

## [Bring 'Em Home, Bring 'Em Home](#)

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Bruce Springsteen belts out an old peace movement standard.

I first heard it while driving home from work on a college FM station. It was a song I had forgotten about but had known, with slightly different opening lyrics, in my childhood:

*If you love this land of the free  
Bring 'em home, bring 'em home  
Bring them back from overseas  
Bring 'em home, bring 'em home*

A roar went up for the arena-sized crowd on this live recording. I also recognized the singer's voice, but it was not one I associated with the song.

*It will make the politicians sad, I know  
Bring 'em home, bring 'em home  
They wanna tangle with their foe  
Bring 'em home, bring 'em home*

I then recalled when I first heard it: it was in 1965 at one of the early anti-war rallies in Washington, DC and I had come up from North Carolina with my parents. On the stage, was a 45-year old folk singer named Pete Seeger, with the thousands of demonstrators joining him in the line "bring 'em home."

*They wanna test their grand theories  
Bring 'em home, bring 'em home  
With the blood of you and me  
Bring 'em home, bring 'em home*

This wasn't Pete Seeger on the radio, though. It was a recent recording by Bruce Springsteen. And the lyrics are tragically apropos today.

*Now we'll give no more brave young lives  
Bring 'em home, bring 'em home  
For the gleam in someone's eyes  
Bring 'em home, bring 'em home*

I was born just a few years too late for me and my friends to have been shipped off and killed in Vietnam. I knew only a few people indirectly who had died: The older brother of my classmate David. The boy who used to deliver the News & Observer to our driveway every morning. It was sad and, as I got older, I started going to

anti-war protests on my own, but individual deaths still seemed rather distant to me.

*The men will cheer and the boys will shout  
Bring 'em home, bring 'em home  
Yeah and we will all turn out  
Bring 'em home, bring 'em home*

I turned 50 this past year. And my first-born went off to college. As a result, the deaths of the young Americans who are being killed in the Iraq hits me on a deeper emotional level than those who have died during other wars in my lifetime: these are the sons and daughters of my generation. I have been a father for nearly 20 years now and now have some sense of just how unbearable it would be to lose one of my children.

*The church bells will ring with joy  
Bring 'em home, bring 'em home  
To welcome our darlin' girls and boys  
Bring 'em home, bring 'em home*

Thousands of American parents and hundreds of thousands of Iraqi parents have lost their children since the U.S. invasion a little over four years ago. And the death toll continues to rise. I have three former students, all of whom opposed the war but who are now being forced to fight it, having joined the ROTC in order to afford a college education.

*We will lift their voice and sound  
Bring 'em home, bring 'em home  
Yeah, when Johnny comes marching home  
Bring 'em home, bring 'em home*

At the end of the song, at the top of the hour, the radio station switched to the news. The lead story was that the Democratic-controlled House of Representatives defeated a bill that would have required the withdrawal of all U.S. combat troops from Iraq within nine months. Congress could have also, with a simple majority and no need for an override, simply zeroed out all war funding except for the costs of bringing our troops safely home, but that option wasn't even considered. Later that evening, however, my Congresswoman, Nancy Pelosi, pushed through a bill providing for \$40 billion of unconditional supplemental funding to enable the Bush administration to continue to make war on Iraq at least through July.

That's not why you and the Democrats were elected to lead Congress, Ms. Pelosi.

No more compromises. Bring 'em home!