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## WHY GUANTANAMO MATTERS

There has been some criticism of Mr. Obama's decision to close the Guantanamo Bay "Detention Center" (let's call it like it is: prison). Many Americans are bewildered by the international attention that Guantanamo receives, but to many of those outside of this country, it is a running sore on the face of Democracy itself. Here are some of the reasons why:

First, there is the irony. Here we have a prison, full of alleged terrorists, which range from the truly evil, to the truly innocent. Guantanamo sits on the island of Cuba, whose government we regularly accuse of human rights abuses - like say, holding prisoners without trial - and berate for not allowing Democratic reforms. This irony plays particularly badly in Latin America, where the embargo on Cuba has not been supported or understood for decades.

Secondly, there is the shameful "NIMBY" (Not in My Back Yard) attitude of Congress, when asked to approve funds for the closing of the Guantanamo Prison. They allege that they don't want terrorists on American soil. This is shameful for two reasons: (1) there are already some terrorists imprisoned on American soil, who received fair trial and will never see the light of day again. After a fair trial, why can't we add to their numbers? It won't do, apparently, for our lawmakers to encourage the rule of law when it comes to terrorists. (2) We are showing the world that we are afraid to have this vermin here, instead of

showcasing their trials and condemnation to all nations, thus illustrating the very Democracy and rule of law we supposedly seek to spread to other lands.

Finally, and most crucially, other nations wonder what we will do with those prisoners who will be found innocent, or those we lack adequate proof to convict? Some are not able to return to their countries of origin for fear of reprisals. Evidence is there to suggest that some return home and become terrorists. As an American, if you were imprisoned by a foreign country for seven or eight years, without trial, and returned home, dumped with no explanation, compensation or apology, would you not feel a compulsion to retaliate against those that took away years of your life? This is an extremely difficult question that will take sharper minds than mine to resolve. It is however, a problem of our making, and therefore, we are required to fix it.

President Obama is right to want to close Guantanamo, which is doing much to ridicule our calls for freedom and justice in other parts of the world and a travesty of the values we hold close to our hearts. The call to close the prison before we have resolved the issue of individual innocence and guilt, and what to do with both types of prisoners, was too hasty. His decision will, however, serve as a catalyst for resolving this issue which Congress seems intent on shoving under the carpet for someone else to clean up in the future.