Wave the Bloody Shirt



It’s not hard to find examples of politicians exploiting tragedy for cheap emotional gain. But it’s hard to imagine a more cynical episode than the stunt trump pulled last night during his congressional address.

On January 28, just a week into the trump reign, our Commander in Chief green lighted a military raid in Yemen. By most accounts, the president* took a cavalier attitude toward approving the mission. He could not be bothered to attend to the mission in the Situation Room, preferring to stay in the residence and tweet about trivialities. Leadership.

During the raid, CPO William Owen died, and six other SEALs were injured. An estimated 29 civilians died in the raid, including children. A $75M Osprey helicopter was disabled; airstrikes were called in to destroy the aircraft to keep it from falling into enemy hands. No strategic intelligence was attained, no strategic hard target or combatant captured or killed. It was a clusterfuck from start to finish.

This woman, Carryn Owens, lost her husband. Her grief is beyond my imagination.



I’m confident in saying that it is also beyond the president’s * imagination. Or interest, really, in anything other than its value as a show biz gambit that allowed him to bask in one minute and forty-four seconds of standing ovation tribute, tribute that may have been intended for Mrs Owens and her late husband, but which he treated as his due. He even made her stand up a second time, this woman consumed in mourning and public grief, reduced to a prop in a sick game to let this sick man believe himself to be a popular leader.

Watch the tape. She wants to go away and hide. Now look at trump: the sick bastard is beaming, smiling, waving thumbs up as though he had just had a protester dragged out of one of his rallies. The world is just a reality show set to him. He could care fuck. all. about human feelings, about suffering, about yearning. Give him an applause line and everything is fine.



This is what sociopathy looks like<fn>And isn't Speaker Ryan the cutest little puppy dog?</fn>

Trump quoted the Bible. Trump said "Ryan" was looking down from heaven, and "he is very happy because I think he just broke a record" for the ovation. Huzzah.

Now, take a look at the Joint Chiefs of Staff during this revolting spectacle.



Ever since the botched mission, trump has swung between claiming everything went great to blaming the failure on Obama. And then a few days ago, he tried to hang it around the necks of the military.

> *"This was something that was, you know, just – they wanted to do," Trump said. " And they came to see me and they explained what they wanted to do, the generals, who are very respected."*
>
> *"And they lost Ryan," Trump continued.*

Not one of those generals would deny their responsibility for CPO Owens' death. It's part of the role of leadership. (And by the way, Don, to you his name is Chief Petty Officer Owens. His friends call him Ryan.) The look of disgust on these faces is telling.

Trump, a pretend leader, is never to blame, never culpable for any failure. When things are going well, it's all to his credit, just as when an audience is on its feet cheering, it is because of his magnificent greatness.

FWIW, CPO Owens' father has refused to meet with the president*, claiming that the questions surrounding the approval and execution of the raid make it impossible for him to face trump. He has called for a full investigation, saying, "Don't hide behind my son's death to prevent an investigation."

The schmuck from Queens went one step further. Not only will he hide behind CPO Owens' death to avoid an investigation, he is waving a good man's bloody shirt to wrap himself in applause and adoration.

It's difficult to imagine a more revolting manipulation of genuine grief. Somehow, though, I think we have a long way to go before we hit bottom with this guy.