

Jimmy Carter the Unredeemed

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There are no references in this article, because everything here can be easily verified by a simple google search. (For example search on "carter east timor" and follow the sources you trust). The facts stated below, most of which are shocking and unreported in the U.S., constitute pretty uncontroversial history and can easily be validated. So for those who care, you will find the truth.

The establishment version of history tells us that Jimmy Carter was the "human rights president". He even has a Nobel Peace Prize to back that up. This reputation is almost universally accepted - across the political spectrum. The right-wing mantra in fact is that Carter was one of the worst presidents of all time because he was basically a sissy who put his idealistic beliefs in pacifism before the security of the country.

However there are people who, for whatever reason, have come to learn some facts about Carter's presidency that are difficult to come to terms with in light of his human rights legacy. For example, there is his role in the massacre of over 100,000 East Timorese who were killed for trying to achieve status as an independent country. Up until 1975 East Timor was a Portuguese colony. Once Portugal finally pulled out the people reasonably expected they would be left alone to go about their business and to determine their own destiny. They weren't trying to do anything outrageous except to forge a functioning democracy and raise their standards of living beyond what they had been subjected to from centuries of colonization. They just wanted what the rest of us have.

But the U.S. never tolerates ex-colonies going independent. So President Ford gave Indonesia the green light for the military invasion and annexation of East Timor. Indonesia literally came to us and asked for permission to invade. Why would they ask us first? Because Indonesia was already firmly in our pocket after our 1964 coup d'état when we replaced their democratically elected progressive and popular leader Sukarno with our hand-picked puppet dictator Suharto. That coup did not go over well with the population, so in order to maintain control they had to carry out one of the biggest genocides of all time with upwards of 2.5 million civilians "disappeared" in a short period of time. Anybody identified as progressive and potentially influential was executed. And United States intelligence was vital in drawing up the lists of those people to be eliminated. This happened around the same time as the Pol Pot genocide in Cambodia, just around the corner from Indonesia. However the Indonesian genocide was not considered newsworthy, obviously because we were the ones doing it. Now in all fairness that did not happen on Carter's watch. But a dozen years later Carter, via our bloodthirsty puppet regime in Indonesia, actively partook in one of the worst acts of genocide in history. At some point when Indonesia ran short on bullets, and Carter stepped in with some \$50 million in military assistance to keep the genocide going, there is truly disgusting footage of him signing the bloody order, while grinning ear-to-ear.

Similarly there wasn't a death-squad dictatorship in Central America that wasn't on Carter's payroll. He vehemently supported some of the worst regimes on the planet, all in the name of U.S. business interests. Guatemala and El Salvador are countries where we keep virtual slaves to work on our fruit plantations. The land is almost entirely owned by a few very rich families. If the people organized for labor laws, or for any kind of land reforms, the U.S. would simply have them executed. This is not crazy conspiracy theory, it is very well documented - see for example "Bridge

of Courage" by Jennifer Harbury, a book every American should read. El Salvadoran Catholic priest Oscar Romero wrote to Jimmy Carter personally, imploring him to put a stop to the violence. The only person who could have effectively put a stop to it at the time was Jimmy Carter. But Carter ignored his letter and just a few days later Romero was gunned down with machine guns, in church while preaching at the pulpit - by terrorists most likely trained by the U.S. and most likely on U.S. soil. You'd think that would at least make the news. But no, that was not considered news. The corporate press understands very clearly what is to be news and what isn't. Patrick Leahy even bragged about how he got the press to completely shut up about East Timor when the worst atrocities were happening.

The list of Carter's crimes against humanity is long and sordid. And there are indeed a number of people who are aware of these facts. But almost everybody will tell you that Carter has redeemed himself by the acts of his post-presidency - his work with Habitat for Humanity and Vote Smart, or his election monitoring, for example. Sure some of those may be wonderful things; others are questionable¹. But in no way, shape or form can we redeem a war criminal who oversaw the murder of untold numbers of innocent civilians, women and children, for profit, just because he built some homes and monitored some elections. Do we forgive mafia murders because they also throw some money at charities in their local neighborhoods? Obviously not. So why are we letting Carter off the hook?

The only reasonable way Carter could possibly redeem himself would be to come clean: to admit to exactly what he was responsible for and why. And to teach the entire population how deeply indoctrinated we are that he, a gangster willing to commit genocide for U.S. business interests, could possibly be branded as the human rights president. If people could just understand how out of whack things are, they would learn to be more skeptical of the facade the establishment tries to pass off as reality. Until then, and probably forever, he will always be Jimmy Carter, the unredeemed.

It would probably be instructive to try to understand why people on the far left might want to give Carter a pass on his war crimes and to help seal his legacy as a man of peace and lofty values. It is a natural tendency of people to want to have *something* to believe in. To believe that Carter is an extremely evil human being requires living life in a state of pretty severe cynicism which is not good for your mental and physical health. Perhaps as a defense mechanism most people simply are not willing to cross that line and feel that hopeless? But, if more people would just be honest about this, with themselves and with others, then allowing oneself to play with the truth would not be such a lonely road to travel. And there is also some relief you feel when you stop believing things that require excessive mental gymnastics. Once you give up on those fantasies, it relieves your mind from so much cognitive dissonance that you may find you actually feel better.

If there's a simple moral here, it is that if we allow ourselves to be swayed in our beliefs about politics by an aversion to being cynical, then we can never progress past these disgraceful times to create what should be so much better of a world. Because the sooner we can do away with these pervasive myths that there can even be a human rights president in the Democratic Party², the sooner we can finally replace these guys with people who really do care about humanity.

¹ See <http://fair.org/media-beat-column/jimmy-carter-and-human-rights-behind-the-media-myth/> for example

² See also <http://trueamericanleft.org/articles/sanders.pdf>