

BRING OUR CHILDREN HOME FROM IRAQ!

One Mother's Voice Makes a Difference

Cindy Sheehan

Camp Casey founder Cindy Sheehan spoke on the UC Berkeley campus on November 18, 2005. The following is an edited transcript of her remarks.



I'm a founder of Gold Star Families for Peace. When I became a gold star mother on April 4, 2004, it was the worst day of my life. The day we buried Casey, a gold star mom who had two sons killed in Vietnam handed me a gold star, like it was some

sort of demented Girl Scout badge. A military officer gave me a purple heart and a bronze medal - as if these could somehow replace my son's life.

The campus anti-war, counter-recruitment movement is so important because the way that we are going to stop this immoral war machine is by ending the source of human cannon fodder.

I'm glad to see so many young people tonight. The present belongs to people like you. My son was 24 when he was killed. He didn't get to have a future, so we have to work together so that we all have a future. And so that we won't have to apologize for the world we give to our children and grandchildren.

I want to live in a country that uses its words to solve problems and not always violence and killing. I want to be able to look at myself in the mirror every day. I don't know how these war criminals can look at themselves in the mirror. How do they shave? How does Condi brush her teeth?

Today was a terrible day in Iraq. At least 70 civilians were killed by car bombs. The killing goes on and on. John Edwards recently admitted that he had made a mistake in voting for the war, but he didn't say we should bring the troops home. That position still supports the war.

I can forgive anyone for making a mistake, even the one that killed my son, but if they perpetuate the war by their

silence, they have blood on their hands. What are the politicians doing to get our kids out of this nightmare?

John Kerry said in September he'd give a strong speech against Iraq. When I heard his speech, I was flabbergasted. He said, "Let's bring 20,000 troops home by Christmas." But there were 20,000 extra troops in Iraq for the special elections! That wasn't worth the breath it took him to give the speech. If you want a strong speech, hire me as your speechwriter!

I say: The war was illegal by our constitution or anything that measures legality, and it was immoral. After the invasion and occupation, now we find out that US forces have been using chemical weapons - those are war crimes!

If any other country were doing this, [the leaders] would not be in power, because in other countries they can do something about their leaders.

On September 24th, with hundreds of thousands of people supporting me, I went to Washington, DC to ask for a meeting with President Bush. I went to the front gate of the white house, and they pretended to call [him], and they said, "No, he won't meet with you." I said, "Fine, it's my constitutional and first amendment right. I have the right to freedom of speech, to peaceably assemble, and to petition my government for a redress of wrongs, and I'll sit here until he comes to redress my wrongs."

I had a chance to testify in court yesterday about it. When the prosecutor asked, "Did you have a permit," I said, "I don't need one! The first amendment says I have the right to petition my government for a redress of wrongs. It doesn't say anything about the number of people, I can't help it if 375 people sat down next to me."

Their little schemes are designed to shut us up. It was working for a long time. On February 15th 2003,

millions marched to stop the invasion of Iraq and we thought our voices didn't matter. Bush called it a "focus group," and I thought, "What would my voice add?" But that's what they want you to think. We have to demand our rights.



"I can forgive anyone for making a mistake, even the one that killed my son...."

Soon Congress will vote on extending the Patriot Act, and if it's approved, we have to start committing civil disobedience and violating the Patriot Act. When I say "we," I actually mean "I," because I can't encourage others to break the law. But it wouldn't be illegal to defy the Patriot Act, because the Patriot Act contradicts the constitution! The constitution says, "Congress shall make no laws prohibiting..."

You have to stop letting them take our voice away. I proved in August [at the Camp Casey vigil in front of President Bush's ranch in Crawford, Texas] that one person's voice can make a difference.

We can't wait for other people to do it. We have to work to keep the rights we still have and get back the ones we lost. Some of our congressional representatives are acting courageously, like Barbara Lee and John Conyers. We have to support them.

For Rep. Jack Murtha, a war hawk, to say, "Bring the troops home in six months" is huge. People accuse me of playing politics with my son's life. No one asked me what party I belong to before they sent my son to Iraq. This isn't a matter of right and left, it's a matter of right and wrong. Right now 63% of America says, "The war is wrong, bring the troops home." It crosses red states and blue states. We're reaching all the people on the fence.



Cindy Sheehan marches with Rev. Jesse Jackson on September 24, 2005. photo by Jeff Simmermon

We're ready now to take back our democracy. Congress abrogated its responsibility in giving the President the power to make war, and we abrogated our responsibility as patriots and Americans. It's not patriotic to let the government kill innocent people, torture people, use chemical weapons, and invade a country that's no threat to us. We're not afraid of the people in the white house. They have no power over us, we the people have the power, and we're not going to let them continue. There are a lot of warmongering democrats – they are almost as responsible as the republicans.

This is a very dangerous but exciting time. It's the one time in history when we can change things. Change never comes from the top down, it's always bottom up. Where did the civil rights movement, the women's suffrage movement, and the anti-slavery movement start? Every true movement that has made lasting relevant and positive change started from the bottom up. We are here to tell the leaders at the top: "You work for us, we pay your salaries, it's time for a job review! We are not only an anti-war movement, we are a peace movement, because when we bring our troops home from this mess we will never let you do this to us again!"

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Civil disobedience in front of the White House in September, 2005 resulted in dozens of arrests of activists. photo by Matthew Bradley

RESOURCES

- [Meet with Cindy: www.meetwithcindy.org](http://www.meetwithcindy.org)
- [Gold Star Families for Peace: www.gsfp.org](http://www.gsfp.org)
- [Not One More Mother's Child by Cindy Sheehan](#)
- [Berkeley Stop the War Coalition:](#)
ucbstopthewar-subscribe@yahoo.com
- [Campus Anti-War Network: www.campusantiwar.net](http://www.campusantiwar.net)
- [Code Pink: www.codepink4peace.org](http://www.codepink4peace.org)