

Our Darkest Days Are Here

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If you were going to make a list of the great times in American history, you'd start with the day in 1492, when Columbus got here.

The Revolution when we won our independence would be on the list.

Beating Hitler.

Putting Americans on the moon.

We've had a lot of great days.

Our darkest days up until now have been things like presidential assassinations, the stock market crash in 1929, Pearl Harbor, and 9-11, of course.

The day the world learned that American soldiers had tortured Iraqi prisoners belongs high on the list of worst things that ever happened to our country. It's a black mark that will be in the history books in a hundred languages for as long as there are history books. I hate to think of it.

The image of one bad young woman with a naked man on a leash did more to damage America's reputation than all the good things we've done over the years ever helped our reputation.

What were the secrets they were trying to get from captured Iraqis? What important information did that poor devil on the leash have that he wouldn't have given to anyone in exchange for a crust of bread or a sip of water?

Where were your officers? If someone told you to do it, tell us who told you. If your officers were told - we should know who told them.

One general said our guards were "untrained." Well, untrained at what? Being human beings? Did the man who chopped off Nicholas Berg's head do it because he was untrained?

The guards who tortured prisoners are faced with a year in prison. Well, great. A year for destroying our reputation as decent people.

I don't want them in prison, anyway. We shouldn't have to feed them. Take away their right to call themselves American - that's what I'd do. You aren't one of us. Get out. We don't want you. Find yourself another country or a desert island somewhere. If the order came from someone higher up, take him with you.

In the history of the world, several great civilizations that seemed immortal have deteriorated and died. I don't want to seem dramatic tonight, but I've lived a long while, and for the first time in my life, I have this faint, faraway fear that it could happen to us here in America as it happened to the Greek and Roman civilizations.

Too many Americans don't understand what we have here, or how to keep it. I worry for my grandchildren, my great-grandchildren. I want them to have what I've had, and I sense it slipping away.