

The New Rosa Parks

Cindy Sheehan has been causing a bit of a stir by following President Bush around trying to ask him why he killed her son. Her late son was a Marine who was in fact killed by the enemy. She seems to have **changed her story** about the President since she met him last year. But anyway, now a holy man, the Reverend Lennox Yearwood (leader of "the Hip Hop Caucus, an activist group") has called her the "**Rosa Parks of the anti-war movement**". We agree. Just like **Rosa Parks**, Cindy would do a lot of good if she tried her very best to get on a bus, sit down quietly in the seat of her choice, and ride it all the way home.

Update: Solomonia has two good posts which anyone interested in the Cindy Sheehan phenomenon ought to read: **Not a Saint** and **A Judenhass Horse**.

Fri, 08/12/2005 - 01:23 | [digg](#) | [del.icio.us](#) | [permalink](#)

How many children has the editor lost in the Iraq war?

by a reader on Fri, 08/12/2005 - 13:25 | [reply](#)

Don't "Son" Us

It is not the case that the victim of a catastrophe has the right to immunity from criticism when they express a public opinion about its nature, cause, or proposed remedy.

As Christopher Hitchens said, **don't "son" us**. See also the **chickenhawk argument**.

by **Editor** on Fri, 08/12/2005 - 15:29 | [reply](#)

How many parents has the editor lost in the Iraq war?

I guess you can count grandparents, aunts, and uncles. But not cousins or ants.

-- Elliot Temple

<http://www.curi.us/>

by **Elliot Temple** on Fri, 08/12/2005 - 20:02 | [reply](#)

It is a simple question, Editor. How many?

by a reader on Sat, 08/13/2005 - 00:31 | [reply](#)

Another simple question:

Why do you ask?

-- Elliot Temple

<http://www.curi.us/>

by **Elliot Temple** on Sat, 08/13/2005 - 01:13 | [reply](#)

Re:Another simple question:

Because I want to know what price the editor has paid in support of his agenda. I believe at heart he is a socialist, and like most socialists he wants **other** people to pay the price.

by a reader on Sat, 08/13/2005 - 15:02 | [reply](#)

Criticism of public opinions

It is not the case that the victim of a catastrophe has the right to immunity from criticism when they express a public opinion about its nature, cause, or proposed remedy.

I agree, but making fun of someone (even as gently as was done here) isn't necessary for criticism, and it's not very persuasive. At best, it's encouraging to people who already agree with the criticisms -- unless it comes across as insensitive (which it does to me in this case). I disagree with her claim that Bush has killed her son. It's wrong for her to do so, and it's wrong for people to encourage her to do so. I'm sorry her son is dead.

Becky

by **beckyam** on Sun, 08/14/2005 - 19:13 | [reply](#)

Re: Criticism of public opinions

We have exercised restraint in our comments in deference to Cindy Sheehan's loss and that of her family and out of respect for her late son Spc. Casey Sheehan. If you disagree that we have, please read Solomonia's posts, themselves appropriately restrained, that we refer to in our update above.

by **Editor** on Mon, 08/15/2005 - 00:42 | [reply](#)

Public figures and criticism

Nobody is seeking out grieving parents of fallen soldiers to criticize them.

Sheehan opened herself to criticism when she made herself into a public figure. She has spent the last year speaking at anti-war meetings often with very questionable (anti-Semitic and pro-terrorism) associates.

She stepped into the public square and appears to have spent the last year trying to grab the limelight. Now, she has it.

by a reader on Mon, 08/15/2005 - 01:37 | [reply](#)

Re: Sheehan

Her web site (Crawford Peace House) states:

"Israelis deserve to carry on the activities of daily living without fear of being blown to bits." Is this an example of anti-zionism?

by a reader on Mon, 08/15/2005 - 03:04 | [reply](#)

"Chickenhawk" Argument

The following is a quote from the NY Times on the web dated February 28, 2003:

"Mr. Wolfowitz, the deputy defense secretary, opened a two-front war of words on Capitol Hill, calling the recent estimate by Gen. Eric K. Shinseki of the Army that several hundred thousand troops would be needed in postwar Iraq, 'wildly off the mark.'"

The other "front" was his gross underestimation of the cost of the war.

I fully agree with the Editor's view that failure to have served in the military in no way should limit a persons right or obligation to speak out on important issues of war and peace -- particularly if one is in a position of leadership. However, those who have the responsibility for developing war strategies and fighting plans (particularly if they have no military experience or training) also have a duty to listen especially closely to those who have such training and experience.

Although, as noted in previous posts, I question some aspects of the strategy adopted to combat Islamic extremists and the terrorism that they spawn (e.g. focusing on Iraq to the exclusion of other potential targets, and perhaps, as a result, actually contributing to unnecessary setbacks and losses), I have no hesitation in ultimately supporting this "war," because it must be waged in defense of fundamental values and human progress. Nevertheless, the above quote reflects, at least from my perspective, the often tragic way our effort in Iraq has been implemented. The war in Iraq, despite progress on some fronts, is in many important respects floundering and the outcome remains uncertain. Gen. Shinseki was canned, at least part, because he spoke out about what history appears to be showing was really

needed.

Those who haven't served or who have no real military training or experience (and Wolfowitz was not alone in this regard in the Administration), certainly have the right and the obligation to speak out, but they also have an obligation to listen carefully (despite ideological and political proclivities) to those who by experience and training are most capable of helping to develop the best possible strategy and tactics. Brave men and women's lives are at stake, as well as much, much more.

by [Michael Bacon](#) on Mon, 08/15/2005 - 14:50 | [reply](#)

Re: "Chickenhawk" Argument

they also have an obligation to listen carefully (despite ideological and political proclivities) to those who by experience and training are most capable of helping to develop the best possible strategy and tactics

Indeed.

In what way does the experience and training of a high-ranking military officer qualify him or her to judge issues like "if we delay for two years to undertake a crash programme to recruit and train hundreds of thousands more troops, will Saddam use the time to stockpile more chemical and biological weapons and missiles to use against them when they attack?" Or "is such a recruitment programme politically practicable?" Or "how far can we deplete our strategic reserve before the North Koreans are tempted to resume military adventurism?" Or "to what extent would the deployment of a large occupation force inhibit the evolution of the Iraqi political culture?"

Would the answers to such questions have been relevant, at the time, to the Administration's Iraq policy?

Are the answers relevant today, to judging how successful or unsuccessful that policy has been so far?

What sorts of experience and training best qualify a person to answer such questions accurately?

Were there any high-ranking officers with experience and training similar to that of Gen. Shinseki who endorsed the Administration's policies? If so, would adopting Gen. Shinseki's policy have been evidence that the Administration had not listened carefully to those officers?

by [Editor](#) on Mon, 08/15/2005 - 15:47 | [reply](#)

Re: "Chickenhawk" Argument

The training and experience provided to high ranking officers in the modern US military, because of its scope and sophistication, might

well be helpful, but I can't see that it would necessarily provide any

particular insights into answering the more strategic and policy oriented questions you list in your first full paragraph.

The answers to your questions would, I agree, be very relevant, at the time, to the development of a successful and timely Iraq policy. Of course, asking these and other important questions, and getting the answers right, is the hard part, and I do not in any way mean to make light of the difficulty.

I don't think the answers are relevant to the question of the success or lack of success of the policy today. To answer that we must look to the facts and circumstances as we find them today, and how we think the facts and circumstances will play out going forward.

A sound moral and ethical compass, domestic political acumen and experience in international political, economic and cultural affairs (perhaps with that helpful dose of training of the kind provided to high-ranking officers in today's military), would be the best overall experience.

Rarely, of course, can all of this be found in one individual, or even in a handful. Every Administration is served by a cadre of people, both in and out of government, who provide these types of experiences and knowledge. Certainly, this Administration went through an extensive consultation exercise, including consulting with a number of high ranking military officers.

I am far less certain how many high ranking military officers wholeheartedly supported the effort with fewer troops (a question regarding which they had particular knowledge and experience), even if it meant some delay in launching the war -- I think your reference to "two years" is greatly exaggerated (to make a good point no doubt), but that discussion is more complicated.

I believe that there is a good deal of evidence to support a reasonable view that a very substantial number of high ranking military officers (active and retired) and others, supported the war effort, but strongly recommended (from the start of the war, and regularly thereafter - since the need for higher troop levels has been apparent to many objective observers at least from the end of the first round of fighting) that additional troops be provided.

Having ignored and continuing to ignore that advice does not mean that the Administration didn't and doesn't listen carefully to those it chooses to seriously consult, including high ranking military officers. It could, however, mean that we have much greater difficulty and sacrifice many more lives than necessary -- without achieving our goals. The jury is, I believe, still out on this question.

Let me reiterate something I said in a post some time ago. I am not arguing for cutting and running in Iraq. If anything, this is an argument for more troops, primarily because the cost of failure now could be catastrophic. Nevertheless, I see nothing to be gained by failing to look at things clearly (clearly, of course, in my opinion), warts and all.

Shinseki was not canned

Gen. Shinseki was canned, at least part, because he spoke out about what history appears to be showing was really needed.

By the way, factcheck.org says this is a pure **myth**, propagated by John Kerry among others.

by **Editor** on Tue, 08/16/2005 - 12:31 | [reply](#)

Factcheck

Your are correct.

Factcheck says: "It is true that Shinseki told the Senate Armed Services Committee on Feb. 25, 2003 that 'something on the order of several hundred thousand soldiers' would be required for an occupation of Iraq. It is also true that Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz called that estimate 'wildly off the mark' in testimony to the House Budget Committee on Feb. 27, 2003. And it is true that the general retired several months later on June 11, 2003. But the administration didn't force General Shinseki to retire. In fact, The Washington Times reported Shinseki's plans to retire nearly a year before his Feb. 25, 2003 testimony."

I obviously didn't check MY facts on this specific point, and I regret the mistake. I believe that the Factcheck item does, however, reconfirm that the advice was given to the Administration, and Wolfowitz's response to that advice.

The main issue today is whether in fact we need more troops to secure Iraq, and whether without such troops there is a material risk of failure.

Thanks for the correction.

by **Michael Bacon** on Tue, 08/16/2005 - 13:19 | [reply](#)

Re: Factcheck

Indeed that is the main issue. But in regard to the side issue: doesn't that mean that there is now less evidence than you thought there was, that the Administration did not listen carefully to a proper range of qualified people?

by **Editor** on Tue, 08/16/2005 - 15:57 | [reply](#)

Yes

Yes. While it does not speak directly to the question of whether they listened carefully, it is relevant to answering that question. Whether or not they listened carefully, it's direct evidence that they did not in this case (and perhaps therefore don't in most all cases) take revenge in the form of trying to fire someone whose private advice

and public remarks makes policy goals more difficult to achieve politically -- even if they believe that the advice and public remarks were "wildly off the mark."

by [Michael Bacon](#) on Tue, 08/16/2005 - 20:34 | [reply](#)

Restraint

We have exercised restraint in our comments in deference to Cindy Sheehan's loss and that of her family and out of respect for her late son Spc. Casey Sheehan. If you disagree that we have, please read Solomonia's posts, themselves appropriately restrained, that we refer to in our update above.

I don't know if I have said this before here, but I really appreciate this site and the effort that goes into the articles. I'm definitely not a fan of what Cindy's been saying, and my problem with the statement had little to do with Cindy's having lost a son. It's a general distaste for people being poked fun at. Compared to what she's saying about President Bush, though, it seems relatively minor.

Becky

by [beckyam](#) on Wed, 08/17/2005 - 04:21 | [reply](#)

Bought into it

The most insightful thing I can say about this story is that first of all it is a story where there is almost no story to tell. Of all the things going on in the world, if I stood along a back country road in the middle of Nowhere Texas, who would take notice? In sum, this is all it is, a lady standing on the side of a back country road.

As they say in the real estate business, Location, Location, Location. It seems to be true of the News too. Crawford Texas sells newspapers and little else.

by a reader on Wed, 08/17/2005 - 15:02 | [reply](#)