TORTURE SURVIVOR ADVOCACY NONPROFITS AND REPRESENTATION ON THE INTERNET: THE CASE OF FREEDOM FROM TORTURE

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ABSTRACT

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This dissertation primarily examines the ways in which images and videos of tortured bodies are used in a neo-liberal socio-economic system. In this dissertation, I examine how the bodies of torture survivors have been used in order to market anti-torture nonprofit websites. In an economically harsh time period, nonprofits are forced (and sometimes encouraged) to act more like corporations. Therefore, their “products” must be advertised similarly to the marketing of corporations in order to gain financial support. In the dissertation, I mainly focus on two nonprofits that are situated in the United States and two in the United Kingdom. I use Freedom from Torture’s website as a base template from which I use to compare and contrast the other sites. Of the four, Freedom from Torture has one of the most affectively powerful websites. Because their website has changed so much over the period of this dissertation, I am able to create a roadmap of their development to help categorize the other websites. I argue that Freedom from Torture creates a diversity of images that are sometimes problematic, but include many images that break the concept of survivor as only victim. Freedom from Torture’s website helps to empower the survivor. Through my observations of their website, I create the Anti-Torture Nonprofit Development Model in order to better understand the representation of clients on these sites. The model consists of three stages that describe how these organizations represent survivors of torture. I argue that all anti-torture nonprofit websites should strive for the third stage of development where the voice of survivors is central. I use this model to examine Freedom from Torture, Redress, Program
for Victims of Torture and Torture Abolition and Survivor Support Coalition

International. I believe that this model will be useful to anti-torture websites and other
nonprofits that are interesting in empowering their clients through positive
representations.
This dissertation is dedicated to Deborah who has been more than supportive through this long journey. I also would like to dedicate this project to my mother, Cynthia, whom I credit for my love of books and my academic achievements. Without her, I never would have made it this far. Finally, I dedicate this journey to the memory of my father. I miss him dearly and wish that he could have been there to see the end of this ride.
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PREFACE

I opened my eyes to the sun coming up over the horizon. Below me are hundreds of homes sprawled out for what seemed like miles. The dwellings are obviously constructed from whatever materials were most easily available at the time. Most are simply built from old wooden pallets (add description from pictures here). Wires run along the desert ground from house to house. Earlier that morning we had walked from the Annunciation’s main building in the village of Anapra to the base of a large sand hill, avoiding both the wires and the packs of feral dogs. We scaled up the mesa in order to catch the sunrise over the mountains. In this area, there are almost 360 degrees of mountains surrounding you. The view above the village is spectacular and yet melancholy as well. We are above the destitute poverty of the area, but we cannot escape its power. I know at this moment that simultaneously I can be a part of the problem and solution. I am somehow connected to the plight of the people. I ask myself “What can I do to change this?” The sun rises, but heavy, dark clouds block it. We find out later that two bodies were found abandoned near where we had been.

In 2005, as an undergraduate at St. Lawrence University, I took a class taught by my advisor, Martha Chew Sanchez, called La Frontera that changed my life forever. The course was built around Gloria Anzaldua’s incredibly influential piece, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The Case of the New Mestiza*. This fundamental text was used to open our eyes to not only the issues of the physical border along the southern portion of the United States, but also the borders created internally within multiple cultures. We took the knowledge learned within the classroom with us as we spent a week in the El Paso/
Juarez border. During my short time there, I lived in a Maquiladora village with several of my peers and interacted with dozens of people who lived and the border. The organization that hosted us was called the Annunciation House, a place whose mission is to serve those in need at the border. “In a Gospel spirit of service and solidarity, we accompany the migrant, homeless, and economically vulnerable peoples of the border region through hospitality, advocacy, and education. We place ourselves among these poor so as to live our faith and transform our understanding of what constitutes more just relationships between peoples, countries, and economies” (“Annunciation House”).

While we were there, our group leader’s emphasis was on the living with the individuals that existed at the border in order to build long-term relationships with the community. While I cannot argue that the people who struggled to live on the border were being tortured, they definitely were suffering because of the economic situation. However, these people still managed to have a vibrant and welcoming culture, even to strangers.

This welcoming environment was especially apparent when we invited to the Voice of the Voiceless award ceremony. Their website explains the award as follows: “Annunciation House’s Voice of the Voiceless Award recognizes the value of these voices that offer a guiding path of light in times of darkness. The Award honors the prophetic voices among us, affirms advocacy on behalf of the poor, and recognizes that such witness often comes at personal risk. Recipients live in solidarity with the poor—they advocate with those whose voices are ignored or overshadowed” (“Voice of The Voiceless”). The award that year was given to Sister Dianna Ortiz, founder of Torture Abolition and Survivors Support Coalition International and now director of Pax Christi. Her inspiring speech planted a seed in my head that would continue to grow for many
years. After returning home, I devoured her autobiography, *The Blindfold's Eyes: My Journey from Torture to Truth*, and was moved by her continued struggle against both the Argentinian and US government in order to receive justice for the atrocities committed against her.

In 2006, I lived with a host family in Hampstead, a posh part of London. Part of my experience and scholarship in England was to intern at an organization for the last month of my stay. Most of my peers ended up going the corporate route working at banks, or businesses, but I was looking for something that had more of a component of service. On the long list of choices in my school’s office, I saw The Medical Foundation for the Care of Victims of Torture. The secretary told me that no one had worked with the organization for some time, but that she still had the site’s contact information. Before I knew it, I had an “interview” lined up.

I woke up incredibly early to head out to tube to take the northern line from Hampstead down one side of the line and then up the other to the Finsbury Park station. Finsbury Park is an incredibly diverse section of London and full of petty crime (at least according to the people I would later work with). When I stepped out of the tube station I was shocked to see that I was in the minority with my white skin. Up until that point, the bulk of my experiences in England had taken place in more affluent, monocultural areas. Growing up and going to college in upstate New York did not offer me many opportunities to be around multiple races and ethnicities. Consequently, Finsbury was probably the most diverse area I had been exposed to.
I wandered down the road until I found the Medical Foundation building. The receptionist let me in and helped me find one of my future supervisors. In the interview, I found that they didn’t really understand what it meant to be an intern (they normally just worked with volunteers), but they would be happy to allow me to work there for a month. Prior to the interview, I had no idea of what my role at the organization was going to be. I was confident that I wouldn’t be working with the survivors directly, but beyond that I had no idea. During the interview I found out that I was to be working in the fundraising department.

My weeks spent at the Medical Foundation were some of the most inspiring of my life. The incredibly diverse staff came from very different backgrounds, but seemed to be all activists for numerous causes. I was welcomed by many people there and ended up researching for several different departments. As my time there progressed, I was given more complex tasks. However, most of my time was spent pulling apart raffle tickets and stuffing envelopes, but while I was performing more trivial tasks, I watched and listened to staff members conducting their more significant work around me. Another interesting, and yet hardly thought of outside of a nonprofit, task that I was given was spending the time to take individuals off the mailing list that had died, or writing apology letters to those families who were still receiving donor requests from the Medical Foundation after their loved one had died.

The one task that I was given that most stands out, even many years later, was when I was asked to find images of white people being tortured. The Medical Foundation had been receiving complaints about not having enough images of white people being tortured. My supervisor asked me to look through their database of images in order to
find white people being tortured. At the time, I felt really torn about the issue because I did not think we were accurately representing the reality of torture. My supervisor was also conflicted about it, but still said we needed to do it. Years later, I began to think about how nonprofits have to deal with the problematic realities of neo-liberal markets. While they may be aware of these issues, they still have to work within these paradigms in order to financially survive. The following dissertation will help to bring some of these issues to the surface through an examination of the political economy of nonprofits and visual analysis of the websites of several anti-torture nonprofits.
INTRODUCTION. TORTURE AND MEDIA

To many western born individuals, torture exists only on the big (and now little) screen. Specifically, in American cinema, there are many examples of films filled with graphic hyper violence. Often, the violence comes from the hands of the “other”. There are countless films of the Middle Eastern terrorist causing havoc for the American protagonists. Torture is often shown as white individuals being tortured by non-whites during war. As a child, I remember staying up to watch *Deerhunter*, a Vietnam War film, on late night television. I distinctly remember being traumatized by the Russian roulette scene. In it, the American military prisoners are forced by the Viet Cong to put revolvers with one round to their own heads. The lucky soldier was the one that received the gun with an empty chamber. The Viet Cong were represented as one-dimensional violent and very inept torturers. In this film, the portrayal of the non-white body is not a positive one. Historically, the non-white body has not been a positive one. Nowadays, we are more surrounded by media than ever before. One opens up their laptop or flicks on their iPad to watch the latest film or television show on demand. In the modern era, films like *Hostel*, *Brave Heart*, *Casino Royale*, and TV shows like *Battlestar Galactica* and *24* that all depict torture in one way or another.

Media portrayals of torture and torture survivors are often problematic and yet they can potentially be the main source of information regarding torture for the public. The issue of torture in the United States and the UK became newsworthy soon after the attacks of September 11th, 2001, especially when it became clear that waterboarding (among other forms of torture) were being used on detainees. As we will see in the following section, torture comes up again and again in the news, but often there are long
periods of time where the issue is not as popular. Most recently, the film *Zero Dark Thirty* was released to some controversy. An article in the Huffington Post by Barry Lando is troubled by the blatant use of torture as an effective interrogation technique by the film. Lando rightfully argues that *Zero Dark Thirty* somehow manages to present itself as an accurate portrayal of the events leading to the assassination of Osama bin Laden. The film’s director, Kathryn Bigelow argues that the film is just a movie and that two and a half hours cannot possibly explain the breadth of a ten-year hunt. However, the film’s marketing obscures facts from fiction. Lando points to a study by Andrew Butler at Washington University at St. Louis where fifty students were given an essay of accurate information about an historical event and then watched a Hollywood film on the same subject with gross inaccuracies. When writing about the event, fifty percent of the students cited the film rather than the accurate information in the document (Lando).

Now, one could argue about the methods in the study, but it does show that there is some kind of correlation between media and the retention of accurate historical knowledge. One could also argue about the inaccuracies of *Zero Dark Thirty*, but for our purposes, I am interested in the debate surrounding torture.

In response to the release of the film, Freedom from Torture wrote a scathing blog review and official statement entitled, “Zero Dark Thirty: Why This Torture Depiction is an Endorsement” and “Zero Dark Thirty: The Unreality of Torture”. In the former, Freedom from Torture argues that the film may not “glamorize” torture in the way that other films have, but it has “normalized” interrogative forms of torture. The film depicts torture as an effective, and regularly used, way of receiving crucial information (“Zero Dark Thirty: Why This Torture Depiction Is an Endorsement”). The latter piece finds
flaws in the film presenting itself as historically accurate while CIA record shows that torture techniques did not help the organization uncover Osama bin Laden. Torture, in the film, is used as a vehicle of entertainment rather than a critique of military operations during the War on Terror. Seemingly, torture is used in the most exceptional of circumstances. As Freedom from Torture states, “The fact that Freedom from Torture continues to receive over 1,500 referrals every year, for people who have survived torture at the hands of torturers in more than 80 countries, shows that all over the world 'the exceptional' has become 'the routine' (“Zero Dark Thirty: The Unreality of Torture”). Torture, therefore, becomes a kind of trope in film to show that those in power sometimes must go over the line (in this case, international law) in order to save the world. Freedom from Torture rightfully argues that this is a myth. A myth that somehow keeps being perpetuated in many mainstream films and television shows. Interestingly, the organization does not discuss the types of bodies that are being interrogated in these media; that they tend to be bodies of color from “undeveloped” nations. So, there are many examples of bodies being tortured in acceptable ways for the pleasure of viewers. Anti-torture nonprofit organizations often respond to these messages because inaccurate or incomplete popular culture can become a basis of knowledge.

While media have some influence on the ways in which Freedom from Torture operates, this dissertation is not about the popular media portrayals of torture. Nor is it about the audience that consumes those images. Instead, this dissertation analyzes the types of images that are created and constructed by torture survivor advocacy organizations. In particular, I focus on the visual growth of Freedom from Torture’s website in order to create a new model of development and test that model by comparing
it to three other similar nonprofits, Redress, Program for Victims of Torture, and Torture Abolition and Survivor Support Coalition International. There are many different types of pressures placed upon these nonprofits. One type of pressure comes from these media portrayals of torture. The organization must produce and construct alternative images and videos in order to portray an alternative and more human face of torture. Another pressure is neo-liberal economic policies that do not encourage state support to nonprofits, even though nonprofits are set up to deal with many issues that the state cannot. The nonprofit is also pressured by the wishes (or at least perceived wishes) of its donors. As in the story above, we can see how important it is to keep the economic base happy. Donor funding is incredibly significant to a nonprofit. With all of these pressures, the organization attempts to maintain its original mission, to help survivors of torture in one way or another. With these pressures in mind, I examine the representations of torture survivors on these organization’s websites. These nonprofits have many roles when it comes to representation of their clients. One role of a torture survivor advocacy organization is to offer a more accurate narrative of torture. While one might argue that there is no one narrative of torture, since it is so specific to the individual case, these groups create spaces for actual survivors of torture to tell their own stories. Another aspect of representation is creating compelling images that attract the gaze of multiple audiences. These compelling images can sometimes, just like any marketing campaign, use problematic schemas and stereotypes that show the survivors as being one-dimensional. Representing a group that has suffered such a traumatic event is difficult. In this dissertation, I highlight the ways in which some websites are growing with more positive and less stereotypical representations.
This dissertation is not meant to be a condemnation of any one torture survivor advocacy group. All of the organizations that are mentioned are doing significant work around the globe. We should all be supporting their efforts to assist those who have suffered such traumatic events. Rather, I focus on their websites in an effort to study their portrayals and representations of their clients to create an alternative roadmap. Some websites better represent their clients in ways that includes their voice and stories while giving them the voice to speak to the world. This dissertation is an effort to study how the tortured body is used to market these nonprofits and offer an alternative schema.

This dissertation primarily examines the ways in which images and videos of tortured bodies are used in a neo-liberal socio-economic system. In this system, we have several major actors: governments, nonprofits, and survivors. Sometimes the goals of these entities are in opposition, especially when it comes to defining torture. However, they all are in an economic system that advocates similar ideologies of consumption. In this dissertation, I examine how the bodies of torture survivors have been used in this system. In an economically harsh time period, nonprofits are forced (and sometimes encouraged) to act more like corporations. Therefore, their “products” must be advertised similarly to the marketing of corporations in order to gain financial support.

Significantly, I first place the nonprofit within a system of corporate westernized media. In order to understand the limited media power of the nonprofit I compare it with the growth of powerful media conglomerates throughout the world. The staging of these online images happens on websites produced by various players including non-profits, torture survivors, governments and so on. Each of these players has specific goals like earning profit, helping survivors, etc. Some of these goals oppose each other in their
messages. The visual spectacle of torture is mobilized for specific goals. I create a roadmap that assists in contextualizing the influences of economics and culture on image creation. In this dissertation, I use the affective theories of Seigworth, Bertlesen and Murphie and others. Essentially, affect theory is useful because it helps us to understand the affective, or emotional, responses we have to images as well as the ways in which those in power try to manipulate those responses. Additionally, I couple this with specific theories within subaltern theory (Ranajit Guha, Gayatri Spivak, and Aradhana Sharma), theories of race (Nakamura), and theories of representation (Alcoff, Clifford). In order to understand the ways in which bodies are being used, we must first contextualize their position. Race, subaltern, and theories of representation/the image all work well together here because they are speaking of the agency of marginalized groups. Specifically, I use Bertlesen and Murphie’s idea of the affective refrain or the power of the repetition of images to understand how subaltern (in a general Spivak sense) images/representations can further stereotypes of the “othered” body. These theories, when used together, can create a matrix to understand the push and pull of representation on all of the actors.

In the dissertation, I mainly focus on two nonprofits that are situated in the United States and two in the United Kingdom. The reason for this is the long and intermixed history of the two countries, especially when it comes to issues of war and torture. I spent some time working for Freedom from Torture (formerly The Medical Foundation for the Care of Victims of Torture) in London, England. Therefore, I have some firsthand experience with the process of representation. Each nonprofit’s focus is on anti-torture activism. Because of my understanding of the work that went into the production of this website, I use Freedom from Torture’s website as a base template which I use to compare
and contrast the other sites. Also, Freedom from Torture has one of the most affectively powerful websites of the three. Because their website has changed so much over the period of this dissertation, I am able to create a roadmap of their development to help categorize the other websites. I argue that Freedom from Torture creates a diversity of images that are sometimes problematic, but include many images that break the concept of survivor as only victim. The scope of this dissertation spans the period from September 11th, 2001 to the present. This is a significant time period because this is when the United States (with the support of the UK) challenged international torture. Also, the US and UK were complicit in their leadership of the use of torturous techniques. In an effort to create a better model for a well-rounded and empowered representation of survivors of torture, I create a model of anti-torture nonprofit website development that I will discuss in later chapters.

The importance of this project is that it explores issues of representation of survivors of torture. I believe that this is just the beginning of much larger project that will include the voices of nonprofits, torture survivors, and donors. However, here I focus on the image/video of torture as it relates to the struggle for financial resources. I hope that this project will allow for both academics and nonprofit workers to further challenge state sponsored torture by using diverse images and videos. The goal of the following section is to contextualize the history of torture and discuss the many pressures that surround the process of representation and to encourage a more symbiotic relationship between producer and participant of nonprofit images. Many different societal and individual pressures shape depictions of torture survivors. Often, these images and/or videos on nonprofit websites are problematic because of their use of stereotypes that
perpetuate myths surrounding the tortured body. However, to place the blame on the nonprofit would be a mistake. In order to combat the problematic nature of images of torture survivors we must examine both the sites of these images and the economic atmosphere that assists in their creation.

A Brief History of Torture and Persuasion

Freedom from Torture (formerly The Medical Foundation for the Care of Victims of Torture) is an organization that has responded to many issues of torture throughout the world since the mid 1980s. It is the only organization in Britain whose sole purpose is to give therapeutic and financial support to those who have survived torture. In order to better understand their mission, one must examine the context of torture in contemporary society. Unfortunately, the scope of torture goes as far back as written history (and probably even further). Ancient societies like the Assyrians, Greeks, and Romans all used severe forms of punishment as well as modern societies like the Chinese, Germans, and Americans. The reality is that most societies have used torture, but for very different reasons. Freedom from Torture exists because of this long history of torture throughout the world. For the purpose of this dissertation I am going to mainly focus on the western and modern view of torture. Specifically, I am interested in how the post 9/11 political landscape has affected the ways in which Freedom from Torture operates. However, I must first work through a web of western history and legality in order to contextualize the ways in which torture affects Freedom from Torture today.

Torture itself is nothing new to the human experience. Torture has been a method used by those in power since well before the beginning of recorded history. One of the most well-known torture regimes was that of the Assyrians in the 8th century BC where
mutilation of victims’ bodies was common. Soldiers would cut off the noses and ears of prisoners in order to gain information. Impalement, where a person was impaled on a stake near their groin and left to die slowly in agony as gravity pulled them down, also was used to torture victims (Mannix 2003). Long before the invention of the penitentiary system, these forms of punishment were used to create a very public warning about the repercussions that came from attempting to fight against a certain government or group. Torture was meant to be as much about the victim as it was about those who might commit a wrongdoing in society. Torture is a very strong symbol. So, here we understand that early torture was both a means to gain information as well as to represent physical punishment. This punishment was not hidden from society because it was such a central part of it. Athens, in which many great ancient western thinkers emerged, was a site of legalized torture. Jennifer Ballengee believes that many aspects of our understanding of torture in western society can be read through ancient texts. In particular, she is interested in the stories of Oedipus Rex and Antigone where the body becomes the site of both legal and political torture. According to her, the body is represented as a site where pain and punishment reflect the beliefs and anxieties of society. So, Oedipus is severely punished for the immorality of citizens. Athenian law is symbolically used in these stories, but they also reflect the actual law of the land during this time period. In Athens, the evidence and testimony of a slave who had been tortured was given more validity than a freeman who was not. Also, the slave was brutally tortured on a regular basis in order to gain the truth. So, the ancient body becomes connected to both pain and truth. The true body must represent and/or suffer through pain in order to be understood in society (Ballengee 54). Importantly, this gives us some insight into the ways in which torture has been
perpetuated in more modern forms. This belief of torture as being a powerful message is still prevalent today.

England had a distinctive relationship with torture during the medieval period. During the long reign of systematic torture in Europe from the 12th century on, England was unique in that it did not condone torture. By the 15th century, English law had removed torture from its legal proceedings. However, this does not mean that torture did not occur in England at all. According to Langbein, systematic torture became important in Europe after the Fourth Council of the Lateran outlawed the use of the ordeals. The ordeals allowed clerics to sentence individuals to death and judge over criminal proceedings. The clerics forced the accused to go through many psychological ordeals to prove their innocence. With the end of this function, Langbein argues that new ways of proof was needed. There was no longer the word of God to fall back on, so the new system included many checks and balances to make sure that the right person was convicted of a crime. Judicial torture was created in order to accurately gather evidence in a criminal case. However, in England, because of the use of a jury system that did not need as much evidence to convict, a system of torture was never implemented. On the other hand, the Tudors were notorious for the use of torture against their enemies (77-82). While there seemingly was a chance for torture to take hold in a systematic way, especially under Queen Elizabeth, it never did because torture was only used under specific cases (139).

In order to discuss torture in contemporary society, we must now move into brief discussion of the effects of World War Two. In 1948, the United Nations drafted and ratified Universal Declaration of Human Rights. After the mass genocide committed by
the Germans against the Jewish people and the many atrocities committed by all sides during the war, it was decided that the issue of human rights must be addressed. The United Nations was created in an effort to bring together many diverse countries under a common belief system. After the failed League of Nations and two world wars, countries throughout the world agreed upon a charter that defined the rights of all humans. Article 5 is most important to our discussion of torture. It states that: "No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment" (United Nations). While this language is up for interpretation (and has been interpreted differently by countries like the United States and Britain) however, it is clearly the beginnings of a universal ban on torture.

Torture was then again directly and legally addressed during the “Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment” or CAT in 1984. The convention was a continuation of the “Declaration on the Protection of All Persons from Being Subjected to Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment” which was written in 1975. The reason for this was that the original definition of torture had been criticized for being not precise enough. The first portion of the document is as follows:

Torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment are particularly serious violations of human rights and, as such, are strictly condemned by international law. Based upon the recognition that such practices are outlawed, the Convention strengthens the existing prohibition by a number of supporting measures. The Convention provides for several forms of international supervision in relation to the observance by States parties of their obligations
under the Convention including the creation of an international supervisory body -
the Committee against Torture - which can consider complaints from a State party
or from or on behalf of individual. (“The Universal Declaration of Human
Rights”)

The United States would sign the document in 1988 and ratified it in 1994 while
the United Kingdom signed it in 1985 and ratified it in 1988. Since its creation, this
document has been used in order to condemn many instances of torture throughout the
world. It is important here to get a working definition of torture. This is a very
contentious issue because while many powerful countries have signed this document, the
way in which it has been interpreted has been very different. In particular, I will later
examine how both the United States and the United Kingdom have twisted the definition
of torture (or at least what counts as torture) in order to conduct their war on terror. The
definition, as created by the convention and adopted by many states is below:

For the purposes of this Convention, the term "torture" means any act by which
severe pain or suffering, whether physical or mental, is intentionally inflicted on a
person for such purposes as obtaining from him or a third person information or a
confession, punishing him for an act he or a third person has committed or is
suspected of having committed, or intimidating or coercing him or a third person,
or for any reason based on discrimination of any kind, when such pain or
suffering is inflicted by or at the instigation of or with the consent or acquiescence
of a public official or other person acting in an official capacity. It does not
include pain or suffering arising only from, inherent in or incidental to lawful
sanctions.2. This article is without prejudice to any international instrument or
national legislation which does or may contain provisions of wider application.

(“Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment”)

As Jeanne Mirer writes, this is an example of *jus cogens* because of its universally accepted nature. However, again, this statute would be used differently or ignored by certain actors. The United States would later argue that during the war on terror, many of the sites of torture were outside of the territory of the US and therefore international laws did not apply. Mirer points out that while this may be the case, U.S. statues still apply to all American activities (Mirer 244). With this in mind, Freedom from Torture was established in an effort to combat issues of torture throughout the world.

During this time period (1985), a woman by the name of Helen Bamber would quit her job at Amnesty International in order to and create Freedom from Torture (formerly The Medical Foundation for the Care of Victims of Torture). I cannot do her justice in this space, but her role in the history of both international torture activism and Freedom from Torture is crucial to the contemporary context of torture activism. Bamber has been an influential figure in many different activist organizations and philanthropy. Bamber was a human rights activist who was also a psychotherapist who had worked with holocaust survivors in Germany in 1945. She helped to create Amnesty International in 1961 and then would spend a great deal of time learning about torture survivors in Chile. After feeling that she could not dedicate enough resources toward torture survivors, she and several others would leave Amnesty in order to create Freedom from Torture (Belton 294). Freedom from Torture has been incredibly important in addressing the aftermath of torture and has even had clashes with the Home Office in terms of
defining torture. As Neil Belton points out, scars can be read differently by different parties. Throughout its history, Freedom from Torture has fought the Home Office (in England) with its more than 500 medical reports a year to determine what in fact counts as torture (318-319). As mentioned earlier, Bamber’s career began with World War Two and has followed many instances throughout the world where torture has been implemented. The history of torture has been crucial to the ways in which the organization has adapted to issues of torture.

With this in mind, I want to move into a discussion of the post-September 11th world of torture because this was a very active time period for popular discussions of torture. With the global wars on “terror” in both Afghanistan and Iraq, torture became much more of a hot topic in popular media and therefore organizations like Freedom from Torture had more of a platform to expound upon their missions. While the Freedom from Torture is based in the United Kingdom, it still has to deal with the many repercussions of American activity with torture. Also, both countries have incredibly linked histories, which have, in many contexts, created a mutual relationship of support.

For the next section, I focus on American laws and actions that have involved torture. The reason for this will become more apparent as we see the connections between the wars on terror in both nations.

The main statute that deals with torture in the United States is a federal law that defines what torture is:

(1) “torture” means an act committed by a person acting under the color of law specifically intended to inflict severe physical or mental pain or suffering (other than pain or suffering incidental to lawful sanctions) upon another person within
his custody or physical control; (2) “severe mental pain or suffering” means the prolonged mental harm caused by or resulting from— (A) the intentional infliction or threatened infliction of severe physical pain or suffering; (B) the administration or application, or threatened administration or application, of mind-altering substances or other procedures calculated to disrupt profoundly the senses or the personality; (C) the threat of imminent death; or (D) the threat that another person will imminently be subjected to death, severe physical pain or suffering, or the administration or application of mind-altering substances or other procedures calculated to disrupt profoundly the senses or personality; and (3) “United States” means the several States of the United States, the District of Columbia, and the commonwealths, territories, and possessions of the United States. (“United States Code”)

This statement is an extension of 8th amendment (a ban on cruel and unusual punishment), which was inspired by the English Bill of Rights from the 1600s. This is an incredibly important document because contemporary American presidents have challenged this amendment (which I will address when I speak of the torture memos). Torture is defined above in very clear terms. However, in recent history, the definition of torture has been challenged. After September 11th, the floodgates were opened by the Bush administration. Torture has been publically addressed in terms of the legality of waterboarding, and the scandals at both Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo Bay. While I do not have the space to go into great detail with all of these issues, I will instead focus on the release of the torture memos and their effect on policy in the United States and abroad.
The torture memos are a set of legal memoranda that were created by Deputy Assistant Attorney General John Yoo in 2002 that advised the CIA, the Department of Defense, and the president on torture techniques being used and their legality. Techniques include waterboarding, sleep deprivation, stress positions, and other mental and physical types of torments. The memos themselves are an interesting exercise of avoidance, in the sense that John Yoo attempted to avoid the stipulations of CAT (Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment from the United Nations). Interestingly enough, the United States has used this argument to condemn other countries, and yet, when it came to their own position, officials deliberately ignored these international laws. Yoo attempts to argue that the CAT only applied to the worst cases of torture. One of the memo states, “In sum, CAT’s text, ratification history and negotiation history confirm that Section 2340A reaches only the most heinous acts” (Cole 68). Another quote shows the unconditional freedom that the president was given, “Even if an interrogation method arguably were to violate Section 2340A, the statute would be unconstitutional if it impermissibly encroached on the President’s constitutional power to conduct a military campaign” (80). And finally, this last quote sums up the broad position of the Bush administration, “Because the acts inflicting torture are extreme, there is a significant range of acts that though they might constitute cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment fail to rise to the level of torture” (99). While these memos were not released until 2009, the position of the Bush administration was very clear during this time period. They argued that many of the aforementioned acts did not fall under the typical definition of torture and the President was above any laws that would hinder his military strength. With the strength of United
States policy against them, Freedom from Torture would have to argue against western state sponsored torture.

During this time period, articles in British newspapers like “Dispatches: Kidnap and Torture American Style” (Stewart) argued that the United Kingdom was using the same sort of torture tactics with Iraqi soldiers. In particular, this article pointed out that after the London bombings, Tony Blair stated that “the rules of the game are changing”, implying that certain laws would no longer apply. At that time it was unclear as to whether or not Blair was allowing for extraordinary rendition of certain criminals to be tortured in other countries. The article has several anecdotes of people who claim to have been put in just that position. However, certain memos were leaked from the foreign secretary’s private office that were meant for the Prime Minister in 2005 that made it clear that British officials were at least aware of the actions of the United States. The memo showed that Britain knew about these actions, and yet did nothing to prevent them or to bring them before international courts (Danchev 594). Danchev also argued that a system of denial of accountability was set into place in order to save higher-level officials within the British government from public scrutiny. In this way, the country was incredibly complicit in these torturous actions and yet could remove themselves from the situation when it was politically necessary. So, Britain has much at stake in the war on terror.

Definition of Torture

Before I continue with the historical context of torture, I want to spend some time working with the many definitions of torture. What is torture? Do the legal definitions of torture do justice to the multiple types of torture that exist? Michael Davis attempts to
grapple with many different types of torture in order to create a workable conception of torture. He begins by arguing that the United Nations definition of torture leaves out a significant portion of the moral argument against torture. Also, he states that its definition conflates mental and physical torture. Many definitions of torture deal with physical tortures or physical outcomes of “mental” tortures. Davis argues that the nature of torture being mental is a moral argument, because all types of torture affect the mental capacities of a living being. He believes that the distinction between physical and mental torture needs to be abandoned and that all torture is mental and physical, however, torture is only one of many ways that people can be mistreated. We must not confuse threats with torture itself, except when the threats are repeated often enough to create a form of torture (31-32). Davis distinguishes between torture and death because of the duration. Torture is meant to last and can last much longer than quick death. He argues that torture needs to be examined as an entire process rather than the specific events. Davis argues that, “We must look (primarily) to the intentions of the torturer, not the effects on the victim, to decide whether the suffering in question is torture (whether ‘torture proper’ or something morally close)” (37). Thus, the torturer position and intention defines whether an act should be considered torturous or not.

Contrarily, David Sussman argues that the act of torture upon the autonomy of the victim is more valuable than the intention of the torturer. He states that, “What the torturer does is to take his victim’s pain, and through it his victim’s body, and make it begin to express the torturer’s will” (21). Literally, the body becomes the vehicle in for the torturer to gain information or to create a public statement. According to Sussman, torture should be defined as pain that is inflicted upon someone who has no way of
protecting themselves. Significantly, the body of the victim of torture becomes the property of someone else (32). While both this definition of victim centered torture and the one of above of torturer centered seem to be conflicting, I argue that in order to contextualize torture and its effects we must look at both sites. Here, I am not interested in creating a definitive definition of torture, but rather to map out the many different facets of torturous acts. It seems that these authors leave out the intentions of those advocates for survivors of torture and how they would define the act. The position of the advocate (or even scholar) also is relevant in the understanding of contemporary conceptions of torture.

**Philosophy of Torture**

The merits of torture have been long argued over by both practitioners and philosophers. Here, I examine some of the contemporary debates about torture and its use today. In a well-known piece by philosopher Henry Shue in 1978, argues that torture is only justified in cases where incredible harm will be wreaked upon a large population. Many scholars have jumped on this line of argument as being a ridiculously unfounded and dangerous claim. While I agree that torture needs to be universally banned, many scholars have missed the important arguments in Shue’s piece. The majority of the article is an attempt to argue against many of the seemingly logical arguments for torture. One of the arguments is that if killing is sometimes allowed during times of war, that torture is less heinous than killing, and therefore should be allowed in certain circumstances. Shue believes that the weakness of this type of argument comes from the idea that the only moral responsibility comes from the amount of harm being committed. While some would argue that justifiable killing is acceptable, this doesn’t mean that only quantifiable
harm can be used to allow for torture. However, he goes on to argue that if one were to change the final premise of the argument to “torture is sometimes morally permissible, provided that it meets whichever standards are satisfied by just-combat killing” (126). With this he examines two types of torture, terroristic; which is dominant form which is used to intimidate without questioning being necessary, and interrogational torture; which is use to gather information. Shue believes that terroristic torture that was used by many regimes, such as under Pinochet in Chile, is completely unjustifiable. However, interrogational torture is different because there is a specific end time built in. Once the information has been received, the torture stops. Shue still argues that this is somewhat problematic because there are so few cases that fall into the category of interrogational torture because it is difficult to measure when there has been just the right amount of torture. Also, those who commit the actual torture may not be inhibited by any of the rules of conduct and therefore take these interrogations beyond what is necessary (134). He argues that for a justified type of terroristic torture to exist, it would have to meet specific criteria. The first, that the purpose of the torture must be morally significant. Second, that it was the least harmful means of obtaining a goal. Finally, the purpose of the torture must be incredibly apparent (139). He contends that there is no real way to create this a model that would not lead to permanent and institutionalized torture. He uses the same formula in order to examine interrogational torture and argues that in extreme cases that it is justified (141). However, Shue seems to be deluded in his thinking that these cases would not lead to the many types of torture that he condemns. Any state sponsored torture opens a dangerous road toward uncontrollable state power. It would be incredibly hazardous if laws were created that opened up legal avenues for the subjective
powers of the state over the bodies of its inhabitants and beyond. When it comes to the legality of torture, the law needs to be explicit. Torture, in any of its forms, should be banned at an international level.

**Media Representations and Political Economy**

With this introduction to western history and discussions of torture, I move toward a discussion of media representations of torture and how these are shaped through the interplay of economic and political hierarchies. In order to properly understand the place of anti-torture organizations, we must first understand its place within media. Political economists have long studied the impact of media concentration on the public. In particular, they focus on how the structure and political economy of media may affect the views of consumers. There is a very long history of the deregulation of media in both the United States and the United Kingdom. Deregulation has allowed corporations to gobble up all of their competition and, in effect, it has limited the diversity of voices. Significantly, deregulation on the American continents comes at the heels of years of American sponsored dictatorships in the Latin American region. By “encouraging” these countries to open their markets up to capitalism, many of the citizens of these states suffered greatly. The political economy of media is not created in some sort of a vacuum where one can only talk about media itself. Modern media conglomerates and neo-liberal economics now go hand in hand. That being said, the nonprofit organization must compete in this field. Historically, nonprofits have often taken up the slack left by governmental organizations and the free market. In fact, as we will later see, nonprofits existed primarily in order to provide for social needs that were not met by these groups. However, one misconception is that the nonprofit is completely separate from these other
types of organizations. The picture of the nonprofit is much more complicated. In fact, one cannot talk about nonprofits as if they all have similar characteristics. Nonprofits’ main similarity is that they use surplus capital to further their goals. That being said, Freedom from Torture can hardly be compared to the American Heart Association or other huge nonprofit organizations. In the non-for profit world, there is a huge spectrum of these groups, especially in terms of annual income. Additionally, some nonprofits are much more closely connected to the government or private enterprises than others. Nonprofits also have differing levels of access to advertising media. However, one issue is clear; media power has primarily centered on the growth of the corporation and its connection to the government.

Before I discuss torture as a media commodity, I must first contextualize the historical power of media in contrast to the position of nonprofits. The plight of the small nonprofit largely deals with getting their message out to as many potential donors as possible. Sometimes, in terms of marketing when the issues are apolitical, large media corporations are more than willing to work with the nonprofit. However, issues of torture are not as attractive as saving starving children in Africa. Also, large media corporations are complicit in producing entertainment that glorifies or decontextualizes issues of torture such as 24. Therefore, it is significant to compare and contrast the political economy of western media with that of nonprofits. In particular, there appears to be a reoccurring relationship between media, government, military, torture and neo-liberal economics. For example, Naomi Klein argues, in The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Global Capitalism, that much of modern day globalized imperialism originates in a kind of shock technique that forced multiple economies to open up to the free market. Several
countries in Latin America simultaneously opened their doors to neoliberalism and dictatorship all while the merits of free market capitalism were continuously being encouraged by mass media. Ruthless dictator Pinochet ran Chile for decades while thousands of individuals were “disappeared”, all the while Chile was depicted as an economic success. I will return to Klein in later chapters, but I now focus on American media might. I focus primarily on the United States in this section as a comparison between the media power of arguably one of the most media saturated states in the world and the much less visible media presence of the small nonprofit. The next section begins with an examination of media power in the United States and then moves into a discussion of the position of the nonprofit and its relation to this system.

**Old/New Media Power**

In order to understand contemporary media, we must first work through the history of media concentration. I examine the American model of media power because it is one that has been used by many other regions of the world. One of the most influential and important American political economy scholars is Herbert Schiller. His work spans much of the growth of modern day media power in the United States. In his seminal piece, *Mass Communications and American Empire*, he explains the growth of the American media system. Interestingly, in his foreword to the second edition in 1992, he emphasizes the fact that while the United States culturally is becoming a hegemonic power, it is losing its ground as an industrial power (3). Schiller is interested in the power and influence of the media on cultures throughout the world. In the re-visioning of his piece, he emphasizes the power and significance of globalization on media. Interestingly, he points to the fall of the Soviet Union as being a threat to independent radio/media that
challenges some of the dominant ideas of the state (18). This, of course, hasn’t been an issue with the growth of global terrorism and new technologies like the Internet. That being said, his original work is still as powerful now as it was when it was first written. Herbert Schiller’s understanding of mass communication is best understood through a history of regulation and control. He specifically points to the connection between military and media.

While the military had long had its hand in communications in the United States, they solidified their control over radio during a time of war. Throughout much of his work, and in many other political economists, we see the reoccurring theme of a burgeoning resistance against media power. He argues that this model still allows for instances of pirated radio. He points out that even Franz Fannon argues that the radio spectrum could be used for rebellion against the dominant groups. Schiller states that, “The U.S. Department of Defense, for instance, regards the potential of the radio spectrum strictly as a military asset, useful in overcoming the very conditions that excited Fanon’s enthusiasm” (110). This military complex to this day, still threatens the public nature of global communication. Also, the growth of private, technology-based companies has occurred through the assistance of the government which allowed huge conglomerates to form unheeded. This system makes it very difficult for any independent media company to survive. He goes on to argue that nonprofit communication has only been an afterthought in this model (190). Schiller is incredibly concerned with the idea of “knowledge conglomerates” and “integrated private informational structures”. However, he does believe that there is some hope. He argues that resistance can come from many different areas, including teachers, universities, and the black social movements of the
time (200). These groups can use media technologies in order to question societal norms and gain agency. While he is optimistic that technologies can help foster independent media, he is concerned that the monopoly over media will exclude many diverse voices. Even in the age of digital information, this is still the case. In many ways, the Internet has become a vehicle that tends to reflect this model. As we can see, from very early on, scholars are incredibly concerned with a media structure that silences marginal media voices.

Media structure is not the only problematic issue with contemporary media. Messages have long been constructed and framed in problematic ways that silences diverse views and opinions. Another influential text that deals with just how older media technologies are controlled through framing is *Manufacturing Consent: the Political Economy of the Mass Media* by Edward Herman and Noam Chomsky. Their main argument for their propaganda model is that media are filtered through specific frames that are controlled by elite groups in the United States. This elitism again hampers the ability for smaller media groups to get their messages out to the world. As we will see later on, torture has been presented in very specific frames that depict marginalized bodies in different ways than dominant ones. Significantly, for this piece, their frames are useful in understanding how media controls what information we receive. The first frame is the concentration of ownerships of mass media firms. This frame deals with the power and influence of a limited number of people who have much influence over the process of media creation. The second frame deals with the issue of advertising as the primary income of the media. This influence is significant because often media outlets will ignore negative issues when it comes to the advertiser or the company that owns that firm.
Thirdly, is the reliance on information from government, business, and experts that receive funding mainly from primary news sources. The fourth frame is the flak that media sources receive. Flak can come from many sources (i.e. letters, phone calls, petitions, etc). Flak is basically any threats of punitive action against a media outlet. It can be incredibly detrimental to the idea of a free press. The last frame is anticommunism, which is the basically a continuous and central attack against “this ultimate evil” (3-31).

The authors argue that:

Contrary to the usual image of an ‘adversary press’ boldly attacking a pitiful executive giant, the media’s lack of interest, investigative zeal, and basic news reporting on the accumulating illegalities of the executive branch have regularly permitted and even encouraged even larger violation of law, whose ultimate exposure when elite interest were threatened is offered as a demonstration of model service ‘on behalf of the polity’. (301)

This is a significant claim for political economists who are interested in the ways that representation of news has been constructed through elitist means. These frameworks are useful in understanding how media control access to certain information. The arguments and theories of Herman and Chomsky continue to be relevant today when examining contemporary media systems. These frames describe the complex pressures that are placed upon global media firms. Also, they help us to analyze how torture and torturers are represented in the media today, especially now that the communism filter has turned into modern terrorism.

Some authors have argued for extreme criticisms of the historical trajectory of modern media systems in the United States and beyond. Robert McChesney is relevant to
the conversation because he offers some solutions to these issues of the concentration of media. First, he argues that everyone should donate to nonprofit media outlets. Secondly, there needs to be a stronger noncommercial public radio and television system that has both local and national stations and networks. Thirdly, networks should be charged for public airways in order to pay for some of these nonprofits. Lastly, antitrust laws need to be established and followed in order to create a diversity of voices (339). Throughout many institutional political economist texts, we see the emphasis on the nonprofit media outlets as being a solution to concentration of media power. The plight of the small nonprofit is expressly understood, and yet it seems to be at the center of many solutions. The main issue to the success to alternative media sources is simply funding. How can one compete with alternative ideologies when fighting against large corporations?

So, many political economists of media argue that there is space for agency against the large corporation, however that the terrain is very bleak. I am not arguing that all nonprofits are completely limited in terms of their voice. In fact, many have a great deal of power and finances for marketing. The issue is that not all nonprofits have equal power. Also, some nonprofit messages are more popular than others. The Red Campaign is and will probably always be more popular than anything Freedom from Torture markets. Why is this? Perhaps it is because supporting torture survivors is not an easy concept to market on cable television. Also, it is important to point out that nonprofits sometimes work within the same kinds of “frames” as large corporations. As nonprofits become more successful and cater to larger number of clients, it is difficult to not fall into the media models of privatized corporations. Nonprofits are under many of the same types of pressures to produce brands and results in order to continue to maintain their
funding. As the next section argues, nonprofits sometimes are forced to act like corporations in order to survive, even though state governments need nonprofits in order to provide services for multiple groups.

**Political Economy of Nonprofits**

Understanding the political economy of nonprofits is crucial in placing their position as organizations in relation to large media conglomerates. In this section I explore these relationships in order to further contextualize the influences upon anti-torture nonprofits and the ways in which they construct images of their clients. Significantly, nonprofits and state governments have an interesting and turbulent relationship. While many nonprofits have to struggle for funding because the state will not provide, the government often needs these organizations to provide services that would not otherwise exist. As we will see, nonprofits tend to be tax exempt and represent a kind of check on the government’s power. However, states and nonprofits are incredibly connected and therefore this check is not always apparent. The next section will first examine the economic theories that attempt to explain the existence of nonprofits and their role within a state. Finally, I focus on the history of nonprofits and philanthropy in western societies.

**Theory of Nonprofits**

There are several theories that attempt to understand the economic role of the nonprofit. The first are called Institutional Failure Theories. The assumption goes that organizations, especially in the United States, focus solely on capital earning. In a purely neo-liberal economic model, the market itself will deal with any issues that arise from the negative consequences of capitalism. Whatever is not provided through the market, will
come from the government through things such as roads, defense, education, etc. Therefore, theories have arisen to explain the role of the nonprofit in this system. The first is that nonprofits produce goods that governments are either incapable or unwilling to create. The second is that often corporations benefit from certain privileges that hamper consumers from accurately being able to determine the quality of a good, which some call a “contract failure”. Therefore, the consumer feels more comfortable purchasing their goods (public radio/television, education, etc) from a nonprofit. Thirdly, many subsidies and tax exceptions have created many incentives for nonprofits to grow. Lastly, some argue that nonprofits have grown out of the desire of greater consumer control over their own products. For example, if someone created an educational nonprofit in an effort to better control the type of education that young people receive. While these issues all deal with types of public goods, they differ greatly. The authors argue that defining categories for nonprofit organization is difficult because they all have many different goals. Also, there is a debate within these theories over whether the failure comes from the government or the market (Hammack and Young 6-7).

These authors also point out that there is a constitutional basis for nonprofits in the United States. The argument is that there were many political reasons why nonprofits were encouraged at the founding of the United States. One component of this is was that after the American Revolution, part of the many checks and balances of a powerful government would be the growth of many new nonprofits that would serve the public. Therefore, many Americans preferred that social and cultural services be provided from alternative sources. In this way, nonprofits were encouraged as a way to create appropriately biased political groups. For example, the church and state would remain
separate, but many nonprofit religious groups could be created in order to represent those people. Also, items within the constitution, such as federalism, allowed for many challenges against a centralized government, which allowed for the growth of nonprofits (9-11).

Smith and Lipsky argue that there needs to be more balance between the public and private sectors in order to serve the citizens today. They state that, “Government priorities and controls increasingly structure the procedures and priorities of nonprofit providers” (206). Therefore, they believe that there needs to a greater balance because now the nonprofits rely too heavily on governments. In this configuration, the nonprofit is basically run by government standards and therefore loses its status as a viable alternative to this system of rule. Also, they argue that the “contracting regime” has created a new type of relationship between government and citizens. Throughout much of the Regan and Bush era, social funding was cut which caused nonprofits to take up some of the social slack. However, because of the nonprofits connection to government funding, it seems that they do not have the ability to offer the same level of services. Some services have seen increases in federal funding, but a level of citizen’s entitlement is not present, meaning that not every citizen is entitled to all of these services. The model has changed because of the homogenous nature of these services.

The authors argue that contracting has also ended any notion of equity within these services. They believe that nonprofits simply can’t provide for all of the social needs of a society. However, contracting is not something that can easily be disrupted. They emphasize a system in which equity and responsiveness is balanced through the use specific criteria and public support. It seems that the authors believe that certain
selectivity within the nonprofits is fine as long as the services are not essential. Also, they argue that issues of geographical inequalities can be disrupted through creating incentives for specific groups to come forward or to create new organizations in undeveloped areas (216-223). While there is some merit in maintaining the contracting system, there are too many possible issues in regard to providing services to everyone that needs them. This system lets the government off the hook for some essential human needs. While working within a capitalistic system may be the most reasonable option, it doesn’t mean that it will be very effective over the long run.

Also, there are many different types of nonprofits that are involved in many different sectors of the economy. According to Berry and Arons, 48 percent of nonprofits in the United States are in Health and Human Services, 12 percent are in education, 12 percent are in Health, 7 percent or in Public Benefit, 4 percent in the Environment, 4 percent in Religion and 13 percent in Other. The one commonality between all of these sectors is that they are all tax exempt (Berry and Arons 5). Therefore, when I talk about “nonprofits”, I actually mean very specific groups that have less access to marketing funds and that focus on providing health services to specialized groups of people.

**History and Modern Understandings of Nonprofits**

The history of western philanthropy is incredibly complex. Some scholars go back to ancient Judaism where charity was seen as a human imperative while others look at Greek life, which the term itself comes from. Wealthy patrons were expected to provide for the city and citizens as part of the natural order of the day. If they failed to do so, there would be incredibly political strife. The Romans also were keen on philanthropy, but sometimes for interesting reasons. While, like the Greeks, there was an emphasis on
giving in society to begin with, some wealthy Romans simply gave back because they either did not trust their family with vast wealth or they wanted to create an immortal vision of themselves through their good deeds. Also, Christianity has shaped the modern formation of western philanthropy by mixing many of the ideas from the previous three. There is some evidence to support that early Christianity even attempted to thwart the charitable ways of Jewish, Greek and Roman giving by creating conflicted modes (Powell and Steinberg 13-20). The point of this short history is to begin to understand the complex foundations in which the nonprofit sector has its origins. Philanthropy itself is very complicated and often stems from diverse reasons. We give for many diverse reasons that often involve issues of power and control.

Nonprofits have a long and complicated history. Without taking too much space to go through this history in the United States, Peter Hall excellently describes many important periods. I just focus on the transitions in the 20th century. I am particularly interested in the idea of welfare capitalism as an alternative to big government and socialism of the early late 1800s and early 1900s. The idea was the creation of social services to employees as well as corporations being involved with charitable organizations. Andrew Carnegie was a strong proponent of this type of capitalism in which offered areas of charitable donations that was outside the control of the federal government. Welfare capitalism created factory towns and focused on the community that surrounded these corporations. Hall argues that this wasn’t necessarily completely philanthropic because it had as much to do about the social nature of workers as well as creating further efficiency (49-51). Interestingly, the average American did originally not support nonprofits. Much of the support for these organizations came from corporations.
During the economic depression of the 1930s, nonprofits were hit hard financially because of this. After this era, the United States moves into what Hall calls “Corporate Liberalism”. He goes on to argue that while many assume that the nonprofit came as a response and alternative to government, the reality is that may policies helped push the growth of nonprofits. Also, there was much controversy around the corruption of tax-exempt organizations. In the late 1960’s Congress would hold several hearings on this subject. The Tax Reform Act of 1969 challenged some of the political activities of tax-exempt groups, but allowed for fines rather than loss of their exemptions. He states that it also “increased the efficiency, accessibility, and accountability of nonprofits” (91). Hall then points to the misconception that the nonprofit sector exists as a separate and independent space outside of both government and the corporate world. With many economic cuts during the Regan years, nonprofits began to falter. The author argues that the nonprofit must be understood in terms of its relation to both private and governmental organizations.

One of the benefits of being a nonprofit is that the organization receives tax-exempt status. Shrivner argues that there are three reasons (albeit simplistic ones that do not cover all of the nuances of the nonprofit world) that nonprofits continue to receive tax except status. The three are heritage, public policy, and special interests. He points to the Tariff Act of 1894 as being one of the first laws passed by Congress that specified which organizations that need to be taxed. While this act would be found unconstitutional, its exception of organizations that were used for charitable, educational, and religious purposes were kept. Shrivner argues that this and subsequent tax laws would encompasses issues of heritage, meaning that it would be following earlier English laws.
Secondly, public policy was significant because these organizations would provide public services for the community in ways that the government failed. Finally, nonprofits were set up to reward special interest groups that had given to the country in the past (Scrivner 127-128). These three reasons seem to be at the heart of many tax laws regarding nonprofits. However, the road has not always been an easy one for these organizations.

Funding is a really significant issue within a nonprofit. Howard P. Tuckman argues that nonprofits have three levels in which they can receive funding. The first is internal funding. Internal funding is crucial because it can be spent and invested relatively easily and one can use these funds as collateral in order to gain further funding. The author found that in a sample of several thousand charitable organizations, over 86 percent of them claimed a surplus of revenues. This surplus can come from investors, endowments, and capital investments. The second level is loans and grants from nonlending institutions. These include individuals, other nonprofits, governments, foundations, and corporations. While these are very important, they are not always guaranteed sources of funding. The last level is capital markets that include banks, insurance companies and pension funds, investment companies, stock issuances, and nonprofit bonds (Tuckman 210-224). I don’t have space here to go in depth with all of these areas; however, I am most interested in the individual sources of investment. This is significant because nonprofits like Freedom from Torture exist almost entirely off of funding that is received through individual donations.

Financial issues are not the only concern of modern nonprofits. Neff and Moss argue that the idea of the community has shifted for the nonprofit. In years past, many nonprofit campaigns focused on the geographical community of their donors. An
organization would hold certain fundraisers that focused on this specific space. The nonprofit would encourage individuals to get their direct community involved with campaigns. Rather than groups of people who are focused on their direct neighborhoods, now individuals were much more likely to be connected to those in the workplace. The authors argue that this dramatic shift didn’t catch on with nonprofits for many years. Essentially, they believe that women eventually joining the workforce changed the ways in which community was formed (Neff and Moss 11-12). I believe that this change was much more complicated. With an economic shift toward a neo-liberal model in the 1970s and 1980s, more and more families couldn’t afford to have only one family member at work. Coupled with issues of deindustrialization and suburbanization, the idea of community for many families radically changed. Individuals became closer to their coworkers because they had to work more in order to provide for their families. Also, with the growth of ever present technology, one is seemingly much more connected to their place of employment than to their next door neighbors. However, the authors here bring up an important point, that in order for nonprofits to succeed, they must be aware and willing to adapt to these changes.

Also, there is much pressure for nonprofits to use new social networking technologies to keep on top of the game. The authors point to one successful campaign that was conducted by The Brooklyn Museum. The museum used the popular program Foursquare, which is geo-location software for computers, cell phones, and tablets. One can post information about specific locations, so that when another individual on the site physically (or through searches) comes across the area, they can find out more information. Many of the staff members added information about the neighborhood
around the museum and eventually so did users. The person who checked in the most at these sites would become the Mayor of the museum and would win a year pass to the real museum (66-67). The authors encourage nonprofits to follow similar paths into the social networking world. However, there really isn’t much discussion in texts like this about the ramifications of this type of work. Who moderates the activity on these sites? Who is in charge of making sure all this information is correct? Should museum officials ask the local community if they want information about the area to be posted on the Internet? It seems that there are many issues like these that arise with the growth of a new technological public sphere that are not always being addressed.

The concept of community is related to the emotions of the donors of nonprofits. Emotions are incredibly important in terms of the nonprofit world. Dollery and Wallis point to Hirschmann as conducting some of the first studies on emotional commitments for NPO’s in the early 1980s. He argued that commitments are “sticky” because of past disappointments. The nature of nonprofit work is not always a successful one. Often campaigns do not work and therefore donors sometimes become dissatisfied. Hirschmann argued that there are several reasons for disappointment. First, that there isn’t much progress toward a specific goal. Second, disappointment arises when donors are encouraged to conform to a group that they are not explicitly connected to. Third, there is a sense of guilt when one does not keep a commitment toward a specific group for whatever reason. Disappointment is relevant to nonprofits because of the financial pressures that these organizations face. If too much disappointment is accumulated, then the nonprofit cannot function. Another significant theory that they point to is the theory of hope by Jon Elster. They reduce his complicated theory into the
concept “that hope is a particular type of action tendency engendered by antecedent beliefs and the investment of emotional energy” (52). In short, hope creates action. Hope, according to the authors, is triggered by both “the advancement of common goals” being possible and worthwhile. Here, they point to the reproduction of emotional energy as being an important aspect of hope.

In examining Collins, they argue that a visible passion comes out of a high level of emotional energy. Interestingly, this high level of emotional energy will either repel or attract people to NPOs. They state that “The capacity of an NPO’s stakeholder to cope with disappointment and sustain their commitments will depend on the degree to which their reserves of emotional energy are reproduced and augmented” (53). Therefore, the nonprofit must be able to mediate these inevitable disappointments in order to sustain themselves with crucial capital from these donors. Collins argues that an ‘energetic afterglow’ is created when participants are encouraged to work with other passionate individuals (54). This feeling eventually dissipates which forces individuals to keep coming back for that energy. The nonprofit must be able to fill the disappointing times with hope in order to create a beneficial relationship with their donors. This is useful in understanding the importance of images of nonprofit websites.

As we will see in later chapters, this kind of emotional pull is significant to the ways in which anti-torture nonprofit organizations market their clients. Nonprofits exist in a complicated world with many pressures. Many have to fight for funding and resources in a system where they are expected to care for individuals who sometimes cannot receive assistance from anywhere else. Anti-torture nonprofits deal with having comparatively little media power in comparison to older systems of corporatized media.
Also, they must compete with images of torture that are prevalent in popular culture.

These nonprofits deal with a global issue that needs to be addressed in global media. These organizations have websites in order to attract donors and clients. Above all else; they must protect and fight for survivors of torture. This dissertation examines online representations of survivors of torture and urges these organizations to continue to assist their clients and to be mindful of just how they represent them. An online space should not depict the survivor of torture as just a victim without any agency. We can understand the horrors of torture and the agency of the survivor through a diversity of images, transparency of the production of these images, interactivity of the website, and allowing the creativity and resolve of the survivors to shine through.

**Organization of Dissertation**

With this, I have examined the history and theory of torture in an attempt to position the politics and context of torture into modern times. I then looked at the position of the large media corporation in contrast with the smaller nonprofit. Here, one can see that, originally, the growth of nonprofits in the United States was as a type of check on government while now some are much more closely linked with the state. The nonprofit is subject to many pressures and these all have some affect on the ways in which they represent their clients on their websites. The next chapter will closely look at theories that will help to contextualize issues related to the image of torture survivors on nonprofit websites.

The first chapter of this dissertation examines several theoretical perspectives that inform the final analysis. Torture survivor advocacy nonprofits have to be visible to the public in order to both encourage new clients to join as well as convince individuals to
donate. The Internet has become a space where many companies and nonprofits focus a large part of their marketing. This relatively new area is a visual medium. In order for nonprofits to stand out, they must create compelling images that affectively pull the viewer into their world. Often, it seems, the goal is to create images that evoke a strong visceral reaction. Nonprofits want their audiences to see torture through the eyes of survivors. So, they produce images and videos of simulated torture and of real torture survivors and actors. Accordingly, this chapter examines affective theories like affective refrains (Bertelsen and Murphie), affective labor (Hardt), and affect as a type of emotional exchange (Brennan). The real affective pull of nonprofit images is questionable (often it seems that we learn to ignore the financial pleas of nonprofits), but most of them have some sort of Internet presence that includes some sort of images. The chapter then moves to a discussion of subaltern studies with its Indian schools of thought with authors like Ranajit Guha, Gayatri Spivak, and Aradhana Sharma. Because of the nature of many survivors coming from marginalized areas of the world, subaltern theories are useful in positioning these survivors who sometimes have little say about how they are represented. Accordingly, the conversation moves to the representation of race on the Internet because the majority of images on survivor websites are of non-white peoples. I examine theories of race in cyberspace with Lisa Nakamura. The chapter ends with a discussion of representation through the eyes of scholars like Linda Alcoff and James Clifford. In examining these spaces, we must always be ready to analyze the significance and danger of representing groups of marginalized individuals.

The second chapter of this dissertation is an examination of the methodology and method of this project. The chapter begins with a look at the growth of visual rhetoric as
a subfield within rhetoric in communication. Often rhetoric is understood as simply a theoretical perspective, but, as many of the authors argue throughout the chapter, it can exist as both theory and method. In this chapter, I examine and critique many visual theories in order to extend them to my work with the visuals of anti-torture nonprofits. I use the concept of “iconic images” by Hariman and Lucaites as a jumping off point for my own work. I argue that some of the same concepts for iconic images are also useful for images of survivors of torture and that there are several flaws in the theory. Also, I use the work of Foss, Peterson, Olson and their understanding of visual rhetorical methods to situate this theory in a larger history of visual rhetoric. The chapter then moves into the work of Marita Gronnolvoll and her work on the rhetoric of torture images. With that, the chapter examines how I use grounded theory and close readings as methodology in this dissertation. The chapter ends with a discussion of a model of anti-torture nonprofit website development with three distinct stages. Each stage represents the building upon of the previous stage. As these websites evolve, the goal is to create a space where torture survivors are not shown as only third world victims. Stage one is the initial creation of the website while stage three is a thoroughly developed website that included many positive representations of torture survivors. The goal is to create a roadmap for current and future nonprofit websites to help them avoid some of the traps of representing their clients in a negative light.

The third chapter of the dissertation examines the older incarnation of Freedom from Torture’s website when the organization was still called The Medical Foundation for the Care of Victims of Torture. At this point, The Medical Foundation website is in the second stage of development. The records for this website no longer exist and so, I
use screen captures that I managed to get before the site was updated and taken off of The Wayback Machine (an Internet Archive). I use this chapter as a model of the second stage of development of anti-torture nonprofits. In this stage, the nonprofit has had a web presence for some time, but it is just starting to use media heavy images and videos on their sites. This stage tends to have many problematic instances of survivors of torture. Accordingly, I use theories of Barbie Zelizer to explain implied instances of torture. I focus mainly on a section of the website entitled, “Speaking Out” where survivors are filmed and asked to give their testimonies. I use the different rhetorical strategies of Jennifer Ballengee, specifically four metaphors of tortured bodies to examine how bodies are used in these testimonies.

The fourth chapter is an examination of the current role of Freedom from Torture. Freedom from Torture completely overhauls its website in an effort to rebrand itself as a global force that fights against torture and assists torture survivors with the process of healing and seeking asylum. Accordingly, I argue that the website has moved into the third stage of development. I use Naomi Klein’s arguments of a global shock doctrine to position Freedom from Torture and their global fight against torture. Also, I highlight the work of Linda Alcoff and her ideas of representation in order to examine the relationship between outcomes and intentions and how it relates to the growth of the website. Freedom from Torture still has some problematic representations, but it also has created a new website that has many alternative visions of survivors of torture. We are encouraged to learn about survivor’s lives and their creative outlets rather than focusing only on the event of torture. Freedom from Torture is a website that is constantly evolving and
pushing the boundaries of representation. While they are not always successful, the website itself has much improved and will hopefully continue to do so into the future. The fifth chapter follows three other anti-torture nonprofit websites that are not as developed as Freedom from Torture. I examine Redress, Program for Victims of Torture, and Torture Abolition and Survivor Support Coalition International. Again I use the concept of the affective refrain (Bertlesen and Murphie) to understand the power of repetition of some of these problematic images of survivors of torture as only victim. I also use Lisa Nakamura’s concept of cybertypes to examine how survivors are further “othered” by these images. As compared to Freedom from Torture, I argue that these websites are in earlier stages of development; often, survivors are shown as lacking all agency. Several of these websites rely too much on images of implied torture rather than focusing on what happens to the survivor after the event. Also, the websites themselves are just not very affectively powerful. The lack of multiple empowered images and interactivity poses issues for their continued online presence. I believe that this can both have harmful effects to the representations of clients and the actual marketing of the websites. As we have seen, torture is a global issue that needs nonprofits that are working on a global level.

The final section of the dissertation consists of my conclusions and where I believe that this project should expand. I argue that empowering representation is difficult when the author of the images is not part of the group being represented. However, this doesn’t mean that the nonprofit is any less responsible for fair depictions of survivors. In general, nonprofits need to add more resources to their online presence in order to market themselves and their clients to an ever more economically turbulent
world. The Internet is a space that is becoming more and more cluttered and in order to stand out of the mess, these nonprofits should represent their clients in affective ways that move beyond the stereotypical. As for the future, the discussion of anti-torture nonprofit websites needs to include the voice of the producers of the images, the staff of the nonprofit and the survivor. It is one thing to examine these websites as a relative outsider and another to talk to the people who are actually creating them. Also, the actual voice of the survivor is a significant part of representation that often gets overlooked. I believe that interviews with these groups would further add to the discussion of representation.
CHAPTER I. THEORY

This chapter deals with three significant theoretical perspectives that will influence the ways in which I examine images and videos on anti-torture websites. The first theory major theory falls within the realm of affective studies. In particular, I use affective refrains through the lens of Lone Bertelsen and Andrew Murphie to emphasize the power and influence of the repetitions of certain images and representations. Similar images of torture survivors, like a darkened cell with hands sticking out of the bars, are used over and over again as a way to show the terrors of torture. I also use the discourses of affective labor with Michael Hardt and Sara Ahmed to show that affect has real, material consequences, especially when dealing with the issue of torture. Torture survivors that are repeatedly depicted as only victims of abuse have to overcome that strong stereotype. With that stereotype in place, torture survivors often have little voice in media.

In order to examine voice, I then discuss a brief history of subaltern studies with a primary focus on the work of Ranajit Guha, Gayatri Spivak, and Aradhana Sharma to place the plight of the survivor of torture within this history of the subaltern voice. Specifically, I use Sharma to contextualize and critique the complexities of voice and power within subaltern discourses. I then move into a discussion of representation and the image in relation to torture. I focus on the works of Roland Barthes, Susan Sontag, and Linda Alcoff. In anti-torture activism, representations are just a part of life. Images of torture survivors are used on every website that I examine in this dissertation. Donors and future clients want to see the stories of those who have survived torture through the help of these nonprofits. Many of these representations are created on the websites of
nonprofit organization in the forms of photographs, paintings, and drawings. In order to deconstruct these images, I use the above theories to historically analyze the trajectory of scholarship on representation through media. In particular, I use Barthes’ theories on the *studium* and *punctum* to attempt to understand the visceral feelings associated with certain images while grounding theory with Alcoff’s discussion the intentionality of representation. In using these theories, I bring together a discussion on voice and representation in order to analyze how anti-torture nonprofits construct their clients through images, testimonies, and affective means.

The following section uses affect, subaltern, and racial theory in order to synthesize an overall framework to inform the study of testimonies of torture. In order for nonprofits to benefit from the emotional/affective representation of the subaltern, they must mediate a tricky arena of racial politics. The nonprofit uses the Internet to represent these “powerless” groups through their affective labor. Sometimes these representations use problematic racialized politics in order to convince donors to contribute. I argue that the following theories together help us to better understand the nature of the relationships between donor, subaltern, nonprofit, and the market.

**Affective Refrain**

Freedom from Torture, much like many other nonprofits, uses affective messages (both written text and images) that are meant to pull in its audience. The nonprofit world has relied on several emotional tropes that have been used over and over again in an effort to collect donor money. One is that of the third world starving child who needs our financial assistance in order to survive. Another is the African plagued by AIDS who can only survive if we buy Red product. Often these depictions are not very flattering for
those in need. In fact, these images are often of “victims” who will only continue to survive if many individuals donate money to the cause. One can easily see how these depictions are problematic because they only show a certain type of othered body. Affect is used in a repetitive way in order to gather eyes. So, affect, as a concept, needs to be examined closely in relation to how tortured bodies are marketed.

Affective theory has a long and complicated history. The forefathers of affect are often cited as Guattari, Deleuze, Lacan, Lyotard, and Foucault to name a few. However, this section is not meant to be an exhaustive list of affective scholars or a complete history of the field. I am interested in situating affect in terms of its application to the study the affective flows surrounding anti-torture activism. In order to better understand how the study of affective flows play out in relation to the production of visual representations of images of torture as well as to understanding various affective flows that anti-torture activists encounter and are immersed in, we must start with Gregory Seigworth’s excellent synthesis of these concepts. Seigworth maps affect through Deleuze’s writings that yet again draw on the work of Spinoza. Deleuze draws on Spinoza to note three different ways to understand affection (or affect). These are, affectio, affectus, and affect as blessedness (Seigworth 160). affectio “is the transitive effect undergone by a body (human or otherwise) in a system-a mobile and open system-composed of the various, innumerable forces of existing and the relations between these forces” (161). So, affection is the idea of an affect that is prior to thought, it is the direct affect of one body on another at its most basic level. affectus is when “a dimension of subjectivity opens up—a lived intensity that is simultaneously neutral, or, interpersonal (an intimate exteriority) (162). This concept is most useful in understanding how bodies
subjectively interpret different and continuously changing affects. Affect as blessedness (or immanence) is the idea that the soul is “neither above or inside, it is with”, meaning that the soul lives both through outside influences on the body (affectio) and its movements and subjective variations (affectus) (164). While these issues are seemingly very complicated, they do have practical uses in every day life, especially when it comes to the feelings we get when we look at images. Also, they are especially useful when examining how images and videos are used to compel us to donate.

Power is another issue that comes up in affect theory. Seigworth argues that while both Deleuze and Foucault shared many of the same beliefs in terms of the power of affect, there are some key differences. Deleuze believes that assemblages are primarily of desire before they are of power in a Foucauldian sense. He argues that the desire must be there prior to the need for power. If one focuses on power as their initial site of discourse, then acts of resistance simply become reactive responses to those in power. Deleuze argues that “power is an affection of desire” (166) and therefore desire is the primary motivator of power. He goes farther to argue that power should be separated into pouvoir (power acted out in reaction) and puissance (or power as the potential to act) (167). These seemingly nitpicky differences are actually quite useful in thinking about the different ways that bodies and power affect individuals. Also, this discussion will be useful when we enter the critiques of Foucault and Deleuze by Spivak in her interpretation of subaltern studies later on in this piece.

According to some affect theorists such as Massumi, affect and emotion are not always synonymous terms. Teresa Brennan’s description of affect expands on this notion. She argues that affect “is the physiological shift accompanying a judgment” (5). Often
judgments are misconstrued with passions and affects. Again, Brennan is arguing for the distinction between affectio and affectus. In effect, she believes that there is much more of an evaluative component to affect. Significantly, Brennan believes that feelings are the affects that have discovered ways to be described. So a feeling is only a feeling when one can describe it. Once it is recognizable, it moves past the point of a bodily reaction and into something that has been processed by the mind. She states that, “All this means, indeed the transmission of affect means, that we are not self-contained in terms of our energies. There is no secure distinction between the ‘individual’ and the ‘environment’” (6). Energy flows between different bodies, which is why it is so difficult to capture emotions. The transmission of affect is especially useful when examining things we look at or images. What we examine directly affects our behavior, whether it is the body language of someone we love, or an image of someone being tortured, we adapt our bodies and behavior to what we see. Brennan goes on to say that “Visual images, like auditory traces, also have a direct physical impact; their reception involves the activation of neurological networks, stimulated by spectrum vibrations at various frequencies” (10). There is a biological response to images that occurs due to the transmission of affect that occurs prior to our being able to process this response.

While these discussions of affect are significant to the overall understanding of reactions and emotions, we must ground ourselves in both affective economies and labor. According to Sara Ahmed, emotions actually serve a purpose! She points to the importance of understanding emotions as more than simply “psychological dispositions”. She argues that emotions both work through adherence and coherence. Emotions are things the flow between bodies and sometimes tend to stick to some more than others.
Similarly to Marx’s *Capital*, Ahmed creates a theory of passion. The more that certain signs circulate the more affective power/significance they have. She believes that emotions do not inhabit any one body, but rather the body is just one nodal point “rather than being its origin or destination” (Ahmed 121). Ahmed is significant because through her example of hate, we begin to understand the consequences of the different flows of affect.

Affective labor also plays into this system. As we move into the postmodern condition, certain types of labor are now exploited through immaterial ways. Michael Hardt argues that immaterial labor consists of computers and affective labor. By affective labor, he means that the production of “social networks, forms of community, and biopower” (96). In this way, production has moved into the realm of human relations through capital. Culture and economy become more and more tangled together. Hardt next brings in the concept of biopower from above and below to understand the potential of affective labor. He uses the example of the woman’s labor as maternal work toward the caring of young that has been commodified to demonstrate how affective labor is pushing economy and culture closer together. Affective labor produces life that will perpetuate the system of capital (99). Immateriality, in all of its growing forms, is the future of the capitalistic project both in the developed and developing worlds. For this project, affective labor comes into play with the ways in which bodies are used through images and videos to commodify both capital and hegemonic discourses.

Affective theory is useful here in order to understand the multiple flows of meanings and emotions associated with these images. In a significant piece entitled “An Ethics of Everyday Infinities and Poweres: Felix Guattari on Affect and the Refrain” by
Lone Bertelsen and Andrew Murphie, the authors argue for the political power of the refrain. In particular, they are interested in examining affect and its use by both conservatives and liberals in order to push certain agendas. They make several assumptions about affect, which are useful to this study. Firstly, that ‘affect is transitive’, meaning that we connect with things that we are not. Second, is that affect also can be ‘more personal’ and is composed of emotion and feelings. Thirdly, that affect can be a combination of the first two whereby we have the power to affect and be affected. Lastly, that conservative individuals have the ability to use affect in refrain in more significant ways (Bertelsen and Murphie140). The authors explain a story of a ship in regard to the affective refrain. To the Australian government, a giant red Norwegian ship on the horizon represented the menace of illegal immigrants coming to infest the country. The vessel was forced to stay off the coast for at least 20 hours before the ship was taken over by Austrian special troops. The asylum seekers were sent to either Nauru or Papua New Guinea as part of the “Pacific Solution”. According to the authors, this refrain was used over and over again in order to push a conservative agenda. The conservative party used the idea of a menacing ship bringing outsiders to the borders of Australian as a scare tactic. This example shows the power of conservative politics to control and attempt to solidify affect. The authors argue, through Guattari, that affects are transitions between states and that it is not a stable form (145). The path that is created has ethical implications for these relational potentials (154). This instability is significant in understanding the fluid nature of effect.

Affect theory is valuable because it helps to contextualize the role of emotions in representations of torture survivors. However, it is only as useful as its placement within
a larger neo-liberal economic context. I use affect theory to better understand how images are constructed in order to convince donors to donate money to an organization. However, affect is only one component in representation. One must also think about how these individuals are being represented and their role in that representation. This is where the concept of the subaltern is useful.

**Subaltern Studies**

At this point, I would like to use the momentum of affect to modulate over to issues of the subaltern. Subaltern theory is essential when examining groups of individuals who may lack voice in a certain system. Subaltern theory can sometimes be problematic because it may lead to many assumptions that further alienate those who the study is trying to “help”. The ways that nonprofit groups have represented “othered” groups typically does not allow much room for voice and agency. While subaltern theory is useful, one must be careful to not create binaries between those with voice and those without. Additionally, we must be careful to not re-victimize those who we are studying. Subaltern theory is useful here when looking at how individuals are represented. In my case study, the subaltern exists at the level of representation.

Subaltern theory has a long and complex history. In this section, I will just give an overview of subaltern theories that are useful in contextualizing issues of torture survivors. In the introduction of a special issue of Angelaki, the editors surprisingly discovered that by encouraging authors to use affect to talk about subaltern studies; questions of subalternatity became clearer (Beasley-Murray and Moreiras 2). So, hopefully by trying to ground affective theory, we can also come to terms with the complicated and passionate history of subaltern studies. For this discussion, we find that
the term subaltern is just as slippery a word as any other affective refrain. The point here, then, is to study the different trajectories within both the South Asian and Latin American tracts in order to create a workable framework to study the representations of the voiceless. Here, I argue that the term subaltern needs not be limited to only those who are completely outside of the hegemonic discourse. This is significant because often the subaltern group is shown as having no agency and no access to it. If we create a binary between subaltern and those in power, it is difficult to create a space for those that transcend the powerless group. Also, contemporary scholars like Stuart Hall argue that there are multiple ways to gain agency and voice through the multiple readings of texts. While subaltern as a term is still useful, it is most useful in theories of representation. While subaltern voices may be hard to pin down, the representation of subaltern groups is ever present. Through the lens of immaterial labor, we must understand both the different incarnations of the subaltern, as well as recognize the political power of the term subaltern.

Subaltern Studies has its roots in England during the late 1970’s with a group composed of many South Asian scholars. It was agreed that a journal in India would be published in three volumes called Subaltern Studies: Writings on South Asian History and Society that started in 1982. This field has become a global phenomenon that has taken on many different roles in multiple continents. David Ludden argues that in India, Marxism and capitalistic understandings of imperialism are still an important component of study while in the United States Subaltern Studies is used primarily as a way to understand theories of the other (4). While this remark is slightly unfair and simplistic, it does hold an overall truth in regard to the ways that the field has evolved. During the late
1970’s and 1980’s, scholars became much more interested in studying social histories from below. In India, there was much tension between popular histories and national politics, which would eventually lead to a politics of everyday life that spread into the 1990s. After the end of the Cold War, Subaltern Studies became popular because of the popularity of these new histories from below (12).

Subaltern Studies has its lineage from Antonio Gramsci and his concepts of hegemony and the subaltern. In the 1970s, his works had finally become popular through the writings of Raymond Williams. Gramsci argued for an emphasis on subaltern groups and their treatment by hegemonic powers. An interesting article by Arun K Patnaik exposes the flaws within typical Marxist arguments surrounding the subaltern and the concept of common sense. He argues that typically Marxists believe that subaltern thought is simply in response to the dominant group. So, their entire consciousness is in response to the hegemon, in effect, creating a binary or an inverse structure through a false consciousness (Patnaik 8). Gramsci, on the other hand, argued for a unique culture that was created from the subaltern group. This concept of original thought is in direct contrast to the ways that Marxism uses enlightenment concepts to push an identity onto a subaltern group. Perhaps part of the appeal of Gramsci to the Subaltern Studies scholars is that he emphasizes the culture of the subaltern group.

Significantly, the creation of Subaltern Studies in India was, at its heart, an attempt to challenge issues of colonialism and nationalistic histories. This new school of thought differed from alternative “histories from below” in three main ways. First, power was separated from any universal histories of capital, a harsh critique of the nation, and an interest in the relationships between power and knowledge (Chakrabarty 8). The group
was intent on challenging how subaltern groups were historically portrayed. The editor, and original leader of the group, Ranajit Guha became an early influential writer. He especially argued against the term prepolitical. Many early historiographies of Indian development claimed that development only happened through the introduction of western capitalism and colonialism. Therefore, there was a prepolitical India prior to capitalism. In effect, this history created a seemingly unitary ideology of the nation that Guha was intent on challenging through an examination of a postnational India. However, in doing so he emphasized a kind of peasant consciousness that would lead to his problematic binary model of the subaltern vs. the elite (15).

While the Indian version of Subaltern Studies attempted to create a unique field that would eventually break from Gramsci, it still had many internal critiques. First, the idea of the binary between elite and subaltern was problematic. Second, this binary removed subaltern groups from political histories of popular movements. How could the subaltern exist politically if they were so distinct from and powerless in regard to the dominant group? So, the subaltern scholars shifted toward “cultural history, critical theory, and representations of subaltern subjectivity in the vein of Foucault” (Ludden 17). However, some were critical of the use of scholars who base their theories on western paradigms.

Gayatri Spivak burst onto the scene with her much discussed, *Can the Subaltern Speak?* in 1988. In the piece, she both celebrates and harshly critiques Subaltern Studies. In particular, she is interested in finding numerous flaws in the ways that Deleuze, Guattari, and Foucault examine power and desire. She states that, “Neither Deleuze nor Foucault seems aware that the intellectual within socialized capital, brandishing concrete
experience, can help consolidate the international division of labor” (69). In effect, she argues that these scholars perpetuate these divisions through their own paradigmatic views of the world. In particular, she uses Edward Said’s critique of Foucault to demonstrate his lack of subaltern understanding. He argues that Foucault creates a system of power where issues of class, economics, and insurgency and rebellion are completely ignored (75). In this, Foucault emphasizes a sort of authentic subjectivity that Spivak refutes. She also claims that both Foucault and Deleuze ignore epistemic violence of imperialism (84), which allows these systems of power to exist without an emphasis on some of the core assumptions of an imperialistic mindset. Significantly, she does admit that Foucault has been able to create a system where we can understand the disciplinary nature of colonialization on the subaltern (90). In order to demonstrate how the subaltern is understood, Spivak goes on to talk about the role of Sati in the patriarchal construction of the subaltern in India by western culture. She also explains the suicide of a woman, Bhuvaneswari Bhaduri, who purposely killed herself while she was menstruating as to not be confused with having an illicit child. It was found out a decade later that she had been would be political assassin, who committed suicide because she could not follow through with the task (103). In this sense, the woman represents a subaltern history that had been washed away through a dominant understand of women as being nonentities and simply vessels for procreation.

Spivak famously states that, “The subaltern cannot speak. There is virtue in global laundry lists with ‘woman’ as a pious item. Representation has not withered away. The female intellectual as intellectual has a circumscribed task which she must not disown with a flourish.” (104). The subaltern cannot speak because they are simply not
part of the hegemonic system. However, even Spivak understands that the term subaltern is a fluid one. In an interview years later, she once again brings up Bhuvaneswar Bhaduri’s suicide, but this time she clarifies by saying that she was not a subaltern in the strict sense of the word. She saw Bhaduri, who did attend college and was from a lower middle class urban upbringing, as a subaltern and therefore she was. Spivak believes that the strict sense of subaltern still lies within those who have no chance for upward mobility, however she also argues for a “moratorium on naming too soon” (Sharpe and Spivak). I want to take this a step further and argue that the naming itself is a political act. The subaltern, as a term, is only as useful as its political outcomes. The affective nature of the subaltern is a tool that academics can use in order fight for the material conditions of those being represented by so-called dominant groups.

Many scholars find Spivak’s work to be almost unreadable in the sense that she often works with fragmented ideas; however, one author believes that these fragmentations actually point out the importance of subaltern studies. Hiddleston believes that while there are many attacks against Spivak’s type of writing (and some are justified) these critics miss the point of an open kind of self-reflective scholarship. Writing about marginalized groups is not something that should be taken lightly and therefore an author must be transparent in their thought processes and methods. Spivak’s writing shows the hardships that many scholars face when attempting to speak for others and perhaps when one attacks this, they miss the overall point of the piece. Hiddleston states that “What I have hoped to draw attention to here, however, is not so much theory’s self-defeat as its highly challenging identification of traps and lures that will continue to plague postcolonial criticism, even if such self-consciousness has now largely been suspended”
(637). She argues that at least Spivak attempts to grapple with these ideas by being self-conscious throughout her work. So, while I am critical of some of Spivak’s ideas surrounding the subaltern, she helped to continue a discussion about groups of people who do not have much traditional global power. She is struggling with concepts that many other scholars have ignored and so we can look at her work, and others, as a growing and fluid movement. It is helpful to look at the concept of the subaltern as an affective and fluid term.

An example of the complicated nature of the subaltern voice rests within the work of Aradhana Sharma. In her book, *Logics of Empowerment: Development, Gender, and Governance in Neoliberal India*, she argues that the concept of the subaltern is much more complicated than simply a binary construction. The organization that she studied in India worked with landless rural women who were at the one of the lowest castes. These women were considered by the organization to be completely uneducated and in need of assistance (53-54). So, the idea of empowerment is lost through a patriarchal view of gender. Simultaneously, the women who work for the nonprofit also were not from the highest caste system negotiated their role as both nonprofit worker and activist. Often, they would have to mediate through the politics surrounding their status as government or NGO workers in order to reach out to those in the community without seeming to represent someone in too much authority (64). In this way, many different groups took advantage of their “subaltern” status in order to use the system to their benefit. So, the subaltern can be voiceless and yet also mediate the power structures. Also, the subaltern position becomes more fluid as neo-liberal politics infiltrate organizations that are constructed to “help” people.
As we have seen, subaltern studies has a relatively complicated history. Often, the definition one uses for the subaltern is dependent on what tract of theories one uses. However, I am not interested in trying to find one definition of the term. The purpose of subaltern theory in this project is to connect it to the idea of representation. I find it to be problematic when one group is claimed to be subaltern while other groups are not because of nit picky arguments. Privileged groups have created false binaries between subaltern and those that are not. When one really closely examines these groups, we find that while socio-economic jumps are difficult, that individuals within groups are relatively diverse. I believe that there is little point in arguing over the place of subaltern groups. This type of binary thinking doesn’t solve issues of inequality and oppression. However, subaltern theory is useful when thinking about it as a type of mentality. Privileged individuals or groups can perceive others as being subaltern. The subaltern, therefore, exist as a type of representation created by those in power. In many cases, they are whomever we deem to fit within the subaltern moniker. This is not to say that groups have not taken on the term itself, but here I am more interested in how the idea of the subaltern has been used to create a picture of individuals without voice. I call this concept the subaltern image. The subaltern image(s) are representations of “voiceless” groups through photographs, paintings and other mediums that use stereotypical tropes. The subaltern image is that repeated affective photograph of the victimized third world torture survivor. The use of the same types of images over and over again create a problematic trope that forces the idea of the subaltern onto certain less powerful groups. The subaltern concept is only useful if it causes people to act (to donate or get involved in the cause), but it can also affectively connect these individuals with third world
stereotypes that are difficult to shake. I will analyze some of these stereotypes in later chapters, but first I must focus on the image itself. In order to better understand how the image has been historically constructed, the next section will examine the growth of the image.

**Theories of the Image**

We live in a visual culture. While technologies have drastically changed since man/woman drew paintings on cave walls, the power of the image still dominates. Why is this? Even in a day and age where we have access to virtual worlds and moving pictures, the image is just as powerful. The ways in which the image exists are multiple (painting, photograph, digital image, etc) and they float around in our everyday lives. These texts can come from companies, friends, strangers, etc. Some images hold more meaning to us than others and some are incredibly powerful. The following is an examination of the image through its different mediums and how meaning has been constructed through the relationship between producer, text, and audience over time. I argue that meaning is constructed through all three components as well as the surrounding caption (whatever form that may take). Also, images hold great significance and power in society, and therefore we must create a language in order to understand these affects. Importantly for the overall project, there is a certain fascination with images of suffering and pain through the sublime; this is especially relevant toward studies based on torture. A note on terminology: the picture or image tends to be the overarching terms that can encompass both painting and photograph.

The term image has historically been used in many different ways. It is incredibly difficult to pin down just one definition. W.J.T Mitchell argues that there are several
different branches of a family tree that encompass many of the main uses. The term
image (meaning “likeness, resemblance, or similitude”) can be broken into “Graphic”,
“Optical”, “Perceptual”, “Mental”, and “Verbal” families (10). Mitchell argues that these
branches are all connected to different academic fields but often can overlap. One can
understand an image to mean something that is physical or abstract. For example, some
believe that mankind was created in god’s image. Are we talking about the physical
representation of a god or a more abstract philosophical position or both? We can also
use imagery through verbal and written means. Images can be almost any type of
representation, which makes it a very slippery term. One of Mitchell’s main arguments is
that more seemingly unstable images like verbal and mental ones are actually very
similar to stable ones on the other side of the family tree. We are taught to read in images
in certain contextual and historically dependent ways. So, the ways we view “stable”
images can and will drastically change over time and across cultures. Mitchell argues that
many observations of images have dealt with “…the image as the site of a special power
that must either be contained or exploited; the image, in short, as an idol or fetish” (151).

This dissertation has the potential of fetishizing certain types of images over
others, which is why both image and its surrounding texts are examined in tandem.
Scholars have long debated over the power of images and how to contain or control them.
Those who control the image can or at least attempt to create somewhat stable meanings.
In order to understand the history of the image, one must examine the fear that
individuals associate with it. In the case of torture, media often downplay he graphic
realities of torturous events. We do not see the most intense instances of torture because it
is believed that it is too obscene for a western viewer. For the survivors of torture
representations of empowerment and disempowerment come directly from media images. In many ways, their voices are also connected to these representations. The argument that texts and images are read in similar ways is one that scholars have come back to again and again. We are both trained to read images and texts in certain ways.

Before I delve much further into the specifics of the image and torture, I need to take a walk through the historical and critical trajectory of the image. The image has been something that has been debated over for centuries, but this review begins with more modern examinations of the subject. In Walter Benjamin’s “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction”, he explores the mass reproduction of objects and images. He argues that the aura of an object (or its unique presence in time and space) is lost through this type of reproduction. He famously states that, “To pry an object from its shell, to destroy its aura, is the mark of a perception whose ‘sense of the universal equality of things’ has increased to such a degree that it extracts it even from a unique object by means of reproduction” (222). This destruction of aura both can democratize an object and control the ways in which the audience interacts with the reproduced object. He goes on to create an important and relevant analogy between magician and surgeon and painter and cameraman. The magician has a natural space between himself and the participant, while the surgeon literally puts his hands inside of a body. The painter also has a natural distance between himself and reality, while the cameraman literally manipulates reality (233-234). In this way, we can see the fundamental difference between how reality is understood through representation. While Benjamin is speaking of the editing of film, this analogy holds true for the photographer. The photographer
manipulates reality through framing, retouching, and now digital editing. This gets to the heart of many debates surrounding the role of photography and reality building.

In order to better understand the image, we must find a language that encapsulates some of the feelings and emotions that come with the act of looking. Roland Barthes is a significant figure in the development of many cultural and semiotic based theories. Throughout much of his career, he was fascinated by the image and the power that it held over him. Most of his work deals with understanding how an image can create certain meanings. In his important book, Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography, he attempts to understand his own relationship with the camera. He creates two incredibly influential terms for the study of the image/photograph. The first is the **studium** which is the “application to a thing, taste for someone, a kind of general, enthusiastic commitment…” (26). The **studium** is the idea that you like something, that it makes you interested in it, but you are not in love with the image. It is a feeling that helps us to understand the photographer. He argues that it is a type of education. What Barthes calls the unary photograph is also part of the studium. “The Photograph is unary when it emphatically transforms ‘reality’ without doubling it, without making it vacillate (emphasis is a power of cohesion): no duality, no indirection, no disturbance” (41). So these types of images are news and war photographs that show something interesting, but they do not challenge what we think of reality. The **punctum**, on the other hand, is something that pierces the **studium**. He states that, “A photographs punctum is that accident which pricks me (but also bruises me, is poignant to me)” (27). Essentially, the **punctum**, is a detail that sticks out, that forces us to think about reality. He argues that the **studium** is always coded while the **punctum** is open to interpretation. He also states that,
“it is what I add to the photograph and what is nonetheless already there” (55). Here, he is pointing toward the relationship between the photographer and the audience. The creation of reality is a kind of back and forth relationship. Obviously the punctum is a feeling that intrigues Barthes.

Barthes believes in the power of photography to really affect the ways that we understand the world. However, not all photographs hold equal weight in this regard. He contends that, “Ultimately, Photography is subversive not when it frightens, repels, or even stigmatizes, but when it is pensive, when it thinks” (38). Here, he emphasizes that the photograph itself must make us think, but also must think itself. Again, he points to the relationship between the audience, photograph, and ultimately the photographer. Photography can be thought provoking if all parties in the relationship are contributing to the experience. In an interesting section showing the difference between a pornographic image and the image of the seemingly naked body Barthes further explains the relationship between these meaning partners. He states that “The punctum, then is a kind of subtle beyond – as if the image launched desire beyond what It permits us to see: not only toward “the rest” of the nakedness, not only toward the fantasy of a praxis, but toward the absolute excellence of a being, body and soul together” (59). To Barthes, the punctum represents an almost religious experience. The punctum is a feeling of unease about something that the audience can’t quite grasp. Importantly, Barthes argues that a photograph has two ways that the audience can interact with it; both are choices that the audience makes. The first is that one can look at an image as an illusion and the second is that we can confront reality (119). To Barthes, reality is determined through how we examine the image. We have to actively engage with a photograph in order to grapple
with greater issues. Barthes is significant because he argues for a certain amount of
agency for the audience. The audience is not simply told what to think when they view an
image, but there is a kind of mutual relationship.

**Visual Culture**

Much of our society is based upon a sophisticated visual culture. Our peers and
surroundings teach us from an early age how to “look”. Suren Lalvani examines the
importance of vision and the image in western societies. She argues that vision has long
held a higher sensory status in western culture; meaning that vision has been arguably the
most central sense to the way that reality has been constructed. She also argues that
modern vision is historically constructed. In particularly she is interested in how Foucault
examined how the body is controlled through this vision centric discourse. She argues
that he creates an anti-visual discourse that challenges some of these assumptions. She
states that, “According to Foucault, madness which became the object of reason’s gaze,
also became the subject of a blindness; the blindness of unreason, as reason ‘dazzled’…”
(22). Foucault’s understanding of the ways in which madness is constructed allows us to
see how these seemingly enlightened ideas were actually being used to control and
restrain. In particular, Foucault used Sartre’s concept of “le regard” to examine modern
medicine’s use of vision to further control bodies (23). Foucault used paintings and
images to show not only how things looked in the past, but also how things were shown
or constructed (25). However, Foucault is problematic because he examined the body as
being a passive medium. Lalvani is instead interested in using Judith Butler to find the
distinction between the body as a “signifying practice” and a “prediscursive body and its
disruptions” (33). She argues that the body is not passive, but rather interacts with these issues of control through vision.

Lalvani also explains the history of photography and how it constructed vision, particularly in the United States. Early accounts of photography claimed that it democratized portraiture. Lalvani argues that the real history is much more complicated. So, while many more people could be filmed, it was a very slow process prior to the technique of daguerreotypes being perfected. Many of the early photographs of families were of middle class status (47). She states that, “Both the mechanical apparatus and the chemical process replaced substantially the subjective interpretive judgment of the individual picture maker, and because the camera seemed to operate ‘naturally’ in response to God’s light in recording the image, it provided the camera its particularly divine status among the transcendentalists” (50). So, the early photographs were used to naturally record “God’s light”. The photograph itself seemed to capture a type of reality that a painting could not, and therefore the image was sought after. Also, those who were originally photographed reflected their status. In an effort to create a universal type of portrait, the ideal images were placed into large publications. In this way, the body and image was controlled through the representation of Americans in the late 1800’s. She argues that, “In effect, a moral icon was being cultivated, due less to the special characteristics of the camera as insight machine, than to photographers operating within discourse of physiognomy, which gave them a set of typologies by which to orchestrate and adjust posture, expression, and lighting” (52). In these early cases, we see the power of the photograph on the body. The photograph could accurately document and disseminate the “correct” body type and its relation to race, class, and gender. These
images reflect a type of alienation because they demonstrate ideal body. With this analysis, it is also significant to question who had access to early photography and who was absent from these images. As the portrait became more accessible, there were still major differences in the ways that bourgeois were positioned as compared to those from lower classes. She argues that the head on stare that was associated with the lower classes reflected their lack of leisure time. On the other hand, the bourgeois were always depicted with their head pointed off screen (66). These differences further instilled the bodily differences between the classes and helped to reinforce strict class boundaries.

Historical photography goes beyond the cutesy photograph of the family. It was also used to document prisoners. Lalvani also explains that criminality was constructed through the lens of the camera. One of the first major uses of the camera was to document criminals. The authorities wanted to capture the exact appearance of someone who has broken the moral codes of the day, and drawings were not comparable to the ability of the photograph to capture the essence of a person. In this way, power was directly associated with being able to watch and control. Literally these images were used to hunt criminals down, and therefore held a great deal of significance to law enforcement. However, the prisoners were not completely powerless in this system. In prison, often criminals would try to distort their face or struggle in order to defeat the identifying power of the image. In this way, the criminal would be able to challenge to hegemonic power of the image by literally distorting it. However, it was only inevitable before technology would catch up with this type of resistance. Both the frontal and profile photograph was used in order to have both an expressionless view and the full on face for identification purposes (113). So, it seems that it is always a cat and mouse game when it comes to controlling
criminals of all types. One must point out these sites of resistance because too often the study of the image is focused on producer or consumer and not the subject of the actual photograph. While there isn’t a balance of power, those who have their pictures taken sometimes do have some agency. The agency of the subject is difficult to maintain when the technology of photography improves over time. Photography was also used in what Lalvani calls “anatomo-politics” in an effort to control the mechanical process as well as the body of worker (139). The idea here is to create a form of surveillance where you literally can secretly photograph (and now film) your employees in order to make sure they are correctly performing their tasks. Also, it was used to make manufacturing even more efficient. One could take images of the process to both improve the time it takes to create a product as well as train future employees. Photography was used in order to create more efficient workers both through both surveillance and through close examination of the production process itself (159). So, photography has long been used to both control and to educate.

Photography is a tool that has historically been used to create some sort of emotional response in the consumer of the image. Another historian of photography, Nicholas Mirzoeff, argues that images compel us because of the pleasure we receive from them. Tangentially related to the idea of the punctum, he explains the sublime as being the pleasurable feeling one receives when one looks at the representation of something that, in reality, would be terrifying. There is something that compels us to look at representations of pain, suffering, and struggle. Mirzoeff explains that the idea of the sublime was renewed through the work of Immanuel Kant, who defined it as “a satisfaction mixed with horror”. Kant believes that the sublime is a very complicated
emotion that focuses on ethical rather than aesthetic concerns. However, Mirzoeff argues that the sublime has been used in order to perpetuate the myth of the dominant white over colonial “othered” art (16). In any case, the sublime helps us to further understand the idea of receiving pleasure from watching pain. The extremes of this would be our fascination with images of catastrophe. However, one could also discuss the sublime within images composed of everyday narratives of pain and loss.

Throughout contemporary photographic history, there have been many attempts to capture the essence of the photographer. In Reading Photographs: Understanding the Aesthetics of Photography, the authors attempt to bring to light the multiple techniques that photographers use in order to examine the world and humanity. This piece represents the modern take on the artistic vision of photography. The introduction by Ainslie Ellis argues that photography is simply a medium and that the actual art comes from the artist. He states that “Photography is concerned with images which are the product of light and awareness…But awareness of the photographer alone illuminates and vivifies this process. To what subjects, in what way, he applies his openness is now the marrow and the matter of our concern” (Bayer 6). He goes on to argue that there needs to be some way to judge photography, and that although discipline is a scary word, it can also instill creativity. He argues for a type of excellence that comes from the Greek word aretê. aretê is a term that is sometimes translated into English as virtue, however, Ellis thinks that excellence is more fitting because there isn’t the moralistic value placed upon it. He believes that this form of excellence and tension that comes from self-discipline is what creates great photographic art (7). Therefore, the artistic merit of a photographic piece comes from as much outside the artist as within. This attitude informs the rest of the
book. In the next section Jonathan Bayer argues that a good picture demands to be read (9). The artistic view of photography is quite prevalent in much of the literature. It seems that many of the same concepts from art history were applied to photography as a medium. So, there is a kind of aesthetic judgment that is created that places certain value on specific techniques within the photographs production. However, some would agree that the importance of the photograph comes from its ability to hail to the audience. Often, it seems, the very subjective punctum allows for a photograph to become popular.

**Relation between Text and Audience**

As I have mentioned above, the audience that consumes a text plays a significant role in the consumption of meanings associated with an image. One of the most influential modern writers on representation and photography is Susan Sontag. In one of her first books, *On Photography*, she attempts to understand the influence of photography on a mass media driven society. Tellingly, the first section is entitled “In Plato’s Cave” and examines our fascination with images. Plato’s allegory of the cave is one that exemplifies humankind’s struggle with understanding reality. From the beginning, we are trapped in a cave, watching shadowy images flicker from the fire behind us. These images are not the Truth, but just incomplete reflections of reality. Sontag likens this situation to the collection of photographs. While we may never be able to find the capital T Truth, we can collect images that make up a vision of the world. Sontag argues that photographs have the possible ability of being immortal (they can be copied and reproduced much easier than paintings because they are completely flat), they offer evidence, they can democratize experiences, and they are accessible to a wide audience (10-12). However, as through many of Sontag’s pieces, there is a darker side to the
photograph. She argues that the “camera is sold as a predatory weapon” (14). We use the
camera to actively hunt down and capture our subjects. We “load”, “aim”, and “shoot”
our film. There is a kind of warlike terminology given to the camera. Also, the camera is
used to capture images of horrible suffering and pain. She argues that these images are
dangerous because, “The ethical content of photographs is fragile” (21). As our “aesthetic
distance” increases, our empathy for the image will decrease over time. With this, Sontag
is also most interested in the ways that the photograph affects the photographer. She
contends that, “The camera is a kind of passport that annihilates moral boundaries and
social inhibitions, freeing the photographer from any responsibility toward the people
photographed” (41). The photographer needs to remain on the outside in order to properly
“colonize” his or her own work.

Sontag progressively became more concerned about the negative aspects of the
image within photography. Regarding the Pain of Others is the extension of Sontag’s
with a much darker and pessimistic tone. In it, she argues that war is a seemingly
inevitable part of modernity, and that the photograph has been used to both celebrate and
denounce war, but is always connected with pain, suffering, and death. Significantly, she
argues that the photograph is still relevant because it breaks through the information
overload. It is an easy way to understand something and to remember it (22). Also,
photography has always been connected to death, and for us to look at those images; we
become implicated into a voyeuristic system. In particular, she is interested in our
fascination with the horror images that were created during the Vietnam War that were
not staged in the same way that other war images were. She believes that, even with the
possibility of the digitally altered image, the artistically staged photograph of war is on its
way out because of the amount of people who witness the event in person (58). Now with mobile recording devices, this is even more the case, however; this is not to say that war is any less staged that it once was. Rather, the image of war seems to be more and more controlled and policed. Again, Sontag returns to the affect of the image. She states that, “Shock can become familiar. Shock can wear off. Even if it doesn’t one can not look” (82). Also, she points to the idea that only certain images are celebrated or included in public discourse. The Holocaust Memorial Museum exists because it is an event that did not happen in the United States. We are must more likely to ignore atrocities that are committed on our own soil (88). The image is purposely forgotten and those images that exist are not properly explained. Since she wrote On Photography, her attitude toward the shrinking of sympathy after repeat exposure has altered. She believes that audiences become tired of the overload of all types of images, not just those that evoke sympathetic feelings. The real culprit is modernity. She argues that an ecology of images is no longer possible because the horrors of images are so prevalent (108). The only way to escape is to change the channel. The overload of visual information in society is problematic and nonprofits need to address the issue by trying to stand out of the crowd.

Obviously, this type of analysis is very different from examining images that were constructed for public consumption; however one can gain an important lesson from this study. We mustn’t forget our own position to our work and we should not claim to be able to uncover truths. The images themselves are as important as the stories that are constructed about them. While we are able to gather multiple readings from texts, we must be careful to push our analysis too far. Scholars must examine multiple images and the surrounding texts before coming to larger conclusions.
Race in Cyberspace

Race is a significant component in the creation of meaning in photographs or images. The Internet has created a space where stereotypes of race are manipulated for the gain of certain organizations. In terms of race and the Internet, Lisa Nakamura is one of the most important contemporary scholars. Her seminal piece, *Cybertypes: Race, Ethnicity, and Identity on the Internet*, is an attempt to understand how race is constructed on the Internet. Even to this day, there is a general attitude that the Internet is a space for fluid identities, where we can leave our bodies behind and enter a space that is not restricted by the boundaries of race, ethnicity, location, gender, etc. By now, most scholars understand that these claims are far from accurate. Nakamura was one of the first to begin to question some of these assumptions about the possibilities of race on the Internet. She examines both images that represent identity and what she calls “afterimages” (11). Afterimages are those that are both after identity in terms of a post-digital world, and a kind of blur that is created through cyber identities. She asks “How have the blinding changes and dazzlingly rapid developments of technology in recent years served to project an altered image or projection of identity upon our collective consciousness?” (12). Nakamura is interested in how the bright light of technology has affected the ways in which we understand race. In a section on the digital divide, she points to two different arguments. The first is that people of color shouldn’t simply adopt technological advancements because it will further the agenda of the dominant culture. The second is that they can only challenge “imperialistic images” by getting online and offering alternative visions of race. At this point, Nakamura is hesitant to side with either side, but I would argue that time has shown us that adaptation can be an important tool to
challenge hegemonic ideals of race. However, being outside of the digital wave can have its advantages in terms of creative and expressive freedom. Interestingly, she argues in response to racial issues on the internet that “Perhaps opening up the Net through government subsidies and infrastructure building in the schools will redress this problem, but the incentives for minorities to opt for default whiteness online will probably exist as long as there are material disadvantages to nonwhiteness” (58). This is an important observation because it gets to the heart of representation of race on the Internet.

Discussions surrounding race in cyberspace have been less present (although recently they are more prevalent with issues like the Harlem Shake) because normative whiteness has maintained its dominance in many major media outlets.

Nakamura is also interested in how race is constructed on the Internet. In particular, in *Digitizing Race: Visual Cultures of the Internet*, she is interested in changing the dominant question about minority women and the Internet. Rather than try and find ways for women to get online, she examines how they “use their digital visual capital” (16). Nakamura explores how racialized bodies become capital in this new environment. She points to the flexibility of racial formation theory and how it becomes incredibly appealing to cyber studies because of the ways in which technologies have become fluid and are constantly changing. However, she is also quick to point out that as much as the Internet has changed the way that we communicate, it also has reinforced other aspects of our culture. Another significant aspect of Nakamura’s work is the idea that Internet studies must not be constricted to only events that take place on the Internet. She argues that we need to examine hybrid aspects of entertainment in order to see how media are converging and not limit ourselves to the restrictions of cyberspace (29). This
is useful when examining survivors of torture. I would also add that life is not and will never be solely on the web. In fact, in order to better understand the Internet we need to conduct studies that include online and offline aspects of our identity. This being said, Nakamura’s first section deals with the construction of race with AIM buddies. She admits that even at the time of publishing that there were far more advanced ways of visualizing race on the Internet; however, she is interested in the smaller sites of resistance. In a slight against fan guru Henry Jenkins and his belief that anyone can join the new fan produced culture, she argues that “…the cultural gatekeepers keep out not only the young, the female, and the obese but also the poor…and people of color” (51). So, in part, she is interested in spaces on the Internet that actually allows for agency like with AOL avatars. In particular, she examines how icons have both challenged cultural stereotypes of young Muslim women as well as reinforced dominant western ideas of beauty.

Race is often depicted in problematic ways in popular cultural texts. The most relevant for this discussion is the Apple iPod ads. Nakamura argues that Apple exploits a form of black culture in order to sell their products by showing a silhouette of a black body dancing to music with the product. She points to Trek Kelly’s subversive ads that place images of Abu Ghraib (called iPod Ghraib) overtop of the original ads. The idea was to question the literally colorful nature (in terms of their backgrounds) an of the Apple ads by confronting their appropriation of black bodies for white consumption. She argues that, “Just as blackness is posed as a cross-platform visual style that can endow a transcodable ‘cool’ on all types of media technologies and practices, whiteness is
exposed as killingly normative” (116). Interestingly, the tortured and racialized body comes to represent the most abused body within the capitalistic system.

**The Representation of the “Other”**

The affective nature of images and representations of survivors of torture is not always easy to explain. Affect itself is a concept that is incredibly difficult to pin down. Often, affect is seen as being synonymous with emotion, but this isn’t always the case. Emotion itself can be defined in several different ways. For this piece, we can understand the first as the emotion one has prior to cognition, so the cause/effect created by a stimulus. For example, when one walks into a normal room and has a visceral feeling that cannot be explained. Often, advertisers attempt to pin these types of emotions down in order to sell their goods. The goal is to be able to find images and sounds that will compel people to consume. McDonald’s wants our primordial brain to automatically crave their burgers when a commercial comes on. These reactions are so quick, that the mind doesn’t have time to process them. The second example of emotion would be the one that we have had time to digest. For example, one looks at an image of someone being tortured and it brings up emotions from other traumatic events in the person’s life. While this is an over-simplification of affective theory, it is a useful way to examine nonprofit’s use of multiple images to attract donors. These affective images are often problematic representations of survivors of torture. The challenge for a nonprofit organization that uses affective appeals is to construct a representation of a survivor that is both attractive to the audience as well as respectful to the survivor. Selling the ideology of an anti-torture nonprofit is very different from selling other types of products, but too often the same mentality is encouraged.
As we have seen, there have been many debates over representation and the image. In the humanities and social sciences (like cultural studies, anthropology, sociology, communication, etc.) scholars have long wrestled over the proper way to represent those who participate in studies. One can trace some of these conversations back to anthropology and the growth of the problematic lone ethnographer paradigm. However, academics have moved well beyond the concept of a researching silently observing the subject of an investigation. Nevertheless, many of the same problems of that paradigm exist today. For instance, how does a nonprofit organization represent their clients in a way that does not exploit them? Is this even possible? In 1992, Linda Alcoff wrote an inspiring piece called “The Problem of Speaking for Others”. In it, she discusses the many different opinions of speaking for others in contemporary academics. It is important to mention here that many of these arguments can help us to better think about activism as well as academics because voice and representation transcends all artificial barriers. In academia we are privileged in the sense that we do not have to necessarily represent our constituents. The challenges to building community, democracy and engagement with marginalized groups are issues often discussed, but the reality is that we all could be doing a better job of representing those who support us. Alcoff, I believe, would argue this point as well. She specifically points to the fact that speaking for others has become much more criticized than in the past. Importantly, she notes that we need to ask ourselves if we ever have the ability to speak for someone else. Also, which individuals can speak for a whole? Just because someone is a man, can they speak for all men? She mentions her mixed identity and that for her the privilege of group identity falls short. For an activist organization like the Freedom from Torture, how are they
supposed to represent their clientele in a respectful manner while advocating in their behalf? Sometimes those in positions of power must speak out for those who are being oppressed. These ideas of power and oppression are extremely important to consider in this argument. Alcoff states that:

Here is my central point. In order to evaluate attempts to speak for others in particular instance, we need to analyze the probable or actual effects of the words on the discursive and material context. One cannot simply look at the location of the speaker or her credentials to speak, nor can one look merely at the propositional content of the speech; one must also look at where the speech goes and what it does there. (26)

So, she argues that academics must not judge the nature of representation simply through the positionality of the author or the content of the text itself. Rather, we should look at the outcome of the event. Significantly, we as academics and activists should be equally as interested in the praxis of the work in question. Is the work useful to the group that is being represented? We should not give up on representation because there is much to be gained from these interactions. However, this still doesn’t mean that the relationships between scholars and those who are being represented are unproblematic. We must constantly be questioning our intentions and our positions, but at the same time we must deal with the issue of voice. This also holds true for the nonprofit organization. Alcoff also argues that identities can be represented by ‘interpretive horizons’. She uses the work of Georg Gadamer and his definition of a horizon as vantage point where everything can be seen. She argues that in order to discuss and represent identity we must use this concept of horizon to link experience to identity without making either the sole
way to understand human interactions. Alcoff believes that this is the most practical and realistic way of examining these important issues because it connects culture to history and other contextual aspects of life. So, perhaps one way to examine identities and representation is to examine many aspects that affect the group that one is studying.

In the past, scholars of ethnography have discussed many of these issues. James Clifford wrote a significant article a decade before Alcoff’s piece that discusses the problems and merits with ethnography. In particular, his discussion of participant-observation is useful to this discussion of torture. As someone who has volunteered at the Freedom from Torture, much of my own research stems from my own experiences there. He argues that participant-observation is a continuous balance between ‘inside’ and ‘outside’ dynamics (Clifford). It is a difficult balance to maintain. Anthropologists have long argued over the position of the ethnographer and here Clifford is arguing that interpretation has become much more important. Rather than simply examining an event from an objective point of view, scholars should interpret activities through thick descriptions. Does one need to experience (or participate in) an event in order to really understand the context of the occurrence? Interestingly, this does not address the issue of the powerful ethnographer being the one who maintains the power of representation.

Many questions of representation have been brought up in this chapter. In terms of anti-torture nonprofits, they must somehow keep all of these issues at the forefront as they create the many types of representations on their websites. The task is incredibly difficult, but it is a worthy one. As Linda Alcoff argues above, representation is difficult, but that doesn’t mean that it shouldn’t be attempted. Nonprofits have to represent their clients in order to advertise themselves to the world. The issue of torture is a global one
that requires global efforts. So, the nonprofit must try to avoid some of the traps of representing their clients in stereotypical ways, as subaltern images. In chapter three, we will see Freedom from Torture as The Medical Foundation for the Care of Victims of Torture struggling with many of these concepts. However, the next section examines the methodologies that informed this study.
CHAPTER II. METHODOLOGY AND METHOD

In this dissertation, I have created a theoretical lens through which to analyze the images and videos from four nonprofit websites (Freedom from Torture, Redress, Program for Torture Victims, and Torture Abolition and Survivor Support Coalition). In particular, I use the growth of the Freedom from Torture website to build a progressive anti-torture website model (which will be discussed later in this piece) to assist other websites in creating empowering representation of their clients. I use Freedom from Torture as the basis for the model partially because I have spent time working with the organization, but also because they have, over the years, developed an impressive online presence. Above and beyond what other organizations have developed, Freedom from Torture has created a space where survivors are showcased in creative ways. This is not to say that the website still does not have problematic issues, but it is a great place to start. The model of development that I create will hopefully allow a multitude of nonprofits to better contemplate the ways in which they represent their clients and how to utilize modern technologies to create a kind of positive dialogue (through images, videos and interactive media) between clients, donors and nonprofit workers.

In this dissertation, I am most interested in examining how emotional/affective appeals are used to gain support from donors on the Internet. In this way, the image itself becomes part of an affective economy, in the Sara Ahmed sense, which creates a connection between the audience and the image as text. Ahmed argues that emotions do not inhabit any one body, but rather the body is just one /nodal point “rather than being its origin or destination” (Ahmed 121). This linking is significant because it hails people into a system of capitalistic giving through the use of these emotionally filled images.
With this lens, I want to determine what types of affective appeals are being used through the creation and use of the images. Significantly, this analysis will include the ways in which the survivors of torture are represented. Issues of socio-economic status, race, and gender are at play with the creation of any image; however, it is especially clear in these examples because many of the participants come from developing nations. There is a long history of using stereotypical “third world” images for nonprofit literature and commercials (i.e. the Sally Struthers ads of the 80s and 90s). Also, Subaltern theory is useful here to examine the ways in which voice is represented in the images and surrounding texts themselves. Some of the videos and images include narratives and testimonies of survivors, but is this enough to consider them as participants of the creation of these texts? Overall, the images and their surrounding text on these websites create a narrative about torture and torture survivors. I examine these images through the lenses above in order to contextualize their place in a larger narrative of torture that runs throughout all of these sites. In addition, I use the theories and methods of visual rhetoric to further focus my study. I also use the theory of iconic images (Hariman and Lucaites) as a starting point toward analyzing images of survivors of torture by placing it into a larger history of visual rhetoric within communication through Foss, Peterson, and Olson. Visual rhetoric (at least how I analyze it for the purposes of this dissertation) is a field within the study of communication that focuses on visuals as an act of communication. Visual communication is both a way of thinking about images and a method of how to examine the constructed image. I then discuss Marita Gronnovoll’s work with the visuals of torture to show a case study of non-iconic images. With those theories/methodologies in mind, I move into a discussion of grounded and narrative theory as method. Finally, I
move into the specific method for this dissertation and end with my anti-torture development model. Before I discuss these topics, I examine methods as they pertain to the Internet.

**Virtual Methods**

There are many reasons that I decided to use the Internet as my site of research for this dissertation. Mainly, I believe that many people now get their information and news from online sources. Additionally, the Internet has become a place where many companies and nonprofits market themselves. While online spaces have been around for a good amount of time now, some scholars still treat it as a different type of space. So, I ask the following questions: Is the Internet something that is completely different and unique? Do we need to create completely new methodologies? Ananda Mitra and Elisia Cohen argue that there are six special characteristics of the Internet. The first is that it is incredibly intertextual due to the amount of links. Second, it is not a linear text in the same way as conventional texts. Third, the audience interacts with the text differently from other mediums, meaning that one has much more power to interact with the text online. Fourth, the Internet combines many different media. Fifth, it has a global outreach in a way that no other medium can compare. Sixth, the Internet is impermanent and always changing (Gauntlett and Horsley 36). Admittedly, some of these claims can be argued with; however, they are a good way to think about the scope of the Internet. However, it seems that Internet research is very similar to that of visual studies. The main difference, I argue, is the pervasive affective nature of the Internet. While the web is, on the one hand, always changing, on the other it also has the potential to host images for all
of eternity. Now that we have the ability to Google an image at anytime we please for
forever, it changes the way that meaning is constructed and understood.

The trajectory of cyber-studies is also relevant to this dissertation. Christine
Hine’s *Virtual Methods: Issues in Social Research on the Internet* is an important volume
that attempts to give its readers a sense of the spectrum of virtual methods that are
available. She argues that CMC research can be characterized in two phases. The first
phase was the use of psychological approaches to better understand how people
interacted on the Internet. This era of study used experimental designs in order to define
these new types of communication, however, she states that there were also many
observational studies occurring simultaneously. The second phase of CMC research was
created through the growth of naturalistic approaches that included participant
observation and ethnographic approaches. Importantly, Hine states that, “We might
suggest, then, that a methodological shift, the claiming of the online context as an
ethnographic field site, was crucial in establishing the status of Internet communications
as culture” (8).

The Internet as culture seems like an obvious connection; however, these early
researchers opened the door for many of us cultural scholars. In an effort to better
understand the potential for engagement with this new field, she creates the term
Sociology of Cyber-Social-Scientific-Knowledge. As she states, it is not a catchy term,
but it does help researchers remember that they are studying a phenomena that is not
outside of culture. She believes that this term encompasses the belief that we need to both
look at the Internet as a cultural context and cultural artifact (9). Another important point
that Hine brings up deals with the reflexivity of the researcher. Online research has many
benefits, but it also can be dangerous when one assumes that the answers will simply come from analyzing the text. It is important for the researcher to be able to step back from the text and reflect upon their interaction and position with the artifact.

While my method for this project involves mostly text and visual based analysis, it is still important for me to remember my relationship with the nonprofit organization that I am studying (Hine 19). My interactions with Freedom from Torture (I volunteered for them in 2006) will be helpful for me to move beyond the information in the text. In a chapter by Joelle Kivits, she explains the importance of research relationships. In particular, the section on pre-interviews is significant to my study because this dissertation project is part of a lifelong effort. She emphasizes that there is a significant amount of information to be gathered from the initial communication or e-mail correspondence with the participants of a study. As she argues, the growth of Internet communication has created a space where professional and friendly lines have been blurred. The author emphasizes that one should discover what the best form of communication is for each individual interaction. E-mail is not always the best way, even if at times it may seem to be easiest. Kivits believes that prior to e-mailing someone with a list of questions, that you need to establish a connection in order to create a friendly environment as well as to glean some information about the tone of the participants (Kivits 39). For my own study, in an effort to find certain images and videos on the Freedom from Torture website, I have interacted with several people through e-mail. In my next project, I would like to conduct, so these conversations have been significant not only for informational reasons, but also to establish a connection with the nonprofit.
Another emphasis in Internet Studies is the need for a specific research site. Hine argues that these research sites are not always easily accessible or obvious when one first starts their research. We should also keep in mind that the technology itself is not something that should be researched for these types of studies. Scholars need to be more interested in how the technology is used in culturally and historically situated contexts. Another emphasis is that not all-online research needs to start online. In fact, many of these studies start with an event that moves back and forth between online and offline existences. I would even say that these spaces are becoming more blurred so that it is difficult to only study one space as if they are mutually exclusive to each other. Lastly, we need to archive our work because the Internet is constantly changing (111-112).

Another component of Internet research is being able to focus your study in a world that is not very focused. Schneider and Foot use web sphere analysis in order to research the connection between web producers and developers. While this isn’t the objective of my own study, parts of it are useful, especially its emphasis in creating boundaries around the online texts that the research plans on examining. In examining multiple websites of nonprofits that examine issues of torture, I will need to be able to understand how they exist in connection or ignorance of each other. The authors emphasize discursive and rhetorical methods in order to analyze the significance of the text and images of the website. “In an online action perspective, web texts are situated as inscriptions of communicative practices on the part of site sponsors and/or users, and methods of discursive or rhetorical analysis can help to illuminate social action” (Schneider and Foot 164). Here, there is an emphasis on being able to rhetorically examine texts for their alternative meanings. Also, the authors argue for the importance
of archiving texts. They state that; “Web materials are uniquely ephemeral and persistent” (166). This is an important point because the web is hard to capture due to its ever-changing nature. So, when one conducts a study, they must have specific start and end dates and they must document and save as much material as they can in an organized manner. When examining images on the Internet, method becomes tricky. In the next section, I will look at rhetoric as both theory and method in order to inform my own method for this dissertation.

**Visual Rhetoric as Theory and Method**

For this section, I focus on visual rhetoric through the eyes of Hariman and Lucaites’ and their work on iconic images. I analyze their contemporary use of visual rhetoric, especially in relation to theories that have come before them. In order to examine alternative ways to deconstruct images, I describe torture literature. The literature on pain, suffering, and torture has created interesting examples that incorporate more in-depth analyses of the narratives surrounding images. Also, it brings to light certain images that are considered iconic by some, but wouldn’t necessarily fit the Hariman and Lucaites’ model. My main critique is with their attempt to create a straightforward criterion for iconic images. I provide an overview of specific trajectories within visual rhetorical in order to navigate the world of the visual and create a space for images of torture. In particular, I discuss the contemporary works of Foss, Peterson, Olson, and others in order to compare their ideas with Hariman and Lucaites. I find some portions of their theory of iconic images to be helpful when formulating a method of visual rhetoric for torture images, but there are some missing components that I will discuss in this piece.
Visual Rhetoric: Iconic Images of Torture?

Before I move into a further in-depth analysis of iconic images and how I can adapt it as a theory and method to my own work, I need to first lay out some of the history of visual rhetoric that is unfortunately ignored by *No Caption Needed* by Robert Hariman and John Louis Lucaites. The book briefly mentions Barthes, Benjamin, Bourdieu, and several other scholars that examine images, but they do not explore these authors in great detail. It seems that they are more interested in creating their own formulation rather than applying what has theoretically come before them. This is a great weakness in their theoretical foundation because they do not ground themselves with, or in opposition to, rhetorical scholarship of the past. So, in order to situate my own critique, I begin with a discussion of this missing history. Visual rhetoric (sometimes called vernacular or material culture), in the rhetorical tradition, is part of a larger response toward classical forms of rhetorical criticism. According to Olson, this turn occurred around the time of the Vietnam War because of the multiple ways in which activists were protesting through diverse means. Rhetoricians began to argue that written and spoken rhetorical texts were not enough to cover this large and diverse movement. As Olsen suggests, there were multiple ways in which visual rhetoric has been interpreted over the years. He defines visual rhetoric as, “culturally-shaped practices of seeing in their relationships to historically-situated processes of rhetorical action” (3). Olsen argues that this definition is in itself problematic because one uses their eyes to read, but visual scholars tend to focus on symbols rather than the words themselves. Because of the multitude of definitions, he decides to explore focal points rather than pin down one in particular. This is a significant scholarly move because it allows for the complexities of
the subject. If we define a field too strictly, we limit the texts that are considered relevant for study.

Olsen is particularly useful because he points out some of the difficulties associated with studying images. First, there are so many different names that have been created over the years for visual rhetoric that it is difficult to unify these studies within one umbrella term. Second, since the study of images has been so scattered over many different disciplines, it is difficult to connect related work together. I argue that this is a fundamental issue with many aspects of rhetoric in general, but that is a topic for another paper. Third, resistance to the actual study of visual rhetoric has been a detriment to the field as a whole (10-11). Some rhetoricians have been historically oppositional to anything that was outside of the typical realm of written or spoken speech, but it seems that this is not as much of an issue now. Visual rhetoric has recently become much more popular as a field of study. With these issues in mind, Olson argues that visual rhetoric is missing a theoretical base (14). While he makes it clear that there are useful theories, he believes that there needs to be some sort of overarching theory that pulls them all together. However, the reason that visual rhetoric is so useful is that there are so many focal points that allow for the theoretical understanding of multiple types of images and studies. Creating one all-encompassing theoretical or methodological “book” would be dangerous because it may again limit the scope of what scholars discuss. It seems that some rhetoricians (some that I will discuss in a moment) want to create a distinct discipline, but I argue that this is impossible because the world of images is essentially interdisciplinary.
One of the most cited visual rhetoric academics is Sonja Foss. Foss is one of the first visual rhetoric scholars to blend theory and method together when in order to formulate a new way of examining images. Foss attempts to create an alternative way of deconstructing images in response to works using aesthetics. The move away from the aesthetically pleasing dimension toward rhetorical symbols and structures is relevant because it roots the academic in a grounded theoretical and methodological stance. She argues that there are three reasons why aesthetic arguments are not useful to rhetoricians. First, the study of idiosyncrasies of evaluations by the scholar is not useful because it cannot be generalized outside of that context. Secondly, when only highly trained scholars of aesthetics are allowed to speak about an image, this implies that the rhetorician is not capable of interpreting the visual. Finally, aesthetic arguments allow for the evaluation of texts in terms of their artistic merit rather than their ability to persuade (214). Her points here are relevant because aesthetic judgments can be very dangerous in terms of what scholars deem significant for study. It seems that the iconic images of Hariman and Lucaites would also fall into the role of aesthetically pleasing (which could be used to define both the beautiful and horrific) images, which of course makes them more attractive to scholars and those that buy academic books. Foss also argues that semiotics (the study of meaning) is not useful for rhetoricians because it does not create a useful schema for evaluating visuals from a rhetorical standpoint. In fact, semiotics isn’t really concerned with the creation of judgments, but rather the production of meanings.

So, Foss creates her own system of evaluation as a type of method, which involves three different criteria. Firstly, the function of an image must be identified through the scholar’s analysis. Secondly, an assessment is made of the function and how
well it communicates. She states that, “Dimensions such as the subject matter, medium, materials, forms, colors, organization, craftsmanship, and contexts, for example, are examined by the critic for their contributions to the communication of the function” (216). Foss emphasizes that a scholar can also conduct comparative analyses with other images. Finally, there is an assessment of the function itself and how well it communicates the intended function that was originally understood by the scholar. The intention of the artist or author of the text, as she earlier states, isn’t really relevant in this evaluation. While Foss pats herself on the back because of the move away from aesthetic judgments and the low and high art debate, it seems that many of the judgments made through her evaluations are actually quite similar to aesthetic interpretations. We, as scholars, are still judging the text based upon notions of effectiveness rather than assessing the meanings and symbols of an image through deconstruction coupled with some sort of audience reception. The very idea of judging the image solely on the effectiveness of its message is very problematic because the valuation lies on one person, the rhetorician. Foss falls into the trap of discussing and judging an image without fully contextualizing it with historical and audience related materials. If we are to judge meaning and effectiveness of a text, should we not conduct focus groups or at least examine how the audience interacts with the image? Multiple audiences interact with images as well as discuss them in easily accessible forums. So, scholars are only one part of the equation when it comes to meaning making. I am not saying that one shouldn’t discuss the effectiveness of an image, but rather it must be contextualized within the position of the critic; meaning that the scholar must be forthright when it comes to their own relationship with the text. The scholar may be able to point out specific meanings
that are embedded in a text in relation to the history of certain symbols and stereotypes in the common imagination, but this is only one interpretation of many.

Foss’s piece is typically cited as being a significant contribution to the history of visual rhetoric; however, some authors are also critical of her work. Valerie V. Peterson argues that Foss’s work limits the ways in which rhetoricians can deconstruct images. First, she believes that Foss places the image too centrally while leaving out issues of perception. Peterson rightfully states that both understanding and being critical of culturally learned ways of looking is a necessary step before one can interpret an image. One doesn’t just look at an image without having some sort of cultural and historical context in their mind. Simply put, we are taught to read images. As the audience, we have seen countless images that will taint the ways in which we interpret new ones. We are trained to examine images in certain contextual and societal ways and to focus on specific aspects of images. The issue with starting with interpretation, according to Peterson, is that some academics leave themselves open to critiques of accountability. What makes our interpretations more accurate than someone else’s? How are we outside of the system of image construction? Secondly, Peterson argues that Foss’ schema focuses only on the image and this creates a type of circularity. If critics only evaluate specific images, the analysis might miss out on the elements that are built into the image. Instead, the critic can easily and uncritically find what they are looking for. Thirdly, Peterson believes that Foss too quickly rids visual analysis of aesthetics. She believes that there is both a new vocabulary and issues of beauty (what counts as looking nice in society) that can be gained from this type of analysis. Lastly, Foss’ schema is lacking because of her modernist approach. Modernists tend to focus on function and content over form, which
isn’t useful in all cases. Peterson uses the apt example of a man yelling up into the air that, “It’s a bird!…It’s a plane!…It’s superman!” (23). When we see Superman, we expect certain traits. We expect Superman to be able to fly, save the day, and never fail. Our analysis of Superman is limited because we focus only on the content rather than the nuances of his behavior in the image itself. This is true for any type of image. Whether it is an image of a graduation, homecoming, or anything that we have some conception of, we are limited by those conceptions and therefore miss out on items that our outside of that function.

Peterson believes that she has found an improved schema for visual rhetoric. She argues that her schema fills in many of the holes that Foss’s analysis doesn’t allow for and is also distinct from the original position. She argues that we should first start by examining “visual stimuli” such as light, line, color, perspective, shading, volume, scale, etc” (23). Peterson claims that through this process, the critic will bring to light his or her own contextual assumptions about the image at the start of the analysis. She argues that the advantage comes from being able to focus on visual stimulus and compare it to that of other critics. Also, one should not fall into the trap of art historians that simply place images in certain categories from the beginning. In this way, circularity is avoided because the critic is less likely to be looking for specific analytical items within the image. In particular, Peterson is interested in how images “impact on the eye” and therefore argues that aesthetic assessments are useful in this type of study. She concludes by again arguing that this type of analysis would answer some of the issues with modernist conceptions of images by conducting a more post modern (although she seems to be hesitant to use this label outright) examination that would be better suited to images
that do not fit into easily accessible categories. Peterson’s schema, while filling in some
gaps in the literature, doesn’t address many issues of the authority of the critic. According
to this model, the critic needs to focus on the visual stimuli and compare their findings
with other critics, but this still places the value of the analysis in the sole hands of the
rhetorical critic. Her schema is really not that different than Foss’s, it just starts from a
different perspective. While this is indeed significant, Peterson misses many of the
contextual issues that surround an image. The text/caption in relation to the image is not
explained and the reaction of the audience is ignored. Peterson takes the important first
step of realizing that we bring conceptual baggage with us when we examine an image,
however, she doesn’t push her analysis much past Foss’ original conception.

The postmodern turn in critical studies has also affected visual rhetoric in
profound ways. To continue the discussion of the postmodern tools, Jonah Rice further
pushes visual rhetoric in a sometimes foggy direction. Rice begins by running through the
typical players including Foss and Peterson. Specifically, he argues that Peterson doesn’t
push postmodern ideas toward an explanation “of how to unearth ideology, abstractions,
and historical layers in images” (66). Rice believes that Peterson does little more than add
upon Foss’ schema while ignoring the fact that postmodern critiques tend to shy away
from a concrete method. So, he attempts to piece together postmodern thought in order to
give the visual critic a sort of theoretical base. He adapts some of Mary McLeod’s
postmodern indicators to explain the postmodern visual text. In this analysis, Rice makes
it very clear that he is not trying to create an “archetypal” categorization, but rather a kind
of toolbox to use when examining images. The first indicator that he argues for is the idea
of refusal of universals. He believes that this concept is similar to oppositional elements.
The text itself is full of multiple and shifting tensions that sometimes contradict each other. The second indicator is the concept of co-constructed elements. The text itself is seen as being an almost literal exchange between audience and producer. The example he uses is of the Apartheid Museum in South Africa where the participant is asked to take a white or black card at the beginning of their tour. Depending on which card they take, their experience will be much different. The audience is encouraged to interact with the text in a way that is an alternative to the typical museum experience. While the museum is meant to be a persuasive text, it allows for the audience to be closer to the art pieces. Therefore, meanings are much more obviously co-created. The third indicator is contextual elements. The relationship between text and context is significant in creating multiple meanings. These elements can include cross-cultural and temporal items. The fourth and final indicator is the challenging of ideological elements. The postmodern text supposedly pushes against dominant ideologies. However, it seems that this indicator is much more difficult to pin down. He states that, “Ideological indicators focus on text and all its surrounding elements, which results in a revelations of rhetorical power. The critic would need to carry out a full exploration of the previous indicators to find out what would be discovered” (72). In this sense, the ideological bit is comprised of all of the work that has come before it, especially the interplay of contextual issues with the co-constructed nature of a specific artifact. Inherently, he also argues that this work does not lend itself to a simple model. All of these issues are very complex and have possibly multiple meanings depending on the critic. He believes that to view images through a postmodern lens they need to be examined for there “content, form, and a culminating
fusion of visual experience” (73). Again, he reiterates that both Foss and Peterson miss out on the power of the postmodern way of analysis.

While Rice begins to create a much more relevant and useful way to understand the text, it still seems that the power of the critic to make analytical decisions is still not questioned enough. The attention paid to the context and audience co-creation is a step in the right direction, but it needs to be taken further. The danger with a postmodern analysis is that while we claim that there are multiple readings, the reading of the critic tends to be centralized and privileged. Rice begins to create a system where the critic must play with some other factors that are involved with the interaction of the audience and text and text with its surroundings, but it still seems to be a far cry away from a completely useful strategy when conducting a visual rhetorical analysis. While I agree that there cannot be only one model for scholars to follow, there are some components that are missing here. I believe that these postmodern indicators could also be useful for texts that wouldn’t be considered postmodern by most critics. Also, there needs to be an emphasis on the production of the text and its societal, historical, and political economic context. The text itself is only one piece of a much larger puzzle; it cannot stand up by itself. Much in the same way that scholars have admitted that the audience brings cultural baggage with them when they consume an image, the image itself is connected to a great deal of its own contextual information. While this may not have an obvious direct impact on the audience itself, it might bring to light some of the intentions and positionality of the producer and explore the influences of society on the image itself. If we look at the image in isolation, we are much more likely to miss out on many of the multiple
meanings that Rice explains. We should really question where the place of the critic is in relation to the image as well as the point of the analysis. Where does the critique lead us?

Another significant tract in visual rhetoric is the concept of reading as a critic. Michael Deluca argues that there is some danger associated with reading photographs. The argument is that often researchers may further obscure these objects by studying them like any other text. Significantly, he attempts to add to Roland Barthes’ idea of the punctum by stating that while it is something that is unshared, that by trying to study this phenomenon, it tames it. He argues that rhetoricians tame photographs in four different ways. The first, simply not paying attention to images because they do not fit the mold of stereotypical rhetorical texts. The second is to examine texts that include images without actually examining the images (this can be reversed – looking at images without examining the surrounding text). The third, is analyzing texts, but then simply going back into the world of rhetorical techniques and methods rather than creating new ways of examining these texts. Finally, Deluca argues that there are several dangers to reading images with too much care and diligence. One issue may be that historical context may be taken too literally and that by hiding behind these meanings one can superficially read the image. Another problem is that there seems to be an automatic moral condemnation of certain images that often affect the ways in which they are understood. He believes that Susan Sontag was wrong in arguing for the mental pollution of images, and that we should instead look even deeper to these photographs. Lastly, he argues that we should be careful with the new concepts we create in order to better understand images. He believes that we need to both “…face the intractable immanence of this photography in its absolute particularity, and, second, to describe the world called into being by this
photograph as part of the public discourse of an image-centric media matrix” (Deluca 87). So, we as scholars need to be able to closely examine an image without letting ourselves become overwhelmed with our own preconceived notions. Our analysis should focus more on the public discourse surrounding these texts.

**The Judgment of Visual Rhetoric**

With this condensed examination of relevant visual rhetoric history in mind, I move into an analysis of Hariman and Lucaites. Several components of the schemas from the authors above are found in their work; however, they try to create a new formula. According to Hariman and Lucaites, popular images produce and reinforce specific ideologies. However, they also believe that often images do not have a direct effect or “dominate” public opinion. They argue that it is very difficult to measure the effect of an image because often studies have too narrowly assessed influence as only being connected to specific political or public acts (8). They state that there are five vectors of influence that are significant to understanding the power of an image. They are as follows: “reproducing ideology, communicating social knowledge, shaping collective memory, modeling citizenship, and providing figural resources for communicative action (9). They argue that images have an important part of the reinforcement of ideology because they can “relay” dominant codes. Throughout the book, they state that iconic images show how “photojournalism underwrites democratic polity” and those iconic images show a shift from “more democratic to more liberal norms of political identity” (13). This argument is interesting in that it runs counter to what many people claim is the power of the image in society. Rather than challenging some of the norms found in our
democratic polity, they argue that these images (even the ones considered to be challenging) actually reinforce dominant institutions. The authors claim to use an interpretive method that does not limit itself to any one social category (race, class, gender, etc) because they are more interested in public communication and creating their own unique study. This, of course, is a weakness in the piece because it often ignores literature that would help contextualize some of these issues.

Nevertheless, they understand images as existing within another five elements of visual rhetoric. The first is aesthetic familiarity, which is when the image exists within a well-known aesthetic motif. The second is civic performance, which argues that while photographs are seemingly static images, they are framed performances that represent repetitious acts or events that have political consequences. The third rhetorical component is semiotic transcriptions. Simply, this means that a code is already available for the audience to be able to understand the context of the image. They state, “We believe that iconic images become so because they have strong economics of transcription: that is, such images coordinate ‘beautifully’ a number of different patterns of identification, each of which would suffice to direct audience response, and which together provide a public audience with sufficient means for contending with potentially unmanageable events” (35). This is a particularly important point because the code creates a springboard for an image to become iconic. The next aspects are emotional scenarios, which connect to the affective nature of an image. Here, the authors argue that the image continuously evokes strong emotions that tie the audience to that image. However, the image effectively controls and directs the emotion. Lastly, contradictions and crises make up the final component of their analysis. The three main sources of
contradictions are diverse groups existing within a political system, politics always has
contradictory sources working within the same system, and finally representation is not
something that is all encompassing (28-37). With this system in place, the authors argue
that reproduction allows for iconic images to exist. While a fine art piece may lose its
original aura, another (and sometimes more powerful) aura is created through multiple
reproductions of an image.

The authors also make an important argument about the image and its relationship
to surrounding text. They state, after explaining the shifts in representation of the image,
that “This shift does double duty because the iconic photograph also reverses the
hierarchy of verbal and visual media. Instead of providing an illustration for the verbal
report, the image is dominant, and any accompanying verbal text is merely a caption or
reduced to the function of captioning. More important, visual immediacy then displaces
the discursive organization of the news” (90). Here, they believe that image almost
literally needs no caption because the meaning is so ingrained. The authors argue that the
caption doesn’t entirely disappear, but is instead moved to the side. The image itself
comes to represent the event. While this point is relevant, it also should include the
cultural contexts of the image that directly come from the ways in which the surrounding
text affects meaning of images. Their book becomes an extended and powerful type of
caption for these images that affect the meanings associated with the icon. While the icon
is difficult to challenge, their meanings are still fluid and are not universal. Also, they are
not nuanced enough with their discussion of iconic images. There may be multiple iconic
images that are used for different populations. One person’s iconic image may not be the
same as another person’s, but their analysis does not have room for the multitude.
However, the idea that images often reflect certain cultural beliefs is useful when examining images of torture.

**Torture as Iconic?**

In order to illustrate some issues dealing with iconic images, I want to focus on a specific type of image; the one that is of a torturer or a survivor of torture. Some of the iconic images that Hariman and Lucaites uses include victims of one atrocity or another. My issue with this is that iconic images seem to represent only one portion of a distorted narrative, a narrative that may indeed reflect the dominant ideologies of the time. However, these iconic images come into being through contextual and cultural issues. This is why the surrounding text is so significant to an image because it also can persuade the audience to conjure up specific cultural associations that allow them to relate to the image or it may cause the opposite. The image does not sit in a vacuum on the page. Hariman and Lucaites do not push their analysis far enough to those images that are not considered to be iconic to certain groups. What about the significant images that are left out? What about images of events that are not popular in the quantitative sense of the word? There are many images that hold significance to large groups of people that actually counter dominant ideologies, which are completely ignored by Hariman and Lucaites. One example that they claim to be salient in their book are the many images of the Holocaust (7). They claim that these types of images are significant, but do not fit into their criteria of what it means to be iconic. The issue is then with the subjective position of the critic and their problematic ability to judge what is deemed to be iconic and what is not. Their analysis reinforces dominant ideologies without specifically challenging them with alternative messages. In the next section, I explore issues dealing with the analysis
of torture images. Torture images can be iconic images of famous torturers, images of survivors of torture after the fact, popular cultural depictions of torturous events, and many other types of torture images.

An important and missing component of Hariman and Lucaites is a section on the ethics of photography and it relationship to the photographer. Judith Butler, using Susan Sontag, states “It won’t do to say, as Sontag elsewhere does, that the photograph cannot by itself provide an interpretation, that we need captions and analysis to move beyond the discrete and punctual images. I have no doubt that we need such captions and analysis, but if we say that the photograph is not an interpretation we get in another bind” (952). Butler goes on to argue that images do compel us to an interpretation in contrast to Sontag arguing that a photograph can only move us temporarily. Here, Butler argues for a relationship that is missing in Hariman and Lucaites’ work, the relationship that is created by the frame between the “photographer, the camera, and the scene” (957). Butler argues that the frame is significant because it is the component that brings all of these items together. The frame itself is more than the framing of the picture; it includes the framing of specific cultural and contextual meanings built into the text itself. The image is framed by the photographer and represents certain “norms” that are reflected in society. She is specifically concerned with the photographs at Abu Ghraib (an now infamous prison and torture site in the years after September 11th) and how they represented a certain set of norms that was allowed by the military at that time. Also, she argues that the photographers themselves gain some sort of pleasure out of taking so many exploitative images. The disturbing aspect of all of this pleasure, whether it is a beautiful or horrific, is what connects us to an image and its production. We find pleasure in the looking itself.
The ethical component comes into play when we become aware of the frames that are forced upon us through society and overcome them.

**Torture as a Case Study**

To demonstrate a more dynamic way of examining visual rhetoric, I analyze the work of Marita Gronnovoll. She examines multiple images in order to create a full narrative about torture and its effects on media entertainment. Her critique is significant because it does not just limit her analysis to iconic images. While she does spend some time examining the images that made Lyndie England famous, she also contextualizes these images with those that would not be considered iconic. The narrative of the iconic image can only be understood in a larger contextual scene. Also, her analysis breaks down the hierarchy created by so called iconic images by including popular culture texts (such as the television show 24) in the same study.

She argues that media representations of torture are connected to notions of gender. In particular, she contrasts the ways in which women are depicted throughout the several scandals during the mid 2000s in the United States. Through the lens of Foucault, she argues that while historically there has been a turn toward disciplining the mind of prisoners, now there is a resurgence of punishment of the body. In a close analysis of the infamous Lynndie England and other women who were the center of controversy at Abu Ghraib, she rightly argues that gender is used to put down women in the military while white men still remain unmarked. England is constantly criticized for not being feminine enough through her role as sexual deviant and torturer. In contrast, Charles Graner, the lead torturer and England’s lover, is depicted as being a devoted husband with a cheating
wife who was negatively affected by the Gulf war. He is partially exonerated by the media because of his heroic past. Here, Gronnovoll leans too much on general media portrayals of Abu Ghraib. Her argument would have been stronger if she more closely examined the complex relationship between England and Graner and the many interviews that they both have conducted since this event. However, she makes up for this shortcoming with her excellent visual analysis of several images from Abu Ghraib. She rightly points to the physical position of men versus women, in that the men are protected from many of the simulated homosexual acts of the prisoners by always being positioned far away, while the women often are right next to the event.

Her final major section attempts to cover many different television shows that depict terrorism and torture. She is most interested in comparing female (La Femme Nikita, Alias) and male protagonists (24, The Unit). The main theme throughout many of these shows is that the female leads are not strong enough to withstand torture and therefore cannot be trusted and when they do use torture it is very out of character and their femininity must be redeemed. The women who torture often do so in very hypersexual ways. In contrast, men are depicted as torturing in order to save society. She has a lengthy chapter on the role of Jack Bauer in 24 as a messianic character that is forced to torture in order for western society to maintain its lifestyle in a world of terror. Here, she argues that blood is used symbolically to represent Bauer as Christ and savior in contrast to the blood of women from earlier.

Essentially, Gronnovoll is connecting both the typical iconic images with other images and representations of similar events in the popular imagination. Her study is
much more complex and useful for this dissertation than Hariman and Lucaites because it doesn’t place all of the value on iconic images. Popular images and videos can have the same sort of ideological effect upon different audiences. Also, meaning associated with images, much like communication, flows in many ways. The creation of an iconic image may be influenced by popular ones, and vice versa. The hierarchy needs to be broken in order for academics to accurately portray the narrative of images. Essentially, our theoretical lens and method must align in such a way that allows for the study of multiple images and texts that would not be considered iconic.

So, through the history of Foss to the work of Hariman and Lucaites, we get an interesting mix of theories and methods. With Foss, we get the criteria for the ways in which scholars should examine and judge images. On the other hand, Rice argues for a more postmodern interpretation, which essentially states that there is no one-way to interpret an image. The post-modern view is that there is no one method in looking at images. Hariman and Lucaites argue that certain ideologies exist within a specific group of images (i.e. iconic images). Their method consists of grouping together historically relevant images that often reinforce dominant western ideologies. In these authors of visual rhetoric, we see how theory and methodology blend together. Examining an image can be difficult because it is such a subjective task. However, if one is aware of their position and relationship to the text and contextualizes their arguments, the image can be a great source of information. Also, one must be willing to see the multiple narratives that are constructed within an image. With this in mind, I explore close readings, the effectiveness of close readings and images.
**Close Readings**

In order to conduct a textual analysis of images and videos, one must be able to conduct a close reading. Barry Brummett argues for two important aspects of a close reading. The first is the social aspect. We must be able to understand how a text is constructed socially, in the sense that these objects exist in a socially constructed world. Secondly, he argues that understanding close reading from a personal level is significant because the researcher needs to understand how his/her own perceptions will affect the ways in which they understand the world. Two important aspects for this study include narrative and metaphoric analysis. Narrative analysis is particularly interested in studying the formal nature of the story being presented. I argue in this piece that images or videos put together with surrounding text are used in order to create emotionally strong narratives. Brummett argues that most texts are created with some sort of narrative in mind, so reading them as narratives is helpful in order to understand the full picture. In a narrative analysis, patterns are always significant for the form of the text. Brummet argues for three major elements of narratives. The first is coherence and sequence. In order for a narrative to make sense to the audience, it must have an element that brings together its different sections. Here, the researcher must look for the “theme, effect, tone, or meaning” within a given text (56). The sequence is also significant because the ways in which events unfold can give the researcher some insight as to the intended or received meaning from the text. A linear text has a much different meaning than a story that is told in a reverse fashion. The second aspect of narratives is tension and resolution. Narratives almost always have some sort of tension between characters, settings, internal thoughts, etc. A story without some sort of tension is not really a narrative. Resolutions are equally
as important in a western sense; however, they are not always fulfilling to the audience. In fact, when it comes to the narratives of torture, the resolution is put into the hands of the audience. The audience can assist with the resolution of the events by donating to the cause. The last component of narratives is alignment and opposition. This area is important in that it demonstrates the rhetorical power of being for or against something. Often binaries are created within typical narratives in order to create strong connections between the protagonist and the audience.

Metaphorical analysis is also significant to this study because they reveal the way in which the body is being used in the video testimonies. Brummett argues that metaphors reveal the perspective of the piece. Metaphors are relatable to the audience simply because so many are used in our everyday life. He argues that with each metaphor there are many implications, or connections, that are made to other meanings. Sometimes these implications are not planned and therefore metaphors can take a life of their own. Simply put, metaphors can take on many diverse meanings that are beyond the original scope of the author. Also, they can have extensions that start with a base metaphor that can be the basis of all other metaphors in the piece. (76-83). In images, metaphors are especially prevalent and they create powerful signs and meanings. One must be on the lookout for metaphors that are embedded in the photograph. An example of this would be the image of hands in some of the pictures of torture survivors. Hands can represent many different meanings in western culture, one being freedom or oppression depending on the position of the hands and the context of the image.
Narratives of Pain

While torture is an activity that is inherently disturbing and wrong on many levels, it is continuously used in all parts of the world today. Years after the atrocities of the holocaust during World War Two, countries continue to abuse basic universal rights in order for their own gain. These actions need to stop. Nonprofit organizations like Freedom from Torture work incredibly hard against powerful global interests in order to assist survivors of these acts and to protest government sponsorship of torture. That being said, the goal of this section is to not to harm their activities, but rather complicate the issues of particular narratives. The narratives of survivors of torture go beyond their own immediate stories. This is not meant to diminish their experiences, but rather to bring forth the systematic ways in which torture is connected to the very fabric of western society. Often, torture is only located only at the level of the tortured and the torturer. In order to understand its connection to systemic issues, we must theoretically ground ourselves in western narratives. This is especially important when it comes to images and videos. Narratives are prevalent in both the ways that the images are constructed and what the subjects/participants are saying or doing.

The narrative of pain and suffering as a tool of truth is prevalent throughout our culture. However, the testimonies presented on the Freedom from Torture website (and other anti-torture websites) only give us one small sliver of understanding. In particular, I use narrative theory in order to bring to light the stories of all the actors in this system. The overall story connects representation, torture, politics and political economy into the messy world of neo-liberal everyday life. The components of this saga come together in order to better inform activism. My goal is to not only better understand these functions,
but to push for more transparency and critical thinking within these areas. While the act of torture itself, in my mind, is a black and white issue, the representation of torture survivors is much more complicated. So, while I argue that the representation of the Freedom from Torture’s clients can be somewhat problematic, I do not argue that they their overall goal is without merit. Life within the nonprofit world is much more complicated than simple binary constructions.

Since much of narrative theory comes out of rhetorical criticism, I would like to take a moment to comment upon this field. Rhetorical criticism, in my mind, is only as useful as its intentions. Criticism must be an activist venture that brings to light problems and solutions. It is more than simply deconstructing an artifact or finding patterns in a text. I use rhetorical criticism as a kind of engaged scholarship because I am interested in assisting anti-torture nonprofits to better understand and improve the representation of their clients. Gunn and Lucaites discuss engaged scholarship in a forum on the subject in the Quarterly Journal of Speech. They ask several important questions of the scholars of the pieces in the journal: “As a prompt, we posed three questions that, we stressed, they needed to address only at their discretion: what form should engagement take? whom do we engage? And should we even try? All authors answered the last question in unison” (410). So, while engaged rhetorical criticism is debated, most scholars feel that it is necessary work. I agree with this and in my own work I typically engage those that are in my community because I feel the need to give back. Not all engagement needs to follow this view, but I find it most rewarding. Engagement can take many different forms, but this project will specifically engage with the narrative of many texts in order to hopefully benefit all of the actors.
The narrative paradigm is imperative to this type of work. The stories of the survivors of torture are important to discuss, but they must be intertwined with the narratives of a larger political system. In order for us to get to this level, we must understand that the ‘rational world’ is always understood through subjective stories. Walter Fisher argues that narratives are one of the most important parts of human nature. He claims that the structure of storytelling is encompassed with five central claims. The first is that humans are “essentially story tellers”. The second is that decision-making and communication’s rationale comes from “communication situations, genres, and media”. The third is that good reason comes from “history, biography, culture, and character”. The fourth is that “rationality is determined by the nature of the persons as narrative beings”. Finally, he argues that the world is understood through stories that have been chosen and agreed upon (Fisher 247). While Fisher doesn’t use the term hegemony, it seems that that it is a large part of this relationship. Stories are agreed upon through consent. Rather than assume that all realities are based upon rational arguments, stories that are dependent on context and history are at the forefront of his analysis. In particular, he is interested in different metaphors that are used in the creation of these contexts. In the analysis of the stories of torture, many metaphors of the body are used.

Narrative theory has seen many different incarnations over the years. More recent examples include discussions over narrative as dialogic performance (Harter 141), narrative as ontological and epistemological (Stalker 222), and narrative as paradigm (Specter-Mersel 206). Firstly, the dialogical performance of narrative is relevant here because all of the texts that follow (whether they be the legal documents, testimonies from survivors, histories of torture, etc) all speak to one another. Narrative is not
exclusive to only one story, but rather the combination of many stories that interact with each other. Secondly, ontological and epistemological issues are both concerns that make up the following work. Stalker defines ontology and epistemology in the following ways: “I understand the former to the phenomena of social reality presented by the participating narrators. Epistemological narratives are therefore the narratives we as researchers construct as our knowledge of the social world we are investigating” (Stalker 222). She argues that both of these work together in informing our analysis. Again, the issue is that these ideas need to be in conversation with each other, especially in terms of how the research constructs his/her position in regard to the work. Lastly, Specter-Mersel argues that narrative should become a paradigm itself. Without having the space to get into the details of the argument here, I agree with him that narrative should be more central to rhetorical work, understanding anything as paradigmatic can be problematic. Narrative is central, but shouldn’t limit us to only one framework of analysis. In the following section, I use several theories together in order to explain the issues surrounding torture, representation, and voice.

Jennifer Ballengee is particularly interested in examining torture from the point of view of the body as metaphor. While she is interested in examining ancient texts, her framework is incredibly useful when examining the anti-torture nonprofit websites. Significantly, she argues that torture has ‘rhetorical agility’, meaning that torture can be used for multiple meanings by multiple actors in order to persuade. So, while torture itself can have ambiguous meanings, the visual and bodily nature of the event forces certain conclusions upon the audience. This is useful because it frames the slippery nature of torture. Throughout the book, the argument is brought back to the idea that
representational torture graphically persuades the viewer to think in certain ways and this has long influenced our western understanding of torture. Torture, to some, can be beneficial if it leads to life or death information. Others would argue that the act of torture should never be allowed because it violates basic human rights. Also, she deconstructs the torture into different metaphors of the body. She is most interested in four different types of bodies; the legal body – the body and its relation to the state, the political body – the body as a site of pain and suffering, the erotic body – the body as sexualized, and the moral body – the body as a site of morality. These four aspects of bodily discourse inform the ways in which tortured bodies have been constructed in popular culture and by nonprofits. Here, I would also argue that this informs how the testimonies are crafted and how the visual image is constructed. While these narratives are significant in creating a type of methodology for texts with stories, it is useful to couple this with more concrete methodologies. In the next, section, I examine grounded theory as type of methodology that will inform this dissertation.

**Grounded Theory**

In this dissertation, I use grounded theory as a method of collecting information from images. While the section above speaks of framing of information within images, grounded theory is a much more concrete method for the collection of data. While it is important to use rhetorical theory as both theory and method, it is also helpful to ground it in methodologically rigorous theories. Grounded theory lends itself to the study of images. There are multiple ways to read a single image and in order to conceptualize these diverse meanings; one must categorize these signs in order to build a narrative. Grounded theory was created by two sociologists, Barney G. Glaser and Anselm L.
Strauss in the late 1960’s and is still a widely used method today, albeit in slightly
different incarnations. Both argued that this method was significant to the study of
people. A sound method gives data more credence and thus scholars would take it more
seriously. At this time, qualitative research was not receiving respect in the sociological
field and therefore Glaser and Strauss, while conducting research on dying patients in
hospitals, created a highly systematic system of analyzing data. In trying to justify their
work they came up with an alternative method for non-positivistic work that was as
rigorous, if not more so, than the work of social scientists. As Kathy Charmaz states,
“Glaser and Strauss invited their readers to use grounded theory strategies flexibly in
their own ways” (Charmaz 9). Grounded theory can be used with multiple projects in
many different ways. The strength of grounded theory being is it is not a stagnate theory
that can only be used in certain cases, but on the other hand, some may argue that
because of its fluid/non-standardized nature it is not useful.

Grounded theory has two main features. The first is that theory comes from the
“relationships between data and the categories into which they are coded”, the second
being that “codes and categories are mutable until late in the project” because the
researcher can change the scope of the project until his/her theory makes sense (Lindlof
and Taylor 218). The former suggests that theory is situated in the data and not in a
general hypothesis. One must reject their preconceived notions and prejudices and
examine the data for patterns that may create new theory. On the other hand, the main
issue with the latter feature is that if the researcher is continuously altering the study, the
study may never have an end. One can always find different connections within the data,
but one must explore most important connections to the overall study.
According to Lindlof and Taylor, there are initially two kinds of coding in grounded theory. The first, open coding, is the initial coding of data that occurs very early on in the process. Data is collected (in terms of interviews or surveys) and then examined line by line to find categories for further analysis. They state that, “this stage of coding is ‘unrestricted’ because the analyst has not yet decided the range of categories or how the categories are defined, and has not yet unitized the coding procedure” (219). During this, the researcher should feel free to try to randomly connect different themes together. The second, in vivo coding, is used simultaneously as open coding. In vivo coding is simply an examination of the “terms used by the social actors themselves” (220). These observations help to further ground the work in the actual words of participants by creating categories that reflect trends in the data.

A practical component of grounded theory is creating a codebook and using memos. This book can be used to show all categories possible in the study. It is an easy way to organize data into themes/theories. A researcher would line by line examine their data, come up with categories and place these into a reference book in order to find more connections. Here, one can place the ‘decision’ rules in terms of what sorts of general themes are being found. With this, memo writing is the form of analysis that directly relates to the data itself. As the researcher examines the data, he/she will write memos that will help to eventually code patterns and theories. One can explore their codes in greater depth and help brain storm with these memos (Denzin and Lincoln 368-369). This method then assists the researcher in pulling together theory from the memos into an overarching argument through axial coding.
In this dissertation, I apply the grounded theory approach to text, photographs, videos, and paintings/artwork. As we have seen throughout this chapter, rhetorical theorists tend to mix theory and method together without being transparent with how they actually analyze images. Often, it seems that scholars pick images that are most intriguing to them or the photographs that are most controversial or images that are already well known. Additionally, the actual method of their study is sometimes unclear. In effort to find an effective method, I use grounded theory as a base for my own method. Through the use of grounded theory, textual analysis, visual rhetoric, and a focused site, I create a concrete method for analysis of anti-torture nonprofit websites. While many of the examples of grounded theory use mainly text-based material, it is still a useful method to use when analyzing images. In the same way that we are taught to “read” images, we can also analyze them using a grounded theory approach. For this study, I ground myself in the primary images that are on four nonprofit websites (that I will explain in the next section). I code the information and inferences from the images in much the same way that one would code written text. I use both open and in vivo coding as I examine the images of torture survivors from the following websites.

Sites and Method

This is a dissertation about torture survivor advocacy nonprofit websites and how they represent their clients. I focus mainly on one primary site, partially because of my own connection to it, but also because Freedom from Torture has the most sophisticated and developed website of all of its peers. Freedom from Torture’s website (formerly the Medical Foundation for the Care of Victims of Torture) (http://www.freedomfromtorture.org/) is a great example of an online space that adapts
with the times. The website has grown over the years to include many more diverse representations of survivors of torture. That being said, its representations of survivors of torture are still sometimes problematic. However, Freedom from Torture seems to be able to learn from its mistakes. Because of this trait, I examine both an older version of the site, when it was called the Medical Foundation for the Care of Victims of Torture, and the current one as Freedom from Torture. It has by far has changed the most (compared to the other similar sites) over the time restraints of the dissertation project. I use Freedom from Torture as the basis of a model of anti-torture nonprofit website development, that I will discuss in the following section. The reason is to show the growth of these websites to map out their general stages of development.

The goal is to help future and current anti-torture websites to avoid some of the more problematic stages. Freedom from Torture is headquartered in London, England, but has several locations throughout the United Kingdom. As well as conducting an analysis of their website, I compare it to three other similar anti-torture nonprofit websites. The point of this is to situate Freedom from Torture in the world of torture advocacy and to discuss the representations of survivors more broadly. I also examine Redress (http://www.redress.org/) which is also based in London that focuses on the legal rights of torture survivors (created by a white survivor of torture). I then move to the United States and look at two more organizations. The first is the Program for Torture Victims (http://www.ptvla.org/index.php), which is based in Los Angeles, California. Then, I examine Torture Abolition and Survivor Support Coalition (http://tassc.org/blog/), which was created, in part, by Sister Dianna Ortiz (the nun that I
saw in Mexico which started my journey towards the study of these types of organizations).

The method I chose for this dissertation is a combination of visual rhetoric and textual analysis with a grounded theory approach. This is significant because of the importance that is placed on the image in society. I am most interested in how images are being used on websites in order to sell certain ideologies. The image is part of the success of the promotion of nonprofits. Also, since my own observations and experiences relate to one of the organizations, I will include some aspects of my own participant observation. In this piece, I conduct a textual analysis of images, videos, and the surrounding text of torture survivors. The analysis of the websites will be limited to the time period after September 11th to the present. I choose this era because of the resurgence of discussions surrounding torture issues that were openly discussed by governments, especially during the war on terror. In order to capture the images over this time period, I will use the Internet Archive: The Wayback Machine (http://www.archive.org/web/web.php) for those sites that it is available for. There are many nonprofits that specifically deal with torture, but not all of them are image heavy. Additionally, I am particularly interested in those that have been updated consistently over the years. I will use screen captures of the main page and any related linked pages that have images that are predominantly displayed. Primarily, I use several nonprofits that are based in the United States and England. These two countries seem to have some of the strongest anti-torture activist nonprofits and also have governments that have been in many controversies surrounding torture. Torture is a global event that is difficult to corner into one geographical area. Many organizations may be based in one country, but
have offices in others. Also, many of these organizations take on issues with many
different countries and give assistance for survivors from all over the world. I will
especially focus on Freedom from Torture (formerly The Medical Foundation for the
Care of Victims of Torture) because that is the organization that I have had the most
personal experience with and it has always had many images on its website over the
years.

In this dissertation, I collected images through screen captures of each website as
they currently exist. I captured all of these images in May of 2012 for consistency
purposes. My analysis is primarily focused on the front-page stories; however, I took
screen captures of every page that has at least one large image. Often front-page stories
led me to other pages on the website with large images. Also, I used the Wayback
Machine to collect screen captures of each website in May starting from 2001 to May
2012. However, not all websites have the same months captured on the Wayback
Machine, so I was forced to use the closest month. Also, the Wayback Machine is
sometimes is blocked by the host website at a certain point where they no longer allow
themselves to be metacrawled, so some websites have less captures than others. Also,
even if the website has been archived, sometimes the archive will be retroactively
deleted. Often, an Internet researcher must do the archiving herself in order to have a full
archive of images. Unfortunately, I only have a few years of specific websites saved, so I
had to rely on other sources for certain information.

In order to capture images and videos on these websites, I used a combination of
Screen Capture Elite 2.0.0.23 which is a Firefox Add-On, RealPlayer and Zotero. The
images and videos were saved by their place on the website and their date. I backed these
images up on my own computer, a backup flash drive, and the program Dropbox. After the images were collected, they were sorted and analyzed by their specific criteria and patterns. Each image was analyzed and deconstructed for their significant signs. Also, the text surrounding the image was analyzed for frequent themes. I used a grounded theory approach for this project. Once the images and related stories were organized by themes, I started with open and in vivo coding. Secondly, I created a “codebook” that assisted me in organizing the codes I found in the material. Thirdly, I created memos in order to conceptualize the thematic meanings that I am finding. Lastly, I used axial coding in order to examine and pull together these themes under several overarching theories. Through this process and observations of many patterns on these websites, I created the Anti-Torture Nonprofit Website Development Model. The model is meant to show a general roadmap of these websites as they grown into using more sophisticated media and representations of their clients. I believe that this model will be useful to all kinds of nonprofits as they create content for their website. The goal is to attract an audience while moving away from stereotypical views of survivors of torture.
As I gathered the images for this project, I began to notice several patterns on the multiple websites. These patterns assisted me in better understanding how these websites developed over time. Since the Freedom from Torture website was the most changed over the time period of this dissertation, it became the primary focus for analysis. I was able to create a roadmap of development that tracks the general progress of these sites. In doing so, I hope to allow both scholars and nonprofits of all types to better analyze the way that they represent their clients on their websites. Nonprofit websites have several purposes. First, websites are a main way of advertising both the mission and the actions of the
organization. Secondly, websites are a place to gain donations. One of the central features of all of these websites is that they offer information to those who are searching for help from torture or to an individual or organization who wants to refer someone. However, not all anti-torture nonprofit websites are at the same level of sophistication. In the following section, I examine the general trends in the history of these websites in order to create a model of anti-torture nonprofit website development.

Generally, these sites start off in more unsophisticated and sometimes problematic ways and then grow into more complex information centers that offer interesting ways of understanding torture. It is important to understand the growth of these websites in order to see reoccurring patterns that can be followed or avoided by other websites. These stages are not set in stone and there are transitional times that may overlap each other, but generally, these are the main stages that I have observed. One important item to note before I begin theses stages is that while we can argue that the online and offline world is becoming more synonymous for individuals, often these organizations are divorced from their online representation. So, while I can seem to be very critical of some of these websites, the organizations themselves are doing really significant work for survivors. This critique is meant to assist in empowering the representations of their clients.

The first stage of the development of these types of websites is very basic. The point of this stage is to mainly get their information up on the web. The simplicity of these websites may be due to the technological limitations of the time, lack of resources, or a general feeling that the work of the organization exists offline and therefore doesn’t need to focus on the online world. Items like their mission statement and contact information will be central on the site. While this project focuses mainly on
organization’s online presence, each group does incredibly significant work amongst the populations of torture survivors. So, when I argue that some nonprofit websites are problematic, this is not a direct condemnation on the organization itself. In particular, anti-torture organizations provide services for survivors that other nonprofits simply do not have the resources or knowledge base to provide.

Another significant section of these early websites is a focus on a donation link on the front page. The donation link is normally somewhere that is easily accessible. It would seem that often the nonprofits during this stage use the online world primarily to gain additional financial support. The online world is often understood as a place to expand donorship, especially to a global level. Prior to the ubiquity of the Internet, these small nonprofits would focus on mailing lists, but now this newer media space has made global advertising more egalitarian. So, anti-torture websites that deal with the international issue of torture can reach potential donors in many different areas of the world (at least the ones that are technologically able). However, this online world is limited because of the quantity of websites that are out there. In an earlier chapter, I discussed the role of gatekeepers in this world. Freedom from Torture must compete with the large organizations that spend a great deal more money on advertising and marketing. Why would I give money to Freedom from Torture when I can donate to Amnesty International? These websites need to stand out against the crowd in order to find a new source of funding. So, one of the main issues with the first stage of development is that these websites do very little to make their website unique or even fluid. The websites themselves are very basic and only have a few images which mainly consist of photographs. The images are either of events from the organization or images of implied
torture (I will explain implied torture later on in the piece). These websites tend to not have any videos or other forms of multimedia.

In addition, these online spaces create a one-way line of communication where the website offers information, but very few places for a donor or survivor to interact with the website itself. These websites have spaces to send e-mails to the organization, but these are all private and there are no comment threads. The user can communicate on the website by donating. The space is also set up in order to give information to survivors who want to research organizations that will help them with their future. Of course, the survivor would have to have access to a computer and Internet and the knowledge that these organizations exist in order to be able to take advantage of these resources. Additionally, this stage has very few quotes from the survivors themselves. Survivors are used more for their representation than their voices. So, we may see images of survivors and possibly even a few of their stories, but the survivors or only representations of themselves rather than develop and empowered individuals.

Another component of this stage is that the organization uses the online space as simply a reflection of their offline work. They post many images from the organization and its events with an emphasis on their own efforts to fight against torture. While this is obviously an important part of any nonprofit website, I argue that users expect a different and unique experience on modern websites. So, essentially, the online space needs to transform basic information into a multimedia spectacle for individuals to continue to return to on a regular basis. However, these websites tend to be much more static than this; Updates are few and far between. Often, there is only one page that gets refreshed on a somewhat regular basis. The few images on the site tend to stay the same for
extended periods of time there are long intervals where the website stays exactly the same. The danger of these types of spaces is that there really is no reason for individuals to return after their first viewing.

If these websites are lucky enough to get a refresh, they will move into stage two which is quite a bit more dynamic than the prior stage. This stage tends to build upon the first stage and leaves many of the original sections of the website in tact. I think I can safely generalize by saying that all nonprofit websites have sections (in one form or another) for their mission statement, contact information, and donation links. So, once these basic components are set and the organization wants to strengthen their online presence, there is the development of a more complex website with many more links. The website becomes a place that goes beyond the physical actions of the organization and incorporates components of an online environment. Often narratives of both survivors and nonprofit workers are used in order to give the website itself more complexity. These narratives are often used to persuade individuals to help with the cause of fighting against torture.

At this stage, there is a tremendous increase in the amount of images. The images themselves become larger and more sophisticated; often including both professional looking photographs, paintings or other pieces of art. Interestingly, some of the images become artistic and look as if they could be hanging in a museum. In stage one, we often see photographs that appear to be stock rather than unique to the organization. This stage includes many images that can only be seen on the specific website. The images themselves tend to be of survivors of torture and/or the environments or implements of torture. Some of the themes include images of hands and cells. Additionally, these images
are coupled with more developed testimonies of torture survivors themselves. Often, one will see prompts that encourage us to click on past a short quote to see what this person has to say about their experiences. Again, these images tend to emphasize implied torture rather than the actual event of torture itself. I argue that these images are often problematic because they (sometimes unintentionally or at least unwillingly) reinforce some of the stereotypes of survivors. Essentially, narratives of the victim are created in order to convince people that these individuals need assistance. While these depictions are not explicitly racialized, they often follow a long tradition of presenting the other as disempowered and victimized.

This type of narrative is not specific to only anti-torture nonprofits, but has been part of the genre of nonprofits in general for a long time. Imagine the narrative of the starving and helpless African child. This message is steeped in racial overtones, but is never explicitly expressed in the advertisements themselves. So, these websites are dealing with issues that have a lot of baggage that is automatically associated with the work. Another issue with these images is that they often have no background information associated with them. We do have the images of survivors who have a connected story, but the majority of the images are of individuals or places that have no story. The images stand-alone and are enthymematic. We are to assume that these individuals have really been tortured and that these spaces have really been used for torture. However, there isn’t any evidence to suggest this beyond the fact that they are on an anti-torture website. The issue with this is that the boundary between real and simulated torture blurs. Individuals have the right to know when these acts are being recreated.
Additionally, survivors may not identify with the specific acts of torture that are being depicted or the acts themselves may be offensive to them and drive them away. Another problematic issue is that perhaps it would be useful to have sections or captions that tell the audience that the photograph is a representation, so that survivors and other groups would know that these individuals are not being exploited. I argue that the more transparent the system, the more likely people are to participate. Another added component of this stage is the use of videos. These videos tend to not be incredibly sophisticated and they are very short. Often, they will be of individuals who work at the organization or occasionally of survivors of torture. These videos are not incredibly sophisticated and their production value is very low. The videos themselves can be as problematic as other images on the website in terms of representation. Torture survivors tend to be depicted as one-dimensional. The survivor is shown only in relationships to his/her experience with torture and perhaps a bit about the aftermath. Rarely, do we hear about the positive gains that these individuals have made. Sometimes, the organization will link to a video that has been created by another more powerful organization that has produced torture related videos. One of the positive aspects of this stage is that torture survivors are starting to gain a greater presence on these websites. The survivor has a limited voice, but we start to see more testimonies and development narratives that create a complex picture of contemporary torture. The audience is given a lot more to ponder than in stage one. Finally, the site is updated on a much more frequent basis, but the main structure of the site always stays the same.

Stage three is another step that builds upon the stages that have come before it; however, it also transcends several of the imperfections of stage two. Here, the website is
better organized and easy to navigate. The pages work well together and the overall message of the website is clear and streamlined. One would use the website like any other modern website or blog, in fact, often the website looks very similar to contemporary news sites or blogs. Most users would already be comfortable with this configuration and therefore would be able to easily navigate the site. Also, the website is updated much more frequently. The information and news on the main page changes at least once a week and the entire site becomes more dynamic. If one were to view the website and then come back a month later, while the structure stays the same, the content will have drastically changed. Also, the website will have a modern and slick interface. The site will be indistinguishable from other similar websites of the time. The website will have multiple types of images, including cartoons and artwork. These images will be of a much greater quality and quantity than in stage two. Also, many of the images will be labeled as real or not. The user will have a greater knowledge of when the website uses models for their photoshoots.

Also, the website will heavily promote their other social media accounts like Facebook and Twitter. With the growth of these types of networking websites, these nonprofits need not worry about creating their own infrastructure. Donors and fans can interact on Facebook and Twitter without the organization needing to build an extensive discussion space. One of the most significant parts of stage three is that the voice of survivors is a central component of the space. These websites will focus not only on the survivors and their empowerment, but create several spaces where the survivor will be given space to speak and be creative. These spaces are by no means perfect and are often being improved, but it is a step towards allowing survivors to create their own
representations. Survivors are encouraged to speak, but also create paintings, poems, and stories. The website itself becomes a space where healing and marketing of these stories becomes more symbiotic. The survivors learn these important life skills and are able to showcase them in a way that is less exploitative. During this stage, survivors are shown in acts of empowerment and creation throughout the website. Many of the images of implied torture are removed for more progressive ones. Again, these images are not perfect, but they have moved beyond the representation of only the victim. Lastly, this stage is one where donors become more active, the donor/audience’s work is also showcased on the website. The donor is encouraged to take an active role on the website in many different ways.

These three stages are not always a linear process, however, it seems that several of these websites continue to improve their representations of their clients. In my observations, I argue that these nonprofits typically come from a positive place, they want to serve their clients in the best way possible, however, they tend to build off of older established models of representation. Rather than focus on a symbiotic type relationship of empowerment and marketing of their clients, they paint a picture of their clients as being third world victims. Often, we see images of dark skinned individuals who are behind cells or in the shadows. Occasionally, there are images of the scars of physical torture, but even these realities of the event do little to empower the survivor. Additionally, if there are only images of the physical aspects of torture, it may lessen the impact of the emotional and psychological effects. Nevertheless, these images do little to show the survivor and the audience individuals who have successfully moved past their past traumatic events. The reliance on the older themes of the victim is not only
problematic, but also not very interesting in our contemporary media rich environment. The victimized other has been used so long that it no longer holds the same kind of psychological weight that it once did. Many have grown up on this type of image and have learned to ignore it. I believe that by moving towards a more complex depiction of the survivor of torture will be more stimulating for a media savvy public. As we will see in the following sections and chapters, perfecting a vision of torture that both takes into account the terrible nature of the crime of torture and includes a fully developed representation of a survivor is no easy task. One cannot fault the organization for some of the issues that we will see later in this piece; rather, I hope to open up a dialogue that will encourage these organizations and similar ones to push themselves to think beyond stereotypical representations of torture survivors. As individuals use mobile technology in ever increasing ways, nonprofit organizations are moving towards an online-based marketing system. These organizations need to push their websites to stage three of the model and beyond.

The next section of this dissertation will begin with an analysis of Freedom from Torture’s older website when the organization was called The Medical Foundation for the Victims of Torture. I partially use this model to help contextualize the growth of the website and to show how Freedom from Torture has adapted to its clients over the years. I use the next chapter to compare the website to its more current graphic heavy incarnation. The growth of this website is significant because it shows how representation of clients can change over time with the proper resources and reflection. The work of a nonprofit is very difficult and time consuming, so it is understandable that sometimes their websites are not the priority of the organization, however, it is now one of the first
sites of information that people see. Nonprofits should put more resources into these sites in order to empower both the organization and their clients.
CHAPTER III. THE TRIALS OF THE MEDICAL FOUNDATION FOR THE CARE OF VICTIMS OF TORTURE

Freedom from Torture has long attempted to address issues of globalized torture through their own activism. Obviously, their online presence is only one small component of their organization, but progressively their website has become more and more sophisticated. There is little in common between their website in 2001 and their website today. Comparatively, many of the other torture websites that I will analyze in later chapters do not change anywhere near as much. Over the past decade, Freedom from Torture has attended to and improved their website and has kept it on par with other contemporary nonprofit websites. There may be many reasons for their maintenance of their online presence; Freedom from Torture might simply have more resources than other anti-torture nonprofits. However, in order to compete in a globalized context, a nonprofit dealing with global issues must focus on expanding their donor pool. Torture itself has no political boundaries. Occasionally, individuals are extradited to other parts of the world in order to be “legally” tortured by so-called civilized western states. Also, survivors often escape from one country to another in order to seek asylum from their tormentors. Therefore, nonprofits addressing issues of torture are dealing with a global issue. In this neo-liberal economic climate, small nonprofits must continuously strive to expand their reach to gain funding support. A globalized activism requires an easily accessible global presence. Freedom from Torture has successfully capitalized on this need by creating a dynamic Internet space.

Through the growth of new mediated communication technologies, globalized forms of activism are increasingly possible. While activism across borders is nothing
new, the Internet has created a space that capitalizes on groups with similar interests across the globe. While optimist may view this modern development as heaven sent, often these arrangements complicate issues as much as they solve them. The work that Freedom from Torture conducts is a type of highly organized activism. One of the intriguing aspects of many of these anti-torture organizations is that they do not focus solely on recovery and healing. For the organizations to address issues of torture, they must speak out against those that torture, namely state governments.

These organizations speak out against different state actors with varying degrees of success, but typically, it is a significant part of their mission. Simultaneously, nonprofits must be wary of their interactions with governments, especially the ones that they work under, because they need to have some connections within states in order to push for change. One can assume that if nonprofits or non-state actors and states were constantly at each other’s throats, it would be difficult to accomplish anything. While the nonprofit can be a check on state power, often the situation is much more financially and politically complicated. A significant way of examining this type of activism is through the lens of Internationalism. As defined by Sidney Tarrow, internationalism is “a dense, triangular structure of relations among states, nonstate actors, and international institutions, and the opportunities this produces for actors to engage in collective action at different levels of this system” (Tarrow 25). So, we must understand the multiple actors in the system that go beyond Freedom from Torture. There are pressures placed upon nonprofit organizations that go well beyond just their donors.

These pressures are difficult to quantify, but we can see them in some of the connections I have already spoken about early in this dissertation. Freedom from Torture
and other anti-torture nonprofits fit into the category of transnational activists (43). Again, the nature of this type of activism is necessary when dealing with a global issue. Another significant aspect of anti-torture activism is its externalizing claims (145). Many of the nonprofit organizations that I explore exist in countries where torture is less of an issue. Typically, survivors in these groups escape their homeland and seek asylum in western countries. So, part of the mission of the nonprofit is to deal with claims outside of their own state. We can also think about this in terms of donorship as well. Since torture is a global issue, this type of internationalism is not always a straightforward and easy process.

Coupled with this type of internationalism is a growing sense of what Clifford Bob calls a “global consciousness”. While we become more globally connected through the economy and technology, there is also a sense of an ethical connection. Not only should individuals and states worry about what is happening globally, there is also a need to expand to all areas of the globe. A global consciousness sees individuals as citizens of the world and it can create a kind of faux-universal bill of rights. However, as Bob argues, these universal claims that are taken on by the nonprofit are difficult to pin down. The scope of the reality of the world is just too great to be fully taken on by nonprofits (7). Then, why are some claims more focused on than others? Part of the answer deals with the economic situation that many NGOs have to deal with. In a modern neo-liberal context, there is a scarcity of funding for these organizations and often they have to compete with each other for these limited resources. In fact, there appears to be a hierarchical system in place that makes it difficult for newer nonprofits to exist. Bob argues that there are two main types of nonprofits in these systems, gatekeepers and
followers. Gatekeepers are those organizations with a long track history of success and ample financial resources.

These NGOs tend to be the big players in the field; examples are Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch. Alternatively, followers have to deal with the gatekeepers in order to be successful. An organization would do well to have a recommendation from Human Rights Watch because Gatekeepers have a monopoly over resources. This type of system makes sense in a world where money is scarce and individuals and businesses only want to donate to reputable sources (18-19). However, this can cause a great deal of tension between many different nonprofits. Can an organization exist and thrive without the support of these gatekeepers? This binary system seems to explain some of the relationships within NGOs, but not all of them. It is problematic to lump all of the large and small organizations together. Freedom from Torture is much smaller than an Amnesty International, but seems to be able to exist in a somewhat separate world. Gatekeepers are powerful, but their reach matters more to nonprofits that deal with mainstream issues. Again, as Bob points out earlier, these organizations pick and choose the issues that are most important at a specific historical context. While torture is always lurking in the shadows, it is not always on the minds of those that regularly donate to nonprofits.

To complicate the matter even more, NGO’s themselves are becoming more and more closely aligned with the State. Sangeeta Kamat states that, “Accordingly, we may give the label NGO to those organizations that engender a corporatist identity among their members, that work within the existing political forms of the state, and do not facilitate a reinterpretation of the material basis for a collective identity” (161). Kamat is
attempting to demonstrate the difference between grassroots movements and larger organizations in India, but it seems like an important way to understand the connection of some NGOs to states. The danger is that sometime the organization can so closely aligned with the state that they become just an arm of their policies. Kamat uses Gramsci’s idea of “private organisms” to understand just how the state uses and polices these organizations in order to maintain their dominance. In a way, the NGOs are used in order to extend capitalism to all those that receive assistance (162). As one examines anti-torture nonprofit websites, they need to watch for challenges to hegemonic capitalistic discourse. As we will see further in this piece, anti-torture nonprofits walk the line between challenging and reinforcing or ignoring government policy. In particular, many of these organizations seem to focus on challenging the developing states rather than the western ones that they exist within.

However, anti-torture nonprofits have a difficult battle ahead of them because the idea of torture itself has been globalized. Naomi Klein claims a direct relationship between neo-liberalistic capitalism and globalized torture. In her book, *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism*, she depicts the long history of bringing developing countries into the mold of neo-liberalism. She is interested in both tangible torture and what she calls the “metaphor of torture” (19). This metaphor can sometimes blur into real torture. Klein’s main argument in the book is that in order to introduce a deregulated economy, many economists have pushed toward the “shock doctrine”. The shock doctrine forces a nation or specific geographic location into a state of panic or even war in order to encourage the adaptation of the free market. Klein argues that in the same way that torture is used to soften up a victim; the shock doctrine is used to soften up a
nation. She goes into very extensive case studies, particularly in Latin America during the several United States backed military coups. Many of the dictatorial regimes in Latin America tortured and murdered thousands and thousands of individuals in order to maintain their control. As long as they did not challenge the free market, they were left up to their own devices. She argues that, “…The Chicago School Project in Latin America was quite literally built on the secret torture camps where thousands of people who believed in a different country disappeared” (143). The growth of the modern capitalism is connected to torture (i.e. Latin America, Afghanistan, Iraq, etc.), which directly influenced the creation of nonprofits that had to deal with the consequences of said torture. The pressures of the market also influence how survivors of torture are represented.

As anti-torture nonprofits develop their online presence, there is the potential for the growth of marketing empowerment. The evolution of the digital native and the use the bodies of survivors of torture for visual gratification will continue just as exploitations of native bodies always has. We live in a society where instant gratification is a priority. Individuals demand that they witness the visual happenings of atrocities. The anti-torture nonprofit must work within these demands in order to survive in a globalized market.

**An Effort against Torture**

Nonprofit websites often are well intentioned, but they all have their flaws in terms of how they represent their clients. As I have stated throughout this dissertation, the following critiques are not a condemnation of any anti-torture nonprofit in particular. Instead, I compelled to discuss the problematic ways in which many nonprofits market
their clients in an effort to improve these representations. I believe that the market can be satisfied in ways that both benefit the survivor and the organization. Freedom from Torture has vastly improved the ways in which it represents its clients on the Internet. However, similarly to many other anti-torture nonprofits, this organization has its own humble roots. In the development model discussed above, I argue that three is the most empowering and complex stage for these organizations. While the process is not always linear, Freedom from Torture has followed this path. This chapter focuses on Freedom from Torture when the organization was called The Medical Foundation for the Care of Victims of Torture. The time period that I am most focused on during this piece is when the website was in stage two of development. I use this chapter to set up the following one where Freedom from Torture vastly changes its website and really improves the ways in which they digitally represent their clients. During this stage (2003 to about 2011), The Medical Foundation has moved past the first stage by creating a more complex digital environment. The site itself in many ways created a gateway for clients and individuals who were interested in helping out the cause. However, I argue that this stage is still problematic because the site used older tropes of the victimized “other” in order to sell the idea of anti-torture reform. This chapter examines mainly images and videos of survivors on the site.

In the following section, I will conduct a close reading of several videos on the Medical Foundation’s website using techniques of visual rhetorical analysis – specifically examining visual narrative and metaphors. These videos use the trope of the subaltern image in order to attempt to affectively reach out to potential donors. I start by briefly analyzing the website itself. I argue here that by using narrative and metaphoric
techniques through the lens of Jennifer Ballengee, I can contextualize how this nonprofit uses bodies. Importantly, I do not want to criticize the goals of the Medical Foundation, but rather push us all to think more about how representation is created through bodies that do not have much agency in this specific process. This is a very complicated process that I do not have the space to fully develop here, but it seems that there are many pressures on how survivors are represented, in terms of the survivors themselves, the producers, and the environment surrounding the nonprofit. The following is an attempt to begin to understand the process through the text itself.

**Freedom From Torture**

The organization that I have spent the most time with both online and off is called Freedom from Torture. The original name of the organization was The Medical Foundation for the Care of Victims of Torture. Of all the organizations I examined for this project, Freedom from Torture’s website had the most dramatic transformation. In fact, the entire website was overhauled a few months before the last set of images were collected. Freedom from Torture has continuously changed with the times and seems to be always tweaking their Internet presence. In order to examine this change, this section starts with the older version of the website and then moves into its current incarnation. Freedom from Torture has constantly tried to represent the empowerment of their survivors. The organization has occasionally stumbled, but has managed to still be one of the strongest websites when it comes to representations of survivors of torture.

Freedom from Torture is an incredibly significant nonprofit in the fight against torture. They offer free services to all torture victims who seek asylum in the UK. Their website states that “Advocacy and media work ensures that torture survivors' stories are
honestly and fairly portrayed, and that pressure is constantly maintained on government bodies through various lobbying and campaigning activities” (Freedom from Torture).

Freedom from Torture was started in 1985 and is the only organization that’s sole mission is to help with the treatment of torture survivors. According to the website, over 50,000 people have been referred to the organization over the past 30 years and people from 79 countries have received treatment (particularly from Sri Lanka, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Sudan and Iran). Importantly, the organization offers many different forms of treatment to the victims of torture. They state that:

The MF (now Freedom from Torture) offers medical consultation, examination and forensic documentation of injuries, psychological treatment and support, and practical help. Central to the MF’s vision are its efforts to educate the public and decision makers about torture and its consequences, while advocacy work strives to ensure that the UK honours its international obligations towards survivors of torture, asylum seekers and refugees. (Freedom from Torture)

Freedom From Torture is a site where people can come for help, but it obviously needs funding in order to continue operations. In 2008, it received close to £5,000 in donations from individuals. The Freedom From Torture’s website has been online since 2000 and has greatly expanded its content since then. According to Internet Archive: The Wayback Machine (which is a meta-crawling surface that documents the internet), the domain name (torturecare.org.uk) was purchased in 1996, but it has no record of the site until 2000 (Internet Archive: The Wayback Machine, http://www.archive.org/web/web.php).

In order to show the growth of Freedom from Torture’s Website, I first look at an older incarnation. In particular, I focus on one section that has since been removed. The
section is composed of several video testimonies of survivors of torture (as well as videos from employees of the nonprofit). The videos are very problematic because they seem to reinforce the role of the survivor of torture as being the victim. The survivors are placed before a camera and are asked several very personal questions. To my knowledge, this project was one of the first large scale attempts to depict survivors individual stories in video form on the website. There had been several video projects before this, but this one is much more intimate and less flashy. The survivors are literally right in front of the camera for the audience to consume. However, around 2010, the videos were no longer prominent on the website and were much harder find. I even had to e-mail the organization to get the link. By 2011, the section was completely removed and the new design of the website was complete. Freedom from Torture had decided to move into another direction and decided to remove all of the content. Again, this shows an organization that is willing to adapt their online presence over time.

**Time as The Medical Foundation For the Care of Victims of Torture**

In order to be consistent and because during this time period the organization refers to itself by its own name, in this section Freedom from Torture will be called The Medical Foundation (or MF for short). One important section of the original Medical Foundation website is one that included several videos. Unfortunately, much of the original website has been removed from the Wayback Machine. I assume that this is because of the organizations name change. However, I was able to capture bits and pieces of the website from the Wayback Machine and my own research of the site itself over the years. There is no easy way to find histories of websites on the Internet. As cyber scholars, we sometimes have to piece evidence together in very much the same that a
historian would when studying a significant past event. The common assumption is that once something is put on the Internet, it exists there for all eternity. While this may be true for a Facebook profile picture, many websites often have substantial changes without being archived. This is especially true for smaller nonprofit websites. Therefore, this section does not have all of the direct links/images of the original and now nonexistent versions. While I do not have all of the direct references for this section, I find the work to be relevant to this case study. Some of the following information may be the only record of this site in its original form. In a future research project, I would like to contact Freedom from Torture and see if they archive any of their own website information. Luckily, I do have copies of the original videos that were posted in the “Speaking Out” section, which is highlighted in this piece.

The Medical Foundation’s website has been online since 2000 and has greatly expanded its content since then. According to Internet Archive: The Wayback Machine (which is a meta-crawling surface that documents the internet), the domain name (torturecare.org.uk) was purchased in 1996, but it has no record of the site until 2000 (Internet Archive: The Wayback Machine, http://www.archive.org/web/web.php). At the top of the site was a simple banner stating the name of the organization with the motto: ‘Caring for Victims of Torture.’ While the original site is rather plain, it does have several images on each page; however, due to the fickle nature of the Internet those image links have been long broken. Unfortunately, any comparison of images between older versions of the site with its current state is near impossible. The original site has plenty of text (with a black background and orange font), including three articles about activist art at the organization, the trial of Augusto Pinochet, and doctors at the Medical
Foundation refuting the denial of torture abuse in India. Along the side of the site, there are links under ‘Content’ that are composed of the typical ‘About Us’, ‘News’, ‘Support Us,’ etc. The home page consists of the following quote: “The Medical Foundation for the Care of Victims of Torture provides care and rehabilitation for individuals and their families who have been subjected to torture and other forms of organised violence. Founded in 1985, it is an independent charity and the only organisation of its kind in the United Kingdom” (“Medical Foundation”, http://www.torturecare.org.uk/). Interestingly enough, the Medical Foundation is still the only organization of its kind in the UK and arguably the world. This website debuted well before the era of web 2.0, and there are no interactive sections other than being able to contact the organization. One can donate and read stories about some victims of torture, but this is only way to interact with the site. The site, like many of its time, was meant to be a one-way line of communication for those who were interested in torture activism. The technology of the time did not allow for anything more intensive, especially with the slower speed of the Internet with many using dial up connections. In 2000, less than 5 percent of adults in the United States had broadband access in their home and even in 2009 it has only risen to around 60 percent (“Home Broadband Adoption”). Thus, many sites like the Medical Foundation simply could not have graphic intensive websites. However, the site also doesn’t give space for users to create dialogue about the issues related to torture, which was well within the ability of the Internet in 2000.

Ten years later, the website has expanded into a graphic heavy beast that is much more fitting to the expectations of a web savvy 21st century populous. There is almost no resemblance to its humble roots, and in fact, the site itself is overwhelming in
comparison. There are now several dozen links that offer everything from the basics about the MF, to videos, to statics of who the organization has helped over the years. The color scheme has changed to different shades of light blue with a combination of white and blue text. The initial quote about the organization is no longer on the front page and it is much more streamlined in terms of the interaction of images and text. By this, I mean that often text is layer across images or colors that helped emphasize the story or link. Along the left hand side are quick links, an image of an upcoming program of a one day course where people can learn how to work with people seeking asylum from torture, and below that is a link to their RSS feed. The center has a large image of a prison cell, and beneath that are image links to both a recent fundraiser and videos of torture survivor stories, followed by recent news stories related to the MF. Along the right hand side are links to a BBC 4 fundraiser, a map of Medical Foundation locations in Britain, and an area for donors to pledge money. Overall, the redesign (over a 10 year period) is very similar to many other contemporary websites and would be familiar to a modern audience.

Significantly, after a close inspection of the website, there are actually not many images of victims or acts of torture. This is contrary to what I expected to find because the newsletters that were being distributed during my time at the Medical Foundation often would have many more images of recreated torture situations or acts. While this is important, the few images and videos that do exist are even more significant because they stand out. Also, the MF is one of the few sites that have video testimonies from both health providers and victims. I am most interested in these videos because of their scarcity on the Internet. While one can find many graphic depictions of torture through a
simple Google search, there really aren’t many forums where the voices of torture survivors are highlighted. Significantly, these videos represent the movement from test to a more Youtube culture. This is an important change for nonprofits that otherwise could not afford such public advertisements. These videos and interactions need close analyses in terms of power and representation.

From the home page one can click on a small link toward the bottom of the center of the page that has an image of a man with white text. The text states “Speaking Out” and “Video Interviews” (“Medical Foundation”, http://www.torturecare.org.uk/speakingout/). After selecting the link, the user is sent to a much different looking page. This page uses much darker colors including grey, black, and red. At the top center of the page it is titled “Speaking Out” in large grey text. Below this are several sections of black and red tiles, and in the center is a large rectangle where one can play videos. The red tiles are all different videos of people who work at the Medical Foundation, victims of torture, doctors, etc. Also, in clockwise order from the left top corner, the following titles are placed around the main video box; “Treatment,” “MF Chief Executive,” “Arrival,” “Stories,” “Issues,” and “Funding.” As there are red tiles strewn in different patterns, one can assume that eventually many more will eventually be red. However, since starting this project, there have been no new videos added and in fact it is very hard to find the “Speaking Out” section. For several weeks, I had thought that the page had been taken down when I couldn’t find a link to it on the MF homepage. Interestingly, it also brought up no hits when one searched for it in their search engine. I contacted the organization and found out that it was still there, but have yet to find out why it is no longer publicized.
**Implied Acts of Torture**

Contrary to the belief of many, anti-torture nonprofit websites rarely show images of gratuitous torture. When asked about this project, many of my colleagues expect to be bombarded by descriptions of images that represent the worst of humanity. While torture is incredibly disturbing and images of torture (real or not) are a simple Google search away, nonprofit websites will very rarely use any shocking images. Images of graphic torture are not pleasant to witness, and many who visit a website like the Medical Foundation (Freedom from Torture), are not interested in seeing these images. Firstly, these images can be traumatic for those who have suffered similar tortures. Secondly, donors are also not particularly interested in seeing stomach-turning images when they enter the address. Anti-torture nonprofits walk a thin line between shocking their audience and not addressing the visuals of torture. Therefore, torturous acts are implied through certain familiar markers. We are witnessed to images of cells and dark scenes of individuals with their heads down or looking away from the camera. I will go into much greater detail with these symbols in the following chapters, especially when it comes to other anti-torture websites.

In particular, there tends to be several themes in these images and videos that imply torture. The first is an image that focuses on the place and environment of torture minus the tortured body. Often, the viewer is shown an empty dark prison-type cell or brutal rusty instruments of torture. The images themselves tend to be aesthetically pleasing, which adds to the feeling of unease. When I say aesthetically pleasing, I mean that these images tend have strong composition and are lit very well to convey a menacing feeling. Obviously, professional photographers have taken some of these
photographs. As someone who has spent a great deal of time staring at these images, I am often struck by how interesting the images are for nonprofit websites. There are not many gritty, real-time photographs from journalists out in the field that are posted on these sites. The professional styles of the images that are highlighted are similar to those on other nonprofit websites. However, the images on an anti-torture nonprofit website have some unique characteristics and convey several significant meanings. One is that these spaces and instruments are about to be used to torture someone. If we donate money, we will be able to stop the use of these crude forms of dehumanization. The other is that these implements of torture have been used in the past and will be continuously used in the future. Another form of torture images has the actual bodies (or representations) of torture survivors in them. Some include images of survivors in places of torture, contemplating torture, and empowering themselves after the act itself. The common theme throughout, other than the fact that these are supposedly survivors of torture, is that actual physical torture is not directly happening. We may see someone in a prison cell, but we do not see what is happening to the prisoner. One image that I will go into detail later shows the healed scars of torture on an individual’s back, but this is about as close as we get to torture. Also, there are several representations of these individuals in paintings and cartoons, but again it doesn’t display the act of torture itself. Therefore, the act itself is implied through contextual clues, but rarely shown. The significance of these images comes from the fact that the act is implied. The associated connotations would change drastically if the actual torture itself were shown. Now, there are varying degrees of success in the images themselves. I argue that images depicting an empowered survivor are more effective than those showing a victim.
Barbie Zelizer writes a fascinating book entitled *About to Die: How News Images Move the Public* about how images of implied death are used by journalists. She astutely argues that images, “Generally [offer] an affective and often gestalt-driven view of the word, they tend to be indexical-directing attention to something; material-having a tangible form, iconic and syntactically indeterminate-representative of something but in a fuzzy, porous way” (Zelizer 6). Zelizer believes that images may have the power to point the audience toward certain meanings, but more often then not, the meanings are ambiguous. Many individuals may have a very strong emotional and visceral reaction to a photograph, but it doesn’t necessarily mean that they will read it in the same way. While meanings that are associated with images are sometimes hard to pin down, this does not mean that journalist stay away from controversial images. Zelizer is most interested in images that focus indirectly on death. She calls this the, “as if” dimension of death and photography. Rather than focus on images of individuals who have been killed or who have died, journalists tend to use images that imply that death might happen or is certain to happen. In contrast, she argues that the “as is” graphic depictions of death are mostly avoided because they might shut down the conversation. Graphic images are not as prevalent as other mainstream ones (although may be becoming more familiar to younger generations of Internet friendly youth) and therefore, according to the author, stop the conversation. So rather than showing the graphic realities of death, often the images that are used imply that death is imminent (18).

She goes on to argue that “The about-to-die image thus provides an escape hatch for journalism, by which is counters its ambivalence about images and images of death by playing to a suggestive picture, sidesteps contradictory aspirations between the
realized and desired dimensions of news, and stays abreast of the tensions between journalism and the lager mediated environment without alienating any of its residents” (24). This statement is significant when dealing with controversial images. One must always keep their audience in mind when constructing a text. Particularly, American mainstream news sources have often been conservative in the images they decide to use. The “as if” images are often connected to some sort of text. However, she argues that, “not all texts are equal” (59). The texts can be captions, new stories, headlines, etc. that consist of different lengths and size fonts.

Zelizer breaks up the “as if” images into several distinct but related categories. The first are images presumed death. Presumed death is when there isn’t a great deal of specific information dealing with a tragic event. She argues that this area has to deal most with emotional understandings because the physical images are just not used. An example would be of a typhoon that destroys an entire country and the only images that are depicted are of water logged buildings. The second category is images that show possible death. These images often a bit more contextual information than the first, but they often are of individuals that are unknown. An example would be a wounded Afghani soldier that has no context. The audience is missing a great deal of information, but can conclude that perhaps the solider will pass away because of his/her wounds. She argues that these images symbolize a kind of hypothetical death that the audience has to work out from their own position. The last category is that of certain death. Certain death is when the audience is shown an image of an event where death is going to happen. An example would be an image of a solider pointing a gun against the head of a civilian. It is assumed that this moment is the civilian’s last. These types of images are the hardest to
refute because they are taken close to the time of death (68-74). Zelizer continuously argues that the “as if” image allows for a kind of deliberation and reflection that would not be granted to graphic and more explicit images. I disagree in the sense that western, privileged individuals need to be more exposed to the realities of the world around them. Often media is involved in creating a kind of simulacrum where violence and oppression is constructed only in entertainment. However, there are different forums and situations where these types of graphic images would be encouraged. In particular, American news media should move more toward a model of disclosure. Zelizer does discuss that the appropriateness of images are linked to many contextual issues. She states, “The words around the picture tell the public what the image means, but the negotiations around a given moment-social, cultural, economic, legal, ethical, technological, moral, and political in nature-determine what the image is worth, and the public exposure and engagement with the image help determine its afterlife”(305). So, the use of these types of images can be very controversial because of all of these different pressures. Nonprofit websites have to especially keep this in mind when constructing images for their pages. If they alienate their sometimes very sensitive donors, they may lose a great deal of money. As we have seen in other sections of this dissertation, these nonprofits are at a much greater disadvantage because they have significantly less funds to devote to advertising their causes. So, they have to be especially careful with their PR campaigns.

Images on anti-torture nonprofit websites seem to follow a similar pattern to the “as if” images of death in mainstream journalism. In telling friends and family about my dissertation, I am often met with groans or looks of disbelieve. The common misconception about the project is that I would be examining the most brutal and
inhumane images on the Internet. However, this is just not the case. The photographs used are much tamer than many would think. One reason for this is the ever-present desire to please their audiences. Significantly, these nonprofits depend on these individuals in order to continue to function.

**Medical Foundation Images and Videos of Survivors**

One image that captures the essence of Medical Foundation images is on the banner of the main page (unfortunately the image file has become corrupted). It is a very large picture of a dark cell with a barred window. At the bottom of the box is the following text in white font: “Saaed spent two years detained in Iran, in a cell covered in bloodstains of previous prisoners. Ten years on, as allegations of torture spread in the wake of recent troubles, he disclosed for the first time that he was raped. Read Saaed’s Story (the final text in royal purple)”. The theme of the image of the cell is part of a larger trope of anti-torture nonprofit websites. At this stage of development, the Medical Foundation website uses these types of images sparingly, but they are still prominent on the main page of the site. Significantly, Saaed’s story is meant to pull the audience in. The text provokes us into wanting more information. It is an effective way to grab our attention, but is it too sensational? The authors of this piece obviously decided to include a photograph of a cell that was supposed to represent Saaed’s experience. As the audience, we can assume that this is not the actual cell where he was tortured, but a representation of the space. The dark room with the jail cell window is incredibly menacing, but the room is empty. The implied intent is to hail the audience into superimposing themselves into Saaed’s place. We are to put ourselves in the cell and to experience his experiences as a victim of torture. This is an incredibly effective way to
connect an audience with an image, but it can also be problematic. One can view this image as type of simulacra of the very real event of torture. Saaed’s story does gain voice through the narrative after clicking on the hyperlink, but his image or physical representation is missing from the piece. There may be many reasons for this, but it does create an interesting dichotomy between voice and absence. Also, in using these types of images, the Medical Foundation creates an aesthetically pleasing form of torture. While this is effective in being pleasing to the eye, it can also have the effect of depoliticizing the issue. The image itself is not very graphic and the nature of the crimes are implied through the text that is superimposed onto the cell, but in creating an aesthetically pleasing depiction of torture one can further remove the victim from the event. The political correctness of these types of images allows for many people to view them, but simultaneously distances the reading from the actual events. The text is not enough, but nonprofits like the Medical Foundation must walk a fine line between representation and exploitation. Also, in torture activism, confidentiality is incredibly important, so obviously some victim’s images cannot be used.

In the next section, I examine an area where the testimonies of survivors of torture are highlighted. I use the work of Jennifer Ballengee to explore some of the themes and metaphors that come up in these types of studies. As said in an earlier chapter, Ballengee has historically found four different types of metaphors of the body in relation to torture; The legal body and it connection to the state, the political body as a site of suffering, the erotic body as being sexualized, and the moral body as a sense of universal morality. Throughout the use of the tortured body for these ads, we see many of these themes coming up again and again. The body is central to the argument of the authentic tortured
individual. While the following videos show very little of the actual body of the survivors, some of the conversation centers on their experiences while being torture. It is difficult to construct the stories of these people without having some graphic conversation about their ordeal.

In order to address some issues of voices of survivors of torture, the MF has created a section of their website called “Speaking Out”. “Speaking Out” is the Medical Foundation’s attempt to give voice to their clients. It is a section of their website with video testimonies of their client’s experiences of torture. However, the majority of the videos on the page are of Medical Foundation employees speaking about the nature of the organization, the healing process involved with torture survivors, and the many issues surrounding torture politically. There are actually only four videos of testimonies, one of which is a therapist speaking about one of her client’s experiences. These videos are troubling because of the framing of the survivor and the person asking the questions. It is almost as if the survivor is being interrogated.

After a close inspection of the website, this was actually one of only a few images of victims or acts of torture on the site. However, “Speaking Out” has several testimonies of survivors. While there are many interesting videos with testimonies from different faculty at the MF, I instead would like to examine the ones that highlight the survivors of torture. These stories are relevant because they represent the nature of the organization as well as how the organization views and uses the image and voice of their clients. The website itself is littered with different stories of the survivor’s testimonies, treatments and fundraising events that are put on by the MF. However, this portion of the website is the
first to have video testimony. Also, in terms of representation, these testimonies are the voice (for the most part) of the actual survivors without mediation.

The videos offer different experiences of torture through sit down interviews. Under the story section of the videos there are only four videos of torture testimonies. The website states; “We are in the midst of a major initiative in the ‘survivors speak out’ series and will have many more client comments over the next month”. However, these are the only videos that were posted in this section. Each interview consists of an individual sitting (either in a room or outside) with an interviewer off camera. While the interviews are conducted, one can hear the unseen interviewer asking questions. Also, some of the survivors are out of focus so that one cannot determine their true identity.

The first survivor’s story is that of activism and torture. The video begins with a black screen that has the following text: “Jonathan was a teacher in the Democratic Republic of Congo. At the school where he taught he witnessed soldiers forcibly abducting children in conscription. Jonathan spoke out about the issues of child soldiers – for which he was imprisoned and tortured”. There is no music here and there isn’t any in the rest of the short film. This text fades away and we see Jonathan, who is out of focus in the frame. We can just make out his shoulders and head, but his identity is well concealed. The first voice one hears is actually the interviewer who is off camera whom is never introduced or shown on film. She starts the conversation by asking him about how he spoke up against soldiers who were forcibly kidnapping children. In particular, she is interested in a specific night and she asks him to recall his experience. To paraphrase, Jonathan spoke on the local radio in protest the kidnapping of the children who were used as soldiers. Later that night he was abducted because of his speaking out
against the military forces and his role as a politician and educator. Several men broke into his home and forced him into a van taken and he was taken to an undisclosed location. He was stripped naked and, according to him, he was physically abused. Strikingly, he tells us that everyone wanted to get a bit of him and that he was very scared. In listening close to video, you can hear his voice tremble as he recounts this tale. Jonathan explains that many people attacked him and eventually he was forced to perform oral sex on the strange men. The video abruptly ends with him saying that his experiences were ‘really awful’. The clip is only about three minutes long, so there isn’t much time to really get to know Jonathon past his abuse. We are privy to his torture, but not much else.

Here the body of Jonathon is described in terms of legality and activism. His physical body was tortured because of the ways in which he acted out against state sponsored (which we can deduce but is never directly said) abuse of children. It appears that that the physical wounds of the torture and the psychological damage from the event was meant to deter others from committing the same sorts of acts against the government. So, his wounded body becomes a message, but again his body is used for something else here. Jonathon has become a moral representative of the vile nature of torture. His story is not only meant to compel the listener to emphasize with his plight, but also for them to support the goals of the Medical Foundation. This rhetorical strategy of using emotional appeals is used by many organizations (nonprofit and for profits), but it becomes problematic when not enough context is given. In this short video, we only see a glimpse into the life of Jonathon and his existence is only associated with the proceeding torturous event. His body is used for the economic benefit of the nonprofit, but it falls short in
benefiting his own representation. The story of Jonathon is a compelling narrative, but it also does little to address more specific issues of the systematic growth of torture. These individual stories do not address western sponsored issues of torture. It is also significant that there are no testimonies from individuals who were tortured by western countries. The ‘othered’ body is connected to a brutal world that is not associated with a global movement toward these brutal acts. I am not arguing that the Medical Foundation can make these arguments in such a confined space, but perhaps there needs to be an emphasis on how these individuals are being affected by a legal system of torture.

Another short video focuses on Samuel, who was tortured in Cameroon. The title slide explains that Samuel was in the opposition party and accidently revealed the name of a young boy who was also part of the cause. Both Samuel and the boy would be tortured and eventually the boy was killed. The black slide transitions to Samuel who is out of focus and he is already speaking. His story begins with the tragedy of the boy who is being tortured. He tells the viewer that his survival may have been because of his age and maturity, while the little boy was too young to handle being strung up “like an animal”. Throughout the video, we can make out the gestures being made by the Samuel. The video is out of focus, so we cannot see his face clearly, but we can make out his clothes and see the reactions of his body while he speaks. His body is much more central and animated in this video than in others on the page. The midshot allows the viewer to better see his nonverbal. Samuel explains that the boy was bleeding profusely in his cell and that no one came with medical assistance or even water. As hard as he tried to call for help, his demands were unanswered. As the story hits a climax, the interviewer off frame asks, “What happened to Eric (the little boy)?”. Samuel goes on to explain that the
boy’s breathing began to become haggard and he compares his shaking to that of a chicken who is about to be killed for dinner. Samuel once again tries to get help with no avail. The boy dies in his arms. As Samuel takes a pause, the woman off screen says that it was a “terrible story” and she asks if he is “ok”. He visibly wipes his eyes and we can assume that he has started to cry even though we cannot see his face. When he begins to speak again, he tells the interviewer that the prison guards did not come back to find the body until the following morning. As Samuel tells the story, the guards came back to take them both to be tortured again, but discover that Eric had died. During this portion of the video, he has to stop again to collect himself. He says that they became frightened and they decide to move him to various different cells after that. The video then fades out to the Medical Foundation symbol. The clip itself is only about four minutes long.

Samuel’s testimony is incredibly moving, but it doesn’t contextualize his struggle. The video itself focuses on his very specific experience of torture. The audience is not included in the discussion that happened prior to the on screen portion and therefore we do not know what initiated the story. Also, the political reasons for the conflict are also glossed over. The initial title screen explains the geographical location, but little else. We do know that Samuel is fighting with the main opposition party against the government. The reason for this conflict is left up for the audience to discover on their own. The focus of the interview is on the death of the young boy and not on the actual political conflict. The implied argument, it seems, is that all forms of torture are atrocious and that something needs to be done to address these issues and that support is needed for the survivors. The short video doesn’t do justice to the lives that were lost and continue to be lost. Instead, we get the body of a torture survivor on display. The affective power of the
video is strong because the content is so shocking. One is prepared to hear the story of the survivor of torture, but the narrative of the young boy is unexpected. The audience is also supposed to relate to Samuel because of his complicity in the death of the boy. While these accounts are powerful, they use stereotypical torture tropes. Samuel is the victim of a system that is beyond his control. He is part of the resistance against a powerful tyranny. The implicit arguments use binaries that could be used either way; the resistance could be just as evil. The arguments here would be more compelling if they provided more contextual information. What exactly is the resistance and who is it against? The Medical Foundation relies too heavily on affective means to persuade audiences to donate.

The video is meant to capitalize on strong feelings and emotions; however, this is not always enough to convince people to take up a cause. Affective appeals only go so far in the nonprofit world. Also, the lack of context of the actual interview is troubling. Was Samuel encouraged to tell this specific story or if he was asked to? Highlighting the voice of the survivor of torture is significant because typically nonprofit clients have little agency on these types of websites. However, could we say that agency and voice exists mainly in the testimony itself? The testimony of Samuel, and others on this website, are problematic because of how the videos are edited. We mainly see the most traumatic events in these individuals’ lives. While this is an organization based on torture, there also needs to be a balance of stories dealing with the aftermath. If one were to just watch these two videos of survivors, the only information we have is that they survived. While the website does have much more content on it, often people are most attracted to images and/or videos. These videos seem to show the survivor as a victim.
Another video that adds a bit more context showcases Robert Kabemba. Kabemba, according to the opening screen is an activist in both the Democratic Republic of Congo and South Africa. The slide claims that he has been tortured numerous times and that he could barely communication for six years while the Medical Foundation worked on him. The clip transitions to Kabemba, whom is the only survivor whose face is shown. The angle and interview style is the same, but there is no blurring used. The video begins with Kabemba stating that there is no democracy in Africa and that he could not speak that way if he was there. He says that if he were to talk that way, his life would be threatened. However, Kabemba argues that people need to discuss these things in order to cause change.

He explains several instances where students were threatened in Congo. The first is a demonstration in 1991 against the Mobutu regime where students were told that they would be killed if they marched in the streets. He states that the students thought that perhaps there would be some hope with Kabila who overthrew Mobutu, but in the end dictators are all the same. Right after this section, we can clearly see a cut where the video was edited. He jumps to talking about how people need to speak out against regimes and he uses Mandela as a good model for this. People like Mandela have inspired him to speak out against these issues even though he risks his own life by doing so. At this point, something significant happens in the interview. Kebemba is the first to bring up the names of western politicians in these interviews. He says that he has written to politicians like Tony Blair, Gordon Brown, and Condoleezza Rice in order to have them fight against these terrible regimes in Africa. During this section, he doesn’t go into great details as to how these individuals are implicated. The film ends with him explaining that
he grew up in a small poor town and poor family. He believes that everyone is born equal and that we should fight to continue these rights. Unlike the other videos, we do not hear an interviewer asking questions at all. We can see that Kememba is looking at someone off camera and is actually asking the person questions himself. This video shows a man who is confident. He is very brave in allowing the Medical Foundation to film his face and tell his story to the world. Interestingly, he does not mention torture at all during the interview; rather, he talks about the threat of death from government actors. Also, the portion about his healing process is only in the first slide of the film. The video is commendable because it shows an empowered individual who seems willing to speak out, but it doesn’t really explain how he dealt with some of the aftermath torture. The next video shows healing a little bit more explicitly.

The next video is actually not of a torture survivor. Instead, Mary Raphaely (coordinator of the Natural Group Project), tell us the story of one survivor. The text at the beginning of the video is as follows: “Working with nature often unlocks memories and resources that survivors can forget they had the traumatic experience of torture. One of the core beliefs of the MF’s Natural Growth Project is the healing power of nature. In the words of one client: ‘Nature cannot hurt you like man can’.” In this case, Mary (the background is the garden at the MF – in sharp contrast to the first video) tells the story of one of the torture survivors that she has assisted over the past several years. A young woman from an African country was imprisoned with her newborn baby who was killed in front of her on Christmas day. She was raped, left her dismembered baby in a cloth, and eventually fled the country. When she was brought to London, she was again raped for several weeks and became pregnant by the man who helped her to the country.
Eventually, she went to the Medical Foundation for help because of her depression and flashbacks of her past abuses. After a year of therapy, Mary assisted her in choosing her favorite plant for the garden (as part of the Natural Growth Project) in the back of the MF to represent a memorial for the child she lost.

Mary believes that because the woman felt that her child had never been buried that in creating a memorial she could finally put her child to rest. In doing so, the survivor believed that she could finally let go of her grief. Often she comes to the garden at the Medical Foundation in order to talk to her lost child. Her second child is now two years old and Mary states that the patient is going to University and is even leading an allotment group. Mary argues that the woman needed nature in order to move past her abuses. The client changed from someone who could not stop crying to an empowered individual through the Medical Foundation and their use of nature. Mary argues that the project links survivors to their “pre-traumatic capacities” that allows them to move past some of the mental barriers they have created because of the torture. Here there is a direct connection between the openness of survivors and their connection to nature or at least the nature that is associated with the Medical Foundation. This alternative form of healing is being portrayed as a significant component of the strategy at the Medical Foundation. They, as an organization, are willing to use alternative therapies in order to treat this unique type of abuse.

This video is better at showing the transnational flow of torture, but again, it does not implicate the state in these actions. Also, the absence of a body is troubling. While the story is important, the idea of a video testimony that doesn’t have the actual person in the video brings up issues of representation and validity. The audience is not informed on
whether or not she has given permission for the Medical Foundation to share these intimate stories about her life. So, her body becomes the vessel for the organization to appeal to a mass audience through a brutal and emotionally provocative narrative. She, like Jonathon above, becomes part of an implicit moral argument. However, the control over the situation is clearly on the side of the organization and not the survivor. In this way, without being clearer, the Medical Foundation falls into the trap of re-victimization.

**Conclusion**

Throughout this chapter, I analyze the Medical Foundation for the Care of Victims of Torture and I argue that its representations of survivors could be improved. As I have stated earlier, the website is firmly in the second stage of anti-torture nonprofit website development. The organization has been online for several years and has increased their production of the site by including several videos and many more professional looking images. The goal, it seems, is to highlight the voice and image of their clients. Instead of just having images and stories of their clients, they also include their actual voices. An organization that represents a sensitive group must be very careful with how they represent their clients. This is not to say that the Medical Foundation is not constantly thinking about these issues, but one cannot always be successful when representing another group. The significant aspect of the exercise of representation is the willingness to grow and adapt. It takes a lot of courage to try something new for an organization that depends on financial backing from donors. The Medical Foundation attempts to give voice to its survivors, but falls short. In some ways, the organization has re-victimized its clients in some of these representations. Obviously, the producers of these images interested in issues of representation and voice, but their execution
ultimately fails. As of this point, the website has many voices of survivors, but we only see them in the light of the brutal aspects of torture. In reality, the organization is selling a portrait of survivors that is already well known. The audience is introduced to a group of minorities from developing countries that are in need of western help. Now, this isn’t the intention of the Medical Foundation, but they use the same tropes that other nonprofit’s have used for years.

The Medical Foundation allows their clients to speak, but only through the mediated lens of their own videos. While the spirit behind the project was positive, the outcome was not successful. By interrogating their clients, they show them only as one-dimensional characters. The stories that are told are very heartfelt, but we really only see one type of story being told, the story of the victim. While some of the survivors are a bit more vocal about their activism, it isn’t enough. These video testimonies are a step in the right direction, but the narrative of the survivor of torture needs to be more complex. One needs to see multiple narratives of the lives of torture survivors in order to really see who these people are beyond the event of torture. The more that these individuals are shown to be human, the more empowered their representation. Audiences can identify with certain types of suffering, but state sponsored torture is an event that many western individuals have not had to endure. It is difficult to relate with something that is so outside of our imaginations. However, we can identify with the story of a life. The Medical Foundation needs to move away from these short problematic stories, and include more of a diversity of images and videos. At some point in the near future, the website should allow survivors to work with the producers of the media in order to create representations that are agreeable to all parties. While there is much work to be done, the Medical Foundation
is willing to take chances and adapt to improving Internet technologies. As we will see, the Medical Foundation dramatically changes its tactics in the next chapter and moves into the third stage of anti-torture website development.
CHAPTER IV. TRANSITION TO FREEDOM FROM TORTURE

A few months before I began to collect screen captures of these several websites, Freedom from Torture had a major facelift. Prior to this, I had worked on several projects involving the website, so the drastic change was a bit of a shock to me. Originally, I had wanted to do in-depth interviews with members of the organization and I had started some initial conversations with some of my contacts. One informant explained that the nonprofit was going through some transitions and this was probably why people were not getting back to me. Little did I know that these transitions involved changing the name of the organization itself! The transition from The Medical Foundation for the Care of Victims of Torture to Freedom from Torture is one primary focused on branding. One does not change the name of a long established organization without a great deal of thought behind the modification. I believe that the transition came about as a way to rebrand the nonprofit. The Medical Foundation for the Care of Victims of Torture is a mouthful and the Medical Foundation by itself isn’t specific enough to automatically connect it to torture. Therefore, the move to Freedom from Torture creates a much easier to remember brand. Also, Freedom from Torture, as a name, connotes much more of an activist sentiment than The Medical Foundation for the Care of Victims of Torture. The organization demands freedom for survivors of torture!

During the transition, Freedom From Torture came out with the rationale behind their name change. They argue that they are going to change their name for three reasons, “Memorable”, “Aspirational”, and “Inclusive”. The name Freedom from Torture is much easier to recognize than The Medical Foundation for the Care of victims of Torture. As they say, it is much more concise and memorable. The Freedom bit of the name is used to
convey that the organization is continually trying to fight for a time where torture is no longer an issue. Lastly, Freedom from Torture offers many services beyond medical care, like therapy. Another question stated in this section is, “How will the new name increase voluntary funding?” (“Who We Are”, www.torturecare.org.uk/whoweare). They argue that after extensive research, they found that the name of the nonprofit was hindering new donors from getting involved with the cause. The nonprofit calls this “organizational identity”, but again, it is also an issue of branding. Freedom From Torture claims that the name change cost them roughly twenty thousand pounds which all came from excess money in the fundraising department. This statement is important because it shows us that Freedom from Torture did not directly use donor funds in order to push this change.

While the re-branding of Freedom from Torture makes sense from an advertising standpoint, it also demonstrates how the organization is shifting more toward corporate strategies. In order to compete with the many media messages that saturate an audience’s environment, this nonprofit should re-position in order to be heard. While the Medical Foundation for the Care of Victims of Torture is a long name, it is the name that was used for decades. Why, in 2011, was the change necessary? The switch came about in order, partially at least, to create a name that worked much better as a sound byte. However, it would be unfair to argue that this is all simply a promotional move. The website, as we will see, has added several areas that have included more of the voice of the survivor. So, while the website itself and the name change may be related to a general move of smaller nonprofits toward a more corporate model of advertising, it also moves several steps forward in directly empowering their clients. This is an important criterion for assessing the effectiveness of a non-profit/advocacy campaign and organization. The question of
intention versus outcome materializes in this situation. Sometimes the visual outcome has unintended consequences. For example, a nonprofit might intend to gather more supporters by showing the brutal realities of torture, however, they may use problematic images of third world victims that further victimize the survivor.

Why does it matter that Freedom from Torture needs to rebrand itself in order to survive in a globalized market? Freedom from Torture deals with the global issue of torture, and therefore, must operate in the global market. As Naomi Klein argues, torture itself has become connected to the global neoliberal expansion. For example, the transition of many Latin American countries to capitalistic markets has included several periods of torturous activities. As the war on terror has grown, torture itself has become globalized (Klein). The United States has often been at the forefront of this new kind of globalized torture. With the presence of prisons across the world, the US has created its own network of torture (Shane). Therefore, nonprofit sites like Freedom from Torture must operate at a global level in order to gain the funding necessary to deal with this global issue. Linda Alcoff argues that outcome is significant when dealing with the voices of others (10). She argues that global advocacy cannot function without the inclusion of victim voices since the representing of silent victims is a paradigm of the past. Victims must be represented through a staging of their “own” voice in current global web 2.0 climate of online advocacy. Therefore, in this system, one must be concerned with intentions and outcomes, but sometimes the outcomes are most important. The fact that survivors receive assistance from nonprofits sometimes trumps their problematic depictions. However, there is always room for growth and the improvement of voice on these websites.
Freedom from Torture works at a global level. Throughout much of their website, the claim is made that the vast majority of their clients come from places outside of the UK. This is solidified when they state that, “In 2010, over 61% of the 1,729 clients referred to Freedom from Torture came from 10 countries: Iran, Afghanistan, Sri Lanka, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Turkey, Pakistan, Sudan, Nigeria, Cameroon and Uganda” (“About,” http://www.freedomfromtorture.org/about/5178). This sort of claim and invoking of the third-world Other as the tortured victim invokes particular Development discourse prevalent in other non-profit development based websites that adopt lexicons of empowerment (Gajjala, Zhang, Dako-Gyeke 70) where the western self empowers the previously colonized Other. In another section called, “Influencing Others”, Freedom from Torture attempts to show their encouragement of spreading information about activities of torture throughout the world. The page briefly describes “News and Media”, “Training and Capacity Building”, “Policy and Advocacy”, “Human Rights Research”, “Campaigning”, and “Legal Case Work”. The implicit emphasis on this page is that torture awareness and activism is not a linear process. Freedom from Torture has spread its influence into many different and diverse areas in order to benefit the survivor of torture. The uniqueness of the organization is highlighted here, because they do a bit of everything. While they are campaigning for popular awareness of contemporary torture (the torturer ads in British newspapers) they are also providing legal services for survivors of torture, and training others to work with such sensitive groups and more! (“What We Do” http://www.freedomfromtorture.org/what-we-do/17) Freedom from Torture is constantly running activities and campaigns to raise money for the organization and have recently upped their social media presence by creating a Twitter
feed (http://twitter.com/#!/freedomfromtorture) and Facebook fan page (https://www.facebook.com/FreedomfromTorture).

The following section explores the growth of Freedom from Torture, comparing it to the original Medical Foundation website. I argue that during this time period, there is a clear shift from the second stage of nonprofit website development into the third. With Freedom from Torture, there is a more obvious jump to the third stage because of the major marking change that happened with the update in name. Freedom from Torture does not perfectly represent their clients, if there is such a thing, but I argue that the organization allows for a diversity of voices on its website. Many nonprofit websites would benefit from following this model because of the attention to the needs of the survivor. In the third stage of the nonprofit website, the needs of the survivor are much more central. While the nonprofit’s goals may have always been to cater to their clients, the marketing face of the organization more greatly aligns with the idea of empowerment. I argue that in this stage, Freedom from Torture moves away from the survivor as victim model to an empowered one. Of course, there are still some images and descriptions of the disempowered “other”, but some of those types of images are difficult to avoid when dealing with torture. Individuals who have been tortured have had their agency as a human being stripped from them during the event itself and for some time after. There is no problem with describing some of these horrible instances of torture, because individuals need to know the realities of the world. The issue, therefore, is how these stories have been presented. The goal of stage three is to balance the stories of disempowerment with those of how torture survivors can move past their ordeal. Accordingly, there needs to be a diversity of voices and experiences because no two
survivors have exactly the same experience. Also, representations of survivors are not as aligned with images of third world “others”. Instead, there are much more complex and well-rounded depictions of individuals before and after their ordeal. The anti-torture nonprofit can both satisfy its need to market itself in order to survive the free market as well as create balanced portrayals of its clients.

**Freedom from Torture: An Analysis**

As of this writing, Freedom from Torture has recently added a new slogan on their homepage. The redefined mission literally incorporates the voices of survivors of torture. In order to have a successful and progressive website for an organization that provides services for torture survivors there needs to be a section for survivors to contribute. Many nonprofit organizations manage to have some testimonies from their clients, but they don’t actually have spaces devoted for them to demonstrate their growth. While it is sometimes difficult to demonstrate how their voices work within the actual organization itself, in a globalized world, their space on the Internet becomes their main means of advertising. Freedom from Torture states, “At Freedom from Torture we play an active role in creating spaces for survivors of torture (both former and where appropriate, current clients) to engage with decision makers and speak out against torture on public platforms - their voices are critical in shaping opinion and influencing decisions that directly affect survivors. As told by a survivor from Chad, “‘It’s our voice, our stories, who better to speak for us than ourselves’” (“Survivor Voices”, [http://www.freedomfromtorture.org/survivor-voices](http://www.freedomfromtorture.org/survivor-voices)). The statement here is significant because it shows the emphasis on the voice of survivors. In prior conceptions of the site, the clients were always a part of the conversation, but they were never this central.
Freedom from Torture’s website has continuously improved. This does not mean that the website is in an ideal form, there are still several problematic sections and images, however, the ability to grow and change with the times shows that they are willing to adjust the way they represent survivors.

Freedom from Torture goes on to describe its goals in the section “What we do”. Under the “Freedom from Torture's Strategic aims for 2011-2012” we find that the organization has several significant aims. The first aim is to create opportunities for survivors to receive assistance towards the means of healing. The second aim is that human rights are a priority to the organization and that they are committed to fighting against torture on a global scale. The third, and most important aim for this project is their commitment to collaborative work with survivors of torture. Freedom from Torture argues that the experiences of the survivors are most important when constructing narratives on the website. The openness of the organization about creating a dialogue between survivors and the organization is significant. This is a very important step for the growth of an anti-torture nonprofit. The last aim is to be an organization “that learns and develops through the contributions of our clients, supporters, volunteers, trustees, staff and partners”. One important component of the third stage of development is an open dialogue between all of the parties involved. While the nonprofit has the power to represent their clients in anyway they see fit, they must cater to the desires of their constituents. In this system, there are many actors that need to be listened to and this can sometimes become very difficult. However, the needs of the survivor must be central because they are the ones that need the most assistance. Also, survivors’ should be given a well-rounded characterization on these sites, which would help to move away from
their image as the victim. The fact that Freedom from Torture has included stipulations about their relationship to the survivors in their aims for the year is quite an improvement from when I volunteered there. As stated earlier in the dissertation, sometimes the organization needed to include images that were not the most representative of the realities of their clients in order to please donors. These statements put the needs of the survivor at the forefront in a way that was not always there in the past (“What We Do”, http://www.freedomfromtorture.org/what-we-do). The following chapter will examine many of the main pages of Freedom from Torture’s website. I argue that while some images and portrayals of survivors are still problematic, that this is a much improved website that better caters to all of its interested parties. Freedom from Torture’s website should be a model for other anti-torture nonprofit websites.

First and foremost, I spend some time examining the front page of Freedom from Torture. I focus on both the images of survivors of torture and the connected stories. The front page is arguably most significant part of any website. Often individuals do judge a website by its cover and therefore a great deal of time is spent by web developers on creating a flashy and thought provoking initial page that pulls viewers into the world of anti-torture organizations.

**Faces of Torture: Front Page Marketing**

The front page of any website tends to be the most significant one because it is the first space that the audience sees. It tends to include many affective appeals with powerful images. A website should hail the viewer in right away. However, the front page is normally built as a jumping off point with little information. The viewer is compelled to take the extra click to find out more. Because of the limited time and space,
the front page can be somewhat problematic, in that it uses certain visual cues to pull you in. As in the image above, we are meant to read a great deal of information into the visuals on these sites and connect the image to the surrounding text and context of the site. As of May 14, 2012, the front page has an appeal from Keith Best, who is current chief executive of Freedom from Torture. The text, which is part of three links that rotate, tells us of an appeal to supporters and potential donors. The image next to the text is that of a woman’s face. The frame is tight up against her face and we can see her hand in a fist that covers the left side of her mouth. The woman looks off to the left into a space that the audience cannot see. She has dark brown skin, eyes and hair. The woman seems to be wistfully looking at something off screen. The audience is left to their own imagination as to the woman’s identity and story. We can assume that she is a survivor of torture, and one interpretation is that she is looking toward a future that includes assistance from Freedom from Torture. With our support, we can continue to make that dream a possibility. When one follows the link to the next page, in small print beneath a thumbnail version of the larger image, there is this text, “Image posed by model to ensure the protection of our clients”. While this is only one sentence, I find this to be one of the most significant improvements on Freedom from Torture’s website. In older versions of the website when it was in stage two, images would float around the website with very little background information. Often, there would just be an image of a survivor of torture connected to a news story or an upcoming event, but no explanation of what the image had to do with the story. It would be similar to a newspaper publishing images that were vaguely related to the story without any caption. In the world of anti-torture nonprofits, captions can make or break an image. A caption-less image can very easily fall into the
trap of “othering” the survivor because of the lack of context. The audience is meant to fill in the gaps of information and this can be problematic when the only images we see are of torture survivors covering their faces in shame of the events of their past. Many sites I have come across, even the ones whose message and mission are contrary to some of these stereotypes, rely heavily on the vision of the disempowered victim of torture. In my research, I have found no other websites that include this type of information about the images used on the site. The caption with information about the person in the image is significant because it pushes back the curtain to reveal the inner workings of how images are constructed for anti-torture nonprofits. Rather than using the motif of implied torture, we know that these images are, in fact, staged in order to maintain the privacy of survivors. Often, the more forthright organizations are about the origins of images of torture survivors, the better the representation. The website must present the survivor as a real person and not just a marketing tool.

As with many other websites, clicking on the link leads to more contexts. When one clicks on the story connected to the image, we are taken to a plea for help. The rest of the document speaks of the need for the foundation to raise one hundred thousand pounds by May 31, 2012 in order to maintain the same level of services for current and incoming survivors of torture. The article states that £48 can allow someone to receive two hours of free counseling, but we should be willing to donate more if we are able to. Now, we see that the connected image is used as a marketing symbol. While the photograph does have a caption that tells us that the person is a model, there are still problematic elements in the piece. The woman represents a type of torture victim that has an implied narrative. The image of the brown survivor of torture, without a name and
without a story is ignored by the written piece and becomes a symbol of consumption. When a donor pledges their support, they also support an image that is lacking a tangible narrative. The narrative is instead may be built off of prior knowledge of oppressed groups which is not always empowering to the survivor.

The image also allows the donator to be a voyeur in the world of torture survivors without actually having to witness the torturous effects. We can also interpret the image of the woman above in an alternative light. She may be thinking back to a time where she had been tortured, praying that someone will take those memories away. In this way, the image is enthymematic. It works on a premise that is implied by the context and the viewer’s background. In a society full of an overabundance of images, audiences expect to see what they are paying for. If we are going to donate to an organization, we must be able to see and to witness those whom we are supporting. The use of some sort of image on nonprofit websites is almost obligatory. While this image has no direct references to the physicality of torture, it is implied due to its position on the website. However, it doesn’t go as far as to depict the actual act itself. The argument, it seems, is that the implied act is sometimes more powerful than showing the actual event. On the other hand, the donor is completely removed from the more brutal consequences of torture. There is a constant battle between what is deemed appropriate to show and what is too graphic. In my observations, Freedom from Torture has historically been much more conservative than other more politically based blogs and websites in this regard (“An Emergency Appeal from Our Chief Executive, Keith Best”, http://www.freedomfromtorture.org/helping_us/appeal/6253).
In sharp contrast to the images and messages in the first campaign, Freedom from Torture also highlights a fundraising/awareness campaign that relies on messages that are less overtly related to torture. Another campaign that has been highlighted for several months on the front page of Freedom from Torture is an external website for interactive eCards. One can send a personalized card to a special someone with an additional message from Freedom from Torture. The cards themselves are incredibly generic and include options for images such as a dog with a birthday hat on, one that says “Happy Anniversary”, and one with a picture of Easter Candy to name just a few. None of the images have any particular relevance to torture or to the mission of the organization itself. In fact, one would never really know that the card had anything to do with torture until they read the attached message. The one interesting aspect of the card service is that it allows one to upload their image to use as the front of the card. So, while the site only offers stale images of birds and Christmas trees, one can shock any of their friends with the most graphic and terrible images of human suffering. The user also has the option to include a personalized message to the recipient. The only place that Freedom from Torture has any of their own text is within the body of the e-mail sent to the individual. Here is an excellent example where the caption is needed for the audience to understand the nature and intention of the message. The message is as follows: “Hello, I made this card especially for you at Freedom from Torture's ecard site. Take a look! Freedom from Torture is the only organisation in the UK dedicated solely to the treatment of survivors of torture. The effects of torture continue long after someone has escaped their torturers; survivors often suffer from chronic pain, anxiety, flashbacks and an inability to trust.” (“Freedom From Torture E-Card System”, http://ecards.freedomfromtorture.org/). It is
the message inside the card that is the main markets the organization. While the statement is significant, it doesn’t seem to connect well to the images attached to the card. Interestingly, the card has no direct call for donations (although you can there is a link to donations as you create a card), but it does say that 95 percent of their money comes from aid. In this case, the text holds a greater value for the organization than the image itself.

As we have seen, Freedom from Torture does not rely on graphic images of torture on their front page. Instead, they use images that imply issues of torture. While these are not the most progressive images of survivors, at least we are told when models are being used to represent survivors. With this small step, Freedom from Torture has opened the door to describing to the audience pieces of the production of images. While this isn’t directly empowering survivors, it is a movement toward being more transparent. The more one can see the thought processes behind these images the more they will understand the intentions of the site. I believe that this is one step toward allowing survivors to assist in the production of images or representations. However, as is the case with many nonprofit websites, Freedom from Torture sometimes relies on problematic means of advertising. In the following section, I examine another problematic front-page story (devoid of images) that deserves its own section.

**Controversial Advertising Campaign: Advertising Torture**

Freedom from Torture relies heavily on images, but section deals with an ad campaign that did not use any images (other than the image of the ads themselves on the website). I include this as part of the study because it creates a type of mental image of torture in many audiences that reach outside of the main website. The latest (as of May 2012) large scale marketing campaign by Freedom from Torture does not involve
pictures at all. Three large ads that ran in several British newspapers (including *The Guardian*) claimed to be working for a governmental agency that was searching for a new torturer. The advertisement includes qualifications such as “prepared to inflict extreme pain and suffering”, “familiarity with positional torture”, and “terrorizing small communities”.

According to Freedom from Torture’s website they claim that, “We realise that these adverts make for uncomfortable reading. Of course torturers are not really recruited like this, but at Freedom from Torture we know only too well that torture is a daily reality for men, women and children around the world. The truth is ugly…” (“Advertising Torture”, [http://www.freedomfromtorture.org/feature/advert/6270](http://www.freedomfromtorture.org/feature/advert/6270)). The truth is ugly, but what do these the torturers in this case do have some geographical locations attached to them. One is from a militia group in Central Africa, another is from a government of a Middle Eastern State, and the final is a South Asian government agency. While the point of these adverts is to attract the eyeballs of those who would normally not think about globalized torture, it in effect, reinforces the third world perception of torture. Freedom from Torture only focuses on specific areas of the globe that do not include the United States or England, both of which have been constantly implicated in these issues throughout the war on terror. The focus on Africa, Asia, and the Middle East builds upon a long history of Orientalism in western media. While it may be true that Freedom from Torture deals mostly with cases from these general areas, the advertisements are not connected to any one struggle in particular. Instead, they fall into the trap of focusing on the abstract concepts of geographical areas. The ads, maybe inadvertently, hail to a history of NGO’s lumping minority groups all together under one needy banner. The
effect is a narrative created for minorities that showcases their lack the agency to move beyond a certain predicament. The predicament could really be any global issue from AIDS to hunger. Western viewers have been conditioned to these certain types of ads and often ignore them because they have become so prevalent. So, the shocking and progressive nature of the aforementioned ads is lost through the use of dominant ideologies that perpetuate classical stereotypes.

There are many interesting negative and revealing reactions to these ads on the Internet. Many of these reactions reveal the problematic nature of this ad campaign. In many ways, the ad relies on old stereotypes of torture only happening in developing nations and it doesn’t implicate the United States or United Kingdom into issues of torture. On a culture blog, Rick Poynor wrote a response to the ads an article entitled, “Career Prospects in the Pain Business”. He states that, “The ads are a sophisticated form of détournement that works by subverting an existing channel of communication. There must be plenty of other platforms that could be infiltrated in similarly imaginative ways and used to capture attention for positive purpose” (Poynor). Another blogger states that, “I guess the Guardian copy editor thought these would be ok, and not grotesque renderings of undifferentiated Middle East and Africa as land of despots, because the next page, or tomorrow, or all next week, there would be exposés of USA tortures in Guantanamo, Bagram, Abu Ghraib, etc and British abuses via deportations, immigration raids, complicity with the US and all that” (Hutnyk). A comment on the Telegraph stated, “But the Middle Eastern state "recruiting" in this advert could be almost any in the region. Syria, Iran, Saudi Arabia and Bahrain spring to mind. Not to mention non-governmental torturers, like Hezbollah, or the various militia in Iraq, or Hamas in the
Gaza Strip. Or the distinctly worrying state of the post-Arab Spring regimes in Egypt and Libya” (Knowles). The campaign was even mentioned on the famous and long running Internet blog, Boing Boing (“Help Wanted Ads for Torturer, Abuser, Kidnapper”). These negative reactions point to the many issues within the campaign. However, it does show that there was an audience for the advertisements.

While this campaign has received some attention by the media, it seems that it has been very short lived. Some would argue that any type of attention is positive for an organization, but in this case, it only further obfuscates the nature of globalized torture that reaches many part of the world, including so-called developed nations. Freedom from Torture should not use the same old stereotypical tactics that include marginalizing entire groups of people in order to get their name out to the public. While the scale of the publicity stunt was impressive for a relatively small organization, I believe that it is a step backwards. Freedom from Torture had its heart in the right place, but the execution of the stunt was lacking. The organization should not allow itself to move back toward stage two of the model, which includes many stereotypical depictions of torture. However, it is all a learning process and these stages are more about development and adapting to change rather than just one singular static event.

**Images and News Blog: Graphic Images of Torture**

While Freedom from Torture has very few actual images of torture, the current news blog has the most graphic images. I believe that this area of the website is needed in order to showcase the realities of torture throughout the world. While the front page is often more sterilized, the news blog is open to more controversial images. The news blog leads us to the more overtly political section of the website. The first image that is
showcased is an image with the title “Guantanamo Anniversary”. The image itself is very complex with several layers. One’s eyes are first drawn to a three dimensional sign that spells the word Guantanamo. Each of the letters on the sign are supported by large blocks just below the letters. The letters look as if they are on stilts, raised above the ground. The impression is that the sign propped above a military prison. The sign itself is white in this image and it stretches across the screen. The manipulated photograph has an orange/redish tinge to it, which matches the color of the famous stereotypical prisoner outfits of the camp, but also connotes a sense of dread and pain that is typically associated with Guantanamo Bay. The sign is positioned as the middle layer of the image.

Above this layer is a barbed wire fence that starts from the bottom of the image and wraps around all the way to the top. The large razor wire loops around toward the viewer. It is almost as if we become part of the wire itself, or that the wire is close enough for the audience to be cut by it. The large loop, which would typically be the top of the fence, actually is only the beginning of this image. Above the razor tips is the outline of another fence. The illusion created is that the fence never ends. The prisoner could climb and climb and there would be an endless, impenetrable gate keeping him/her from the outside world. Much as in the traditional reading of the myth of Sisyphus, the struggle here is shown to be hopeless. Above the Guantanamo sign, there is yet another layer of the image. The bottom level is left to images of several prisoners who face away from the camera. They appear to all be tied up and sitting on top of their bent legs with their heads hunched over.

This scene is a familiar refrain that has been depicted constantly since the war on terror began. The image of the faceless prisoner tied up, in a most precarious position is
one that has become the symbol of all that is demeaning with this style of incarceration. Each of the men is turned away from the camera in a position of complete powerlessness. They are so insignificant that they are overshadowed by everything else in the image. In fact, when one just glances at the picture, it is quite easy to miss the prisoners because of the layering effect. The caption next to the image states, “10 years since the first transfer of terror suspects to the Guantánamo Bay detention facility. 10 Years of Injustice”.

Unfortunately, the link to the blog post no longer works, but one can assume that the story followed this caption. However, the image itself is quite powerful and tells a powerful story (“News”, http://www.freedomfromtorture.org/news). The image is an artistic representation of the horrifying events at Guantanamo. In this case, the use of the image of the tortured is appropriate because many of these individuals are still in detention. It is appropriate to use these types of images when the event itself has hidden many of the voices and faces of torture. Guantanamo and other global prisons represent the real and current face of torture. The Freedom from Torture viewer needs to be aware of these issues. The organization does not simulated the graphic descriptions of torture in this scene and it is effective because the complexity of the Also, the image implicates the United States into a global system of torture

Another, more sterile image, image on the main news page showcases the spine of a large report. At the top we see a yellow seal with the words in large yellow print “Report of the Commission of Inquiry on Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation” beneath it. The title and caption on the right of the image explain that Sri Lanka has failed to address issues of torture in this significant document. At the time of writing, the link is broken on this page, but in their news blog there are several stories about the atrocities committed
by the government, including testimonies of individuals who were tortured.

Unfortunately, many of these links also lead to pages that no longer exist. The image itself also sterilizes torture, so the audience does not have to deal with the harsh realities of what happened in Sri Lanka. Torture is understood through ineffectual commissions. While the realities of the image of torture may be hidden, it still brings to light issues that may not be well known to the public. The image of a book could also represent how the commission itself has sterilized torture in such a way as to not relate its brutal realities. Also, the image completely contrasts the next image, which shows torture in mid-action.

The news of torture is not limited to artistic visions of terrible events. Another image on the same page is one of the most graphic that I have seen on Freedom from Torture’s website for several years. At the beginning of this project, I was surprised to notice that this organization, compared to many others, really did not show many images of actual acts of torture. The more common image was that of implied torture, of a person who is about to be tortured, or who has already been tortured. Often, even these images were recreated or staged. Graphic depictions of torture seem to go against the general mission of the site. However, the image on the news page (which had been moved from the homepage) is of a soldier jumping in midair about to land full force on a man that is laying face down on the ground. The soldier in the air is facing the camera, but his head is cut off by the frame. To his left is another soldier who is just standing next to him; his head is also cut off so his identity is hidden. While we cannot see his head, it appears as if he is just watching his compatriot stamping on the unprotected man. To the right is another man who is only partially visible on camera, again seeming to watch the scene without partaking. The most compelling aspect of this image, which is a screen-capture
from a video, is that the participants in this horrible act could really be from many
different countries. The film is grainy and unclear which makes us guess where the image
was taken. Fortunately, on the right side of the image is this provocative title, “Syria’s
Torture Machine”. We are told under the title that Channel 4 conducted an interview with
the Head of Doctors for a documentary of this footage from Syria. The image itself is
one off the few times that Freedom from Torture relies on the graphic nature of torture.
When used sparingly, it can have a very powerful effect on the audience. This image is
more effective than many of the other images of torture on other websites because it
could represent many different parts of the world. While the caption tells us that the
image is from Syria, the image itself shows a kind of ambiguous state sanctioned torture.
Freedom from Torture could have better taken advantage of this message. However, it
still is a compelling image. These types of graphic images of torture are appropriate when
used in moderation and when they are balanced by other alternative images of survivors

While not all of the images have working links on this news page, there are many
links (with short blurbs that explain the link) that run below this main image box that are
updated much more frequently. On the far left side there are links to articles in the
mainstream media that mention Freedom from Torture directly, in the middle is a general
news and commentary section that includes news and commentary written exclusively by
individuals who are connected to the organization. On the right hand side there is a
column that links to news from external sources that reference torture, these include
sources like the BBC, Channel 4, and The Independent. An important observation on this
section is that each news story includes a small left hand icon in both blue and yellow
colors. This leads back to a theme of images of hands throughout the website.
The main story at the top of the links of news written by Freedom from Torture workers is titled “Women for Refugee Women Report Launch”. Next to this link is a small image that is blown up once we move to the next page (unfortunately the image has become corrupted). The image itself is from the Women for Refugee Women website/report on women being denied asylum, but it is prominently displayed in this article. The image is of three refugee women next to each other on the streets of what is presumably somewhere in the UK. The text above the image is large and in all capital white block-letters it asserts the word “REFUSED”. The text beneath is much smaller and states “The Experiences of Women Denied Asylum in the UK”. The image of the three dark skinned women in headscarves does not show individuals who are empowered. The image itself is tilted (or canted) to the right, which gives the feeling of unease to the viewer. The first woman furthest away from the camera has her arms folded and is staring out toward an unseen object. The middle woman is pulling down her headscarf that obfuscates her face from the camera. The woman on the far right seems to huddle into her down winter coat. From this, we get the sense the women are standing in the street in cold weather. Each of these signs indicates a scene with several very uncomfortable and unhappy individuals. However, the accompanying story shows a different aspect of survivors of torture.

While the image is very bleak, the story below it depicts a survivor of torture whose story is read before a room in the House of Lords to politicians and celebrities. Sheila Hayman, who is the “Write to Life Co-ordinator” at the organization, writes the article. She was invited to the ceremony that celebrated the Women for Refugee Women’s report called “Refused”. In sharp contrast to the image, Hayman depicts a
world of excess and extravagance. She insightfully states that her second impression of the environment “… was 'I wish some of my clients were here to eat all this food'”. The article goes back in time and discusses the experiences of Saron as a survivor of torture. Saron, as the article states, is the unsung hero of the event. She came from an abused and tortured background and then became a writer for the Freedom from Torture’s writing group. Currently, she works for Women for Refugee Women through a Vodafone grant and has been part of the interviewing process of the women in the report. While this story is incredibly empowering and inspiring, the image above it does not reflect this feeling. Instead, it uses the typical third world stereotype image rather than an image of a success story. While this image may be an affective appeal to possible donors, it simultaneously depicts them in very powerless ways. One wonders if this is a stereotype that still is effective in a media saturated environment. Really, it boils down to positive progressive images versus ones that depict individuals at their weakest and most disempowering. The image here is NOT the typical modern one that is shown on Freedom from Torture’s website, which might be why this article is buried several links away from the homepage (Hayman). Also, one wonders why the organization decided to use this image to represent the story. It would be more powerful to show the contrast between Saron (or a representation of her) and the people at the event. In this way, it really could question the disparity between the survivor and people with privilege. The story is powerful, but the image doesn’t push the audience to question issues of power.

**Healing through Nature**

An emphasis on the Freedom from Torture website is healing through nature. During my time spent at the organization in London, I would often walk past the several
flower gardens that were tended by both the workers and survivors of torture. In my experience, there was a great deal of discussion about the power of healing from torture and the incorporation of natural components of the world. Under the “What We Do” section of the website, there is a large black and white image, with a tinge of green, of a white, elderly woman sitting on a concrete curved ledge next to man with dark skin whose head is obscured by a hat. There is roughly a foot of distance from the two people and they are angled toward each other. One would assume that they are talking to each other, but we can only see the face of the woman and she appears to be listening to the man. The angle of the image is taken from above and is from the vantage point of someone looking down from the roof of the building. Behind the couple, there is what appears to be a long narrow curved plot of mulch. We can assume that the weather is colder because there is nothing growing in the plots and both of the individuals are wearing coats and the woman has a scarf wrapped around her neck. Without any context, we can assume that the white woman is the therapist talking to the dark skinned man who is a survivor of torture. To be fair, the audience is clued into this by both their skin colors but also that one person’s face is visible and the other is not. The position of the face of the survivor of torture is relevant because often times it is hidden or obscured. While this, in part, has to do with issue of anonymity, the body of the torture survivor becomes highlighted in many of these images. Another significant aspect of the image is that both the woman and the man have their hands held together in their laps. On many of the nonprofit websites that were analyzed for this project, hands are a common occurrence and represent many different meanings. Here, we can assume that the parallel position of the hands represent a kind of understanding between the two people. The use of the
outside space contrasts many of the dark images of torture that are shown on other websites (and in some sections of this website). The bright green and yellow colors represent a kind of hope for the survivor rather than the dark images and colors associated with torture.

Next to the right of the image, there is a text box with that states “We Work with Survivors of Torture”. Below this is a short statement about how Freedom from Torture has served over ten thousands individuals from all over the world. Here, we begin to get the sense that much of the work of the foundation focuses on several areas that encompass what some would call the third world. From a surface level, the majority of the attention on this website is given to countries in these areas. Just beneath this section are links to “Rehabilitation” and “Influencing Others”. At the top of every page that is linked from the home page there is a graphic of green flowers that are outlined in white with a green background. Again, we keep coming back to the idea of nature and healing. The Rehabilitation section includes many links that explain the organization position on healing. Also, there are several quotes from survivors of torture that are spread throughout these texts. One such quote, “They say torture is an act of killing someone without their dying. I am still alive, but inside I feel no life. I don’t know who I am anymore.” Amir, Middle East (“Rehabilitation”, http://www.freedomfromtorture.org/what-we-do/10). This quote is not given any more context in this space, however as we have seen throughout this project, it seems that the organization is constantly struggling with including their clients on the site. The quote itself seems to emphasize the hopelessness that a survivor of torture feels after the event. It affectively reaches out to the audience without the use of visual images. This is
important because it adds to the diversity of depictions of survivors on the website.
Below this quote is a statement by the Clinical Services director, Alex Sklan, that argues that people like Amir are encouraged to participate in their recovery along side of the individuals at organization. Throughout many of these pages, we see the combination of both the voices of survivors and the organization.

Issues of healing are significant to the mission of Freedom from Torture and it allows them to stand out, however, sometimes these images can have problematic elements. In a section of the website that includes a news blog, there is an image that rotates into view of the side profile of a dark skinned woman in front of a camera crew. She is sitting in a green lawn chair and is talking to an older white man who has a notebook in his hand next to another man who has a film camera in front of him. Both of her hands are up as if to articulate a point while she is speaking to the camera. Her face has a bit of a grimace on it as she looks at the note-taker that is off camera. She is situated in a corner of a large wooden fence. The foreground of the image is of several purple flowers with thin green stems that are slightly out of focus. The flowers are obviously far from the people, but the effect on the camera is that the flowers frame the woman’s head and part of her upper body. Behind the woman is a huge green plant and to the right of her feet are more small flowers. The woman is surrounded by nature. To the right of the image is a caption titled “Natural Growth Project on BBC Television.

The motif of a survivor of torture being questioned is one that has reappeared on Freedom from Torture’s website repeatedly over the years. It seems that this unironic depiction of survivors is also a motif that resonates with donors. Somewhat problematically, this image can be read as one that recreates the hierarchical position of
the survivor being questioned by someone who is more powerful. This image can be mainly understood one of two ways; the survivor has been given the platform to speak, or the survivor is being placed in another form of integration. The organization would like us to believe in the first option. While the image still has some elements of the videos of the older version of the site, this scene is much more positive. The nature scene does seem to make the participants appear to be more comfortable. The donor’s money is contributing to the health and well being of the woman who has been given the ability to voice her story to the world through the documentary. On the other hand, the image itself places the woman in a position of having information that is desired by the film crew. One is to assume that the man asking her questions is not a trained therapist. In a way, the woman’s body becomes the vessel of information that satisfies our desire to know more about her experiences. Since her body does not have the physical marks of torture, her testimony takes the place of this type of image. Additionally, her image is broadcast on BBC1 for the world to consume.

The link takes the user to a news page with a different image at the top. The text below the image explains that this is part of a series called “Inside Out London”. Below is a brief description of the project that follows survivors throughout their journey of both torture and their participation in the “Natural Growth Project”. Also included, as in much of the website, are direct quotes from the survivors themselves. The two quotes both refer to their relief from their struggles through the project and community. The authors of the quotes are only identified by the gender neutral “Natural Growth Project Participant”. The image itself is of three individuals who appear to be in a field. Large green plants on all sides surround the three people in the scene. To the left in the forefront is a green
wheelbarrow that matches the color scheme of the rest of the picture. The individuals are all hunched over the garden and are hard at work. They all form a triangle with a woman in the forefront facing away from the camera and the other two further in the back both positioned toward the middle of the frame. The faces of all three are hidden from view. However, the skin color of both men is dark and the woman in the forefront is dressed in all in black. The image itself is interesting because it shows the assumed survivors in mid-work. One could assume that their faces are not shown in order to protect their identity. However, the effect plays into a long history of minorities being depicted working in the fields. The image of the faceless dark skinned group is not one that is most commonly associated with empowerment. Websites like Freedom from Torture must be incredibly careful when they include images like these because they do nothing to add to the dialogue of an empowered torture survivor. While the emphasis is on the survivors gardening, the message can be easily lost in racially polarized visions of the past ("Natural Growth Project on BBC Television", http://www.freedomfromtorture.org/news-blogs/5901). So, Freedom from Torture has improved its images by including many more soft colors and beautiful backgrounds, however, the position of some of the participants can bring back troubling connotations.

**Drawings and Cartoons of Torture**

Another trend on many anti-torture nonprofits is the use of drawings, paintings and cartoon representations of survivors of torture. I have already covered some of the background images that the website uses, like images of flowers or other nature related items, but this section examines several instances of survivors bodies being represented. The purpose of these representations are to take away some of the sting associated with
the events taking place or depictions of graphic images. When you show the scars of torture on the body of a drawing, one does not necessarily have the visceral reaction that they would when they see a realistic photograph. While the following images tend to not go into detail about specific individuals and their experiences with torture, it is a way to easily discuss controversial subjects. At first glance, one may argue that this is another victimization of torture survivors, but I think that the meaning behind it is much more complex. The major still cartoon that I will discuss later on in this section demonstrates the power of unreal images to assist survivors in real ways. Sometimes a simple animation can explain a complex process in a way that is quite accessible. I commend Freedom from Torture for diversifying their media in order to reach multiple groups. However, my analysis begins with a bit more controversial use of survivors’ bodies.

Sometimes using drawings of torture can show the effects of torture without pushing some of the more sensitive audience away. Under the “Make a Referral” link, there is a large image of two drawings of the outlines of bodies, both facing away from the viewer. The picture ends before the head and just below the buttocks, so we only see the torso of these individuals. The left image looks like that of a male figure while the right resembles the outline of a female. Both bodies have numbers near different areas of their flesh. The left body has several circular blob outlines drawn on his body, indicating areas in which he has been tortured. The one of the right has similar areas on her left arm. The drawing looks like an autopsy diagram that one would see on a crime television show. The title of the article is “Body of Evidence” which refers to a report that was conducted by Freedom from Torture that questioned the techniques used by the UK Border agency in determining asylum status. Unfortunately, the link to the article is
broken on the site and therefore further information was not found on the website. Again, this is an area where the bodies of survivors of torture are used without a great deal of context. One wonders about the effectiveness of images that lack certain contextual information. On the one hand, we are shown sterilized drawings of bodies of torture that could represent anyone. These figures are male and female, but they do not have any racial or socio-economic characteristics. The body here could really be anyone’s body. Now, as have discussed in other chapters of this dissertation, many global powers are implicated in the multiple global networks of torture. So, the issue is obviously very complex and messy. Freedom from Torture is always walking a thin line between empowerment and victimization. In showing sterilized images of torture survivors, the organization moves away from more stereotypical images of the torture victim, but also loses some context. This type of image also allows the audience to understand torture without being constantly bombarded by disturbing images. The bottom line is that there is never going to be a perfect representation of survivors, but these types of images are much improved and demonstrate that the organization is willing to improve and adapt over time (“Make a Referral”, http://www.freedomfromtorture.org/make-a-referral).

The use of drawings and cartoon figures on the Freedom from Torture website is relatively new. However, I believe that these types of images, when balanced with a diversity of images, adds a needed component on the website. Often, these drawings can show aspects of torture that would be difficult to represent with photographs. In including these different types of media, Freedom from Torture creates new ways to understand the process of seeking asylum. Another section that depicts the voice of survivors through unusual means is under the “Fleeing Torture to Safety” link. This link takes us to a multi-
page cartoon called “A Survior’s Search for Safety”. The cartoon spans over several pages that the viewer clicks through by pressing an arrow on the right or left side of the image. Interestingly, as it is set up, the story always repeats itself. While there is an ending, the arrows are always there to compel us to continue on; a metaphor for those who continue to seek asylum in a harsh legal system that they do not always understand.

The first image in the series shows a blue figure opening a door that leads to several other doors ending with the word “Rehabilitation”. Here, the struggle of the survivor of torture is apparent and very literal. The doors have words on them like “Torture” “Loneliness”, “Seeking asylum in the UK”, “Poverty”, etc. However, at the end of the tunnel we do see the large sign, “Rehabilitation” which is hopefully the endpoint of all survivors’ journeys.

The story is many pages and therefore I will only discuss a few of the more compelling images. We are told that torture is something that happens everywhere and that it creates mass numbers of asylum seekers. Many of them end up in the UK, and some are just trying to escape their plight and therefore don’t even know where they are going until they end up in the country. The emphasis in this paragraph is that these individuals who have gone through life altering traumatic experiences have to try to navigate a system that they are not accustomed to. Throughout the cartoon, we are told that anyone can be tortured and that nobody is prepared for it. Again, this points out the stereotype of individuals being tortured because in order to gain some sort of important information to the state. Much more often, torture is used to intimidate and gaining information is not the main objective.

Throughout the piece, the blue figure suffers greatly. It takes on the role of a survivor and tells us the story of asylum without having to expose a survivor of torture to
public scrutiny. A significant image in the series is of the blue person in the middle of several cartoon-like skyscrapers that are bent down toward it. To the left of the buildings we see a ship in the background and to the right an airplane. The bottom left hand corner depicts a close-up of two hands exchanging green money next to large truck. The whole picture is outlined in a brick archway. The size of the figures in the image is meant to convey the epic nature of the situation, while portraying the survivor as being a powerless agent of their own fate. Subsequently, our blue friend is drawn in a state of confusion as it scratches its head while trying to interpret multiple street signs in different made up languages. In this section, there is literally a drawn “Language Barrier” that blocks the blue person from being able to interpret these different markers. We are told that these individuals not only have to deal with the trauma of being a survivor of torture, but they also must navigate the stress of being in a new and unfamiliar place. From this point, the cartoon gets much more intense. We see a stark scene with a screening room with several blue figures with their heads down in front of glass partitions with figures that have uncaring and frowning faces. To the right we see where the line starts with and endless crowd of blue figures waiting. Here, for the first time since the original slide, Freedom from Torture is mentioned. A word bubble tells us that the organization sees many of these individuals in order to help them deal with the bureaucracy of the government. Freedom from Torture becomes the savior of those who have been tortured. After this, an image appears of the blue figure sitting at a desk with an interpreter. The two are sitting in front of two surly looking green figures. The image explains that poor interpreting can lead to the denial of asylum applications. In this section, we are told that male interviewers often intimidate female survivors of rape and that this sometimes prohibits
survivors from explaining their entire story. The author of this piece could perhaps add a section that includes those men who have also been raped into this story. The next section shows the actual Freedom from Torture building on the right of the figure who is depicted in several different poses. The first is him/her sitting on a couch in front of what can be assumed is a therapist. As the person talks, there is a young blue child playing with toys beneath them. The addition of the child shows a stark contrast between this scene and the one in the screening room. Now, the survivors can bring their comfort zone to the organization rather than it being stripped from them. Below this, the blue figure is digging in the ground near a flower and painting an image of the Freedom from Torture logo of two hands creating a dove. The scene is called the “Waiting Game” because the survivors must wait in limbo while his/her fate is decided by the government.

The last bit of the cartoon shows the survivor as they wait to hear from the state. The audience is shown the blue person in several poses of dismay next to a large calendar that proclaims that it is decision day. The calendar has both granted and refused written on it in green and red boxes respectively. In this section we are told that there are three options for asylum seekers. The first is having their asylum status approved, which means that they have to find work within several short weeks and also find a place to stay in the UK. Obviously, this is not easy to do when one does not even speak the language of the country. The second outcome is refused but granted asylum through an appeal. In this scenario, Freedom from Torture blames the UK Border Agency for having a convoluted system that forces many asylum seekers to the court system prior to gaining their asylum. The final and most terrible decision is final rejections and deportation. Here, we see the blue figure hunched over as it walks toward a plane leading back to their country of
origin and torture. The “final” slide explains to us that everyone needs to help these individuals and we can do that by standing “side by side” with both survivors and Freedom from Torture. Interestingly, this is not a direct plea for financial assistance. We are asked to help support both the organization and survivor, but it doesn’t directly link us to a donation screen. Of course, there is a donate link at the bottom of the page, but it is not any larger than the several other links near it. Freedom from Torture’s website shows that there are many ways to support a cause that go beyond financial gifts (“A Survivor’s Search for Safety”, http://www.freedomfromtorture.org/multimedia/6056).

The above cartoon jam-packs a great deal of complex information in a very short space. It could be said that the images oversimplify the issues of torture, but it is an excellent primer for those that are beginning to learn about torture or have been affected by some component of torture. While some may argue that the human-like figures in the comic strip are problematic, I believe that they introduce us to hardships of torture recovery that are often ignored in popular media. We do not often see the repercussions of torture and this is a positive way of showing some of these trials. In some ways, it is significant that real photographs are not used in this case because it doesn’t condemn any one group to victimhood. While we can pick apart these images until we find all of the problematic meanings buried within the text, I feel that in this case it is more important to look at the entirety of the website. If Freedom from Torture’s only media was this cartoon of blue blobs, we would have a problem. Fortunately, over the years, the organization has added a great deal of diverse media that creates a diversity of voices.

Survivor Voices
Freedom from Torture has struggled with including the voice of survivors on their website for a long time. To the chagrin of this author, the section where they highlight these voices has changed several times; it has both added and removed images and videos. These depictions have evolved a great deal over time. The newest incarnation of the voice section of the website highlights a film entitled “Finding a Voice”. The image that represents the film is a set of six images, three on top of another three with images of close-ups of individual’s faces. Each image shows the individual in a pensive state. Several show the participant with their mouth open, we can assume that they are either talking or performing. Each individual has a dark complexion and the apparent gender of the group is split in down the middle; three men and three women. The woman, man, and other woman at the top (from right to left) all seem to be staring intently to just left of the camera. The man in the center is the only one with his mouth fully closed as he just stares out to something we can’t see. Our eye is drawn to his image first, primarily because of his stoic look, but also because the image is the lightest shaded of the three on the top row. Below these images are two men and a woman. The man in the center has his eyes to the floor as he speaks. Here, we can assume that he is having trouble speaking, or ashamed of what he is saying. The woman to the far right has her eyes wide open as she listens to something happening off camera. The bottom row of images is shot from a slightly lower angle than the ones on top. The effect is that of the audience looking up toward the participants of the film.

The film itself, entitled Finding a Voice, is quite the achievement for Freedom from Torture. Long gone are the problematic short films of survivors being “interrogated” about their life story; Instead, Freedom from Torture has developed a short
film (about 20 minutes) that explores the lives of several survivors of torture. The torture itself is not really explored in the film (other than some references to it in their poetry) because the focus is on the stories and poems that were created by the individuals. The film begins with the participants of the group in their own homes. There are many jump shots showing both the men and women getting ready for their day. In this very intimate section, we see people brushing their hair inside of their own flats. For a torture survivor, this is a meaningful act because often they fear retribution from those who have tortured them. To be that open on video is a very powerful act. As the survivors are getting ready and leaving their apartments, we hear voice-overs from the participants talking about going to the workshop. Some tell us about how nervous they were for the first time going to the event.

We quickly transition to a room with all of the participants on the ground surrounding a white woman named Kristine. Kristine is a theater director and the leader of this actor’s workshop. Through clever editing, we find out that these “actors” are all there to learn how to perform their own written works. First, we are introduced to Haymanot from Ethiopia through a transition with a title slide. She explains to us, with the help of Kristine, that she would prefer to perform her own work rather than have other actors. Next, we meet Timothe from Congo who emphasizes the significance of the author’s body in the work. To Timothe, the author is the only one that really understands how the body should react to the written word. Noah from Uganda then explains how the relationship between the solo activity of writing and performing in front of an audience needs to be connected. Jade from Uganda explains to us that writing is significant because she lost the ability to write because of her “experience in Uganda”. Here, we
have an instance of implied torture; she doesn’t directly refer to the specific experience, but the audience knows what she is alluding to. She tells that she forgot how to read and write and now regaining this privilege has allowed her to feel like a human again. Jade also explains that this is a step toward fighting against the people who have done such terrible things to her (and others) in the past. At the end of her short section, she exclaims, “We are fighters!” and shakes her hands at the camera. In an instant, we are affectively connected to this woman. Each of these mini-interviews have included tight framed shots of the participants faces, but the next transition zooms in tight to just the hands of several different people. Hands continually come up in many images on the website as well. The next individual’s name is Stephanie from Cameroon and she explains that she wants to help people understand her experiences and that an actor cannot completely show some of the specific feelings and emotions.

The short sections of each survivor are significant because they not only show them in a different light than any other part of the website, but it also allows them to show their creativity. While torture is at the center of these comments, the audience is encouraged to examine these survivors as individuals. In a very short period of time, we learn a lot more about these people than in any of the photographs of torture and we can relate to them in a way that is different than just reading their testimonies. One understands that perhaps Kristine has asked them a question and encouraged them to answer, but it seems that the survivors have a lot more freedom in this film to say exactly what they want. Each survivor looks very comfortable as they talk about their experiences and feelings. Additionally, the old tropes of the third world victim are not used here. While it would have been interesting to see if the dynamic had changed if the
group leader was of African descent, this was still a very useful exercise. I find this section to be one of the most emotionally charged portions of the website. There obviously is a lot of production that goes into something like this, but it is a very powerful film that should be further showcased on the website.

The film than transitions to Steven from Burundi who explains that he wants to show an audience his “traumatic past experiences”. This section ends with Christine jumping in and explaining that she wants the actors to use improvisation in each actor’s specific cultural context to better relate to their experiences. She explains that this will sometimes mean that they will be speaking in their own languages while acting. The film then moves to several acting exercises where the participants are giving scenarios (like a couple that isn’t working out) and are encouraged to act in their native language. The really significant portion of this section is that when each actor is performing, we are given title slides that tell us what each of the languages are that are being spoken. Also, it is significant that initially the actors are always seated on the ground so that everyone is at equal position to one another. The following section moves to an activity that includes both improvisation and the actual text that has been written by the participants. The actor/authors are given prompts and are asked to use the emotion from a specific situation and apply it to their own text as if their text had no meaning outside of the separate prompt. With these exercises, we see a vulnerable group of people who are allowing the world to see the process of their creations. The film moves into Stephanie reading a beautiful poem entitled: “A Map” which describes her relationship with her family and how her body is literally a map that reminds her of her ancestry. Her body is also a space that reminds her of her experiences as a torture victim and asylum seeker. The poem ends
with her exclaiming that her breathing shows her that she is still alive (“Hear from Our Write to Life Group”,

While this poem is intensely emotional, we get a feeling of hope as she reads it out loud. As they argue throughout the film, author’s interpretation of their work is needed in order to really connect with the traumatic event of torture. The film then moves into group improvisation that includes portions of the individual authors works. Whenever an author reads, we are given the name of the author and his/her piece on a title slide and quotes from the text also are transitioned into the film. In one emotionally moving portion of the film, Noah is encouraged to sing a song and others naturally join in about a song about best friends. We see the group open up to each other and to the camera. It is a privilege for the audience to be able to view this experience. The section of the film ends with the participants going home and taking of their coats and settling in to their apartments. Each person is shown going into their home and the final shot is of their poem on a piece of paper sticking out of purse or a jacket pocket. The voice-overs tell us that the participants are exhausted, but all seem to have enjoyed their experiences with the workshop.

I believe that this section shows how far Freedom from Torture’s website has evolved over the past several years. With this thought-provoking documentary, we are able to see the survivors of torture in a much more complex and interesting way. While holding on to the central theme of torture, this film is able to move past that as its sole motivating force. Participants use their creativity in order to better express themselves and share their experiences with a larger audience. As an organization, this is a great
move toward giving survivors a platform to speak. In the future, it would be fascinating to see them given their own space to speak without the mediation of someone else. Perhaps there will be a day when survivors are making documentaries themselves about their own experiences.

The film lead us to a related area of the website where survivors actually go out into the community to share their experiences. This section is entitled: “Who is Survivors Speak Out?”. Here, we find out that these pages are created and supported by the Survivors Speak OUT network, which includes 19 individuals. They are former clients of the organization who are advocates for the rights of other survivors. As part of their activism, they speak out to schools and universities, sharing their stories with young people. They emphasize that they do not speak about their stories of torture, but rather examine their lives after these terrible events. While this is empowering, the page could be more open to the political nature of this work. Freedom from Torture does explain the context surrounding torture, but someone interested in this must dig further and further into the website. The specific context of a survivor’s tortured past is not always explicitly explained. With this, the systemic nature of torture is sometimes lost in the narratives.

For example, this page along with many others on the site, begin with direct quotes from survivors. The quotes here explain the plight of the survivor of torture, which includes many struggles, but they are also very nonspecific. The second quote on the page explains how a survivor finally got their British passport, which makes them very happy and that they hope to someday return to their own country, but this is all still very vague. While it is obvious that these individuals cannot give away too much of their identity and experiences on this website, it seems that more specifics would allow the audience to
better understand how torture is used by different organizations and governments. It seems that the website has been constructed around small “soundbites” of quotes, short videos, and images that provoke affective responses from possible donors. However, as we have seen above, the website is not limited to marketing fluff. Once one explores the many multiple and diverse links, a larger picture of torture is created (“Who Is Survivors Speak Out?”, www.freedomfromtorture.org/feature/survivors_speak_out/5993).

**Survivors and Allies Unite**

A last section that I examine on Freedom from Torture deals with the portion of the website where we see images of donors. There are not many occasions on these websites that we see anything other than images and/or representations of survivors. Survivors are often at the forefront and donors/supporters are only mentioned when asking for financial assistance. In this section, Freedom from Torture encourages supporters to take an active roll in the website. They are asked to submit images of their hands with messages of encouragement. I believe that this really allows for donors and allies to feel like they have more of a stake in the organization. In asking for these images, the organization is moving past a model that simply begs for monetary donations. The process of creation is one that will better connect these individuals with the mission of the site over the long term.

The participation spoken above starts on an area of the website called: “Survivors Speak Out”. The page itself has a large image with 33 close-up pictures of hands with writing on them. At the top of the right hand side of the overall image is the saying “GIVE US A HAND!” in a large yellow font. Some of the images have two hands (from the same person) in them while others only have one. There is a diversity of skin colors
that run throughout the different pictures. When one places their mouse over top of the images, it magnifies them in order for the viewer to be able to get a closer look. The hands each have individual quotes on them. One says “I’m proud to support survivors speak out” and another states “I speak for those who can’t!” and still another writes “Survivors have a voice…Listen to us!” From this page, it is difficult to determine if the individuals with the messages on their hands wrote them by themselves or hand someone else do it for them. It is especially difficult to determine for those images that have writing on both hands. One image does have someone writing a message in French on someone else’s hand. The message states, “C’est mon hisrorige. C’est..”. It is both the only message that is unfinished and the only to be in a language other than English (“Survivors Speak Out”, http://www.freedomfromtorture.org/feature/survivors_speak_out/5990). Significantly, this shows that there are supporters from all around the world. The greater diversity that is shown, the more the site convinces us that torture is not just a world issue, but one that is going to be ended by a global group of citizens.

On the left hand tool bar, we can find out “How to ‘Give a Hand’”. On this page, there is a medium sized image with two dark male hands being held out palms up. A white woman’s hand holds one of the hands while her other hand writes “Torture was pain…”. Next to the image we are told out to help with the overall project. It states that, “We want people to write messages of support or myth busting messages about survivors of torture on their hands. It is an easy way to engage with us and just like many survivors bravely speaking out but who are also forced to hide their identity, it does not reveal who you are – it is just your message to us”. Interestingly, this message goes beyond the
typical argument against the use of bodies without faces as markers of pain and suffering. There are many who argue that an individual loses agency when their bodies are exploited in a capitalistic way. We see this in advertisements where women’s bodies are used to sell objects. Often, their faces are not shown, but their body parts are highlighted to connect sexuality with commodity fetishism. The images here complicate the matter because showing the face of the survivor of torture can have several very negative consequences. The first is the most obvious one, the fact that their anonymity could be compromised. Many of the survivors of torture who seek help from Freedom from Torture are asylum seekers. There is a real concern that victimizers could discover the identity of survivors. Another issue deals with the healing process of torture survivors. One must give these individuals back the control that has been taken away from them. In order to do this, their lives must be protected from the limelight of modern day media. Significantly, this project allows for both survivors and supporters to be depicted side by side in an effort to raise awareness of torture. We are told how to participate with these directions “It's easy, all you have to do is: 1. Think about what you want to say in your message 2. Write it on your hand 3. Take a picture of your message on your phone or with your camera and send it to us 4. If you want to join Freedom from Torture in campaigning for survivors rights, then join other activists by sending us your name and contact details here” (“How to ‘Give Us a Hand’”, http://www.freedomfromtorture.org/feature/survivors_speak_out/5991). Freedom from Torture is using a type of social media in order to include the messages of their supporters in the advertising of the site. In a way, the free work of these individuals is used to be inclusive but also it is a relatively cheap campaign to run.
The use of hands is important in this section and is a reoccurring theme on many nonprofit websites. Hands are often used to symbolize many different meanings. We can see a menacing hand that is being used to hurt us. A close-up image of a hand in a dark prison can be shown to represent the helpless of the plight of someone being held against his or her will. An image of two hands together creating a dove is the icon of Freedom from Torture and can be seen on almost every page of their website. Hands are often used, when in a positive light, on this website to represent the coming together of individuals to fight against the injustices of the world. The use of hands in this section conveys that we all are in this fight together and that we can relate to survivors by showing them that we have something at stake in their healing. This message is an incredibly positive one that will hopefully inspire people to continue to support this nonprofit. Freedom from Torture has been successful in adding many more positive messages on their website, which help to move beyond some of the stereotypical images of survivors.

Conclusion

As we have seen, Freedom From Torture has grown a great deal from its more simple days as the Medical Foundation for the Care of Victims of Torture. The site has many more places where survivors are allowed to show their creativity and there is a greater diversity of photographs, drawings, and videos. Freedom from Torture has moved into the third stage of anti-torture nonprofit website development and shows that it is willing to adapt and change over time. The third stage is significant because this is when the producers of the website have an active and dynamic presence. While the structure of Freedom from Torture stays the same, over time, the content and images dramatically
change. Now, there are several sections where survivors of torture are depicted as being empowered individuals that are taking part of the fight against state sanctioned torture. However, in some ways, the current website is still problematic. It still somewhat relies on the narrative of the powerless survivor, but it transcends this meme in many other ways. Freedom from Torture includes a diversity of survivor voices and gives them a space to show their own creativity. When I explore the website, I can identify with some of the survivors and this affective feeling is significant when trying to gain donors. The more complex the narrative, the more satisfying it will be for today’s media savvy Internet users and the more accurate it will represent the survivors. The dynamic nature and complexity of the images on the Freedom from Torture website make it a model for other anti-torture websites.
CHAPTER V. TORTURE SURVIVOR ADVOCACY WEBSITES

As we have seen in the previous chapters, Freedom from Torture’s website has evolved into a dynamic space that is continuously updated in order to better serve the organization’s clients. Many other similar websites seemingly do not spend as much of their resources on the Internet such as the websites to follow. The purpose in this section is to contextualize Freedom from Torture and argue that these other websites need to use FFT as a model in their future endeavors. An anti-torture nonprofit’s primary function is to exist in the physical world of torture survivors. Torture based nonprofit must be on the ground and provide services for a relatively dispersed group of people. In the age of global marketing, these organizations cannot afford to ignore the Internet as a source of advertising and direct income. As I have discussed earlier, the global means of media lies in the hand of a select few large conglomerates. Small anti-torture nonprofits have to compete for the eyes and pockets of an audience that is already oversaturated with advertisements. As argued by Peter Hall, The nonprofit is crucial in a free market environment because it needs to provide services for individuals that the government is either unable or unwilling. The irony is that the government doesn’t economically support the anti-torture nonprofits in a satisfying way. Therefore, the nonprofit must act much more like a corporation in order to be financially viable. Nonprofit are capable of (and many of them are working toward) reaching out to donors in a way that does not re-victimize the survivors of torture. Freedom from Torture has made great strides toward this goal. However, some similar websites are not as evolved. In an effort to show the growth of Freedom from Torture, this section will compare three other anti-torture nonprofit websites.
The first, Redress, is also based in the United Kingdom while the other two, Program for Victims of Torture and Torture Abolition and Survivor Support Coalition International are situated in the United States. Many of these websites fall into the trap of depicting their clients as being completely powerless and without agency. The theory of cybertypes by Lisa Nakmaura is useful here because these stereotypes of the “third world victim” are transposed into the digital world with serious consequences (Nakmaura 11-12). The Internet is a powerful place and it can be part of a larger picture of global stereotyping. Also, the idea of implied torture (meaning when torture is not depicted in images, it is implied that it will or has already happened), which I have created out of Barbie Zelizer’s concept of implied death, is often used on these websites. Implied torture can be both useful, in that it grabs the viewer’s attention, but it can also add to the victimhood of the nameless survivor of torture. In the following sections, we will see many images of individuals in prison cells, photographs of handcuffs (among other implements of torture), and survivors in different states of recovery. In this, we see the concept of the affective refrain (Bertlesen and Murphie) with these images being repeated over and over again.

The difference, it seems, is that while they reinforce ideas of the victim, they also are repeated so many times that the audience can ignore them. Still, there seems to be some sort of affective pull with some of these images. While I find the concept of the subaltern to be problematic when talking about specific groups (Spivak), it can be useful in understanding how groups are depicted. In this way, the subaltern image is created, where groups of people are depicted as having little to no voice. In order to combat the subaltern image, these websites need to further adapt incorporate more of the survivor’s
voice. Somewhat ironically, survivors started several of the nonprofit organizations that I will examine in this piece. However, the voices of other survivors have been lost to image after image of the victim. The following websites need to work toward reaching stage three of my anti-torture nonprofit website development model. In order to more positively depict their clients, they need to have a much more active web presence that includes a diversity of images and voices in order to show themselves to the world.

**Redress: Front Page Torture**

Redress is an organization that, according to their website, helps survivors of torture through “Casework”, “Advocacy”, and “Capacity Building”. Keith Carmichael, a British citizen started the nonprofit in 1992 in the United Kingdom. He was a Territorial Army Officer who was imprisoned and for three years in Saudi Arabia without ever being charged. He alleges that he was both tortured physically and mentally. After his ordeal, he began to work with many different health professionals in order to recover from his ordeal. He has suffered from both physical ailments and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and has not, to this day, received any compensation from the Saudi Government. In order to help other survivors of torture, he created Redress (“Torture Damages Bill: Seeking Reparation for Torture Survivors”, [http://www.redress.org/downloads/survivors-stories/KEITH%20CARMICHAEL%20Statement.pdf](http://www.redress.org/downloads/survivors-stories/KEITH%20CARMICHAEL%20Statement.pdf)). So, the organization bases itself on the credibility of being started by someone who has actually experienced torture. Much of the website is based upon his experiences. The idea of experiencing something that many others have not establishes the ethos of an organization that focuses on such a sensitive group. We can see that the founder of the organization has a lot at stake in his creation. He is yet to be financially compensated for his torture and he believes that this
is crucial to the health and well being of the survivor. As we will see later, the nonprofit is dedicated and focused on financial compensation for the survivor, hence the name, Redress. Redress focuses mainly on giving legal support to survivors (“Who We Are”, http://www.redress.org/about/who-we-are). As we will see, the website itself is stuck in the second stage of development because it relies so heavily on images of victims of torture.

The front page of the website has several mixed messages. We are shown both images of survivors who are fighting against the system that doesn’t allow them to be compensated for their torture and stereotypical images of torture victims. The very first page of the website has a large banner image with this quote on the right hand side in large white font, “REDRESS is a human rights organisation that helps torture survivors obtain justice and reparation. REDRESS works with survivors to help restore their dignity and to make torturers accountable”. To the right of this is an image of the shadow outline of the profile of a woman. The outline effect comes from light from a nearby window. She is looking to the right and her shadow is against a cracked cement covered wall. The light that brightens this otherwise incredibly dark room comes from this solitary window. The light fades out along the wall toward the text. While one cannot see the expression on the face of the woman, but her mouth is closed and it appears as if she is staring off towards something that is out of the frame. The image can be read as it attempt to convey the dread one would have if they were about to be tortured. Again, the image plays off of the implied torture trope. We are supposed to make several assumptions about this image. The audience is not going to see the actual torture, but is encouraged to use the image to create a story in their mind. One can view this as a kind of
narrative totality. Firstly, the room is most likely meant to be the place where torture is going to take place or has already begun. Another interpretation could be that the frame of the window around the woman’s shadow is meant to symbolize that the survivor is still trapped within the abuses of the past. The image itself is both terrifying without showing the graphic consequences of torture and yet somehow aesthetically pleasing. The photograph is constructed in such a way that it is almost artistic. There is a tension between what is happening in the image and how the image is constructed. A professionally created photograph that artistically recreates a vision of torture can instill a kind of visceral reaction in an audience. We do not know the identity of the person, but we can assume that they have been or are going to be tortured. Beyond these ideas, there is very little context to add to the photograph. The person becomes part of a nameless (and faceless) group of torture victims.

Not all of the images on the front page include such problematic depictions of the tortured. To the very right of this image is a rectangle with the title “Survivors’ Stories”. Below the title is a full body image of someone who has survived torture. As of the writing of this dissertation, there are two images that switch with one another when the page is refreshed. The first is an image of Patson Muzuwa who is Zimbabwean. He is quoted as saying “I was electrified, put in a drum of cold water and beaten under the foot uncountable times”. Patson stands before us with his hands at his side. He looks directly into the camera; into the eyes of the viewer. He stands before us to share his story of pain and suffering. The image hails to us to journey further with him, to want to read his story at length. Along with the quote, we are being motivated to search more. Is his story an act of empowerment? While the testimony is meant to give voice to the survivor, the man’s
body is also there to be consumed by those interested in donating to the organization. The systemic nature of torture is not challenged by this image; rather there is an absence of context. The image represents the act of torture in order to pull the viewer in, but is it enough to encourage us to continue on? In order to read his full story, we must click on the link under this quote. Patson’s testimony begins with him arguing that the Torture (Damages) Bill (which I have a full section on further in this piece) needs to be passed into law in order to give reparations to those who have been tortured in the past. He goes on to explain that he was tortured because he was an activist in Zimbabwe. On his arrival in the UK, his torturers phoned him and told him that they could and would come after him no matter where he went. Stunningly, he claims that he gave them his own address and told them that he was going to protest at the Zimbabwean Embassy every day. The piece ends with him arguing that he wants to live a proper life in the UK, pay his taxes and find a good job. He argues that, “I want to be seen as a refugee and not as a thief.” Patson exemplifies a kind of brazenness that doesn’t exist in many other depictions of torture survivors. While the act itself significant because it shows an empowered survivor, it is also a bit reckless. So, the image is of an empowered survivor, but not one that would necessarily be a good role model for other survivors. In contrast to the shadowy image of the torture victim that is the main image on the website, this is actually quite an improvement.

Another similar image is the first (and only in this project) of a white torture survivor. A refresh of the page shows us an image of Les Walker, a British citizen. He is quoted as saying “One thing that really hurt was catching sight of ‘Made in England’ on the handcuffs”. This quote is one of the few that actually directly implicates a western
government, however indirectly, in the act of torture. In my research that spans many years, it has been rare to see a connection like this. It seems that soon after the controversy over torture (waterboarding, exposure to loud noises, etc.) during the Iraq War that these types of critiques have lessened on these websites. Interestingly, the condemnation comes from a white male citizen of the United Kingdom. This man also stares into the camera; however, his right leg is pointed out to the right, which opens his body up more than Patson’s in the former image. He stands upright in a blue button down shirt and dress grey pants. His stance is one of someone who is confident of himself. We find out in his first person account that he was a project manager in Saudi Arabia who had been tortured for an extended period of time. Interestingly, the document never really reveals why he was captured, it mainly focuses on the torture itself and on his rehabilitation. However, he is incredibly critical of the British government. He claims that the government actually tried to stop his group from fighting against those who had tortured him. He states that, “To the British Government MONEY, ARMS, PLANES & OIL mean more than the rights and lives of this country’s citizens” (“Success Stories”, http://www.redress.org/home/home).

Again, here is a direct attack on a western power and their implication with torture. This is a brave move by the organization, but it is really aimed more for the potential donors than clients to the site. Many survivors, especially those who are foreign to the country, have good reason to not criticize the government because they do not know if they will be able to gain amnesty there. Les is privileged in that he is white and a citizen of the UK and is allowed to speak in this way. It was bold of the organization to place two aggressive messages on their main page, but it comes from a very masculine
point of view. It caters to a very specific type of anti-torture stance that may alienate other survivors that are looking for assistance. While western governments need to be further implicated into the system of torture, it needs to be part of a larger campaign and not just played upon the backs of specific survivors. The organization can pass the buck by not making the issue part of their overall mission and having survivors represent those feelings instead.

**The Torture Bill: Depictions of Torture**

One of the primary functions of the organization and website is advance the Torture Bill. The bill is meant to create a way for survivors of torture to gain some kind of financial restitution from governments that have supported torture. Their page entitled, “The Torture Bill”, highlights an image that showcases the aftermath of torture. A brown skinned man’s back is the focus of the photograph as he places his hands against a white door. His face is turned away from the screen at an angle as he looks at the floor. We can only see the back of his head and ear. His back is covered in scars from assumed past abuses. To the left of the door is a white plaster covered wall with cracks all over it. The scars stand out in stark contrast to the white, pure looking room. There is an interesting dynamic at play between the whiteness of the walls and the jagged lines that run down them that end in holes in the very wall itself. These imperfections limit the calming effect of the white paint. Even if the man had been removed from the center of the image, one would know that something was strange about this space. The caption under the image states “GREECE. 2005. Lavrio Detention Center: This Afghani man resisted conscription by the Taliban, and was consequently tortured. He is now being detained in Greece as an illegal immigrant”, which leaves much to the imagination, another instance of implied
torture (“The Torture Bill”, http://www.redress.org/the-torture-bill/the-torture-bill). The image itself is professionally produced, but there is only limited information about where and when the image was taken. The position of the man is quite problematic; it conveys multiple meanings that are beyond a photograph of someone just displaying their scars. The man is pushed up against the wall as if he is about to be searched. It shows him in a position of powerlessness before both the camera lens and our eyes. His body represents the torture that the nonprofit is fighting against and yet it is, in a way, violated once again in order to create a realistic scene.

Under the image are several paragraphs that explain the Torture Bill. The bill is meant to allow torture survivors to have some legal recourse in the England and Wales to seek compensation in other countries. Often, the survivors have no legal options in the country in which they have been tortured. Under this bill, the plaintiff would be allowed to fight for monetary compensation from the safety of England and Wales. According to the website, the bill has been floating around since 2009, but has not succeeded in being past yet. Beneath this section, there are several paragraphs that ask donors and activists to “Take Action!”. Individuals are told that they can write to their Member of Parliament, Donate, use Redress’s campaign briefing packet (which I will examine next), and e-mail the website with any experience with torture survivors or evidence of torture. This is a laundry list of information that can be found on many nonprofit websites. Redress doesn’t seem to use effectively use social media to interact in a similar way as Freedom From Torture, rather it passively presents users these options. It seems that Redress prefers to rely on its suggestive imagery to compel individuals to participate.
In this section there are several links to further information, including a “briefing pack” that has some alternative imagery. The pamphlet begins with a large image of Les from other sections of the website. While this information is for The Torture Bill, it isn’t until the third page that the text begins to talk about the bill. The second page is consists solely of quotes from Les about his experiences. Again, many of the same quotes are used to explain his torture in Saudi Arabia. It seems that the website does not have a great deal of original content and that the same images and information are used over and over again. This time we learn that he had lived there for twenty-five years before he was taken prisoner. He explains that he would think about the long walks he would take with his dog back home during his hours of interrogation and torture. Les laments that he still wakes up screaming from the nightmares he still has from the experience. Beneath these several powerful quotes are three parallel images that are consistent with the torture trope from other sections of the website. The smallish images are in color and start with an image of a prison cell. The cell itself looks as if it is inside of a warehouse because of the large industrial windows that barely light the scene. The window frames seem to represent the bars of a prison cell. The room is mostly dark except for one patch of light that brightens the stained, aging floor tiles. The focus of the image is on large chain that is draped along the floor. The room is empty except for this ominous metal chain. If this was the sole image on the page, the reader may wonder exactly what happened in this room. It can be assumed that this is a room of torture, but beyond that first impression one must use their imagination. However, the center image is that of a male prisoner. This image is closely cropped so one can see the back of a shirtless man slumped over
against a wall. His legs are folded underneath his body and his hands are tied behind his back.

From his position, his ethnicity is difficult to discern because his back is visible, but his head is concealed by white hood. The image itself is oversaturated so everything has a glowing appearance, except for the edges of the frame that have an iPhoto type vignette surrounding the man. The effect is to create a set of bars, without the bars. The man is essentially trapped by the image itself! The final image, which is on the very left of this page, consists of a large set of dark metal bars with a Caucasian man’s fists grasping two of the horizontal ones. The perspective on the image is such that we can only see the man’s hands and no other portion of his body. We can see that the bars end at a grey cement wall. Again, another image is depicted of someone who is hopelessly trapped.

Under these photographs, there is a little more information about the Torture Bill. The paragraph states that, “Under the State Immunity Act 1978, as a general rule, foreign States are immune from the jurisdiction of the UK courts. This means that torture survivors in the UK are unable to seek justice in UK courts for the torture they endured overseas” which demonstrates why it is so difficult for torture survivors to fight against their torturers (“Torture Damages Bill: Seeking Reparation for Torture Survivors”, http://www.redress.org/downloads/torture-bill/Torture-Damages-Bill-leaflet.pdf). Accordingly, the new bill allows for survivor to use the UK courts to receive financial compensation for their trauma. The literature seems quite old since it references the bill being read in the House of Lords in 2008. It appears that the campaign has been going on since that time. The bill is a very significant move for torture survivors, but we only see a
few of their voices on this website. In contrast, there are many images of people in states of torture or implied torture. The site focuses too much on the terrible consequences of torture, but there are very few stories or images of survivors who have been able to overcome these trials.

Another disturbing image appears on the “Torture Bill in Parliament” page, which explains the history of the torture bill. The image is very dimly lit with a closely cropped figure of a man. The photograph is taken from the side of his body and he is sitting with his arms leaning against his legs, his hands rest on top of each other. The image ends right before his shoulders. His short-sleeved shirt and pants appear to be black or very dark, so the only white looking color comes from his upper arms. The black and white image reveals extremely scarred arms that look as if they have been burned from the tips of his fingers all the way up to the top of his body. While we cannot see the man’s face, the image itself invokes a sense that perhaps the rest of his body is just as scarred. The scarring is one of the more revealing images on these types of websites, however it shows the physical nature of torture that is often hidden. While many of the other images show either implied physical torture through empty “torture rooms” or the mental ramifications of torture through images of individuals in pain, this one depicts the visible marks. It is unclear as to whether or not this image is legitimate, but it is still powerful. The physical signs of torture are significant because they demonstrate the realities of torture that are often overlooked by some websites, however, it is problematic when these types of images are the only ones that exist on these sites. There needs to be a diversity of images along side the diversity of voices (“Torture Bill in Parliament”,

Implements of Torture: Handcuffs, Prison Cells, and Shadowy Figures

This section examines more of Redress’s use of images of implied torture. The theme of the site seems to be that of handcuff, prison cells, and shadowy figures. There are many images that showcase survivors in a series of distressful poses as well as the theme of tortured environments. I first examine some of the images that do not include images of survivors themselves and then I move into those that are much more explicit. While we do see some of these images on Freedom from Torture, they do not exist in the same quantity. Redress focuses too much on these archaic images that mostly depict survivors of torture as victims. The site hits us over the head with the same types of images to the point where they all blur together. The affective refrain loses its power here and becomes less interesting. Redress needs to readdress some of its cyber priorities and adapt to more contemporary forms of survivor representation.

One example of an area of the website where these types of images are prominent is the “Our Work” section. The first large image on this page is a close-up of a rusty pair of handcuffs. The rust looks as if it could also be specks of blood. The handcuffs are laying on what appears to be a stone surface. The right cuff is still partially in its leather sleeve. This is another area where torture is implied but not depicted. We are to assume that these handcuffs are either intended to be used in the torture process or have been used in the past. Another horrifying alternative is that they have been used repeatedly in many torture sessions. Whichever the scenario, the handcuffs imply a terror that most will hopefully never have to experience. Metaphorically, they also chain individuals to their memories. Handcuffs are not the most empowering of symbols for a group of people who have survived torture.
On the left hand side of the page is a small image of a painting created by Issam Hafiez. According to the caption, the image was created at a workshop called “Artists for Human Rights” at the Khartoum Center for Human Rights and Environmental Development in 2005. The image is of a kind of Cyclops-humanoid figure that is twisted around itself. The grey figure wraps its abnormally long arms around its frame as its head looks longingly down at an empty bowl. The face, which is most human except for the one large eye, looks both forlorn and hopeless. One interpretation of this image is that the figure represents someone who is without food because of the way that the figure cradles the bowl. One can also interpret the figure as representing the plight of those who have experienced trauma. His position reflects a feeling of isolation and sadness. On this page, we are not shown images of empowered survivors fighting against the systems of power that oppressed them, but rather the highlighted images are those that remind us of past and current abuses. The effect is to create a sense of horrification that could be meant to instill some sort of affective drive in donors (“How We Work”, http://www.redress.org/how-we-work/how-we-work).

Another section of the website under “Reparation Law & Cases” link also has images of inanimate objects that are meant to represent torture. The image is of a single bright light bulb that is centered in the midst of a ceiling covered in cracks and long fissures along its plaster. From this vantage point, we can only partially see the cement wall that runs down the side of the image. The scene itself is quite stark and conveys a sense of foreboding. Torture is implied through the trope of the bright interrogation light. However, the caption points us toward another conclusion; “GREECE. 2004. A cramped tenement, which houses Bangladeshi immigrants”. While this image seems to represent
life after surviving torture, it still uses familiar imagery to connect it to those that are used in other types of implied torture images. Interestingly, while the origin of the photograph is stated, it isn’t mentioned further in the piece. So, it appears that the image is used more for its aesthetic qualities rather than it being related to the topic of torture. Granted, survivors of torture are often left in dire straights after their ordeal, however, this image does not have enough contextual clues to fill in the rest of the narrative. Instead, the audience is left to fill in the gaps with other visual information from the rest of the website. Under the photograph is the title, “What is Reparation?” with several paragraphs that explain that reparation for injuries are customary in dealings involving international law. The document points to The International Law Commission that has upheld this idea in many of its court dealings. Significantly, this section explains the different types of reparation. The four are; Restitution which is restoring the survivor to their pre-tortured state, Compensation which is when damages are awarded because of these acts, Rehabilitation which allows for medical, psychological, and social services, Satisfaction and guarantees which is the idea that the events will be made public and the guilty party will take full responsibility.

The following section entitled “Perceptions of Reparation” follows the familiar pattern of myth dispelling. Redress states that, “Given that victims come from a diversity of backgrounds and experiences, victims' perceptions of reparations and the 'reparations process' are varied and multidimensional. Victims in the midst of conflict will not have time to think about 'reparations’”. So, we have a relatively significant portion of the website connected with an image of a scary light bulb. There seems to be some sort of disconnect between the content of the website and the images that it uses. Redress needs
to move away from the model of simply putting images on their website because websites need images. While the light bulb follows a certain theme that relates to other sections, there isn’t a strong connection between words and image. Redress relies on a theme that is antiquated and frankly not very interesting (“What is Reparation?”, http://www.redress.org/what-is-reparation/what-is-reparation).

Redress also uses images that imply being trapped. The website has several images of gates and cells. A photograph of a gate takes up another area called “How to Document Torture”. The image shows the top of a metal chain linked fence along the bottom of the image with barbed wire above it. Behind the fence there is a blurry mountain in the background. This area explains to the audience how to document instances of torture by giving examples and links to helpful sites like the “Torture Reporting Handbook”. Also, they compile some of the common information throughout these areas. One needs to have reliable information, testimonies from the survivor, secondary evidence, and information that corroborates that torture is prevalent in that specific geographic location. The gate is a trope that has been used over and over on anti-torture websites. We associate the gate with imprisonment and torture without much context. We assume that someone has been tortured beyond those gates, but it holds no more meaning than that. The audience is left to come to their own conclusions about who the torturers are and why they are doing this to innocent people (“How to Document Torture”, http://www.redress.org/information-for-survivors/documenting-torture).

I shift here to images of supposed survivors of torture, but the themes from the above section are very similar to these images. The audience isn’t given any more contextual information in these images or captions than before. A section of the website
entitled “News and Events” has another stark image on its main page. The picture is of a brown skinned man’s hands grasping the bars of a cell. The image is cropped to the point where we can only see his hands and just a glimpse of his upper arm in a white shirt at the edge of the photograph. The man’s fist is clenched around the rusted bar of the cell, his shiny gold wedding band on his ring finger is a sharp memory of better times. His other hand holds the perpendicular bar that is just out of frame so that we only see his knuckles and the higher sections of his fingers. The photograph is angled that is slightly off to the right side, making it difficult to see inside of the cell. To the left of his hands are two bars that are covered by several layers of a dark grey chain. While this scene is meant to convey a feeling of being trapped, paradoxically the scene is very well lit. It is almost as if there is sunlight coming from an adjacent window that makes the room brighter than normal.

The effect of this light creates a type of about to be tortured image slightly different from the typical ones found on other sites. In some ways, this image blends in well with the other colors on the page, the muted yellows, oranges, and blacks. The bright prison cell also conveys a feeling of the ever-present sense of torture that many survivors have during and after their ordeal. Even during the day, with the knowledge of many (including state governments throughout the world), torture occurs. The powerful image is contrasted by the simple and much less dire “Events and Conferences” title beneath it (“Events & Conferences”, http://www.redress.org/news-and-events/events). There are two similar images under “Survivor Networks” http://www.redress.org/information-for-survivors/survivor-networks and “Anti-Torture Campaigns” (“Information for Torture Survivors”, http://www.redress.org/information-for-survivors/anti-torture-campaigns).
Both show images of men with their hands on their heads in a state of lamenting. The former is of a man sitting on a set of dark grey stairs with his hand running through his hair. The latter is a close-up of a light skinned man’s face that has both his hands touching his face. The sequence of images is the few that actually show the survivor’s face. Another image shows one hand held out of a set of prison bars. The light skinned hand is bent down from the wrist and lies limp against the bars. To the right of the hand is only darkness. This image is one of the dimmest on the website. It depicts a forlorn tortured individual through the use of light and strategically placed body parts (“Books and Articles”, [http://www.redress.org/books-and-articles/books-and-articles](http://www.redress.org/books-and-articles/books-and-articles)).

Several times Redress uses the same image of the shadow woman from the front page as the banner of other sections of the website. The image of the shadow of a woman is used once again on the “Were you Tortured?” section. On this page, Redress follows the 1984 United Nations Convention Definition of Torture. In order for someone to receive help from the organization, one must first fit certain criteria. Redress states that one must have received pain or suffering, an official or someone in a role of power must commit the act, and it must be committed for a specific purpose. The purposes could be intimidation, to cause a confession, or to discriminate. So, in order to receive any assistance from this organization, torture must be sanctioned by the state. Here, we see a state oriented definition of torture. Torture is not defined in terms of the survivor, but rather in terms of state power. This organization focuses on reparation through the court systems, so it seems that if the torture occurred by a nongovernmental agency, Redress wouldn’t take the case (“What is Torture?”, [http://www.redress.org/information-for-survivors/what-is-torture](http://www.redress.org/information-for-survivors/what-is-torture)).
Following this section, “Urgent Help” shows another shadowy image of a man covering his face in cell. There is no caption to further explain the photo, so one can assume that it is staged. Another hint is the position of the sitting man with his hands holding his face as he is bent over as if he was crying. The hidden face is significant in these types of images because it hides the identity of the “survivor”. Behind the figure are the dark bars of the cell. In contrast to the many other images on the website, this one is very dark; the only light coming from a source beyond the cell. As with other images of cells, there is a cracked wall that symbolizes the broken existence of someone under guard. These figures in the shadows help the audience to visualize and imagine the survivor of torture’s plight, but there needs to be more context in order to address systemic issues of torture. Who is being tortured and why? Who is the torturer? The images mostly focus on the tortured and not the torturer (“Urgent Help”, http://www.redress.org/information-for-survivors/urgent-interventions).

Another image in the “Medical & Psychological Support” section is also quite disturbing. The photograph is of a close up of a woman’s eyes and eyebrows. Her right eye has a large, dark bruise that looks rather fresh. Her face is at an angle to the camera, but her eyes look directly at the audience. This image has no caption, but the section beneath it consists of information about how to receive medical and psychological support for these experiences. Here, we can tell the page hasn’t been updated at least in year since they still link to Freedom From Torture’s old name (The Medical Foundation for the Care of Victims of Torture). The information on this page is limited to several links to organizations that focus on medical care. Redress is purely a legal organization, but at least it offers up some other organizations to assist the survivor with their other

Redress is an organization that provides an important service for survivors of torture. However, their representations of survivors rely heavily on stereotypes. Torture is only viewed through the eyes of dark cells and shadowy prisoners. The website has a few testimonies from clients, but they seem to focus on extreme and aggressive individuals that do not represent the entirety of the population. Redress would improve by including the voice of the survivor and depicting both their lives before and AFTER torture has occurred. The website relies too heavily on stock-like photos that do nothing to advance the conversation into a new realm of empowerment. An audience is too used to the images of victims in need. In order to be more affectively compelling, the site should include a diversity of stories and voices. A successful website is one that creates a strong narrative that goes beyond the superficial level. Let the survivors speak for themselves and people will become interested. Additionally, the website needs to be more frequently updated with these types of stories. Redress could include monthly spotlights of individuals who were comfortable with sharing their images and voices with the world. The website is in the second stage of development and should look toward other examples of nonprofit websites that showcase their clients in alternative ways. Redress is updated with news, but many of the images stay the same. In order to be a more positive force in the global nonprofit scene, Redress needs to adapt with less images of implied torture and more affective appeals that include the voice of the survivor. It is not clear as to how much the survivor is included in the creation of the literature on the site. Also, the
site should more interactive ways for audiences to connect with the material. The Redress website has a lot of potential to show their clients as being empowered.

**Program for Torture Victims**

The Program for Torture Victims is another website that represents an anti-torture nonprofit. It claims to be the first of its kind in the United States. Interestingly, the few organizations that I have found in the United States that specifically focuses on torture do not have major online presences. It seems that they focus on their offline work rather than their online personas. Program for Torture Victims is one that does use its web-space, but it doesn’t quite compare to the other websites that I have discussed in this dissertation. I want to reiterate that this project focuses solely on web presence in relation to representations, not on the organization itself. We can understand the website as a type of representation, but it can’t possibly explain the entirety of a nonprofit. As I will demonstrate, Program for Torture Victims, while performing a significant task that not many nonprofits in the United States focus on, still rely to heavily on representational stereotypes of survivors of torture on their website. This site, like the one discussed above, is also in the second stage of anti-torture nonprofit website development. It has a lot of potential to move into the third stage, but it also relies too heavily on images of torture victims.

Program for Torture Victims is an established American torture survivor advocacy nonprofit. José Quiroga and Ana Deutsch created the Program for Torture Victims in 1980. Both escaped from their respective Latin American countries in the 1970s during political upheaval. Dr. Quiroga was the primary physician to the ousted President Allende of Chile. He was in the building as Pinochet’s men ransacked the
government in a United States backed coup. During this time period, he would be captured and tortured. Fortunately, Quiroga would escape when all physicians were allowed to leave captivity. Several years later, he moved to California with his family. His partner at the organization, Ana Deutsch fled from Argentina because of threats made against those who opposed the military government. Trained as a psychoanalyst, she was interested in the ways that people coped with these types of trauma. Quiroga and Deutsch met during a project for survivors of torture that was funded through Amnesty International (“Our Founders”, http://www.ptvla.org/organization-our-founders.html).

Images of Survivors

The Program for Torture Victims’ website has not changed a great deal in several years, however, soon after the data collection for this project, the site was overhauled. The next section will consist of information from the original site. The website has significantly less information than either Freedom from Torture or Redress with many less images. It seems that the organization has spent a lot less of its resources on its website. Overall, it feels quite dated compared to other modern nonprofit websites. However, their logo is part of a similar theme of anti-torture nonprofit websites. The logo of The Program for Torture Victims is a brown inky left hand pushed against our screen. The hand has two barbed wires that cross each other and flow over its palm. This logo is repeated several times on many different pages, the homepage alone has two (one in the top left corner and another in the bottom right). As I have shown several times before, the hand is a symbol that keeps popping up in photographs and other images on these websites. Hands can take on many different meanings depending on the context, but the idea of the helping hand is prevalent on this website.
The homepage for The Program for Torture victims consists of short news information on a left column, a section of rotating images in the middle with information about the organization and links below it, and the right has an area to sign up for a newsletter and The United Nations Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment’s definition of torture (which was defined earlier on in the introduction). The rotation images in the center box have no captions or explanations. The only information that is given below the images is the following, “PTV is a non-profit organization whose mission is to alleviate the suffering and health consequences of torture through psychological, medical, and case management services to victims of state-sponsored torture” (“Healing Lives”, http://www.ptvla.org/index.php). The rest of the text under this statement consists of more historical information about the nonprofit, but it never references the images above it. The audience is to assume that the images have something to do with torture; however, the images lack any contextual clues that would explain exactly what is happening. Most of them are close-ups of faces or mid shots of random individuals. In all, there are six images that fade in and out. Some are in black and white while others are in color.

One image is the profile of a man with dark skin’s face looking toward the right side of the frame. The image is completely black except for the section where we can see the man. The photograph is in black and white, which makes the darkness of the surrounding area even more menacing. His face is lit up just enough to see his face while the rest of his head is in relative darkness. His head is slightly tilted down. He stares off at something that the audience cannot see. We can assume that he might be pondering over something in his head by the pensive look on his face. The next image shows a
close-up of a Caucasian or Hispanic appearing man in a color photograph. The background is out of focus, but one can almost make out some sort of green plants. The man’s face is centered in the frame with his eyes slightly down. The frame is consists of his eyebrows down to his bottom lip. Again, the man here looks as if he is thinking about something; something that is not explained. He is not smiling, but there isn’t the same sort of metaphorical darkness in this image. In contrast to the last image, this one is much more colorful. It seems that color might suggest hope in this set of images. The next image uses a familiar trope, that of hands. The image is a color photograph, however, only an elderly woman’s forearms and hands are visible. Her well-worn hands grasp each other in the center of the picture. The photo then morphs into a color close-up of a woman of Asian descent’s head and shoulders as she leans against a white wall. In the unfocused section of the image, she appears to be on a road next to a long tiled wall. She looks directly at the camera without an expression on her face. The photograph changes again to blurred black vignette of a man’s face. The dark skinned man covers his face with both of his hands. The audience can only just see a little section of his hair before the picture is cut off at the top. This image evokes a feeling of despair through both the color of the photo and the position the man. His hands are at the center of the image and we cannot see the man’s facial expression, but his hands tell us a story of desolation. The next and final image in the series contrasts the previous one by showing a color mid shot of a dark skinned woman in front of a white background. The background is almost entirely white, there appears to be something behind the woman, but it is too feint to make out. The woman smiles and looks directly at the camera. Her white shirt and small gold necklace match the serenity of the overall photograph.
The images on the main page have no captions and flow from one to another, leaving much to the imagination. The photographs morph from brightly colored images of people smiling to dark and troubling stills of hands, covered faces, and faces of despair. The page makes no claim as to the origin of these images, so the audience can assume that they have something to do with torture. However, we do have the context of the organization and what they claim to do for survivors. The images depict both survivors who seem to be empowered and disempowered (through their position on the page and the use of bright/cheerful or dark/moody light). One can assume that those who are going through troubled times and gain assistance from the organization will move into the more positive image. We also do not know weather or not these images are of individuals that were actually tortured. The issue of simulated torture comes up again and again on these websites. Is it important to the donor to see someone who has actually been tortured and to have some sort of context connected to the image? Is it important for the survivor of torture to have this information? These images do need more contextual information and a stronger narrative needs to be created around them that show multiple survivor perspectives. The Program for Torture Victims has many of the same types of pages as other websites (“Services”, “How to Help”, “Contact”, etc.), but with many less images. In fact, the organization seems to focus on including more images of those who work there than of actual survivors of torture. The inclusion of these photographs may allow for more comfort to survivors when they are looking for assistance. Under the “Our Staff” section, there are fourteen bright and colorful images of staff members. Each person has a mini-biography next to their photograph, showing us their diverse and extensive backgrounds in related fields (“Our Staff”, http://www.ptvla.org/organization-
Another page shows a dark skinned man examining an x-ray and talking to a woman that is mostly out of the frame, except for the left side of the back of her head (“Medical Services”, http://www.ptvla.org/services-medical.html). The surrounding text explains that clients all see a special physician and, when needed, they have connections to the Venice Family Clinic. This is the only instance on the website where an individual that works for the organization is seen with a survivor of torture.

One section that does include an image of a supposed survivor of torture is titled “Caring for Survivors”. On this page, there is an image of dark skin man who looks directly at the camera. The image is in color and the man is well lit. The background is out of focus, but he appears to be in a room and not some sort of cell. There is no caption to explain the purpose of this image, but the context of the website implies that this man was probably tortured at some point. Next to the image is an essay that begins with the following sentence, “Torture is the most serious violation of a person’s fundamental right to personal integrity” (“Caring for Survivors”, http://www.ptvla.org/organization-caring-for-survivors.html). This claim encompasses the feeling of many of these organizations. The essay goes on to argue that even though torture is almost universally banned, many countries still use it in order to both “terrorize and intimidate”. The Program for Torture Victims’ essential mission can be summarized in these sentences, “Our vision is to enable our clients to recover their health, sense of well being, and to become contributing members of their community. We believe that healing a person involves healing the whole individual; and that rebuilding the life of someone whose dignity has been destroyed requires long-term support and care.” The organization provides help for the survivor living in Los Angeles, medical care, and psychological and psychiatric
assistance. Significantly, the organization claims to be completely free of charge to those looking for assistance. So with this information, we can ask ourselves why the image of the man significant to this section? Do we need a physical representation to go with the verbal description? The organization expects the viewer to fill in some contextual gaps. Is this the authentic face of a man who has been tortured? As we have seen in other websites, authenticity isn’t as important as honesty and diversity of voices. These websites need to create narratives of their clients that include both their time as torture victims and what has come next. In addition, these websites could include captions similar to the ones on Freedom from Torture’s website that explain to the audience the images that are staged. In this way, the production becomes much more visible and the audience can feel like they know exactly what they are consuming.

To the left of the page, under the several links to other pages on the site there is a quote from Jose Quiroga. He states that, "Until now all their experiences with human beings have been violent. They have no reason to believe that they are human beings. You need to be the bridge between the victim and society"("Caring For Survivors”, http://www.ptvla.org/organization-caring-for-survivors.html). This statement might be a bit extreme, but it does capture some of the experiences of torture survivors. Interestingly, society is being introduced to these survivors through the images on these websites.

A section of the website that does have powerful images is actually a link to a short three and a half minute video entitled, “To Heal the World: 30 Years of Rebuilding Lives in the City of Second Chances”. The video begins with clips of riots in some area of the world. As the video plays, white text transitions in and out. It states that, “Around
the world, people are standing up for their rights. They fight for political and religious freedom. Many are imprisoned. Many are killed. Many are tortured. For 30 years the Program for Torture Victims has helped survivors who had nowhere else to go.” As the text progresses, we see very quick photographs of people behind bars and fences. We also see an image of someone who has a huge burn scar across his face. We are to assume that these images are all related to instances of torture. The next section shows interviews with Dr. Jose Quiroga, Ana Deutsch, and Julie Gutman (Executive Director of PTV) talking about the origin and purpose of the organization. In the section with Julie Gutman, the video starts to transition to photographs of images of people in groups that we can assume are survivors. Some of the images from the website are used here.

The video ends with several testimonies of survivors. The first is Ramchandra Lamichhane from Nepal. He looks directly at the camera in a bright room with an orange background. He tells us that he is very happy to be supported by the organization and that he has been granted asylum and his family will be coming to be with him soon. Next, we see “Sayed” from Morocco whose face is blackened out so that we cannot determine his identity. He tells us that his life has been changed “from darkness to light” which is ironic as he sits in the dark. The video transitions to Rossana Perez from El Salvador in a bright room. She only has a chance to tell us that she is grateful for the help to overcome her traumatic experiences in El Salvador before the film moves on to Leontine Lanza from Democratic Republic of Congo. She exclaims that the organization has stayed with her for the past five years. The film ends with several of the same images of survivors shown again in a clump and then PTV’s icon (“To Heal The World: 30 Years of Rebuilding Lives in the City of Second Chances”,
While the video begins to show some of the voices of torture survivors, it is far too short to give a full picture. While this may be useful in convincing a potential client that they have helped others, it doesn’t effectively show a complex view of their empowered clients. This is a positive first step toward moving into stage three, but now the site should develop other forms of media to further this cause.

While Program for Torture Victims shows potential, in order to move to stage three of the anti-torture website development model, the website must focus more on giving voice to their survivors. The one video on the site begins to do this, but it does not take enough time to allow survivors to explain their lives and how they have moved beyond their torture. An important goal of these websites should be to show those who have been able to overcome the trials of torture. Instead, we see image after image of people in different states of torture. Also, the use of many problematic photographs of unnamed and uncaptioned survivors of torture furthers the myth of the victimized other in need of help. The organization needs to diversify the voices on its website and give more forums for survivors to speak and interact with donors.

**Torture Abolition and Survivor Support Coalition International**

The last website in this chapter is part of an organization that inspired my journey to this dissertation. Unfortunately, it is the least image heavy of the three. It is an example of the first stage of anti-torture nonprofit website development because of its lack of media and interactivity. Torture Abolition and Survivor Support Coalition International is one of the very few organizations created by survivors of torture. In fact, Sister Diana Ortiz (as you might remember from the introduction), who inspired me years ago to start...
this project, originally founded TASSC. The founding of one of these organizations by someone who was tortured at some point in their lives obviously adds to their overall credibility. It is the ultimate display of self-empowerment. However, TASSC has the least graphic and image intensive website of the four that I have analyzed. The website has not changed much over the years and looks rather amateur when compared to the impressive Freedom from Torture website. The website itself looks very similar to a blog. The content is, for the most part, kept up to date. On average, there are roughly two posts a month on the main page under “Latest Story”. Torture Abolition and Survivor Support Coalition International has one of the least interesting websites of all the anti-torture sites that I have examined in the past several years. That being said, the organization is still performs a crucial task, but they do not put many resources into their online presence.

According to the organization, their main mission is to support survivors and their families. In order to accomplish this, they offer a program that is meant to help survivors deal with the transition after torture and to also assist in their seeking justice. Interestingly, there is not a section devoted to the history of the site itself. However, under the link “Campaign to End Torture” there is a long article, written in 2009, that references Sr. Dianna Ortiz. This seems to be the only section of the website that gives credit to Sr. Ortiz for starting this nonprofit. In June of that year she testified before the Human Rights Commission on behalf of TASSC in order to argue that waterboarding and other harsh forms of interrogation were actually torture. Attached to the article is a color photograph of Sr. Ortiz looking toward the left of the frame, apparently talking to someone off screen.
The article explains that the organization had written an open letter to President Obama that protested these types of torture (“Campaigns to End Torture”, http://tassc.org/blog/programs/campaign-to-end-torture-2/). While the news section is kept up to date and the organization has protested many times since 2009, the “Campaign to End Torture” seems dated in comparison to other anti-torture websites. Images on this website seem to be used primarily to show employees of the organization or people during TASSC events.

**Torture Banner**

While this website doesn’t have many images, its banner holds many different and significant meanings for survivors of torture. The main page has a large banner with what appears to be a photograph of TASSC banner or painting. The banner is obscured here, but the “What is TASSC?” section explains that the logo was created by Elshafei Dafalla Mohommad (a Sudanese artist). The sites states that the large T represents truth and it has a zero next to it signifying that torture under any circumstances will not be allowed. The blue color is meant to convey spirituality, which turns into an orange pigeon flying from oppression. The letters in ASSC represent a figure pushing himself/herself up against the many hardships that torture survivors must undergo (“What is TASSC?”, http://tassc.org/blog/about-us/mission-statement/). The actual images are a bit abstract in the logo itself. One can see the individual rising in the image after reading this on the website, but without the explanation it could totally be missed. However, the amount of attention to detail in one logo is very impressive and meaningful for survivors of torture. They should move the explanation to the front page, so that people can take advantage of it. By far, it is the most explicitly meaningful logo of any of the websites. Under the large
banner are the following links, “Home”, “What is TASSC?”, “Helping Hands”, “Communities of Healing”, “Truth Speakers”, “Campaign to End Torture”, “June Survivors Week”, “Get Involved”. The page set up is very similar to the other websites analyzed for this project; Links on the left side, news in the center, and more links on the right. The left column begins with a quote that starts with “Remember…Thou shalt not be a Victim. Thou shalt not be a Perpetrator. Above all, thou shalt not be a Bystander!” (“Blog”, http://tassc.org/blog/). This quote is significant because it ties not only the survivor to the victimizer, but it also involves multiple audiences. One can read “bystander” in several different ways. A bystander can be someone who sits idly by as someone is tortured. Additionally, it can be a possible supporter or donor to the organization.

Many of the photographs on this website are not of a professional nature. Unlike the other websites, it relies mostly on amateur looking images. Many of the posts under the “Latest Story” section have a photo attached to the left side of the news article. Almost exclusively, the images are of individuals who work for the nonprofit at events held by the organization. The photographs sometimes have, what we can assume to be survivors in the picture, but it isn’t always explicitly stated. It is difficult to tell the difference between a survivor and advocate. While the website is not using the subaltern image, it also doesn’t take advantage of the visual nature of the Internet. The photographs all have lengthy news stories next to them, but no proper caption. For example, on May 28th, 2012 there was a story entitled “Join TASSC International in June to Commemorate Survivor Week”. The article is about the organizations 15th anniversary of their Survivor Week. It also encourages us to participate with the survivors of torture as they attend
different events during the week (like human rights training and having a vigil in front of the White House). The article is mostly a schedule of events for the week and doesn’t mention the image at all. The photograph is of roughly 19 individuals standing in front of what appears to be a small stage. The stage has a white wall built upon it with the words “We Remember” painted in red across it. On either side of the stage are two black speakers. Many of the individuals in the image are wearing “We Remember” t-shirts and the rest are wearing a white one that might say TASSC, but it is hard to determine because the image is not very large. The group is a mixture of different races and is predominantly nonwhite. In the image, there are around 11 male appearing individuals and the rest are female. Most of them are looking straight at the camera and not smiling. The image is obviously not professionally produced like the images on the other websites in this study (“Join TASSC International in June to Commemorate Survivor Week”, http://tassc.org/blog/2012/05/tassc-june-survivor-week-june-17-24/). The positive aspect of the image is that, we can assume, that these are survivors and nonprofit workers together. These types of images are very infrequent on these types of websites.

While there are not many images of survivors of tortures, TASSC does focus on images of a space created for survivors. Another significant section with images is the “TASSC Survivor Home” link. This page consists of four small images of different sections a new home. The first is a color photograph of the outside of a three-story light grey house, followed by a three images of the inside of a very new looking house. The images include a window from the inside of the house, a bright and clean kitchen, and a bathroom. Shelters Plus and Home Builders Care Foundation built the house in order to give refuge for survivors of torture. The purpose of the page is to encourage people to
donate more money in order to furnish the house. We are asked to become a Survivor Home Guardian by donating monthly to the cause. Under the explanation is a link to the organization’s donate page. Also, there is also a comment box, but none of these comments are posted on this page and it seems that only the TASSC can look at them ("Support the TASSC Survivor Home", http://tassc.org/blog/survivors/tassc-survivor-home/). The main issue with this page is that there are no dates on it; we don’t know when the house was built or when it will be furnished or how far along they are to their goals. An audience doesn’t have much incentive to keep going back and donating. With a website that is not updated very frequently; one simply doesn’t visit on a regular basis. The lack of any type of interactive media really does a disservice to a website like TASSC. However, it is a positive step toward showing an audience the lengths at which the organization is willing to go to protect the survivor of torture. In this case, it is fine that there are not many images of survivors of torture. However, they could better take advantage of an online campaign to raise money in order to finish the home.

There are two areas of the website that have no images, but they are positive spaces that could eventually show empowered representations of survivors of torture. The first area is called, “Truth Speakers Program”. Interestingly, the section that does give survivors of torture the ability to directly speak out has no images. The Truth Speakers Program is a group of survivors who have decided that they are comfortable enough to speak about their experiences to large groups of people. The website states that, “The mission of TASSC’s Truth Speakers is to educate the public about the fact that governments today use torture despite nearly every state’s legal responsibilities to desist from torture under the Geneva Conventions, the Convention Against Torture, and in the
United States, the Eighth Amendment of the Constitution” (“Truth Speakers Program”,
http://tassc.org/blog/about-us/truth-speakers/). The Truth Speakers are used to debunk
some of the myths about torture itself. At the bottom of the page, one can request a Truth
Speaker to come to their classroom, church, high school, and other organizations. The use
of the word truth is an interesting rhetorical move. Another, related page that has no
images is called “Communities of Healing Program”. TASSC explains its International
Communities of Healing on this page. It is not explicit, but it seems that TASSC may
support these communities, but does not run them directly. The FAQ states that, “No two
ICOHs are the same. They have been described as interaction sites or communities
without walls. Survivors come together physically, psychologically, and spiritually in
forms of their own choosing. Each group sets its own agenda as to the frequency, timing
and content of their collective work” (“Communities of Healing Program”,
http://tassc.org/blog/about-us/international-communities-of-healing/). So, each one is
created specifically for the area’s needs. Models that are allowed to adapt to their specific
environments are important when dealing with an issue as sensitive as torture. According
to TASSC, there are these types of organizations in many states and even in other
countries. Interestingly, they argue that non-survivors can help by actually opening up
their home to people who have suffered torture. So, there is a lot of empowering work
being done by the organization, but again, they do not take advantage of the marketing
power of the Internet.

While there may not be many images on the website, TASSC does manage to use
the theme of hands as one of their icons. The final section of the website that is relevant
to this study has a tiny graphic is called; “Helping Hands”. The “Helping Hands”
program is the first step in the process of reaching out to survivors of torture for TASSC. There is very little information on this page, but TASSC does state several goals of the program. These goals include supporting survivors of torture through both the asylum process and dealing with other significant issues related to traumatized individuals living in a foreign land. Survivors are encouraged to call the organization or physically go their building Washington, DC. On this page, there is only one image and it is of a very small graphic with the title “Helping Hands” in blue above it. The image has two cartoon hands in a position as if they are about to shake; however the fingers on both are spread apart. The hand on the left is purple with an orange outline and the right hand is reversed with orange and then purple. The icon is very small on the page, but is literally hands about to hold each other (“Helping Hands for Survivors”, http://tassc.org/blog/survivors/helping-hands-for-survivors/). These hands hold a similar connotation as hands in the other more positive depiction of hands on websites in this project. We see hands of different colors coming together in order help each other. The message is a positive one, one of hope and camaraderie; unfortunately, it is in the form of a simplistic graphic.

TASSC has the least impressive website in terms of media and interactivity. The website has a lot of potential, but it needs to be completely overhauled in order to survive in today’s global market. The limited information that is on the website shows an organization that is doing some really powerful work. However, TASSC is not taking advantage of this global medium in order to reach more survivors and more donors. However, less information means that they are less likely to misrepresent their clients. So, in some cases perhaps less is more when dealing with torture. While this is a positive trait, it is not a model that is very realistic for the future of the organization. This website
is firmly in the first stage of anti-torture website development and will be there until the organization focuses more heavily on their online presence. At the moment, TASSC may not have to think about some of the issues that are being brought up in this project, but eventually, they will have to adapt to modern technologies. In order to fight a global issue, an anti-torture organization must have an affective global presence.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have analyzed three websites; Redress, Program for Victims of Torture, and Torture Abolition and Survivor Support Coalition International. In each case, I have found that there are not enough representations of their clients in positions of empowerment. Representation on the Internet is difficult when the group that is being represented is not at the helm of production (even then there can be many issues). These websites could all increase the amount of images of survivors in poses that are not directly related to torture. In effect, these websites can sometimes further victimize their clients by only depicted the survivor in the state of torture or implied torture. In a time period of global media, nonprofits are expected to have some sort of an online presence. In fact, as media becomes more interactive, many nonprofits are moving toward interacting with their donors and clients through things like Twitter. In order for these websites to compete in the market, they must adapt. At the same time, the nonprofit must be wary of the ways in which they represent their clients on the Internet. I believe that a diversity of images of survivors, being transparent with the production of images, and allowing survivors to have more of a presence in the production of these representations will help create a more complex picture of torture and the people are effected by torture.
However, these websites have not addressed some of these issues. Redress and Program for Victims of Torture do little to create a complex vision of survivors of torture. There are several situations on both sites that explain what survivors go through, but many of the visuals are lacking. As I have shown throughout this dissertation, we live in a visual culture. The Internet is an incredibly visual medium. These nonprofits will benefit from re-examining some of their images and adding positive depictions of survivors to the ones they already have. All of these websites need to further develop their content and create a space that depicts the horrors of torture and the complex voices of torture survivors. Comparatively, Freedom from Torture has a much more interactive website that uses the Internet to market itself and shows a diversity of images of survivors of torture. Freedom from Torture is far from a perfect website, but it sets a good model for other similar torture survivor advocacy websites. One of the key elements is the ability to adapt and change over time. The websites that I have explored have not been as successful with this as Freedom from Torture. However, there is always room for improvement.
CONCLUSION

This dissertation began with a discussion of the many pressures that are placed upon anti-torture nonprofit organizations. In this current neo-liberal economic world, the nonprofit is often on its own when it comes to financial support from the state. The modern nonprofit was created as a kind of check on the state, but not all nonprofits are created equal. Small nonprofit organizations, like the ones in this dissertation, are in no position to challenge this type of institutional power. Also, these organizations must compete for the eyes of individuals who are constantly bombarded by media messages from a select few corporations. Media power, particularly in the United States, has historically been so concentrated that it creates a very difficult playing field for those outside the boundaries of typical media (Schiller, McChesney). We see organizations like Freedom from Torture attempting to use these outlets to promote their own causes (the advertisements for a new torturer position in The Guardian) with debatable levels of success. While political tensions that are brought up in the news surrounding torture are sometimes limited, the actual acts of simulated torture are often displayed in popular culture. One of the most current iterations of this is featured in the film, Zero Dark Thirty. While the film itself is not a topic of this project, the quick response from Freedom from Torture shows the desire of the organization to address torture in all levels.

With all of these pressures on top of having to care for a sensitive group of clients and interact with important donors in order to raise money, the nonprofit must market itself through its website. In order to remain relevant in this technologically advanced world, one must have some sort of web presence. In the current climate, having a website is not enough, it must be a website that inspirers and entertains. A nonprofit website can
no longer just be a space where one simply goes to find out the address of an organization or donate. Now, many websites are spaces full of multimedia. For an anti-torture nonprofit, the Internet world is a tricky one to navigate because the environment serves so many different purposes. The website is a place to gather donations, explain the organization’s mission, market to current and future donors, advocate for their clients, offer information about torture, and encourage new clients and their supporters to come to them for assistance. It seems that not all nonprofits see the importance of this space and how it can help their overall mission.

We must remember that the primary goal and mission of these organizations are to help their clients. My arguments have nothing to do with the institutional workings of these groups. I believe that each of these nonprofits is doing significant work for a group of individuals that society seems to push under the table. Without these nonprofits, survivors of torture would have to deal with the system of asylum and issues of redress in an unfamiliar country, possibly in a language that they do not speak. Also, some of these nonprofits offer free therapy to survivors, which is crucial to a healthy recovery after such a traumatic experience. These nonprofits offer services that are difficult to get without access to great deals of money. Without conducting a research project that focuses on interviews with administrators and staff, I do not feel comfortable condemning their work. In fact, I hope that this dissertation will inspire people to research these organizations and perhaps even donate to them.

One of the main points of this dissertation is to map out the path that Freedom from Torture and other similar organizations take during the process of representation of their clients on websites. I argue that Freedom from Torture’s web presence is a positive
model for advocates of torture survivors to follow, but that there is always room for improvement. Representation of sensitive groups on the Internet is not a simple task, especially when there is a great deal of money on the line. Often, these nonprofits rely on what I call the subaltern image (or a representation of a group voiceless and powerless people). The image itself is problematic because it depicts racialized groups of people as only victims that need our help. The issue is much more complex than these simple depictions. It would seem that it is easier to just use stock photographs of survivors of torture, but this does little to show these individuals as being real people with real stories and real lives. Audiences have difficult times relating to the same, played out images of victims from unknown countries. Rather than perpetuating the same stereotypes of the racialized “other”, these nonprofits must work toward creating fully developed narratives of the people who suffer torture. We live in a world where sound bites rule the media landscape, however, I believe that an organization can both better represent their clients and create easily digestible vignettes. The focus needs to be on including more of a diversity of stories that involve both survivor’s experiences as a torture victim and their lives after the fact. This is why I create a map of anti-torture nonprofit website development in order to show the trajectory of these websites and to help sites skip steps in order to better represent their clients.

The significance of this dissertation to the field of Communication is multifaceted. The concept of representation is a component of communication that has been discussed by many scholars, but there hasn’t been much written on torture survivors and their place on the Internet. In many ways, the Internet is a reflection of other forms of communicative media, but in other ways it is very different. We often use this new space
as just an extension of what we are used to, but this is also changing. The Internet is becoming much more interactive. Now, an audience can literally talk directly to the producers of media in ways that they could never have in the past. I can send a Tweet to my favorite director and have some expectation that he/she might respond. Also, the Internet has created a space where many more people can produce and showcase their work. With the growth of media technologies, anyone with a cell phone camera and access to broadband connection can post their videos for the world to view. Because of these advancements, the media influence and reach of small nonprofit is increased tremendously by having access to the Internet. However, there is still a great deal of material and competition. The Internet is still far from an egalitarian space. Many corporations have a strong Internet presence and have the resources to be able to make their websites flashy and interactive. While the market for torture survivor websites may be different than people who want to play games at Disney.com, it still demonstrates a disparity in influence and media reach.

In terms of communication, the affective appeal of images on these websites is debatable. As I discussed earlier, the affective refrain can be powerful, but sometimes it can also be overplayed. We are now being indirectly taught to not pay attention to these communicative acts. So, the nonprofit has many challenges. I believe that this dissertation is useful to many small nonprofits doing global work. The same struggles that these anti-torture nonprofits have with the representation of their clients can be insightful for other groups. Representation is a difficult, but necessary task that takes a lot of effort and resources to do correctly. Many nonprofits represent groups that are not necessarily included on the staff and even those that are created by the target group (for
instance Torture Abolition and Survivor Support Coalition) still have hierarchies of power that creates all kinds of tension. The representation of sensitive groups is especially problematic because of the lack of their media voice. I use the term voice to mean that these groups (like torture survivors) do not have access to media to represent themselves on a global level.

Freedom from Torture has made it clear that some survivors of torture are actually quite capable of representing themselves, however some survivors are placed in circumstances where they do not have access to the means of communication. As many of these websites argue, torture survivors often come to England or the United States to seek asylum from the torture that they had experienced in their home country. Often, these individuals do not speak the language and do not know the legal system of that country. One could be argue that the image itself transcends some of the restrictions of language, but these individuals often have more significant obstacles to overcome. So, even talking about empowerment of these people is somewhat problematic because of the issue of measuring success. What is empowerment? How do we measure it? Is it fair for us to judge it in others without talking to these groups? While the term itself is problematic, it is crucial that we discuss issues of power in these conversations. All of these questions are fundamental to the success of communication and representation. As I have mentioned earlier, there is no perfect way to represent a group.

This study is also useful to communication because it attempts to highlight the communication between nonprofit and client. I advocate for more communication between nonprofits and their clients, especially when it comes to representations. The nonprofits should be moving towards a model where survivors of torture are encouraged
to partake in the process of creating media for their literature. In doing so, the nonprofit both insures that the representations themselves are satisfactory and helps the survivor to gain a new skill.

In an effort to create a roadmap for the representations of survivors of torture on nonprofit websites, I use Freedom from Torture as a basis for a new model. The anti-torture nonprofit development model begins at a very early stage of website creation. This is when the website is just put up into cyberspace with basic information on it. We see the mission of the organization, what it does, information about the staff, etc. There are few pictures and most of them appear to be stock photos. The website itself is not very dynamic and works within a linear model of communication. The audience of the site may be encouraged to contact the site, but there is no sophisticated forum for them to discuss issues as a community. The website posts news about the organization, but little else. At this point, the website is very barebones, it just really isn’t that interesting. Also, the website does very little to contextualize the lives of survivors of torture. The survivors are depicted as being one-dimensional.

The next stage builds upon the first, but adds more video and images. The website looks more sleek and modern and resembles other prominent nonprofit websites of the time. The space includes many more stories of survivors, but they mostly deal with the event of torture itself and do not include much of the narrative beyond this time period. The survivors of torture are used affectively market the site to potential donors. This is not to say that this is the only purpose of these representations, but it is a significant one. Often, there are many issues with these representations because the organization relies heavily on tropes of the survivor as “other”. There are numerous depictions of dark
skinned individuals in poses of the victim. Often, the symbol of confined hands is used to show that these people are trapped and have little hope. The images themselves are meant to evoke some sort of affective appeal to the viewer. We are meant to feel for these poor individuals. With these images, reality and simulated are mixed. The audience can assume that many of these images are staged, because they have a kind of aesthetic air to them (meaning that the structure and medium is pleasing to the eye), but the authenticity of the photo is rarely made clear. I believe that the production of the image is important to the process because it shows both the donors/supporters and clients that the organization is transparent in how they represent survivors. Many of these images and videos do have testimonies attached to them, but they mostly have to do with the experience of torture and the individual. The testimony mainly focuses on the atrocities of torture, with possibly a little blurb about the current situation of the torture survivor. It can be inferred that the actual survivors whose real stories are displayed do interact with the creation of these images, videos and written text, in the sense that they speak to the organization. However, their participation doesn’t go much beyond being there for an interview. Stage two is problematic because it uses these images without being transparent with the production. We do not see a lot of interaction with the survivors and the staff, nor do we see their creativity. Nevertheless, stage two is significant because it sets the groundwork for the next stage. Stage three can only come about with the trials and errors mentality of the previous stage.

Stage three is when the website becomes much more interactive for the audience and clients. The audience is encouraged to both donate, but to also to produce creative items for the site itself. In the case of Freedom from Torture, the audience is encouraged
to send in pictures of messages on their hands so that they can be in solidarity with survivors. This stage could even include some sort of online forum for survivors and potential donors to interact with other survivors (I did not see this on any site, and it would be a very courageous step, but also one that would be difficult to moderate). Also, this stage includes spaces for survivors to show their life beyond torture. Freedom from Torture does this by having a video of survivors learning how to act out their own poetry. While the focus is still on torture, it moves it more to a discussion of healing and creativity. We see a group of individuals who are still dealing with their horrible experiences, but in a positive light. Rather than adding to the hundreds of images of survivors in states of plight, the site highlights a group who uses their experiences to better themselves. Torture is important to showcase on a torture survivor advocacy website, however, it isn’t as compelling as these images.

Many of us are used to seeing the image of the poor third world person reaching out for help in a commercial between the viewing of our favorite television show. We have created our own filters to ignore these images. I believe that including more diverse ways of representing survivors will attract people more than the older representations. Also, it shows that there is some hope for survivors and creates a multi-dimensional depiction of these people. Fair and accurate representations are difficult without interacting with those who are being represented. Stage three is the beginning of the participation of the survivor on the website. Ideally, the relationship should grow to the point where survivors could write and produce their own images. The relationship should be mutually beneficial. One of the most important parts of this stage is that the organization allows itself to take chances and try new ways to represent their clients and
organization. Now, this is not always successful. As we saw, Freedom from Torture stumbled when it advertised for torturers in British newspapers. However, the organization is willing to be creative with how they advertise themselves. While I argue that their depiction of torture in these ads as only being a third world issue is incredibly problematic, the act itself may have gotten a lot of people to look at their website for the first time. The maintenance of a website with themes such as these is really difficult, but an organization must be willing to keep with it and adapt. The organization needs to interact with and add to their website everyday in order for it to remain relevant in the constantly changing Internet. As we have seen, websites like Torture Abolition and Survivor Support Coalition (who are firmly stuck in stage one) just don’t put the effort to keep up with other websites. Stage three is the last section of the model, but it is far from the end of progress of these websites. In the future, I see websites that include many more videos of survivors. I believe that encouraging them and allowing them opportunities to produce their own material for the website would be a really positive step toward really progressive representations. Also, these websites could show more of their activism through videos. I believe that the focus will move toward video production, as is the trend in much of cyberspace. While the Internet is far from an egalitarian place, it has made it much easier for numerous groups to interact with each other. These websites need to take advantage of this technology and continue to encourage donors and other interested parties to create media for the website. This allows individuals to feel like they have a stake in the organization and it also encourages a discussion about representation beyond the walls of the nonprofit.
There are several limitations to this study. If given more time and resources, I would greatly like to interview the nonprofit workers. As I mentioned earlier, I had intended to actually do just this, however, Freedom from Torture was in the middle of their rebranding and it was very difficult to maintain communication with the staff. During my time interning at Freedom from Torture, I realized that the majority of the people I was working with had many of the same concerns that I did about representation. I think that too often studies that look only at an organization assume that the people within the organization are all likeminded and that the literature that is associated with the site represents a united front. Within a nonprofit, each decision has a lot of conversation that goes along with it. Also, sometimes the staff is under strict deadlines to get literature out there, so the discussions are sometimes cut short. In my time working there, I felt that there was both a relaxed feel, but also feelings of urgency. So, in order to make this study more complex, I believe that these people need to be interviewed. I would especially like to interview the producers of their media and website. It is unclear from the websites themselves as to the origin of many of the non-event specific images. I believe that it would be really interesting to take a look at just how these images are produced. This would include talking to the photographers and actors that play as torture survivors.

The world of anti-torture nonprofit websites is relatively small, but the concepts that are addressed in this dissertation can be useful other nonprofit sites. Whenever a more powerful group represents another group that does not have access to the same means of communication and technology, there will always be tensions. Nonprofits should learn from the achievements and mistakes of Freedom from Torture in order to
start having more discussions about their client’s image. I believe that these groups can harness the power of the Internet in such a way that it benefits the organization and it spreads positive images and messages of their clients.
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