

Madness

"She wouldn't hurt anyone," says Sabrina Harman's mother as the secretary of defense of the United States, mounts a defense of the United States in the wake of the scandal over what the secretary prefers to refer to as "prisoner abuse." "My daughter is a scapegoat. They're passing the buck, putting it all on the little kids."

"She wouldn't hurt anyone." Robin Harman can tell you. So what does that make the naked Iraqi men, hooded, piled, captured in a candid snapshot with the smiling Sabrina? They must be nobodies.

Ordinary young people, who wouldn't hurt anyone (all the mothers can tell you) until they are turned into soldiers to battle "the Krauts," or "the Wops," or "the Japs," or "the Gooks," or "the terrorists." One nobody name or another, it makes no difference.

At first they put wristbands on everyone rounded up and brought to Abu Ghraib with the word "terrorist" engraved upon it. But they found it wasn't needed. The MPs easily recognized who the nobodies were. "Terrorist," "Muslim," "Arab," one nobody name or another, it makes no difference.

In Vietnam ordinary young men, who wouldn't hurt anyone (all the mothers could have told you), carried severed ears or testicles, stolen from nobodies, around with them as souvenirs. Today a new generation is more up-to-date, takes nobody photos which become screen savers for their laptops.

"My daughter is a scapegoat. They're passing the buck, putting it all on the little kids. That is what makes me mad," says Robin Harman.

"I cannot understand how such a thing could happen," says Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, President George Bush, the military chain of command, along with mothers, sisters, brothers, and friends across the USA. "It's so unlike our soldiers." "It's so unlike our children, our siblings, our schoolmates."

Some of them, in fact, really do not understand, but together you and I may try to appreciate the true how and who of these photographs. First picture severed ears and testicles. Then think about the chain of command, and what is generally not revealed of how ordinary young people learn to identify the nobodies and become soldiers.

"That is what makes *me* mad," says the poet.

Steve Bloom
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