

Assessment

Patriotism: Your Response

Name _____

Read the following article by Oliver Okoli and answer the questions that follow:

How Grateful Is The Nation?

(September 20, 2007)



Very often, the essence of an important issue or event is lost amidst debates, protests, counter protest, seemingly endless cacophony of opinions and numerous conflagrations.

Listening to the media coverage of the war with Iraq, on television, radio, and reading about it in the newspapers and the Internet, one can only wonder, do the pundits, protesters, politicians, media managers and many people in this country truly know what are at stake in this conflict?

Indeed, it's all about national security, global stability, and the freedom of an oppressed people. Nevertheless, what are most critically at risk are the lives of our brave servicemen and women fighting in the war, and the well-being of their families.

In a world inhabited by people, incapable of peace, love and justice, war is inevitable. It does not matter how often that is, as long as the fundamental human aspiration is not love, peace and justice, there will always be conflicts and wars.

When that happens, such as is, someone has to pay a severe price, even make the ultimate sacrifice to protect others. This sad reality brings us to the question posed by this article.

How grateful are we to the people who are risking their lives to protect this great nation? How grateful is the nation to the soldiers who are now fighting, getting injured, maimed and even killed in battle for the freedom of Iraq, Afghanistan and the safety of this country and the world, and to those who have gone before them and done likewise.

Is it enough to just say “thanks”, “we are proud of you”, or to invoke a similar cliché? Is it adequate to sport a T-shirt or bumper stickers with slogans of support, or attend rallies? Would sound bites from politicians, celebrities and entertainers, promises of free college tuition and guarantee for house loan, a medal of honor and a spot in a prestigious cemetery in Arlington Virginia, suffice?

Certainly, these are measures of gratitude, but they are not enough. Everyone

knows that these brave soldiers are not in it for the money; but for the noble reason of defending their country, and the freedom of people they do not even know. Nevertheless, our gratitude to them for their honorable sacrifice should mean more than just mere words and a token of gratitude here and there.

In a country where everyone has thrived in the freedom and stability ensured by our servicemen and women, it is only proper that the gratitude of the nation translates into a substantially better life for every combat soldier, many of whom return to a life of hardship and poverty, perhaps directly or indirectly caused by the noble and honorable sacrifice they made to protect the nation.

Many of them have families who are struggling financially. Many have gone to fight in the war, leaving jobs that may not be there when they return. Many families are without health insurance because the breadwinner has been called to active duty.

I am outraged and shamed by the fact that many of these soldiers have to rely on donated groceries to supplement their ability to provide for their families, because they are not paid enough to live otherwise. For this to be happening in the richest and most powerful nation on earth, and to those who have sworn to defend it, is indeed shameful and scandalous.

No doubt, care for our servicemen and women have improved, since the Vietnam War. However, more needs to be done.

The sacrifices made by our servicemen and women are infinitely beyond money. You cannot put a price on a maimed or lost life. How do you repay someone who lost his life defending others, a child whose father or mother was taken in combat, a mother whose son or daughter was taken, a wife or husband whose spouse was taken, a family or community, for such a dreadful loss?

No amount of money is sufficient for the fear, anxiety and loss endured by that father, mother, husband, wife, son, daughter, relative or friend whose loved ones have gone to war and who have to constantly deal with the fear and anxiety of not knowing whether they will return.

Nevertheless, a tangible token of gratitude that would make better; the lives of these noble men and women, is not only just; it is a moral imperative. I say pay a little more tribute and a little less lip service to our servicemen and women, they deserve it and a whole lot more.

Write or call your Congressman to demand that more of our tax dollars be used to improve pay for servicemen and women, join or start a Foundation to support the servicemen and women and their families in any of the many ways possible.

Response to the Article: How Grateful is the Nation?

1. Do you agree with the author's assertion that "war is inevitable?" Why or why not?
2. The author says that the treatment of veterans is "shameful and scandalous." Do you agree? Why or why not?
3. What does the author propose to do about this problem?
4. What are some ways you think we can address this problem?