

Torture, What is it Good For? Absolutely nothing! An Analysis of McCain and the Response to the Abuse at Abu Ghraib

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This paper discusses Senator John McCain's statement on detainee amendments on the Army Field Manual (FM 34-52) and cruel, inhumane, and degrading treatment of detainees, and the many associated postmodern sea of circulating fictions regarding detainee abuse. We use the government's own reports as well as our experiences at the courts-martial of two of the seven "bad apples" to discuss the several circulating fictions, which include the following: that the abuse was confined to a few "rotten apples" at Abu Ghraib; that the "interrogation techniques" were normative; that abuse occurred and occurs as the outcome of interrogation; and that the problem of abuse can be fixed by referring to ambiguous normative standards which are already cited as the source of confusion that led to abuse. We outline the ambiguity of the Army FM 34-52 and show the implosion of meaning associated with "interrogation techniques" and the juxtaposition of image versus reality when it comes to the actual reality of torture and its consequences. Additionally, we use Riesman and Veblen to discuss how this amendment is itself "other-directed" and "conspicuous", as well as based on image, which we argue eventually leads to self-sabotage and the sabotage of American ideals. Finally, we critique the list of interrogation techniques used at Abu Ghraib and elsewhere, and claim that this kind of system of torture, or what we call "must-torture logic", will perpetuate the deviance of abuse at Abu Ghraib and other locations such as GITMO, Afghanistan, and other places in Iraq. *[Article copies available for a fee from The Transformative Studies Institute. E-mail address: journal@transformativestudies.org Website: <http://www.transformativestudies.org> ©2008 by The Transformative Studies Institute. All rights reserved.]*

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