

Gitmo—It's still there, and it's still an important issue

Despite President Barack Obama's order to close the prison-torture facility in Guantanamo Bay, it is still open, and we can safely assume that it's there to stay. The issues concerning the facility's existence are much bigger, though, than the public-relations/ perception-management/ propaganda shills in the media ever talk about.

A whole new kind of law has been created by establishing a series of precedents for:

- ❓ Arresting people anywhere in the world because they are merely *suspected* of committing some vaguely defined wrongdoing;
- ❓ Not having to show a good reason for holding them;
- ❓ Transporting them overseas for imprisonment—even for life;
- ❓ Torturing them to extract confessions;
- ❓ Establishing an alternate system of courts with novel crimes, procedures and rules of evidence.

Before the establishment of the torture-prison complex in Guantanamo Bay, Americans officially rejected the idea that anyone could be imprisoned without charge and held for as long as “authorities” felt like holding them. This belief forbade the use of such devices as Lettres de Cache, used by the French kings prior to the French Revolution to imprison anyone they (or their closest and richest friends) didn't like. Our teachers used to quote the famous jurist, William Blackstone, saying, “Better that ten guilty persons escape than that one innocent suffer.” We recognized the criminality of the judicial crimes committed by the Nazis, the Soviets, and other totalitarian

regimes—for example, arbitrary arrests, kangaroo courts, show trials, concentration camps, torture and summary executions.

Now all of these formerly-reviled policies seem to have been accepted as normal, even necessary, to defeat an elusive, ill-defined enemy that miraculously always moves its base of operations to whatever country U.S. policy-makers have already decided they want us to invade next.

But these laws have not been written to apply only to “ragheads” on the other side of the world—the racist epithet sometimes used to dehumanize detainees, perhaps to make us feel better about violating their human rights or killing them. These laws apply to *you*, too, and you can bet that they will gradually be applied more and more frequently to people right here in this “free” country.

Ralph Waldo Emerson's “Concord Hymn” commemorates the first battle of the American Revolution at Lexington and Concord in 1775, celebrating the colonists who dared to “die and leave their children free.” What legacy will our generation leave for its children? What freedom? A nation that is willing to inflict every horror and injustice on other people because our politicians promise us “safety” is no longer a nation of free, brave people.

It is highly unlikely that any future poet will write with reverence about America in the 21st century.

CONNECTICUT PEACE COALITION/ NEW HAVEN
Vigil every Sunday, 12-1 p.m., Broadway, Park & Elm
<http://newhavensundayvigil.wordpress.com>
ctpcnh@gmail.com

