

Human Rights Day with George, Dick, and Ken

Final Version

Written by Kevin Cross
Based on an idea by Kim Salinas
Supported by Strength Through Peace, a project of
The Center for Justice, Peace, and Environment
Fort Collins, Colorado, U.S.A.

Cast in order of appearance

Mother – needs white mask
Father/Detainee 1 – needs white mask
Child – needs white mask
George W. Bush – needs George Bush mask (optional)
Dick Cheney – needs Dick Cheney mask (optional)
Ken Salazar – needs Ken Salazar mask (optional), cowboy hat, and bolo tie
Narrator
Detainee 2 – needs white mask
Detainee 3 – needs white mask
Detainee 4 – needs black full body hood
5 – 10 Extras – need white masks

Props

White masks (10 - 15)
George Bush mask (optional; alternatively substitute a large name tag)
Dick Cheney mask (optional; alternatively substitute a large name tag)
Ken Salazar mask (optional; alternatively substitute a large name tag)
Cowboy hat
Bolo tie
Black full body hood
Card table
Table cloth
Paper plates
Flatware
Folding chairs (3)
Sheaf of papers titled “U.S. Constitution” with pages titled “Writ of Habeas Corpus” and
“Article 8”
Sheaf of papers titled “Universal Declaration of Human Rights” with pages titled “Article
5”, “Article 9”, “Article 10”
Boom box
Fast food bag
Crates (2)
Board
Laundry tub

Scene I: Capture

Narrator: On behalf of Strength Through Peace, I would like to welcome you to this performance of “Human Rights Day with George, Dick, and Ken”. We begin our play with a family of three eating dinner, somewhere in the world. George Bush, Dick Cheney, and Ken Salazar are about to pay them an unexpected visit.

A family of three is seated around a table, eating their dinner. Suddenly, Bush and Cheney burst in, followed by Ken Salazar, wringing his hands.

Bush: “We got you, you terrorist!” Don’t let him get away, Dick!

Cheney: This one looks like a high value target, George! Oh, no you don’t! &c.

After a brief struggle, Bush and Cheney grab the father and put a white mask on his face. The other family members don white masks as well. Actors freeze.

Narrator: The Military Commissions Act was approved by Congress and signed into law by President Bush on October 17th, 2006. Colorado’s Ken Salazar was one of twelve Democratic senators to vote for this bill. The Military Commissions Act permits agents of the U.S. Government to detain and interrogate anyone designated by the President as an “unlawful enemy combatant” anywhere without any requirement to observe the rights established by the Geneva Conventions. If the detainee is not a U.S. citizen, Habeas Corpus does not apply, that is to say, no reason ever need be given for why that person was imprisoned. According to the Center for Constitutional Rights, many of the detainees being held in Guantanamo were handed over to U.S. forces in exchange for large bounties. Only 8% have been characterized by the U.S. military as Al Qaeda fighters. Like many others, the so-called “terrorist” just picked up by George Bush and Dick Cheney may not be guilty of any crime whatsoever.

Bush, Cheney, and Salazar break out of their freeze.

Bush: Well, Mr. Terrorist, me and Dick here are going to take you on a little tour to see what’s in store for you. And by the way, there are a couple of things we WON’T be needing on our trip. The U.S. Constitution, for example... we won’t be needin’ that stuff about the “Writ of Habeas Corpus”... let’s see here (*throws out a page from the U.S. Constitution labeled “Writ of Habeas Corpus”*) or anything about ‘cruel and unusual punishment’... let’s see... Article 8, no, no, won’t be needin’ this (*throws out a page titled “Article 8”*). And that Universal Declaration of Human Rights that that U.N. group over there (*points to people at the Northern Colorado Chapter of the U.N. Association table*) is talkin’ about is even worse. Let’s see... Article 5: “No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.” Hmm. Degrading treatment... what does THAT mean? (*throws out a page titled “Article 5”*). Article 9: “No one shall be subjected to arbitrary arrest, detention or exile.” Hah! (*Throws out a page titled “Article 9”*). Article 10: “Everyone is entitled in full equality to a fair and public hearing by an independent and impartial tribunal, in the determination of his rights and obligations and of any criminal charge against him.” Aww, we don’t need ANY of this stuff! (*throws the entire document labeled “Universal Declaration of Human Rights” on the ground*). C’mon, let’s go!

Scene II: Sleep and Food Deprivation

Bush and Cheney then lead Detainee 1 to Detainee 2, who has his hands over his ears. Salazar follows along. Bush holds a boom box close to Detainee 2, and snickers.

Bush: How do you like the music, you terrorist?!? Loud enough for ya?

Cheney takes out a fast food bag from his coat, holds it in front of Detainee 2's mouth, then withdraws it.

Cheney: Mmmm, this smells delicious! None of this food for you now, terrorist. You'll eat later... MUCH later. I dunno though, George... McDonalds might be too good for this one!

Bush: 'Course, none of what you just saw is torture. The U.S. doesn't engage in torture.

Cheney: That's a no-brainer.

Salazar wrings hands. Actors freeze.

Narrator: The Military Commissions Act permits the President to determine the meaning and application of the Geneva Conventions, and to determine what acts are and are not torture. Sleep and food deprivation is common practice in U.S. detention centers such as Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, and Bagram Air Base, Afghanistan. These detention centers hold up to 14,500 people prisoner worldwide. The United Nations has declared both sleep and food deprivation to be forms of torture. Yet these practices will almost assuredly continue under the Military Commissions Act.

Scene III: Waterboarding

Bush and Cheney lead Detainee 1 to Detainee 3, who is strapped to a board balancing on a crate, next to a wash tub. Salazar follows along. Cheney raises the detainee at an angle as if to dunk him in the tub.

Bush: Dunk the evildoer, Dick, dunk him! Of course, that ain't torture... the United States does not engage in torture. Little water never hurt anybody!

Cheney: That's a no-brainer.

Salazar wrings hands and moans. Actors freeze.

Narrator: In a radio interview on October 24th of this year, Dick Cheney was asked whether he would agree that "a dunk in water is a no-brainer" as an interrogation method. Cheney replied that it would indeed be a no-brainer for him. Cheney appeared to be endorsing a torture technique known as "waterboarding", in which the victim is strapped to a board with head slightly below the feet. The victim's mouth and nose are wrapped with cloth or cellophane, and water is then poured over the face to simulate drowning. CIA officers subjected to water boarding during training exercises reportedly last 14 seconds on average before pleading to be released. Victims of waterboarding often remain traumatized by the experience for years.

Waterboarding is believed to have been widely used in Iraq, Afghanistan, and elsewhere. Although the current version of the *Army Field Manual* prohibits waterboarding, that document does not apply to the CIA. Remember, the Military Commissions Act now allows the President of the United States to determine what acts do and do not constitute torture.

Scene IV: Stress Positions

Bush and Cheney lead Detainee 1 to Detainee 4, who is covered with a full body hood and standing on a crate, recalling the well-known Abu Ghraib image. Salazar follows along.

Bush: How are you doin' there, you terrorist? Comfortable? Keep standin' straight up with your arms out, or we'll give you a little jolt! Of course, the United States doesn't engage in torture.

Cheney: That's a no-brainer.

Salazar wrings hands and moans. Actors freeze.

Narrator: The image you see re-enacted before you was first made public in April of 2004 when the Abu Ghraib prison scandal broke. Any illusions that the United States did not engage in torture, as George Bush has so often claimed, were finally laid to rest. This image now appears all over Iraq: in shops, in mosques, on the walls of buildings. It is a symbol of what the United States government has done and continues to do to the Iraqi people.

It must be said that stress positions such as this one have long been used by U.S. government agencies. In the 1950s and 60s, the CIA conducted a large scale research program on coercion and human consciousness, and developed a number of torture techniques that have since been used in Southeast Asia, Latin America, Iraq, and elsewhere. These techniques were first described in the secret 1963 manual titled *KUBARK Counterintelligence Interrogation*, which was publicized in the 1990s. The idea running through all of these techniques - sexual humiliation, sensory deprivation, and stress positions - is to make the victims feel responsible for their own suffering. This torture paradigm is capable of eliciting more information than the thumbscrew, rack and wheel, and iron maiden of earlier times. It also causes deep and lasting psychological damage to victims and interrogators alike.

One of the people subjected to the treatment represented here, Haj Ali al-Qaysi, survived to tell the world his story. Al-Qaysi was found to be innocent. He was released after 2 ½ months in Abu Ghraib, and vomited when he saw the light of the sun again at last. He told a reporter from Der Spiegel that he is now filled with a hatred that he cannot shake off. The worst thing about his experience, said Ali, is that he hates himself for hating others. Not the memories of pain or humiliation. That he was made to hate himself.

Scene V: Transcendence

Bush and Cheney lead Detainee 1 back to his family. Salazar follows along.

Bush: How did you like that, Mr. Terrorist, huh?

Child: But why did you take my father away?

Bush: 'Cause he's a terrorist!

Cheney: That's a no-brainer!

Woman: How do you know? Where's your proof?

Bush: Don't have to show you any. That's the interesting thing about bein' President!

Salazar: But I voted against denial of habeas corpus rights!

Cheney: But you voted FOR the Military Commissions Act, Ken. I guess you were against the bill before you were for it! What would we do without Democrats like you?!? (*Salazar wrings hands and moans.*)

Cheney: George, with a compliant Congress and an apathetic public, we can get away with just about anything!

Bush: That's right, Dick. It's great being the decider. Hey, where did all those, uh, PEOPLE come from?!?

Extras and the detainees , still masked, have joined the family members and formed a circle around Bush, Cheney, and Salazar.

Victims and others: Why have you done this to us? Why? Who gave you this power? This is unconstitutional! This is unjust! This is abusive! Why? Throw them out! Repeal this law! &c.

Victims and others raise their arms and draw the circle in tighter. As they do this, all actors, including Bush, Cheney, and Salazar, remove their masks . They then open the circle, turn to face the audience, hold hands, and take a bow.

Narrator: Thank you for coming to see our performance of "Human Rights Day with George, Dick, and Ken". (Acknowledge actors and director by name). Members of Strength Through Peace are circulating through the crowd with two things: a fact sheet on the Military Commissions Act, and a petition to Northern Colorado's Congressional delegation demanding the repeal of that law. Please be sure to pick up a copy of the fact sheet and sign the petition before you leave. The Military Commissions Act is a threat to all of us, and it must go!