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Letter to President Bush

By Joseph W. DuRocher

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***Forwarded from Marni Harmony, the minister of a church in Orlando.
Joe is one of her parishioners.***

President George W. Bush
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

As a young man I was honored to serve our nation as a commissioned officer and helicopter pilot in the US Navy. Before me in WWII, my father defended the country spending two years in the Pacific aboard the USS Hornet (CV-14). We were patriots sworn "to protect and defend". Today I conclude that you have dishonored our service and the Constitution and principles of our oath. My dad was buried with full military honors so I cannot act for him. But for myself, I return enclosed the symbols of my years of service: the shoulder boards of my rank and my Naval Aviator's wings.

Until your administration, I believed it was inconceivable that the United States would ever initiate an aggressive and preemptive war against a country that posed no threat to us. Until your administration, I thought it was impossible for our nation to take hundreds of persons into custody without provable charges of any kind, and to "disappear" them into holes like Gitmo, Abu Ghraib and Bagram. Until your administration, in my wildest legal fantasy I could not imagine a US Attorney General seeking to justify torture or a President first stating his intent to veto an anti-torture law, and then adding a "signing statement" that he intends to ignore such law as he sees fit. I do not want these things done in my name.

As a citizen, a patriot, a parent and grandparent, a lawyer and law teacher I am left with such a feeling of loss and helplessness. I think of myself as a good American and I ask myself what can I do when I see the face of evil? Illegal and immoral war, torture and confinement for life without trial have never been part of our Constitutional tradition. But my vote has become meaningless because I live in a safe district drawn by your political party. My congressman is unresponsive to my concerns because his time is filled with lobbyists' largess. Protests are limited to your "free speech zones", out of sight of the parade. Even speaking openly is to risk being labeled un-American, pro-terrorist or anti-troops. And I am a disciplined pacifist, so any violent act is out of the question.

Nevertheless, to remain silent is to let you think I approve or support your actions. I do not. So, I am saddened to give up my wings and bars. They were hard won and my parents and wife were as proud as I was when I earned them over forty years ago. But I hate the torture and death you have caused more than I value their symbolism. Giving them up makes me cry for my beloved country.

Joseph W. DuRocher



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