

Speech given by World Can't Wait representative MaryAnn Thomas at the Rally Against Torture, Guantanamo & NDAA on June 26th in San Francisco CA.

My name is MaryAnn Thomas, and I find myself living in an EXCEPTIONAL time.

A time when the myth of American moral superiority is being used to excuse, even PROMOTE, cruel and intolerable crimes against humanity.

People in this country have been told the LIE that torture is necessary to keep Americans safe, and acceptance of this idea has spread widely in society.

The culture of FEAR required to maintain that lie -- that torture is sometimes justified -- has historical precedent. One has only to look at the silencing of "Good Germans" during World War II. Nazi Germany was a nation RUN on fear of the government.

There is nothing "natural" about America's growing ACCEPTANCE of increasing brutality. The practice of torture is taught. It takes work to overcome the revulsion that anyone with a conscience feels towards the practice. Torture is always wrong and degrades anyone involved.

We find ourselves in an EXCEPTIONAL time when our government openly ADVOCATES the use of torture and fosters an environment of hostility to anyone who doesn't buy the myth of the "American Dream." And resorts to mass incarceration of a multitude of "nameless" individuals written out of the social contract.

Consider the warehousing of prisoners in solitary confinement, and the torture that represents. The disgraceful example of Guantanamo was itself an adoption of U.S. prison policies.

And we find ourselves in an EXCEPTIONAL time when U.S. Law is used to protect those responsible for war crimes.

Torture is a war crime and a crime against humanity. Torture has become a standing weapon in the U.S. arsenal to terrorize the entire planet. America's War OF Terror against the people of Iraq and Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iran cannot be allowed to continue.

This means that the LEGAL COVER provided by government and its officials for torture policy, and the institution of a TORTURE STATE, must be dismantled. The massive criminal actions committed by the Bush regime were not and will not be excused by platitudes from Obama.

Contrary to government assertions that the most egregious “enhanced interrogation” practices initiated by the Bush regime have been discontinued, U.S. torture policy flourishes today at home and abroad. Under Obama the number of prisoners at Guantanamo Bay has (slowly) decreased, but operations at the Bagram prison camp in Afghanistan have proven to be even more lawless than those at the military base in Cuba, denying even the most rudimentary legal representation for detainees.

Other CIA “black sites” continue to be exposed. Meanwhile, Obama has not only effectively blocked accountability for perpetrators of the above crimes; he has raised the bar of cruelty with the introduction of his “KILL LIST,” assuming the power of EXECUTIONER IN CHIEF.

There are REAL PEOPLE suffering excruciating torments as we stand here today. An acceptance of torture has taken root in American culture. We stand with the National Religious Campaign Against Torture in its goal of ending torture in U.S. policy, practice and culture. If not us, who? If not now, when?

The WORLD CAN'T WAIT!