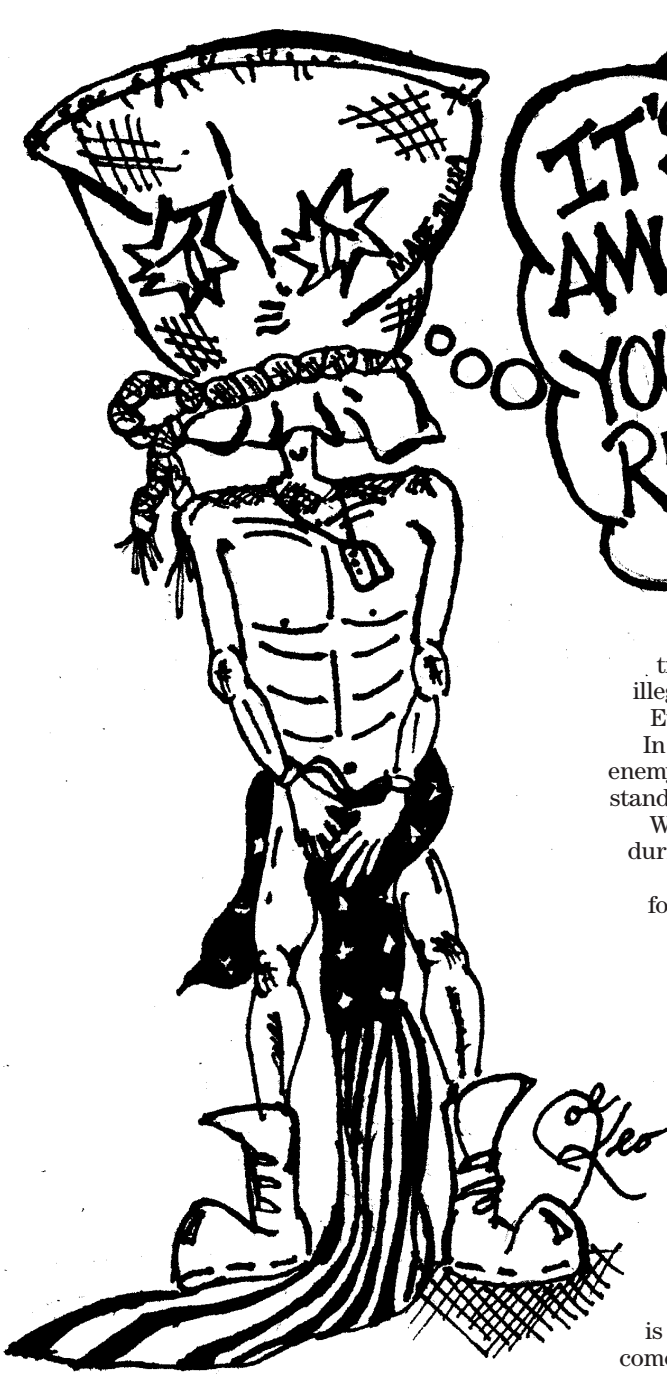
Among its provisions is a guarantee that prisoners who "may have complaints to make regarding their conditions of captivity" have the right to transmit their concerns to their leaders.

Had the prisoners at Abu Ghraib been allowed free, unlimited communication with their leaders - as international law mandates - then the abuse there would likely have come to close more than a year ago.

There would have been no sexual abuse, no packing people in ice or any of the other horrors that went on and on at the prison.

With those photos and videos bearing witness to what happened, "Operation Iraqi Freedom" is going to wind up in history books as another dark chapter in humanity's history.

I'm sure that war veterans - whether they fought in World War II, Korea, Vietnam or Afghanistan - cannot even fathom why this horror is going on in Iraq today. Yes, the dictatorship, executions and terror during the tyranny of Saddam Hussein and his followers needed to come to an end. But do we need to kill thousands upon thousands, injure countless others and inflict abuse on those we happen to capture? George Bush, British Prime Minister Tony Blair, the U.S. Army and the British armies: what is it you think you are doing over there?



Joe Keo / The Tattoo

Opinion

Preparing all year for one final exam

By KATIE JORDAN
The Tattoo

Spring is a beautiful time of year. No, I'm not talking about the flowers and sunshine. I'm not even talking about the fact that summer vacation is so close I can almost taste the freedom. No, the reason I'm rejoicing is because I've finally finished my two advanced placement (AP) exams.

For those of you who have never experienced an AP class, and especially for those of you who are considering taking one, let me give you a glimpse of what I went through, and let you decide whether you're up to the challenge. My first taste of the AP program was a year and a half ago, second semester of my sophomore year, when my class made the transition from civics to AP U.S. history.

Actually, that's not really true. The fact is, I had an idea of what was coming ages before second semester actually rolled around. My teacher never missed an opportunity to gleefully inform us that we were taking the AP at our own risk, and our grades would almost certainly take a nose dive.

I'm glad he warned us, because otherwise I might have been very unpleasantly surprised by the difficulty of the course. But at the same time, I don't think the constant reminding produced

exactly the most desirable result. By the time the AP hit, I think some of us had been a little desensitized. Like skiers trapped in an avalanche, we had lost almost all hope of survival.

The low expectations didn't exactly ensure that everyone would give 100 percent effort on every assignment. We adjusted, though.

Soon we found that there were more expectations than for any other class, in terms of the amount of material and the ways in which we were expected to apply it.

The class is taught to the exam, with heavy focus on the three sections on the exam: multiple choice, free response essay, and every AP-er's favorite assignment, one that can be summed up in three little letters: the DBQ. Unlike the ordinary essay questions, DBQs (Data Based Questions, for those of you who are out of the AP history loop) require not only historical knowledge, but the ability to analyze snippets of historical documents.

Surprisingly enough, these aren't the most riveting pieces of writing a high school student has ever laid eyes upon. But somehow we muddled through it all, without too many concussions from sleepy heads hitting desks, even

though we had it first period, before any high school student is really awake.

To be honest, I didn't think the class was as hard as I was expecting it to be. It was demanding, and no cakewalk. But - even though it came close - my brain never actually exploded. And just when I was thinking everything was relatively smooth sailing, just when I'd gotten into the swing of things, and maybe even started to slack off a little - then the countdown to the AP exam began.

Time was running out. We were all studying like maniacs. Well, okay, we were all sort of slacking off and saying we planned to start studying like maniacs really soon. But the point is, we were all feeling the pressure.

Then came the daily after-school reviews. The not mandatory but "HIGHLY recommended" after school reviews. The entire two weeks before May 7th - the date that had been written on the blackboard since the beginning, the date of the exam, a day I'd long since come to regard with dread as E-Day - was a blur of practice multiple choice questions, confused discussion of long-forgotten topics, and highlighting my review book in some last-ditch attempt at finding salvation.

And then it was May 7th. And the sun ceased to shine. Well, no. As appropriate as it would have seemed, the universe did not actually go to

pieces on the day of the exam. As it turned out, it was a lovely, sunny day. The sort of day you hate to spend three hours and five minutes of taking an exam.

I showed up as early as I could to the exam room. I'd half expected something to go wrong with the family car on the way to school or something, but I arrived mercifully punctual. Upon entering the exam room, we were all met with the barking orders of the AP proctor. She was a woman we'd all heard stories about, the test-giver of legend, a person whose strictness I had heard tell of but never quite believed.

Now I believed it. She shouted over the nervously chattering AP students, telling them over and over to look at the board and follow the directions written there. We rushed to comply, leaving our backpacks and all other materials in the back of the room.

"Put sweaters or jackets in the back of the room," she shouted, then added in a subtly-evil sounding way, "You won't be cold...I promise."

So then I was right. We were in hell. With that thought, I listened and followed instructions: Darken in this or that oval with a number two pencil, sign here, rip the plastic off your packet, and...

Begin.

Notebook

Love that Trojan horse

By CHLOE STEAD
The Tattoo

Whoever cast Brad Pitt as Achilles is a genius.

In the new movie "Troy," Pitt is moody, misunderstood and unbelievably, unspeakably sexy as the Greek fighting machine.

Who would have known that blood, sweat and dirt are aphrodisiacs?

The movie starts with two princes of Troy - Paris (Orlando Bloom) and Hector (Eric Bana) - and Menelaus (Brendan Gleeson), king of Sparta, celebrating the newly established peace between their countries.

But trouble starts when Paris takes a souvenir home with him: Menelaus' wife, Helen (Diane Kruger). Soon a thousand ships full of warriors are heading for the walls of distant Troy, among them the mighty killing machine Achilles.

"Troy" is a fast-paced action movie about pride, courage, honor, greed and love. Just as the pace begins to slow and you catch your breath, something happens that takes it away again.

Well, what are you waiting for? Go and see this film. The only question is: whose side are you on?

At the movies

Like the movies? See many more reviews, news and opinion on The Tattoo's website at www.ReadTheTattoo.com.

Sucking all the fun out of summer

By JOE KEO
The Tattoo

The last school bell rings, students pack the hallways and the doors fly wide open; I'm finally free of this nightmare that they call high school.

Yet something is still keeping me down. No, it's not the humidity or heat, but the weight of summer reading books in my backpack. Summer is usually the time to relax and lie in the sun. It's the time when I'd rather throw aside my books and calculator and trade them in for sunny days and trips to the beach.

When the cool waters wash ashore, my toes would be deep into the sand. As a breeze blows through my hair, my eyes would be deeply fixated on the fading pink and orange swirl of a sunset. But the only thing that my eyes will be fixated on is small black font in a thick novel. My fingers, not my toes, will be having so much fun flipping through a couple hundred pages of good ol' American literature.

I know I'm just complaining, but I really never got used to reading over the summer. When my English teachers assigned me books in class, I read them. Then I had to analyze, write an essay, and once in a while get quizzed on it. After a while it got really tedious and annoying.

I won't lie - some of the books I read in school were pretty interesting. *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, by Mark Twain, involved a very adventurous plot of a boy and a runaway slave. *The Great Gatsby* was a story of hopeless romantic who goes through all sorts of trouble, but dies in his pursuit for love.

Reading at times was enjoyable and enlightening, but when teachers start dissecting every aspect of the story and dragging it out, it can get grueling. It's even worse during the summer.

Every year high school students are assigned a summer reading list. A student is told to read the book, understand it, and at most times is recommended to take notes. At least students have the choice of the title. When students return, they are evaluated by their teacher through the means of an essay. Teachers hand out writing prompts, and students write a composition that answers the prompt while incorporating themes, motifs, symbolism, and character development relevant to the book that was read.

If that doesn't suck the fun out of reading, then I don't know what does. Just let me enjoy the book the way it is. If I have questions, I'll be the first to ask.

What I say

Reading isn't for everyone. I'm sure the majority of the students at my school can read (there are some exceptions), but they have personal tastes in what they read. I doubt that Steinbeck and Fitzgerald are top favorites of many of the students. Don't get me wrong, I read *The Grapes of Wrath* (well, I read part of it and then saw the movie, but they're pretty close), it was good, but I rather be reading comics than reading about the struggle of Oklahoma farmers any day of the week, especially a week during the summer.

In reality, reading isn't what I consider a way to enjoy the summer. There's the outdoors. Clear blue skies, green fields, and the music of the local ice cream truck are all out there, waiting to become a part of summer memories. Sure, a book can describe in detail and length the beautiful radiance of morning on a tropical island, but wouldn't you rather be living it than reading it?

Maybe it's just me.



THE DAILY SKETCH by Joe Keo

Joe Keo / The Tattoo