

## 1984 Versus 2004: Not so

by Allie Quade

George Orwell predicts a frightening world in which everything one does is monitored and evaluated. Creative thought is abolished, there is only one way of thinking. My initial reaction was, thank god we don't live in a world like that today! But as I read on, more and more of the story was shockingly familiar to some of the corrupt things going on today. I realized the horrifying dystopia Orwell predicted wasn't that far off.

War is pointless in 1984 as well as the War on Iraq today. The mortality rate increases every month, and the debts are over 1 billion per month. Our nation is deeply in debt, and my generation will be paying those debts for years to come. In 1984 no one knows why Oceania is constantly at war with another superstate, just that they are. "One does not establish a dictatorship in order to safeguard a revolution; one makes the revolution in order to establish the dictatorship." (217) This quote is saying that war happens because victory enables power. Bush didn't go to war to settle the peace; to end things in the best way possible. He did it for selfish reasons, not for the safety of our country. Many people believe that going to war with Iraq was a huge mistake, and that Bush went to war for reasons pertaining to his family ties with Chevron Oil.

In Cuba, the inhumanity of those who held the prisoners of war was almost as bad as the jail guards in the Ministry of Love. They had to go without clothes for days, they couldn't contact their family, and most didn't have a reason to be there. Kids age 13-16 years old were held there for no real reason; senile men were interrogated.

The privacy people get in 1984 is almost non-existent. One is constantly being watched. People could get in trouble for thoughtcrime, meaning they could think about something and get in trouble before they've actually done anything. Today, the government has passed an act which enables a system called Total Information Awareness (later changed to Terrorist Information Awareness because of the Orwellian sound to it.) which permitted the government to hold files upon files of "watch lists" on all sorts of people, allowing them to track whoever they want, for whatever reason---in secret. Most of these people show no evidence of posing a terrorist threat, and the government still chooses to take thorough background checks on them, without having a real purpose. The government has the power to change the course of an airplane if someone "suspicious" is on the plane. This is all too familiar to the principles of thoughtcrime: the government tries to catch the person before they strike. Why is this necessary? All this is doing is instilling fear in the people, rather than make them feel safer. Eventually, people might start reporting each other like people's children do in 1984. "You're a traitor!" yelled the boy. 'You're a thoughtcriminal! You're a Eurasian spy! I'll shoot you, I'll vaporize you, I'll send you to the salt mines!'" (23) The youth of our society has a great risk of perpetuating this paranoia, and helping America along in the direction we're headed.

The contradictory names for the ministries are similar to the way President Bush names the acts he passes. The ministries all have names which represent the opposite of how they function. In the Ministry of Truth, for example, files are deleted, literature is edited, and people are erased from existence if need be so. The purpose of the Patriot Act is to ensure homeland security. It permits the FBI to search, interrogate, and/or track anyone they desire without legitimate reasons, and no one has to know about it. It also violates the First, Fourth, Sixth, Eighth, and Fourteenth Constitutional Amendments. There is nothing “patriotic” about this act, and it is unconstitutional. Other names like the Clear Skies and Healthy Forests initiatives have names which promise the opposite of their criteria. “Reality exists in the human mind, and nowhere else...it is impossible to see reality except by looking through the eyes of the party.” (205) By creating these pleasant names, Bush hopes to appear as a martyr for the country, when really he’s just pushing his own agenda. He tries to disguise his motives with names which are mere fallacies; he manipulates the truth. If we look through the eyes of the Bush Administration, we won’t be able to see what’s really going on; the reality of it all. The secretive method which our government chooses to take is gaining more and more leverage; becoming closer and closer to the system they use 1984.

The self-righteous mentality which many Americans carry is that the United States is the whole world. There are people who are completely unaware of what goes on in the rest of the world; the kinds of conditions people live in, and the political suffrage others must endure. We have no idea how lucky we are, or how selfish. It reminds me of when O’Brien tells Winston, “Oceania is the world.” (218) Not only is the government becoming similar to the government in 1984, but the citizens are oblivious to the rest of the world, just like people are in the book. This needs to end. People should be informed so they can help stop all the corruption going on in our country. Certain aspects of society reflect the society in the novel; it has great potential to become even worse.