

# OPEN LETTERS: The Iraq War



## An Open Letter from a U.S. Airman

From: "super sco"  
Sent: Friday, January 28, 2005 3:22 PM  
To: soldiers@michaelmoore.com  
Subject: To inform our citizens

To whom it may concern,

I am a Senior Airman in the United States Air Force. I wish to share a little bit about myself so that you may better understand my concerns over America's current precarious place in history. I enlisted in the Air Force for many reasons. Among them was education benefits, pay, travel opportunities, but most importantly, I simply wanted to wear the uniform. I viewed enlistment as an important act that young men had been undertaking for over two hundred years to protect our people. Imagine my surprise when, upon reaching Lackland AFB, TX for Basic Military Training, I looked at my fellow "trainees" and found nothing but children. I saw not a group of patriotic Americans, but a political rally of apathetic shock troops with no notions of what the Constitution stands for or the oath we took.

I have echoed the words of that oath as a warning to fellow members of my squadron every single time I have heard an undemocratic syllable from their mouths. I quote, "I solemnly swear to defend the Constitution of the United States of America against all enemies, foreign and domestic." The last two words are key: and domestic. To all who read this, I urge this warning: the single greatest danger to America and our way of life is ourselves. No foreign power can dictate your oppression. No foreign army can impose martial law upon us. No foreign dictator can remove the precious right that I am exercising at this moment. Militaries do not keep people free! Militaries keep us safe, but it is we citizens who ensure freedom! Every time we voice our opinion we are promoting freedom. Stationing our armies, navies, and air forces in distant lands and toppling weak regimes does not keep us free. It is through political action and dissent over injustice that we remain free! I say this now to inform concerned Americans of what I have witnessed firsthand as citizen soldier in the U.S. Air Force: your soldiers, sailors, airmen, and marines need instruction on what government by consent means; they need a refresher course in Constitutional government; they need to be reminded that their loyalties lie not to the person in office but to the ideals of the Constitution.

Consider this personal example. In the recent presidential election, I made my opinion very clear and I will make it now. I did not support George W. Bush because his speech on March 17, 2003 misled our country to war. In hindsight, no weapons of mass destruction have been found. The intelligence community has publicly admitted to making a mistake in their reports. I personally feel we have been lied to, and when I expressed this opinion I received the greatest injury of all. I was told I was not to share my opinions in the workplace, which is an Air Force installation. I was told to give up our most precious freedom, the freedom from which all others stem: the freedom of speech. It was on that day that my tolerance for the injustices I sustain in the Air Force withered. The attitude of others in my squadron was that I was being disloyal. If I had a nickel for every time they said to me, "What's wrong with you? Are you anti-military? Are you a pacifist? You don't like your president?" I would never have to work again. The greatest threat to our freedom is the prevailing attitude in the military. The view that we should be personally loyal to the president, not to the Constitution; the idea that the president should not be accountable to public opinion polls.

Your soldiers have forgotten the oath they swore. The Constitution established a separation of powers, and placed a civilian at the top of the military for a reason. Throughout history, no lesson can be more apparent than the old adage, "Power corrupts." How many kings, tyrants, and dictators used their militaries to usurp power from the

people? How many used the military to force citizens to consent to authoritarian rule? The number is astronomical. Our Founding Fathers listened to the voice of history, and knew this lesson well. We must teach it to our children, your future soldiers, again. Never blindly trust authority! This is the heart of the ideals behind the Constitution. Government, if left unchecked, will work to further its own agendas. We must keep government in check to ensure they follow our agenda. And that is the heart of the ideals behind the oath we soldiers take. This is what our soldiers have forgotten. I caution all Americans to keep a watchful eye upon your soldiers. Their hearts and minds are being won over by politicians. They are barely loyal to the Constitution, or the ideals of freedom. Many would rather sacrifice a few of your personal liberties that are "taken for granted" for their personal security. They have forgotten that security stems from personal freedom: the security against oppression lies in the powers that freedom grants. The power I speak of is the power to say "No" and not to comply. I fear dark days for our country and our people. Listen to history, go back and read and reflect upon the atrocities that tyrants and the militaries under their control have inflicted. Then perhaps my warning will have personal significance for all of you.

Christopher R. Atkins  
Senior Airmen  
United States Air Force

## An Open Letter to Congress: The Iraq War

By Denise Thomas  
June 30th, 2005

The Iraq war has NEVER made sense. We were already in a major war and another one would have stretched our military resources to the limit (which it did). Gulf War Syndrome had never been addressed, and as I feared, our soldiers are becoming mysteriously ill AGAIN. We did not build up the numbers of our military past peacetime strength before engaging in this war, and we had no strategy to keep the peace. My husband is a member of the Army National Guard and I strongly resent having the threat of deployment hanging over his head for the last three years. Three years of limbo is counter-productive. There are many more like us. I strongly object to having to give up my daughter to this war, even AFTER two Army doctors had pronounced her medically unfit and "undeployable". Instead of being medically discharged, she spent a year in Baghdad and my pleas to the White House and virtually everyone else were ignored. A letter from the White House assured me that I would be "referred to the Dept. of Defense". That was in December '03 and I'm still waiting for a referral. Medically unfit soldiers are routinely being sent into battle: [www.orgsites.com/ga/save-our-soldiers/](http://www.orgsites.com/ga/save-our-soldiers/) I started this website to call attention to their plight, but I have found that this is an open secret and not many people care. Murderers in our prison system do not deserve such cruel and unusual punishment. Why do we force it upon our soldiers? W. Bush once said that Saddam Hussein had to be removed from power because "he tried to kill my daddy". Well W. Bush tried to kill my DAUGHTER! What do you believe I think about HIM? He has created this impossible situation that forces unfit soldiers into combat while denying them medical treatment. This administration does not care much about our men and women in the Armed forces, and even less about the thousands of innocent Iraqi citizens. The members of our Armed forces are returning - physically and mentally broken. Some with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, instead of being treated, are talked back into combat by military counselors to "face their fears." My daughter won't get help for her own PTSD because she has seen this. The counselors told her to re-enlist, promising that if she did that she would then get surgery for her condition that rendered her "undeployable." Some soldiers have lost their means to make a decent living and cannot get help from the government before they lose their houses, their cars, and sometimes their own families. These soldiers are not the responsibility of the non-profit groups, but we love them and we try to help them to the best of our limited means. Some people are quick to inform us who are the military families, that our loved one signed a contract with the government. In order to have a contract there must be two sides keeping their promises. Keeping that in mind, the government that broke the contract. It can't be one-sided. This war didn't make sense in the beginning; now it makes even less. Please stop this war NOW.

Denise Thomas  
GA Military Families Speak Out

# Open Letter to Laura Bush

by Sharon Olds  
*The Nation*, October 10, 2005

*For reasons spelled out below, the poet Sharon Olds has declined to attend the National Book Festival in Washington, which, coincidentally or not, takes place September 24, the day of an antiwar mobilization in the capital. Olds, winner of a National Book Critics Circle Award and professor of creative writing at New York University, was invited along with a number of other writers by First Lady Laura Bush to read from their works. Three years ago artist Jules Feiffer declined to attend the festival's White House breakfast as a protest against the Iraq War ("Mr. Feiffer Regrets," November 11, 2002). We suggest that invitees to this year's event consider following their example.--The Editors*

Laura Bush  
First Lady  
The White House

Dear Mrs. Bush,

I am writing to let you know why I am not able to accept your kind invitation to give a presentation at the National Book Festival on September 24, or to attend your dinner at the Library of Congress or the breakfast at the White House.

In one way, it's a very appealing invitation. The idea of speaking at a festival attended by 85,000 people is inspiring! The possibility of finding new readers is exciting for a poet in personal terms, and in terms of the desire that poetry serve its constituents--all of us who need the pleasure, and the inner and outer news, it delivers.

And the concept of a community of readers and writers has long been dear to my heart. As a professor of creative writing in the graduate school of a major university, I have had the chance to be a part of some magnificent outreach writing workshops in which our students have become teachers. Over the years, they have taught in a variety of settings: a women's prison, several New York City public high schools, an oncology ward for children. Our initial program, at a 900-bed state hospital for the severely physically challenged, has been running now for twenty years, creating along the way lasting friendships between young MFA candidates and their students--long-term residents at the hospital who, in their humor, courage and wisdom, become our teachers.

When you have witnessed someone nonspeaking and almost nonmoving spell out, with a toe, on a big plastic alphabet chart, letter by letter, his new poem, you have experienced, close up, the passion and essentialness of writing. When you have held up a small cardboard alphabet card for a writer who is completely nonspeaking and nonmoving (except for the eyes), and pointed first to the A, then the B, then C, then D, until you get to the first letter of the first word of the first line of the poem she has been composing in her head all week, and she lifts her eyes when that letter is touched to say yes, you feel with a fresh immediacy the human drive for creation, self-expression, accuracy, honesty and wit--and the importance of writing, which celebrates the value of each person's unique story and song.

So the prospect of a festival of books seemed wonderful to me. I thought of the opportunity to talk about how to start up an outreach program. I thought of the chance to sell some books, sign some books and meet some of the citizens of Washington, DC. I thought that I could try to find a way, even as your guest, with respect, to speak about my deep feeling that we should not have invaded Iraq, and to declare my belief that the wish to invade another culture and another country--with the resultant loss of life and limb for our brave soldiers, and for the noncombatants in their home terrain--did not come out of our democracy but was instead a decision made "at the top" and forced on the people by distorted language, and by untruths. I hoped to express the fear that we have begun to live in the shadows of tyranny and religious chauvinism--the opposites of the liberty, tolerance and diversity our nation aspires to.

I tried to see my way clear to attend the festival in order to bear witness--as an American who loves her country and its principles and its writing--against this undeclared and devastating war.

But I could not face the idea of breaking bread with you. I knew that if I sat down to eat with you, it would feel to me as if I were condoning what I see to be the wild, highhanded actions of the Bush Administration.

What kept coming to the fore of my mind was that I would be taking food from the hand of the First Lady who represents the Administration that unleashed this war and that wills its continuation, even to the extent of permitting "extraordinary rendition": flying people to other countries where they will be tortured for us.

So many Americans who had felt pride in our country now feel anguish and shame, for the current regime of blood, wounds and fire. I thought of the clean linens at your table, the shining knives and the flames of the candles, and I could not stomach it.

Sincerely,  
SHARON OLDS

## An Open Letter To The Hollywood Bunch

From Charlie Daniels to the "Hollywood Bunch"

Ok let's just say for a moment you bunch of pampered, overpaid, unrealistic children had your way and the U.S.A. didn't go into Iraq. Let's say that you really get your way and we destroy all our nuclear weapons and stick daisies in our gun barrels and sit around with some white wine and cheese and pat ourselves on the back, so proud of what we've done for world peace.

Let's say that we cut the military budget to just enough to keep the National Guard on hand to help out with floods and fires. Let's say that we close down our military bases all over the world and bring the troops home, increase our foreign aid and drop all the trade sanctions against everybody.

I suppose that in your fantasy world this would create a utopian world where everybody would live in peace. After all, the great monster, the United States of America, the cause of all the world's trouble would have disbanded it's horrible military and certainly all the other countries of the world would follow suit. After all, they only arm themselves to defend their countries from the mean old U.S.A. Why you bunch of pitiful, hypocritical, idiotic, spoiled mugwumps. get your head out of the sand and smell the Trade Towers burning. Do you think that a trip to Iraq by Sean Penn did anything but encourage a wanton murderer to think that the people of the U.S.A. didn't have the nerve or the guts to fight him?

Barbara Streisand's fanatical and hateful rankings about George Bush makes about as much sense as Michael Jackson hanging a baby over a railing. You people need to get out of Hollywood once in a while and get out into the real world. You'd be surprised at the hostility you would find out here. Stop in at a truck stop and tell an overworked, long distance truck driver that you don't think Saddam Hussein is doing anything wrong. Tell a farmer with a couple of sons in the military that you think the United States has no right to defend itself. Go down to Baxley, Georgia and hold an anti-war rally and see what the folks down there think about you. You people are some of the most disgusting examples of a waste of protoplasm I've ever had the displeasure to hear about. Sean Penn, you're a traitor to the United States of America. You gave aid and comfort to the enemy. How many American lives will your little, "fact finding trip" to Iraq cost? You encouraged Saddam to think that we didn't have the stomach for war. You people protect one of the most evil men on the face of this earth and won't lift a finger to save the life of an unborn baby. Freedom of choice you say?

Well, I'm going to exercise some freedom of choice of my own. If I see any of your names on a marquee, I'm going to boycott the movie. I will completely stop going to movies if I have to. In most cases it certainly wouldn't be much of a loss.

You scoff at our military who's boots you're not even worthy to shine. They go to battle and risk their lives so ingrates like you can live in luxury. The day of reckoning is coming when you will be faced with the undeniable truth that the war against Saddam Hussein is the war on terrorism. America is in imminent danger. You're either for her or against her. There is no middle ground.

I think we all know where you stand.

What do you think?

God Bless America