

Mother of dead soldier finds way to peacefully protest war in Iraq

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According to *moveon.org*, since the beginning of the war in Iraq on March 19, 2003, over 1,800 soldiers have died in an attempt to defend the U.S. With each of these deaths, family and friends have been forced to deal with the anger, grief, and misery of losing a loved one. These deaths provide another reason for people to question whether or not the war is worth everything that the U.S. loses for its cause. While many people disagree with the war, they should be peaceful about the ways that they protest the war.

Cindy Sheehan's son, Casey Sheehan, was killed in Iraq in 2004, and his death convinced her to lead one of the most publicized anti-war protests since the beginning of the war. Sheehan spent a large part of her summer camping outside President George Bush's ranch in Crawford, Texas in protest, insisting that she would not leave until Bush agreed to speak to her about her opinions on what should be done in Iraq. Sheehan's efforts are a good example for the people of the U.S. that one person can make a big difference without having to resort to violence.

One of the main reasons that Sheehan's protest has become so publicized is the support that she has gained from people across the

U.S. Many people chose to join her at her site in Texas, which was nicknamed "Camp Casey" after her son. The arrival of supporters brought media attention, and Sheehan was able to make her voice heard across the U.S. using peaceful resistance.



Courtesy of AP
March Cindy Sheehan led a peaceful war protest over the summer in Crawford, Texas.

Sheehan's support did not only show up in Texas. On August 17, hundreds of thousands of Sheehan's supporters gathered at 1,627 vigils in all 50 states in the U.S. These vigils were another example of peaceful protest, and this time the protesting was nationwide. "Our candlelight vigil at Camp Casey was beautiful. There were hundreds of people here and we are hearing that hundreds of people were involved around the country. We are so amazed and gratified that

there were almost 1,700 vigils around the country," said Sheehan to *moveon.org*.

While Sheehan has gained supporters in her peaceful anti-war protest, there are many others who do not agree with her views, and believe that she is wrong. Not all families who have lost soldiers in the war believe that it should end. Gary Qualls, who also lost a son in the war, believes that Sheehan is destroying troop morale, according to *agc.com*. There was even a protest against Sheehan in which a group of people went to Crawford, Texas in what was called the "You Don't Speak For Me, Cindy" tour.

Since the beginning of the war in Iraq, many opinions about whether or not the war is justified have arisen. Unlike after September 11, 2001, when Americans were united in anger against terrorism, now the U.S. is divided between those who support the war, and those that do not. Cindy Sheehan may not represent the opinions of everyone, but she has become a good example for all Americans by proving that one person can make a large difference in the U.S. without using violence.

Hurricane blame shifts focus

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Hurricane Katrina has caused extreme devastation to New Orleans and other parts of the Gulf Coast that it is difficult to choose an area to begin repairing. There are thousands that are homeless, starving, sick, and dying. The images of New Orleans on television show the devastated areas that have a shocking resemblance to those of a third world country. With so many large-scale problems, it is hard to believe that Americans are becoming increasingly divided during such a difficult time when they should try to come together in an effort to relieve the destruction that Hurricane Katrina has caused, instead of letting discrimination, blame, and other petty differences get in the way.

One aspect of the problem that Americans are worried about is the large number of looters in New Orleans. According to *cleveland.com*, looting spiraled so out of control that New Orleans Mayor Ray Nagin ordered the entire police force to abandon search-and-rescue efforts and focus on thieves who turned increasingly hostile. Although it is true that there are many people looting, calling an entire police force to control it, rather than continuing the search-and-rescue effort was not a rational thing to do. While there are many people in New Orleans that are taking goods that they do not need, most people are taking things from

stores that they need in order to survive, such as clothes, food and water because they cannot get them any other way. If they do not do this, they will most likely starve because although there are several



Courtesy of AP
Journey home Survivors of Hurricane Katrina walk the streets of New Orleans for the first time. The government should focus attention on rebuilding homes instead of casting blame.

groups and individuals there to help the victims, there is not enough help to assist everyone at the same time. The main concern during that period of time should have been searching for as many people as possible that need help and serving them in the best way possible instead of punishing people that are only trying to survive through such a tragic natural disaster.

In addition to this, many Americans, rather than helping the victims of the hurricane, are letting discrimination, hatred, and blame

get in the way of helping out. According to the *Chicago Tribune*, a group of Christians, called Repent America, issued a statement that said Hurricane Katrina was God's way of canceling a gay festival that

was scheduled to take place in New Orleans this fall. In addition, several Americans believe that the people of New Orleans should have left in order to avoid such devastation, and because they stayed, it is their fault that they are faced with the poor conditions that they have to live in. Such simple mindedness among the American people is one of the reasons why so many people in New Orleans are still suffering. Americans should be ashamed to have such discriminatory attitudes to the people of New Orleans when they are in dyer need for help. A horrific natural disaster that should inspire people to support and aid the victims of the hurricane is only giving life to the bigoted attitudes that so many Americans have, which is not going to help solve any problems.

Cross argument pointless

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On August 12, 2005, Veterans for Peace, an anti-war group, set up almost 600 crosses along the road leading to President George Bush's ranch in Crawford, Texas, in support of Cindy Sheehan's protest against the war, according to the Associated Press (AP). The crosses were meant to honor the troops who have died defending America in the War in Iraq. However, the crosses in Crawford have sparked controversy because people believe that the crosses are being used to support the anti-war movement. While the soldiers who have died for the U.S. deserve to be honored, their deaths should not be used for either side of the argument concerning whether or not the war is necessary.

Hundreds of people have visited the memorial in Crawford, Texas to honor the soldiers that have died in the war so far. However, because the crosses are associated with anti-war protests, they have faced vandalism from people who support the war. According to AP, some of the crosses in Crawford, Texas were run over, and many others have been stolen.

Crosses representing soldiers who have died should not be put up to try to gain support against the war because many of these soldiers believed that the war was for a good cause. Using crosses bearing the names of soldiers who supported the war to prove a point

is disrespectful to these soldiers. The families of these soldiers do not want their loved ones used to help a cause that they would not have supported. Sherry Orlando, a spokeswoman at Fort Campbell, Kentucky, whose husband was killed in Iraq in 2003, said, "I don't want my husband to be used for someone's political agenda," according to AP. "Being in the military was who he was. It was not just a job. He supported what he did and I support that as well," she said.

Members of Veterans for Peace argue that the crosses were not put up to protest against the war. "As a memorial, our job is to honor the dead. That has always been our intention. All we wanted to do is remind people that there is still a war going on," said Veterans for Peace member April Fitzsimmons to AP. However, if the only reason that Veterans for Peace set up the crosses was to remember soldiers, they should not have chosen the site of an anti-war protest to build the memorial.

The crosses that were put in place to honor soldiers that died in Iraq should not be exploited to support either side of the debate as to whether or not the war in Iraq should continue. Memorials to soldiers should remain memorials, and should not become weapons to support either side of the argument. One thing that both sides can agree on is that the death of a soldier is a great loss, and people should respect the memorials to these soldiers.

Along with this, several people are placing blame on the mayor of New Orleans, the governor of Louisiana, and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) for the devastation that Hurricane Katrina has caused. According to the *Chicago Tribune*, FEMA has been tagged the international embarrassment for the U.S. Every level of government that was supposed to prepare for the storm and its aftermath failed miserably. While it is true that more could have been done on behalf of FEMA and all other government officials within the affected areas in order to prevent such great devastation, what is important now

is getting the people that were affected the most help and support that they need, and not worrying about what could and should have been done.

With so many Americans worrying about decisions that should have been made earlier, blaming one another, and displaying such attitudes of hate and bigotry, there is little importance placed on anything that actually matters. What Americans should do in this type of crisis is to help in any way they can to relieve the damage done by Hurricane Katrina instead of becoming divided over petty differences, and letting that get in the way of doing what is right.

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