

By Andy Worthington

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As part of [“Berkeley Says No to Torture” Week](#) (the largest gathering of anti-torture experts and activists since the Bush administration began its “War on Terror” over nine years ago), I was delighted to join Justine Sharrock, journalist and author of [Tortured: When Good Soldiers Do Bad Things](#), at Revolution Books on Sunday evening for the opening event.

I discussed the event in [an article a few days ago](#), when I wrote: “Justine and I ran through various aspects of the “War on Terror” — in particular, its effects on those subjected to arbitrary detention and torture in the cages of Guantánamo and elsewhere, and, through Justine’s account, its effect on the US soldiers required to implement this torture and cruelty by their political masters, who, as [the Abu Ghraib scandal showed](#), then tried to pretend that it was the work of “a few bad apples.”

It was not, of course. The dehumanization and torture of the men and boys detained in the “War on Terror” — in Afghanistan and Iraq, at Guantánamo and in [secret prisons](#) — was directed from the highest levels of the Bush administration — by George W. Bush, Dick Cheney, Donald Rumsfeld and others — and in refusing to thoroughly address and repudiate these actions, and to hold accountable those who authorized America’s slide into barbarity, President Obama continues to send out a message that it is OK for the nation’s most senior officials to break the law so long as they leave the White House after two terms.

He has also, sad to say, [perpetuated](#) many of [the Bush administration’s crimes](#), and [added some of his own](#), and, as part of the bigger picture, has presided over what appears to be nothing less than a battle for the soul of America, between those who embrace endless war, barbarity and torture, and those who do not.