

# PSYCHOLOGY OF TORTURE AND TORTURERS

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## **Body**

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JUAN WILLIAMS, host:

This is TALK OF THE NATION. I'm Juan Williams.

Here's a puzzle: How could you, a decent, caring, intelligent soul, possibly approve of torture and could a nice person like you actually torture someone? The answer is yes. Nice, caring people have approved of torture throughout history. Our friends, our neighbors and we ourselves are not only accepting of torture done by the government, but we are easily trained to become people who torture other people.

That is the thesis of a gripping new book, "Unspeakable ***Acts***, Ordinary People: The Dynamics of Torture." Author John Conroy weaves in and out of three cases as he studies the repulsive yet somehow titillating reality of torture. The first story is about torture done by the British ***against*** 342 Catholics suspected of ties to the Irish Republican Army in 1971. The second case occurred in 1982 when a man accused of killing a Chicago police officer is tortured by one of the city's leading police officials. And the third case took place in 1988 when Israeli soldiers tortured Palestinians.

In all the cases, Conroy found that the people who torture others are not monsters. Quite the contrary, in fact. For example, Conroy concluded that the Chicago police commander who tortured the suspect cop killer was a wonderful man, full of humor, wit and intellect. The policeman was the sort of person who Conroy would be glad to have at his family's Fourth of July picnic, for example. The kind of guy who would certainly stop, Conroy said, to help an old lady with a flat tire.

This seems crazy. Most Americans view torture as something that goes on in Idi Amin's Uganda, or Pinochet's Chile. And the popular image of a person who would commit torture is that of a stupid, brutal man. But Conroy argues that torture is a worldwide reality done by nice, educated people. And he notes that the news media in all nations, including America's leading papers and National Public Radio, may do an investigative piece on torture once every few years, but generally they take part in a conspiracy of silence that surrounds the use of torture.

Is Conroy right? Is it really possible that you could torture someone? Or is this an author who is trying to shock people by exaggerating occasional incidents and classifying them wrongly as torture? Our guests today are John Conroy, the author of "Unspeakable ***Acts***, Ordinary People: The Dynamics of Torture," and William F. Schulz, executive director of Amnesty International USA. Amnesty International released its list of torture sites around the world this morning.

If you want to join the conversation, our number here in Washington is 1 (800) 989-8255. That's 1 (800) 989-TALK. Our e-mail address is [totn@npr.org](mailto:totn@npr.org). Please include your name and where you're writing from.

John Conroy, let me start with you by asking: Is it possible that you, John Conroy, could be a ***torturer***?

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Mr. JOHN CONROY (Author, "Unspeakable Acts, Ordinary People: The Dynamics of Torture"): Well, I think that it might have been possible back when I was 18 years old had I been drafted. I was lucky enough to get a high draft number during the Vietnam War and I wasn't drafted. But one of the men I interviewed was someone very much like me who had been drafted back then and he was very smart. He was an enthusiastic recruit who began to lose his enthusiasm after the assassinations of Martin Luther King and Robert Kennedy, but at the same time he carried on and he was posted as an interrogator to Vietnam.

And I imagine myself, an 18-year-old, landing in this foreign place scared and my job is to interrogate. And this fellow whom I describe in the book, who lives outside Detroit, told me that his first interrogation that he witnessed as part of his training was of a major who was interrogating a Viet Cong suspect who had a leg blown off and who was waiting to be evacuated by helicopter. And the major didn't like the answer he was getting and he began poking the man's wounds with his pencil. This act was witnessed by high-ranking officers, doctors, nurses and nobody said boo. This man's argument was that torture was just the milieu. That was how it was done. And I could imagine, having been raised an obedient Catholic, that when I arrived in Vietnam, scared and uncertain, I would believe in whatever leadership was there and might--if they had said, 'Conroy, this is how we do it here.' I might have said, 'Yes, sir.'

WILLIAMS: Well, you describe that the potential torturer is often selected to become part of an elite group. And the elite group could be combating everything from drugs to crime to terrorism to the subversive acts of people who want the country to become Communist. And they, therefore, dehumanize the victim--that the victim is seen as people of a lower class and they become sort of, you know, 'the untouchables' of that society. Is that the way--is that the tactic that's most often used to turn ordinary nice people into those who would administer torture?

Mr. CONROY: Well, I don't think that--I think it's a whole slew of things that help make a torturer and that certainly it's very difficult to torture someone whom you regard as your equal. So I think that is a key component that the person who is the victim is a member of this outgroup, whatever that group might be. In Chicago, I argue that the outgroup is African-Americans with criminal records.

WILLIAMS: And is there any kind of pleasure taken by people who torture other people? Is there any sadistic delight taken in administering the torture?

Mr. CONROY: I'm sure that there are some torturers who might enjoy the power, but several of the ones I interviewed said there was not much feeling about it at all, it was just business. And there was no hard feelings. One of them, Hugo Garcia(ph), a torturer I interviewed from Uruguay, said we had nothing personal against these guys. And a Rhodesian torturer, Bruce Morking(ph), whom I interviewed, said pretty much the same thing. He told me he was in a hurry to get the information because he was part of a--it was a tracking unit in the Rhodesian army and they were trying to find where the guerrillas had gone. They'd pull into a--they'd ride into a village on their horses and he would take out the electrical device, attach the clips to a man's ears and turn the crank. And he couldn't remember a single face or a name. He just needed the information and he was going to get it. Anger wasn't part of the psyche at all. It was just very cold-blooded. I need this information. This is how we get it.

WILLIAMS: Gosh.

William Schulz, you're the executive director of Amnesty International USA, and this very morning you released a list of where you have found torture taking place around the world. How extensive was your finding?

Mr. WILLIAM F. SCHULZ (Executive Director, Amnesty International USA): Well, unfortunately, approximately two-thirds of the countries of the world are places where Amnesty has found evidence of torture and ill-treatment that is tantamount to torture. That has increased by approximately 28 percent in terms of the number of countries that we have documented torture over the last 10 years. So it's a pervasive phenomenon found in every continent and unfortunately, here in the United States as well.

WILLIAMS: And where is it most prevalent? In any one country, as a particularly alarming rate of torture?

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Mr. SCHULZ: Well, because we find it so common throughout the world, it's hard to pick out a particular country. Certainly in China, for example, torture is a regular part of the treatment of prisoners, particularly in Tibet, where electroshock weapons are utilized with some of the young Buddhist monks and nuns there. Electroshock weapons applied to the teeth, the ears, the genitalia. Torture has been documented in Colombia, in Peru, in Turkey, in, of course, Bosnia and Kosovo, Chechnya, very, very common.

WILLIAMS: You say it's growing.

Mr. SCHULZ: It has increased. At least the number of countries in which we found it has increased over the last 10 years. I think, in part, that's because torture is something that in some ways can be hidden. It is not like taking a prisoner of conscience prison--putting a prisoner of conscience in prison. That's usually a public act because there are people who know about it. It's not even the same as executing someone because someone--there is a dead body in most cases. But by torturing someone, that can often happen in a prison, in a back alley, in a police station and very few people need necessarily know about it or the person who is tortured is not always able to prove that they suffered torture. That's particularly true with the popularity--the growing popularity of electroshock weapons that in many cases leave no physical marks or scars on the victim.

WILLIAMS: William Schulz is executive director of Amnesty International USA, and you mention the United States and what kind of torture did you find taking place here in these United States?

Mr. SCHULZ: Well, I might point out that it was not just Amnesty. But just a few weeks ago, the United Nations Committee on Torture criticized the United States for the prevalence of torture or acts that are tantamount to torture here in this country. And I'll just give you a couple quick examples. It is very common these days that those in jails and prisons use metal restraint chairs in terms of punishment of prisoners. These are chairs to which all four limbs are strapped and a person is held in a very uncomfortable arched position, often for extended period of time. There have been at least 11 deaths attributed to this kind of punishment in prison. Electroshock weapons in the form of both stun guns and in the form of a growing popularity, the use of the stun belt which is a device that is wrapped around the waist of a prisoner and can issue a 50,000 volt shock. This is very common--used in federal prisons as well as in state and local jails as well. The use of pepper spray in terms of intentional infliction of pain through pepper spray, not just to control people but to actually punish them by swabbing it in the eyes, for example, which is, of course, an extraordinarily painful burning sensation. This has been documented here in the United States. Those are just a few examples, Juan.

WILLIAMS: John Conroy, I wanted to ask you about research that was done by Stanley Milgram back in 1960--he was a Yale psychologist--that showed, I believe, that ordinary people can, if they are told to, readily become torturers and start to administer extraordinary shocks to people that they don't know even when those people are screaming, 'Please, stop it. I don't want to be part of this experiment. I'm in pain. Let me out of here.' Does that experiment by Milgram still hold up?

Mr. CONROY: Well, I think it does and I say this because it's been duplicated in other countries and also in the United States. The gist of the experiment was that a group of volunteers were recruited and brought to the testing site and were told they were taking part in an experiment on the effects of punishment on learning. And they were told that when this other volunteer here answers a question wrong, you will flip the switch and give him an electric shock and the shocks started at very mild, 15 volts, and proceeded down a long scale to 450 volts, above which it's a dangerous severe shock.

And the volunteer who was being shocked was actually not being shocked at all--he was in league with the experimenters--but gave out very realistic screams throughout. And 62 percent of the people in the model experiment--there were variations of it--but 62 percent were willing to go all the way to the end of the scale as long as there was somebody there in authority saying the experiment must continue.

WILLIAMS: They were also told that the victim had a heart condition, weren't they?

Mr. CONROY: Yes. At one point, the--Milgram was so surprised at the level of obedience that he started to insert various clauses and he'd change what was happening from the volunteer's perspective so that initially their--I don't

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think there were any screams, but the screams got worse and worse and at one point, there was a--he had the person yelling that he had a heart condition. And that was relatively early on. I think that was in the 160-volt range that people started to complain and scream and yell to get out of it.

WILLIAMS: Mr. Schulz, very briefly, I only have about 30 seconds. How would you define torture?

Mr. SCHULZ: Well, torture is ill-treatment of an extended nature which causes extreme pain. The official definition usually is that it has to be administered by some kind of official, a person in some kind of official status. But it certainly has to be extensive and ongoing.

WILLIAMS: We're going to take a short break right now. You're listening to TALK OF THE NATION. I'm Juan Williams. When we return, we'll be talking with someone who has firsthand knowledge of what it's like to a victim of torture and we'll begin taking your calls at (800) 989-8255. You can also e-mail us at [totn@npr.org](mailto:totn@npr.org).

At 21 minutes past the hour, it's TALK OF THE NATION from NPR News.

(Soundbite of music)

WILLIAMS: Welcome back to TALK OF THE NATION. I'm Juan Williams.

Today we're talking about the dynamics of torture. Joining me now from Belfast, Ireland, is Jim Auld, who was tortured by British intelligence forces in 1971.

Mr. Auld, thanks for joining us. I wanted...

Mr. JIM AULD (Victim of Torture by British Government): OK.

WILLIAMS: I wanted to ask you what are the so-called five techniques of torture?

Mr. AULD: Well, the five techniques that they used on me were isolation, particular noise that was sent through my head. There was a hood put over my head. I was made to stand in a particular position and I was deprived of food and sleep.

WILLIAMS: And how long did this continue for?

Mr. AULD: Nine days and nights.

WILLIAMS: What did they want you to tell them?

Mr. AULD: Well, they thought that I had information about the IRA. I was--at that stage, I was a 20-year-old living in west Belfast. In the early '70s, there was--as most people would probably be aware, there was widespread unrest in Belfast. And they...

WILLIAMS: And...

Mr. AULD: They picked up--the British authorities picked up something like three and a half hundred people. And out of those three and a half hundred people, they picked out 12 to undergo a particular technique, which was known as interrogation in depth or--and using sensory deprivation techniques...

WILLIAMS: Did...

Mr. AULD: ...to try and elicit information that they thought that those people had.

WILLIAMS: Could you see the person who was torturing you?

Mr. AULD: **No**. Well, from the very first day and hour that I was brought into the interrogation center, a hood was placed over my head. I was stripped naked and I was taken away in a helicopter. When the helicopter landed, I

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was taken out of the helicopter--I was kicked out of the helicopter, run against a metal bar that I couldn't see because of the hood on and I was severely beaten by what I assumed was RUC officers and British soldiers. I was brought into a building and put against a wall and made to stand back from the wall, leaning against the wall with my fingertips just touching the wall. So the weight of my body was on my fingertips. And I was left there.

After a short period of time standing in the one position, I became--hands became numb. And I tried to move them. As soon as I moved them, I was attacked again with batons and I was knocked unconscious with them. When I woke up, I was put back up on the wall and it was made plain by movement of other people's hands against mine that I had to stay there. And that continued until I couldn't stand at all. And when I fell, I was beaten again. And I was beaten unconscious again. And that was just repeated.

At that stage, I wasn't aware particularly of the annoyance of a sound that was going through the room. It was later identified as a white noise. The noise after a period of time went from one of annoyance to one of taking over your head, taking over control. It was very much there. It was there buried at the front of your mind. You couldn't think of anything at all except the noise. And that just went on until I defecated. I urinated where I was and I was beaten again. After four deaths, they sat me down and lifted the hood up off my mouth to the bottom of my nose and they gave me a slice of bread and a mouthful of water. And I was put back up onto the wall again.

At that stage, they started taking me down from the wall and asking me questions. And the question was--first question was, 'Do you know anybody in the IRA?' And when I told them no, I was dragged out, beaten again and put up on the wall. And so it was. It went on and the impression was that you better start talking or you're going back into the room with a knife.

WILLIAMS: Well, was this technique effective? In fact, did you know people in the IRA who you could have told them about?

Mr. AULD: Well, I told them a couple of well-known IRA men, like Joe Carroll(ph) and Sean McSteffen(ph) at the time. But they were the only ones who I knew were in the IRA. Of course, there were other people around the area, around the same age as me, but--who people had suspected of being in the IRA. However, I'm still alive. If the IRA, at that stage, knew that anybody had told information about them, the dilemma was that you would have been shot as an informer. So they--contrary to what the British government have since said publicly, that they got information and they got lots of information from the people that were interrogated in depth, there was very, very little information that anybody there could have given.

WILLIAMS: Did you want to die?

Mr. AULD: Yes, I did. I attempted to kill myself while I was on the wall. At one stage I said to myself, 'There is no way a government in this hemisphere could allow this to take place and allow for that information to be got out to the world.' And I resolved the opinion that they were going to kill me anyway. So I thought that the easiest option for me was to kill myself, to save me suffering any. I mean, after a few times falling, I was well aware of a two-inch, three-inch pipe running along the bottom of the floor. And I attempted to hit my head on that hoping that I would break my neck. In fact, at one stage when that happened and all I did was hurt my head, but I cried when I couldn't kill myself.

WILLIAMS: Hmm. Let me ask, did you ever meet any of your torturers later?

Mr. AULD: No. No, but we are aware of--I had met one of them prior to going away on the helicopter. He's a well-known special branch man called Harry Taylor(ph). He's retired now. And before he retired, he was given a medal for what he did, for services to the RUC.

WILLIAMS: Were you allowed to go to court and sue?

Mr. AULD: Yes, we were. They were--the British government were found guilty of inhuman and degrading treatment on me. The court found that they weren't guilty of torture because the people who were carrying it out didn't get any pleasure from it. But I can assure you, it didn't make any difference to me. It was still painful.

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WILLIAMS: Well, wait a second here. That was the criteria, that they had to get pleasure from it.

Mr. AULD: Yes.

WILLIAMS: As in they had to be sadistic or take some sexual delight in it.

Mr. AULD: Yes. And because they didn't, it wasn't torture. It was only inhuman and degrading treatment.

WILLIAMS: Goodness. Now how do you feel about that man whose name I forget at the moment. You just said he was honored for what he did there.

Mr. AULD: Well, I can't forgive any human being and I have a difficulty at accepting that one human being can do that to another. And I've listened to just a part of what was said by John Conroy, just before I started speaking, and I accept what it is that he's saying. But me, as a human being, have difficulty accepting that one human being can carry out those acts on another human being without having some sort of psychological difficulty.

WILLIAMS: Now has that experience continued to have impact on you or your family?

Mr. AULD: Yes, it has. Of course, it has, up until the present day. This is probably the first time that I've spoken about this publicly, and I can tell you, it's not a comfortable situation for me.

WILLIAMS: Why?

Mr. AULD: Because I'm sitting here and I'm sweating, thinking about it. The water's running down my head. I'm feeling very, very uncomfortable at the thought of talking about it, because it is bringing it to the front of my head.

WILLIAMS: Well, at the same time, don't you have a sense that all of us really are in sympathy with you, that what happened to you was wrong, that, in fact, we hope that this is an example to the world so it won't happen again?

Mr. AULD: It's been happening--certainly in Ireland it's happening on a very regular basis. The British government, through its forces, through the British army and through the RUC, are continually inflicting torture on people. They're not using the same techniques, but I can assure you, they are continually inflicting torture on people.

WILLIAMS: And...

Mr. AULD: So it doesn't do me any good knowing that people in America are aware of it. I just know that my community are suffering at the hands of it.

WILLIAMS: You mean you think it continues?

Mr. AULD: Yes. Oh, undoubtedly it continues.

WILLIAMS: Well, give me some evidence of that. Why would you say that it continues?

Mr. AULD: Well, Robert Hamill is a young Catholic from Lurgan(ph) four years ago who was systematically beaten by a group of loyalists 50 yards from four policemen in a Land Rover who allowed it to take place, and they kicked him to death. Those people were never--there was one of them charged and found not guilty. The four policemen were never prosecuted and are still serving within the RUC.

WILLIAMS: Jim Auld, I wanted to ask if--when you finally were released, what did your family do? Who came to get you?

Mr. AULD: I was really--when I was released, I was released into the hands of a psychiatrist and sent to an asylum.

WILLIAMS: Got sent to an asylum, you say?

Mr. AULD: Yeah.

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WILLIAMS: What is that?

Mr. AULD: Well, it's a mental hospital.

WILLIAMS: Oh. And the psychiatrist then became your friend and supporter.

Mr. AULD: Yeah.

WILLIAMS: And did you get to see a doctor?

Mr. AULD: Well, it was the psychiatrist that brought me from prison, because after I got out of the torture place, where we--incidentally, we still don't know where it was. They won't release those details at all. But after we were brought out of the torture chamber, I was in prison for nine months without charge. I was never--I've never been in a court in my life. I've never been found guilty of any charge. But I was held for nine months and then released. And I was released for two months, and then I was arrested again and put back in prison for another nine months because my court case was coming up through the civil courts, and when my claim was coming through--on the day my claim was coming through, they reinterned me for another nine months.

WILLIAMS: Jim Auld, I wanted to thank you personally for coming on TALK OF THE NATION today. I know how difficult this has been for you, and I just want to again express my thanks, because I think it's so important that the world hear your story.

Mr. AULD: My pleasure.

WILLIAMS: That was Jim Auld, who joined us from Belfast, Ireland. He was tortured by British intelligence forces in 1971.

My guests for the rest of the hour are John Conroy, author of "Unspeakable Acts, Ordinary People: The Dynamics of Torture," and William F. Schulz, executive director of Amnesty International USA. If you want to join the conversation, our number here is 1 (800) 989-8255. That's 1 (800) 989-TALK.

William Schulz, when you hear that kind of story, does it seem representative to you of what takes place in torture around the world?

Mr. SCHULZ: Oh, yes, indeed. It's a very realistic story. I have absolutely no doubt that what Mr. Auld described happened to him, and indeed, it has happened to many other people. I think it is important to point out that not all torture, however, takes place for the purpose of securing information, as was apparently the case here.

There is a certain amount of torture that takes place simply to send a message to other people, or simply as a form of punishment of the individuals involved. The examples of that include instances in which the individual him or herself has not been tortured, but is aware of the fact that a loved one is being tortured in the next room, for example. And that is designed to send a message, not necessarily to get information. We have a recent report out of Chechnya just yesterday of a filtration camp, a prisoner camp, in which individuals are being tortured not for the purpose of getting information, but simply in order to send a message to some of the so-called rebels in Chechnya that their rebellion needs to stop.

WILLIAMS: I want to remind everyone who's tuned in that they're listening to TALK OF THE NATION from NPR News.

John Conroy, I wanted to come to you. Now that situation in Northern Ireland is one of the examples that you wrote about in your book, and I wanted to ask you if, in fact, what we heard from Mr. Auld is typical of what happened to the 342 Catholics who were suspected of IRA affiliation.

Mr. CONROY: Oh, in the book I state that 342 Catholics were arrested in this internment sweep. That means that they were interned without charge on an indefinite basis with no right of appeal. But that doesn't mean that all 342 were tortured in that precise way. They chose a dozen of those 342 of this initial sweep--they later did it to two

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other men--and it was those dozen men who--11 of them were with Jim Auld in that room. No one knows exactly why these 12 were chosen. They seemed to have been chosen on a geographical basis. There were three men from each of the four brigade areas in Northern Ireland--excuse me--and that was about the only way, the only sort of common denominator. There were members of the IRA there; there were people there who had nothing to do with the IRA, like Jim. And they all got the same treatment at the same time, same techniques.

In some ways, I argue, they are like a control group. It's very difficult to find a group of individuals who were tortured using the same techniques at the same time, same socioeconomic group, like these men. And so I think that they're a fair example of--if you look at what's happened in the last 20 years.

WILLIAMS: John Conroy, we have an e-mail here from Eileen in Lawrence, Massachusetts, who wants you to think about why there are so few cases of women acting as torturers. Is that, in fact, true?

Mr. CONROY: I think that it is true that women are not usually torturers. I would argue that it is because of lack of equal opportunity in military and police forces, who generally carry out the torture. I haven't seen any--the Milgram experiment, for instance, found equal rates of obedience between men and women. And one of the torturers I interviewed, Hugo Garcia, said there were women in his unit. There were two women torturers, and one of the sergeant's main job was to make sure that the men did not soften up when they were interrogating a woman, that they went as hard on her as they did on men. So I don't think that it's that women are not capable of it; I think that they are--but if there's someone out there who can correct me, I'm open to hearing their argument.

WILLIAMS: Now in Kosovo and in eastern Europe, we've heard recently of the use of rape as a weapon of war. Is that classified as torture?

Mr. CONROY: I certainly would classify it as torture.

WILLIAMS: William Schulz?

Mr. SCHULZ: Yes, indeed.

WILLIAMS: And it's intended to, just as the rest of torture, intimidate and send a signal, but it does so with such damage even across the generations.

Mr. SCHULZ: I think all torture damages across the generations. And there are some various studies that bear this out. Rape is a particularly awful one, and I don't want to diminish that, but somebody who is tortured who goes back and lives with their family, their families suffer. And I can recall a study of children of Chilean victims who all had--a huge majority of them had all sorts of problems.

WILLIAMS: We're going to take a short break right now. You're listening to TALK OF THE NATION. I'm Juan Williams. My guests are John Conroy and William F. Schulz. When we return we'll continue talking about torture and whether it's possible to hold torturers accountable, and we'll take more of your calls at (800) 989-8255.

(Soundbite of music)

WILLIAMS: At 40 minutes past the hour, it's TALK OF THE NATION from NPR News.

(Announcements)

WILLIAMS: Welcome back to TALK OF THE NATION. I'm Juan Williams.

Today we're talking about torture and how victims can seek redress from society. My guests are John Conroy, author of "Unspeakable Acts, Ordinary People: The Dynamics of Torture," and William F. Schulz, executive director of Amnesty International USA. If you want to join the conversation, please do. Call us at 1 (800) 989-8255. That's (800) 989-TALK.

Let's go to Ray in San Francisco. Ray, you're on TALK OF THE NATION.



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RAY (Caller): Good. I wanted to--as an aside, I think somebody once observed that the system of torture operates in such a way that the methodology of delivering torture is that you recruit people to deliver that torture. So the way you torture people is by recruiting torturers. I wanted to ask a specific...

WILLIAMS: Wait a second, Ray. I didn't understand it. I mean, you just pull--you recruit them in some special way, you're saying, or...

RAY: Well, it's--the whole system of torture is--as you may notice, if you try to discuss it, as we are trying to do now, it's a little bit slippery. We know that we despise it, but when we go about trying to define what it is that torture consists in, one of the observations that we do make is that it's rarely delivered by people who are, quote, unquote, "free agents." Usually a torturer is working for somebody. And the system of torture itself is initiated in the process of recruiting a torturer to be just that, a torturer to torture somebody else. And I think your guest touched on this earlier on in the hour.

WILLIAMS: Well, let me see if William Schulz agrees.

Mr. SCHULZ: Well, I'm not sure exactly what our caller is saying, but it certainly is true that you can train someone to be a torturer. I think some of the most important points that John makes here is that you can often take people who are not inclined to be torturers and, largely through abusing them in various ways, through various kinds of physical insult and attack on them, can enrage them, can teach them to dehumanize others as they may feel that they have been dehumanized themselves in that training. And I think we even see this in our own training of police and military here in this country, to the extent to which some of that is engaged with a very kind of brutal, dehumanizing kind of interaction. So that is certainly true, that you can train people to be torturers.

RAY: Right. And the other thing I wanted to know...

WILLIAMS: Ray, was that what you're saying?

RAY: ...would be how to protect ourselves or our children or other loved ones, not only from being tortured but from being recruited to this very system. But I wanted to ask you a question, specifically, to both of you. How is it that we can literally define the system of torture in such a way that it doesn't include the delivery of--say, the meting out of punishment? In the meting out of capital punishment, wouldn't you say that it's very hard to distinguish between the meting out of capital punishment and the torturing of that individual who is going to be eventually put on some sort of restricted incarceration and gradually moved up the pipeline to be executed?

WILLIAMS: Ray, thanks for your call. John Conroy?

Mr. CONROY: Well, this is probably a better one for William. But I would say that it's easy to get into a semantical argument about what is torture; is the death penalty torture? Well, the death penalty is abhorrent. Whether it's torture or not depends, of course, on how it's administered and, you know, what research has been done on the lethal injection and what kind of pain might be caused by the lethal injection or the lethal injection badly administered, or of course, the Florida electric chair is certainly torture. So, you know, to me--you know, I don't see a whole lot of point in spending a whole lot of time on this argument.

WILLIAMS: All right.

Mr. CONROY: William?

Mr. SCHULZ: Well, I will say that one of the great paradoxes, I think, of our society is that, at least officially, we would find ourselves expressing great horror at almost any kind of physical torture, but we find little horror expressed, at least by the majority of people, at executions. And that really is paradoxical. The old 'eye for an eye, tooth for a tooth' argument, which is so common in this respect, is taken apart. If you ask ourselves, 'Well, if we really believe in that, would the punishment of rape be to rape the rapist in return? If the murderer plucked out someone's eye, would we pluck out his or her eye before executing them?' Of course, not. Those are things that we regard as inhumane, as uncivilized. But when it comes to the extreme form of execution, we find ourselves somehow able to rationalize that.

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WILLIAMS: But let me just say, isn't it the case that, ideally, when we execute someone we think we've found them guilty of a horrific crime? Someone who's just being tortured may be guilty of nothing.

Mr. SCHULZ: Of course, but my point is that someone who is guilty of rape, we would certainly not agree should be raped in return as punishment. We would find that a form of inhumane behavior. But we don't find execution inhumane.

WILLIAMS: John, you were snickering.

Mr. CONROY: Well, that's because I don't think that because we execute someone that necessarily means they weren't innocent, either. You know, the state of Illinois is a grand example of how close we have come to executing innocent people. I think we've executed 12 and let 12 go who were very close to being strapped on that gurney. And so I--and the Chicago Tribune has just done a very fine series on executions in the state of Texas raising severe doubts about the guilt of some of the people who've been executed down there.

WILLIAMS: Let's go to Rob in Columbus, Ohio. Rob, you're on TALK OF THE NATION.

ROB (Caller): Yes. I would like you to talk about some of the more subliminal or sinister psychological torture that occurs in groups or corporations. For instance, I was affiliated with a company that hired temporary workers, and when I stood up for better treatment of them, a lot of psychological what I consider to be torture was applied to me, such as searching my locker, lot of insults; uniforms stopped--made to wear temporary uniforms, things of that nature. And I think this occurs pretty widespread all across the country. And it just amazes me, you know--or it really doesn't amaze me--that civilized people, once they're part of a group, and in order to protect their current status quo, will go to these means in order to persuade or dissuade people from conflicting with their beliefs.

And later on, if something then is changed, such as the Mandela case, where he was tortured for a while because he believed in certain things and later he was released and then uplifted because of his beliefs--I guess I'm asking, when groups apply torture because they don't want to change the status quo, how can you convince them otherwise?

WILLIAMS: All right. Thanks for your call, Rob. Would that classify in your mind as torture, William Schulz?

Mr. SCHULZ: Well, I am not really prepared to comment on this kind of behavior within a corporate context. That's not something that Amnesty studies. But I will say that there certainly are many subtle forms of torture. We think of torture as excruciating physical agony, but certainly we have documented many examples--and John does in his book--of psychological torture of various different kinds. One of the most horrific, for example, comes from Afghanistan. Before the Taliban took over--and they, God knows, are bad enough--the mujahedeen used to simply tie individuals to corpses. They didn't inflict direct physical pain upon them; they simply tied them to corpses and left them tied to a dead body for days on end. So there certainly are ways in which torture can be inflicted, even if it isn't in the form of outright physical punishment.

WILLIAMS: John in North Tonawanda, New York, you're on TALK OF THE NATION.

JOHN (Caller): Oh, thank you, Juan. Great show.

WILLIAMS: Thank you.

JOHN: My question--I see torture or those who torture as a result of people who are either obsessed or have been brainwashed by some sort of ideology. And I'm just questioning whether people who are susceptible to that kind of brainwashing are, indeed, normal or ordinary at all, or perhaps just look so--just appear to be normal. But I'd like to believe that there's a subset of every society who simply are not capable of this kind of behavior, and I'd like your comment on that.

WILLIAMS: Well, wait. Who do you think is not capable of becoming a torturer?

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JOHN: People who have proven--for example, I took issue with the comment about women arising, you know, in society and not becoming torturers. It could be that women have suffered enough and can get their needs met by other means. It could be that there are people who have proven themselves to have risen above this kind of behavior.

WILLIAMS: Well, John Conroy, would you agree that, in fact, there are certain groups of people who could never be torturers?

Mr. CONROY: I don't know that I would classify certain groups of people; I'm sure there are individuals who could not be torturers, but if you look at the membership of the Einsatzgruppen--I probably mispronounced that, but the group of men who carried out the assassinations of Jews in Eastern Europe, in those ranks there were the Protestant ministers, the opera singers, academics, civil servants. There's a wide range of people who, given the opportunity, have committed torture and execution. And so I would argue that, no, I can't say that ministers will not engage in torture. I can't say that, you know, this particular religion is less likely to engage in torture. I don't--maybe William can; I don't know.

WILLIAMS: All right. Well, let me just remind everyone that they're listening to TALK OF THE NATION from NPR News.

John, are we the only species that engages in torture?

Mr. CONROY: That's a question that I've never studied. I'm sorry, Juan, but I can't give you that answer.

WILLIAMS: Let's take a call now from Amy in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Amy, you're on TALK OF THE NATION.

AMY (Caller): Hi. Thanks for taking my call. I was hoping to find out if the inclusion of the School of the Americas that is in the United States, funded by the United States government or military, was found out to be training officers from other countries in this hemisphere in various things, including torture. And I wondered if that was covered in either of these books.

WILLIAMS: Well, John Conroy's the author of the book; William Schulz is director of Amnesty International. Let me ask you both, have you come in contact with this School of the Americas that was training military personnel?

Mr. SCHULZ: Yes, indeed. There's certainly no question but what in the past, at least, the School of the Americas did train in various different types of torture techniques. In fact, it was revealed a year or so ago that there was a torture manual that was, indeed, part of the curriculum there. I'm not prepared to say that that is still the case. We're certainly assured by those who run the School of the Americas that it's not, but there's no question that it has been in the past.

WILLIAMS: All right. Let's go to Bernie in Portland, Oregon. Bernie, you're on TALK OF THE NATION.

BERNIE (Caller): Yes. Good afternoon. Thank you. I wondered if you'd heard anything about Con Son Island in Vietnam.

WILLIAMS: John Conroy?

Mr. CONROY: I don't know anything about it.

BERNIE: The tiger cages?

Mr. CONROY: Oh, torture of American prisoners? Yes, I have. Yes.

BERNIE: No, no, it was South Vietnamese who imprisoned South Vietnamese, their own people, in the tiger cages in Con Son Island, about 125 miles off the coast from Vunkow(ph). My ship took a bunch of people over there once, and I was just so upset I was just livid. Young children and women, old men, they chained them in our tank

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deck. It was a most horrible trip for those people overnight, going out to that island. And then they were thrown into the tiger cages. Senator...

WILLIAMS: What's a tiger cage, Bernie?

BERNIE: Pardon me?

WILLIAMS: What was a tiger cage?

BERNIE: A tiger cage is just a pit; the French built the prison in the '40s or the '50s; I don't know exactly when. But it's a pit that has just bars over the top. So anything that goes out has to go out through the top, even your own body, if you make it. And Senator Harland(ph) of Iowa--I think it's Harland...

WILLIAMS: We only have a few seconds left, Bernie.

BERNIE: I know that. And John Anderson--they found out about it. And I just wondered if your guests had heard about the tiger cages.

WILLIAMS: All right. Thanks for your call, Bernie. It doesn't sound like either of you have.

Mr. CONROY: Well, I've certainly heard about it, but I've not studied it.

WILLIAMS: William Schulz, where do we go from here? How can Americans take a stand to stop torture, not only in this country, but worldwide?

Mr. SCHULZ: Well, the fundamental issue is accountability, and whether that be through creating international structures, such as an international criminal court before which people who torture can be brought to justice, whether it be supporting international efforts such as that taken with regard to Pinochet, or whether it be holding our own police and prison officers to account, that really is the secret.

WILLIAMS: All right. That's all the time we have for today. I'd like to thank all of you who called this hour, especially my guests: John Conroy, author of "Unspeakable Acts, Ordinary People: The Dynamics of Torture"--he joined us from member station WBEZ in Chicago; and William F. Schulz, executive director of Amnesty International USA. He was here with me in Washington.

Earlier we spoke with Jim Auld, an Irish victim of torture by the British in 1971. He joined us from his home in Belfast, Ireland.

In Washington, I'm Juan Williams, NPR News.

## Classification

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