



Media Reality ✓ Check

# QUICK TAKE

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## LIBERAL RADIO HOST MOCKS IRAQI VOTERS WITH NAZI SALUTE

# ***A FAKED HUG? U.S. COERCED IRAQI VOTERS? MSNBC'S CHRIS MATTHEWS PUSHES CRACKPOT CONSPIRACIES***

Unlike Dan Rather, MSNBC's Chris Matthews at least doesn't deny that he brings his liberal opinions with him when he anchors the third-place cable news networks live coverage of political events. But in recent days he's been using his perch to suggest wacky conspiracy theories that might make even Howard Dean blush.

During last night's State of the Union coverage, Matthews suggested that the emotional highlight of the evening — the embrace of a mother whose Marine son was killed in Fallujah and an Iraqi human rights activist who braved insurgent threats to vote on Sunday — was cynically engineered by President Bush "to push his numbers on Social Security reform, just to get his general appeal up a bit, a couple of points." Only left-wing MSNBC host Ron Reagan agreed with Matthews premise. *Newsweek's* Jon Meacham called it "absurd."

Matthews persisted. "The only question is whether that Iraqi woman was prompted to go up and hug Janet Norwood [the mother of the Marine] by some staffer," he told his mostly skeptical panel. If a rebuttal is even necessary, Mrs. Norwood appeared on ABC's *Good Morning America* on Thursday, and explained that she and her husband "had no idea who was going to be there. We met just as we went in the door."

Matthews was also out in far left field a few hours after eight million Iraqis voted in Sunday's free elections, wondering if our troops had bullied them into making the trip to the polls: "Was there no pushing by American soldiers or coalition forces to make people vote or discourage them from not voting? Was it a clean turnout, in other words?" he asked NBC's Brian Williams. Williams rejected Matthews' theory.

A couple of hours after Matthews signed off last night, the left-wing Air America radio host Janeane Garofalo showed up as a guest on MSNBC. She sneered that it was "disgusting" for House members to salute the bravery of Iraqi voters by holding up similarly ink-stained fingers, and mockingly held up her hand in a Nazi salute. Next to her, Chris Matthews looks downright mainstream.