

WTE column of January 29, 2015. Editor's headline: "Stand up against Cheney"
Casper Star Tribune of Jan 31: "Cheney to face protests for torture advocacy"

Wyoming Against Torture and other peace activist groups plan to demonstrate against Dick Cheney when he appears on the UW campus in Laramie to promote his wife's new book. The Cheney promotion is set for Tuesday, February 17, at 4 pm in the auditorium of the Rochelle Building at 22nd and Grand Avenue.

"This is an opportunity for people to express how we feel about Mr. Cheney's policies and his recalcitrant stance," said a spokesperson. "We want the world to know, Americans do not condone torture."

Mr. Cheney was instrumental in implementing the torture policies of the Bush administration. Notwithstanding national and international outcries, he has yet to be held accountable. The UN Declaration of Human Rights, the Geneva Convention, the Convention against Torture, and other treaties to which the United States is a signatory have condemned the U.S. stance, including the brutality of the U.S. government's "war on terror" and the torture of detainees. Still, the Obama administration has undertaken no legal action against Mr. Cheney.

Bob Strayer opened the group's initial meeting with a quote from Colonel Wilkinson, who was Colin Powell's chief of staff during Powell's term as Secretary of State in the Bush/Cheney administration and now teaches Public Policy at College of William and Mary. His recent broadcast, speaks of Cheney's actions as "morally reprehensible."

"Cheney has said over and over that torture techniques are effective, when all the evidence shows the exact opposite," Wilkinson said. "Depravity" is a fitting term, since its legal meaning is "a total indifference to serious harm that occurs to innocent people as a result of one's conduct."

Early in the Bush administration, Cheney disseminated the lie of Saddam Hussein's "weapons of mass destruction" that led to the U.S. invasion of Iraq. More recently, the Senate Intelligence Committee's damning Torture Report showed that the former vice president lied when he claimed torture secured the intelligence that nailed Osama bin Laden. The lie became "fact" with the release of the film "Zero Dark Thirty." Mr. Cheney dismissed the Torture Report with comments like, "I'd do it again in a minute."

In stark contrast stands US Justice Robert Jackson's statement at the Nuremberg Trials: "No grievances or policies will justify resort to aggressive war. It is utterly renounced and condemned as an instrument of policy. The same applies to other war crimes as well. The war crimes of one's opponents are no justification for one's own."

Do our leaders refuse to practice what they preach? The Bush/Cheney team, it seems, read the justice's message as "Do as I say, don't do as I do." Already in 2009, the Panetta Report recorded horrid prisoner abuses at Gitmo, and documented as untrue CIA claims of valuable information extracted via torture.

Dr. Adam Henne, Professor of International Studies, said outraged students and faculty protested furiously when a university building was dedicated to Cheney, whom they consider a common criminal.

Nancy Sindelar, retired army Staff Sergeant and contact for Chapter 65 of VeteransforPeace.org, had demonstrated against Cheney on that occasion. “The naming rights to the (Cheney) Center were purchased with a gift of \$3.8 million,” she said. “Previously, the building housed UW’s School of Nursing. The conversion changed a world of caring into one of cynicism.”

In previous demonstration, Veterans for Peace carried a thirty-foot banner with the names of 4,000 GIs who perished in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. “And that doesn’t include the many who died as a result of invisible wounds,” said Sindelar. On that occasion, protesters stationed themselves at a curve on the road to the airport, where Mr. Cheney’s limousine was forced to slow down. A local newspaper reporter took photos but nothing came of any mention in the paper.

A contingent from Laramie’s Wyoming Against Torture traveled to Cheyenne on January 19 to march with the crowd honoring Martin Luther King, Jr. A delegation from the Wind River Indian Reservation honored the throng with its drumming. After that, speakers reminded listeners that the struggle for justice is far from finished, that everyone must pitch in. Sergio Maldonado of the Northern Arapaho tribe of Wyoming spoke movingly of the hardships of Wyoming’s underserved. The Rev. Audette Fulbright of Unitarian Universalist Church of Cheyenne gave her perspective on effecting creative change. Rita Watson, a leading voice in the Cheyenne African American community and Executive Assistant to Wyoming’s newly-elected Superintendent of Schools, welcomed the speakers, state officials, and attendees at the steps of the capitol.

Planners and participants of Wyoming Against Torture have been holding strategy sessions at 6 PM on Mondays at Laramie’s UU Fellowship Hall on 1402 East Gibbon. Sometimes the Cheyenne group participates via Skype. Interested groups or individuals are encouraged to contact Bob Strayer (Laramie) at (307) 742-9809; strayer@q.com or Janet Cunningham (Cheyenne) at (307) 630-4145; jcunningham43@yahoo.com.