

By Andy Worthington

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Just up on YouTube (and posted below) are three edits of “The Giant John Yoo Debate,” which took place last Tuesday as part of [“Berkeley Says No to Torture” Week](#). This excellent piece of political theater involved a group of legal experts and activists, introduced by Stephanie Tang of the [World Can’t Wait](#), and led by Sharon Adams of the [National Lawyers Guild \(San Francisco\)](#), responding to filmed statements and interviews with John Yoo, the UC Berkeley law professor who [wrote the notorious “torture memos”](#) in August 2002, which [purported to redefine torture](#) so that it could be used by the CIA (and then by the US military). Yoo narrowly avoided charges of “professional misconduct” in an internal Justice Department investigation that was [cynically manipulated](#) earlier this year, so that he and his immediate boss, [Jay S. Bybee](#), who now serves as a judge in the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals, were merely adjudged to have exercised “poor judgment.”

The images of John Yoo were projected onto the wall of Boalt Hall, where Yoo teaches when he is not hiding out from protestors calling for his prosecution, and those joining Sharon Adams to debate the giant images included Ann Fagan Ginger of the Meiklejohn Civil Liberties Institute, author and activist [Larry Everest](#), Shahid Buttar, the executive director of the [Bill of Rights Defense Committee](#), and antiwar activist [Cindy Sheehan](#), who memorably described Yoo as “a baby-faced, twisted piece of human excrement.”

I also took part, as I explained in [a previous article here](#), and among the other speakers were law student Yanin Senachai, part of the student group Boalt Alliance to Abolish Torture, who said, “International law establishes an absolute prohibition on torture. We shouldn’t even be allowed to practice law if you don’t understand that.” Another extraordinarily passionate student

called for John Yoo’s prosecution and told the crowd that many other students felt the same way, but were afraid of speaking out.