

What It's Like To Be Waterboarded By "Scylla"

So much talk of waterboarding, so much controversy. But what is it really? How bad?

To determine the answer, I knew I had to try it.

I figure I would be a good test subject. I am incredibly fit and am training for a 100-mile endurance run. The main thing about such an event is ability to tolerate pain. I am good at this. I am trained.

I also have experience with free-diving from my college days. I once held my breath for four minutes and two seconds. Once, while training as a lifeguard, I swam laps without breathing until I passed out, so that I could know my limits.

So, here's what I would do. First, I would google "waterboarding" to understand the basic concepts, than I would try it on myself. First, self-inflicted and then, if necessary, inflicted by my wife. (She has no problem torturing me. We've been married almost 15 years.)

These are the results of my research and experience:

The goal of waterboarding is to simulate drowning without the actual drowning or inhalation into the lungs. In order to accomplish this, the subject is forced to lie on an inclined plane with his head lower than his lungs, and then water is dumped onto his/her face (always keeping the lungs above the "water line"). This simulates drowning and causes a panic.

There are some advanced techniques that make this more extreme, but that's the basic concept.

Easy enough to duplicate. I have an inclined weight bench and a watering can. No problem. I lie on this and tilt the water can to pour water on my mouth and nose. Water goes up my nose causing me to gag and choke and splutter, but after a try or two I'm able to suppress my reflex, relax, breathe in shallowly, and then expel rapidly (shooting out the water) and maintain my composure. This is not too bad. With my diving experience, you would never break me this way.

Back to researching the advanced techniques:

The first of these is wet rag in mouth. I try it. Ok, I can handle this too. It makes it a little bit more difficult to maintain control. I didn't realize it, but the first

time around I was selectively breathing through either mouth or nose, to help maintain control. The wet rag eliminates the mouth as an option. You have to really concentrate to maintain control, breathing very shallowly on the inhale and not allowing yourself to exhale until you have a good lungful with which to expel the water in your nose, throat and sinuses. Then, you have to inhale slowly but fast enough to pull in a lungful of air before your nose, throat and sinuses fill up. Difficult, but doable with some self-control. I can see where this would get very unpleasant if you lost control, but still, not terrible, not torture per se in my book.

Once your lungs are empty and collapsed and they start to draw fluid, it is simply all over. You know you are dead and it's too late.

Next up is saran wrap. The idea is that you wrap saran wrap around the mouth in several layers, and poke a hole in the mouth area, and then waterboard away. I didn't really see how this was an improvement on the rag technique, and so far I would categorize waterboarding as simply unpleasant rather than torture, but I've come this far so I might as well go on.

It took me ten minutes to recover my senses once I tried this. I was shuddering in a corner, convinced I narrowly escaped killing myself.

Here's what happened:

The water fills the hole in the saran wrap so that there is either water or vacuum in your mouth. The water pours into your sinuses and throat. You struggle to expel water periodically by building enough pressure in your lungs. But with the saran wrap, each time I expelled water, I was able to draw in less air. Finally, the lungs can no longer expel water, and you begin to draw it up into

your respiratory tract.

It seems that there is a point that is hardwired in us. When we draw water into our respiratory tract to this point, we are no longer in control. All hell breaks loose. Instinct tells us we are dying.

I have never been more panicked in my whole life. Once your lungs are empty and collapsed and they start to draw fluid, it is simply all over. You *know* you are dead and it's too late. Total panic.

There is absolutely nothing you can do about it. It would be like telling you not to blink while I stuck a hot needle in your eye.

At the time my lungs emptied and I began to draw water, I would have sold my children to escape. There was no choice, or chance, and willpower was not involved.

I never felt anything like it, and this was self-inflicted with a watering can, where I was in total control and never in any danger.

And I understood.

Waterboarding gets you to the point where you draw water up your respiratory tract, triggering the drowning reflex. Once that happens, it's all over. No question.

Some may go easy without a rag, some may need a rag, some may need saran wrap.

I didn't allow anybody else to try it on me. Inconceivable. I know I only got the barest taste of what it's about since I was in control, and not restrained and controlling the flow of water.

So, is it torture?

I'll put it this way. If I had the choice of being waterboarded by a third party or having my fingers smashed one at a time by a sledgehammer, I'd take the fingers, no question.

It's horrible, terrible, inhuman torture. I can hardly imagine worse. I'd prefer permanent damage and disability to experiencing it again. I'd give up anything, say anything, do anything.

The Spanish Inquisition knew this. It was one of their favorite methods.

It's torture. No question. Terrible, terrible torture. To experience it and understand it and then do it to another human being is to leave the realm of sanity and humanity forever. **CP**

This account was posted by "Scylla" on "The Straight Dope" website on December 21, 2007.

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farmers and farms. The number of hog farms has dropped from 64,500 in 1980 to 10,500 in 2000, though the number of hogs has increased by about 5 million.

Hog production is a factory operation these days, largely controlled by two major conglomerations: Tyson Foods and Smithfield Farms. Hogs are raised in stifling feedlots of concrete, corrugated iron and wire, housing 15,000 to 20,000 animals in a single building. Hog factories are the concentration camps of American agriculture, the filthy abattoirs of our hidden system of meat production.

Pig factories are the foulest operations in American agriculture. A single hog excretes nearly 3 gallons of waste per day, or 2.5 times the average human's daily total. A 6,000-sow hog factory will generate approximately 50 tons of raw manure a day. An operation of the size of Premium Standard Farms in northern Missouri, with more than 2 million pigs and sows, will generate five times as much sewage as the entire city of Indianapolis. But hog farms aren't required to treat the waste. Generally, the stream of fecal waste is simply sluiced into giant holding lagoons, where it can spill into creeks or leach into ground water. Increasingly, hog operations are disposing of their manure by spraying it on fields as fertilizer, with vile consequences for the environment and the general ambience of the neighborhood.

Over the past quarter century, Indiana hog farms were responsible for 201 animal waste spills, wiping out more than 750,000 fish. These hog-growing factories contribute more excrement spills than any other industry.

It's not just creeks and rivers that are getting flooded with pig shit. A recent study by the EPA found that more than 13 per cent of the domestic drinking-water wells in the Midwest contain unsafe levels of nitrates, attributable to manure from hog feedlots. Another study found that groundwater beneath fields which have been sprayed with hog manure contained five times as much nitrates as is considered safe for humans. Such nitrate-leaden water has been linked to spontaneous abortions and "blue baby" syndrome.

A typical hog operation these days is Pohlmann Farms in Montgomery County, Indiana. This giant facility once confined 35,000 hogs. The owner, Klaus Pohlmann, is a German, whose father, Anton, ran

the biggest egg factory in Europe, until numerous convictions for animal cruelty and environmental violations led to him being banned from ever again operating an animal enterprise in Germany.

Like father, like son. Pohlmann, the pig factory owner, has racked up an impressive rap sheet in Indiana. In 2002, Pohlmann was cited for dumping 50,000 gallons of hog excrement into the creek, killing more than 3,000 fish. He was fined \$230,000 for the fish kill. But that was far from the first incident. From 1979 to 2003, Pohlmann has been cited nine times for hog manure spills into Little Sugar Creek. The state Department of Natural Resources estimates that his operation alone has killed more than 70,000

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fish.

Pohlmann was arrested for drunk driving a couple of years ago, while he was careening his way to meet with state officials who were investigating yet another spill. It was his sixth arrest for drunk driving. Faced with mounting fines and possible jail time, Pohlmann offered his farm for sale. It was bought by National Pork Producers, Inc., an Iowa-based conglomerate, with its own history of environmental crimes. And the beat goes on.

My grandfather's farm is now a shopping mall. The black soil, milled to such fine fertility by the Wisconsin glaciation, now buried under a black sea of asphalt. The old Boatenwright pig farm is now a quick lube, servicing SUVs.

America is being ground apart from the inside, by heartless bankers, and insatiable conglomerates. We are a hollow nation, a poisonous shell of our former selves. CP

Born Under a Bad Sky, Jeffrey St Clair's collection of essays about the American environment, from which this piece is drawn, will be published by CounterPunch Books in the early spring.

"Free Trade" Rejected: Africa Says No – and Means It

By Ignacio Ramonet

The unimaginable has happened, to the displeasure of arrogant Europe. Africa, thought to be so poor that it would agree to anything, has said No in rebellious pride. No to the straitjacket of the Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs), No to the complete liberalization of trade, No to the latest manifestations of the colonial pact.

It happened in December, at the second EU-Africa summit in Lisbon, where the main objective was to force the African countries to sign new trade agreements by December 31, 2007, in accordance with the Cotonou Convention of 2000, winding up the 1975 Lomé accords. Under these, goods from former colonies in Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific are imported into the European Union more or less duty-free, except for products such as sugar, meat and bananas that are a problem for European pro-

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