

# Using torture to get the information

[Sociology](#), [Violence](#)



## **Government Sanctioned Torture**

There are many controversial topics in today's day and age, and anything that points to the government seems to become the most cared about topic. Recently media has been exposing what Americans are calling the horrifying truth of our government. Government Sanctioned Torture has been a hot topic for years now due to the media finally able to expose what the government has been doing behind closed doors. There are two very good examples of such exposure, the Guantanamo Bay Prison and the Abu Ghraib prison. Along with these two prisons, a nun released her experience when she was kidnapped and taken to a prison in Guatemala and a Native American man imprisoned in our own US prison. Even though the government says that using torture to get us the information we need is ok, torture, is inhumane and degrading to the mind and body of prisoners it is used on.

It is interesting that we have so many problems with torture in today's day and age. Surprising or not, our country was built on being torture free because General George Washington did not want to be like the British army. He stated, " New Country, new world would distinguish itself by its humanity" (" Human Rights Abuses"). It wasn't until World War II did the US government begin taking the rights of both civilians and the prisoners of war. Fast forward from World War 2 all the way to 9/11. It was here that the US Government really started to push the use of torture to gain information from suspected terrorists. After 9/11 the government began to physically and mentally abuse its detainees. They did this in a multitude of ways ranging

from water boarding, which is making the person feel like they are drowning, to beating or confining prisoners to a box. The government was able to do this because they executed the power of the executive branch which gave them the ability to torture any suspected terrorists. They say that the Bush administration began to “take off the gloves” this meaning that they were willing to ignore the laws set in place against torture. These were the laws set in place to keep the president’s power at bay when it came to wage war and to banish the use of unjust treatment on detainees (CJA).

One of the biggest places that has been exposed by the media is Guantanamo Bay Prison. There is a manuscript written by a man named Mohamedou Slahi that gives the media an insight of what happens in the prison. The manuscript was written in 2005 from his prison cell (“Inmate’s Book”). Slahi claims that he was wearing night vision goggles when he was snatched and forced to intake an abundance of salt water then had ice shoved into every crevice between his body and his clothing from head to toe. The man also states that he spent many nights in isolation or chained to the floor in extremely painful positions. He was un-allowed to eat or sleep causing severe mental harm. He says he was forced to undergo severe temperatures ranging from hot to cold. Slahi had been in this prison since 2002 and remains there today. In 2003 he states this is when the peak of the torture hit the prison (CNN). Since then there have been 779 people in the prison, 592 of those have transferred out to other prisons, 118 remained there, and 6 have been recorded dead (CJA).

More recently a place called Abu Ghraib Prison has been exposed to the public. Abu Ghraib Prison was under the charge of General Karpinski who, a month into her charge, was let go. The situation was overly pretty quiet until The New York Times managed to get a hold of a 53 page report written by major General Antonis M. Taguba about the situation. The living quarters of the prison were described as absolutely disgusting. Along with the terrible living space the prison performed weekly executions of prisoners along with torturing them (Hersh). Along with the report there were photos that made their way to the public's eye. These photos showed the different ways these soldiers were physically, physiologically, and sexually abusing the inmates (CJA). These photos were extremely detailed and shocked the country. Many photos showed images of them forcing inmates into homosexual poses with sand bags over their heads. The reason this was so degrading towards Islamics was it was against their religion so being naked in front of another man was extremely humiliating. Along with sexually degrading photos of inmates there were multiple photos of a room splattered in blood and a photo of a prisoner numbered 153399, beaten (The New Yorker). To respond to the negative reaction the government was getting from the public they passed a bill in 2005 to ban cruel, inhumane, and degrading torture of prisoners. Along with this the department of defense removed seventeen officers that were stationed there, eleven of them being charged with crimes (CJA).

Along with the accounts of these two prisons, another woman willingly shared her experiences with the government. This woman was a nun who went by the name Sister Dianna Otiz. Sister Dianna was taken by

Guatemalan forces on November 2, 1989. She was placed in the Clandestine Prison (Truthout). While in this prison Sister Dianna was kept in a large pit that housed both dead, and alive inmates. The people in charge her forced her into a dark room where she discovered another woman. After a few moments of speaking with the already beaten woman a soldier came in with a knife, placed it in her hand, and forced her to stab the other woman to death. Once the woman had died he told Sister Dianna that she was now one of them. She also recalls soldiers taking a gamble on who would have sex with her first. The man who one told her that God did not exist before raping her, the other men following after. Along with these horrendous acts she was tortured with a game. If she was good and gave them the answer that she wanted she could have a smoke, however if she gave them an answer they did not like then she was burned with the cigarette. Sister Dianna was burned for every answer she gave (Truthout). While going through this torture “ game” she came to the realization that this was not about gaining information but more so to push her into silence and submission. While here Sister Dianna was surprised to meet a man who spoke perfect English. She was able to find out that he was part of the US military and that the US was running the facility. Sister Dianna managed to escape to a nearby convent where she planned on exposing that America was the head of the torture squad in Guatemala. However, the US military and the Guatemalan forces both released that the nun had never been tortured in the facility. They used the cover up that she had been a part of erotic lesbian intercourse that had gone bad. The documents she has been

looking for still have not been found, and her own story was not made public until the book *The United States and Torture* was released.

Unfortunately torture for the United States does not happen only in prisons across the country, but it can also happen in prisons here, in our own country. In today's age one of the biggest torture device in our own prisons is solitary confinement (Torture in US). This was originally designed for only temporary disciplinary actions but had now been used a long-term punishment instead. The main case seen was man by the name Leonard Peltier. HE was an activist for the Native Americans and was suspected and condemned for apparently killing two FBI agents in the shoot out at the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota during the year 1977. At age sixty-six he was forced into the solitary confinement in Pennsylvania even though he had many medical issues. This man has spent over thirty-five years in prison even though they have found evidence of misconduct in the police and evidence of the police wanting the Native American rights movement to end. Unfortunately for Peltier, this meant he was seen as guilty even before the trial began due to them wanting to cover this information up (Torture in the US). A former officer by the name Bruce Smith was a witness to the neglect and suffering they had placed upon Peltier over 20 years ago. Smith states that they had it out for Peltier, giving him hardship that where both unreasonable and immoral. He also states that the police are trying to make Peltier as unhappy as they can. Peltier suffers from diabetes, hypertension, and cancer, most of them a direct result of lack of nutrition and poor medical treatment during his stay in prison. One day Petier was moved into solitary confinement for a reason the police would not release to both the public or

his legal team. When they did finally give a reason they said he assaulted an officer by pushing him into exposed electrical wires. To this day Peltier remains in prison, even though the prosecutors have stated they do not know who killed the officers. Peltier remains in a six month long solitary confinement sentence even with the prosecutors statement (Torture in the US).

Government Sanctioned torture had been something that has been with us since September 11. This topic has been controversial amongst American for many years now. We have shocking evidence in cases both out of country and in our own country. The media has exposed so many personal stories along with stories of large prisons where mass torturing occur. Sister Dianna, the Guantanamo Bay Prison, the Abu Ghraib prison, Slahi, and Peltier are only some of the stories that prove government sanctioned torture in the United States should now be legal.