



## Security 'thrives on mother lode of fear'

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BEFORE 9/11, the stereotypical voter US politicians courted was the "soccer mom", a middle-class woman who drove her kids to play a football game less violent than gridiron.

Now, says Amy Kaplan, that demographic has been replaced with the "security mom", whose main concerns were based on fear created by the war on terror.

"According to one self-proclaimed security mom, there are two figures she fears the most: Islamic terrorists and criminal illegal aliens."

Professor Kaplan, who is touring Australia as the guest of the US Studies Centre at the University of Sydney, is a professor of English at the University of Pennsylvania. She believes the language of "homeland security" has had a profound effect on the US.

And Australia is unlikely to escape the phenomenon — with the Tampa affair, anti-terrorism laws, and even the NSW Government's draconian World Youth Day regulations signalling the transformation is under way.

Professor Kaplan delivered the keynote address to the Australia and New Zealand American Studies Association in Sydney yesterday, on the topic "In the Name of Homeland Security".

She said the mantra of President George W. Bush that "you are either a member of the

homeland or with the terrorists" has had some far-reaching consequences. "When immigrants can be detained and deported in the name of homeland security, the notion of homeland itself contributes to making the life of immigrants terribly insecure," she said.

Professor Kaplan does not deny the threat of terrorism is real, but says the often paranoid mentality linked to homeland security can lead to senseless decisions. "Congress has given the White House a blank cheque ... to build a security fence between Mexico and the US, despite the fact that not one single terrorist has been apprehended at the southern border."

Politicians, Professor Kaplan said, had extended the fear of enemies abroad and within to all things threatening.

"Today, securing the future justifies pre-emptive warfare as well as indefinite detention," she said. "People are being incarcerated — and denied their own future — not for acts they have committed or for legal convictions, but for acts they might perform in the indefinite future."

The risk is a vicious cycle.

"If security implies the need for protection from a lurking threat, then security thrives by generating insecurity and conjuring the constant threat of extinction, and it can only be pursued at the violent expense of the security of others."