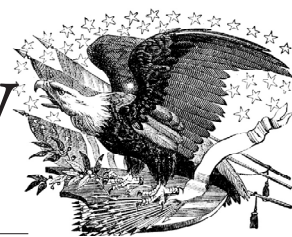


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A Tortured Nation

Ryan Fairchild and Austin Smith



"The United States is committed to the worldwide elimination of torture and we are leading this fight by example. I call on all governments to join with the United States and the community of law-abiding nations in prohibiting, investigating, and prosecuting all acts of torture and in undertaking to prevent other cruel and unusual punishment." --George W. Bush on June 26, 2003, U.N. Torture Victims Recognition Day.

In March 2002, the Bush administration began to approve, without public knowledge or consent, what were clandestinely termed "advanced interrogation techniques." These included brutal beatings, prolonged sleep deprivation, waterboarding, and many other inhumane practices. As knowledge of these grievous acts began to reach the American conscience, a public outcry arose. Why had the United States government hypocritically turned on its history of leading the world as a moral and just nation? Why were we turning to torture?

The U.N. Convention Against Torture defined torture as "any act by which severe pain or suffering, whether physical or mental, is intentionally inflicted on a person for such purposes as obtaining from him or a third person information or a confession," and goes on to say that, "no exceptional circumstances

whatsoever, whether a state of war or a threat or war, internal political instability or any other public emergency, may be invoked as a justification of torture." On December 7, 2005, Condoleezza Rice said, "As a matter of U.S. policy, the United States' obligations [fall] under the CAT (Convention against Torture), which prohibits cruel, inhumane and degrading treatment—those obligations extend to U.S. personnel wherever they are, whether they are in the United States or outside the United States."

To highlight how the "interrogation techniques" allowed by the Bush administration violate the aforementioned definition, consider waterboarding, a form of torture first used during the Spanish Inquisition, which has been universally condemned as torture. The victim is bound and immobilized, a rag is held tightly over their face, and water is poured into their mouth. What may be the most accurate description of the psychological and physical effects comes from Malcolm Nance, a former Master Instructor and Chief of Training of the U.S. Navy Seals, who said, "Waterboarding is slow-motion suffocation with enough time to contemplate the inevitability of blackout and expiration. Usually the person goes into hysterics on the board. For the uninitiated, it is horrifying to watch. When done right, it is controlled death."

The main justification for the use of torture is that it allows for the extraction of vital information that will save American lives. However, top U.S. intelligence officials agree that, frequently, torture not only fails to generate such intelligence, but instead yields faulty and misleading information. Retired

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The Mormon Trump Card

Ryan Decker



Mor-mon · trump · card—lo
gical fallacy : a logical fallacy referring to attempts to end political discussion by quoting a general authority.

When debating at BYU, many feel that one cannot disagree with a political statement by a past or present general authority. To them, doing so would clearly indicate drifting or even apostasy from the principles of the Church. This kind of thinking is both unproductive and inaccurate because it assumes that there is no political disagreement among the Brethren and that your general authority of choice speaks for the church on political matters. This is simply not true. Nonetheless, the Mormon trump card is often played in debates across campus—especially by conservatives. I will illustrate the problem using the most common example: Ezra Taft Benson.

President Benson was an incredible apostle and prophet—certainly called of God. He did great things for the Church and our country, serving under Eisenhower as Secretary of Agriculture. He had great love for the Constitution and great fear of communism. Benson's conservatism makes him a popular trump card among conservatives who use him as a means of substantiating their views on entitlements and other issues, assuming that Benson's political statements establish the will of God on these matters. In their minds, the fact that Benson shares their views closes the door on discussion entirely, stifling responsible thought and discussion about political issues. This tendency can sometimes be perceived as self-righteousness, and it shows a general lack of knowledge about a complex time in Church history—the apostles did disagree on political matters.

In the late 1950s, Benson began a close association with the leaders of the John Birch Society, an anti-communist organization that many considered extremist. Despite Benson's persistent involvement with the Birchers, President McKay disagreed with many of their viewpoints and never

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allowed Benson to join this society. There was also much disagreement among the apostles regarding Benson's views on communism. During the 1960s, Benson delivered anti-communist speeches, including in them statements about the relationship between socialism and communism and the dangers of anything like unto them. These statements concerned many Church members, including the apostles and even counselors in McKay's First Presidency: Hugh B. Brown and N. Eldon Tanner, both Democrats. Brown was also concerned about the dangers of communism, but he and others felt that Benson's controversial remarks and accusations (he had supported Joseph McCarthy) were not the best ways to fight the problem. Public views of the association between the Birchers and the Church, largely due to Benson's support of their politics, led the First Presidency to issue a statement that read in part, "We deplore the presumption of some politicians, especially officers, co-ordinators [sic] and members of the John Birch Society, who undertake to align the Church or its leadership with their partisan views."

In 1968, Benson made plans with Senator Strom Thurmond (yes, that Strom Thurmond) to form a third party and run for president. Benson and Thurmond were in opposition to the civil rights movement—Thurmond due to racism, and Benson due to a belief that the movement was a communist conspiracy. This concerned many of the Brethren, and McKay asked that Benson not participate. The relationship among the Brethren regarding Benson's politics can be best explained by another anecdote: in 1969, Benson gave a controversial speech at BYU, criticizing the government and international officials for being too liberal. Shortly after, McKay authorized Brown to give a rebuttal speech.

In general, many Church leaders disagreed with Benson's politics. In a letter to Senator Ralph Harding, Joseph Fielding Smith said, "I hope [Benson] will get all of the political notions out of his system." McKay told Harding, "Several of us have had problems with Brother Benson over the Birch Society." After McKay's death, Benson's political statements ceased. "McKay was succeeded by Joseph Fielding Smith and, subsequently, Harold B. Lee, both of whom had strongly objected to Benson's political activities during McKay's presidency," wrote McKay's biographers Prince and

Wright.

The lesson of this story is that Elder Benson did not represent the views of the Church. Rather, many of the apostles disagreed with him much of the time. In a political discussion, quoting Benson's views on politics and assuming the debate is over is misleading because there is an allowance for difference of opinion even among the Brethren. Despite statements by Benson, the Church has repeatedly expressed its position that members in good standing can be involved in either of America's political parties. There is a difference between personal values and political pragmatism. The political views of the Brethren are certainly relevant, but because the Brethren have often disagreed, these political views should not be considered the final word—and they do not exempt conservatives from needing to develop solid arguments for their views. Most importantly, using the Mormon trump card to attack the character of political opponents is damaging and ignorant. Educated people should base arguments on reason and facts instead of relying on the Mormon trump card.

Ryan is from Colorado majoring in Economics and Political Science. He blogs at pendulumpolitics.blogspot.com.

It's Time to End the Cuban Embargo

Brent Eliason



Almost half a century ago the United States placed an embargo against Cuba. This was done for several reasons. Our island neighbor had recently undergone a change of government to a communist dictatorship led by Fidel Castro. In the context of the Cold War and as punishment for the uncompensated nationalization involved in their transition, the U.S. decided to cut off all trade with Cuba. Later in the same year, Cuba seeking revenge allowed for Soviet missiles to be placed in its territory to threaten the United States. Fortunately, U.S. and U.S.S.R. leaders were able to negotiate and put off nuclear war, but Cuba was still upset. With Soviet support, Cuba persevered, managing to meet the most fundamental physical needs of its people.

Fast forward to today and we see a very different nation. Fidel has fallen ill and his younger brother Raul has taken his place. The Soviet Union is no more, and, unable to achieve self-sufficiency under a Communist system, Cuba is slowly opening up. Farmers can now lease unused arable land from the government and sell excess crops in a private market. Cell phones are now legal. Portions of Havana previously reserved for foreigners are open to Cuban citizens who can afford them. Just like China under Deng Xiaoping, Cuba is realizing that centralized economies are ineffective and they are reacting accordingly.

Despite the widening gap with Communist ideology, the embargo still stands higher than during the Cold War. The 1962 embargo was strengthened by the Helms-Burton Act of 1996. Meant to encourage "a peaceful transition to a representative democracy and a market economy in Cuba", the act punishes foreign companies that do business in

Cuba and places more restrictions on interaction with the country. This strategy of starving the Cubans into assimilation is not only unethical, but no longer possible. Cuba's food shortages were worst in the early 1990's. They had already passed privatizing reforms and increased trade with Europe when the Helms-Burton Act was passed.

At this critical juncture for Cuba, the United States can pull Cuba on a faster path towards capitalism by opening our doors to the south. The influx of U.S. goods will create an insatiable demand among the Cuban people causing them to push for further reforms. Like Khrushchev, the Cubans will likely be shocked by how much the U.S. has to offer. Allowing travel between the two countries will open an exchange of ideas and American tourists will encourage democracy and capitalism. The large Cuban-American community in the U.S. will send more money to their family members living on the island, helping Cuba's economy. Most importantly, the quality of life for Cubans will improve, empowered by consumer choice and personal freedom.

The U.S. will benefit as well. Cuba was devastated by recent hurricanes. Allowing NGOs and humanitarian aid to flood in will save lives and reduce antagonistic feelings between the two nations. Damaged by the perceived cruelty of the War on Terror, the U.S. will show a more humane side to the world. We can also import cheap labor from Cuba to partially offset the loss due to the crackdown on illegal immigration from Mexico. Plus, there'll be one less disgruntled nation in Latin America reducing the soft power of Hugo Chavez. Best of all though, we'll have more sugar.

Brent is from Yorba Linda, CA and studying Bioinformatics. After graduation, he plans to go to law school.

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The Future of the Republican Party

Jason Jones



American presidential elections are somewhat like the pendulum on a grandfather clock. For several decades, one party wins a large majority of elections while the other watches from the sidelines. Eventually, one or a few presidents of the dominant party ultimately destroys his party's long-held philosophical foundations while the rival party rallies around a new leader with a new vision for the future. It happened to the Republican dynasty when it fell in 1932, it happened to the Democrats in 1968, and the final nail will close the coffin for the latest eround of Republicanism in a few weeks.

At this crossroads in American politics, neither presidential candidate has established a strong party ideology, and with John McCain preaching populist policies and Barack Obama promising spending cuts and lower taxes, the lines are becoming blurred.

In the coming years, it will become imperative for the Republican Party. Many are looking back to 1980 to reinvent the Reagan Revolution, and this strategy may please the party base but it will not win many elections. In 2012, the ideology needs to be conservative pragmatism—similar to the British Conservative Party's center-right platform adopted by its new leader David Cameron.

Economically, this means low taxes and low spending. It is better to have high taxes and high spending than low taxes and high spending; and the Republicans should establish a policy that tax revenue would be at least equal to government spending. A new conservative vision should develop realistic and meaningful solutions to entitlement programs, and abandoning the leave-social-security-to-the-stock-market idea—if for no other reason than the simple fact that such an idea is politically unviable. It means confronting issues that plague America, such as a crumbling infrastructure and

the income disparity between whites and blacks, while standing strong against excessive subsidies, protectionism, and wealth redistribution.

In foreign policy, it means speaking softly but carrying a big stick. Americans do not like war and will not support someone who goes to war recklessly; be tough, but actively promote diplomacy first. The Rummy-Condi-Cheney version will alienate more people than it will please. It means America leading the world, not America separating from the world. Restoring America's soft power will help restore America's capacity to once again be a city on a hill.

Domestically, it means making education a top priority. Stop demagoguing the immigration issue and advocate a policy of tall fences and wide gates. Encourage clean and renewable energy; embrace environmentalism but denounce apocalyptic hysteria. Refrain from absolving ordinary Americans of their errors and let them take responsibility for their own lives. Stop acting like the government can give the American Dream away and start acting like it must be earned. And finally, forget the tired notion that being intelligent and successful means you're conniving and out of touch.

So, what kind of leader can help reform the Republican Party in time for 2012? Forget Palin and Huck. They're both nice and have cute accents, but they're too 2004. We can probably forget Romney—he would probably embrace a new version of conservatism, as he did before he tried being the NeoCon Christian hero, but he may have said too much already. Tim Pawlenty and Bobby Jindal are fresh enough to do it. But the best candidate may already be the party's biggest hero. He has a PhD, a distinguished career, and a proven record of success. His name may rhyme with "betray us", but he could be the one who redefines conservatism.

Jason is from Mechanicsville, Virginia and is a senior in Political Science. He is excited to have more time to study now that he does not have to follow an undefeated football team so closely.

One Reason to Like George Bush

Seth Waite



When George W. Bush steps down from office in January, he will leave office with the lowest ratings of any president in history. His presidency has largely been seen as a complete disaster, and he competes with Hoover and Carter for the title of "Worst President Ever." Yet, Bush's legacy should not only be judged by the mistakes of Iraq. Although few people are aware of it, George Bush has done more to support AIDS relief in Africa

In 2003, President Bush launched two wars; one on Saddam Hussein and one on AIDS. Titled the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), this program is the largest commitment to battle a single disease in human history. AIDS, a more deadly enemy than terrorism, killed more than 2 million people last year while worldwide terrorism killed fewer than 2,000. In 2003, as PEPFAR began, only an estimated 50,000 sub-Saharan Africans were receiving treatment for AIDS. Today, the program boasts that nearly 1.7 million Africans receiving treatments along with tens of thousands of Asians and Europeans.

Expansions include additional funds for the Malaria initiative, which has prevented and treated 25 million individuals, training for 140,000 new health-care workers, commitments of \$4 billion to fighting tuberculosis, improving Abstinence and Be Faithful programs, and leading community partners in fighting this global epidemic.

Skeptics wonder if President Bush deserves credit for this monumental achievement. But as Barack Obama said recently, "I think you know I'm often a critic of President Bush, but I think the PEPFAR program has saved lives and has done very good work and he deserves enormous credit for that." Obama even stated that the program might serve as a future model for a similar program for orphans.

President Bush's role as a leader in the war on AIDS leads me to believe that he has not been given a fair review. Initiating support of 33 million counseling sessions for AIDS victims, providing critical care for millions of orphans and vulnerable children, and ensuring 12.7 million interventions for HIV transmitting pregnant mothers and the prevention of nearly 194,000 AIDS cases suggests Bush is more than an ignorant war-monger. Perhaps if the media actually talked about programs like PEPFAR, Bush might be leaving the White House with fewer critics and a more favorable legacy.

Seth is from Las Vegas majoring in Political Science.

Letting the Joneses Stay Ahead

Allie Winegar



Well, let's face it: the economy is not pretty right now. It's not just not pretty, it's floundering. Food prices are on the rise, and Americans are sitting in their kitchens writing up family priority lists. Pundits are publicly saying, as some have for months, that we are entering a major depression. Is it true? Who knows? Either way, an economic downturn could actually be what America needs most right now.

"[We're] living in a material world, and I am a material girl," Madonna once sang, and I don't think she was alone in her sentiments. How many of us participate in "retail therapy," senselessly buying clothing and toys whenever we feel bad? I know that, up until recently, I have enjoyed that particular indulgence. How many of us feel deprived if we don't yet have the latest convenience, be it an mp3 player, a nicer car, or a bigger house? According to a report by National Public Radio, the typical

American house size has more than doubled since the 1950's, going from a mere 750 square feet to over 2,300 square feet—despite the fact that families are smaller than ever. We are not content with having only the things we need; instead, we have come to develop "needs" that don't actually exist.

Keeping up with the Joneses at any cost has left us in the dust. We have better technology than ever, but less time than ever to enjoy it—and in the end, material things can never make a person happy. Things can add to quality of life (anybody want to give up their microwave?), but in the end, it's people and relationships that give meaning to life.

It is for this reason that I'm not terribly afraid for an economic crash. I think it might actually be better for us to remember that there is more to life than having the nicest car on the block—or even having a car at all.

Allie is a twenty-year-old senior from Washington, DC, majoring in Environmental Science. In her spare time, she enjoys writing stories and music.

HAVE AN OPINION ON WHAT YOU'VE READ IN THIS ISSUE?

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The Case for a Flat Tax

Andrew Johnston



On February 3, 1913, pressured by special interest groups, Congress passed an amendment that allowed government a graduated income tax for the first time. Since then, our tax system has degenerated into a jungle of loopholes that penalizes productivity, distorts incentives, slows the economy, and gums technological advance. A flat tax system could correct these problems while still generating the same amount of tax revenue as our current progressive system.

The biggest problem with the current tax system is that its enormous complexity makes compliance and enforcement a huge waste of money. With 9 million words and 66,000 pages full of regulations, forms, and explanations, a huge industry has been created to service Americans tax returns. Each year, Americans spend \$30 billion hiring people to do their taxes. They waste another \$200 billion in time, as the average American spends 30 hours on paperwork for April 15th. Meanwhile, the IRS employs 110,000 people and spends \$8 billion reviewing tax returns.

With a flat tax, the tax form would fit on a post card. The most commonly endorsed plan is to tax 18% of all income exceeding \$25,000—it's that simple. We would save \$240 billion each year in tax dollars, time, and filing. Moreover, with no more tax attorneys or tax consultants, half a million of the smartest Americans would be shifted from filling out paperwork to producing goods and services that would boost the economy.

Another problem with progressive tax systems is that it discourages innovation. When governments take high proportions of one's income for taxes, there is less incentive to create wealth. We can look to other countries to see how tax rates suppress

productivity and standards of living. In Italy, with a tax rate of 64% (the highest in the world), citizens work, on average, 16 productive hours per week. Japan, with one of the lowest tax rates (37%) has the most productive work week, at 27 hours. A strong correlation exists between taxation and productivity: the higher the taxes, the less people work. Productive people also receive positive psychological benefits and higher feeling of overall well-being. Higher taxed nations rate themselves as less happy and optimistic than lower-taxed, harder-working countries.

Many countries around the world, such as Ireland and the Baltic states, have begun adopting flat tax plans and reaping the benefits. These nations have had consistent and profound economic growth and tumbling unemployment. Policies are sometimes branded like cattle – Liberal Democrat or Conservative Republican – shutting out consideration of those of different parties. But this issue spans both. Under President Eisenhower, a conservative, there was a radically progressive tax, while John F. Kennedy instituted a much flatter tax system. You don't have to be a libertarian to support a flat tax.

Almost all economists agree that a flat tax would spur technological innovation and economic growth progress. But there is another, perhaps more important reason to oppose progressive taxes—the Constitution forbids it. Clause 4 under Powers Denied to Congress states: "No...Tax shall be laid, unless in Proportion to the Census or Enumeration." In other words, taxes must be proportional among all citizens. In 1913, the Supreme Court struck down a graduated tax for this very reason. Perhaps the Founding Fathers foresaw some of the disastrous effects of a progressive tax. We should consider their foresight now and reinstitute a flat tax.

Andrew is from London and Orange County majoring in Economics.

Torture
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Army Lt. Gen. Harry E. Soyster, a former director of the Defense Intelligence Agency, went so far as to say, "Torture is counterproductive on all fronts. It produces bad intelligence. It ruins the subject, makes them useless for further interrogation. And it damages our credibility around the world." William Oatis, an American journalist subjected to over 40 consecutive hours of sleep deprivation by the Czech government in 1951, explained his decision to sign a false confession admitting to espionage: "I had not chosen to abandon the truth -- the choice had been made for me." According to Bob Baer, a former CIA officer, "You can get anyone to confess to anything if the torture's bad enough." Even the Army Field Manual states that the "use of torture is not only illegal but also it is a poor technique that yields unreliable results, may damage subsequent collection efforts, and can induce the source to say what he thinks the [interrogator] wants to hear." Not only is torture ethically wrong, it's ineffective, given that more efficient methods already exist. Rear Adm. Mark H. Buzby, the military commander at Guantánamo, has said, "We get so much dependable information from just sitting down and having a conversation and treating [detainees] like human beings in a businesslike manner."

No bill was written to allow waterboarding after September 11th, no debate held in the Senate, no notice given to the American people of its use at Guantánamo Bay. Between the time that rumors began to circulate and the time when a bill was drafted to ban the practice, the U.S. State Department released a statement saying that "submersion of the head in water" used "to elicit confessions" in Tunisia constituted a form of torture, the U.S. Department of Defense released a revised manual that prohibited the use of waterboarding, and Steven Bradbury, acting head of the Justice Department's Office of Legal Counsel, said, "There has been no determination by the Justice Department that the use of waterboarding, under any circumstances, would be lawful under current law." The bill to ban waterboarding passed through Congress, but, on March 8, 2008, President Bush vetoed it.

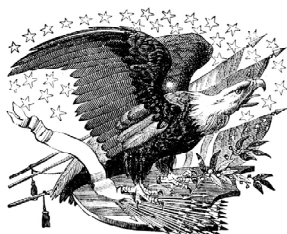
The Bush administration sanctioned torture in the aftermath of a devastating terrorist attack on our nation's soil. They felt compelled to take action, to bring to justice those who had violated the security of every American. In their desire to prevent such an atrocity from happening again, they allowed a level of force they deemed necessary to fulfill that duty. They were wrong. The United States has a history of prosecuting those who practice waterboarding, be they American soldiers caught using the method during both the Spanish-American and Vietnam Wars, or a Japanese officer who waterboarded Americans during WWII. But now the U.S. government has resorted to using the very practice they had historically condemned. If we allow these forms of torture, where will we draw the line? If we use waterboarding, sleep deprivation, forced nudity, and other "techniques" now, when might we begin to burn, beat, and cut people? If our enemies see us resorting to torture, what will they do to the American soldiers that they capture? What will our happen to our credibility with our allies? Torture is wrong. It is ethically, pragmatically, and legally indefensible. This is the line we must draw for our allies, our enemies, and ourselves.

Ryan is from Santa Clara, CA majoring in Economics and Spanish Translation. Austin is from Mclean, VA majoring in Computer Science.

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