



Theresa Schindler-Schiavo (Terri) is a disabled young woman who is the victim of gross abuse and the complete denial of her basic human rights.

Terri is under a Florida Court order to die by starvation simply because her present condition has been confused by misleading information entered into court records.

The facts that follow should be cause for outrage. Not only is Terri being systematically denied her right to life and ordinary care, but half-truths and outright distortions about her case have been deliberately and consistently supplied to members of the media and other influential individuals. This propaganda has seriously damaged public understanding of the truth of Terri's condition and the significance of her cause.

Please take the time to read the following information. Terri needs your involvement NOW. We respectfully ask that you take any action you can to bring focus back to this case and to help us make the truth known.

We will promptly provide you with any additional factual information you may need. Please do not hesitate to contact me personally with your questions or comments.

Thank you on behalf of Terri Schindler-Schiavo,

ROBERT SCHINDLER, SR.



# Myths, Questions & Facts



Terri at Holiday Time

## Things to Know:

- Terri is not “comatose” as reported in the media. She is shown on videotape, responding to her friends and family.
- Terri can move on command, laughs, cries and tries to speak.
- Terri has not received therapy in over 10 years, though doctors say such treatment can advance her recovery.



Terri clearly showing delight with her mother's attention

### **MYTH: Terri is in a coma.**

**FACT:** Terri is NOT in a coma. Like you and I, Terri has separate periods of sleep and wakefulness. Like you and I, she is able to breathe normally, maintain a normal heartbeat and has involuntary functions other than the residual effects associated with a brain damaged patient. Terri is not using a respirator or any other machine to stay alive. She is NOT in a coma, nor is she in a “persistent vegetative state” as her husband, Michael Schiavo has claimed. By Florida Law, a persistent vegetative state is defined as:

#### **a) The absence of voluntary action or cognitive behavior of any kind.**

*This does not apply to Terri. She tracks objects with her eyes, she moves her limbs on command, she vocalizes when her family or friends are present, she laughs, she cries and she has been video taped while responding to her mother's words and touch, trying to speak and trying desperately to communicate.*

#### **b) An inability to communicate or interact purposefully with the environment.**

*Terri is able to interact purposefully with her environment and experiences pain and discomfort like you and I. Medical records verify that Terri has verbally expressed annoyance with caretakers and with at least one medical practitioner during examination—clearly indicating that Terri is able to communicate.*

### **MYTH: Many doctors have said that there is no hope for her.**

**FACT:** Terri doesn't actually see many doctors. Dr. Victor Gambone testified that he visits Terri 3 times a year. His visits last for approximately 10 minutes. He also testified, after viewing the court videotapes at Terri's recent trial, that he was surprised to see Terri's level of awareness. This doctor is part of a team hand-picked by her husband, Michael Schiavo, shortly before he filed to have Terri's feeding removed. Contrary to Schiavo's team, 10 independent physicians have given either statements or testimony that Terri is NOT in a Persistent Vegetative State. Additionally, there has never been any medical dispute of Terri's ability to swallow. Even with this compelling evidence, Terri's husband, Michael Schiavo, has denied any form of therapy for her for over 10 years.

Dr. Melvin Greer, appointed by Schiavo, testified that a doctor need not examine a patient to know the appropriate medical treatment. He spent approximately 45 minutes with Terri. Dr. Peter Bambakidas, appointed by Judge Greer, spent approximately 30 minutes with Terri. Dr. Ronald Cranford, also appointed by Schiavo and who has publicly labeled himself “Dr. Death”, spent less than 45 minutes examining and interacting with Terri.

### **MYTH: Terri's condition was caused by a heart attack.**

**FACT:** Terri was NEVER diagnosed as a heart attack victim when she was admitted to the Northside Humana emergency room in February 1990. To this day, her family does not know the true cause of her collapse. Doctors immediately excluded heart attack as her blood enzymes were not elevated—typical in all heart attack victims. Terri's toxicology screen also eliminated any suspicion of drugs.

At the time of Terri's admittance, blood tests revealed a depletion of electrolytes and her attending physician HYPOTHESIZED that low blood potassium MAY have caused her collapse. It was with this information that Michael Schiavo entered into a lawsuit against Terri's General Practitioner and Gynecologist, claiming negligence on their part.

In preparation for Terri's October 2002 trial, her ER records were reviewed and it was plainly noted in the “Admitting Summary” that Terri had a “rigid neck” when she was admitted to the hospital. These injuries were never disclosed to Terri's family, nor—to their knowledge—were they ever investigated. The doctor reviewing these records testified that the only other patient he treated with similar injuries was the victim of an attempted strangulation.

The prospect that foul play may have led to Terri's collapse and ensuing heart stoppage was enhanced when a bone scan was recently found. This scan, taken 53 weeks after



Terri Disabled  
Persistent vegetative state?

Terri's collapse revealed that Terri had fractured ribs, damage to her pelvic area, L1 vertebrae, spine, both knees and both ankles. It also revealed that Terri had suffered a broken femur and a broken back. Three doctors concluded that Terri had endured trauma of some sort. The radiologist responsible for the scan plainly stated: "*This patient has a history of trauma*".

**MYTH: Terri said she wanted to die if her life could only be sustained artificially.**

**FACT:** Terri never executed a will or a living will. Terri had NO WRITTEN DIRECTIVE nor is there any written record expressing Terri's wishes regarding medical care should she ever become incapacitated. There is NO DOCUMENT in existence indicating Terri's wishes, much less any wish to die or be refused therapy should she become disabled.

During the 1992 malpractice suit, Schiavo testified: "*I believe in the vows I took with my wife, through sickness, in health, for richer or poor. I married my wife because I love her and I want to spend the rest of my life with her. I'm going to do that.*" He also told the jury that he intended to bring Terri home and that, if he had the equipment and resources, he would do so immediately

Terri's alleged "wishes" only surfaced in 1998, after Schiavo petitioned the courts to remove Terri's feeding tube. However, during the 1992 malpractice lawsuit, Schiavo, in pursuit of a 20 million dollar award, pleaded with the courts for money he said he needed for Terri's extended long term care. He presented this case based on Terri's estimated life expectancy of 50 years or more. However, seven months later, after receiving this money, Schiavo instructed nurses caring for Terri not to give her antibiotics for a urinary tract infection. This untreated infection could have brought about Terri's death and this fact was known to Schiavo.

Terri's "wishes" came under scrutiny when the court appointed Guardian Ad Litem filed a court ordered report, recommending the court deny Schiavo's petition to withdraw Terri's feeding tube. The report cited Schiavo's "death wish" story lacked credibility, noting that he was the only witness. Weeks prior to Terri's January 2000 feeding removal trial, Schiavo introduced 2 new witnesses to corroborate Terri's verbal "death wish". The new witnesses were Schiavo's brother and sister-in-law. After years of silence, they suddenly recalled Terri making statements concerning her end of life wishes. Terri's alleged "wishes" were never, however, discussed with anyone in her family nor with her friends, and the statements made by Schiavo's witnesses were simply hearsay evidence.

**Florida Law dictates that an "end of life directive" is a requirement in order to legally remove a person's nutrition and hydration, but there is none in Terri's case.**

**MYTH: People like Terri are a burden on the system.**

**FACT:** Terri's brother and sister have consistently volunteered to work as her guardians. Terri's mother and father have volunteered to be responsible for her care and therapy - which Terri has a right to. Terri also has a medical fund and would NOT be cared for by tax-payers' money. Though the Schindlers have lovingly volunteered to provide Terri rehabilitation and affectionate care, Schiavo refuses to relinquish Terri's guardianship to them and continues to pursue his court battle to end her life by way of starvation.

**MYTH: Terri is in a nursing home. She must be receiving the best of care.**

**FACT:** In April of 2000, Terri was improperly admitted to a Hospice facility. Hospice is not a nursing home, nor is it licensed to care for the chronically ill. The mission of Hospice is to provide palliative care to the terminally ill and Terri has no terminal illness or condition. Upon admittance, the attending physician must certify that the patient is likely to die within six months, yet there is no such prognosis affecting Terri's life expectancy. Terri was moved to Hospice from a full care Nursing Facility secretly and outside of normal facility hours. Although an objection was filed on Terri's behalf upon discovery of this, Judge Greer approved the move after the fact.

The Director of Nurses/Administrator at Hospice stated she would not medicate Terri, even if the outcome of refusing medication would bring about her death - because of orders by Schiavo. When asked if she would advise the family of a life threatening situation on Terri's part, she stated only if Michael Schiavo allowed her. Further, she stated the family would not be advised of any problem Terri may have, regardless of severity, unless approved by Schiavo.

**QUESTION: Why doesn't her family do something?**

**ANSWER:** The courts will not allow it. Outside of the court room, there is little Terri's family can do to help her. Terri's parents have made dozens of petitions on the court to allow them more ability to care for their daughter. The vast majority were flatly denied. Schiavo has terminated open visitation to Terri's family. He has also ordered that Terri's medical records and information be kept from her family. He deals with Terri's medical providers in complete secrecy.



Music and Animal Lover

## Things to Know:

- In the State of Florida, a feeding tube is considered Life Support, though many patients who undergo routine surgery are assisted by a feeding tube.
- Throughout all walks of life, there are people who receive their nutrition by way of a feeding tube. They lead active lives and contribute to society.
- Terri's siblings faced possible arrest and lost visitation rights the first time Terri's feeding tube was removed, for asking nurses to try feeding her baby food - which family doctors believed she could safely consume.
- Terri does not use a Respirator nor does she need any machine or device to sustain her life. Her only dependency is a feeding tube.

Terri Schindler-Schiavo Foundation

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St Petersburg Beach, FL 33707  
www.terrisfight.org

### MYTH: This is just a family battle over money.

**FACT:** In 1992, Terri was awarded nearly one million dollars by a malpractice jury and an out-of-court malpractice settlement which was designated for future medical expenses. Of these funds, less than \$140,000 remains today. The financial records revealing how Terri's medical fund money is managed are SEALED from inspection. Court records, however, show that Judge Greer has approved the spending down of Terri's medical fund on Schiavo's attorney's fees - though it was expressly awarded to Terri for her medical care. Schiavo's primary attorney, George Felos, has received upwards of \$400,000 dollars since Schiavo hired him. This same attorney, at the expense of Terri's medical fund, publicly likened Terri to a "houseplant" and has used Terri's case on national television to promote his newly published book.

### MYTH: Michael Schiavo volunteered to donate the balance of the inheritance to charity.

**FACT:** In October, 1998, Schiavo's attorney proposed that, if Terri's parents would agree to her death by starvation, Schiavo would donate his inheritance to charity. The proposal came after a court-appointed Guardian Ad Litem cited Schiavo's conflict of interest since he stood to inherit the balance of Terri's medical fund upon her death. This one and only offer stated "if the proposal is not fully accepted within 10 days, it shall automatically be withdrawn". Naturally, Terri's parents immediately rejected the offer. Yet, for 4 years, Schiavo has repeatedly implied to the media that he was willing to donate Terri's inheritance to charity.

### MYTH: Terri's husband is only trying to do the right thing for her.

**FACT:** Prior to the outcome of Terri's 1992 malpractice lawsuit, Michael Schiavo placed her in a rehabilitation center and testified that he "wanted to take care of his wife". After Terri was awarded her settlement, and Schiavo was awarded \$630,000, he stopped all progressive treatment and admitted Terri to a nursing home facility - which only provided routine care and maintenance. This was in spite of a promising neurological prognosis indicating that Terri was making progress on the way to recovery.

Schiavo is living with and has fathered a child with a woman he titles his "fiancée". By Florida Statute 798, this is open adultery and considered lewd and lascivious cohabitation under Florida Law. Under such laws, Schiavo is disqualified as Terri's legal guardian. Yet, the court refuses to remove him as such. He refuses to seek divorce (which would be a natural process if he truly intended to move on with his life) and, instead, persists in his demands that Terri be put to death.

### MYTH: Terri's family just doesn't want to let her go. They're keeping her alive unnecessarily.

**FACT:** A renowned neurosurgeon, Dr. William Hammesfahr, has offered to treat Terri and to give her the rehabilitation she needs to recover. Dr. Hammesfahr was nominated for the Nobel Prize in Medicine in 1999 and has recently been acknowledged by the Florida Board of Medicine as "The first and only doctor in medical history to reverse the effects of stroke". Dr. Hammesfahr thoroughly examined Terri and testified that Terri was not in a Persistent Vegetative State. Terri's parents only want their daughter to have access to this treatment as well as any other appropriate therapy. As a patient, Terri has been sequestered from treatment and recovery. Terri's family only want to change this and to have Terri's human rights restored.

### MYTH: It's a horrible situation, but there's nothing I can do about it.

**FACT:** Here is the biggest myth of all. There is plenty everyone can do to ensure that an innocent young woman is not exterminated by the Florida Courts. We ask that members of the press bring focus back to this story and report the TRUTH. We ask that members of government intervene and bring relief to a family that wants nothing more than to care for their own flesh and blood. We ask that activist groups take serious effort to pressure those who can determine the final outcome. And we ask that anyone, who knows the love and joy only a child or sibling can bring, to pass the word of Terri's fight for life along. Terri's time is running out. She needs you now.

# Timelines and Court Decisions



Young and Playful Terri

## Things to Know:

- **Terri's family has NOT been allowed any participation in the decision-making process for Terri's care.**
- **Terri's parents and her brother and sister have been forbidden open visitation with Terri and can only visit when Terri's husband approves it.**
- **Terri has been transferred to a Hospice facility, which is a facility that cares for terminally ill patients, though she is NOT terminally ill.**

## Terri Schindler-Schiavo Foundation

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## Very real information about this case

While it's true that this case has carried on in the courts for some time, it can be easily said that very real and clear miscarriages of justice have taken place in the case of Terri Schindler-Schiavo.

Dozens of petitions have been filed on Terri's behalf, by her parents, with the intention of protecting her rights and ensuring her fair and just treatment. Of those, Judge George Greer has denied more than 95%. Among the denied petitions that were filed on Terri's behalf:

- **Permission for Independent Doctors to evaluate Terri's neurological status**
- **Authorization granting swallowing examinations, supported by 3 doctor's affidavits stating Terri was capable of swallowing**
- **Petition for Terri to have an Independent Medical Examination**
- **Motion for emergency temporary injunction to have Terri's feeding resumed, based on evidence that Schiavo offered perjured testimony of Terri's wishes.**

Conversely, Judge Greer has approved dozens of troubling petitions filed on behalf of Michael Schiavo in his efforts to end Terri's life by way of starvation and dehydration. Among these approvals:

- **To strike and ignore the affidavits of three doctors and other evidence that Schiavo misrepresented Terri's condition at her trial**
- **A secretly filed fee petition to award George Felos \$225 per hour and thousands of dollars in "costs" in pursuit of her death (all withdrawn from Terri's Medical Rehabilitation Fund)**
- **Approve Medicaid Assistance applications with a "Special Needs Provision" to preserve and allow Terri's pledged Medical Rehabilitation Fund assets to be available to Schiavo's attorney, George Felos for payment of his and other legal fees**
- **Restraining parents and siblings from taking any photographs, videotapes or other pictorial representations of Terri.**

Perhaps just as troubling as the decisions handed down by Judge Greer is the public behavior of Michael Schiavo's attorney, George Felos. Mr. Felos is on record in the courts, questioning the sanity of Terri's family for protesting her death. He has publicly likened Terri to a "plant that grows towards the sunlight". And, he has publicly labeled those opposed to Terri's death "right-wing fanatics". Mr. Felos has repeatedly used catch-phrases such as "right to die" and "dying with dignity" in order to reinforce incorrect public perception that Terri is without hope of recovery.

Mr. Felos has recently published a book titled "Litigation as Spiritual Practice". In it, chapters such as "Bargaining for the Contingency Fee", "Battling on all Fronts" and "Bringing to Court a Show-Worthy Production" can be found in its contents.



Terri and her Parents on her Wedding Day

# What can be done

## Terri's story has been reported by:

Glenn Beck: National Radio - People Magazine - Dateline NBC - Court TV with Nancy Grace  
CBS Early Morning Show - CNN with Jeff Greenfield - CNN with Connie Chung  
CNN with Greta Van Susteren - Michael Reagan: National Radio - The Roy Green Program

## Things to Know:

- **Terri's husband gave specific instructions to her nursing facility NOT to treat her for potentially fatal infections.**
- **Terri has not had her teeth cleaned since 1995.**
- **Terri has not had a PAP smear since 1996.**
- **Terri has never been given a mammo-gram.**
- **Terri left NO will, NO living will and NO written directives about any end of life issues or wishes.**

## Our Goals:

- **Support** - from those who believe that her life is sacred. Anyone touched by this story should spread the word and encourage their friends and family to find out more about Terri's situation by logging on to [www.terrisfight.org](http://www.terrisfight.org);
- **People** - to contact the media, expressing their personal outrage with the events of this case and urging them to bring focus and accurate reporting to this case. It is essential to Terri's survival that details of her situation and condition be reported accurately;
- **Financial** - contributions are needed to offset the extensive legal costs Terri's case requires.
- **Pressure** - on Government Officials on the three majors issues:
  1. Terri's present situation and immediate intervention so that she can receive just and fair treatment in our Florida Courts,
  2. To remove Terri's guardianship from a husband who no longer cares for her and assign a member of Terri's immediate family as her legal guardian.
  3. Reform of our State's and our Nation's guardian laws and end of life statutes- which can exclude a child's parents from life and death decisions.

## Who you can contact:

### Attorney Gen. Charlie Crist

Office of Attorney General  
State of Florida - The Capitol  
Tallahassee, FL 32399-1050  
850-487-1963  
850-487-2564 Fax  
[ag@oag.state.fl.us](mailto:ag@oag.state.fl.us)

### Governor Jeb Bush

Florida Capitol Building, PL-05  
Tallahassee, FL 32399-0001  
850-488-4441  
850-922-4292 Fax  
[fl\\_governor@eog.state.fl.us](mailto:fl_governor@eog.state.fl.us)

### Attorney General John Ashcroft

US Dept. of Justice  
950 Pennsylvania Avenue NW  
Washington, DC 20530-0001  
202-353-1555  
[askDOK@usdoj.gov](mailto:askDOK@usdoj.gov)

### Hon David A. Demers

(Oversees all judges in the 6th district).  
545 1st Avenue North - Room 400  
St. Petersburg, FL 33701  
727-581-7882  
727-582-7210 Fax

### The Tampa Tribune

Letters to the Editor  
PO Box 191  
Tampa, FL 33601-4405  
[tribletters@tampatrib.com](mailto:tribletters@tampatrib.com)

### The St. Pete Times

Letters to the Editor  
PO Box 1121  
St Petersburg, FL 33731  
[letters@sptimes.com](mailto:letters@sptimes.com)

### Siblings Together

Terri at left, brother Bob and sister Suzanne share a family Christmas.



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