

WORLD ORDER

Saddam's stash

Iraqi leader hides pop-culture collection, not weapons in his palace



CHRIS MARTIN
columnist

Well it's a-one, two, three, four, well what are we (tentatively) doing for? Good question. The situation, as reported by CNN News, the voice of our generation, is something like this: Saddam refuses to recognize the skills of the United States and the free-world press, so we have to step in and regulate. Saddam is all, "chemical weapons? Here? No, it's whack." And we're all, "Saddam? We heard you got more weapons than the WB!"

But before we all march gallantly off to battle, it's time to give Saddam the benefit of the doubt. Time to give the devil's advocate, so to speak. So what if Saddam is giving U.N. weapon inspectors access to his presidential palace? We only find this shocking because our own leaders have no guff about sharing their privates.

Not that there isn't justifiable reason for alarm. It is a well-known fact that Saddam is crazier than a crack-house dealer. He's creepier than those Girl Scouts who go around collecting used eyeglasses. Domsday weapons are to Saddam what tired, internet-circulated jokes are to morning radio DJs.

Perhaps Saddam isn't hiding weapons in his palace. Maybe the whole thing has been blown way out of proportion. His stash could be completely harmless. Remember when the principal tried to search your locker in high school? It wasn't a .45 you were hiding in there — it was a lipstick-encrusted picture of Scott Baio and Jordan from New Kids on the Block.

It seems that the government has adopted the Jeffersonian formula for success: when the numbers don't add up, start a fight. Since there's no official government bureau of positive thinking, I've taken the

liberty of creating a few positive scenarios for the benefit of peace in the Middle East. What is Saddam hiding? Why, it could be ...

- Beanie Babies
- Saddam isn't stupid. He knows that when a nation's economy implodes, the people turn to collectible bric-a-brac for currency. And what is more collectible than Beanie Babies? The more you think about it, the more it makes sense. That's why you can't find any purple princess bears. And when you're the sire of a thousand bastard children, a well placed Beanie Baby helps to keep down the noise level in the presidential palace.
- A Secret Surprise Party!
- No one knows how to spoil a party like the United States. We're like the brat kid down the street that no one likes to play with because she's always making up rules as you play so she always wins. Perhaps Saddam has been slaving away in the presidential kitchen making the mother of all Rice Krispie Treats for Chelsea Clinton's 18th birthday.
- Tupac, Notorious B.I.G., and John Denver
- If you think the whole east coast vs. west coast situation is ugly, then check out the Tigris vs. Euphrates scene. Saddam needs American rap superstars, kidnapped during their peak, brainwashed and signed to the original Death Row record label. Denver was a special request from Mrs. Hussein. Go figure.
- Rows and rows of Anthrax ... albums!
- This chemical weapon thing has been a big misunderstanding. When we heard it that Saddam had Anthrax, we thought it was the disease, not the cool metal band. The road to white-trash America may be paved with "Among the Living," somebody had to buy all those copies of "Stomp 442."
- The Classic Henway Rouse
- Okay, get this. UN inspectors pull up to the palace, all official and proper, and ask Saddam what's in the palace. Saddam says, "oh, nothing but a henway." Then the inspectors ask, "what's a henway," and Saddam says, "about three pounds!" Laughs and world peace ensue.



- Horrible Human-Rights Violations
- Picture thousands of tortured Iraqi waif children, who because of harsh economic sanctions from the US, have yet to see *Titanic*. The horror, the horror.
- Four hundred metric tons of processed pumpkin pie filler and a flyswatter
- It is not our question to ask why, but to respect the private affairs of a consenting mad dictator.

It's about time someone went to bat for Saddam. Just because you have something to hide doesn't mean you've done anything wrong. Saddam may be crazy, but so is James Cameron, and look how he proved everyone wrong. Let's just hope this time we don't all go down with the ship. Women and columnists first!

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STATE OF THE UNION

Death row inmate stands as example of rights' violations



JOE SCHUMACHER
columnist

Don't tell me about the valley of the shadow of Death. I know it. In south-central Pennsylvania's Huntingdon County a 100-year-old prison stands, its Gothic towers propping an air of foreboding, evoking a somber mood of the past. I and some other men spend about 22 hours a day in 10-foot cells.

Mumia Abu-Jamal, from the Preface to *Live from Death Row*.

In 1981, America was third behind South Africa in percentage of population in prison. With both of these nations undergoing radical change in the past 15 years, America is now number one.

Thursday marked a day set aside for recognition of one prisoner unjustly on death row. This man's name is Mumia Abu-Jamal.

Abu-Jamal is a prominent, black broadcast journalist. In Philadelphia in the current mayor, Frank Rizzo and Philadelphia Police Department launched a campaign against a human rights organization known as MOVE.

This led to police raids, attacks, and beatings. Abu-Jamal used his radio show as a forum for those to speak out against the injustices of the police, and their corrupt activities. This marred him as an enemy of the Philadelphia Police Department.

One night in 1981, Abu-Jamal tried to intervene on behalf of his brother who was being beaten by a police officer. He and the officer were shot. More police arrived on the scene. When they realized who was bleeding at their feet, they continued to beat Abu-Jamal before he was taken to the hospital. The wounded police officer died, and Abu-Jamal was charged.

Being a taxi cab driver, Abu-Jamal had a license to carry a weapon.

However, several pieces of evidence point to the fact he did not shoot the cop. The bullet that struck the cop had been "lost" while in the police files. The officer died with a driver's license in his hand that belonged to another "anonymous" individual. Additionally, two men were seen fleeing the scene.

Yet almost no effort was made to track down or identify these two people. The shooter was described by many other witnesses to be taller than 6'2" and weigh more than 225 pounds, Abu-Jamal is 6'1" and weighs 170 pounds.

Presiding over the court case was "Honorable" Judge Albert Sabo, who had put more people on death row than any other

judge in America at the time. The prosecutor was an experienced lawyer who had obtained a murder verdict for an innocent man in a previous case (*Commonwealth v. Conner*). The defendant in that case served 12 years before being rightfully released.

The only person lacking experience in the court was Abu-Jamal's court-appointed lawyer. The defense was allocated a meager sum of \$150 for Abu-Jamal's defense fund. While the police questioned 125 witnesses, did tests on ballistics and pathology, the defense found two witnesses, neither of whom appeared in court.

Abu-Jamal had originally opted to defend himself, but was removed on the third day of jury selection. The prosecutors claimed he was intimidating to would-be jurors. His court-appointed attorney took over rather reluctantly and was extremely unprepared. Included on the jury was a man whose best friend was a Philadelphia police officer who was disabled after being shot on the job, and the wife of a police officer was selected as an alternate. The prosecution used 11 of 15 peremptory challenges to remove African-American jurors.

In less than a week, the prosecution had presented its case against Abu-Jamal, and most of it in his absence. He was removed for his insistence of his right to defend himself and protesting the fact his lawyer was unwilling and unqualified to defend him.

The prosecutors had a list of shady wit-

nesses, none of whom were asked to identify Abu-Jamal in a line-up. The prosecution's key witness was a prostitute who had been arrested 35 times. She changed her account of the story every time she was questioned. Another prostitute in the same area was offered an interesting deal by the prosecution: testimony against Abu-Jamal for immunity from arrest.

Another witness was on parole at the time because somebody paid him to throw a Molotov Cocktail into a public school. His original statement was that he saw the shooter leave the scene. In his court testimony he altered it saying he saw the shooter sit down on the curb. It is possible he altered his testimony out fear from or to gain favor with the police.

Abu-Jamal was found guilty, and in the sentencing phase of his trial, the prosecution read from his political writings. Most of the readings came from when he was 16 years old and a member of the Black Panther Party, nearly 12 years before the trial.

The intent was to prove Abu-Jamal was a man who had grown up with no respect for American law or society, and he killed the cop out of disgust for the system, which was enough premeditation to warrant a first-degree murder verdict.

Ironically, Abu-Jamal never had a previous conviction, and with the shady lengths the prosecution went to, it makes one wonder who really showed a lack of re-

spect for the system.

Abu-Jamal has not given up on his fight for his innocence. He broadcasts from jail, once a month in a segment called, "Live from Death Row." Through the use of media, "he is fighting for his life."

He has published a book, against the will of many people, also called *Live from Death Row*. There have been many attempts to silence him, including trying to censor his show. Abu-Jamal was also put in disciplinary confinement for the publishing of his book. Apparently the First Amendment rights are not extended to prisoners. He is currently on administrative custody, as are all the people on Death Row.

Abu-Jamal was almost executed in 1995, however international outcry postponed this. The very fact that a man can be put on death row for his political beliefs should be horrifying to anyone that claims to be an American.

The original trial was a travesty of justice: most of the evidence was falsified or circumstantial, the defense was not given adequate support, and using a man's former political alliances to convict and sentence him was ruled unconstitutional by the Supreme court (*Dawson v. Delaware*, 503 U.S. 159 (1992)). Until Mumia Abu-Jamal is released from his political captivity, no one in America is free.

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GENDERSCOPE

Women oppress themselves by obsessing over appearance



MICHELLE VOSS
columnist

Our Bodies ... Make Us Worry." These words were scrawled on the walls of a bathroom at Michigan University in a unfortunate parody of the title *Our Bodies, Our Selves*.

Published in 1970, *Our Bodies, Our Selves*, became an icon of the feminist movement of the 70s, which, at the time, was fighting up the social climate for women. Made in 1973.

Now, in the '90s, this phrase has been twisted to imply a loss of freedom. The phrase "Our Bodies Make Us Worry" points out the irony of the feminist movement and un masks the anxieties of women in America today.

In fact, it is pointing to the very failure of the feminist movement. It is ironic that a movement intended to liberate women has only confined them to a life of despair over, of all things, themselves.

American women are still suffering from the disease that has plagued our Western thinking for hundreds of years, but perhaps to the extreme.

Women are still objects. Our advertising, our

movies, our literature, our television, all cripple women into becoming objects of desire.

As John Berger writes, "Men look at women. Women watch themselves being looked at. This determines not only the relations of men to women, but the relation of women to themselves."

We cannot say the objectification of women in our culture is just a function of hegemonic patriarchy. Rather, it is quite possible to say women oppress themselves.

Herein lies the ultimate challenge for feminism in the late 20th and early 21st centuries: Women everywhere must work to publicize role models for young women who have accomplished great tasks — not just women who have flawless skin, slim hips and gleaming teeth and wear a size-6 cocktail dress.

Today, American women are stifled by an epidemic we only inflict upon ourselves. We worry how others see our bodies. This is no kind of life.

A life where many women are their own worst enemy. A life where many women have no self-esteem. A life where many women besiege themselves with criticism and punishment because of the way their bodies look.

We subconsciously program ourselves to believe arbitrary numbers such as 6, 8, 10 or 12 determine how

others perceive us. Indeed, we would not be so obsessed with these numbers if we did not have this preoccupation with others looking at us.

We believe someone is always watching us, because that is how women are presented in commercials, in magazines and in the cinema.

The camera lens is always gazing upon the woman as an object to be admired, captured within an image. She has nothing of import to say, except maybe, "It won't happen overnight, but it will happen." Beauty can be yours, too, and it is all you need. Just look at me, I'm obviously ecstatic about my hair.

So, we buy into this modern paradigm — literally. We buy products because we believe that we will become more a desirable object for others.

Autonomy? Liberation? What a joke!

As Christopher Lasch said in his book, *The Culture of Narcissism*, "Ads encourage the pseudo-emancipation of women through consumerism."

In other words, women delude themselves into thinking they have freedom merely because they have the freedom to choose what brand of deodorant, shampoo or lip-gloss to buy.

All of this points to a rather disturbing factor: Women in America are overly self-conscious about their appearance, but sadly, not self-aware.

We spend so much time worrying how others will see our bodies that we forget to work on our minds, spirits and hearts. We are weak from the inside out. This is obvious when someone comments on our weight, clothes or skin and we feel hurt, betrayed and rejected.

If we had a stronger focus on developing the intellect and souls of our girls, they would be more resilient or even immune to criticism of their bodies.

Instead, we are left feeling crushed every time we look in the mirror and wonder what others think.

We cannot allow ourselves to remain the objects of other's desire or envy or to be defined by superficiality.

We must work to change the role models for girls in America.

Rather than Cindy Crawford, Gwyneth Paltrow, Jennifer Aniston, Tyra Banks and other swimsuit models acting as the "ideal" representations of women in America, we must change our perspective.

We should focus on achievements — Sandra Day O'Connor, Madeleine Albright, Katherine Graham. These women have proven themselves.

They may not be a size 4 and have firm thighs, but they are brilliant and strong.

We can no longer be afraid of our selves.

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