



Willamette Freethinker



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A publication of Corvallis Secular Society
<http://css.peak.org>

Corvallis Secular Society (CSS) is a Humanist and Freethought society for all nontheists of good will.

CSS is affiliated with the American Humanist Association (AHA) and the Council for Secular Humanism (CSH).

From the Editor:

Some of our readers have chided me for not putting more humanist/secular material in our humanist/secular newsletter. It IS actually a major concern. However:

A) There isn't always much of significance going on, on the church/state front. At least, nothing that gets covered in any of the news sources *I* read (which is quite a bit) — and alas, our budget here at Freethinker HQ doesn't have much room for full-time reporters and original stories.

B) The other "beats" we cover are still strong Humanist causes — human rights, the environment, etc.

I know of at least one or two readers out there who wish we didn't do so much "Bush bashing". I'd like to apologize to those readers. I'd like to, but I can't — because we've never had a president so utterly hostile to science, reason, separation of church and state, and virtually everything else we stand for. I am forced to agree with those people comparing Bush to Hitler — not because he's THAT bad YET, but because he's actively walking the same path, disregarding all boundaries of human decency as he goes. Even HITLER wasn't "as bad as Hitler" his fourth year in power...

Which brings us to the main newsletter topic this month — the atrocities American soldiers are committing at Abu Graib. As Jon Stewart said, "We didn't really close Saddam Hussein's rape rooms; it's more like they're under new management."

Call it Bush bashing if you will, but remember the good old days when a STAIN ON A BLUE DRESS was an impeachable offense...?

Reed Byers

Editor, *Willamette Freethinker*

There are now
three ways you can financially
support CSS online! See back page for
more details...



CSS Meetings and Events

NOTE:

We'll be bringing some new Penn & Teller episodes to watch at this meeting, if anyone is interested...

Calendar:

Saturday, May 15th 2:00-4:00 CSS regular meeting
Saturday, Jun 19th 1:00-4:00 CSS potluck
Saturday, Jul 17th 2:00-4:00 CSS regular meeting

Regular meeting time:

Third Saturday of each month, from 2:00-4:00 pm.

Regular meeting location:

Carl House (3975 NW Witham Hill Dr, Corvallis).

Atheist Charities Online

<http://www.atheistcharities.com>

Attention all Atheists!

Atheist Charities is here, an organization of helping hands to empower and educate those in need without imposing the chains of religion.

Counseling, vocational/employment services, computer classes, food drives, and educational services are among the many programs we aim to offer for the working poor to assist in breaking the anchors of poverty.

Please visit their website and give as much as you can to help them succeed.

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From the President:

Bush versus Science — Part I

About Politics & Science: The State of Science Under the Bush Administration

The Bush Administration regularly ignores, distorts, or suppresses science, whenever it conflicts with the President's religious and social goals. Rep. Henry A. Waxman, Democrat from California, has created a website, <http://www.house.gov/reform/min/politicsandscience/> (or just www.politicsandscience.org), entitled "About Politics & Science: The State of Science Under the Bush Administration." This site details the Administration's disregard of science. The information in this column is taken from this website.

"At the request of Rep. Henry A. Waxman, the Democratic staff of the Government Reform Committee in the U.S. House of Representatives assessed the treatment of science and scientists by the Bush Administration. The resulting report – Politics and Science in the Bush Administration – found numerous instances where the Administration has manipulated the scientific process and distorted or suppressed scientific findings. Beneficiaries include important supporters of the President, including social conservatives and powerful industry groups. This website... is an ongoing record of interference with science by the Bush Administration."

What follows is the barest outline of the documented findings at this site. Please study the website for more information.

INVESTIGATIVE AREAS

Manipulation of Scientific Committees: The Bush Administration (hereinafter, "Bush") has opposed the appointment or reappointment of qualified experts, including some of the most respected scientists in their fields, on the basis of political litmus tests. This includes appointing people with scant scientific credentials but strong industry ties, and appointing nonexperts with right-wing ideological agendas.

Distortion of Public Information: Bush has distorted communications to the American people, provided incomplete and inaccurate scientific information to Congress, altered web sites by deleting information that conflicts with his priorities or adding unscientific information that supports such priorities, and more.

Interference with Scientific Research: Federal funding for research and development totals over \$100 billion dollars. The public expects that this research will be conducted independently and objectively. Yet the Bush Administration has threatened political scrutiny of scientific research projects that concern social conserva-

ISSUE AREAS — ENVIRONMENT

Protecting Yellowstone National Park: In April 2003, Deputy Assistant Interior Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks Paul Hoffman wrote to the United Nations' World Heritage Committee and requested that Yellowstone be removed from a list of parks at risk and in need of international attention. He wrote, "Yellowstone is no longer in danger." To make this argument, Mr. Hoffman cited a reported written by Yellowstone Park staff. However, this report had apparently been substantially edited to suppress scientific information. A draft report in early 2003 discussed several problems that continue to threaten Yellowstone, including the degradation of water from mining toxins, a parasitic disease among native trout, and continued controversy over potentially diseased bison who stray outside park boundaries. The final version of the report sent by the Interior Department to the United Nation's World Heritage Committee does not include these ongoing concerns.

The Impact of Agricultural Pollution: USDA has instituted tight controls over information showing the negative consequences of agricultural practices, such as preventing a senior scientist from speaking about the potential adverse consequences of hog farming.

Oil Drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge: In responding to questions from Congress on the impact of oil drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, Secretary of the Interior Gale Norton reversed data provided to her by U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service scientists.

Environmental Health Advisory Committees: HHS appointed individuals with close ties to regulated industries to a National Center for Environmental Health advisory committee, apparently without consulting the center's director. The National Center for Environmental Health (NCEH) at CDC (Centers for Disease Control) has an advisory committee charged with providing advice on "program goals and objectives, strategies, and priorities" in the area of "environmental health and related disciplines." In August 2002, HHS appointed 15 new members of this committee, apparently without consulting NCEH director Dr. Richard Jackson. The new advisers, who now constitute a majority of the 18-member committee, include individuals with close ties to regulated industries. For example: Becky Norton Dunlop, Vice President of the anti-regulatory Heritage Foundation and opponent of federal environmental regulations while serving as an official in Virginia; and others.

Research on Oil and Gas Practices: Without giving any scientific justification, the EPA changed data on the

environmental impact of “hydraulic fracturing” – an oil and gas practice pioneered by Halliburton. In carrying out hydraulic fracturing, companies sometimes inject fracturing fluids containing benzene and other carcinogenic and toxic chemicals into geologic formations containing underground sources of drinking water. The EPA informed congressional staff that hydraulic fracturing could lead to benzene in underground sources of drinking water at levels above federal standards. When congressional staff raised concerns, EPA changed the data to indicate that the benzene levels would not exceed standards.

Protecting Wetlands: After President Bush took office, and following the filing of a law suit by the National Association of Home Builders, the Army Corps of Engineers moved to weaken proposed wetlands protections. Scientists at the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, part of the Interior Department, found that the new Corps proposal would “encourage the destruction of stream channels and lead to increased loss of aquatic functions.” It also found that the Corps’ own data was “overwhelmingly” against changing mining rules, another Corps proposal. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service criticized the Corps for its “lack of basic knowledge of the effects of these permitted losses on the environment.” Secretary Norton, however, failed to submit the scientists’ comments to the Corps. Her spokesman stated that the Department had run out of time. This led former Fish and Wildlife director Jamie Rappaport Clark to comment, “This is just nuts . . . For Interior to stop Fish and Wildlife from commenting on something of this magnitude and importance, that’s really unbelievable.” The Corps subsequently issued rules that weakened key wetland protections.

The Science on Global Warming: Following lobbying by ExxonMobil, the State Department successfully opposed the re-appointment of a leading U.S. climatologist to the top position on the preeminent international global warming study panel. Dr. Robert Watson had been chair of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) since 1996. An internationally respected scientist and recipient of numerous awards and honors, Dr. Watson had been the Director of the Science Division at the National Aeronautics and Space Administration and chief scientist at the World Bank. Under his leadership, the IPCC had produced a report predicting an increase of 2.5 to 10.5 degrees Fahrenheit in average global temperatures by 2100 and concluding that “[t]here is new and stronger evidence that most of the warming observed over the last 50 years is attributable to human activities.” These conclusions were affirmed by the National Academy of Sciences.

After the release of the 2001 report, ExxonMobil lobbied the Bush administration for Dr. Watson’s ouster. A February 6, 2001 memo sent by ExxonMobil to John Howard of the Council on Environmental Quality at the White House criticized Dr. Watson and asked, “Can Watson be replaced now at the request of the U.S.?” ExxonMobil opposes the regulation of carbon dioxide emissions that contribute to global warming and gives over a million dollars a year to

groups that question the existence of global warming. Subsequently, the State Department opposed Dr. Watson’s reelection to head the panel. The Department gave no scientific rationale for this decision. In April 2002, lacking the support of his home country, Dr. Watson lost his position as chair. One leading researcher, Michael Oppenheimer of Princeton University, commented to Science: “It is scandalous . . . This is an invasion of narrow political considerations into a scientific process.”

The Bush Administration has also suppressed scientific evidence on global warming. In September 2002, the section on global warming was removed from an annual report on the state of air pollution. Then, in June 2003, the Administration published a supposedly “comprehensive” report on the environment without any information on climate change. According to EPA Administrator Christine Todd Whitman, the Draft Report on the Environment used “the most sophisticated science ever” and represented “a comprehensive roadmap to ensure that all Americans have cleaner air, purer water and better protected land.” However, this report contained no information on global warming. Instead, the document stated, “This report does not attempt to address the complexities of this issue.”

Conclusion: We depend on the federal government’s agencies to protect the nation’s environment and our health, as well as to provide our defense, our education, and our common welfare. Policies need to be based on science, not religious dogma; they need to benefit the nation as a whole, not just the wealthy and powerful few. Unfortunately, under this Administration, this has not been the case. This month’s column has briefly touched on investigative areas and on environmental issues distorted and manipulated by the Bush Administration. Next month, we’ll continue with issues of public health.

John Dearing
President of CSS

Voice of an Angel

[Editor’s Note: *Angela’s still in a great deal of pain from the accident, and we’ve continued the new-pain-medication-prescription-twice-a-week pattern fairly consistently for over a month now. We’re hoping to get the pain under enough control to re-start physical therapy in a week or so... but for now, she’s still not up to writing a column. In the meanwhile, enjoy the following lovely space-filling quote box...*]

I do not believe in God. My mind finds no grounds on which to build up a reasonable faith. My heart revolts against the spectre of an Almighty Indifference to the pain of sentient beings. My conscience rebels against the injustice, the cruelty, the inequality, which surround me on every side. But I believe in Man. In man’s redeeming power; in man’s remoulding energy; in man’s approaching triumph, through knowledge, love and work.

— Annie Besant (1847-1933)

Abu Ghraib Scrapbook

Bits and pieces on our latest national embarrassment...

Atrocities

from report by Maj Gen Antonio Taguba,
as reported by Molly Ivins, 5/6/04

[http://www.workingforchange.com/
article.cfm?ItemID=16905](http://www.workingforchange.com/article.cfm?ItemID=16905)

This is straight from the report of Maj. Gen. Antonio Taguba:

"Between October and December 2003, at the Abu Ghraib Confinement Facility, numerous acts of sadistic, blatant and wanton criminal abuses were inflicted on several detainees. This systematic and illegal abuse of detainees was intentionally perpetrated by several members of the military police guard force. ... The allegations of abuse were substantiated by detailed witness statements and the discovery of extremely graphic photographic evidence ... including the following acts:

Punching, slapping and kicking detainees; jumping on their naked feet; Videotaping and photographing naked male and female detainees; Forcibly arranging detainees in various sexually explicit positions for photographing; Forcing detainees to remove their clothing and keeping them naked for several days at a time; Forcing naked male detainees to wear women's underwear; Forcing groups of male detainees to masturbate themselves while being photographed and videotaped; Arranging naked male detainees in a pile and jumping on them; A male MP guard having sex with a female detainee; Using military working dogs to intimidate and frighten detainees, and in at least one case biting and severely injuring a detainee; Taking photographs of dead Iraqi detainees; Breaking chemical lights and pouring phosphoric liquid on detainees; Beating detainees with a broom handle and chair; Threatening male detainees with rape; Sodomizing a detainee with a chemical light and perhaps with a broomstick."

There it is. Just face up to it, and quit making excuses. I have spared you much disgusting detail.

U.S. military officials told NBC News that the unreleased images showed U.S. soldiers severely beating an Iraqi prisoner nearly to death, having sex with a female Iraqi female prisoner and "acting inappropriately with a dead body." The officials said there was also a videotape, apparently shot by U.S. personnel, showing Iraqi guards raping young boys.

Red Cross Operations Director Pierre Kraehenbuehl said the abuse went beyond a few soldiers and detainees held at Abu Ghraib. "We were dealing here with a broad pattern, not individual acts," he said. "There was a pattern and a system."

It Gets Worse

as reported by NBC and MSNBC, 5/7/04

<http://video.msnbc.com/ID/4855930/>
(article no longer available at site)

...Rumsfeld warned the committee that the worst was yet to come. He said he had looked at the full array of unedited photographs of the situation at Abu Ghraib for the first time

Thursday night and found them "hard to believe."

"There are other photos that depict incidents of physical violence towards prisoners, acts that can only be described as blatantly sadistic, cruel and inhumane," he said. "... It's going to get a good deal more terrible, I'm afraid."

Rumsfeld did not describe the photos, but U.S. military officials told NBC News that the unreleased images showed U.S. soldiers severely beating an Iraqi prisoner nearly to death, having sex with a female Iraqi female prisoner and

"acting inappropriately with a dead body." The officials said there was also a videotape, apparently shot by U.S. personnel, showing Iraqi guards raping young boys.

[...]

The International Committee of the Red Cross took exception Friday, stating that it had warned U.S. officials of abuses repeatedly from March 2003 through November.

The Wall Street Journal disclosed Friday that the group had sent a 24-page report to U.S. authorities, describing prisoners who were kept naked in total darkness in empty cells at Abu Ghraib and male prisoners who were forced to parade around in women's underwear.

The Red Cross confirmed that the report was sent to U.S. officials in February, calling it a summary of earlier reports.

Answering a question many lawmakers have posed, Red Cross

Operations Director Pierre Kraehenbuehl said the abuse went beyond a few soldiers and detainees held at Abu Ghraib. "We were dealing here with a broad pattern, not individual acts," he said. "There was a pattern and a system."

Limbaugh on Torture

From radio transcripts of his show,
as reported by Andrew Seifter and Gabriel Wildau

<http://mediamatters.org/>

==May 3:==

LIMBAUGH: And these American prisoners of war — have you people noticed who the torturers are? Women! The babes! The babes are meting out the torture.

LIMBAUGH: You know, if you look at — if you, really, if you look at these pictures, I mean, I don't know if it's just me, but it looks just like anything you'd see Madonna, or Britney Spears do on stage. Maybe I'm — yeah. And get an NEA grant for something like this. I mean, this is something that you can see on stage at Lincoln Center from an NEA grant, maybe on Sex in the City — the movie. I mean, I don't — it's just me.

==May 4:==

CALLER: It was like a college fraternity prank that stacked up naked men —

LIMBAUGH: Exactly. Exactly my point! This is no different than what happens at the Skull and Bones initiation and we're going to ruin people's lives over it and we're going to hamper our military effort, and then we are going to really hammer them because they had a good time. You know, these people are being fired at every day. I'm talking about people having a good time, these people, you ever heard of emotional release? You heard of needing to blow some steam off?

==May 5:==

LIMBAUGH: I think a lot of the American culture is being feminized. I think the reaction to the stupid torture is an example of the feminization of this country.

==May 6:==

LIMBAUGH: All right, so we're at war with these people. And they're in a prison where they're being softened up for interrogation. And we hear that the most humiliating thing you can do is make one Arab male disrobe in front of another. Sounds to me like it's pretty thoughtful. Sounds to me in the context of war this is pretty good intimidation — and especially if you put a woman in front of them and then spread those pictures around the Arab world. And we're sitting here, "Oh my God, they're gonna hate us! Oh no! What are they gonna think of us?"

I think maybe the other perspective needs to be at least considered. Maybe they're gonna think we are serious. Maybe they're gonna think we mean it this time. Maybe they're gonna think we're not gonna kowtow to them. Maybe the people who ordered this are pretty smart. Maybe the people who executed this pulled off a brilliant maneuver. Nobody got hurt. Nobody got physically injured. But boy there was a lot of humiliation of people who are trying to kill us — in ways they hold dear. Sounds pretty effective to me if you look at us in the right context.

Unhinged We Stand

by Ted Rall

http://www.rall.com/2004_05_01_archive.html

Worth noting, as another week of horrifying revelations of torture in American gulags in Iraq, Afghanistan, Cuba and here in der Homeland, is an interesting comparison.

Escaped hostage Thomas Hamill reports having been well treated, fed and "watered" throughout his captivity by Iraqi insurgents. At no time was he tortured; except for the captivity itself — admittedly terrifying — he was just fine.

Pfc. Jessica Lynch, despite spun Pentagon reports at the time, has also repeatedly said she was well treated, even given medical care in priority to Iraqis, by Iraqi doctors in a hospital during the war.

In other words, our treatment of POWs compares unfavorably with that given kidnapping victims and prisoners of both Saddam Hussein and the current Iraqi resistance movement.

[Start singing "The Star-Spangled Banner" now.]



IS THIS THE AMERICA YOU KNOW?

**HOW MUCH WORSE DOES
IT HAVE TO GET?**

**(And can you even IMAGINE the
screaming if a TENTH of this — the
economy, unemployment, 9/11 and
now THIS — had happened
on Clinton's watch?)**

Just Trust Us

by Paul Krugman, *New York Times*, 5/11/2004

<http://www.nytimes.com/2004/05/11/opinion/11KRUG.html>

Didn't you know, in your gut, that something like Abu Ghraib would eventually come to light?

When the world first learned about the abuse of prisoners, President Bush said that it "does not reflect the nature of the American people." He's right, of course: a great majority of Americans are decent and good. But so are a great majority of people everywhere. If America's record is better than that of most countries — and it is — it's because of our system: our tradition of openness, and checks and balances.

Yet Mr. Bush, despite all his talk of good and evil, doesn't believe in that system. From the day his administration took office, its slogan has been "just trust us." No administration since Nixon has been so insistent that it has the right to operate without oversight or accountability, and no administration since Nixon has shown itself to be so little deserving of that trust. Out of a misplaced sense of patriotism, Congress has deferred to the administration's demands. Sooner or later, a moral catastrophe was inevitable.

Just trust us, John Ashcroft said, as he demanded that Congress pass the Patriot Act, no questions asked. After two and a half years, during which he arrested and secretly detained more than a thousand people, Mr. Ashcroft has yet to convict any actual terrorists. (Look at the actual trials of what Dahlia Lithwick of Slate calls "disaffected bozos who watch cheesy training videos," and you'll see what I mean.)

Just trust us, George Bush said, as he insisted that Iraq, which hadn't attacked us and posed no obvious threat, was the place to go in the war on terror. When we got there, we found no weapons of mass destruction and no new evidence of links to Al Qaeda.

Just trust us, Paul Bremer said, as he took over in Iraq. What is the legal basis for Mr. Bremer's authority? You may imagine that the Coalition Provisional Authority is an arm of the government, subject to U.S. law. But it turns out that no law or presidential directive has ever established the authority's status. Mr. Bremer, as far as we can tell, answers to nobody except Mr. Bush, which makes Iraq a sort of personal fief. In that fief, there has been nothing that Americans would recognize as the rule of law. For example, Ahmad Chalabi, the Pentagon's erstwhile favorite, was allowed to gain control of Saddam's files — the better to blackmail his potential rivals.

And finally: Just trust us, Donald Rumsfeld said early in 2002, when he declared that "enemy combatants" — a term that turned out to mean anyone, including American citizens, the administration chose to so designate — don't have rights under the Geneva Convention. Now people

around the world talk of an "American gulag," and Seymour Hersh is exposing My Lai all over again.

Did top officials order the use of torture? It depends on the meaning of the words "order" and "torture." Last August Mr. Rumsfeld's top intelligence official sent Maj. Gen. Geoffrey Miller, the commander of the Guantánamo prison, to Iraq. General Miller recommended that the guards help interrogators, including private contractors, by handling prisoners in a way that "sets the conditions" for "successful interrogation and exploitation." What did he and his superiors think would happen?

To their credit, some supporters of the administration are speaking out. "This is about system failure," said Senator Lindsey Graham, a Republican from South Carolina. But do Mr. Graham, John McCain and other appalled lawmakers understand their own role in that failure? By deferring to the administration at every step, by blocking every effort to make officials accountable, they set the nation up for this disaster. You can't prevent any serious inquiry into why George Bush led us to war to eliminate W.M.D. that didn't exist and to punish Saddam for imaginary ties to Al Qaeda, then express shock when Mr. Bush's administration fails to follow the rules on other matters.

Meanwhile, Abu Ghraib will remain in use, under its new commander: General Miller of Guantánamo. Donald Rumsfeld has "accepted responsibility" — an action that apparently does not mean paying any price at all. And Dick Cheney says, "Don Rumsfeld is the best secretary of defense the United States has ever had. . . . People should get off his case and let him do his job." In other words: Just trust us.

"The United States is committed to the worldwide elimination of torture and we are leading this fight by example"

— George Bush, June 26, 2003,
United Nations International Day
in Support of Victims of Torture

"In July 2003, Amnesty International sent your government a Memorandum on Concerns Relating to Law and Order in Iraq. The Memorandum included allegations of torture and ill-treatment of Iraqi detainees by US and Coalition forces. [...] We have never received a response or any indication from the administration or the Coalition Provisional Authority that an investigation took place."

— Amnesty International, May 7, 2004
Open Letter to George Bush

From Texas to Abu Ghraib:

The Bush Legacy of Prisoner Abuse

by Heather Wokusch, freelance writer
<http://www.heatherwokusch.com/>

While administration officials express shock and outrage over allegations of the torture and murder of Iraqi prisoners by US forces, a deeper look into Bush's stateside prison-system record shows disturbing similarities.

Despite Taguba's report detailing US "sadistic, blatant and wanton criminal abuses" of Iraqi detainees, the President declared, "We acted, and there are no longer mass graves and torture rooms and rape rooms in Iraq."

In George Bush's America, denial about inmate mistreatment runs similarly rampant. As Texas governor, Bush oversaw the executions of 152 prisoners and thus became the most-killing governor in the history of the United States. Ethnic minorities, many of whom did not have access to proper legal representation, comprised a large percentage of those Bush put to death, and in one particularly egregious example, Bush executed an immigrant who hadn't even seen a consular official from his own country (as is required by the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations, to which the US was a signatory). Bush's explanation: "Texas did not sign the Vienna Convention, so why should we be subject to it?"

Governor Bush also flouted the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child by choosing to execute juvenile offenders, a practice shared by only Iran, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and Yemen. Significantly, in 1998 a full 92% of the juvenile offenders on Bush's death row were ethnic minorities.

Conditions inside Texan prisons during Bush's reign were so notorious that federal Judge William Wayne Justice wrote, "Many inmates credibly testified to the existence of violence, rape and extortion in the prison system and about their own suffering from such abysmal conditions."

In September 1996, for example, a videotaped raid on inmates at a county jail in Texas showed guards using stun guns and an attack dog on prisoners, who were later dragged face-down back to their cells.

Funding of mental health programs during Bush's reign was so poor that Texan prisons had a sizeable number of mentally-impaired inmates; defying international human rights standards, these inmates ended up on death row. A prisoner named Emile Duhamel, for example, with severe psychological disabilities and an IQ of 56, died in his Texan death-row jail cell in July 1998. Authorities blamed "natural causes" but a lack of air conditioning in cells that topped 100 degrees Fahrenheit in a summer heat wave may

have killed Duhamel instead. How many other Texan prisoners died of such neglect during Bush's governorship is unclear.

As president, Bush presides over a prison population topping 2 million people, giving America the dubious distinction of having a higher percentage of its citizens behind bars than any other country. When considering that the US has three times more prisoners per capita than Iran and seven times more than Germany, the nation looks more like a Gulag than the Land of the Free.

Abu Ghraib has left administration officials falling over themselves with protestations of compassion, but it's worth remembering that the Bush White House has fought hard against the International Convention Against Torture, especially a proposal to establish voluntary inspections of prisons and detention centers in signatory countries, such as the United States.

It's not difficult to see why: if even a fraction of Bush's devastating legacy with Texan prisoners has been transferred to the US prison system as a whole, then the scandal over Abu Ghraib will seem like child's play.

The White House also wants to stifle investigation into the roughly 760 aliens (mainly Muslim men) the US government rounded up post-9/11, ostensibly for immigration violations. Amnesty International reports 9/11 detainees have suffered "a pattern of physical and verbal abuse by some corrections officers" and a denial of "basic human rights."

Then of course, there's Guantanamo, where the US is holding hundreds of detainees in top secrecy and without access to courts, legal counsel or family visits. Add to that the roughly 1000 civilians the US imprisons in Afghanistan, the 10,000 civilians thought to be detained in Iraq and who knows how many others across the globe, and it looks as if incarceration is the nation's best export.

But blame can't stop with Bush. A recent CNN poll asking "Is torture ever justified during interrogation?" yielded 47% of respondents answering in the affirmative, which explains why there hasn't been much stateside outrage over prisoner neglect in the past. It's that Faustian with-us-or-against-us mentality rearing its ugly head once again, promising safety but tempting us to dehumanize others and lose our souls in the process.

...it's worth remembering that the Bush White House has fought hard against the International Convention Against Torture, especially a proposal to establish voluntary inspections of prisons and detention centers in signatory countries, such as the United States.

Letters to the Editor

Angela: I was sorry to see that you were injured in a car accident that was no fault of your own. As bad as things are I hope you make a full recovery and in the near future.

About Reed's article on gay marriage: It would be nice if we lived in a perfect world, but we don't. In "Civil Wars" a Vermont journalist describes the battle for their Civil Union law there. Against the background of hatred that law brought forth, you wonder how it ever got passed. Gay Marriage may be alright in the future, but for now we have to be content with the example of Canada and take what we can get by another name. I am not gay, but the housing authority's trashing of me as the gay oriented books accumulated has convinced me that I have been the victim of such discrimination.

Sincerely,
Jim Phillips (CSS Member)

Jim:

Actually, I completely agree with you. Equality of gays today stands just about where equality of blacks once stood — people are willing to make grumbling noises in favor of it, as long as none of "them" wants to sit at the same lunch counter.

The only practical thing to do is fight tooth and nail for full marriage, but accept civil unions as the "compromise" position. Then in 20 years or so, once people are accustomed to it in "all-but-name", we'll be in better shape to do battle with the idiotic notion of "separate but equal" once again...

I'm sorry to hear that you've experienced this discrimination first-hand.

— Reed

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- Sign into your account or create a new account.
- Click on "Send Money".
- Follow the given directions. When it asks for "Recipient's Email", type: webmaster@css.peak.org



2) Make purchases using Amazon.com!

If you're planning to shop online at **Amazon.com** anyway, why not give CSS a share of the profits? It costs you nothing extra, but gives us a helping hand!

Visit our web page at <http://css.peak.org> and click on the **Amazon.com** button at the bottom of the button bar (left edge of the screen). Then, just shop as usual. CSS will receive approximately 5% of the purchase price!



3) Buy CSS stuff from Cafeshops.com!

We now have CSS logo merchandise for sale!

You can now show off your "CSS Pride" with T-shirts, Sweatshirts, Baseball jerseys, Baseball caps, Coffee mugs, Wall clocks, and much more!

Visit <http://www.cafeshops.com/secularsociety> to make your purchase — and CSS will get a share of the profits!

Thank you for helping support freethought in
Oregon's beautiful Willamette Valley!

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Thank you for supporting our efforts to promote atheism, humanism, and freethought in Oregon's Willamette Valley.

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Use this address for comments
or questions about CSS.

Please do NOT send payments here.

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