



(Notice that the headline says the opposite of what I meant!)

**James Flori**

My Turn

# History of Arabs gives explanation of Saddam's rule

Since last August, we have heard a great deal about the Arab obsession with humiliation. Many analysts have accepted the idea that Arabs have a long history of humiliation at the hands of the West. The three examples usually given are: the post-World War I partition of the Ottoman empire; the Israeli occupation of Arab lands; and the Crusades. No one would argue that these were the high point of Arab history, but how could they spawn a psychology of humiliation deep enough to cause otherwise sensible Arabs to throw their support to a man like Saddam Hussein?

History has humiliated everyone at some point, and the Arabs have fared no worse than average. With regard to the Ottoman partition, in which Western powers established national borders in the Middle East, the Arab experience has been shared by virtually the entire Third World. As for the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza, there is nothing new about foreign occupation in any region of the world, or in any period. The Crusades were, if anything, a humiliation for the West.

Compare the experience of the Arabs over the past two centuries with humiliations suffered over the same period by the Russians, Chinese, Jews, or the Irish. Look at the humiliation of black people, in and out of Africa, or of the native Indians of the Americas, or in India. Korea was humiliated by Japanese occupation, and the Japanese were humiliated by America's occupation. America was humiliated by Vietnam, Iran and Lebanon.

Now it is Iraq's turn. To be crushed militarily by a foreign power is certainly humiliating, but is not Iraq's great shame. It is nothing compared to the disgrace of having supported Saddam Hussein. Arabs who feel ashamed to have been beaten on the battlefield are missing the point. There is much less dishonor in saying, "A super power kicked our behind" than in admitting, "We support the man who attacked Iran, who fought eight years for no gain, who used poison gas on Moslems, who invaded Kuwait, butchered women and children, launched random missile attacks on the cities of a non-belligerent nation, picked a fight with the entire world and finally destroyed his own country."

Some Arabs have tried to extract a sense of victory out of Iraq's self-destruction. They say the Iraqi war aim was not the retention of Kuwait, but avoidance of humiliation. By placing itself in the path of utter ruin, Iraq stood tall and "gained face."

Much of Saddam's support within Iraq for this line of reasoning was coerced. But much of Saddam's support was freely given. It was freely given by those in Jordan, Palestine, Algeria, Yemen and elsewhere, who still see this man as a hero. For any Arab to place his confidence in such a man is to impose on himself a much blacker humiliation than Western bombs could ever inflict.

Many Arabs know that Saddam Hussein is a criminal and a fool. And yet, simply because he was perceived to be strong, Saddam was allowed to carry the standard of those Arabs whose greatest fear was to be humiliated by the West. In exchange for their support of this tyrant, the ultimate humiliation is now theirs, and it is entirely self-inflicted.

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# Shadow of racism

## L.A. police chief fostered violent bent

Try this. Slam a sofa cushion with a baseball bat. Now do it 55 more times. Is your arm weary? Three Los Angeles officers administered to their victim at least 56 blows with clubs, hard enough to cause fillings to fly from his teeth, fracturing his eye socket, smashing his cheek bone, causing a skull concussion and facial nerve damage and breaking a leg. He suffered burns from an electric stun gun and damage to internal organs. He will never fully recover and may have brain damage.

Daryl Gates, Los Angeles Police Chief, says he is distressed. What distresses others is that he is still chief. Apparently the principle of accountability, never strong in American government, has all but disappeared.

Gates can be called The Eight Million Dollar Man. Just in the last year that sum has been awarded to victims of Los Angeles police misconduct. There will be two commas in the sum awarded to the man whose savage beating by some of Gates' men was recorded by a citizen with a video camera.

After almost committing homicide, but before they knew they had been filmed, Gates' officers compounded their criminality by filing a report filled with lies. They said the victim had been driving 115 mph in his Hyundai. The manufacturer says that car can't go that fast. The officers wrote that they used force to stop the victim from fighting. Witnesses and the camera say that the victim was passive while being clubbed and stomped for two minutes by the three officers as 12 other officers watched.

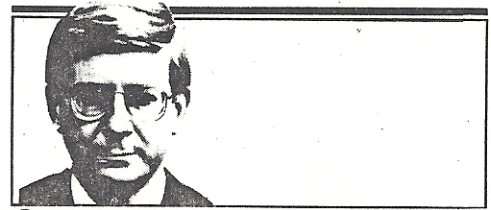
So Gates "apologized." Sort of. "In spite of the fact that (the victim) is on parole and a convicted robber, I'd be glad to apologize."

"In spite of"? Gates' ugly intimation is that a police mini-riot is at least a little bit justified if the victim has a bad enough past.

Gates once said that perhaps the reason several blacks have died after being subdued by police choke holds is that blacks are more vulnerable than "normal" people to such holds. (Twenty-seven people have died after such holds during Gates' 13-year tenure.)

Gates' department is demonstrably guilty of an intolerable level of abuse, much of it resulting from racism. He sees no racial aspect to the videotaped beating. But when three white men club and stomp a black man while a dozen other white men watch, well, people will talk.

They did when Jamaal Wilkes, who is black and a former star with the Lakers, was handcuffed because his auto registration was about to expire. Joe Morgan, who is



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black and a Hall of Fame second baseman, was thrown to the ground and handcuffed when cops decided he looked like a drug dealer. Later the cops said "oops!" and a court said: Pay Mr. Morgan \$540,000.

How many beatings and other indignities are being suffered by Los Angeles citizens who are neither famous nor fortunate enough to have their experience of police misconduct videotaped? The burden now rests on the police department to disprove the assumption shared by 54 percent of all L.A. residents, that blacks are particularly subjected to brutality.

Gates has long been a special pin-up of the kind of conservatives who cotton to primitivism, as in his thought that casual drug users should be shot. But he is a special problem for thoughtful conservatives who are having a hard enough time convincing Congress to expand some police powers.

Every policeman present at the scene of that police crime should, at a minimum, be fired. Some, probably most, perhaps all, should go to jail. And what of Gates, who is paid \$168,793, to produce a police force better than his Los Angeles department is?

Police work is frequently dangerous and even more often unpleasant. It can be desensitizing and demoralizing. It requires special strength of character to do this indispensable work without succumbing to callousness, disgust and rage.

Most police officers lead lives of heroic resistance to these weaknesses. Minimizing those weaknesses is a test of police leadership. Gates has failed that test too often. His department is illustrating an iron law operating throughout American government and business: When there is no penalty for failure, failures proliferate.

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