

You know what bothers me the most? Not that George W. Bush lied to us. I knew he was lying. I was doing the research to know he was lying. I could tell he was lying in his State of the Union speech. I read 1984 as a kid and I could see the propaganda machine spinning its yarn. Besides, with the help of the republican dominated Supreme Court, he stole the election. And look at the people in his administration. Look at their individual and collective track records. What kind of integrity did we really expect from these people?

No, what bothers me is how easily we were (mis)led. What bothers me is how blood-thirsty the average American revealed himself to be. I won't forget the hand painted signs on the tanks that read "Baghdad today, Paris tomorrow". I won't forget how French fries, French toast and French bread all became freedom fries, freedom toast and freedom bread. I won't forget seeing Americans betraying the values of their own country by trying to silence those of us who disagreed with them. I won't forget being called a traitor or a terrorist or at the very least, unpatriotic, because I believed the Bush administration's endless "war on terrorism" to be a farce and the wars on Afghanistan and Iraq to be ruinous for America as well as being illegal and unwarranted atrocities. I won't forget how it feels to have the rest of the world look at us like we're the new Nazi state. I won't forget how it feels to know that they're probably right. It wasn't just a handful of extremists thirsting for blood and trying to silence any and all opposition. It wasn't just a handful of extremists promoting intolerance, paranoia and blind nationalism. It wasn't just a handful of extremists supporting hate crimes, both at home and abroad. It wasn't just a handful of extremists giving away our rights and undermining the values of the United States of America.

It was the every day American citizens goose-stepping right along with the extremists, because it feels good to believe you're on the winning team, it feels good to think you've got it all figured out and, let's face it, it feels good to do whatever you like, no matter who or what it hurts. Nothing makes fear subside like kicking someone's ass and feeling powerful. It doesn't even matter if they deserve it. Children on playgrounds know this. And they resent it when an adult steps in and reprimands them. They resent having to learn how to behave in a civilized manner and they resent having to accept that what they want isn't always good for them or good for others. They don't want responsibility. But they are children and don't know any better. It is for the adults to know better and to guide our children in making sense of the world and making healthy, thoughtful choices. What will our children learn from our own behavior? Can you see the irony here? It's looking at you in the mirror.

America is shamed today. At the worst, we'll just put blinders on and keep on goose-stepping our way into the economic, environmental and social disaster of an endless Third World War. At best, we'll make a quick course correction, and have to pay for this war, and our children will have to pay for it and their children too. And it won't stop there. We'll have to make reparations to the Iraqi people. And we'll have to show a lot of good faith for a long time to the rest of the world. And we won't be able to throw our weight around any more. This will likely weaken our position in the world, because the planets biggest psycho government won't be as dangerous anymore.

Our world has changed, yes. Not because of 9/11, but because of who we allowed ourselves to become and what we allowed ourselves to accept as a result.

The problem isn't just that George W. Bush and his crew got into office. And the problem isn't just that they've undermined our country with lies, illegal wars and a largely unopposed attack on our personal freedoms. The problem is that we let them.

America is shamed. And I am shamed right along with her.

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