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# counterpunch

**edited by alexander cockburn and jeffrey st.clair**

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## Today's Stories

December 21, 2005

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[Iraq Election Spells  
Total Defeat for US](#)

December 20, 2005

Jackie Corr  
[Natural Gas: a  
Montana Tragedy](#)

Earl Ofari Hutchinson  
[Nothing New About  
NSA Spying on  
Americans](#)

Michael Donnelly  
["Eco Terrorism": Cui](#)

December 21, 2005

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from C

The Case  
By Mich

## *One Nation, Under Prosecutors*

### Presumed Guilty

By PAUL CRAIG ROBERTS

**W**hile enjoying the Christmas season in the comfort of your home, take a minute to say a prayer for the wrongfully convicted.

American prisons are full of wrongfully convicted persons. Many were coerced into admitting to crimes they did not commit by prosecutors' threats to pile on more charges. Others were convicted by false testimony from criminals bribed by prosecutors, who exchanged dropped charges or reduced sentences in exchange for

The C  
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MICHAEL



[Bono?](#)

false testimony against defendants.

[Click Here](#)  
[Philosc](#)  
[Neuman](#)  
[Rebuttal o](#)

**Gian Paolo Accardo**  
[Empire of Shame: a](#)  
[Conversation with](#)  
[Jean Ziegler](#)

Not all the wrongfully convicted are poor. Some are wealthy and prominent people targeted by corrupt prosecutors seeking a celebrity case in order to boost their careers.

**WHA**  
[Grand T](#)  
[Tales](#)  
[Profiteer](#)

Pierre Tristam  
[Trifler, Fibber,](#)  
[Sophist, Spy: How](#)  
[Bush Flouted the](#)  
[Constitution](#)

Until it happens to them or to a member of their family, Americans are clueless to the corruption in the criminal justice (sic) system.

Most prosecutors are focused on their conviction rates, and judges are focused on clearing their court dockets. Defendants are processed accordingly, not in terms of guilt or innocence.

by Jef

**Norman Solomon**  
[The Foulest Media](#)  
[Performances of the](#)  
[Year](#)

"Law and order conservatives" wrongly believe that the justice (sic) system is run by liberal judges who turn the criminals loose. In actual fact, the system is so loaded against a defendant that very few people, including the totally innocent, dare to risk a trial.

Sen. Robert Byrd  
[No President is Above](#)  
[the Law](#)

Almost all (95-97%) felony indictments are settled by a coerced plea. By withholding exculpatory evidence, suborning perjury, fabricating evidence, and lying to jurors, prosecutors have made the risks of a trial too great even for the innocent. Consequently, the prosecutors' cases and police evidence are almost never tested in court. Defendants are simply intimidated into self-incrimination rather than risk the terrors of trial.

**Dave Lindorff**  
[Missing Black Boxes](#)  
[in WTC Attacks Found](#)  
[by Firefighters,](#)  
[Analyzed by NTSB,](#)  
[Concealed by FBI](#)

Website of the Day  
[FBI's Spy Files: Got](#)  
[Yours Yet?](#)

According to Yale University law professor John Langbein, "The parallels between the modern American plea bargaining system and the ancient system of judicial torture are many and chilling." Just as the person on the rack admitted to guilt in order to stop the pain, the present day defendant succumbs to psychological torture and cops a plea, whether he is innocent or guilty, in order to avoid ever more charges.

**December 19, 2005**

Mike Marqusee  
[The Global War on](#)  
[Civil Liberties](#)

Michael Tonry, director of Cambridge University's Institute of Criminology, reports that the US has the highest percentage of its population in prison than any country on earth, including dictatorships, tyrannies, and China. The US incarceration rate is up to 12 times higher than that of European countries.

**Gary Leupp**  
[Feds Ask Student:](#)  
["Why are You](#)  
[Reading that Little](#)  
[Red Book?"](#)

Unless you believe Americans are 12 times more criminally inclined than Europeans, why is one of every 80 Americans (not counting children and the elderly) locked away from family, friends, career, and life? Part of the answer is the private prison industry, which requires inmates to fuel the profits of investors. Another part of the answer is career-driven prosecutors who want convictions at all costs. Yet another is the failure of

Ron Jacobs  
[The Antiwar](#)  
[Movement, the](#)  
[Democrats and the](#)  
[Delusions of](#)  
[Bushworld](#)



**John Blair**  
[Stealing the Golden Shovel: Lessons on Civil Disobedience](#)

Gideon Levy  
[Sadism at the Qalandiyah Checkpoint](#)

**Kevin Zeese**  
[The Global War on Civil Liberties](#)

Missy Comley Beattie  
[Warnings from a Military Man and Dad](#)

**Don Santina**  
[Ride 'Em Brush Cutter: Cowboy Imagery and the American Presidency](#)

Website of the Day  
[A Call for Justice in Palestine](#)

**December 17 / 18, 2005**

**Cockburn / St. Clair**  
[Time-Delayed Journalism: the NYT and the NSA's Illegal Spying Operation](#)

Gabriel Kolko  
[The Decline of the American Empire](#)

**Susan Alcorn**  
[Texas: Three Days and Two Nights](#)

Werther  
[The Democrats are an Impotent and Tolerated Opposition Party](#)

judges to rein-in prosecutorial abuses. Another part of the answer is the hostility of Americans to defendants and indifference to their innocence or guilt.

The US invasion of Iraq has brought the breakdown in American moral fiber to the fore. The horrific tortures and abuses at Abu Ghraib prison, the public justifications of torture by the president and vice president of the United States, and the CIA kidnappings and torture of detainees in secret prisons put the American "liberators" in the same camp as Saddam Hussein. It is ironic that mistreatment of Iraqis is one of the justifications that Bush uses for overthrowing Saddam.

In his book, "[Constitutional Chaos: What Happens When the Government Breaks Its Own Laws](#)," Judge Andrew P. Napolitano reports on cases of torture, psychological abuse and frame-ups that he discovered as presiding judge.

I have reported a number of wrongful convictions. Anytime a new offense is created, the word goes out to "produce convictions." Over a decade ago William R. Strong, Jr., was made a victim of Virginia's new wife rape law. Strong discovered his wife in an affair with her boyfriend and was about to serve her with divorce papers. She found out and struck first, accusing him of rape. Mr. Strong has been trying to get a DNA test for many years, confident that the semen in the perk test is that of the lover of his unfaithful wife, but Virginia's criminal justice (sic) system is unresponsive.

Another innocent victim of Virginia justice (sic) is Chris Gaynor. Gaynor took his skateboard team to a competition. When one of the kids tried to buy drugs, Gaynor threatened to tell his parents. To preempt Gaynor, the kid accused him of sexual abuse. There was no evidence against Gaynor, and the entire team knew the real story.

However, Gaynor was framed by a corrupt prosecutor, reportedly a man-hating lesbian, with the connivance of a corrupt judge, who intimidated Gaynor's young witnesses by jailing one of them without cause. Gaynor's innocence was of less importance to the criminal justice (sic) system than a desire to increase convictions for child sex abuse.

In America, defendants are no longer innocent until they are proven guilty. They are guilty the minute they are charged, and the system works to process the guilty, not to determine innocence or guilt.

Americans in their ignorance and gullibility think that only the guilty would enter a guilty plea. This is the

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The Pol  
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**Ralph Nader**  
[The Senator Without Guile: Proxmire of Wisconsin](#)

Patrick Cockburn  
[Counting Ballots and Bodies in Baghdad](#)

**Fred Gardner**  
[When Prosecutors Deceive: Did the Feds Frame Bryan Epis?](#)

Dave Lindorff  
[Spy Scandal Far Larger Than Just NSA](#)

**Ned Sublette**  
[Essence is Gasoline](#)

Lee Sustar  
[The Class War Economy](#)

**Jason Leopold**  
[Did Karl Rove Destroy Evidence in Plame Case?](#)

Laura Carlsen  
[Report from Hong Kong: Deciphering the Language of Globalization](#)

**Jeff White**  
[Teacher Fired for Talking About Peace?](#)

Ray McGovern  
[Torture Between the Lines](#)

**Chris Floyd**  
[Pale Fire: the White Death of Fallujah](#)

William Loren Katz  
[Remembering the First Quagmire at Xmastime: Zachary Taylor vs. the](#)

uninformed opinion of the naive who have never experienced the terror and psychological torture of the US criminal justice (sic) system.

**Paul Craig Roberts** has held a number of academic appointments and has contributed to numerous scholarly publications. He served as Assistant Secretary of the Treasury in the Reagan administration. His graduate economics education was at the University of Virginia, the University of California at Berkeley, and Oxford University. He is coauthor of [The Tyranny of Good Intentions](#). He can be reached at: [paulcraigroberts@yahoo.com](mailto:paulcraigroberts@yahoo.com)



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Iraq, A  
Y  
Alexan  
Jeffi



The Politics  
Edited by Al  
and Je

## [Seminoles](#)

**Rose Miriam Elizalde**  
[Mashenka and the Bear: a Tale for Our Time](#)

Greg Moses  
[Pinter's Provocation: Self Love in America](#)

**Heather Gray**  
[Privatizing the Social Contract](#)

Alison Weir  
[My Bethlehem Experience: the Sequel](#)

**St Clair / Walker / Pollack**  
[Playlists: What We're Listening to This Week](#)

Poets' Basement  
[Landau, Engel and Albert](#)

**Website of the Day**  
[At Least Homeland Security Believes that Mao Still Matters](#)

**December 16, 2005**

Tom Kerr  
[CNN's Goddess of Vengeance: What's Not to Love About Nancy Grace?](#)

**Mark Engler**  
[The WTO in Hong Kong: Is Market Access the Answer to Poverty?](#)

John Bomar  
[When Ollie North](#)



**White Drugs**  
 by Alex  
 and J



**Serpen  
 Liaisons**

**Counterl**  
 ]

[Came to Hot Springs](#)

**Patrick Cockburn**  
[Iraq Votes; Now What?](#)

Pierre Tristam  
[Iraq, Ourselves](#)

William S. Lind  
[The Fine Art of Withdrawal](#)

**Cyril Neville**  
[Why I'm Not Going Back to New Orleans](#)

Robert Jensen  
[Monkey See, Monkey Do: Reason, Evolution and Intelligent Design](#)

**Saul Landau**  
[Bolivian Democracy and the US: a History Lesson](#)

Website  
[CounterPunch & Dr. Price Vanquish Anthropologist Spies](#)

**December 15, 2005**

**Oren Ben-Dor**  
[The Ethical and Legal Challenges Facing Palestine](#)

Stan Cox  
["Agroterrorists" Needn't Bother](#)

**Joshua Frank**  
[Organic Inconsistencies: Federal Food Politics](#)

Ben Terrall  
[Waivers for State Terror: Bush and the](#)



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[Indonesian Generals](#)

**Patrick Cockburn**  
[Silence Descends on  
Baghdad](#)

Monica Benderman  
[What Peace Needs](#)

**Walter A. Davis**  
[Fear and Loathing in  
San Quentin](#)

Vijay Prashad  
[Our Torture Problem](#)

**Website of the Day**  
[Hourly Wages After  
Four Years of  
"Recovery"](#)

**December 14, 2005**

Patrick Cockburn  
[Iran Poised to Win  
Iraqi Elections](#)

**Paul Craig Roberts**  
[Lethal Developments](#)

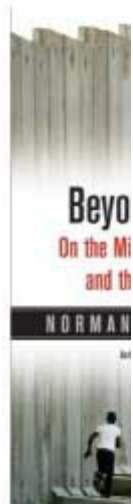
Lawrence R. Velvel  
[A Bore Called Bob:  
On Trying to Read  
Woodward](#)

**Wayne Garcia**  
[The Summer of Sami](#)

John Sugg  
[Preach Peace, Sami;  
Get Truthful  
Prosecutors](#)

**Gary Leupp**  
[Bush and the  
Constitution: "Just a  
Goddamned Piece of  
Paper"](#)

Ray McGovern  
[Torture: a Defining  
Moment](#)



Alan Maass  
[They Murdered a Peacemaker](#)

April Hurley, MD  
[NPR Swallows Bush's Guestimate on Iraqi Dead](#)

Kevin Alexander Gray  
[Richard Pryor's Mirror on America](#)

December 13, 2005

Stephen T. Banko, III  
[Heroes](#)

Patrick Cockburn  
[America's War So Far: 1000 Days of Getting It Wrong](#)

Laura Carlsen  
[What's at Play at the WTO](#)

Karl Grossman  
[Nuclear Routlette in the Troposphere: Another NASA Plutonium Launch](#)

Niranjan Ramakrishnan  
[The Original Sin](#)

Kevin Zeese  
[Report from the International Peace Conference in London](#)

Norman Solomon  
[At the Gates of San Quentin](#)

Michael G. Smith  
[Ending the Death Penalty](#)

Stew Albert



Threatenin  
 McCarthy  
 Surveillance  
 By Da



[California Killers](#)

**Bob Dylan**  
[Song for Tookie:](#)  
[George Jackson](#)

Phil Gasper  
[California Murders](#)  
[Tookie Williams: a](#)  
[Report from San](#)  
[Quentin](#)

**Website of the Day**  
[Boot Hill](#)

**December 12, 2005**

Paul Craig Roberts  
[The Defenders of](#)  
[Torture](#)

**Lawrence R. Velvel**  
[George the](#)  
[Disconnected](#)

Jessica Stewart  
[My Husband is at the](#)  
[Gates of Gitmo](#)

**George Bisharat**  
[Busharon: a Fusion of](#)  
[Like Minds](#)

Nate Mezmer  
[Killing Tookie](#)  
[Williams: If a Black](#)  
[Man Dies in America,](#)  
[Does It Make a](#)  
[Sound?](#)

**Earl Ofari Hutchinson**  
[Richard Pryor Wasn't](#)  
[Crazy](#)

Alison Weir  
[My Bethlehem](#)  
[Experience](#)

**Seth Sandronsky**  
[Thank You, Richard](#)  
[Pryor](#)



51 Doc  
Collabora  
By Li



Track  
Bush's  
Will

Patrick Cockburn  
[Iraq: the Beginning of the End](#)

Website of the Day  
[Wrestling for Peace](#)

December 10 / 11,  
2005

Alexander Cockburn  
[All the News That's Fit to Buy](#)

Landau / Hassen  
[The Condemned of Nablus](#)

Ralph Nader  
[The Widening Wasteland of American Media](#)

Linn Washington, Jr  
[The Philly Media and Mumia: When They Don't Bash, They Ignore](#)

Bill Christison  
[Apathy, US Culpability and Human Rights Day](#)

Mike Ferner  
[The Courage of Jim Loney](#)

Elizabeth Schulte  
[Abortion and the Bush Court](#)

Neve Gordon / Yigal Bronner  
[Murder in Jerusalem](#)

Linda S. Heard  
[Saddam's Trial: Grandstanding in the Theater of the Absurd](#)

Ingmar Lee



[A Kayak Journey to  
Vancouver Island's  
Wildest Forest](#)

**Ray McGovern**  
[Lies, Torture and the  
Six Blind Mice](#)

John Chuckman  
[Torture and White  
Phosphorous: the  
Moral Hell of Condi  
Rice](#)

**John Ryan**  
[An Honorary Degree  
in Child Sacrifice?:  
Madeleine Albright  
and US Foreign Policy](#)

Dick J. Reavis  
[From Waco to  
Baghdad](#)

**Christopher Brauchli**  
[Bush's Hired Pens](#)

Behzad Yaghmaian  
[Trapped at the Gates  
of the European  
Union](#)

**Aseem Shrivastava**  
[The Winter in Delhi,  
1984](#)

John Ross  
[Bushlandia in Black  
and White](#)

**Ben Tripp**  
[War, What is It Good  
For?](#)

St. Clair / Pollack /  
Vest / Despair  
[Playlist: What We're  
Listening to This  
Week](#)

**Poets' Basement**  
[Hassen, Bear Dog,  
Ford, Mickey Z, Albert](#)



FOREWORD

[& Engel](#)

Website of the Week  
[Burn a Brick for Bush](#)

December 9, 2005

Linn Washington, Jr.  
[Roots of Gitmo](#)  
[Torture Lie Close to Home](#)

Dave Zirin / Mike Stark  
[On Seeing Wesley Baker Die](#)

Patrick Cockburn  
[Blair Tries to Cover Up \\$1.3 Billion Iraqi Theft](#)

Alexander Cockburn  
[Murtha Returns to Attack; Flays Bush](#)

Lila Rajiva  
[Shooting the Mentally III](#)

Gary Leupp  
[White House Liars on the Defensive](#)

Jason Leopold  
[Rove Running Out of Answers, Time](#)

Bruce K. Gagnon  
[So These Are the Democrats?](#)

Andrew Cockburn  
[Meet Rahm Emmanuel, the Democrats' New Gatekeeper](#)

Website of the Day  
["X-mas Time for Visa"](#)

Counter



Coun  
PE1

December 8, 2005

Kathy Kelly  
[Blessed are the  
Merciful in Baghdad](#)

James Petras  
[The Venezuelan  
Election: Chavez  
Wins, Bush Loses  
\(Again\)](#)

William S. Lind  
[Questionable  
Assumptions:  
Dissecting the  
Strategy for Victory](#)

Laura Carlsen  
[The Strange Mission  
of Vicente Fox: Free  
Trade and Mexico](#)

Justin Akers  
[Bush's Border War](#)

Thomas Graham, Jr  
[A Nuclear Pearl  
Harbor in Outer  
Space?](#)

Norman Solomon  
[Rumsfeld's  
Handshake Deal with  
Saddam](#)

Tariq Ali / Robin  
Blackburn  
[The Lost John Lennon  
Interview](#)

Website of the Day  
[Pigs at the Trough of  
War](#)

December 7, 2005

John Ryan

[Dershowitz vs.  
Chomsky: a Review  
of the Harvard Debate](#)

**Gary Leupp**  
[Suicide Before  
Dishonor in Occupied  
Iraq](#)

Fran Quigley  
[How the ACLU Didn't  
Steal Christmas](#)

**Jeremy Brecher /  
Brendan Smith**  
[Bush War Crimes: the  
Posse Gathers](#)

Joshua Frank  
[Bird Dogging Hillary](#)

**William W. Morgan**  
[Rendition, Torture  
and Democracy](#)

Dave Lindorff  
[A Stunning Win for  
Mumia Abu Jamal](#)

**Patrick Cockburn**  
[Saddam: "Come Visit  
My Cage"](#)

Harold Pinter  
[Art, Truth and  
Politics: the Nobel  
Lecture](#)

**Website of the Day**  
[Witnesses to Torture](#)

**December 6, 2005**

**Ron Jacobs**  
[No One is Illegal; No  
One is an Infidel](#)

Patrick Cockburn  
[Inside Saddam's  
Trial: Tales of the  
Human Meat Grinder](#)

Yifat Susskind  
[Death, Politics and  
the Condom: African  
Women Confront  
Bush's AIDS Policy](#)

Mike Whitney  
[How Greenspan  
Skewered America](#)

Pat Williams  
[Public Land Should  
Stay Public](#)

Paul Craig Roberts  
[Condi to Europe:  
Trust Us](#)

Website of the Day  
[Debunking Woodward](#)

December 5, 2005

John Walsh  
[The Lies of John  
Edwards: What Did  
the Democrats Know  
and When Did They  
Know It?](#)

Brian Cloughley  
[The Poor Dead: the  
Relative Value of  
Human Lives](#)

Mokhiber / Weissman  
[The Corporate Crime  
Quiz](#)

Robert Jensen  
[How Big Money  
Eviscerates the First  
Amendment](#)

Norman Solomon  
[Hidden in Plane Sight:  
US Media Ignores  
Iraq Air War Plan](#)

Peter Rost, MD  
[An Open Letter to the](#)



[Justice Department:  
Pfizer May Have  
Violated Federal Laws  
When They Fired Me](#)

[Lila Rajiva  
The Torture-Go-  
Round: CIA's  
Rendition Flights to  
Secret Prisons](#)

[Website of the Day  
National Day of  
Counter-Recruitment](#)

[December 3 / 4, 2005](#)

[Alexander Cockburn  
The Revolt of the  
Generals](#)

[Lawrence R. Velvel  
Iraq, Brains and Lies](#)

[Rev. William Alberts  
The Forgotten  
Christmas Story:  
Saying No to King  
Herod](#)

[Saul Landau  
Latino Troops Have  
Parents](#)

[Ralph Nader  
Consumerama](#)

[Paul Craig Roberts  
Don't Confuse the  
Jobs Hype with the  
Facts](#)

[Mike Whitney  
Blood Feast:  
Celebrating  
Executions in America](#)

[Allan Lichtman  
The DeLay Scheme:  
Blatantly Buying Our  
Government](#)

Dave Lindorff  
[A Sudden Rush for  
the Exits?](#)

Brian Concannon, Jr.  
[Haiti's Elections](#)

Fred Gardner  
[Oregon NORML  
Honors Growers](#)

Manuel Garcia, Jr.  
[On Freeing the CPT](#)

Carol Wolman  
[Remembering the 60s](#)

St. Clair / Vest /  
Walker / Pollack  
[Playlist: What We're  
Listening to This  
Week](#)

Poets' Basement  
[Albert, Engel and  
Orloski](#)

Website of the  
Weekend  
[Free the CPT](#)

December 2, 2005

Stan Goff  
[An Open Letter to  
Congress from a  
Veteran and Military  
Dad](#)

Mike Ferner  
[Beware Iraqization:  
Melvin Laird, Vietnam  
and Christmas  
Bombings Over  
Baghdad?](#)

Christopher Brauchli  
[Bush's Constitutional  
Kamikazes: Padilla's  
No-Win Dilemma](#)

Niranjan  
Ramakrishnan  
[Questions for the  
President](#)

Manuel Talens  
[The Chávez Theorem](#)

Peter Phillips  
[Death By Torture:  
Media Ignores the  
Hard Evidence](#)

J.L. Chestnut, Jr.  
[Alabama's Taliban:  
Judge Roy Moore,  
Preachers and Dixie  
Hypocrisy](#)

Website of the Day  
[Support the Hampton  
University Peace  
Activists!](#)

December 1, 2005

John Walsh, MD  
[The God Gaps](#)

Ron Jacobs  
[Hard Rain: Toward a  
Greater Air War in  
Iraq?](#)

Jenna Orkin  
[EPA's Latest Betrayal  
at Ground Zero](#)

Joshua Frank  
[Howard Dean's Blunt  
Message: Forget  
Palestine](#)

Tiffany Ten Eyck  
[Rank and File  
Resistance to Delphi](#)

Missy Comley Beattie  
[Home on the Range:  
Where the Fear and  
the Animus Play](#)

Eli Stephens  
[The Reed and Kerry Show](#)

Elaine Cassel  
[A Government Game of "Gotcha" with Jose Padilla](#)

Website of the Day  
[Rare Erotica](#)

November 30, 2005

Allen / D'Amato  
[Incident at Oglala 30 Years Later: the Long Struggle of Leonard Peltier](#)

Mike Whitney  
[The Cheerleader at Annapolis](#)

Kevin Zeese  
[The Hallucinations of Joe Lieberman](#)

Norman Solomon  
[Colin Powell: Still Craven After All These Years](#)

Ramzy Baroud  
[Sharon's New Party](#)

Dave Lindorff  
[What Happened to All Those Bush/Cheney Bumperstickers?](#)

Stephen Soldz  
[Mental Health Workers in Iraq](#)

November 29, 2005

Phil Gasper

[Live from Death Row:  
an Interview with  
Tookie Williams](#)

Behzad Yaghmaian  
[The Ghost of  
Sangatte](#)

Joshua Frank  
[Jack Abramoff's Bi-  
partisan Sleaze](#)

Walter A. Davis  
[Life on Death Row: a  
Monologue](#)

Gary Leupp  
[Bush the Dupe?](#)

Len Colodny  
[Woodwardgate: Still  
Protecting the  
Rightwing](#)

Jeffrey St. Clair  
[The Duke and the  
Enterprise: Randy  
Cunningham's Crash  
Landing](#)

Bill Quigley  
[Human Rights  
Leaders Call for  
Release of Haiti's  
Political Prisoners](#)

Website of the Day  
[Watch Chomsky vs.  
Dershowitz Live,  
Tonight at 7PM, EST!](#)

November 28, 2005

Chris Reed  
[The "Bomb Al  
Jazeera" Documents  
Trial](#)

David Isenberg  
[Cooked Intelligence:  
the Dog that Didn't](#)

[Bark](#)

Ron Jacobs  
[Contraindications: a  
Review of Blood on  
the Border](#)

Norman Solomon  
[The Woodward  
Scandal Must Not  
Blow Over](#)

Justin E.H. Smith  
[Schwarzenegger's  
Curious Power](#)

Mickey Z.  
[Abbie Hoffman at 70:  
Steal This City](#)

Mike Whitney  
[The Pentagon's  
Domestic Spying  
Operation](#)

David Swanson  
[Is Impeachment an  
Election Issue?](#)

Paul Craig Roberts  
[The Grave Threat of  
the Bush  
Administration](#)

Website of the Day  
["Don't Bomb Us!": a  
Blog by Al Jazeera  
Staffers](#)

November 26 / 27,  
2005

Alexander Cockburn  
[How the Democrats  
Undercut John Murtha](#)

Saul Landau  
[Who We Are: Torture  
and the Empire](#)

Ralph Nader

[Junk Television:  
Excluding Voices That  
Save Lives](#)

Brian Cloughley  
[What Are They Dying  
For?](#)

John Ross  
[When a Language  
Dies](#)

Gary Leupp  
[The Nepal Pact](#)

Fred Gardner  
[Dr. Denney Goes to  
Arkansas](#)

Christopher Brauchli  
[Compassion for  
Corporations:  
Northrup Grumman  
and Katrina's Victims](#)

Dave Lindorff  
[US War Crimes List  
Keeps Growing](#)

P. Sainath  
[See, Neoliberalism  
Really Works: Net  
Worth of India's  
Billionaires Soars!](#)

Timothy J. Freeman  
[The Price of Freedom](#)

Lila Rajiva  
[Of Mice, Men and GM  
Peas](#)

Eric Ruder  
[Beat the Needle:  
Saving Tookie  
Williams](#)

Seth Sandronsky  
[Working Toward  
Whiteness: an  
Interview with David  
Roediger](#)



Joaquin Bustelo  
[What Really  
Happened at Mar del  
Plata](#)

Lewis Alper  
[Is the President's  
Soul in Jeopardy?: an  
Evangelical Christian  
Looks at Bush's Skull  
and Bones Initiation](#)

Will Youmans  
[In Search of Paradise](#)

Phyllis Pollack  
[The Stones' Rough  
Justice in Bush Time](#)

St. Clair / Vest  
[Playlists: What We're  
Listening to This  
Week](#)

Barbara LaMorticella  
[Poetry and the City of  
Ideas](#)

Poets' Basement  
[LaMorticella,  
Buknatski, Engel,  
Albert and Davies](#)

Website of the  
Weekend  
[NLR: The Chequered  
Rainbow](#)

November 25, 2005

David Price  
[How US  
Anthropologists  
Planned "Race-  
Specific" Weapons  
Against the Japanese](#)

Brian McKenna  
[Will Bush Miss the](#)

[Next Bhopal?](#)

Jeff Halper  
[Peretz or Bust?](#)

Ray McGovern  
[Will the US Seize the  
Opportunity for Troop  
Withdrawal?](#)

Leigh Saavedra  
[Thanksgiving at Camp  
Casey](#)

Ingmar Lee  
[How Have the Mighty  
Fallen?](#)

Website of the Day  
[Saving Cathedral  
Grove](#)

November 24, 2005

James Petras  
[How to Think About  
War and Peace](#)

Bob Shirley  
[Thanksgiving Torture:  
What the Puritans  
Fled](#)

Mike Fox  
[Torture Survivors  
Speak for Themselves](#)

Niranjan  
Ramakrishnan  
[Adrift? Perhaps. A  
Draft? Never!](#)

Greg Moses  
[Thanksgiving  
Delayed: TX High  
Court Blesses  
Inequality](#)

Alexander Cockburn  
[Turkeys in the Larger  
Scheme of Things](#)

November 23, 2005

Ramzy Baroud  
[The Great Gaza  
Border Deal: What  
Does It Mean?](#)

Mike Whitney  
[Bush, Padilla and  
Thomas More](#)

Stan Cox  
[Red, White and Blue  
Dawn: What a Bad  
Hollywood Film Can  
Teach Americans  
About Life Under  
Occupation](#)

Linda S. Heard  
[Targeting Al Jazeera](#)

November 22, 2005

Kevin Gray / Mike  
Hersh  
[Maxine Waters, the  
Real Leader of the  
Anti-War Caucus](#)

Ralph Nader  
[What Do Dems Stand  
For?](#)

Michael Donnelly  
[The "Vetting" of  
Bernard Kerik](#)

Mike Ferner  
[The CIA's "Torture  
Taxi" in the Spotlight](#)

Pierre Tristam  
[The Justice Deficit](#)

Marshall Auerback  
[Bush's  
"Compassionate  
Conservatism":  
Neither  
Compassionate Nor](#)

[Conservative](#)

[Website of the Day](#)  
[I Don't Like Geldof](#)

[November 21, 2005](#)

[Mike Marqusee](#)  
[Clinton's Hypocrisies](#)  
[on Iraq](#)

[Josh Frank](#)  
[Democratic Hawks:](#)  
[the Avian Flu of the](#)  
[Antiwar Movement](#)

[Mike Whitney](#)  
[Hugo Chavez vs. the](#)  
[King of Vacations](#)

[Norman Solomon](#)  
[Getting Out of Iraq](#)

[Russ Baker](#)  
[Woodward's](#)  
[Weakness](#)

[Robert Jensen](#)  
[A National Day of](#)  
[Atonement](#)

[Paul Craig Roberts](#)  
[Lies and Official](#)  
[Secrets](#)

[November 19 / 20,](#)  
[2005](#)

[Fred Gardner](#)  
[The Raid on](#)  
[MendoHealing](#)

[Rep. Cynthia](#)  
[McKinney](#)  
[The House GOP Has](#)  
[Done a Heinous](#)  
[Thing: Stop Playing](#)  
[Politics; Get the](#)

[Troops Out Now](#)

**Ron Jacobs**

[A Pathetic Congress:  
If It Walks and Talks  
Like a Withdrawal  
Resolution, Why  
Won't You Vote For  
It?](#)

David Vest

[The Politics of  
Surrender: It's as  
American as Robert E.  
Lee](#)

**J.L. Chestnut, Jr.**

[Condi Rice's Disdain  
for the Civil Rights  
Movement](#)

John R. Bomar

[Staying the Course on  
"Freedom's Frontier":  
a Vietnam Vet on Iraq](#)

**John Ross**

[The Dragon Flies  
High, But Not Over  
Mexico](#)

Phillip Cryan

[Colombia: "Political  
Kidnapping" and  
Murder in Cauca](#)

**Dave Lindorff**

[RIP In These Times](#)

Dick J. Reavis

[The Future of the  
Daily Press](#)

**Jeremy Scahill**

[Vegetarian Between  
Meals: This War Can't  
Be Stopped by a  
Loyal Opposition](#)

Dan Wright

[Cleaning Up Alaska's  
Scan Bay](#)

John Stanton  
[Scowcroft Talks](#)  
[Turkey; Edmunds](#)  
[Fights Fascism](#)

St. Clair / Vest /  
Walker  
[Playlist: What We're](#)  
[Listening to This](#)  
[Week](#)

Phyllis Pollack  
[The Stones: Rarities](#)

Dr. Susan Block  
[Our Night of Weimar](#)  
[Love](#)

Poets Basement  
[Albert, Engel, Ford,](#)  
[Harley and Louise](#)

November 18, 2005

Michael Neumann  
[The Palestinians and](#)  
[the Party Line](#)

Dave Lindorff  
[Murtha and the L](#)  
[Word](#)

Michael Donnelly  
[Black November 15](#)

Mark Chmiel / Andrew  
Wimmer  
[Uncrucify Them](#)

Don Monkerud  
[A Decent Workplace](#)

Tom Kerr  
[Grant Clemency to](#)  
[Tookie Williams](#)

Trish Schuh  
[Faking the Case](#)  
[Against Syria](#)

November 17, 2005

John Walsh  
[A Fractured Anti-War Movement](#)

Rep. John Murtha  
[Iraq Must Be Freed from the US Occupation](#)

Brian J. Foley  
[We Are All In GITMO Now](#)

CounterPunch News Service  
[Guardian Apologizes to Chomsky; Publishes Total Retraction of Brockes' Slurs](#)

Dave Lindorff  
[In Post-Saddam Iraq, There are No Civilians](#)

Mark T. Harris  
[Coming Out in an Up-and-Coming Sport](#)

Cockburn / St. Clair  
[From Reporter to Courtier: the Decline of Bob Woodward](#)

November 16, 2005

John F. Sugg  
[Al-Arian Speaks: In His First Interview Since the Trial Began, Al-Arian Talks About What the Jury Didn't Hear](#)

Noam Chomsky  
[Putting Out the Enlightenment](#)



Dave Lindorff  
[Shake and Bake:  
Pentagon Admits  
Using Phosphorous  
Bombs on Fallujah](#)

Evelyn Pringle  
[Laurie Mylroie's War](#)

Sam Hussein  
[Trying to Look a  
Female Suicide  
Bomber in the Eye](#)

Pierre Tristam  
[Toturers' Theater](#)

Greg Bates  
[Waffling Alito Charms  
DiFi](#)

Farrah Hassen  
[Moustapha  
AkkadDavid Lean of  
the Middle East Killed  
in Amman Blast](#)

Bill Christison  
[Evidence Mounts That  
Bush Wants New  
Wars](#)

Website of the Day  
[Violent Oscillations](#)

November 15, 2005

Todd Chretien  
[My Evening in the No  
Spin Zone; Or Why  
Bill O'Reilly Hates San  
Francisco](#)

Leah Caldwell  
[Death of the Jailhouse  
Press](#)

Frederick Hudson  
[Rosa's Wreath: Miss  
Parks and Robert  
Williams](#)

Harry Browne  
[Bush-Linked Judge  
Bows Out: Another  
Mistrial in Irish  
Ploughshares Case](#)

Jason Leopold  
[Secret CIA  
Testimony: Iraq  
Posed No Threat](#)

Ingmar Lee  
[Logging Lackies vs.  
Canada's Most  
Endangered Species](#)

Diana Barahona  
[Showdown on the  
Silver Coast](#)

Tom Andre  
[New Orleans, Two  
Months Later](#)

Website of the  
Weekend  
[Ernest Crichlow:  
1914-2005](#)

November 14, 2005

Diana Johnstone  
[The Origins of the  
Guardian's Attack on  
Chomsky](#)

Paul Craig Roberts  
[Power Over All:  
Unlimited Detentions  
and the End of  
Habeas Corpus](#)

Conn Hallinan  
[Provoking Syria:  
Cambodia All Over  
Again?](#)

Joshua Frank  
[Off She Goes: Hillary  
in Israel](#)

Christopher Reed  
[The Persistence of  
Racism in Koizumi's  
Japan](#)

November 11 / 13,  
2005

Alexander Cockburn  
[First the Lying, Then  
the Pardons](#)

Gwyneth Leech  
[Cross Connections: a  
Painter Reimagines  
the Passion of Christ  
in the Wake of Abu  
Ghraib](#)

Elmas Mallo  
[Chillin' in the Blazin'  
Texas Sun: Inside the  
Texas Prison System](#)

Michael Neumann  
[The Rebel King of  
Bluegrass: Jimmy  
Martin, an  
Appreciation](#)

Saul Landau  
[Leakgate: the  
Screenplay](#)

Sam Hussein  
[Bush and Zarqawi  
Bomb Because We Let  
Them](#)

Brian Cloughley  
[Sleaze, Deceit and  
Torture](#)

Ron Jacobs  
[Rep. McGovern's  
Withdrawal  
Resolution: a Step in  
the Right Direction?](#)

Lila Rajiva  
[Dover Bitch: the](#)

[Curses of Pat  
Robertson](#)

Michael Donnelly  
[Hypocrisy Watch](#)

Joe Allen  
[Murder in El  
Salvador: Who Killed  
Gilberto Soto?](#)

Roland Sheppard  
[Lessons from the  
Montgomery Bus  
Boycott](#)

Justin E.H. Smith  
[Another Monkey  
Trial?](#)

Ben Tripp  
[The Cost of War](#)

St. Clair / Vest  
[Playlists: What We're  
Listening to This  
Week](#)

Poets' Basement  
[Jones, Louise, Ford,  
Smith, Albert and  
Engel](#)

Website of the  
Weekend  
[Iraq Vets and Against  
the War Need Your  
Help!](#)

November 10, 2005

Peterside, Ogon,  
Watts and Zalik  
[Delta Blues Again:  
Ken Saro-Wiwa, 10  
Years Gone](#)

Pat Williams

[Will Alito Cost the  
Republicans the  
Senate?](#)

**Steve Higgs**  
[Bush Crony Targets  
Indiana's Forests:  
400% Hike in Logging](#)

Jimmy Massey  
[Is Ron Harris Telling  
the Truth?](#)

**Lucson Pierre-Charles**  
[Haiti: Insanity Takes  
Over](#)

Anthony Newkirk  
[Syria in the  
Crosshairs](#)

**Lawrence R. Velvel**  
[Why Did Libby Lie?](#)

Website of the Day  
[Imperial Margarine](#)

**November 9, 2005**

Gary Leupp  
[The Niger Deception /  
Plame Affair: an  
Incomplete  
Chronology](#)

**Tariq Ali**  
[Blair Defeated on  
Terror Laws](#)

Chris Floyd  
[The Philosopher's  
Stone](#)

**Elaine Cassel**  
[The Shocking Trial of  
an American Citizen:  
the Case of Ahmed  
Abu Ali](#)

Joshua Frank  
[Sen. Max Baucus's  
NASCAR Pay Day](#)

**Alison Weir**

[Memo to Jon Stewart:  
Glad You're Against  
Torture, So Why'd  
You Give Israel a  
Pass?](#)

Diana Johnstone  
[Rage in the Banlieue](#)

**November 8, 2005**

**Paul Craig Roberts**  
[Still No Jobs](#)

Roger Burbach  
[Bush v. Chavez: the  
Imperial President  
Meets the Bolivarian  
Democrat](#)

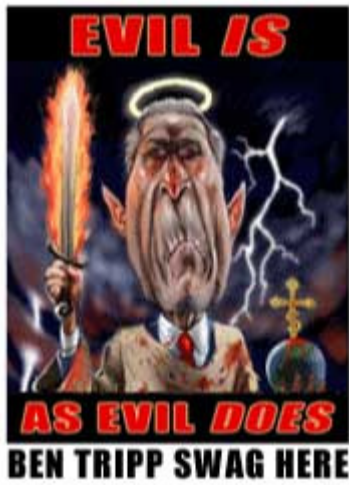
**Ron Jacobs**  
[An Interview with  
Behzad Yaghmaian on  
the Paris Uprising](#)

Ralph Nader  
["The Worst Marketed  
Disease on the  
Planet"](#)

**Jim McGrath**  
[Voter Beware: a  
Cautionary Tale for  
Election Day](#)

David Bloom  
[McCain, Israel and  
Torture: Setting the  
Record Straight](#)

**Stan Goff**  
[Jimmy Massey, Ron  
Harris, and Ambush  
Journalism](#)



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