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Did Christopher Hitchens change his mind about waterboarding? by Isaac King

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Summary: The article examines the narrative surrounding Christopher Hitchens' views on waterboarding and torture. Initially, it's widely believed that Hitchens supported waterboarding, claiming it wasn't torture until he personally experienced it in 2008, after which he vehemently opposed it. Supporters and critics of Hitchens leverage this story to exemplify his intellectual honesty or self-centeredness, respectively. However, the author challenges the accuracy of this narrative, noting a lack of substantial evidence indicating that Hitchens genuinely thought waterboarding wasn't torture prior to his experience. The article highlights the complexities of public discourse around torture in the post-9/11 era, during which many public figures debated the acceptability of practices like waterboarding without firsthand experience. Despite extensive search efforts for earlier written statements from Hitchens supporting waterboarding, the evidence is scant. The author contemplates various articles and seeks confirmation from acquaintances of Hitchens, ultimately noting that Malcolm Nance, who spoke with Hitchens, suggests he did initially support torture before changing his stance. In conclusion, while the story of Hitchens' transformation is popular, its veracity remains ambiguous due to insufficient sources corroborating his pre-experience beliefs, although inference points toward the likelihood of its truth.