

Burning Bush

Notes and Sources

Burning Bush: A Faith-Based Musical, by Noah Diamond and Amanda Sisk, premieres September 15-17 at the HERE Arts Center in New York City. This document, as noted in the production's playbill, provides notes, explanations, sources, and links for the political background and statements made in the show. Information is current as of September 1, 2005. For much more, read the Nero Fiddled blog.¹

Who's Bush

The **frog-abuse** scandal is true, and the quotes from the *New York Times* are real.²

The significance of young Bush's torture of animals is explained in an excellent article by Bev Conover.³ "If we believe the psychiatrists," Conover says, "a sign of a future serial killer is a child who delights in torturing and killing animals." She quotes another journalist: "So when he was a kid, George W. enjoyed putting firecrackers into frogs, throwing them in the air, and then watching them blow up. Should this be cause for alarm? How relevant is a man's childhood behavior to what he is like as an adult? And in this case, to what he would be like as President of the United States?"⁴

The Bush Dyslexicon, by Mark Crispin Miller, offers great insight into how Bush's mind works. Conover's article includes a good summary of Miller's main points:

Mark Crispin Miller, author of *The Bush Dyslexicon* and professor of media studies at New York University, who also sees the darker Bush, said in a Nov. 28 interview with the *Toronto Star*, "Bush is not an imbecile. He's not a puppet. I think that Bush is a sociopathic personality. I think he's incapable of empathy. He has an inordinate sense of his own entitlement, and he's a very skilled manipulator. And in all the snickering about his alleged idiocy, this is what a lot of people miss..."

¹ <http://www.noahdiamond.com/nerofiddled> or <http://nerofiddled.blogspot.com>

² "A Philosophy With Roots In Conservative Texas Soil," Nicholas Kristof, *New York Times*, 5/21/00 (<http://query.nytimes.com/gst/abstract.html?res=F30A16FF3A5E0C728EDDAC0894D8404482&incamp=archive:search>)

³ "Bush Isn't a Moron, He's a Cunning Sociopath," Bev Conover, Online Journal, 12/5/02 (<http://www.serendipity.li/wot/conover01.htm>)

⁴ Miriam Miedzian, *Baltimore Sun*, 9/12/00

“He has no trouble speaking off the cuff when he’s speaking punitively, when he’s talking about violence, when he’s talking about revenge...When he struts and thumps his chest, his syntax and grammar are fine. It’s only when he leaps into the wild blue yonder of compassion, or idealism, or altruism, that he makes these hilarious mistakes.”

In one of his most famous hilarious mistakes (from a September 2001 speech in Nashville), Bush said, “There’s an old saying in Tennessee – I know it’s in Texas, probably in Tennessee – that says, ‘Fool me once, shame...shame on you...fool me...can’t get fooled again.’” (He was trying to say, “Fool me once, shame on you. Fool me twice, shame on me.”) Miller suggests that this moment is more than just a funny gaffe. When Bush makes these ridiculous pronouncements, he’s revealing things about himself.

Said Miller, “What’s revealing about this is that Bush could not say, ‘Shame on me’ to save his life. That’s a completely alien idea to him. This is a guy who is absolutely proud of his own inflexibility and rectitude.”

Another example, Miller said, occurred early in Bush’s White House tenure when he said, “I know how hard it is to put food on your family.” According to Miller, “That wasn’t because he’s so stupid that he doesn’t know how to say, ‘Put food on your family’s table’ – it’s because he doesn’t care about people who can’t put food on the table.

“...When he tries to talk about what this country stands for, or about democracy, he can’t do it...He’s a very angry guy, a hostile guy. He’s much like Nixon. So they’re very, very careful to choreograph every move he makes. They don’t want him anywhere near protestors, because he would lose his temper...I call him the feel bad president, because he’s all about punishment and death...It would be a grave mistake to just play him for laughs.”

I Cannot Tell the Truth

This is a parody of the classic American myth in which the young George Washington chops down his father’s cherry tree⁵ and cannot tell a lie. Bush Senior giving his son an

⁵ Mason Locke Weems, “The Fable of George Washington and the Cherry Tree,” *The Life of Washington*, 1809. (<http://www.loper.org/~george/archives/2000/Feb/39.html>)

axe, and the olive tree, are made up.

Bush's father, as the head of the CIA and later as vice president, helped provide training and weapons (including **Stinger anti-aircraft missiles**⁶) to terrorists. The Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan in 1979, and groups of insurgents called *mujahadeen* rose up to fight the Soviet occupation. The Soviet Union was supposedly America's worst enemy, and the Reagan administration was happy to let the mujahadeen do the dirty work. We gave them money and weapons and training throughout the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan, which lasted until 1989. By then, the mujahadeen had broken into two factions – the Northern Alliance and the Taliban. These two groups were now fighting a civil war for control of Afghanistan, and fighting on the Taliban side was a Saudi aristocrat whose leadership abilities had made him one of the most prominent mujahadeen, and one who benefited a lot from America's support. His name was Osama bin Laden.

But of course, this is an anachronistic reference, since the scene takes place during Bush's childhood in the early 1950s. This is true of other references in the scene, too.

“That tree sought to illicitly purchase the equipment needed to enrich uranium”: Here George W. Bush is saying about the olive tree what he really said about Saddam Hussein in 2003.⁷ In order to win support for war in Iraq, the Bush administration had to convince us that Saddam had a weapons program. Bush claimed that his nemesis had tried to buy uranium yellowcake (a major ingredient in the building of a nuclear weapon) from the African country of Niger. As it turned out, he hadn't. This was determined by Ambassador Joseph Wilson, sent by the administration itself to find out. Since he had demonstrated the inaccuracy of the Niger claim, Wilson was surprised to hear it repeated in the 2003 State of the Union Address⁸. Wilson wrote an op-ed piece for the *New York Times* saying so⁹, which infuriated Karl Rove so much that he leaked the identity of Wilson's wife to the press. Wilson's wife, Valerie Plame, was then an undercover CIA officer who investigated weapons of mass destruction.¹⁰

⁶ “Stingers, Stingers, Who's Got the Stingers?,” Ken Silverstein, *Slate*, 10/2/01 (<http://www.globalsecurity.org/org/news/2001/011002-attack03.htm>)

⁷ 2003 State of the Union Address, 1/28/03 (<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2003/01/20030128-19.html>)

⁹ “What I Didn't Find in Africa,” Joseph C. Wilson IV, *New York Times*, 7/6/03 (<http://www.commondreams.org/views03/0706-02.htm>)

¹⁰ For a simple and brilliantly funny summary of this caper, see my blog article “Apparently the Investigation is Ongoing,” 7/13/05 (<http://nerofiddled.blogspot.com/2005/07/apparently-investigation-is-ongoing.html>).

Bush in Love

We know that Bush's first business ventures were financed partially with **money from the bin Laden family**.¹¹ The money trail starts with Salem bin Laden, the eldest of the bin Laden brothers, and a half-brother and cousin to Osama. When their father Mohammed bin Laden died, Salem took over as the head of the family, managing its \$16 billion investment portfolio. Salem's American representative was a Texas money man named James R. Bath, an old Bush buddy from the incredibly brief Texas Air National Guard period. On Salem bin Laden's behalf, Bath invested \$50,000 in Bush's oil company, Arbusto Energy. ("Arbusto" is Spanish for "bush.")

"Turd Blossom" is indeed Bush's nickname for Karl Rove. (He also calls him "Boy Genius.") In the parlance of West Texas, a turd blossom is a flower that grows on manure. Insert your own punchline.

We're taking some dramatic liberty with the chronology, by aligning Bush's introductions to Karl Rove and Laura Welch. He actually had known Rove for at least a few years by the time he met Laura. Bush probably met Rove in 1972, when Rove was working for economist Harry Dent. It's been established that when Rove was working in Washington D.C. as head of the College Republicans, he became a protégé of sorts to Bush's father, then the head of the Republican National Committee. (He was appointed to that post by President Nixon in December of 1972.) *Texas Monthly* executive editor Sam Gwynne, formerly the Austin bureau chief for *Time* magazine, told *Frontline* that Bush I would send young Rove to run errands for him: "One of the errands that he had him do was to take the keys of his car to give them to his son, George W., who was at Harvard Business School and visiting for the weekend."¹²

Bush met **Laura Welch**, a shy librarian, in the summer of 1977. They met at a dinner party in Midland, at the home of their mutual friends Joe and Jan O'Neill. Their courtship was very brief, and they were married a few months later.

The Finger Report

Unlike W, the first Bush would not take military action without the support of the United Nations and our allies. He didn't want to get stuck in a war like the current one. This

¹¹ "Bush Family's Dirty Little Secret: President's Oil Companies Funded by Bin Laden Family and Wealthy Saudis Who Financed Osama," Rick Wiles, *American Freedom News*, September 2001 (http://www.topplebush.com/article2_famhistory.shtml)

¹² "Karl Rove: The Architect," *Frontline* interview with Sam Gwynne, 1/8/05 (<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/architect/interviews/gwynne.html>)

point was made quite effectively by John Kerry during the 2004 presidential debates.¹³ Most of Bush I's comments on Saddam Hussein and Desert Storm are taken from his speech to Congress at the end of the Gulf War.¹⁴

In October of 1987, when Vice President George H.W. Bush was running for president, *Newsweek* put him on the cover with the headline “**Fighting the Wimp Factor.**” This infuriated Bush, whose critics have often suggested that the Gulf War was simply an exercise in machismo.¹⁵

Bush II's role in his father's campaign was exactly as the scene describes it: He was there to establish a dialogue with evangelical Christian voters, who had never quite taken to Bush I, and to be the “loyalty enforcer.”

Peenack

Nothing said about the **Project for the New American Century** (PNAC) is exaggerated or made up. During the Clinton years, PNAC was started by a cabal of extreme right-wing Republicans, including many who'd served in the Reagan and Bush I administrations, and who returned to public office under Bush II. (Members include **Donald Rumsfeld, Dick Cheney, Paul Wolfowitz, and Jeb Bush.**) The men of PNAC were outraged that President Clinton was not continuing the relentless arms buildup of the Reagan and Bush presidencies, and they concocted a plan for American conquest. On pages 62 and 63 of PNAC's September 2000 document “Rebuilding America's Defenses,”¹⁶ they seem eager for America to be attacked, so that their policy of military domination could win support:

Any serious effort at transformation must occur within the larger framework of U.S. national security strategy, military missions and defense budgets. The United States cannot simply declare a “strategic

¹³ See the 2004 presidential debates, complete transcripts and video (http://www.cspan.org/2004vote/debates.asp?Cat=Current_Event&Code=PresVP_04&Rot_Cat_CD=PresVP_04).

¹⁴ President George H.W. Bush, address to Congress, 3/6/91 (<http://www.albab.com/arab/docs/pal/pal10.htm>)

¹⁵ See Webster G. Tarpley and Anton Chaitkin, “Bush Takes the Presidency,” from *George Bush: The Unauthorized Biography* (<http://www.tarpley.net/bush22.htm>).

¹⁶ <http://www.informationclearinghouse.info/pdf/RebuildingAmericasDefenses.pdf>

pause” while experimenting with new technologies and operational concepts. Nor can it choose to pursue a transformation strategy that would decouple American and allied interests.

A transformation strategy that solely pursued capabilities for projecting force from the United States, for example, and sacrificed forward basing and presence, would be at odds with larger American policy goals and would trouble American allies. Further, the process of transformation, even if it brings revolutionary change, is likely to be a long one, absent some catastrophic and catalyzing event – like a new Pearl Harbor.

PNAC was looking for a Republican presidential candidate to support in 2000, one who would run the country their way – by “projecting force” around the world. They found their man in George W. Bush.

Most of the PNAC guys were old Reagan-era hawks who regarded Bush Junior as an irritating kid. Their opinion changed somewhat when Karl Rove brought W some legitimacy by getting him elected Governor of Texas, and it changed a *lot* when it became clear that the 2000 election would hinge on Florida. As the Governor of Florida, PNAC’s Jeb Bush was in a unique position to see that his brother won the state, democratically or otherwise. He installed **Katherine Harris**, Florida’s Secretary of State, as Bush’s state campaign manager – an obvious conflict of interest, but a legal one. This exact maneuver was repeated during the 2004 election, when Ohio’s Secretary of State, J. Kenneth Blackwell, served as Bush’s re-election manager in that state, and helped to fix the election.

Bush’s first cousin **John Ellis** was the man in charge of the decisions desk at Fox News on Election Night 2000. Fox, under Ellis’s orders, announced that Bush had won Florida when all the other networks were saying either that Gore had won or that it was still too close to call.

Once it was clear that Bush could “win” the presidency, and that he would be a PNAC president, the organization supported him fully. Almost all of the administration’s major players were PNAC men. Nine days after 9/11, Bush unveiled his “National Security Strategy of the United States of America.”¹⁷ Much of this document is taken directly from “Rebuilding America’s Defenses,” often using the exact same language.

Bush’s line about “**running against the guy in the White House**”¹⁸ is something he really said. It was obvious that Bush wanted to be Governor of Texas so he could run for president in 2000. One reporter wrote that “Bush had to avenge his father’s humiliation in

¹⁷ <http://www.whitehouse.gov/nsc/nss.html>

¹⁸ “The Accidental Candidate,” Gail Sheehy, *Vanity Fair*, October 2000. See *The Bush Dyslexicon*, p. 117.

losing to Bill Clinton...the way he said it was like a blood oath.”¹⁹

Bush indeed holds the record for **the most executions** ordered by any governor of any state in American history.²⁰ There is no reason to believe that he’s ever threatened to kill his wife and children, as he does in this scene, but there’s plenty of evidence that Laura and the girls would have preferred that he not enter politics.

John McCain was considered the front-runner for the Republican presidential nomination in 2000 – a race he probably would have won, because of his wide bipartisan support. Karl Rove knew that for Bush to get the nomination, McCain would have to be destroyed. This was accomplished largely through direct mailings, which spread blatant lies about McCain designed to turn right-wing Christian fundamentalists against him. These mailings claimed, for instance, that McCain had fathered an illegitimate black child, that he was opposed to religion, and that he was literally insane (having supposedly lost his mind at the Hanoi Hilton). None of this was true, but it worked, and evangelical voters turned out in unprecedented numbers to choose the born-again Bush over the “secular” McCain.

Another technique by which the Bush/Rove machine defeated McCain was **push polling**. This is when a poll is conducted not to determine public opinion from the answers, but to spread disinformation in the *questions*. As Al Franken has explained, a typical push poll from this period was conducted by phone, and would include questions like, “If you found out that John McCain had fathered an illegitimate black child, would you be more likely or less likely to vote for him?”

The **dyslexia** stuff is from Bush’s actual statements.²¹ The astounding line “That woman who knew I had dyslexia – I never interviewed her” is taken verbatim from Bush.²² (“He did not appear to be making what would have been an incredibly clever joke,” wrote Frank Bruni of the *New York Times*.) The discussion about “**the drug issue**” comes from another Bush interview.²³ The line about “a loud, unified voice, saying, ‘Drugs will destroy you’” is a direct quote.²⁴

¹⁹ Randy Galloway, *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*. See *The Bush Dyslexicon*, p. 117.

²⁰ He executed 152 people (<http://www.bushkills.com>). See their names, statistics, mug shots, police reports, and final statements (<http://www.tdcj.state.tx.us/stat/executedoffenders.htm>).

²¹ *Larry King Live*, CNN, 9/29/00

²² “Bush’s Tune Is the Same Even as the Pitch Varies,” Frank Bruni, *New York Times*, 9/16/00 (<http://query.nytimes.com/gst/abstract.html?res=F60C12F83A5C0C758DDDA00894D8404482&incamp=archive:search>)

²³ *Larry King Live*, CNN, 12/16/99

²⁴ *Meet the Press*, NBC, 11/21/99

The Pet Goat

When the planes hit the World Trade Center, George W. Bush was at Booker Elementary School in Florida, reading a book called *The Pet Goat* with a second-grade class. Although Bush later claimed to have seen the first plane on television, this is obviously wrong, as the first plane wasn't shown on television until much later. After the second plane hit, Bush's chief of staff Andrew Card went up to Bush at the front of the classroom and whispered, "Mr. President, America is under attack." (The exact line varies from source to source; "The nation is under attack, Mr. President" etc.) As everyone knows, for seven minutes, Bush just sat there.

Unlike this scene in *Burning Bush*, the real event wasn't actually Bush reading *to* the kids. The class was demonstrating its skill by reading the book out loud, in unison, following a strangely militaristic reading lesson.²⁵ The line "**These must be sixth graders**" was actually spoken by Bush that morning, in response to the students' aptitude. The line "**Course I know that**" is from the 2004 presidential debates – Bush's response to Kerry's pointed reminder, "Saddam Hussein didn't attack us. Osama bin Laden attacked us."

Some of the many unanswered questions about what happened that day are asked at the end of this scene.²⁶

Mohamed Atta al Sayed was named by the FBI as the suicide pilot of American Airlines Flight 11, the first plane to crash into the World Trade Center on 9/11. He is believed to have been a leader of the attacks.

General Mahmud Ahmed is the head of the Pakistani secret service, ISI (Inter-Services Intelligence). **Porter Goss** was a Republican congressman from Florida until he joined the CIA during Bush's first term; he is now the CIA director.²⁷ **Senator Bob Graham**, who announced his retirement in November of 2003, was a moderate Democrat from Florida who supported Goss. On the morning of September 11, 2001, Goss and Graham had a mysterious meeting with General Ahmed on Capitol Hill. Later, Goss and Graham became the chairmen of the Joint Inquiry on 9/11. Although the FBI found links between ISI, al Qaeda, and the Taliban – including evidence that ISI had played a role in financing

²⁵ You can see the complete video from Bush's 9/11 visit to Booker Elementary School at <http://www.whatreallyhappened.com/schoolvideo.html>.

²⁶ See "An Interesting Day: President Bush's Movements and Actions on 9/11," Allan Wood and Paul Thompson, Center for Cooperative Research, 5/9/03 (<http://www.cooperativeresearch.org/timeline/main/essayaninterestingday.html>). This excellent article tracks Bush's actions on the morning of 9/11, and explains some of that day's unanswered questions, including many of those asked at the end of this scene.

²⁷ In March of 2004, before Bush appointed him to the post, Goss told Michael Moore that he wasn't qualified to head the CIA (<http://www.michaelmoore.com/words/latestnews/index.php?id=128>).

the 9/11 attacks – Goss and Graham excluded this detail from the Joint Inquiry’s 858-page report.²⁸

Jesus’s Jihad

The ECPOO organization is made up, but it follows the basic ideological mold of these evangelical political groups. The statements about 9/11 attributed to Jerry Falwell and James Dobson are based on things they actually said.²⁹

The 9/11 Commission

The 9/11 Commission was established in 2002 “to prepare a full and complete account of the circumstances” under which the 9/11 attacks took place. The most celebrated part of Condoleezza Rice’s testimony³⁰ was during her questioning by attorney **Richard Ben-Veniste** (former chief of the Watergate Task Force of the Watergate Special Prosecutor’s Office. Ben-Veniste asked Rice about the Presidential Daily Briefing (PDB) delivered to Bush at his Crawford ranch on 8/6/01³¹:

BEN-VENISTE: Isn’t it a fact, Dr. Rice, that the August 6 PDB warned against possible attacks in this country? And I ask you whether you recall the title of that PDB?

RICE: I believe the title was, “Bin Laden Determined to Attack Inside the United States.”

Bush and Cheney never spoke to the 9/11 Commission under oath.³² They did agree to meet with members of the commission, but under absurdly secretive conditions – Bush

²⁸ “Mysterious September 11 Breakfast Meeting on Capitol Hill,” Michel Chossudovsky, Global Outlook , 8/4/03 (<http://www.globalresearch.ca/articles/CHO308C.html>)

²⁹ For some brilliant, insightful, hysterically funny comments on these subjects, see my blog articles “Jerry Falwell is Sick,” 3/30/05 (<http://nerofiddled.blogspot.com/2005/03/jerry-falwell-is-sick.html>) and “Pat Robertson on Facial Hair,” 5/4/05 (<http://nerofiddled.blogspot.com/2005/05/pat-robertson-on-facial-hair.html>).

³⁰ Complete transcript of Condoleezza Rice’s appearance before the 9/11 Commission, 5/13/04 (<http://www.cnn.com/2004/ALLPOLITICS/04/08/rice.transcript>)

³¹ “Bin Laden determined to strike in U.S.,” Presidential Daily Briefing, 8/6/01 (<http://nerofiddled1.proboards20.com/index.cgi?board=911&action=display&thread=1116057384>)

³² “Bush, Cheney meet with 9/11 panel,” CNN, 4/30/04 (<http://www.cnn.com/2004/ALLPOLITICS/04/29/bush.911.commission>)

and Cheney had to appear together, behind closed doors, and not under oath. None of the conversation was permitted to be recorded or written down. (“Testify?” Bush asked reporters. “You know, I’d be happy to *visit* with them.”³³ After the “visit,” Bush told the press that he and Cheney wanted to appear at the same time so the commission could “see our body language.” Bush also said, of the conversation, “I’m glad I did it...I enjoyed myself.”³⁴)

The Creature

Halliburton Energy Services (a gigantic multinational corporation based in Houston) has a revenue in excess of \$20 billion. Its business consists mainly of oil exploration and production, as well as the construction of pipelines, refineries, and chemical plants. Dick Cheney became the CEO of Halliburton in 1995, and like the company, he’s made a fortune on American conquest of the Middle East for its oil resources.³⁵

On June 22, 2004, in the Senate chamber, Cheney got into an argument with Senator Patrick Leahy of Vermont, who criticized his association with Halliburton. (Leahy also criticized some of Bush’s judicial nominees.) In a shining example of statesmanlike dignity, Cheney said to Leahy, **“Fuck yourself.”**³⁶

11/3/04

The 2004 exit polls reflected a clear victory for John Kerry. According to a study released by the National Election Data Archive Project, the odds of the exit polls being wrong was 16.5 million to one.³⁷ In an incredible piece of work entitled “Maps and Cartograms of the 2004 U.S. Presidential Election Results,”³⁸ a group from the University of Michigan used stunning visuals to show just how “blue” America really is.

³³ “President Bush Appears On NBC’s *Meet The Press*,” White House press release, 2/8/04 (<http://www.scoop.co.nz/stories/WO0402/S00078.htm>)

³⁴ “9/11 Commission Finishes Bush, Cheney Session,” MSNBC, 4/29/04 (<http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/4862296>)

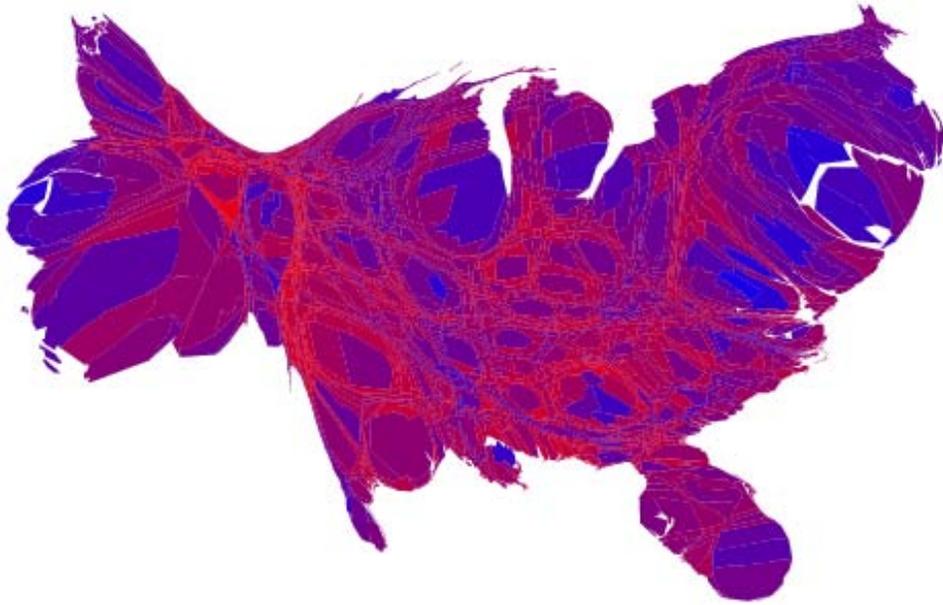
³⁵ See Wikipedia for a good summary of the Halliburton record (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Halliburton>).

³⁶ “Cheney Dismisses Critic With Obscenity,” Helen Dewar and Dana Milbank, *Washington Post*, 6/25/04 (<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A3699-2004Jun24.html>)

³⁷ “None Dare Call it Stolen,” Mark Crispin Miller, *Harper’s*, August 2005 (<http://www.harpers.org/ExcerptNoneDare.html>)

³⁸ Michael Gastner, Cosma Shalizi, and Mark Newman (<http://www-personal.umich.edu/~mejn/election>)

margin. So if you further adjust the map to reflect each precinct within each state, and use shades of purple to indicate just how each area voted, this is what the country looks like:



Obviously, it's a much different picture; politically, it's a lot more accurate. This is a purple country full of purple states. The authors of this project note that "only a rather small area is taken up by true red counties, the rest being mostly shades of purple with patches of blue in the urban areas." The bottom line is that Americans in general are actually more liberal than conservative, and that Bush's post-election claim of a mandate was an absurd fallacy, even if the election had been fair.

Fascist Parents

The Fairness Doctrine was a policy that governed the way the American media presented the news. It required broadcasting entities to present issues of public importance in a balanced and objective manner. It included, among other things, the "personal attack rule" (if a person or group is subjected to a character attack, they must be notified within one week, provided with transcripts, and given an "equal time" opportunity to respond on the air) and the "political editorial rule" (if editorial content supporting a particular candidate is broadcast, opposing candidates must be notified and given equal time).

In 1987, under President Reagan, the Fairness Doctrine was repealed. By the 1990s, the entire American television news media was owned by five public mega-corporations, interested mostly in turning a profit for their wealthiest and most powerful stockholders. This led to the news media culture we have today. Freed of the burden of having to present the news fairly and accurately, the networks do what will increase their financial

prosperity – shilling for Republican policy which benefits the wealthy. Of course, the best (worst) example is Fox News, owned by the ultra-conservative Rupert Murdoch.

Murdoch’s News Corporation also owns the *New York Post*, and thousands of other newspapers and TV outlets which present blatant right-wing propaganda as though it were objective news.³⁹ Because there is no Fairness Doctrine, millions of Americans went to the polls on November 2, 2004, honestly believing things that just weren’t true, and that no responsible and accountable media would have them believe. A majority of Bush voters believed that Saddam Hussein was responsible for the 9/11 attacks, that he had weapons of mass destruction he was planning on using to attack America, and that John Kerry was a gay Frenchman.

Again because of the corporate-controlled media, a lot of Americans don’t realize that at the time of this writing,⁴⁰ 1,885 Americans have died in Bush’s Iraq war. But even those who understand the death toll often forget how many have been wounded. So far, the official number of wounded Americans is 14,021, though it’s estimated that the real number could be as high as 42,500.⁴¹ A lot of these are terrible, severe wounds – missing limbs, blindness, etc. As for the number of Iraqi civilian casualties, nobody knows, because we don’t count those. Estimates range from 23,000⁴² to 128,000.⁴³

The “**rubber stamp of Donald Rumsfeld’s signature**” line is true. That really is what you get if your child dies in the war.⁴⁴

Alberto Gonzales

Alberto Gonzales, another Texas friend of Bush’s who has been with him throughout his political career, was appointed Attorney General – the nation’s top law enforcement official – early in Bush’s second term, when John Ashcroft stepped down. Among liberals, Gonzales is known as “the Torture Guy.” He’s played a key role in the attempt to justify (or deny) the torture of prisoners at the Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo Bay

³⁹ See Robert Greenwald’s documentary *Outfoxed* (<http://www.outfoxed.org>).

⁴⁰ September 2005

⁴¹ <http://www.antiwar.com/casualties>

⁴² <http://www.iraqbodycount.com>

⁴³ “Iraqi civilian casualties,” United Press International, 7/12/05
(<http://www.wpherald.com/storyview.php?StoryID=20050712-122153-5519r>)

⁴⁴ “Impersonal ‘your son is dead’ letters,” Daily Kos, 12/6/04
(<http://www.dailykos.com/story/2004/12/6/10213/0764>)

detention centers.⁴⁵ Gonzales is also known for having referred to the Geneva Conventions of 1949 – a series of treaties which established humanitarian standards for international law during wartime – as “quaint.”

The Passion of the Bush

Bush’s ignorance about the White House is imagined, but probably a safe guess. The White House was designed by an architect named James Hoban. John Adams was the first president to use it. (When George Washington was president, New York City was the capital of the country.) The original White House didn’t have an **Oval Office**, although there was an oval-shaped room called the Blue Room. (American politicians of the eighteenth century favored circular layouts, because the British Court always stood in a circle.) The Oval Office was designed by Nathan C. Wyeth during Theodore Roosevelt’s presidency, and William Howard Taft was the first president to use it, in 1909.

“Wal-Mart in New York City”: In 2005, labor leaders successfully prevented Wal-Mart from opening branches within the five boroughs of New York City.⁴⁶

Bush’s description of the prisoners he executed while Governor of Texas is based on remarks he made to *Talk* magazine in 1999.⁴⁷

Bush’s brand of forthright tough-guy populism can be appealing, and it has played well in Texas. Yet occasionally there are flashes of meanness visible beneath it.

While driving back from the speech later that day, Bush mentions Karla Faye Tucker, a double murderer who was executed in Texas last year. In the weeks before the execution, Bush says, Bianca Jagger and a number of other protesters came to Austin to demand clemency for Tucker. “Did you meet with any of them?” I ask.

Bush whips around and stares at me. “No, I didn’t meet with any of them,” he snaps, as though I’ve just asked the dumbest, most offensive question ever posed. “I didn’t meet with Larry King either when he came down for it. I watched his interview with [Tucker], though. He asked her real difficult questions, like ‘What would you say to Governor Bush?’” “What was her answer?” I wonder.

⁴⁵ http://www.phrusa.org/research/torture/abu_ghraib.html

⁴⁶ http://www.againstthewal.com/jan_05-mar_05.htm

⁴⁷ “Devil May Care,” Tucker Carlson, *Talk*, 9/99
(<http://www.dangerouscitizen.com/Photo+Gallery/568.aspx>)

“Please,” Bush whimpers, his lips pursed in mock desperation, “don't kill me.”

I must look shocked – ridiculing the pleas of a condemned prisoner who has since been executed seems odd and cruel, even for someone as militantly anticrime as Bush – because he immediately stops smirking.

“It's tough stuff,” Bush says, suddenly somber, “but my job is to enforce the law.” As it turns out, the Larry King - Karla Faye Tucker exchange Bush recounted never took place, at least not on television.

“Get the Congress back in 2006 and impeach the son of a bitch”: Amen.