

“ARREST JOHN YOO” OUTREACH

*by: George Cammarota
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Introduction

- This slide show is about the outreach program that has evolved out of the need to challenge John Yoo's teaching post at UC Berkeley and the safe haven he has found in the city of Berkeley, where he has his home.
- During another Berkeley incident involving an arrest and court case unrelated to John Yoo, it occurred to me to pin a flyer on my shirt. And the flyer design – an 8-1/2" x 11" size poster with a headshot of the person on trial and the simple, large, bold, easily readable message, "Drop All Charges." I proceeded into the courthouse with posters pinned to both the front and back of my shirt, not even sure whether the safety pins I used would set off the metal detector at the entrance.
- One person after another approached me asking various questions. I answered the best I could, and passed out the few extra copies of the poster I had with me as people kept asking me for a copy.
- At the next courtroom hearing I came fully prepared with 100s of posters with an informative article on the other side. I also came equipped with a pouch full of safety pins. Again, the response was enormous – before I knew it, I was having dozens of conversations with people inside the courthouse and placing dozens of posters into people's hands and pinning a few to their shirts at their request, all under the radar of the sheriffs!
- The success of the poster was decidedly confirmed when the front page of the *SF BayView* newspaper carried an article with a photo of Cynthia McKinney donning the poster during an interview outside the courtroom.

Which brings us to **John Yoo**

It had been 38 years since the last time I was arrested – Mayday 1971, Washington DC. It took me a few weeks to sort out my thoughts and feelings regarding the arrest of four of us at the protest outside John Yoo's classroom on August 17 (*Law Professor John Yoo is Confronted by Protesters*, <http://www.scoop.co.nz/stories/WO0908/S00364.htm>).



Hallway outside John Yoo's classroom Boalt Hall, Aug 17, 2009

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The National Lawyers Guild was quietly working on our case in the background, but I could not sit quietly any longer. Sometimes the best defense is a good offense, so I decided to launch mine. The message was clear – we had been arrested for raising our voices when the real crime that day was to remain silent while John Yoo strolled freely about the city and campus teaching class. John Yoo should have been the one arrested that day, not us. ARREST JOHN YOO!

ARREST



JOHN YOO

How best to deliver the message?

- The answer wasn't at all obvious to me, and it was only after some wrangling that I thought I might try tweaking the courtroom poster idea and see if I could make it work for John Yoo. It turned out that the most difficult challenge for me was to overcome the temptation to put too much information on the front of the poster. Anytime I deviated from the very simple message, "Arrest John Yoo," it severely lessened the overall impact.
- Let me explain my thoughts on this. The "Arrest John Yoo" message raised some simple questions – for example, "Who is John Yoo?" "What did he do?" "Why do you want him arrested?"
- These questions did not deserve simple sound-byte answers. They deserved thought and discussion. And if people wanted the answers to these questions they were going to have to work for them as all of us here have had to do. For example, placing the words, "war criminal," on the poster gave people who did not fully appreciate the severity and depth of these words an easy way out – "Oh, war criminals are beyond me. That's a political matter. That's a job for our elected officials and world courts and the like." Even providing a contact email or website on the poster provided people with an out – "Oh, WorldCantWait.org, they'll take care of this John Yoo matter, whatever it is. It doesn't mean that I have to get involved."

The back of the poster contains some quotes that are fairly easy to read and digest, primarily from local personalities such as a Berkeley city councilman, a UC economics professor, and a UC Berkeley police officer, and with phone numbers for UC Chancellor Birgeneau's office and Boalt Law School Dean Edley's office where people could call and demand the dismissal and arrest of John Yoo.

The High Crimes of John Yoo

“The President’s Executioner — is a play on words. It refers to professor John Yoo, who teaches law at Boalt Hall, University of California, Berkeley. But this man —mild-mannered by all appearances —is not what he seems.

“He is the man who was, more often than nearly any other, behind the White House decisions to violate the international laws of war. He was the one who told the White House how to get away with committing war crimes. While he may have been a henchman for others who instructed him to make the arguments he did, he repeatedly refused to reverse himself, both while he worked in the Department of Justice and after he left that office and returned to academia.

“But it was also during this time period, as we now know, that the Department of Justice became “politicized.” Instead of executing the laws as it should have been doing, the Justice Department became an instrument of President Bush, executing his wishes. And John Yoo executed White House wishes to twist the law into something it was not and was not meant to be.

“Yoo, however, did more than execute orders. The so-called ‘Torture Memos,’ in the writing of which *Yoo was an active and primary participant, opened the door to such abuse of the laws that some detainees were actually murdered* [italics added]. For all practical purposes, they were executed, without a trial or guilty verdict.

“Thus, the President’s Executioner.”

— JENNIFER VAN BERGEN, teacher and author with a law degree

“John Yoo took a material involvement in the deaths and torture of untold numbers of people. ... The broken bodies, the broken spirits, the broken trust he wrought with his actions — that’s why they call these crimes against humanity.”

— MAX ANDERSON, Berkeley City Councilman

“Professor John Yoo was not just an advisor, informing those whom Berkeley Law School Dean Chris Edley calls the “deciders”—George W. Bush, Richard Cheney, George Tenet, and Donald Rumsfeld—his view of what the law was. Professor John Yoo was an implementer. The decision had already been made to torture detainees of low intelligence value and little culpability. Attorneys at the CIA and the Department of Defense were protesting that this policy of routine torture was illegal: contrary to U.S. and international law and treaty, and exposed them to potential criminal sanctions. Professor John Yoo was asked not to provide an opinion but to write a document to override objections to an already settled-upon course of action. He thus made use of the powers of the Department of Justice within the executive branch to silence lawyers who had correctly evaluated the legal framework — and so cram down the torture policy by issuing “get out of jail free” cards in the guise of OLC opinions. Under treaties that are the law of the land here in the United States, an act of legal advice that materially contributes to the perpetration of acts of torture and cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment is a criminal act if the doers knew that their conduct could possibly and foreseeably lead to the commission of a crime. There is no requirement that they have known the exact specific torture that was to result.”

— J. BRADFORD DELONG, Professor of Economics at UC Berkeley

“John Yoo has not broken any laws on campus.”

— Police officer, UC Berkeley Police Dept., responding to the question,
“Why haven’t you arrested John Yoo?”

Contact UC Berkeley Chancellor Robert Birgeneau at (510) 642-7464, and Boalt Law School Dean Christopher Edley Jr. at (510) 642-6483. Demand the immediate *dismissal* and *arrest* of John Yoo!

So I left the message on the poster simple and purposely incomplete. The media cameras loved it, as seen nationwide on Jim Lehrer's NewsHour on PBS in October (*Yoo's Tenure Questioned Over Bush Torture Policy*, <http://www.pbs.org/newshour/video/module.html?mod=0&pkg=20102009&seg=5>).



Scene from PBS Newshour with Jim Lehrer, aired 20 Oct 2009.

Outreach Method

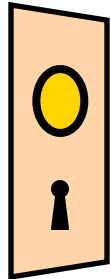
I saw myself as sort of the conscience of Berkeley. The message would go out by displaying it on public fixtures under the protection of the First Amendment, but Berkeley residents were going to have to work to answer the questions the poster raised, or simply let the questions occupy their minds until they spotted me and were willing to engage me for some answers. For those who saw the poster and knew something about John Yoo, I envisioned the message as a challenge for them to raise their voices knowing that there are others out there who are not afraid to speak out. After all, it's their city. Do they really want an international criminal freely walking their streets and teaching their students? I think not.



Shattuck Ave, Berkeley, CA

- My outreach method is simple – I visit those areas of Berkeley that have a high amount of foot traffic, and go about my work of hanging the posters on lampposts and traffic fixtures, and completely ignore the people. If they're interested, they'll come to me. And they do, in droves! People will approach me and ask, "Who is John Yoo?" What a great conversation starter! Or, "I've been seeing the posters around town and couldn't wait to meet up with you so I can find out who John Yoo is?" Another great conversation starter! Or, "Yeah, I want to see him arrested, too!" Another one. Or, "There's some guy following you and ripping down your posters."
- People have no problem identifying me as the one who's hanging the posters because whenever I'm in Berkeley, by virtue of the fact that the posters are pinned to my shirt, front and back, I AM a walking poster.
- Children and young adults are the most curious – small groups of grade school and high school kids will approach me. And oftentimes when parents are accompanied by their children, it's the children who manage to entice their parents to ask about John Yoo. Even the UC students seem more approachable off campus than on – some of their inhibitions seem to break down once they're on the street and away from the campus grounds.

ARREST



JOHN YOO



Topic of John Yoo is a doorway to many crucial issues.

I see “Arrest John Yoo” as a doorway. My discussions on the street always lead to the larger issues of torture, wars of empire and our broken and corrupt political and justice systems. Through the various WCW handouts I have with me, I can point people to places where they can get more in-depth information. But I always challenge people by clearly stating to them as I hand them the clipboard, “Tell us who you are so that we can get you information on how you can help put John Yoo behind bars.” And when people leave me their contact information, I can provide a way for them to participate through the WCW subscriber list.

“Arrest John Yoo” outreach started in earnest September 19th. In two months time I’ve collected over 450 contact names. I generally average 10-12 names per hour using these methods. If I spend half a day at it I’ll usually walk away with 30-40 names, and maybe 2-3 times as many conversations.

CONVERSATIONS

Here are a few summaries of my conversations from a weekly update that I provide to the SF WCW chapter:

- **Ed** is a high school teacher. He asked for extra copies of the "Arrest John Yoo" poster, which I gave him. When I inquired into his intended use of the posters, he said he wanted to make them available to the other teachers at his school. I asked him if he would consider presenting the John Yoo issue to his students. He said YES.
- **Angela** was very engaging – we had a great conversation. She at first advised me to put more information on my poster to make it easier for people to find out who John Yoo is (which I have purposely not done), but then quickly added that she could have easily looked him up on the internet but failed to do so.

After I described who John Yoo is, **Rachel**, a recent high school graduate, offered the word "enabler" to describe his role. I was impressed – she got it! I told her that her observation was right on.

- **Mike** is a UC Berkeley grad student in education. He declined offers from Georgetown and Stanford specifically because they harbored war criminals (George Tenet and Condoleeza Rice). He was devastated to learn upon his arrival at UC Berkeley of John Yoo's presence on campus! (It pays to do your homework!)
- **Susan** is a high school student doing fundraising for her school. She asked me to pin an "Arrest John Yoo" poster on her backpack, and took extra copies of the poster and WCW John Yoo flyer for her friends.
- **Rosio** is a UC student who accidentally encountered John Yoo one day on campus and remained silent in his presence.

Challenges

One of the challenges for me personally moving forward is persistence – not letting the “Arrest John Yoo” message fall by the wayside and becoming “yesterday’s news” even while John Yoo continues to evade the law and live and work in Berkeley. One of the challenges for the FireJohnYoo.org coalition and SF-WCW chapter will be to provide meaningful direction to people who, when challenged by me on one particular day in their lives, stepped forward to take a stand for justice and express their interest in participating in community action.