

FREEDOM FEELS GOOD

Sgt. Eddie Jeffers

Everyday, I live, I breathe, and I think Iraq. It is my life...more so than many of the so called experts who rant and rave about it. I walk these streets, I trudge through this darkness that so much of my life has seemed to become. And I am frustrated. It is hard to battle on the behalf of the ungrateful.

The Iraqis are just as guilty as the Americans in this. It infuriates me to no end to try so hard, to put myself and the ones I lead into the line of fire, and to be forsaken by the ones I am here to save.

They turn their heads when we ask questions. They say there are no terrorists...but there are...everywhere. The Iraqi people unfortunately respond only to force, violence, dominance...it has been their life for so long. Our cultures and religions alone widen the gap between our struggles over here.

The ones who have stepped up to fight are few...the Army and police are small, and struggling to grow. They are the hope of their nation ever leaving our control.

But more than anyone, I sometimes see futility in my actions. I fight, I kill, I scar myself emotionally, psychologically, and in some ways physically...and as I lay in the dark at night, I wonder what it's for. I wonder if the Iraqi people will ever get it together or if the country will collapse on itself whether I am here or not. It makes me angry, and a big part of me is content to let it fall apart. Part of me doesn't care what happens to this God-forsaken city after I leave it...as long as "me and my boys" make it out in one piece.

But that is the viewpoint of a man who wishes his actions to be in vain. I do not. I have lost very close friends over here. I don't want their lives to have been given in vain. Simply put, we are fighters. We are all in the same place for various reasons, for me, it's personal. I am in a modern day crusade to exterminate evil. People whose atrocities I cannot even begin to name cannot be allowed to exist among us. As long as these people are here, everything that is just and good is at risk.

I am not naive...not anymore, too many people who believe in good are unaffected by evil. I have faced it and compromised with it and even felt its poison flow in my veins at times. But this is for a purpose; if anything to provide the example. If the Iraqi people have learned one thing, it is that the Americans will not quit. They gun us down and we advance without blinking, through homes, living rooms, kitchens, into the streets, courtyards, palm groves and back into their face. That example of unrelenting spirit is our greatest gift to the Iraqi people. Some of them have taken the example to heart and signed up for the Army and police.

Things can't change overnight and we can't expect a country whose culture has been dominated by state mandated way of thinking to change in an instance...take the Japanese in World War Two for example. Our example as warriors for the just and good, who will never quit no matter what is thrown at us or no matter how many fall will pay off eventually. But first we have to break the back of a way of thinking that has been in place for decades...it took some very horrible things to break the "yamato damashii" of the Japanese in our Second World War, but we succeeded and look at them now.

The Iraqis are capable of free government but we cannot call it quits because we think they aren't. Someone has to believe in them, someone has to help them out; someone has to provide the example. We are showing it to them. Some have taken it, many haven't, but it will spread...because freedom feels good.

"Blessed be the Lord my Strength, who teaches my hands to war, and my fingers to fight." Psalm 144:1

Sergeant Eddie Jeffers served as a US Army Infantryman in Ramadi, Iraq. Sgt. Eddie Jeffers was killed in Iraq on September 19, 2007. He was 23.