



American Methods: Torture and the Logic of Domination

Kristian Williams

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When the Abu Ghraib prison scandal broke in April 2004, many American commentators expressed shock. But, as *The Progressive's* Anne-Marie Cusac observed, "Abu Ghraib shock[s] us because our soldiers abroad seem to have acted out behaviors that we condone, yet don't face up to, at home." On the heels of *Our Enemies in Blue*, Kristian Williams' controversial chronicle of policing, the writer/activist gives us *American Methods*, once again upsetting the notion that the use of "excessive force" by the state is aberrant rather than altogether American.

American Methods reveals torture not as a recent or rogue phenomenon, but a veteran tool of the American state. As Williams suggests, torture is not, as claimed, a means of interrogation used only by others, elsewhere. Instead, it is a tried-and-true weapon of social control and terror, right here in the US.

Unlike other recent books, *American Methods* locates "war on terror" scandals in the systems of inequities and dominance that nurture them. Williams pays close attention to the distinct character of American torture and its gender and racial contours—particularly its emphasis on sexual violence, emasculation, and spectacle. His discussion ranges over much of the globe and a quarter-century: from US support of torture-regimes in Central America in the 1980s to today's more favored approach—outsourcing torture to "friendly governments." Returning to our shores, Williams observes the banality of violence in American prisons, precincts, and society. Ultimately, he offers devastating conclusions about the centrality of rape, racism, and conquest to both the state and our national culture.

Kristian Williams' writings have appeared in *CounterPunch*, *Columbia Journalism Review*, and *We Are Everywhere: The Irresistible Rise of Global Anti-Capitalism*. A member of Rose City Copwatch in Portland, Oregon, Williams also authored *Our Enemies in Blue* (2004).

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