

American Sniper Chris Kyle and Media Propaganda

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“So you’re not really viewing them as a person. They’re out there, they’re bad people, and you just take them out and you don’t think twice about it.” – Chris Kyle (left)

“Anyone who takes history lessons from Hollywood learns only that white makes right.”

Mass killer [Chris Kyle](#) should have been forgotten when he was killed by another Iraq war veteran in 2013. Kyle became rich and famous after he spoke and wrote publicly about the record 160 kills he committed in America’s war of terror in Iraq. He was the subject of the book, *American Sniper: the Autobiography of the Most Lethal Sniper in U.S. Military History*, and enjoyed celebrity status until his death.

Kyle is now the subject of the film [American Sniper](#). It has received Oscar nominations and is doing record breaking business at the box office. This movie is the latest instance of Hollywood’s love for American [cultural propaganda](#). The entertainment industry happily exists as the promoter of white supremacy and Manifest Destiny. Movies taught generations of Americans that the Indians had no right to live on their own land and that black people are by definition dangerous unless subservient. Anyone who takes history lessons from Hollywood learns only that white makes right. Thus a killer is turned into a hero.

Murder is universally condemned both legally and morally unless the powerful group says otherwise. If soldiers in uniform are sent on missions of conquest they are suddenly exalted even as they kill other human beings en masse. In 2003 the Iraqis were the victims of that code of dishonor and people like Chris Kyle were applauded as they took many thousands of lives.

The new movie is not the first instance of Kyle being lionized. The corporate media played their part in elevating a man whose only skill lay in his ability to shoot people. Kyle’s book was published in 2012, well after the war became unpopular and the Republicans lost credibility with voters in large part because of the debacle. Watching Kyle’s interaction with so-called media professionals is difficult to stomach as none of them asked hard questions about what he and our political leaders did to Iraqis.

Perhaps a mere comedic talk show host like [Conan O’Brien](#) can be excused for fawning over Kyle. “I’m amazed by some of the things that you’ve accomplished. You’re an incredible sniper.” But Kyle got to the heart of the matter as he spoke about being an occupier and invader. He described the process of attempting to avoid attention while creating a kill zone.

“It depends if you take an occupied house or unoccupied. If you take occupied you have to take the family, feed them, make them go to the bathroom, all this other stuff. Let them do everything you just can’t let them go outside. By 9:00 in the morning they know you’re

there.”

I wonder if Conan O’Brien gave any thought to the people who were occupied. What was it like to be kept prisoner in their homes so that an enemy soldier could kill their people? If O’Brien had any curiosity on this matter he kept it to himself.

Supposedly serious media outlets such as [Time magazine](#) were no better than the stand-up comic talk show host. The questions from editor at large Belinda Luscombe would be amusing if they weren’t so awful.

“Are there any kills you regret?”

“No. Not at all.”

“Because you felt like it was either you killed them or they killed other Americans?”

“Yes, ma’am.”

One might expect the next question to be a hard hitting follow-up. Instead Luscombe asked, “When you’re at home do you get out your gun much?”

The most interesting thing about watching Kyle now is that he was so clearly not an interesting person. There isn’t a lot to say about this simple and dangerous man. The only way to bring any drama to his story is to lie about him. He followed orders, didn’t give much thought to what he did and was himself [loose with the truth](#).

Kyle claimed to have fought with former Minnesota governor Jesse Ventura. Ventura filed and won a defamation suit against him. Kyle claimed to have shot two men in Texas when there is no proof of any such incident. He also claimed that he and his fellow Navy SEALs shot looters in New Orleans after hurricane Katrina. That may have been Kyle’s fantasy, but it never happened. The claim that his first victim was an Iraqi woman holding a grenade is probably also untrue.

The movie omits these stories but must rely on making an uncomplicated person appear otherwise. A good movie would have told the truth about the impact of the invasion on Iraq, and the complete story of a man who while dangerous was not unique. Like millions of Americans he had violent fantasies. The only difference is that he was able to act them out. Of course a plot like that wouldn’t break any box office records.

Margaret Kimberley’s Freedom Rider column appears weekly in BAR, and is widely reprinted elsewhere. She maintains a frequently updated blog as well as at <http://freedomrider.blogspot.com>. Ms. Kimberley lives in New York City, and can be reached via e-Mail at [Margaret.Kimberley\(at\)BlackAgendaReport.com](mailto:Margaret.Kimberley(at)BlackAgendaReport.com).

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