

Toward a Moral Consensus Against Torture (TAMCAT) Conference March 25-26, Durham, NC

NOTES

Friday, March 25, 2011 • First Presbyterian Church, Durham, N.C.

3:30 p.m. - 5:45 p.m. Keynote Addresses

Dr. George Hunsinger, Hazel Thompson McCord Professor of Systematic Theology at Princeton Theological Seminary and Founder of the National Religious Campaign Against Torture

A line from Martin Luther King, Jr.'s April 1967 Riverside church address motivated him in the founding the NRCAT (National Religious Campaign Against Torture): we need a "moral consensus." "A time comes when silence is betrayal." When the Abu Ghraib photos came out in 2004, he waited to see if there would be a religious outcry; there were no organized efforts that made an impact. They started NRCAT in Jan. 2006 at a Princeton University conference. It has only been funded for the past 3.5 years. Before then, it was only he and another person volunteering. His awareness of torture by the US was emerging. On July 17, 1970, he first learned the realities of US complicity in forms of torture from *Life* magazine--a photo essay of tiger cages in Vietnam. It was torture by proxy, as the US does now.

Read: *Hidden Terrors* by A. J. Langguth, a *NY Times* reporter. The book discusses torture in Uruguay.

"There is no such thing as 'torture light.'" This is a false focus for national debate. The discussion about water-boarding is an example of this.

In 1994, Ronald Reagan was involved in the *The Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman, and Degrading Treatment*. Those shaping this debate inferred that actions short of extreme torture were allowable: sleep deprivation, stress positions, extreme temperatures, etc. These punishments are used in clusters. They are just as damaging as more direct forms of torture such as electrodes on genitals. There is "a seamless web between torture and so-called enhanced interrogation techniques." Both kinds of techniques shatter personalities. These practices are immoral, illegal, and ineffective.

Barak Obama disappoints on this issue. Executive orders are undermined by fine print. Obama has allowed indefinite detention of Guantanamo prisoners without charges. The administration cannot make a case against these detainees, as they have been tortured. They do not want to release them. About 1/3 of the Guantanamo prisoners, about 175 men, are in this category. Col. Lawrence Wilkerson, with Colin Powell in State Department, admitted that most prisoners in Guantanamo are innocent. President Carter came through with a pledge to give amnesty to draft resisters soon after becoming President. Obama let time lag, and dropped the ball on closing Guantanamo.

Obama had an Executive Order to close secret prisons. He did close CIA-run secret prisons, but Joint Special Operations Command (JSOC) still runs secret prisons inside Afghanistan, some at Bagram. ICRC (International Committee of the Red Cross) is not allowed access to prisoners in these sites, so we know they still exist.

It is important to have a uniform standard of interrogation. The Army Field Manual has a standard like the Golden Rule. They ask, 'Would you want this done to one of your troops?' BUT Annex M of the manual, which was inserted during the Bush administration, allows for enhanced interrogation techniques— isolation, stress positions, etc.

Rendition (Note: later in conference Steve Dear said we should not use this governmental term—instead, tell the truth that it is kidnapping and transport to be tortured): Some forms of rendition continue. This can be seen in relation to recent events in Egypt. The person replacing Hosni Mubarak in Egypt, Omar Suleyman, was the torturer-in-chief in Egypt. Ron Suskind called Suleyman the "hit man for the Mubarak regime." Eric Holder, when in the Clinton administration, helped establish ties with Egypt for early

forms of rendition.

Obama has reduced the extent of these practices. But—most importantly—he has not promoted any effort to bring anyone to accountability for the implementation of US torture. Many who have participated in US torture have received promotions to be federal judges, agency heads, etc.!

The US under Obama has sought to disallow legal redress appeals by torture victims. There has been NO due process in these situations. Torture survivors have been denied compensation for their injuries. The US has a “culture of impunity in our country.” This is troubling for the future of US democracy.

“Torture always comes home.” The Bradley Manning case brings this point home. He is alleged to have released a lot of files to WikiLeaks. The released videos available on the internet show US soldiers in helicopters acting as if they were in a video game while they were killing people on streets of Baghdad. Bradley Manning is now in prison for being a whistle blower on this, and he receives abusive treatment. A *New York Times* editorial says Manning has not been tried or convicted, but he is treated abusively by the military in the same manner as the Bush administration previously treated terror suspects. He is in solitary confinement (a form of torture, widely used in US prison system) at Quantico. NRCAT is trying to find donors to start work against use of solitary confinement in American prisons. For one hour a day he can walk around the room in shackles. He must be naked at night and pass inspection before being given clothes. Forced nudity is a humiliation technique. Philip J. Crowley, a State Department official who critiqued this treatment of Manning, was immediately fired.

What does the world expect of Christians? Unbeliever Albert Camus was invited to speak at a Dominican monastery. Camus said that the world needs “Christians who remain Christians.” The world expects Christians to speak out loud and clear, get away from abstraction, and confront the blood-stained face that history has taken today.

Dr. Ingrid Mattson, Director of the Macdonald Center for the Study of Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations at Hartford Seminary and Immediate Past President of the Islamic Society of North America

Ingrid Mattson is an Islamic law and society scholar and a Canadian philosopher. She lived in Pakistan and worked with Afghan refugee women. She is the first convert to Islam and the first woman to lead the Muslim American Society (MAS) of North America. She commended George Hunsinger and said that NRCAT now has over 300 members.

The first person she met who had been tortured was a woman tortured for eight years in Syria. It was very upsetting to her. This topic is hard. It is so visceral, and one feels it in one’s body. Care for each other is needed, so that people can be sustained in work against torture.

The good news is that more Americans are against US-sponsored torture.

Mattson referred to an article on the trial and sentencing of a 22 year old soldier this week (“Soldier Gets 24 Years for Killing 3 Afghan Civilians”). He had pleaded guilty to planning to kill unarmed people in Afghanistan. Jeremy Morlock was sentenced to 24 years, after a plea deal. Morlock apologized and asked for forgiveness from fellow soldiers. They planned to plant weapons near bodies of victims. “It was hard to come back,” Morlock told the judge. He had doubts even as he participated in the killings. He asked, “How could I become so insensitive? How had I lost my moral compass?” These are questions important questions for reflecting on the US’s use of torture.

Other soldiers are being prosecuted for mutilating dead victims. It is a crime to do this, but not to inflict pain on live men! Inflicting pain on living people has been rationalized by claiming that it is acceptable when there is a good reason.

Mattson will not talk about efficacy of torture because that is in the realm of consequentialist ethics. She asks, is there anything that no matter how useful it is, one just cannot do it? Enslavement of those defeated in war? Is that not the same as those now in indefinite detention? Are they not slaves, even if they do not do agricultural work?

She also asks, what else would one say is absolutely wrong, no matter how effective it is? Rape to get information or compliance? At Guantanamo, men were smeared with red liquid and told that it was menstrual blood. Men’s genitals were inspected by women soldiers. Is this not a kind of “rape?”

She asks, how young is too young to torture? At what point does one give up on the purity and promise of a young person such that s/he is permitted to damage his/her own soul by harming another creature?

CIA interrogation memos released in 2009 described what was done to detainees. Imagine that these things were done to a wild cat: slamming into walls, refusing to allow creature to sleep for 11 days, putting the creature in a damp closed box with no light, putting insects in the box, drenching the creature with freezing water, taking the creature by the neck and repeatedly plunging its face in water as it struggled—again and again. One wouldn't do it to a cat! Serial killers are identified by seeing if they hurt animals as a youth.

The designation “enemy” as a category makes people less than animals, and this shift changes what kind of treatment is seen as acceptable.

There is a conflation between some aspects of social and political culture, as in video games of violence, the construction of enemies, and propaganda making. The popularity of the TV show *24* exemplifies this. Mattson saw posters from the show *24* on the walls of the Pentagon! Americans now enjoy TV shows on life in prison, such as MSNBC's *Locked Up*.

Mattson's child is bedridden and in constant pain, so she is very sensitive to questions about why anyone would want to inflict pain. Mattson's daughter said to her, “Mom, on the show, a prison guard admitted that all they want is to keep prisoners locked up. Anything else is not their responsibility—rape, shanking. Isn't that a crime?” There is a direct link between American prisons and torture of Muslims and others. Economic and political interests predominate over human rights and dignity.

Issue of an Inquiry. Canadians apologized to and compensated Maher Arar after the Royal Commission's investigation of his rendition and torture while he was innocent. This will happen again if Americans do not change the procedures of interrogation by private contractors and others, even if the CIA does not torture. The US has no accountability with the outsourcing of punishment, abuse, and brutality in ICE (Immigration and Customs Enforcement), prisons, and war. This is a satanic happening in our culture.

Jeremy Morlock was convicted for premeditated murder. What about premeditated torture by lawyers in the government? Victims of torture begged to be killed. It is almost impossible to commit suicide at Guantanamo (because practices such as forced feeding, etc. are used), but several have. If we are so disgusted by murder, why are we not disgusted by the methodical planning of torture so that people beg to be killed? Something is very skewed about how we evaluate these deeds.

American/European journalists caught in Arabic freedom struggles now have a close-up view of the kinds of brutality practiced by some of the governments the US has supported. They experienced the brutality themselves, and they said that the uncertainty was the worst part. How does one help people understand that this brutality can happen anywhere?

Americans are sliding fast down to the bottom of the hill on this issue, as is evidenced by an American soldier being brutalized for telling the truth about what happens in US torture.

Muhammad said: *Help your brother whether he is the oppressed or the oppressor.* How do we help the oppressor? Stop him!

7:30 p.m. - 9:00 p.m. “The Nature of U.S. Sponsored Torture” Panel Discussion

Brig. Gen. (ret.) Stephen Xenakis, a psychiatrist active in anti-torture efforts

“Act in the realm in which you can.” Get other people involved.

In 1970, Xenakis was commissioned into the Army reluctantly, because he was against the war. In 2004 he was nominated for a political appointment in Bush administration. He said, “DOD [Department of Defense] wanted my experience.” The Abu Ghraib photos emerged as he was being interviewed. They asked what he would do about this situation. He said, “This is abuse, and Americans soldiers and leaders who do this should be held accountable. If medics see this, they are obligated to report.” His journalist wife told him he should write about this, and he did. The *Washington Post* published his Op Ed, as a voice of the medical world speaking out. He said, “I have been held hostage by human rights groups ever since!” He has worked with Physicians for Human Rights and Human Rights First. He went to Guantanamo. He was a rare psychiatrist with military clearance. “What we have done there is absolutely wrong!” He has interviewed many detainees and reviewed dozens of records. “What's happened to

my Army—it has lost the moral high ground.”

When the US had the military draft, the war came home. Now, Americans have detachment. Less than 1% of Americans serve in military. There have been 40,000 deaths of soldiers so far in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

One has to speak up and speak with veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan.

Xenakis says, ‘I am not a pacifist. I believe we need a smart military for the defense of the country. But, torture is irresponsible and hurts the defense of the country.’

Presidential candidates do listen to constituents. He and other military leaders told candidates for the last presidential election that torture did not work. Candidates listened, but were more responsive to the fear against Muslims expressed by some of their constituency.

Scott Horton, Contributing Editor of *Harper’s Magazine*

Arab revolutions: “Dignity” is key word in these uprisings—Dignity depends on jobs, an economy of promise, and a state that is worthy of them and does not abuse them. Dignity at its core is violated by the torture of a human’s body and spirit.

Torture by Americans fundamentally changed the Arab perception of the US. Before Abu Ghraib, human rights only seemed like an American issue. Photographs from Abu Ghraib changed the framing of the human rights discussion about the Convention on Torture, specific practices, and the Bush administration. The subtext of these conversations was that American practices were also used by their own Arab police states. The priority of dignity emerged as the anti-torture slogan in revolutions. State Security apparatuses were the main objects of revolt. Judges and the Army supported popular taking of files from security police and state intelligence services.

Revolutionaries in Egypt are abolishing the Egyptian SSI. New intelligence services will be subject to judicial oversight in all prisons. There will be accountability. This is raising acute concerns in the US.

Tunisia and Egypt were centers of the US torture by proxy network. The CIA used the Egyptian system as a US proxy torture system. Complicity to torture is now being investigated. The Station Chief for the CIA in Cairo (Michael D.) is now the head of the CIA’s Counter Terrorism Center. He supervised the US torture by proxy system. His counterpart is Omar Suleyman, the current VP of Egypt. The crowds in Cairo object to him.

Military people and CIA people were told to leave if they did not agree with new torture and rendition rules. Many of the most ethical people did leave.

Less than 150 CIA personnel are at the core of this torture-justifying cadre, while there are 10,000 CIA employees total. This clique has risen to the pinnacle of power in CIA through scandalous processes. The AP published a detailed study of 14 CIA officers involved in serious misconduct with renditions. It recounted homicides, kidnapping, assault, drugging, etc. The CIA Inspector General and the DOJ (Department of Justice) reviewed these 14 officers. NONE of them have been punished in any way! No letter of reprimand is in any of their files! These 14 officers are on an express track to the top of the CIA. Some examples are described below.

The case of German citizen Khaled el-Masri: Alfreda B, a CIA analyst, said that her gut told her that had to be Al Qaeda. So, he was taken and tortured, even though they had no evidence against him. He really is a green grocer in Germany. Alfreda said, ‘now we cannot let him go free, as he knows our secret ways!’ Condoleezza Rice ordered his release and said to the Germans, ‘oops!’ There has been NO penalty to Alfreda; rather, she was commended for her aggressive judgment. She was going to be a key anti-terrorism agent in London, a plum appointment. But, the British said that if she came there, they would turn her over to the Germans, who want to arrest her. Alfreda now is head of the Al Qaeda unit at Langley. This CIA clique is driven by the fear of being exposed; this drives their current analysis. These CIA leaders, therefore, do not give Obama good analysis, and they suggested that Omar Suleyman should be the new Egyptian leader. American torture practices, therefore, led the US to be on the wrong side of the Arab revolutions. The CIA now is less smart and less ethical than ever before. This ties directly to torture, which always comes home.

What's required is not shame and atonement (that's not bad), but can the US join Egypt and demand no torture?

The US Office of Legal Counsel's justification memos (by John Yoo and others) were intended to be purely a "golden shield" against prosecution.

These memos are, in fact, evidence of criminal conspiracy by their authors/lawyers as part of a "joint criminal enterprise." Here are ways other countries are affirming that this kind of criminality deserves accountability...

On Feb. 27, the Spanish National Security Court issued from its bench of three judges a judgment upholding their jurisdiction against these memo writers, who were called the "Bush 6."

Italy: 23 American officials were tried and convicted. The rulings were upheld on appeal. The charges were for CIA seizure, kidnapping, and assault.

Germany: Khaled el-Masri case.

UK: Have British agents collaborated with CIA? High Court required this inquiry.

Australia: AG opened criminal investigation as to whether Australians collaborated with CIA in the torture of a person.

Poland: Prosecutors are checking into a person who may have been water-boarded on a black site.

Horton does not expect a lot to come from US investigations.

47 Guantanamo prisoners are now being held in indefinite detention: The US government says that this group contains individuals who cannot be returned to (places like Yemen, etc.), people who may not have committed any crime, and those for whom the US does not have enough evidence. The US government says that these prisoners have acted in ways to indicate they are belligerents and 'bad guys.' 600 have been released from Guantanamo. There were no prisoners considered to be the "worst of the worst" at Guantanamo until 2006, when US black sites shut down, and the prisoners from the black sites were taken to Guantanamo.

Hope for accountability: Between 1980 and today more than 80 heads of state have been held accountable for their criminal behavior. So, maybe Americans, like John Yoo, will be prosecuted later. It takes time.

Robin Kirk, Executive Director, Duke Human Rights Center

Today, March 25, is the birthday of Rabbi Marshall T. Meyer. He would be 81. He was ordained in 1958 and served a congregation in Argentina in 1970's. He founded rabbinical school, and it was a renaissance of conservative Judaism at the time. He was an activist after the coup in 1976 and saved the lives of thousands. He was President of the Human Rights Commission in Argentina. He saved Jacobo Timerman. In 1983, Meyer returned to US and was a leader in peace building and human rights. His papers are kept at Duke. Deeds of loving kindness are the root of human rights. He said, "I have no right to be silent."

Here is a quotation from his sermons: "Silence is the most important ally of extremists who would destroy the fabric of a society." Abraham Heschel said that activism is "praying with his feet" and that "few are guilty but all are responsible."

Kirk tells her classes on human rights: 99% of torture in the world has nothing to do with politics or war on terror. Most of it happens the moment someone comes into a law enforcement office. It is normal, everyday, all over the world. There was Chicago police case recently in which some police were sent to jail for torturing a suspect in a criminal case.

After 9/11, torture has taken up different space in American national imagination. The TV shows *Alias*, *Lost*, and *24* incorporate torture into storytelling. In these shows, torture is depicted as something positive, as something the good guys do, and as something that works. These shows are in support of their producers' political agenda. In an earlier era, TV that portrayed torture as something that the bad guys did and as something that didn't work. Some American armed forces in the field saw TV like *Alias*, *Lost*, and *24* as inspirational. There are other similar TV depictions of torture, such as *NCIS*, *CSI*, *NYPD Blue* (i.e., Andy Sipowicz).

Torture is taught. Methodology and ideology are conveyed particularly as a body of knowledge applied to certain circumstances. The documentary "Death Squads: The French School" is about French techniques in Algeria. These techniques were taught in

Argentina and Chile.

Kirk cautions about using the language of morality as persuasive against torture. In the human rights community, the US until recently was seen as a governmental defender of human rights. After 9/11, our human rights community missed a chance to educate people inside USA about human rights.

Americans need to think that the US is in need of human rights education. Different languages and arguments are needed for different audiences.

Kirk cited a book: *The Last Utopia: Human Rights in History*, by Samuel Moyn. The human rights movement emerged in the 1970's, and it was a product of a particular moment in history. Marshall Meyer helped shape this in Argentina.

Saturday, March 26, 2011 • Duke Divinity School

9:00 a.m. “An Interfaith View of Torture” Panel Discussion

Abdullah Antepli, Muslim Chaplain at Duke University and Adjunct Faculty of Islamic Studies at Duke Divinity School

Antepli said, “I am between you and coffee! It is such a tough spot to be! My whole soul is crying for a cup of coffee right now! For us Middle Easterners, life starts at 10 p.m.!”

One has to watch videos on torture for more than three minutes. One cannot get this only theoretically. Unless one watches YouTube etc videos of this horrible reality, one cannot feel it enough. Watch the ones about torturing by American soldiers and about torture condoned by the American government. One has to go to a level of certainty in order to have the passion necessary to act.

People tell Antepli that as a Muslim Imam he does not have the legitimacy to criticize the American government. His universal humanistic cry for ethical, moral life is not well received. He has to demand some moral space to be heard! Muslims in America are forced to prove their loyalty to this land. They are forced to apologize for other Muslims. Listen to Antepli as a fellow human being, a fellow person of faith with universal human concerns.

Muslim philosophy on torture: There is no way in Islamic law, philosophy, or history to justify intentional pain inflicted on another. One cannot inflict suffering on any creature. In the first ten years, Muhammad and his followers were tortured, raped, and killed by tribal leaders of Arabia. As they were about to face off in war with their attackers (from Medina), Muhammad said: *We will not learn from these people, but from Allah.* He outlined what is basically a “just law” framework. He followed that vision.

Muhammad told a story of two women: One was pious and obedient, but not merciful to her cats. Several of her cats died of hunger. Another woman was a traveling prostitute. She filled her shoes with water to give drink to a thirsty dog. The prophet said that the latter would have God's mercy. The point: rituals should make one merciful.

Medieval Muslim scholars' assessment of torture:

The Ghazali from 12th century Islam wrote on the nature of torture done by the government. Torture is a result of larger a social pathology. Society has failed and has been stricken by an evil force, and torture is the outcome, sign, and indication of that failure. If people are silent, greed has taken over. Fear has been inflicted into the hearts of men. Society has been brewing with frustration,

anger, and revenge. Societies take this poisonous collective energy and inflict pain on others. This is a relevant analysis of why cultures allow torture. We are all suffering from a psychological, moral, and ethical disease.

The ramifications of torture do not remain in secret prisons. They hit Americans here in the US. There was a recent NPR piece was about what torture has done to the American nation. The number of suicides among military and veterans is more than number of soldiers lost in combat. He asks, what are we doing to our soldiers?? He says, “society is attacking itself; it is in decline.”

Joel Harvey, who interrogated in Iraq, said that the people he tortured were innocent and that he got no information from them. He admitted that the torture he did was useless.

Antepli said, “being Muslim in the USA is psychological torture.” He has three locks on his main door. After the Peter King hearings, his wife added two more. She is a nurse at Duke. After Senator Gabrielle Giffords was shot, Antepli’s wife left messages on Antepli’s voice mail, and she was wondering whether they should they leave the country if a Muslim shot that senator. This is the kind of fear a good woman has to bear!

Rev. Richard Cizik, President of the New Evangelical Partnership for the Common Good

Polls show that evangelicals support torture more than other Christians. Cizik is a convert to the cause of abolishing torture. He is not a pacifist and has been a conservative evangelical. He proposed to Ronald Reagan that he ought to give a speech on the morality of weapons of war. In 1983, he worked for the Evangelical Association and wrote a speech. From that speech, Reagan lifted the term that became the *Evil Empire* mantra!!! Cizik says that he was wrong about wanting to begin the Iraq War. He, like most current evangelicals, had no opinion on torture. It is also hard to speak out against torture in mainline Protestant churches.

Cizik says, “If you have never changed your mind about something, pinch yourself—you may be dead.”

In Old India, it was said that one could determine if an inmate in an asylum was ready to be released. Beside a basin with water running into it from the tap, the inmate was told to remove the water from basin, one spoonful at a time. If he proceeded to try that, he was not ready to be released. The moral of this saying was that unless you turn off the tap water, you cannot succeed at the task. Cizik said the story applied to the American situation with torture in that unless government stops torturing, nothing will change.

Christians have tortured at other points in history. Puritans tortured witches, and the Vatican tortured Galileo. These are precedents for those in churches who maintain that there are reasons to justify torture.

Cizik says, “I believe in objective moral truth; there are moral absolutes. The human person is sacred, made in image of God. Therefore no torture is acceptable.”

Cizik argues that people’s thinking moves in a transactional process. They do not go from A to D. Here is a vision of Five D’s about how people change beliefs:

- They Deny truths of scripture.
- They Deliberate on the issue and begin to think about it.
- They Design a will to change.
- They Do change and then begin to urge others to do likewise.
- Then, we become Defenders of the truth.

Younger evangelicals do not all agree with what the old guard said about torture as well as other things.

Cizik says, “Every vision without a strategy is a hallucination.” The strategy should be to care more deeply. Exodus 22 suggests that mistreatment of the powerless is a form of injustice.

Cizik talked about the strategy in his document, Chicago Council on Global Affairs document. Religious communities engaging with other religious communities must collaborate to form a new vision.

Religion itself has been made an object of torture. The Pete King hearings on Islamic terrorism in America are an example of this.

Cizik says, “Interfaith is not an evangelical word! I call myself an evangelical ecumenist.”

Cizik suggests that one must introduce people more often to victims of terror in order to help them understand.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer says, "Torture is inflicting pain while taking advantage of a superiority of strength. The Christian by definition does not take advantage of a superior strength."

Romans 3:10-18 reminds one of the sinfulness of mankind. Father Richard John Neuhaus, a conservative, said: "We cannot trust ourselves to torture."

Remember that Jesus was tortured. The complicity, silence, and denial among Christians in America is wrong.

Kalman Bland, Professor of Religion, Duke University

Bland's focus here in on the Jewish religious tradition as it pertains to torture.

The Brethren of Purity, Islamic sages, started a fable, which was later translated into Hebrew. The fable is about pity for those taken, tortured, and slaughtered in war. It includes vivid description of torture and murder while people kept silent. It asks, "where then is there mercy?" A ram was arguing on behalf of its kin, sheep being led to slaughter for food. For medieval sages, this metaphor was both allegorically and literally true.

Bland suggests that our task is a threefold struggle against all forms of cruelty:

- (1) To arouse the dormant capacity of compassion in anyone. To make even mere thought of torture utterly repellent and repulsive. To excoriate the ruling class, its agents, and sycophants for enacting malicious delusions of righteous grandeur—crimes against truth, humanity, and power. This was anticipated by George Orwell who said, "The party seeks power entirely for its own sake," and "The object of persecution is persecution...the object of power is power."

Bland discussed some scriptural quotations. Bland was at Jewish Theological Seminary with Abraham Heschel who said, "The Bible is not man's book about God, but God's book about man." The Bible seeks to deflate one's ethnocentric pretensions.

Exodus 23:9 and Leviticus 19:34 describe Jews as victims of torture. Therefore Jews more readily identify with other victims of torture and repudiate torture.

Abraham Heschel said, "*God might say: I know how humans tend to react to adversity. Your hearts are hardened, as you have been victims of torture. I weep for your pain. With you, I too lost an exile. I command you to be extraordinarily vigilant and don't let your oppressive history have the last word. Don't torture.*"

In Rabbinic medieval thinking, permission was given to kill in war, when necessary, and when done according to law, despite the commandment not to murder and the theological notion that humans are created in the image of God. Life for the rabbis was not an inalienable right. However, they refused to permit torture under any circumstances. Torture was that which nothing more perverse and unnatural could be conceived.

One should get rid of capital punishment and war, or else one cannot stop torture. Torture is too easy to rationalize. These are changes needed in religion.

- (2) The rabbis established legal safeguards against torture. One was the body of laws forbidding the cruel treatment of animals. The second included punishments prescribed for accidental wounding or unintentional harm to another human being. Maimonides said that if one wounds another, that person must pay five fold compensation in order to compensate for damages, pain, medical treatment, enforced idleness during recuperation, and humiliation. (Bland compared this with water-boarding and other extreme measures. There are consequences for this infliction of cruelty.)
- (3) Rabbinic law disallows self-incrimination. Two credible eyewitnesses are needed or else confessions are legally inadmissible. There is no rationale for extracting information or confession by means of torture. Maimonides said that a court may not flog or kill a person on his own admission of guilt. A defendant may be confused in mind, miserable, bitter in soul, and wishing death when confessing, and these things might lead the person to confess. (Torture confuses the mind, brings wishes for death. This is unacceptable by Maimonides standard.)

The Divine mind says that words admitted under stress are no words at all. The Divine will is not to compromise language.

Torture is ungodly, inhumane, unethical, and illegal under Jewish law!

Q. and A. Robin Kirk self-defined herself as a secular person and asked, “*Each of these traditions has been used to argue the opposite. It’s a devil’s advocate question here. Israel tortures Palestinians. How do we deal with these different interpretations of the texts, which challenge us who are secular? How do we get out of this doctrinal back and forth?*”

Bland said, “The State of Israel is not a good example of what Judaism is. The legal code of Israel is not rabbinic law. You cannot use the state of Israel to derive lessons about Judaism.” He cited a 1999 decision of the Israeli Supreme Court against the use of torture. It forbade the Army and security apparatus to use torture. Bland said, “The Bible is not user-friendly or perspicuous. It is like a picnic. God brings the word, and we bring the blanket. The word is illusive; the notion that it is clear cut is a primal mistake. What matters is the moral sensitivity one brings to the book.” Bland told a story in which Moses complains to God. Moses says, “*Make the Bible unequivocal.*” God says, “*The responsibility for its meaning is yours. Don’t pass responsibility on to me!*”

Cizik: Verses out of context become pretexts for arguments. The overall picture of the cross is that of Jesus Christ exchanging his life for the life of his enemies. The teaching about loving one’s enemies makes no sense without the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Antepli: The foundational texts of Islam simply do not justify torture. The heart of the problem is that people do torture. That is their problem. We have to ask ourselves about our own sins before we talk about external crazies.

Q. Allyson Caison: Someone asked earlier about how we can teach people to care more deeply. I have been trying this, unsuccessfully, for 5 years. Getting people to move from understanding to doing is hard. What are your Ideas?

Cizik asks that of his relatives, who seemingly are of his own blood (farmers and Presbyterian ministers) in east Washington state. They are unmoved by his arguments. The ministers do agree with him, but their opinions do not necessarily persuade even their own family members. He doesn’t know, apart from personal experiences, how to make someone care more deeply. Psychologists and he have worked hard on how to change evangelical minds. Some people, notwithstanding all the evidence, will not change their views. But, there have to be disturbers, who challenge people to reject the status quo. There must be didactic teachers who ask people to shift worldview. Without these disturbers, people will not change. But as disturbers, one has to engage people with others who may move them. Less than 1/3 of evangelical leaders admitted to having one friend they could say is a Muslim. Evangelical leaders by and large have no Muslim friends. If you have no others as friends, you do not relate to these people.

Bland: Everybody cares about something. How do we get people to care about the right things and stop caring about the wrong things? This way of looking at it might give us a new way to approach the issue: people do care about something. Start with what one cares about most, which is oneself. One needs to eliminate the blocks to one’s natural sense of compassion. Let one’s children be more free to resist one, so they can think for themselves. Within Jewish families, there is a habit of questioning. Every child looks forward to Passover, where the child is formally instructed to ask four big questions about life. Bland’s favorite parts of the Bible are when God gets shot down by the prophets!

Jews do not exclude others from God’s grace. But, Christians do, as does the American Constitution. One’s traditions must profoundly change themselves.

Fettig/Hall/Adkins (?) said, “We have held more and more Christians to a notion of “redemptive retribution.” We have wanted torture! In North Carolina, the executions by law are on Fridays in the early morning. We have to look at this and do some deep psychotherapy among my people.”

10:45 a.m. “Torture in U.S. Prisons” Panel Discussion

Amy Fettig, Staff Attorney with the American Civil Liberties Union National Prison Project

Amy Fettig said, “What prisons need is light, light and more light.”

She said, “Terrible things are done in our name in US prisons and jails every day.”

More and more prisoners are subject to solitary confinement. It is for longer times than ever in human history. This is the prison within a prison. It is the hardest to help and protect. People subject to long-term isolation will suffer long-term mind and body damage.

None of this is inevitable. Legal and financial choices drive solitary confinement and how America imprisons.

She said, “There is a serious mercy deficit in prison system here. It is a moral-free zone.” America manages populations, confines and contains problems, and mostly punishes to the maximum extent.

Solitary confinement background: This practice has evolved in the last 25 years from being a sporadic practice to being a long-term correctional management tool. Super Max institutions developed in the 1980’s to this end. 41 states have these facilities, which are dedicated to isolating individuals. About 25,000 prisoners are in these facilities. However, all prisons have a segregation wing, which is known by many Orwellian names and as “the hole.” It is hard to pin down the number of people in solitary confinement, but tens of thousands are subject to long-term isolation each day in America.

Cell description: These cells are the size of a small bathroom with a toilet, bed, and maybe a table. They have a solid metal door and no window. The prisoner is in this cell 23 hours each day. Meals come into the cell through a small food slot, as do medications, legal consult, and therapies. No personal property, letters, radio, or TV is allowed. The prisoners have no human touch or interaction. Guards cuffing or beating the prisoner is the only contact. Cell extraction includes men wear armor, beating the prisoner up, and taking the prisoner out. But the prisoner gets out and is touched in this process!! Prisoners try to get this!

The constitutional minimum is 5 hours per week out of the cell for “recreation” (this entails being in a cage-like cell, walking back and forth, if one is lucky, this cage is outside). Lights are on 24/7 in most places. Some like eternal twilight. This is harsh on human body rhythms.

Duration in solitary confinement: Previously, the duration was days or weeks, but now it is a way of life. In the Illinois Supermax facility, 54 prisoners have been in solitary confinement for over a decade. Some have been in utter isolation for 27 years.

Solitary confinement is considered inhuman treatment by human rights standards. The US is an outlier in this practice. Other nations do not use this practice.

SHU (special housing unit) Syndrome: This is the demolition of human personality. People in solitary confinement experience hallucinations and anxiety. They rage constantly. They have revenge fantasies, a sense of persecution, claustrophobia, severe and chronic depression, a blunting of affect, sleep disorders, confused thoughts, and confusions of reality and fantasy. Self-mutilation occurs often, and this is rarely or never seen in the normal adult male prison population. After 7 days of solitary confinement, EEGs show brain changes. Prisoners in solitary confinement tend to kill themselves at astronomical rates. In California, 10% of the prison population is in isolation. 73% of prisoners in California prisons who kill themselves come from isolation units.

Why use solitary confinement? DOC (Department of Corrections) says that it is used to manage the “worst of the worst.” But, there are not many super predators.

So who gets there? Prisoners who have committed minor infractions, like having a contraband radio, can be placed in solitary confinement. Nuisance prisoners, who file complaints, can also be placed there. Vulnerable prisoners, the young, the disabled, the elderly, victims of sexual assault, and those perceived to be LGBT can also be placed in solitary confinement. The largest contingents of prisoners in solitary confinement are the mentally ill and the cognitively disabled. At least 1/3 of the population in solitary confinement has a mental illness (MI). Bizarre acts of self-harm occur with these persons. One set himself on fire inside cell. Another used his hanky to choke himself to death. They swallow razors. They bang their head against walls. Tearing out their eyes is common.

There is virtually no mental health care in isolation units. At best, some medications are given. Clinical care is through the door’s food slot. It can consist of the doctor asking, “Are you OK?”, and the prisoner responding, “I’m fine.”

These facts about prisoner mental illness are well known. In class action suits before the federal court, judgments never are made to agree that this is an 8th Amendment violation. There is not enough public outrage to prompt such a decision.

Public safety justifications are used for solitary confinement, as if there were no other options. This is not true.

What to do? Make stays shorter. Make solitary confinement a last resort. Raise the level of social interaction these prisoners can have with via books, radio, etc. Don't put mentally ill persons in these conditions! Don't put young people or vulnerable victims into this form of torture. Don't put death row or life sentence people there. Give these prisoners access to mental health care.

Phillip Griffin, North Carolina Prisoner Legal Services

The North Carolina Prisoner Legal Services is a team of six lawyers that represents 38,000 inmates in the North Carolina Department of Corrections in civil claims pertaining to the conditions of confinement and brutality. Griffin said, "We are in the business of trying to make people care." That is hard.

Griffin told a specific story: In the 4th Circuit Federal Court (NC, VA, MD, GA, SC), isolation has been specifically held to be not cruel and usual punishment. This was confirmed in a 1999 case in South Carolina. This case pertained to the 5 *Percenters* group, a Muslim movement perceived to be a gang. They were isolated as a group within the prison system, and they brought a lawsuit to protest this distinctive isolation. The 4th Circuit Court said that even indefinite isolation is not constitutionally significant.

North Carolina has two basic kinds of severe isolation: high-control maximum security (HCON) and maximum security. HCON prisons are in Butner (Polk Correctional Institution), Morrie in Green County, (Central Prison), etc. In these prisons, the rooms are 4x12, with a steel shelf and mattress, a steel combination sink and commode, a window with wire glass to hallway, and a food trap.

Two issues arise concerning these HCON conditions: the mental health of the prisoners and their abuse. These two issues are two sides of the same coin. Those with mental illness CANNOT conform their behavior, so they end up in long-term controlled segregation. This IS torture. And most people don't care. America now has a much increased use of solitary confinement for punishment and long-term control.

Griffin represents Michael, who has been in prison since age 16 and in isolation for 10 years. He is from Winston-Salem and was convicted of armed robbery. His IQ is 75. He has been diagnosed as a paranoid schizophrenic with borderline personality disorder, and he also has a sociopath diagnosis. He is unable to control his behavior in a rational way, relate to people, or understand social situations. NC DOC has committed itself to not putting people with mental illness in HCON, but Michael has been on isolation for 10 years. When they send him to the hospital, he is put in "therapeutic seclusion." This is the same as HCON, but it prescribed by an M.D. See handout. It excerpts the case rejected by the court, and it says Michael was not being harmed. This evaluation lasted 15 minutes, and was done while Michael was in his cell. A psychologist talked to Michael through the slot in his cell door. Now Michael is 30 and cuts himself.

Griffin said, "There is an inexplicable blindness to deliberate cruelty that happens in this country. When people break the law, many of us feel a certain satisfaction in seeing them suffer, because that makes our following the law virtuous. There is not much difference between self-satisfaction and sadism. The criminal justice system is where these two forces merge. Prisoners in this country are the people Jesus had in mind. The mentally ill prisoners are The Least of These. And we are hell on those people."

Sarah Jobe, Duke Divinity School Alumna, 2006, Watts Street Baptist Church, Durham, N.C. and Director of Project TURN

Jobe is a Rutba House resident, responding from the Catholic Worker tradition. Dorothy Day came to Catholicism via the labor movement. She focused on works of mercy and Jesus who says he will be met in the least among us. Jobe's focus is Catholic Worker tradition's teaching about isolation breaking apart individual minds and corporate, social bodies.

In *The Long Loneliness*, Day describes her imprisonment (she had 6 days in solitary confinement and went on hunger strike in response to the rights of political prisoners). She spoke of the dark, the cold, and her loss of identity. Day talks about how her mind began to break down after 6 days. Day says, "I lost all feeling of my own identity." Jobe notes how different intentional submission to arrest is from capture unwillingly. Even so, the effect of solitary confinement is similar and devastating.

Jobe referred to a *New Yorker* article by Atul Gawande entitled “Hellhole.” A man named Robert Felton was kept in isolation for 15 years (1990-2005). He said that flooding the prison with toilet water was the last thing he had autonomy to do. All he had was a toilet. One woman said, “My husband was put in SHU because there was not regular space in the prison for him. They heard that someone was going to flood the cell block. They thought it would be like a party! They put their things up high and anticipated some diversion.” These acts by prisoners take a different angle from within.

Jobe spoke about the Body of Christ imagery. When one of us is in solitary confinement, all are affected. See 1 Corinthians 12.

Jobe said, “I have three close friends in solitary today; all Christians. The Bible says that when we cut these people off, we cut off our hand. We are letting the state gouge out our eyes. We say by our silence that we do not mind being a maimed and broken body.”

WHAT DO WE DO to resurrect the body of Christ, to re-attach our hands? Be in as close communion and identification as possible with those experiencing injustice. Solidarity.

One: Engage in civil disobedience on many issues, but this in particular. Traditional advocacy is important, but arrests break down the walls between criminal and criminal justice advocates. We expose brutalities of imprisonment by allowing them to be done to us, not to other, more predictable bodies. And, we are then in the place of imprisonment with parts of our own body.

Two: Get inside prison via various engagements of volunteers who cross in and out of prison. Caution: Most of these ministries will want to put you in a position of power over the imprisoned, and they will want you to avoid “undue familiarity.” These kinds of ministries support the myths that divide us into good and bad people. Go into prison as a friend, making mutual relationships across divides. Project TURN has Duke students take classes inside, with prisoners.

Third: Letter writing is the only way to communicate with those in solitary.

These forms of solidarity can reconnect the socially broken Body of Christ. A reattached bruised hand is better than no hand at all.

Amey Victoria Adkins, Ph.D. Student in Religion (Christian Theological Studies) at Duke University and a Lecturer with Project TURN

Adkins is American Baptist ordained but Episcopalian. She is speaking from a Christian theological context, but she hopes for resonances with interfaith perspectives. She offers a theological reflection on solitary confinement.

Penitentiary is based on a Christian notion of repentance.

Dr. Willie Jennings speaks of slavery and the auction block as the “crib of American consciousness.” We can see prison as the new auction block.

Auction block: Bodies on the auction block are negative, a threat, different, and less than human. They are this, because white bodies are not these things. The auction block crystallized a moment of racial hierarchy. It achieved distance for the viewers from the calculus of the body.

Solitary confinement (Adkins drew on Foucault’s theory of disciplinary technology): A person is separated from his or her own voice or agency. There is a racial logic and a calculus at play in solitary confinement and torture. Criminal, black, Islamic, gay, mentally ill, and revolutionary bodies, are a problem. They are that which is not and that which must be avoided.

The goal of solitary confinement, and the auction block, is to achieve distance. Solitary is not legislated by courts, but it is determined by those in the prison system. Therefore no due process is in place.

Amnesty International has noted that STG’s (Security Threat Groups) can immediately be put into solitary confinement. Angola prison in Louisiana sits on what used to be a slave plantation. Three Black Panthers have a collective 100 years in solitary confinement there.

Churches turn away their gaze from certain kinds of nonconforming bodies. One can only avert one’s eyes from what one has

already seen. The Christian Church is complicit. Adkins said, “We on the outside are quietly losing our minds and souls as well.”

Adkins said, “The prison is Christianity’s black hole. It is a function of our fear, disgust, and desire for security and safety at all costs. Prisons mark our theological conundrum and inversion (of notions of self-reflection, wilderness, and pilgrimage). Prisons began as a mode of rehabilitation. Prisons have now colluded with capital and marginalization, and they have become the prison industrial complex.”

Quakers thought isolation would bring penitence and reform. But, they quickly abandoned this notion, after isolation was seen to have brought obvious mental illness.

Jesus in the wilderness shows signs of “the crucifying forces of isolation.” (He hallucinated, starved, and was isolated.) But, his time had an end. Those in our solitary isolation see no end in sight. Adkins said, “We entomb people with no hope of resurrection.”

The prison has become our social scapegoat. We enslave those who affirm our identities as American citizens and as virtuous and moral people. We accept social control and domination as key to our global position.

Isolation is a “malformation of wilderness, a kind of “mental crucifixion.”

A way forward: The Christian Church should think about what it might mean to return to the wilderness. There are two dialectical moments to consider. The presence of the Spirit is denied when humans cannot touch. The Church should also consider what it means for prisoners not to know when their time in solitary confinement will end. (Adkins and Jobe work with women in prison isolation).

12:15 p.m. Lunch with Speaker Christina Cowger, Coordinator of North Carolina Stop Torture Now

Cowger described the actions of North Carolina Stop Torture Now. The agency addresses North Carolina’s complicity in CIA-ordered torture taxis for extraordinary rendition of prisoners to be tortured outside of the US. She described specific men who were transported from here and tortured. She asked for signatories to the call for a North Carolina Inquiry Commission, etc.

1:15 p.m. “What Can You Do When You Go Home?” Panel Discussion

Linda Gustitus, President of the National Religious Campaign Against Torture (NRCAT)

The first goal of NRCAT is to establish a Commission of Inquiry, funded by the government and with full access to its papers. International law calls for this. Accountability is critical. Prosecution is not the goal here. She suggests that a series of questions should be asked. How many are being tortured now? How many were tortured? How many were tortured to death? (8-11 of those are affirmed.) What did we do to the young soldiers and CIA agents who did this task? She told a story. A Mormon agent was asked to go and sexually humiliate an Iraqi detainee. She did not, but she felt so bad about disobeying the request that she committed suicide. President Obama said that we will not look backward, only forward. This was a political decision, and it was wrong. (Obama called for an investigation of what Americans did to Guatemalans in the 1950’s during medical experiments without consent. His refusal to investigate US torturing is inconsistent with his decision to investigate this earlier situation with the Guatemalans.)

Get key elements of the Executive Order (EO) legislated. For example, the right to have ICRC access to all detainees, entrance to all prisons, etc need to be legislated. These conditions are now policy, but the EO is subject to enforcement by each President. So, we must take key pieces of the EO’s and put them into law in order to preserve them.

Get the US to sign the Optional Protocol to the Convention Against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (OPCAT). This United Nations resolution was signed by about 50 countries in order to prevent torture before it began. This prevention would be achieved through oversight. It stipulates that each signatory must provide oversight of all its detention facilities. It calls for investigation of wrongdoings in all detention facilities. The US is not near ratifying this treaty. We need to get Obama to sign this OPCAT and then have Congress ratify it. This would apply to all detention facilities in the US.

Change people’s minds. Public opinion in the US is about 50/50 now about the legitimacy of torture. This is a terrifying thought.

Leaders have sufficient support to use torture. How can one change people's minds on torture? One can proceed one by one, congregation by congregation. Institute programs make the subject visible. Having a Commission of Inquiry, where important people say what we did was wrong, would be a large step. This is hard but important. Polls in Europe show that 85 percent of people there oppose torture under any circumstance.

Go to the NRCAT website and sign their statements. They have two lobbyists in Congress. These people gain small successes. NRCAT got a law passed, which states that all interrogations by the military must be videotaped. They are now trying to get that applied to the CIA as well. Grassroots organizing helped convince Congressional representatives to do this.

Go to congregations and ask them to be a member of NRCAT. Once a month there is a participating members' phone call. We can be part of that.

Join NRCAT's Letter to the Editor and Op Ed campaigns. Local paper op-eds affect elected officials.

Work on solitary confinement is a new area for NRCAT. This effort is state based. Its goals include the elimination of solitary confinement for the mentally ill and the cessation of shackling women who are pregnant. The Maine Council of Churches has made a big effort to stop the solitary confinement of the mentally ill. They took clergy to see inside a prison using solitary confinement, and the experience animated the clergy to act.

David LaMotte, Program Associate for Peace with the North Carolina Council of Churches

Beyond the data, actions, and initiatives, here we are with real people who are suffering—both the prisoners and us in this room are hurt by the situation. (A friend of LaMotte said about those who came today: “You know how to party!”) How can we keep ourselves from being immobilized? Coming to this kind of event is like dentistry. We do this because the other alternative is worse. But it is still not fun.

LaMotte spoke about his experience. He was feeling inadequate to the enormity of the need. He said, “I am a *Quakerterian*, and believe in calls, leadings, and our different roles to play all along the spectrum. I used to feel guilty that I am not the bullhorn activist and have never been arrested. But I bring the gifts of dialogue with those who disagree. I can bite my tongue and listen for a long time. Movements need this kind of person too. Matt did graphics for the conference. Amy Laura Hall gets people to say yes. Kara Slade is the details person who made it all happen. It would be a tragedy if Amy Laura and Kara switched roles, or I and Kara switched roles.”

Howard Thurman said, “Don't just ask what the world needs. Ask what makes you come alive, because what the world needs is people who come alive.” Plug in according to the gifts you bring.

Soul of a Citizen by Paul Rogat Loeb: There seems to be four requisites that activists look to before acting: (1) Pick the right issue in order not to waste time. (2) Have solid knowledge of the issue before acting. (3) Have a plan for change. (4) Check one's own motivation and make sure that one is clear that one acts for the right reasons. However, no movement has ever come alive from attention to these requirements before action. The point is to show up!

Activists: In LaMotte's lexicon, this includes anyone who acts. All of us who show up.

Beth Brockman, Activist in Durham, NC, and Member of Witness Against Torture

Brockman described a ritual that Witness Against Torture (WAT) used when they gathered. They listened to the voices that are missing there—voices of those in prison in Guantanamo, Bagram, etc. She said, “We try to find those voices.” She read from *Poems from Guantanamo: The Detainees Speak*. The poets wrote by using plastic spoons to carve into Styrofoam cups.

Brockman identifies with the Catholic Worker movement and is in the Southern Life Community. She quoted William Stringfellow: “The survival of the principalities is the secret purpose of war” and “Act humanly in the midst of the fall.”

We need to confront the evil of our area. Do we risk our comfort and security to do the right thing?

WAT started with a handful of friends in 2005 talking about news of torture at Guantanamo and elsewhere. They also talked about the hunger strikes by prisoners. The friends started to fast one day a week in solidarity with the prisoners. The friends met to discuss what more they could do. Twenty-five of them boarded a plane and flew to Cuba. In Havana, they kept saying they wanted to visit Guantanamo prisoners. With their tents, they walked from Havana to Guantanamo. They wanted to do acts of mercy—to visit the prisoners. They also wanted to appeal to the humanity of the American captors. The group kept a vigil, fasted, and prayed for three days beside the prison. Brockman joined the group when they returned. They organized with interfaith and secular human rights' groups. They gather in Washington, DC on January 11, the anniversary of the opening of Guantanamo. WAT is personally addressing issues of torture by engaging in critical thinking about nonviolent direct action in places of power.

What does it mean to be a conscientious American in these times? What would the men in these black sites want us to do? Direct action has many roles, not only arrest.

Brockman described her own personal experience with WAT: She volunteers for the Human Kindness Foundation and encourages prisoners to have a spiritual practice. Communion, inner peace, and community are very important. She and her co-volunteers wear the orange jumpsuit and a black hood over their heads—these are a symbol for them. They have vigils, process, and hold banners while wearing this garb. It is a small way to feel what it must feel like to be invisible. It makes one draw inward. When tortured, all one has is what is inside—this feels vulnerable. This is important. The only chance for transformation is to become vulnerable, and as we change, everything changes.

WAT will hold an action June 20-26, 2011. On June 23, 2011 they will gather in DC. Small groups around the country are also acting in similar ways.

2:30 p.m. “Notes on the National Detainee Taskforce”

David Gushee, Distinguished Professor at Mercer University and chair of the Board of the New Evangelical Partnership for the Common Good

“Five Reasons Why Torture Is Always Wrong” is an article that Gushee wrote in *Christianity Today* in February 2006.

The Constitution Project: Gushee is the Chair of that Board. It is a national, nonpartisan, and non-ideological group. Beyond politics and polemics, they seek to move toward a common account of what happened. They ask how they can move forward with broad public support. This was a private citizen initiative. Obama declined to form such a panel. Congress investigated some aspects of detainee policy, and they always had majority and minority reports.

The Constitution Project taskforce met in January of 2011, and there are 13 people on the panel. They hired staff this Spring. They receive funding from a broad spectrum.

Gushee said, “Pray and yearn for the work of this panel.” He is the only ethicist and “professional Christian” on this panel. Pray for him. He is switching from being an activist on the outside to one on the panel who must constrain what he says. His role now is to look at the issues in a fresh way.

Gushee described some issues for the church and academy:

He said that this conference is five years late. There are many weaknesses in our civil society accountability structures.

Higher education in the US does not currently play a social role in the profound critique of US policies. The bottom line counts, and institutions of higher education do not want to offend funders. Scholarship in the tenure process rewards narrow focus. Few scholars participate in public intellectual engagement, and they may get punished for it. (George Hunsinger is an exception.)

Churches: Aspiring pastors hope to find jobs in declining churches. Gushee did a series in his Baptist church on controversial issues. A man said: “How dare you bring leftist politics into this church?!” Pastors avoid controversy. Even the growing churches are not interested in such conversations. They do not see discussions of US governmental policy as

part of their primary agenda.

Media: Media have done better than the academy or the church in dealing with detainee policy issues, via investigative journalism. Scott Horton is an example of this. However, most media is commercial and not willing to deal with this issue.

Government: Some speak out at great personal cost. Note to activists: do not criticize all in the military, CIA, State Department, etc. Some of them know when to say no, put up a fight, leave a paper trail, and have prepared the way for later assessments.

What do people do in times of great moral stress, when it is easier to not rock the boat? A remnant still knows that two plus two equals four and are willing to say so.

People of the USA: Do we get the government, media, academy, and church that we deserve? Gushee said, “What a ridiculous way to be a democracy—amusing ourselves to death, with chosen ignorance! We don’t care to be bothered.” For many Americans, these issues are out of sight and out of mind. Some are more concerned with how their NCAA brackets are doing.

Benjamin Franklin said, “It’s a republic, madam, if you can keep it.” A republic is kept by adherence to the rule of law and vigilant oversight of that. Perceived national security threats are among the greatest corrosives to any rule of law. Democracies have collapsed into national security states. We have been a national security state since 1941, Pearl Harbor. That is 65 years, and that is a long time. In that stretch, we have traded our principles for a little more security, often in secret, and we have forgotten to notice how we did that.

Gushee said, “There is a limited salience of biblical and theological arguments among most folks in congregations. You had to make arguments to endangering troops abroad, self-interest, national security. I have been more Niebuhrian about how little collective groups respond to moral appeals. They only fly when we tie a moral appeal to a self-interest appeal.”

HOWEVER, without a theological, transcendent reference point in this discussion, we have only utilitarianism and the national security state.

We can say: Christians are a certain kind of people who have certain discipleship obligations. Anything that challenges that fidelity must be confronted. Some accept this argument, and others say this is mixing politics and religion. The capacity to think in densely Christian theological terms about life in general has been lost for a long time. But, there is opportunity to breathe new life into the church. Gushee said, “I would not underestimate the difficulty of beginning the conversation.”

Question by Christina Cowger of NC Stop Torture Now: What about people-to-people relationships between those who have been tortured and regular citizens? She and fellow activists formed relationships in Central America that enlightened them. How could we as a national movement put programs in place to link survivors with others?

Answer: The US government tries to hide those released from American torturing. It makes sense to find those people and join with them in relationships. This would be a great strategy!