



News

The Dead Have A Right to be Seen

Friday May 14, 2004

I started to cry when I saw the pictures of the the flag draped coffins



feeling the heaviness of those coffins—

that son, that brother, that sister, that husband,

and all the other husbands and fathers and wives

All of them whose coffins we have not seen

Someone decided that it is better for us

to not see the coffins

So across the United States, private ceremonies are held

away from the view of the American people,

leaving us all bereft of reality.

Bereft of seeing the families, the children,

the widows crying or trying not to cry,

holding it together as they receive the folded flag

Keeping us from seeing the children who will grow up

without a father, a mother, a brother.

We should see it every night on the news.

We should see it so we cannot pretend about the cost,

the real cost.

I cried for those who have no witness on our nightly news.

For the over 600 civilian Iraqis killed in Fallujah and the more to come,

for they too are husbands, and brothers, and sisters,

and more children than we can bear to admit.

They were being buried in mass graves because

it was not safe to take the time to bury the dead

Some were kept on ice in their homes until it was safe to go

outside

but the electricity was cut off and the ice melted.

Why have we not seen these images?

Are we worth more?

Are they worth less?

I cried because I remembered watching the dead arrive home from Viet Nam

I remember the flag draped coffins in the hundreds and the

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thousands,
the overwhelming magnitude of it all
I remember seeing children in flames running screaming down streets
And I remember that it mattered.
It mattered that across this country
millions of us transformed by witnessing—
It mattered so much that they took away the images
They have hidden the coffins and the crying families from view

But we are involved -whether we want to be or not
We need to see the dead arriving every day
as they touch the soil of the country that they died for
No matter who you are, no matter what you think
about this war
The dead still have a right to be seen.

—Micky Duxbury