

By William Blum

From [The Anti-Empire Report](#) | Original Article

Things which don't go away. Things the American government and media don't let go of. And neither do I.

"They're leaving as heroes. I want them to walk home with pride in their hearts," declared Col. John Norris, the head of a US Army brigade in Iraq. [1](#)

It's enough to bring tears to the eyes of an American, enough to make him choke up.

Enough to make him forget.

But no American should be allowed to forget that the nation of Iraq, the society of Iraq, have been destroyed, ruined, a failed state. The Americans, beginning 1991, bombed for 12 years, with one excuse or another; then invaded, then occupied, overthrew the government, killed wantonly, tortured ... the people of that unhappy land have lost everything — their homes, their schools, their electricity, their clean water, their environment, their neighborhoods, their mosques, their archaeology, their jobs, their careers, their professionals, their state-run enterprises, their physical health, their mental health, their health care, their welfare state, their women's rights, their religious tolerance, their safety, their security, their children, their parents, their past, their present, their future, their lives ... More than half the population either dead, wounded, traumatized, in prison, internally displaced, or in foreign exile ... The air, soil, water, blood and genes drenched with depleted uranium ... the most awful birth defects ... unexploded cluster bombs lie in wait for children to pick them up ... an army of young Islamic men went to Iraq to fight the American invaders; they left the country more militant, hardened by war, to spread across the Middle East, Europe and Central Asia ... a river of blood runs alongside the Euphrates and Tigris ... through a country that may never be put back together again.

"It is a common refrain among war-weary Iraqis that things were better before the U.S.-led invasion in 2003," reported the Washington Post on May 5, 2007.

No matter ... drum roll, please ... Stand tall American GI hero! And don't even think of ever apologizing. Iraq is forced by the United States to continue paying reparations for its own invasion of Kuwait in 1990. How much will the American heroes pay the people of Iraq?

"Unhappy the land that has no heroes ...
No. Unhappy the land that needs heroes."
– Bertolt Brecht, Life of Galileo

"What we need to discover in the social realm is the moral equivalent of war; something heroic that will speak to men as universally as war does, and yet will be as compatible with their spiritual selves as war has proved to be incompatible."
– William James, The Varieties of Religious Experience

Perhaps the groundwork for that heroism already exists ... February 15, 2003, a month before the US invasion of Iraq, probably the largest protest in human history, between six and ten million protesters took to the streets of some 800 cities in nearly sixty countries across the globe.

Iraq. Love it or leave it.

1. *Washington Post*, August 19, 2010