

Podcast # 26
A War Without Pain:
How the Media Failed America, and Americans Failed Themselves

K. Edward Renner, PhD ¹
Forums for a Future Podcast ²

To mark the anniversary of Five Years of War in Iraq, Time magazine choose 18 photographs to display on their website.

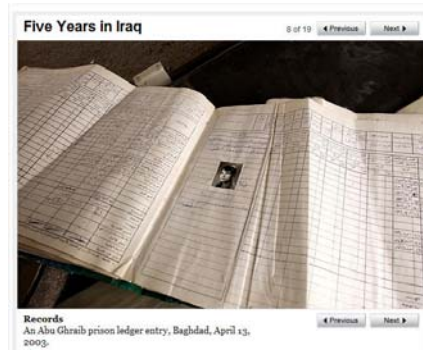
The photographs were not what I expected to see. There are not any pictures of blood or death, and only a hint of destruction or human suffering. The pictures are more of a display of photographic art, than of photographic journalism. They tell a story of a painless war.



The pictures from Time are a fiction the US media has chosen for us to know -- an illusion we willing accepted. Yet, the rest of the world has seen and knows a very different story. The real story is one of civilian pain and suffering.



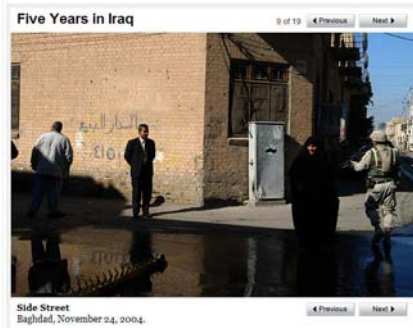
Time showed an Abu Ghraib prison record. Yes, we knew that it represented an embarrassment. However, we did not see the graphic details the rest of the world saw.



The rest of the world saw pictures that contradicted every thing our troops were supposed to be fighting for. Rather, we had a political debate about when torture could be justified in the context of 9/11 and our war against terror.



The pictures, showing the occupation of Iraq, portrayed a drab and uncertain emergence of a democratic process of voting, of freedom of movement, of the beginning of a new government, and of the fragile nature of civic life.



But, there is no hint that the reality behind these pictures was one of chaos of sectarian violence, a dysfunctional government, a collapsed infrastructure, over 3 million Iraqi civilians that had been displaced from their homes, over two million of whom are living as refugees in Syria and Jordon, nearly one million people who have been wounded or maimed, the majority of whom are women and children, and 150,000 Iraqi people who have been killed.



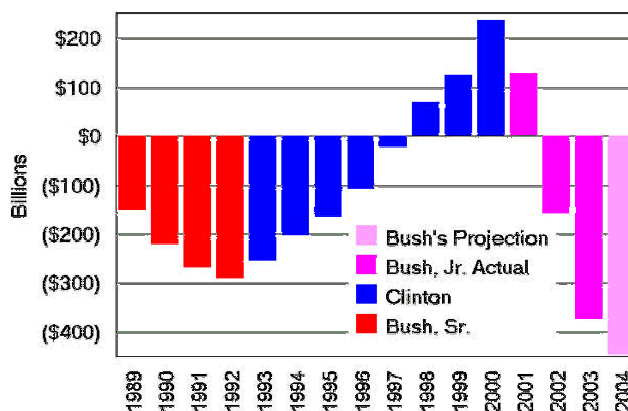
Our use of depleted uranium has caused birth defects in Iraqi babies and in the children of American soldiers.



Why haven't we seen these pictures of human pain and suffering? Why haven't we seen the pictures of the injury and deaths inflicted on US soldiers?



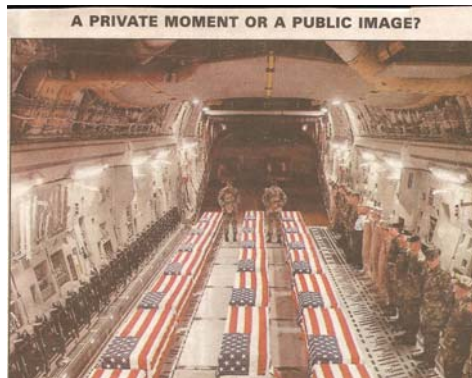
The media has not been witness to what we have done to either Iraq or to ourselves. The success of our freedom and democracy require us to demand to know and to see reality. The media has failed America, and we have failed ourselves.



If we had paid for the war with our own money, rather than left it as a debt for our children we would have better understood its true cost at the time of the decision, rather than only now in retrospect.

If we had seen the pictures that the rest of the world had seen our choices and decisions could have based on reality not fiction. That is the foundation of civic responsibility in a democracy.

A war with no visible pain is a war that should never have been fought. Therefore, let us resolve that:



- Never, ever, again shall we fight a war on money borrowed from our children, rather than taken from our own pocket as our personal endorsement of the choice.
- Never, ever, again shall we fight a war with a professional army and private security forces, rather than through conscription as our personal endorsement of the choice.
- Never, ever, again shall we let the government nor the media keep us in a bubble of isolation to protection us from our personal endorsement of the choice for war.

This is the change we have all been waiting for.

1. Professor Renner may be reached at erenner@cas.usf.edu. The podcast series is also available through the University of South Florida at:

https://my.usf.edu/webapps/lobj-podcast-bb_bb60/feed/IDH3400.004S09/podcast.xml

2. This essay is based on an audio and video podcast by Professor Renner entitled "**Forums for a Future**". Text, audio and video copies of the material may be accessed from his website at www.kerenner.com. The direct link for subscribing to the video series from iTunes is:

<http://phobos.apple.com/WebObjects/MZStore.woa/wa/viewPodcast?id=289289719>