



Women as Weapons of War: Iraq, Sex, and the Media

Kelly Oliver

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From the female soldiers of Abu Ghraib prison to Palestinian women suicide bombers, women and their bodies have been "powerful weapons" in the Afghanistan and Iraq wars. Kelly Oliver reveals how the media and the George W. Bush administration used metaphors of weaponry to describe women and female sexuality and forge a link between vulnerability and violence. Oliver analyzes the discourse surrounding women, sex, and gender and the use of women to justify America's decision to go to war. She also considers the cultural meaning, or lack of meaning, that lead female soldiers at Abu Ghraib to abuse prisoners "just for fun," and the commitment to death made by women suicide bombers. She examines the pleasure taken in violence and the passion for death and what kind of contexts creates them. Oliver concludes with a diagnosis of our fascination with sex, violence, and death and its relationship with live news coverage and embedded reporting, which naturalizes horrific events and stymies critical reflection.

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