

Outrage! On The Beheading of Our Media Brother James Foley

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James Foley in Aleppo in November 2012.

New York, New York: Outrage has been the response to reports, still officially unconfirmed a day later, that the Islamic State-Isis maniacs in Iraq beheaded an American journalist. Unlike, American politicians who want us to be loved, in the media at least, these Islamic extremists only want to be feared. We had shock and awe; they have only shock.

The killing by decapitation of Global Post freelancer, James Foley, who had earlier endured a four month kidnapping ordeal, was deliberately horrific, prompting former CIA and NSA Director and now a for-profit, private industry securocrat, Michael Hayden, to explode on Fox News by pressing the self-righteous fear button and warning “they are coming for all of us.” (I am sure they wouldn’t turn him down!)

Now President Obama has weighed in, saying, “entire world is appalled” and that the killing “shocks the conscience of the entire world.” Its not sure how much shock there is to go around, after Gaza’s ongoing bloodbath about which he has said little and the crisis in Ferguson about which has so far done little. He has promised “justice” for Foley, not the other conflict zones.

Of course, this has happened to journalists before, most notably to American journalist Danny Pearl in Pakistan, an event that I helped report on for an HBO film, and so know, personally, the unspeakable anguish everyone felt then, especially his parents. That’s the anguish we feel today.

Foley’s news outlet Global Post reports, “Video of Foley purporting to show his beheading was uploaded to YouTube on Tuesday afternoon and later removed. The FBI is evaluating the video’s contents.

The video asserts that the alleged killing of Foley is in retaliation for recent airstrikes by the [United States](#) against IS militants in northern Iraq. In it, Foley, kneeling next to an apparent IS militant, makes comments against the US for its actions. The militant also claims to be holding journalist Steven Joel Sotloff, who went missing in Syria a year ago, and issues a direct challenge to President Barack Obama that Sotloff’s fate will depend on the president’s “next move.””

Obama is scheduled to speak on this, and it’s the type of high profile and viscerally disgusting incident that is likely to lead to an escalation of American bombing and more atrocities on the ground, nothing new in this summer of atrocities in Gaza, Syria, Iraq, and Ferguson Mo.

The appropriately named Daily Beast called the event “medieval,” with Christopher Dickey noting “the horrifying scene sickened the world, and that’s exactly what ISIS wants.”

Of course there is already indignant finger-pointing at the “uncivilized behavior.” They do their killing with the kind of “terrible swift sword” that we sing about in the Battle Hymn of The Republic, while we prefer no direct contact with our victims, relying on so-called “surgical” air strikes and drone attacks.

Despite the lack of verification in the aftermath of the You Tube posting of a grotesque video—since removed—most media outlets blasted away with reports that accepted ISIS’s claim without confirmation. The Global Post was more cautious, as was the AP, in part, because the family still had hope it wasn’t so.

His loved ones remembered him with pride, “We have never been prouder of our son and brother Jim. He gave his life trying to expose the world to the suffering of the Syrian people. We implore the kidnapers to spare the lives of the remaining hostages. Like Jim, they are innocents. They have no control over American government policy in Iraq, Syria or anywhere in the world.”

Who does have “control” over this American government policy, and how is it guided? Is it all the President’s doing, or has he been “captured,” as many suspect, by the Military Industrial Complex? How much accountability is there? Willam Astore, a former Air Force Lieutenant writes on Tom Dispatch, that there is an “American cult” about bombing, and explains why:

“Obviously, there are staggering amounts of money to be made by feeding America’s fetish for bombers. But the U.S. cult of air power and its wildly expensive persistence requires further explanation. On one level, exotic and expensive attack planes like the F-35 or the future “long range strike bomber” (LRS-B in bloodless acronym-speak) are the military equivalent of sacred cows. They are idols to be worshipped (and funded) without question. But they are also symptoms of a larger disease — the engorgement of the Department of Defense. In the post-9/11 world, this has become so pronounced that the military-industrial-congressional complex clearly believes it is entitled to a trough filled with money with virtually no accountability to the American taxpayer.

Now, to the issue of civilized behavior, versus uncivilized killing.

The Islamic world did not create beheading. It was Shakespeare or Alice In Wonderland that first gave us the phrase, “off with their heads.”

Anyone remember, Henry VI, Part III, where the King’s beloved Margaret has, according an interpretation on the website, Snoop (“We Speak Student”) racked up a lot of enemies.

“When she visits him in prison here, Margaret takes a hanky dipped in Rutland’s blood and waves it around in Richard’s father’s face. Um, yeah—not so nice. After some name-calling and papier-mâché crown making, York explodes, calling Margaret abnormal among other things.

Margaret’s classic response is simple: she kills him and put his head on the city gates for all to see.”

The French gave us the guillotine for more industrial scale beheading, but the history of this savagery goes way back and into the present, with Brits decapitating Indian resisters to their rule in the American colonies, and chopping of the heads of Royals out of favor in the mother land, and, then, more recently, when a Brazilian soccer coach killed a player in 2013, his head had to go.

He was not alone. Check out Wikipedia's list of people who were beheaded in our country and others. Now, that's frightening!
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_people_who_were_beheaded

We, too, have been obsessed with the head, perhaps because so many of ours are empty.

In the parlance of the War on Terror, how many times have you heard about going for leaders like Bin Laden with the vain hope that once you have chopped off the "head of the snake" all will be well. It never happens. Yet, as we also know, brutality leads to more brutality and violence to more violence.

Also let us not forget, bin Laden was labeled "Geronimo" by the Navy Seals who went after his "scalp," and executed him. Later, Steven Newcomb, a columnist for the weekly newspaper Indian Country Today, called the use of the freedom fighter's name disrespectful. "Apparently, having an African-American president in the White House is not enough to overturn the more than 200-year American tradition of treating and thinking of Indians as enemies of the United States," he said

Forget the lectures. Let's get real. Hanging was officially favored as an execution strategy in the United States for many decades, until, its offshoot -unofficial lynching — became too graphic to bear.

We supported the hanging of Saddam Hussein in Iraq who at least had a semblance of a trial before going to the gallows with the dignity that his executioners and American cheerleaders lacked.

Bin laden was shot down, we are told in his bedroom at night and then disposed of, Mafia style, to "swim with fishes. Years earlier, the Daily Mail reported, "In the midst of the confusion that came immediately after the attacks on September 11th, the CIA chief of counter-terrorism had one clear goal.

'I want you to cut bin Laden's head off, put it on dry ice, and send it back to me so I can show the president,' said Gary Schroen, a CIA operative sent to Afghanistan weeks before the war officially started."

Years ago, we bombed the so-called "HEADquarters" of the Viet Cong in the jungles of Cambodia, to no avail. Once again our "intelligence" was not.

Are there ever lessons learned, or are we doomed to watch the same bombs-away strategy, recycled by the Pentagon and our Israeli allies, who always speak of bombing as way of "decapitating" enemies?

Let us remember, and respect the commitment of journalists, like James Porter who take the risks most of us wouldn't, to share unpleasant truths with us.

We also need to look in the mirror before climbing up on our own high horses so often

riddled with hypocrisy that loves exploiting the shock of sensation.

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