

HUMAN EXCEPTIONALISM

Terri Schiavo: A Life of “Indelible Impact”

By WESLEY J. SMITH

May 30, 2007 3:52 AM

USA Today has named Terri Schiavo one of the **top 25 people who “moved us”** in the last 25 years. Hmmm. I know her family would rather she hadn't made such an impact, that instead, she were still alive and being cared for in the bosom of their love.

It is undeniable though that Terri did profoundly impact the world. As I travel nationally and internationally speaking, she remains very much on people's minds and in some of their hearts.

And that impact continues. Her brother Bobby Schindler, with whom she was very close in life, continues to hold her flame aloft throughout the world. Bobby has become a very good friend. I have watched, deeply moved, as he has harnessed his profound and continuing grief to grow from a somewhat shy individual into an eloquent advocate and speaker on behalf of disability rights and the sanctity/equality of all human life. I have often appeared with him, most recently last week at an anti-euthanasia conference in Edmonton, and his personal decency and abiding love for Terri never fails to deeply move his audiences. Both loved and loathed for their desperate fight to save Terri's life, Bobby and the entire Schindler family also, in my view, continue to make an important and indelible impact. *USA Today* opines that Terri's

contribution concerns living wills. I disagree. I think her most profound legacy is that after Terri, no one can now say they are unaware that we dehydrate people to death because they have profound cognitive disabilities. In the end, I think, Terri is a mirror upon whom we project our own deepest feelings about life, death, disability, helplessness, personal control, and mortality. People who are capable of moving the world as she unquestionably did are few and far between. There was clearly something very special about Terri Schiavo that surpassed the bitter politics of her death. So, yes: USA Today got this one right. Her life had—and continues to have—a profound and indelible impact on us all.



WESLEY J. SMITH is an author and a senior fellow at the Discovery Institute's Center on Human Exceptionalism. [@forcedexit](#)