

Out of the Shadows: Casting Light on CIA Torture

An Interfaith Discussion Guide

Released December 10, 2015

Dear NRCAT Friends and Members,

Thank you for your interest in organizing a screening and discussion of the 10 minute film, *Out of the Shadows: Casting Light on CIA Torture*. It is the hope of NRCAT, and its director Rev. Steve Martin, that this film will serve as a discussion starter for you in your congregations and communities on where we can make an impact on the debate over U.S.-sponsored torture.

We anticipate that the religious community will have a major role in 2016 to educate the public and candidates for office that reviving waterboarding or any other form of torture would now fly squarely in the face of U.S. law. We also anticipate that unless the faith community raises up a loud voice now, chances of closing Guantanamo may fade as the final year of this presidency comes to a close.

This DVD discusses both these areas of concern – public discourse on torture and closing Guantanamo. In addition, this film is premised on the notion that public support for torture goes down when people are presented with the ugly details of U.S.-sponsored torture. This film presents the case that was made on the ugly immoral nature of torture that is contained in the Senate Intelligence Committee’s Torture Report.

Please let us know at NRCAT if you would like any assistance in designing or setting up your program, and report back to us with any ideas that are generated.

Rev. Ron Stief, Executive Director
National Religious Campaign Against Torture

Why now?

In November 2015, the President signed into law the National Defense Authorization Act – a bill that contains a provision that permanently bans CIA torture. This comes after nearly a decade of advocacy by NRCAT and human rights organizations to right the wrongs that were embodied in the post-9/11 CIA torture program.

Just as importantly, the provision was the result of a rare bi-partisan vote. By a 78-21 vote of the U.S. Senate, with a majority of both parties voting for it, this provision requires CIA interrogators to follow the humane guidelines in the Army Field Manual on Human Intelligence Collector Operations (or “AFM”), while conducting interrogations. The provision also requires that the AFM be regularly updated to reflect our best understanding of effective, humane interrogation tactics that do not involve the use or threat of force. Further, it requires that the International Committee of the Red Cross be informed of and granted access to all detainees.

Background Shown in This Film

In December 2014, after many years of investigating, the Senate Intelligence Committee released a report, called “The Torture Report,” that details the CIA’s use of morally abhorrent and horrific acts of torture in the post-9/11 period. Acts of torture described in the report include waterboarding to the point of inducing convulsion and vomiting and medically unnecessary rectal feedings. One detainee was chained, partly unclothed, to a concrete floor and left to die of hypothermia. Others were stripped, hooded, bound with Mylar tape, and dragged through corridors while being slapped and punched. The CIA placed detainees in ice water “baths” to induce hypothermia and threatened to sexually abuse or otherwise harm the family members of detainees. The CIA also imprisoned an intellectually challenged family member of a detainee solely for the purpose of forcing the detainee to provide information and used his taped crying in an attempt to do so.

The report shows that torture often failed to produce intelligence or produced false information. In a public response to the report, CIA Director Brennan himself admitted that the CIA did not know whether torture had produced any useful intelligence. Further, the report shows that the CIA repeatedly misled Congress, the Administration, and the Department of Justice about the extent, severity, and outcomes of the torture program.

The 500 page Torture Report is only the executive summary of an even longer 6,000 page report that was written by the Senate Intelligence Committee after a multi-year investigation of the CIA's torture program. It was adopted with a bi-partisan 9-6 vote. The 500 page report was made public following an 11-3 bi-partisan vote of the Committee.

Why this Matters – The Moral View

The Torture Report describes acts of brutality that don't have any place in a decent society. Our democracy depends upon the truth about the torture program being made public. Our values depend on us acting to ensure that it is never repeated. As people of faith, we believe that torture is a sin against humanity and against God.

Now that the 500 page Torture Report has been made public, we have a responsibility to ensure that our fellow citizens hear about both the brutality and ineffectiveness of the torture program, and that we make clear to our politicians that it was wrong. We will lose something irrecoverable if we allow torture to become accepted by our society.

Why this Matters – The Legal View

Although torture was illegal during the CIA’s torture program, the laws against torture at that time were not strong enough to prevent the program from taking place. After the Torture Report publicly detailed the gaps in the law that were exploited by those who wanted to use torture, Congress responded by passing legislation that strengthened the law against torture.

What’s Next for Faith-rooted Advocacy

Although the laws against torture have been strengthened, in many other ways our government has yet to address the problems cause by the torture program:

- *The prison at Guantanamo Bay must be closed.* Guantanamo is a place where our government tortured prisoners, and it remains a place where the vast majority are held without charge or trial – most for over a decade already. Our own government says that it no longer has any need to hold almost half of the people there.
- *The President should order executive branch agencies to read the full 6,000 page Torture Report* and make use of the information in it to develop recommendations for preventing the use of torture in the future. Despite having been sent the report in December of 2014, no executive branch agency has read, or even opened, their copies of the full Torture Report.
- *The President should declassify the CIA torture program and make the full, 6,000 page Torture Report available to the public.* The CIA’s torture program has been over for seven years, and many of the details have already been made public. There is no longer any reason to keep anything more than agents’ identities secret.

What Individuals, Congregations and Organizations Can and Should Do Now

We have a responsibility to ensure that these crimes are never repeated. Those who are answerable to the U.S. public – the President, the CIA, Congress, and executive branch agencies – must work with us to make clear that torture will never be used again. You can make a difference with your actions:

- Contact Congress and the President and tell them you expect them to close Guantanamo now.
- Contact the President and tell him to order executive branch agencies to open and read the full Torture Report.
- Contact the President and Members of the Senate Intelligence Committee and ask them to release the full Torture Report to the public.
- Use social media to share anti-torture messages. We have samples at www.nrcat.org/GetInvolved
- Join NRCAT’s e-mail list to be sure you are contacted with opportunities to contact your legislators about torture or to write an op-ed or a letter to the editor. Sign-up at www.nrcat.org/supporter

Suggestions for Using this DVD

This discussion guide was prepared by NRCAT to facilitate discussion of NRCAT’s 10 minute film *Out of the Shadows: Casting Light on CIA Torture*. **You can view and download the film, order a copy of it on DVD, download promotional materials, and access all the resources and links mentioned in this discussion guide at: www.nrcat.org/shadows.**

This film best lends itself to small group settings for discussion, such as during an adult education class. An outline for a 60 minute session is provided, including a suggested time breakdown for the session.

This resource could also be used in:

- Older youth or college groups
- Women's or men's organizations
- Social ministry meetings
- Adult education programs
- A weekend retreat
- Any interfaith setting

Some of the information presented in the film could be disturbing for young audiences. We recommend that you yourself view the film before sharing it with any audience.

Preparing for the Discussion

We suggest that as a facilitator you preview the film and read through the discussion guide to decide how you would like to present the material. Think through your own feelings and reactions to the film so you are prepared to respond helpfully to the comments of participants. Feel free to add your own questions. The film includes religious voices of various faiths. There may be a variety of opinions expressed during the discussion, however, and openness and honesty should be encouraged.

Here is a quick preparation checklist:

- Be sure to let us know about your viewing and discussion by registering at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/Out-of-the-Shadows>
- Advertise early and often about the upcoming discussion session within the congregation or your community. Announce it in worship or other appropriate venues. Sample promotional materials are available at www.nrcat.org/shadows.
- Determine the tasks you want to accomplish during the screening.
- Determine who will lead the session.
- Test the film with the equipment (DVD player and TV or Computer and Projector) you will be using for the session.
- Participants might ask for a definition of torture. The definition from the Convention Against Torture, which is U.S. law, is included in Appendix 1.
- Please make copies of the petition version (Appendix 2) of the statement that we suggest that participants might want to sign at the end of the session. You can mail the statement with the signatories to the President: The White House; 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW; Washington, DC 20500, or if you want NRCAT to send the petition along with others, please mail to our office at: NRCAT; 110 Maryland Ave NE #502; Washington, DC 20002. If you want to mail them directly, you are encouraged also to send your list to the National Religious Campaign Against Torture so we can continue to provide resources and information about torture to those who want to receive it.

Additional Resources

As a facilitator you may want to visit or encourage participants to visit www.nrcat.org, where we have a list of our member organizations, several studies from various denominations and faith groups, statements on torture from denominations and faith groups, additional worship and prayer resources, and ways that you can work to ensure that U.S.-sponsored torture never happens again. Many of these resources could be helpful in your preparation for the class.

Session Outline

Welcome and introductions (5 minutes)

Open with prayer, if that is your tradition, and if needed ask participants to introduce themselves.

Then introduce the class and the film *Out of the Shadows: Casting Light on CIA Torture* by saying something like:

“This viewing of *Out of the Shadows: Casting Light on CIA Torture* is intended to provide a safe and open place in which we can express our thoughts, feelings and beliefs on the United States use of torture after 9/11. We may have conflicting views. The purpose of this discussion is for us to discuss U.S. practices and policies, and to look at those policies through the eyes of our faith. Our own faith teaches that every human being has been created with worth and dignity, and yet some of us may also believe – however uneasily – that sometimes torture is necessary. We ask that you keep an open mind to one another, listen respectfully and share as honestly as you’re able.”

Film Screening (15 minutes)

Insert DVD and play the film. The film is 10 minutes.

Discussion (30 minutes)

The following questions are offered to guide a fruitful discussion. Feel free to ask other questions as well. If the group is too large, you might want to divide it. If you do, ask someone in each subgroup to lead it and ask the questions.

Now we’ll discuss some of the issues raised in this film.

1. What are your reactions to the film?
2. The film describes horrific acts of torture. Think about the person ordering those acts. Can you understand why someone would do those things to another person? What do you think it does to a person to torture another person?
3. How do you think torture affects society? When our government tortured a person, how do you think it affected people from that person’s community? How has it affected people in the United States?
4. Torture harms both the tortured and the torturer. What can the faith community do to heal the wounds of each group affected by torture?
5. The U.S. has played a leading role in drafting and advocating for human rights standards around the world. What does our country’s use of torture do to our stature in the world? Do you think it makes us a good or bad example to others?
6. Did watching the film change your views about U.S.-sponsored torture? If so, how?
7. How can you or your congregation make a difference in educating others about the importance of ending torture?

A Statement and Closing (10 minutes)

It is suggested that you ask participants to sign the statement found in Appendix 2. You can mail the statement with the signatories to your U.S. senators and your representative or if you want NRCAT to hand deliver them to your senators and representatives, we would be happy to do that. If you want to mail them directly, you are encouraged also to send your list to the National Religious Campaign Against Torture so we can continue to provide resources and information about torture to those who want to receive it.

Please pass around the petition and invite participants to sign the statement:

The National Religious Campaign Against Torture has a statement calling on the President to close the prison at Guantanamo Bay. I invite you to sign the statement and then I will copy it and mail it to the President.

End with a closing prayer or in the way that your class typically closes its session.

Definition of Torture

The National Religious Campaign Against Torture (NRCAT) uses the definition of torture included in Article I of the U.N Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment. The Convention came into force on June 26, 1987, following ratification by the 20th nation. June 26th is now recognized as the UN International Day in Support of Torture Victims.

The Convention was signed by the U.S. in 1988 and ratified by the U.S. Congress in 1994, thereby becoming U.S. law.

Here is the definition of torture from Article I of the Convention:

“For the purposes of this Convention, the term ‘torture’ means any act by which severe pain or suffering, whether physical or mental, is intentionally inflicted on a person for such purposes as obtaining from him or a third person information or a confession, punishing him for an act he or a third person has committed or is suspected of having committed, or intimidating or coercing him or a third person, or for any reason based on discrimination of any kind, when such pain or suffering is inflicted by or at the instigation of or with the consent or acquiescence of a public official or other person acting in an official capacity. It does not include pain or suffering arising only from, inherent in or incidental to lawful sanctions.”

The Convention against Torture also prohibits cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment which does not amount to torture.

Mail Petition to:

National Religious Campaign Against Torture

110 Maryland Ave., NE Suite 502; Washington, DC 20002

PRESIDENT OBAMA: CLOSE GUANTANAMO

We, the undersigned, call upon President Obama to close the prison at Guantanamo Bay. Guantanamo is a place where people were tortured, and it remains a place where they are detained without trial. Closing it now is the right thing to do.

In particular, we ask the President to order the Secretary of Defense to transfer all cleared detainees by July 4, 2016. All other detainees should be brought to trial or reviewed by the periodic review boards to determine if they can be cleared for transfer by the same date.

Name — PLEASE PRINT	Address	E-mail*

** Thank you for your support. When you provide your email address, the National Religious Campaign Against Torture will add you to our mailing list to receive regular updates on ways to make your voice heard for a torture-free future. You can unsubscribe at any time.*

