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# Savage, indeed... USA

**RADIO TALK SHOW**  
personality Michael Savage, host of 'The Savage Nation,' has been reported as saying he believes that Arabs and Muslims are 'nonhumans' and has called for the United States to "kill thousands of Iraqi prisoners and nuke a random Arab capital".

There is, I believe, a link, however indirect, between these sentiments, which create a climate of opinion in the United States, and the scandal of the prison abuse emerging from places like Abu Ghraib in Iraq. A correlation exists between the barbarous acts at Abu Ghraib and the climate of hate and violence against Muslims that has been created in the last few years in the United States.

The correlation has been either missed or ignored because of the need for a damage-control strategy. It is far easier, for example, to deal with an exploding story like Abu Ghraib by saying that Lynndie England and her six or seven colleagues who were involved in the acts were simply an aberration. The assumption is that no decent American would ever be doing these things.

For others, especially abroad, Lynndie England is now the poster girl for the prison abuse scandal — sex, videotape, prurient sadism, racial hatred and violence. However, it is becoming clear that not only were there many more soldiers involved in these cases but that the links in the chain went up much higher. The press now speculates that this may just be the tip of the iceberg. Stories are already circulating from other camps, including those in Afghanistan and Guantanamo Bay.

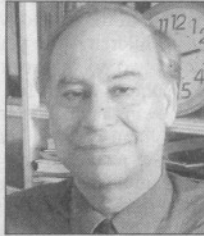
Even before September 11, a climate of hostility and intimidation had been building against Muslims in the United States. Hollywood films and media commentators were depicting Muslims — especially Arabs — negatively as extremist or violent and intrinsically hostile to the US. After that terrible and tragic day the hatred and violence grew dramatically. Since the war in Iraq it has become even worse.

According to the Council for American Islamic Relations, attacks on Muslim girls wearing the hijab, on mosques and on Muslims generally have spiked dramatically. The graph seems to be moving upwards in a dramatic and dangerous manner. The signs are there for all to see.

It is time for the correlation between the actions of Lynndie England and the climate that created them to be recognised. In order for us to understand the climate let us look more closely at the words of wisdom of Michael Savage, a popular radio show host, a man who has some 6 million listeners.

What is important to note in some of his pearls of wisdom is that he is neither alone in expressing these sen-

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**AKBAR S AHMED**

*The social and cultural climate in the US is becoming unpleasantly aggressive towards Muslims and it is linked to the actions of Americans in positions of authority*

timents nor even remotely aware of what he is doing to make the world a more dangerous place. Rush Limbaugh insisted that what happened in Abu Ghraib was a harmless prank. Sen. James Inhofe, R-Okla., insisted the prisoners got what they deserved. So Michael Savage is not alone.

Savage dismissed the treatment of the prisoners. "These are tough interrogations?" Savage asked. "My father put me through tougher interrogations when I was 16!" He then went on to argue that Lynndie was the poster girl for the war on terrorism and she embodied the idea that kicking Muslim ass can be fun.

But behind Savage's ideas of sexual fun are serious ones of death and destruction: "I don't give a damn if they hide behind their women's skirts... wipe the women out with them! Because it is our women who got killed on 9/11! And it's our women who are gonna get killed tomorrow unless we get rid of the bugs who are destroying us!" Savage said he fantasised of being woken up by the sound of B1 and B52 bombers flying overhead on their way to bomb the Arabs in their homes in the Middle East. He confessed that when he imagined these bombers at 4 am, "It's better than an orgasm — It is an orgasm!"

Savage touched upon President Bush's arguments about caring for Muslim hearts and minds. To him being gentle in dealing with the Muslim world had nothing to do with winning hearts and minds. The relationship between America and the Muslim world had to be an expression of power. And it did not matter what anyone thought about it. Savage successfully creates a climate in his audience and when he asks "Does anyone in this crowd care a [expletive] about the Iraqis?" the answer is invariably a roaring "NO!"

So if we accept the fact that the social and cultural climate in the US is becoming unpleasantly aggressive towards Muslims and being linked to the actions of Americans in positions of authority then we have to raise several questions: Where will this incitement to hatred and violence lead? Do people listening to Savage understand his is only one aspect of America?

Are those who believe in the ideas of George Washington, Thomas Jefferson and Benjamin Franklin also out there defending their corner? Are people like Lynndie England aware of the grand and noble ideas of the American founding fathers?

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