

a letter to
america

Where's the Outrage?
A Political Newsletter
August 2005

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In August the news is supposed to slow. This month, however, has been as busy as any other month for important news. Bill Frist, Senate majority leader, ended this session of Congress by announcing his support for stem cell research. Wasn't that debate big six months ago? Didn't Ron Reagan, Jr. stand up at the Democratic National Convention and speak in support of stem cell research last summer? Where was Dr. Come Lately then? Dr. Frist is trying to position himself as a moderate who loves the people so that he can run for president in 2008. Did you see him at NASCAR Cola-Coca 600? He looked about as comfortable as Ralph Nader in a Hummer.

Israel is pulling out of the Gaza strip. Hamas, a militant organization that is labeled as a terrorist organization by our State department, claims that their campaign of terror has worked, and they will continue the violence. Israel's Prime Minister, Ariel Sharon, seems to understand that Israel has to give up something if they are going to move the peace process along. Sharon is showing the kind of strength that we would like to see in our politicians.

As attacks on our troops continue in Iraq, the anti-war movement has finally found a face to put to its words. Cindy Sheehan is that face. The beauty of Ms. Sheehan's message is its simplicity. She simply wants to know why her son had to die. What was the noble purpose? So far, the Bush administration really has not had any good answers. They cannot use the WMD argument since more and more evidence is coming out that the intelligence community had

significant doubts before the invasion that Iraq did not have significant weapons. Although Bush has tried to push the idea that Al Qaeda and Saddam were bedfellows, the 9-11 Commission has quashed that idea ... totally. So, let's ask the question again - Why did her son have to die?

So where does that leave Bush? Out in the cold if you ask me. He really does not have any good answers to the families that have lost loved ones. He could try the truth -- he wanted to publicly humiliate Saddam for trying to kill his father, for lying to weapons inspectors, and for making the senior President Bush and his post-Gulf War peace agreement look weak. When Europe wanted to stop sanctions against Iraq and to sell that country food and supplies, Saddam was laughing at us. The junior President Bush could not have that. In essence, President Bush took America to War to resolve a personal grudge.

The good news for Democrats is that they have an ace in the hole. Bush. Bush is Bush. He is not going to change. He is going to vacation in spite of the fact that his approval ratings are falling faster than Michael Jackson's popularity. He will not meet with Ms. Sheehan because... He is riding his bike? At a fundraiser? Clearing brush? All the Democrats have to do is let Bush continue to shoot himself in the foot. In the meantime, it would be great if Democrats would get a message. Any message. Drop the "we're not Bush message." It did not work for Kerry.

As all of these problems stew in Iraq, the administration has offered no changes in plans. One has to wonder if there *is* a plan for how to fix the problem of security in Iraq. Bush has made a political decision not to increase the number of troops in Iraq. We really cannot pull out of Iraq while insurgents are flowing into Iraq, in part because we did not close the borders. If we pull out of Iraq, Iran will move in. Syria will move in. Iraq most likely will break into three or

more pieces. Terrorist training camps will sprout up like weeds in my garden; and, I hate to say it, America will be less safe.

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Hurricane Katrina has devastated the Gulf Coast. From New Orleans east to the Florida panhandle, there is water or destruction where there used to be buildings and commerce. This is a huge national problem. We cannot afford to stand by for three to five years while the city of New Orleans and other Gulf Coast communities such as Biloxi and Gulf Port struggle back to their feet. The amount of work that needs to be done is overwhelming. Remove the water. Rebuild levees. Repair and restart pumps. Clean up. Rebuild neighborhoods, businesses and infrastructure. In the meantime, where do over two million people live? How can they find work?

We, in the trauma/critical care community, have been talking about disasters for a long time. Here are a few of the suggestions to repair and rebuild this area as quickly as possible -

1. Mobilize the National Guard from other states. You are going to need a lot of manpower—tens of thousands.
2. FEMA should make physicians, nurses, respiratory therapists, EMTs, paramedics, etc. government employees for 60 - 90 days. Thousands of extra medical personnel will be needed to prevent and control the diseases that await us (West Nile, Cholera, dysentery - to name a few).
3. Armed Forces medical ships should be stationed off the coast of Mississippi and Louisiana. Patients and personnel will need to be flown or ferried to the ships for medical treatment.

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Dr. Thompson is available for lectures!

4. The President should call on industry, just as FDR did in 1941, to pull together to help rebuild this area. We are going to need food, clothing, shelter and toilets. Houses will need to be repaired. Roofs fixed and windows replaced. Pipes. Generators. Cell and Telephone towers. The list is almost endless. One other thing: those who try to gouge the federal, state, or local governments should be charged as criminals and serve time.

In addition to measures such as these, the victims of Katrina will need our prayers and our gifts.

* with writing and editing assistance by **Catherine Ross, PhD**.