

Peace in Our Times



A Veterans For Peace publication exposing the root causes and enormous costs of war

Peace at Home, Peace Abroad

What does it mean for Veterans For Peace?

How do struggles against racism, repression, poverty, and environmental destruction fit in with Veterans For Peace's mission to end war? Ending war must include ending all its manifestations, both at home and abroad, in an all-encompassing demand for peace. We call this Peace at Home, Peace Abroad, a lens through which to organize and talk about our work. Joining the struggle for peace at home and showing our solidarity with communities here are effective ways to organize and build power to move our mission forward.

Since the August 9 shooting of Michael Brown by police officer Darren Wilson, Veterans For Peace has had a consistent presence in Ferguson, Mo. Our executive director, Michael McPhearson, is a co-chair of the Hands Up United organizing coalition, and VFP members have traveled to Ferguson to stand in solidarity with non-violent protesters demanding justice and an end to long-standing and systemic oppression and police violence.

The violence of war has been epidemic since Columbus landed in this hemisphere. We acknowledge the 500-year war on indigenous peoples, the ongoing war and racism against black and brown communities beginning with the extreme violence of slavery, and the racist immigration policy. VFP sees the connection between the violence and police militarization here in the United States and U.S. wars abroad.

Peace at Home, Peace Abroad speaks to people about domestic issues that are nearly always at the top of their concerns and exposes the connection between domestic and foreign policy, how war and militarism negatively affect both. This organizing strategy is directly connected with the larger mission of ending war.

Peace at Home, Peace Abroad also addresses veterans' issues. Suicides, homelessness, unemployment, mass in-

'What would it say about VFP not to say anything about police in camouflage military uniforms confronting peaceful protesters and using force?'

carceration, militarized police in our communities and cities, PTSD, and the inadequate VA healthcare system are directly linked aspects of war and militarism. Veterans, who have been personally affected by these issues, have a unique perspective.

Addressing issues that touch people's lives here at
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Veterans at national march for justice in Ferguson, Mo., October 11.

GI Resistance to the Vietnam War

The collapse of the armed forces

By Kevin Keating

An American soldier in a hospital explained how he was wounded: He said, "I was told that the way to tell a hostile Vietnamese from a friendly Vietnamese was to shout 'To hell with Ho Chi Minh!' If he shoots, he's unfriendly. So I saw this dude and yelled 'To hell with Ho Chi Minh!' and he yelled back, 'To hell

with President Johnson!' We were shaking hands when a truck hit us." [From *1,001 Ways to Beat the Draft*, by Tuli Kupferburg]

A friend who was in the U.S. military during the 1990-91 Persian Gulf War says that before President George H.W. Bush visited the troops in Saudi Arabia, enlisted men and women who would be in Bush's immediate vicinity had their rifle and

pistol ammunition taken away from them. This is a standard practice when a President meet the troops, but along with obvious safety concerns it was clear to those on the scene that Bush and his corporate handlers were at least somewhat afraid of the enlisted people who Bush would soon be killing in his unsuccessful re-election campaign.

The suppressed history of the last big U.S. war prior to "Operation Desert Storm" shows that the commander-in-chief had good reason to fear his troops. Our rulers want us to forget what happened during the Vietnam War—especially what happened inside the U.S. armed forces, and the importance of resistance to the war by enlisted men and women.

Until 1968 the desertion rate for U.S. troops in Vietnam was lower than in previous wars, but by 1969 the desertion rate had increased four-

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Letters

Peace at Home, Peace Abroad Comes from VFP Grassroots

Dear Friends,

It would be a mistake to think that the evolving Peace at Home, Peace Abroad strategy of Veterans For Peace has somehow been concocted in secret by the VFP Board of Directors and imposed from above. Many VFP members know better.

The VFP board, in fact, has been inspired by the actions of VFP members and chapters who have been showing up at important events in their own communities to call for racial justice; an end to police killings of Black, Latino, and Native American youth; an end to the continuing genocidal theft of land from First Nations people; and an end to the assault on Mother Earth.

It is no coincidence that the theme of last summer's VFP Convention was "Peace or Perish: Abolish War on Planet and Poor."

The theme of Peace at Home, Peace Abroad was addressed to the convention by our Executive Director Michael McPhearson, our President Patrick McCann, and board members Margaret Stephens and Mike Prysner. Stephens and McPhearson also participated in a special plenary session addressing the War at Home, well attended and very well received.

The remarkable enthusiasm of VFP members and allies who attended the Asheville convention was very much related to these discussions of making ties to struggles in our own communities, and showing how they relate to U.S. militarism abroad.

The discussion about making links to local struggles has also been carried out in chapter meetings and in regional VFP conferences, where it has been warmly embraced.

It is true, however, that not all VFP members have had the benefit of engaging in these discussions. For some members, an organization-wide discussion of Peace at Home, Peace Abroad is just beginning. The more input we receive, the more ideas we have for local struggles in which we can engage, from opposing gun violence to opposing attacks on GLBT folks.

The linchpin is opposition to all forms of violence.

VFP chapters have a significant amount of autonomy, carefully guarded. The national board and staff do not attempt to dictate what activities people should pursue at the local level. This has been a strength of the organization. It means that VFP chapters are usually ahead of national in their thinking and practice.

The VFP Board of Directors was elected by the members to represent them at the national level, and most board members are actively involved in local chapters themselves. We are not a top-down organization. Peace at Home, Peace Abroad has come from the grassroots, where the rubber meets the road.

As many members know, it only makes sense to show solidarity with local community struggles for peace and justice. It would be silly to take off our VFP caps when we do so. Instead, we can demonstrate that VFP cares about our communities and that we also want our communities to be well informed and actively engaged in struggles for world peace.

Peace at Home, Peace Abroad!

Gerry Condon
VFP National Board

Maine Chapter: 'Total Support for PAHPA'

Dear members of the VFP national Board of Directors:

At our December 18 monthly meeting of Chapter 001 here in Maine we discussed the national campaign on Peace at Home, Peace Abroad (PAHPA). We had previously had a similar discussion at our meeting in November as well.

At the December 18 meeting it was decided, by unanimous vote of the 11 members present, that we should send this letter to the national board expressing our total support for the PAHPA program. We also wish to express our total confidence, and great pride, in our Executive Director Michael McPhearson and deeply appreciate his work to make links between our organization and people in the greater St. Louis area now struggling against police militarization and brutality.

Our members have seen Michael on national TV interviews and have been impressed with his public representation of VFP. One of our members recently went to St. Louis for six days and reported back to us how impressed he was seeing Michael in action immediately following the recent grand jury refusal to indict the cop who killed Michael Brown.

Bottom line for us is that we see the links between U.S. endless wars abroad and the growing militarization of police across the country. Here in Maine, local police departments are getting loads of military weaponry donated to them from the Pentagon. It is clear to our chapter that the people of the United States are now the enemy. How can VFP not see these connections and work with people in local communities that are resisting this madness?



Photo by Peter Woodruff

Members of the Maine VFP chapter.

We strongly urge the national board to stand by the PAHPA program and to stand strongly behind Michael as he tries to implement this program.

We'd like to see a statement of recommitment from the national board on this program following your next meeting.

For justice and peace,

Richard Clement
President

Maine Veterans For Peace, Chapter 001

A Note from the Editors

Hard Act to Follow

For six years, Kim Carlyle and a small team of volunteers he assembled consistently put out superb editions of *War Crimes Times*, each one seemingly better than the last. He built a foundation, word by word, page by page.

Some of us remember when the concept of a Veterans For Peace newspaper started. After a successful 24-hour action exposing the war crimes of the Bush/Cheney government at the National Archives, a small number of the Veterans For Peace Direct Action Team were planning the next action when someone said, "We need our own newspaper for this next action." Everyone present agreed, but how, and what would we call it? None of us had ever put a newspaper together or had a clue how to do it. Kim was silent for a while and then he said, "I think I could lay it out and we could call it ... *War Crimes Times*."



That was the beginning. The first issue came out in January 2009 with the headline, "WAR CRIMINALS STILL AT LARGE!" Some of us wrote for the paper, gathered articles, photos, political cartoons, proofread, and then we distributed that first issue in Washington at the Newseum, Union Station and other places. We all worked on it, but Kim was the cornerstone. He held the paper together, nurtured it and made it grow.

So it is with deep respect and gratitude to Kim and Susan Carlyle, Mark Runge, Lyle Peterson, Robert Yoder and the distribution team from Asheville VFP Chapter 099 for six solid years of dedicated service as we step up to continue publishing a VFP newspaper.

It's a hard act to follow but we are excited by this first issue, which we are calling *Peace In Our Times*. In these pages we look at the Vietnam War, the continuing war in Afghanistan, torture, police repression, and more. There is a moving piece by Assata Shakur about being an escaped modern-day slave and poetry by Doug Rawlings, Mike Hastie, and Jay Wenk.

To make this new publication a success, we need your input. Letters to the editor are traditionally the most read part of any newspaper, other than headlines. Please send your letters, articles, commentary, poems, photos and graphics to peaceinourtimes@gmail.com.

We have a job to do, all of us. End war, save the planet and create a new world. We're all in this together.

Peace in Our Times

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Of Sheep, Wolves, and Sheepdogs

American Sniper: rife with lies

By Brock McIntosh

As a veteran, I see *American Sniper* as dangerous, but not for the reasons you'd think.

After watching the movie, I called a friend named Garrett Reppenhagen, who was an American sniper in Iraq. He deployed with a cavalry scout unit from 2004 to 2005 and was stationed near FOB Warhorse. I asked him if he thought this movie really mattered. "Every portrayal of a historical event should be historically accurate," he explained. "A movie like this is a cultural symbol that influences the way people remember history and feel about war."

Then the officer screamed, 'Fire!'
Confused, no one in the convoy pulled their
triggers. 'I said fire, goddamn it!'
Someone fired, and all hell broke loose.

Garrett and I met through our antiwar and veteran support work, which he's been involved with for almost a decade. He served in Iraq. I served in Afghanistan. But both of us know how powerful mass media and mass culture are. They shaped how we thought of the wars when we joined, so we felt it was important to tell our stories when we came home and spoke out.

I commend Chris Kyle for telling his story in his book *American Sniper*. The scariest thing I did while in the military was come home and tell my story to the public—the good, the bad, and the ugly. I feel that veterans owe it to society to tell their stories, and civilians owe it to veterans to actively listen. Dr. Ed Tick, a psychotherapist who has specialized in veteran care for four decades, explains, "In all traditional and classical societies, returned warriors served many important psychosocial functions. They were keepers of dark wisdom for their cultures, witnesses to war's horrors from personal experience who protected and discouraged, rather than encouraged, its outbreak again."

Chris Kyle didn't view Iraq like me and Garrett, but neither of us have attacked him for it. He's not the problem. We don't care about the lies that Chris Kyle may or may not have told. They don't matter. We care about the lies that Chris Kyle

believed. The lie that Iraq was culpable for September 11. The lie that there were weapons of mass destruction in Iraq. The lie that people do evil things because they are evil.

The film *American Sniper* is also rife with lies. This was not Chris Kyle's story. And Bradley Cooper was not Chris Kyle. It was Jason Hall's story, a one-time actor in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* and screenwriter for *American Sniper*, who called his film a "character study." Don't believe him. His movie is as fictional as *Buffy Summers*.

In the movie's first scene, Cooper faces a moral dilemma that never happened in real life. Cooper suspects a boy is pre-

paring to send an improvised explosive device, or IED, toward a convoy of approaching Marines on the streets of Fallujah. Either he kills a child or the child kills Marines. A soldier next to Cooper warns, "They'll send your ass to Leavenworth if you're wrong." In writing this line, Hall implies that killing civilians is a war crime and U.S. military members are sent to prison for it. If U.S. soldiers, including Kyle, don't seem to be getting punished for killing civilians, then they must not be killing civilians.

Garrett and I agreed that even if that boy was a civilian, nothing would have hap-

It'd be like telling people in San Antonio that
they have to walk to El Paso; then they come
back home and their city is bombed and
contaminated with depleted uranium.'

pened to Cooper for shooting him. Both of us were trained to take detailed notes with the understanding that if something went wrong, it would be corrected in the report. Americans were responsible for thousands of Iraqi deaths and almost none were held accountable.

During one incident in Iraq, Garrett was involved in a firefight that left six to



Bradley Cooper as Chris Kyle doing his job in Iraq

seven civilians dead. He received his orders from an intelligence officer who got his intelligence wrong. He led Garrett and a small convoy to an Iraqi deputy governor's compound, which was supposedly under attack. As the convoy approached, the soldiers spotted a cluster of trucks with armed Iraqis. The armed Iraqis saw the American convoy inching closer, but they didn't fire. It seemed obvious to Garrett that these Iraqis were not who the intelligence officer was looking for. Then the officer screamed, "Fire!" Confused, no one in the convoy pulled their triggers. "I said fire, goddamn it!" Someone fired, and all hell broke loose. In the ensuing chaos, one of the Iraqi trucks struck a civilian seeking cover on the sidewalk. As it turned out, those armed Iraqis were the deputy governor's own security detail. The officer didn't go to Leavenworth.

In Hall and Cooper's Fallujah, it's as if the Americans just found a city that was already laid to waste. The movie leaves out America's bombardment of Fallujah. An officer explains that the city has been evacuated, so any military-aged male remaining must be an insurgent. Conveniently, every Iraqi that Cooper kills happens to be carrying a rifle or burying an IED, even though the real Chris Kyle wrote that he was told to shoot any military-aged male. Obviously, every non-insurgent did not evacuate Fallujah.

city is bombed and contaminated with depleted uranium."

So what brought Bradley Cooper's character to Iraq? Early in the film, Hall sets the stage for the moral theme of the movie. When Cooper was a child he sat at a kitchen table with his father, who explained that there are only three types of people in the world: sheep who believe "evil doesn't exist," wolves who prey on the sheep, and sheepdogs who are "blessed with aggression" and protect the sheep. In this world, when Cooper watches the 1998 U.S. embassy bombings on television, there is only one explanation: just evil wolves being evil. So he joins the military. When Cooper watches September 11 on television, there is one explanation: just evil wolves being evil. So he goes to war with them.

Amazingly, Hall and Cooper's war seems to have absolutely nothing to do with weapons of mass destruction. It's about al-Qaida, which in real life followed the United States into Iraq after we invaded. Cooper's war also seems to have nothing to do with helping Iraqis, only killing them. Except for the military's interpreters, every Iraqi in the movie—including the women and children—is either an evil, butchering insurgent or a collaborator. The sense is that there isn't a single innocent Iraqi in the war. They're all "savages."

Finally, it seems that a voice of criticism will be heard through the character of Marc Lee. When Lee voices his skepticism, Cooper asks, "Do you want them to attack San Diego or New York?" Cooper somehow wins with that absurd question. Later in the film, Navy SEAL Ryan Job is shot in the face. Distraught, Cooper decides he should lead a group of SEALs back out to avenge Job's death, which is portrayed as the heroic thing to do. While Lee and Cooper are clearing a building, an Iraqi sniper shoots Lee in the head. The audience is then at Lee's funeral, where his mother is reading the last letter that Lee sent home expressing criticism of the war. On the road home, Cooper's wife asks him what he thought about the

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By Assata Shakur

My name is Assata Shakur, and I am a 20th-century escaped slave. Because of government persecution, I was left with no other choice than to flee from the political repression, racism, and violence that dominate the U.S. government's policy toward people of color. I am an ex-political prisoner, and I have been living in exile in Cuba since 1984.

I have been a political activist most of my life, and although the U.S. government has done everything in its power to criminalize me, I am not a criminal, nor have I ever been one. In the 1960s, I participated in various struggles: the black liberation movement, the student rights movement, and the movement to end the war in Vietnam. I joined the Black Panther Party. By 1969, the Black Panther Party had become the number one organization targeted by the FBI's COINTELPRO program.

In 1978, my case was one of many brought before the United Nations in a petition filed by the National Conference of Black Lawyers, the National Alliance Against Racist and Political Repression, and the United Church of Christ Commission for Racial Justice, exposing the existence of political prisoners in the United States, their political persecution, and the cruel and inhuman treatment they receive in U.S. prisons. According to the report:

"The FBI and the New York Police Department in particular, charged and accused Assata Shakur of participating in attacks on law enforcement personnel and widely circulated such charges and accusations among police agencies and units. The FBI and the NYPD fur-

Although the U.S. government has done everything in its power to criminalize me, I am not a criminal, nor have I ever been one. ... I was falsely accused in six different 'criminal cases' and in all six, I was acquitted or the charges were dismissed.

ther charged her as being a leader of the Black Liberation Army which the government and its respective agencies described as an organization engaged in the shooting of police officers.

"This description of the Black Liberation Army and the accusation of Assata Shakur's relationship to it was widely circulated by government agents among police agencies and units. As a result of these activities by the government, Ms. Shakur became a hunted person; posters in police precincts and banks described her as being involved in serious criminal activities; she was highlighted on the FBI's most wanted list; and to police at all levels she became a 'shoot-to-kill' target."

I was falsely accused in six different "criminal cases" and in all six of these cases I was eventually acquitted or the charges were dismissed. The fact that I was acquitted or that the charges were dismissed did not mean that I received justice in the courts. That was certainly not the case. It only meant that the "evidence" presented against me was so flimsy and false that my innocence became evident. This political persecution was part and parcel of the government's policy of eliminating political opponents by charging them with crimes and arresting them

I AM A 20TH-CENTURY ESCAPED SLAVE



with no regard to the factual basis of such charges.

On May 2, 1973, I and Zayd Malik Shakur and Sundiata Acoli were stopped on the New Jersey Turnpike, supposedly for a "faulty taillight." Sundiata Acoli got out of the car to determine why we were stopped. Zayd and I remained in the car. State trooper Harper then came to the car, opened the door and began to question us. Because we were black, and riding in a car with Vermont license plates, he claimed he became "suspicious." He then drew his gun, pointed it at us, and told us to put our hands up in the air, in front of us, where he could see them. I complied and in a split second, there was a sound that came from outside the car, there was a sudden movement, and I was shot once with my arms held up in the air, and then once again from the back.

Zayd Malik Shakur was later killed, trooper Werner Foerster was killed, and even though trooper Harper admitted that he shot and killed Zayd Malik Shakur, under the New Jersey felony murder law, I was charged with killing both Zayd Malik Shakur, who was my closest friend and comrade, and charged in the death of trooper Foerster. Never in my life have I felt such grief. Zayd had vowed to protect me and to help me to get to a safe place, and it was clear that he had lost his life trying to protect both me and Sundiata. Although Sundiata Acoli was also unarmed and the gun that killed trooper Foerster was found under Zayd's leg, Sundiata Acoli, who was captured later, was also charged with both deaths. Neither Sundiata Acoli nor I ever received a fair trial. We were both convicted in the news media way before our trials. No news media was ever permitted to interview us, although the New Jersey police and the FBI fed stories to the press on a daily basis. In 1977, I was convicted by an all-white jury and sentenced to life plus 33 years in prison.

In 1979, fearing that I would be murdered in prison, and knowing that I would never receive any justice, I was liberated from prison, aided by committed comrades.

The Senate's 1976 Church Commission report on intelligence operations inside the USA, revealed that "the FBI has attempted covertly to influence the public's perception of persons and organizations by disseminating derogatory information to the press, either anonymously or through 'friendly' news contacts." This same policy is evidently still very much in effect today.

In 1997, the New Jersey State Police wrote a letter to Pope John Paul II asking him to intervene on their behalf and to aid in having me extradited back to New Jersey prisons. The New Jersey State Police refused to make

their letter public. Knowing that they had probably totally distorted the facts, and attempted to get the Pope to do the devil's work in the name of religion, I decided to write the Pope to inform him about the reality of "justice" for black people in the State of New Jersey and in the United States.

In January of 1998, during the Pope's visit to Cuba, I agreed to do an interview with NBC journalist Ralph Penza around my letter to the Pope, about my experiences in the New Jersey court system, and about the changes I saw in the United States and its treatment of Black people in the last 25 years. I agreed to do this interview because I saw this secret letter to the Pope as a vicious, vulgar, publicity maneuver on the part of the New Jersey State Police, and as a cynical attempt to manipulate Pope John Paul II. I have lived in Cuba for many years and was completely out of touch with the sensationalist, dishonest nature of the establishment media today. It is worse today than it was 30 years ago.

After years of being victimized by the "establishment" media, it was naive of me to hope that I might finally get the opportunity to tell "my side of the story." Instead of an interview with me, what took place was a "staged media event" in three parts, full of distortions, inaccuracies, and outright lies. NBC purposely misrepresented the facts. Not only did NBC spend thousands of dollars promoting this "exclusive interview series" on NBC, they also spent a great deal of money advertising it on black radio stations and in local newspapers.

Like most poor and oppressed people in the United States, I do not have a voice. Black people, poor people in the U.S. have no real freedom of speech, no real free-

Like most poor and oppressed people in the United States, I do not have a voice. Black people, poor people in the United States have no real freedom of speech, no real freedom of expression, and very little freedom of the press.

dom of expression, and very little freedom of the press. The black press and the progressive media have historically played an essential role in the struggle for social justice. We need to continue and to expand that tradition. We need to create media outlets that help to educate our people and our children, and not annihilate their minds. I am only one woman.

I own no TV stations or radio stations or newspapers. But I feel that people need to be educated as to what is going on, and to understand the connection between the news media and the instruments of repression in Amerika. All I have is my voice, my spirit, and the will to tell the truth. But I sincerely ask those of you in the Black and progressive media, those of you who believe in true freedom, to publish this statement and to let people know what is happening. We have no voice, so you must be the voice of the voiceless.

Free all political prisoners.

I send you love and revolutionary greetings from Cuba, one of the largest, most resistant and most courageous palenques (Maroon Camps) that has ever existed on the face of this planet.

Assata Shakur lives in Havana, Cuba.

A Brief History of Policing

Whom do the cops serve?

By Sam Mitrani

In most of the liberal discussions of the recent police killings of unarmed black men, there is an underlying assumption that the police are supposed to protect and serve the population. That is, after all, what they were created to do. If only the normal, decent relations between the police and the community could be re-established, this problem could be resolved. Poor people in general are more likely to be the victims of crime than anyone else, this reasoning goes, and in that way, they are in more need than anyone else of police protection. Maybe there are a few bad apples, but if only the police weren't so racist or didn't carry out policies like stop-and-frisk or weren't so afraid of black people or shot fewer unarmed men they could function as a useful service that we all need.

This liberal way of viewing the problem rests on a misunderstanding of the origins of the police and what they were created to do. The police were not created to protect and serve the population. They were not created to stop crime, at least not as most people understand it. And they were certainly not created to promote justice. They were created to protect the new form of wage-labor capitalism that emerged in the mid to late 19th century from the threat posed by that system's offspring, the working class.

This is a blunt way of stating a nuanced truth, but



Photo by Ellen Davidson

**Million March NYC protest against police killings
December 13.**

sometimes nuance just serves to obfuscate.

Before the 19th century, there were no police forces that we would recognize as such anywhere in the world. In the Northern United States, there was a system of elected constables and sheriffs, much more responsible to the population in a very direct way than the police are today. In the South, the closest thing to a police force was the slave patrols. Then, as Northern cities grew and filled with mostly immigrant wage workers who were physically and socially separated from the ruling class, the wealthy elite who ran the various municipal governments hired hundreds and then thousands of armed men to impose order on the new working-class neighborhoods.

Class conflict roiled in late 19th century American cities like Chicago, which experienced major strikes and riots in 1867, 1877, 1886, and 1894. In each of these upheavals, the police attacked strikers with extreme violence,

even if in 1877 and 1894 the U.S. Army played a bigger role in ultimately repressing the working class. In the aftermath of these movements, the police increasingly presented themselves as a thin blue line protecting civilization, by which they meant bourgeois civilization, from the disorder of the working class. This ideology of order that developed in the late 19th century echoes down to today—except that today, poor, black, and Latino people are the main threat, rather than immigrant workers.

Of course, the ruling class did not get everything it wanted, and had to yield on many points to the immigrant workers it sought to control. This is why, for instance, municipal governments backed away from trying to stop Sunday drinking and why they hired so many immigrant police officers, especially the Irish. But despite these concessions, businessmen organized themselves to make sure the police were increasingly isolated from democratic control and established their own hierarchies, systems of governance, and rules of behavior. The police increasingly set themselves off from the population by donning uniforms; establishing their own rules for hiring, promotion, and firing; working to build a unique esprit des corps, and identifying themselves with order. And despite complaints about corruption and inefficiency, they gained more and more support from the ruling class, to the extent that in Chicago, for instance, businessmen donated money out of their own pockets to buy the police rifles, artillery, Gatling guns, and buildings and to establish a police pension.

There was a never a time when the big city police neutrally enforced “the law,” or came anywhere close to that ideal (for that matter, the law itself has never been neu-

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tral). In the North, they mostly arrested people for the vaguely defined “crimes” of disorderly conduct and vagrancy throughout the 19th century. This meant that the police could arrest anyone they saw as a threat to “order.” In the post-bellum South, they enforced white supremacy and largely arrested black people on trumped-up charges in order to feed them into convict labor systems.

The violence the police carried out and their moral separation from those they patrolled were not the consequences of the brutality of individual officers, but were the consequences of careful policies designed to mold the police into a force that could use violence to deal with the social problems that accompanied the development of a wage-labor economy. For instance, in the short, sharp depression of the mid 1880s, Chicago was filled with prostitutes who worked the streets. Many policemen recognized that these prostitutes were generally impoverished women seeking a way to survive, and initially tolerated their behavior. But the police hierarchy insisted that the patrolmen do their duty whatever their feelings and arrest these women, impose fines, and drive them off the streets and into brothels, where they could be ignored by some members of the elite and controlled by others. Similarly, in 1885, when Chicago



Photo by Scott Olson/Getty

**Unarmed man in Ferguson approached by
heavily armed police.**

began to experience a wave of strikes, some policemen sympathized with strikers. But once the police hierarchy and the mayor decided to break the strikes, policemen who refused to comply were fired. In these and a thousand similar ways, the police were molded into a force that would impose order on working-class and poor people, whatever the individual feelings of the officers involved.

Though some patrolmen tried to be kind and others were openly brutal, police violence in the 1880s was not a case of a few bad apples—and neither is it today.

Much has changed since the creation of the police—most important the influx of black people into the Northern cities, the mid-20th-century black movement, and the creation of the current system of mass incarceration in part as a response to that movement. But these changes did not lead to a fundamental shift in policing. They led to new policies designed to preserve fundamental continuities. The police were created to use violence to reconcile electoral democracy with industrial capitalism. Today, they are just one part of the “criminal justice” system that continues to play the same role. Their basic job is to enforce order among those with the most reason to resent the system—who in our society today are disproportionately poor black people.

A democratic police system is imaginable—one in which police are elected by and accountable to the people they patrol. But that is not what we have. And it's not what the current system of policing was created to be.

If there is one positive lesson from the history of policing's origins, it is that when workers organized, refused to submit or cooperate, and caused problems for the city governments, they could back the police off from the most galling of their activities. Murdering individual police officers, as happened in Chicago on May 3, 1886, and more recently in New York on December 20, 2014, only reinforced those calling for harsh repression—a reaction we are beginning to see already. But resistance on a mass scale could force the police to hesitate. This happened in Chicago during the early 1880s, when the police pulled back from breaking strikes, hired immigrant officers, and tried to re-establish some credibility among the working class after their role in brutally crushing the 1877 upheaval.

The police might be backed off again if the reaction against the killings of Eric Garner, Michael Brown, Tamir Rice, and countless others continues. If they are, it will be a victory for those mobilizing today, and will save lives—though as long as this system that requires police violence to control a big share of its population survives, any change in police policy will be aimed at keeping the poor in line more effectively.

We shouldn't expect the police to be something they're not. As historians, we ought to know that origins matter, and the police were created by the ruling class to control working-class and poor people, not help them. They've continued to play that role ever since.

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Remembering Howard Zinn

By Bill Bigelow

This week—Jan. 27—marks five years since the death of the great historian and activist Howard Zinn. Not a day goes by that I don't wonder what Howard would say about something—the growth of the climate justice movement, #BlackLives-Matter, the new *Selma* film, the killings at the *Charlie Hebdo* offices. No doubt, he would be encouraged by how many educators are engaging students in thinking critically about these and other issues.

Zinn is best known, of course, for his beloved *A People's History of the United States*, arguably the most influential U.S. history textbook in print. “That book will knock you on your ass,” as Matt Damon's character says in the film *Good Will Hunting*. But Zinn did not merely record history, he made it: as a professor at Spelman College in the 1950s and early 1960s, where he was ultimately fired for his outspoken support of students in the civil rights movement, and specifically the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC); as a critic of the U.S. war in Vietnam, and author of the first

rethinking of premises about history and the role of the United States in the world, “things will never change.”

A key premise that needs to be questioned, according to Zinn, is the notion of “national interests,” a term so common in the political and academic discourse as to be almost invisible. Zinn points out that the “one big family” myth begins with the Constitution's preamble: “We the people of the United States . . .” Zinn noted that it wasn't “we the people” who established the Constitution in Philadelphia—it was 55 rich white men. Missing from or glossed over in the traditional textbook treatment are race and class divisions, including the rebellions of farmers in western Massachusetts immediately preceding the Constitutional Convention in 1787. No doubt, the Constitution had elements of democracy, but Zinn argues that it “established the rule of slaveholders, and merchants, and bondholders.”

Teaching history through the lens of class, race, and gender conflict is not simply more accurate, according to Zinn; it also makes it more likely that students—and all the rest of us—will not “simply



empires, although textbooks cleanse this imperial bullying with legal-sounding terms like the Louisiana Purchase and the Mexican Cession.

Patriotism is another premise that we need to question. As Zinn told teachers in Houston: “It's very bad for everybody when young people grow up thinking that patriotism means obedience to your government.” Zinn often recalled Mark Twain's distinction between country and government. “Does patriotism mean support your government? No. That's the definition of patriotism in a totalitarian state,” Zinn warned a Denver audience in 2008.

And going to war on behalf of “our country” is offered as the highest expression of patriotism—in everything from the military recruitment propaganda that saturates our high schools to the social studies curriculum that features photos of U.S. troops heroically battling “enemy soldiers” in a section called “Operation Iraqi Freedom” in the widely used high school Holt McDougal textbook *Modern World History*.

Howard Zinn cuts through this curricular fog: “War is terrorism. . . . Terrorism is the willingness to kill large numbers of people for some presumably good cause. That's what terrorists are about.” Zinn demands that we reexamine the premise that war is necessary, a proposition not taken seriously in any high school history textbook I've ever seen. Instead, wars get sold to Americans—especially to the young people who fight those wars—as efforts to spread liberty and democracy.

Critical, Not Cynical

Howard Zinn wanted educators to be deeply critical, but never cynical. When speaking to the teachers in Houston, Zinn insisted that another premise we needed to examine is the idea that progress is the product of great individuals. Zinn pointed out that Abraham Lincoln had never been an abolitionist, and when he ran for president in 1860 he did not advocate ending slavery in the states where it existed. Rather, it was largely the “huge antislavery movement that pushed Lincoln into the Emancipation Proclamation—that pushed Congress into the 13th and 14th

and 15th Amendments.”

Zinn urged educators to teach a people's history: “We've never had our injustices rectified from the top, from the president or Congress, or the Supreme Court, no matter what we learned in junior high school about how we have three branches of government, and we have checks and balances, and what a lovely system. No. The changes, important changes that we've had in history, have not come from those three branches of government. They have reacted to social movements.”

Thus when we single out people in our curriculum as icons, as “people to admire and respect,” Zinn advocated shedding the traditional pantheon of government and military leaders: “But there are other heroes that young people can look up to. And they can look up to people who are against war. They can have Mark Twain as a hero who spoke out against the Philippines war. They can have Helen Keller as a hero who spoke out against World War I, and Emma Goldman as a hero. They can have Fannie Lou Hamer as a hero, and Bob Moses as a hero, the people in the civil rights movement.”

People Make Change

And to this, there is one final “people's history” premise we need to remember—whether in education or the world outside of schools. As Howard Zinn reminded the audience of social studies teachers in Houston: “People change.” Zinn did not look to President Obama to initiate social transformation; but in 2008, he saw the election as confirmation that the long history of anti-racist struggle in the United States produced an outcome that would have been inconceivable 30 years prior. And this shift in attitude should give us hope.

Immediately following Zinn's death, the writer and activist Naomi Klein said, “We just lost our favorite teacher.” That's what I felt, too. As we remember Howard Zinn five years after his passing, let's count him among the many social justice heroes and teachers who offer proof that people's efforts make a difference—that ordinary people can change the world.

Zinn often recalled Mark Twain's distinction between country and government.

Does patriotism mean support your government?

No. That's the definition of patriotism in a totalitarian state.'

book calling for an immediate U.S. withdrawal; and as author of numerous books on war, peace, and popular struggle. Zinn was speaking and educating new generations of students and activists right up until the day he died.

It's always worth dipping into the vast archive of Zinn scholarship, but at a moment of increasing social activism and global tension, now is an especially good time to remember some of Howard Zinn's wisdom.

Shortly after Barack Obama's election, in November 2008, the Zinn Education Project sponsored a talk by Zinn to several hundred teachers at the National Council for the Social Studies annual conference in Houston. Zinn reminded teachers that the point of learning about social studies was not simply to memorize facts, but to imbue students with a desire to change the world. “A modest little aim,” Zinn acknowledged, with a twinkle in his eye.

In this talk, Zinn insisted that teachers must help students challenge “fundamental premises that keep us inside a certain box,” because without this critical

swallow these enveloping phrases like ‘the national interest,’ ‘national security,’ ‘national defense,’ as if we're all in the same boat.”

As Zinn told teachers in Houston: “No, the soldier who is sent to Iraq does not have the same interests as the president who sends him to Iraq. The person who works on the assembly line at General Motors does not have the same interest as the CEO of General Motors. No—we're a country of divided interests, and it's important for people to know that.”

Another premise Zinn identified, one that is an article of faith in so much U.S. history curriculum and corporate-produced textbooks, is “American exceptionalism”—the idea that the United States is fundamentally freer, more virtuous, more democratic, and more humane than other countries. For Zinn, the United States is “an empire like other empires. There was a British empire, and there was a Dutch empire, and there was a Spanish empire, and yes, we are an American empire.” The United States expanded through deceit and theft and conquest, just like other

By Joey King

I have been researching the issue of veteran suicide for about six years. My interest started during a Veterans Day parade in Nashville. I was marching as a member of Veterans For Peace. We march every year in the Veterans Day parade because we represent an island of peace in a sea of militarism.

Rather than march, one of our members printed handouts and passed them out to onlookers along the parade route. The flyer said that 18 veterans a day commit suicide. The thought that 18 veterans commit suicide every day shocked me. These were the military's own numbers, not the propaganda of some peace organization. Veterans are the largest identifiable subgroup of suicides in the U.S. Alcoholics do not kill themselves at this rate, nor do drug addicts or prostitutes.

Sadly, the number soon jumped from 18 to 22 veterans per day who kill themselves. It has been stuck there ever since. Far more military personnel lose their lives by their own hands than by the hands of the enemy, and it has been that way for years.

I have tried to "unpack" this number. Several sources tell us that about one current military person kills him or herself and approximately 21 veterans die at their own hands each day.

Two types of veteran deaths do not end up in the suicide statistics: overdoses and accidents. If a veteran overdoses because he or she uses drugs to cope with PTSD, he or she is not considered a suicide. Also,

Veterans are the largest identifiable subgroup of suicides in the United States. Alcoholics do not kill themselves at this rate, nor do drug addicts or prostitutes.

if someone gets drunk and gets on a motorcycle and then dies in an "accident," it's not counted. To be fair, there is a good reason for this under-reporting at least for active duty personnel. Most service members have a \$400,000 life insurance policy. If the service member's death is ruled a suicide, the widow/widower gets nothing. For this reason I am sure medical examiners go out of their way to rule these deaths as anything other than suicide. It is understandable; indeed, it is humane.

But then, a few months ago I was thrown a curve ball. A friend of mine in Veterans For Peace is interested in veteran suicide as well. I sent him an arti-

Straight Talk on Veterans and Suicide

cle, and he replied that a huge percentage of military suicides are people who have not deployed to a combat zone. That statement did not sound right, so I tried to verify it.

I have an Army buddy from my cadet days who is a general now. I asked him about suicides among those who have not been in combat. He said, "Suicide rates for

Panama and the first Gulf War?

That being said, my service was tougher than most peacetime veterans. I graduated from U.S. Army Ranger School in the summer of 1985. I served as a leader of a rifle platoon and a mortar platoon, and as a company executive officer in an airborne (paratrooper) unit. I was honorably discharged as a first lieutenant. It was a men-



Three-tour Afghanistan veteran Jacob George

soldiers who served in Iraq and Afghanistan more than doubled beginning during the late 2004 timeframe and extending through the extreme high tempo of two simultaneous war zones to more than 30 per 100,000. The trend among those who never deployed nearly tripled to between 25 and 30 per 100,000. ... Much of the reserve component, more precisely the ARNG (Army National Guard), took some big hits in suicide."

The doubling of combat veteran suicide rates did not surprise me; but the tripling of non-deployed veterans suicide has me and apparently the military scratching our collective heads.

The next person I contacted is a friend who currently serves as a VA chaplain. I picked her brain on the high rate of suicide among those who were not in combat. She asked her fellow chaplains and found out that, indeed, there is an epidemic level of suicides, especially within the ranks of the reserve component.

So, I was able to verify (at least to a degree) that lots of non-combat veterans kill themselves. For some reason this epidemic is most pronounced in the reserve components.

I am a non-combat veteran. My active duty service was during peacetime from 1984 to 1987. It was after the Grenada invasion of October 1983 and before the Panama invasion in December 1989. I am very lucky, but am I at a higher suicide risk than my friends who deployed to

tally tough peacetime assignment. The training tempo was high. Just to give you an example, I was stationed in Vicenza, Italy, for 14 months. In that time, I was deployed on training missions throughout Europe for seven months. I was on two-hour recall for three months of the seven months that I wasn't deployed.

In my case, this tempo led to an increase in alcohol consumption. I have not had a drink in 20 years. I am not sure if I was an alcoholic, but I was certainly headed that way.

To this day, I have recurring nightmares. About every six months, I dream that I am back in the Army. I wake up swinging my fists wildly or choking an imaginary opponent. At the suggestion of a friend, I started asking non-combat vets if they have similar dreams; almost all do. I do not mean to imply that

my occasional nightmares compare with PTSD, but there is something twisted in my brain. I've been pacifist, vegetarian, yogi, and Buddhist for over a decade, yet the nightmares of my military training 30 years ago still lurk in my subconscious. It is just there. Like trying to rid a paint-roller of paint, I may never be able to get it out. I can not imagine hurting another living being in my conscious mind, but violence is stuck in my subconscious, and manifests in my dreams. All veterans are broken in one way or another.

In a very convincing article entitled "Moral Injury: The Crucial Missing Piece in Understanding Soldier Suicides" (Huffington Post, July 23, 2012), Dr. Rita Nakashima Brock identifies moral injury as the phenomenon that happens in situations like basic training. All cultures teach that killing is wrong, yet in basic training, military personnel are taught to reflexively kill without feeling. This can lead to problems, like alcoholism, divorce, domestic violence, and suicide.

I will take to my grave the belief that my favorite uncle suffered from moral injury as a result of his service during the first Gulf War. His last National Guard unit was a fueling company that was in direct support of the 18th Airborne Corps, which includes the 101st and 82nd Airborne Divisions. The 82nd and 101st are usually the first to go into battle, so his company was called up very early in the buildup to war in the fall of 1990. When he was activated, he was a heavy smoker and alcoholic in his early 50s. Most of his time overseas was spent on a hospital ship at the U.S. Naval base in Bahrain dealing with a variety of smoking- and drinking-related illnesses. The National Guard sent him home by Christmas Eve, a few weeks before the shooting started.

His drinking became much worse as soon as he got home. I believe it was due to a combination of survivor's guilt (because he did not finish the tour with his Guard buddies), moral injury, and a genetic predisposition. Eventually, the Social Security Administration gave him a pension due to his mental issues. At times we thought he was suicidal. Drinking was his method of slow-motion suicide, no doubt.

As the suicide epidemic among active duty and veterans becomes better under-

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PAHPA and VFP

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home builds peace and strengthens the movement.

Racism is a driving force for modern war and must be talked about and confronted. Veterans have experienced firsthand how racism is used to brainwash us into fighting and killing. Racist terms like “haji,” “towel head,”

“gook” and “sand nigger” are clear examples. Dehumanization of so-called enemies is central to war. VFP cannot lead the struggle against racism; however, confronting racism is the responsibility of any organization promoting socio-economic justice and peace. We have that same responsibility to confront all forms of bias.

Do we take a lead on these issues? No. But we stand in solidarity.

Demilitarization of the Police

In May 2014, Drone-Free St. Louis asked Michael McPhearson to be on a panel about military equipment being used in U.S. streets. As he learned more about the 1033 program, whereby the Pentagon creates small armies out of local police forces, he was amazed to see the scope of police militarization and the communities most affected by this policing, such as Ferguson. Demilitarization of the police directly confronts militarism and war.

McPhearson, a black man, a combat veteran leader in the Ferguson movement, has said, “Do you think I should have let all this happen around me and not be involved? That was really not possible for me. What would it say about VFP not to say anything about police in camouflage military uniforms confronting peaceful protesters and using force? What kind of legitimacy would VFP have to talk to struggling communities about war abroad when facing violence here at home? If we don’t believe in peacemaking here at home, I’m not sure our rhetoric about peace is real.”

We cannot win the fight to abolish war without solidarity on a wider range of struggles. The issues are not separate, and the mother of them all is violence, militarization and war. When domestic street violence is on VFP’s doorstep, shall we turn our backs and pretend it is not happening?

VFP’s mission will not change. The costs of war are felt at home through poverty, racial inequality, collapsing inner cities and infrastructures, lack of universal health care and quality education and more. It is all connected. As we explain the connection and as we stand in solidarity with people struggling for justice right here at home in their communities, we will continue to build VFP and the mission for peace, justice and an end to war.



Veterans For Peace National Board members April Adams and Tarak Kauff and VFP Executive Director Michael McPhearson at clergy-led direct action in Ferguson, Mo., October 13.

American Sniper

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letter. “That letter killed Marc,” Cooper responds. “He let go, and he paid the price for it.” What makes Cooper a hero, according to the film, is that he’s a sheepdog. In Jason Hall’s world, Lee stops being a sheepdog when he questions his actions in Iraq. He becomes a sheep, “and he paid the price for it” with a bullet from a wolf.

Hall claims his film is a character study, yet he shamelessly butchered Marc Lee’s real story (and part of Kyle’s) to

that drives many veterans is a truly special one I wish we all had. Was Kyle wrong that the Iraq War had anything to do with September 11, protecting Americans, seizing weapons of mass destruction, or liberating Iraqis? Without a doubt. But that’s what he was told and he genuinely believed it—an important insight into how good people are driven to work for bad causes. Was Kyle wrong for calling Iraqis “savages”? Of course. In one interview, he admits that Iraqis probably view him as a “savage,” but that in war he needed to dehumanize people to kill them—another important insight into how humans tolerate killing, which was left out of the movie.

So enough about Chris Kyle. Let’s talk about Cooper and Hall, and the culture industry that recycles propagandistic fiction under the guise of a “true story.”

And let’s focus our anger and our organizing against the authorities and the institutions that craft the lies that the Chris Kyles of the world believe, that have created a trail of blowback leading from dumb war to dumb war, and that have sent 2.5 million veterans to fight a “war on terror” that persists in Iraq, Afghanistan, Yemen, Syria and Pakistan. Critics and nonviolent organizers can be sheepdogs too.

Brock McIntosh served eight years in the Army National Guard as a combat MP, including a tour in Afghanistan. He is a member of Iraq Veterans Against the War and has been involved in numerous veteran support and advocacy organizations. He is currently a Harry S. Truman Scholar pursuing an MPA at New York University.

Let’s talk about the culture industry that recycles propagandistic fiction under the guise of a ‘true story.’

promote his moral fantasy world and deny legitimacy to veterans critical of the war. Here’s the truth: On the day that the real Ryan Job was shot, the real Marc Lee died after stepping into the line of fire twice to save Job’s life, which apparently was either not “sheepdog” enough to portray accurately in the movie or would have taken the focus off of Cooper’s reckless heroics. You can’t have people believe that critical soldiers are actually not sheep, can you? And as it turns out, Kyle never said those things about Lee’s letter and never blamed Lee for his own death for being skeptical of the war.

Chris Kyle was like so many soldiers who served in Iraq and Afghanistan. He believed in doing the right thing and was willing to give his life for it. That trait



Photo by Lance Corporal Joel A. Chaverri, U.S. Marine Corps

Fallujah burning in 2004



Obama is leading the TPP fast track express in Congress.

A Battle We Can Win

Stopping fast track for the Trans-Pacific Partnership is one way we can build power together

By Margaret Flowers and Kevin Zeese

Two thousand fourteen saw tremendous growth of the movement across numerous fronts of struggle—worker rights and wages, racism and policing, militarism, climate justice, the environment and extreme energy extraction, building a new economy, and so much more. We witnessed how uniting and working in solidarity are essential for success.

“Building power together” means working together as a movement of movements to build on the progress of 2014. We build power together because all of our issues are connected and unified power is when we are strongest.

There is an immediate challenge in 2015 that threatens our progress on all fronts.

Obama and Congress are pushing to finalize the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP). If we don’t stop it, our struggles for social, economic, and environmental

justice will be set back. But we can deal a huge blow to the corporate powers that exploit our communities if we unite and work together to stop the TPP. Doing so will strengthen us greatly.

Our Struggles Are Connected

The Black Lives Matter movement, while focused on the urgent issues of police abuse and institutional racism, is also recognizing that economic injustice in black communities is pervasive. The wealth divide between the top 0.1 percent and the rest of us is stark enough, but the wealth divide between African-Americans and Caucasian Americans is extreme and growing rather than shrinking. Whites have much greater wealth, with white median wealth at \$142,000 compared to blacks at \$13,700. Black unemployment has been double white unemployment for 50 years; throughout that time black unemployment rates have averaged recession levels, 11.5 percent. Also, during that time whites have earned \$20,000 per year more than blacks. Poverty has been rising in the black community for 15 years.

This systemic inequality has been made possible because we have police who keep communities in check. Sam Mitrani re-

minds us that police “were created to protect the new form of wage-labor capitalism that emerged in the mid to late 19th century from the threat posed by that system’s offspring, the working class” (see page 5). The force applied to maintain that inequality has now increased as the lines between police and the military on domestic soil have blurred. When the bottom drops out of the economy or when

wealth and income divide. They will find themselves competing with people in Vietnam, where the average annual income is under \$2,000 per year, or Peru, where it is \$6,000. How can the campaign for a living wage succeed with this reality? How can already poor and impoverished communities lift themselves up when big business seeks cheap labor abroad?

In St. Louis, as in many communities from coast to coast, people are working to create a new economy where focus is put on black-owned businesses and co-operative businesses owned by workers. They are putting in place what is called

Corporate global trade agreements are the economic arm of U.S. imperialism. ... Global hegemony by the United States is in large part about benefitting U.S.- and Western-allied transnational corporations.

wages are lowered, communities of color feel the impact first and deepest. That is why issues like global trade rigged for big business interests will most adversely impact these poorer communities. Global trade seems distant but it has impacts at the local level.

Communities will experience lost jobs and lower income and an expanding

a “solidarity economy” based on principles of participatory democracy, cooperation, and equity. However, trade pacts like the TPP will make it extremely difficult for local governments to create a new economy. Transnational corporations will be given greater access to local markets. Practices like purchasing local or buying

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Ferguson to Guantánamo: Fighting Racism and Torture

By Jeremy Varon
Photos by Justin Norman

On January 12, in the entrance of DC Metro Police headquarters, Witness Against Torture (WAT) addressed a phalanx of officers in song: “We remember all the people / The police killed / We can feel their spirits / They’re with us still,” written by Luke Nephew, anti-torture stalwart and poet for movements from climate justice to Black Lives Matter. (Nephew’s “I Can’t Breathe” has become an anthem for the latter.) The anti-torture group had gathered in Washington to mark the 13th “anniversary” of the opening of the detention camp at Guantánamo in January 2002. By also protesting domestic racism, WAT broke new ground.

Earlier that day, WAT members were arrested at the U.S. Capitol. Some interrupted Senate business to demand prosecution of those authorizing or committing torture, as detailed in the Senate’s own report on CIA interrogations. Others were



WAT members protest inside the U.S. Capitol Visitor Center

cuffed in the visitors’ center holding banners reading “We Demand Accountability for Torture and Police Murder!”

Woven between the two actions was the demonstration by the Hands Up Coalition DC at the Department of Justice, attended in force by WAT activists. In driving rain, the mother of Emmanuel Okutuga, killed by police in nearby Silver Spring, Md., addressed the crowd through sobs.

WAT organized its actions under the slogan “From Ferguson to Guantánamo: White Silence Equals State Violence.” The goal was to link mass incarceration at home and indefinite detention overseas; that impunity for police murder and CIA torture are dual dimensions of state violence, rooted substantially in racism.

Behind this synthesis lay challenges commonly confronting today’s activists: to connect diverse oppressions; to build alliances based on their interconnection; and, for majority white groups like WAT, to support with appropriate deference and recognition of structural privilege, movements led by people of color. The sometimes halting journey of anti-Guantánamo activists toward new solidarities may be instructive for others with similar challenges.

Guantánamo and Solidarity

Solidarity has long been at the heart of efforts to close Guantánamo. The movement’s signature—orange jumpsuits and black hoods worn by Guantánamo detainees—attempts to represent men whose bodies and plights are largely banished from view. Solidarity fasts softly echo the hunger strikes at Guantánamo. Witness Against Torture’s frequent arrests use the voluntary loss of freedom, however brief, as a means for empathizing with men snatched into open-ended detention.

Arrests can extend solidarity in more pointed ways. WAT’s largest arrest action was at the Supreme Court in January 2008, when the justices were considering whether Guantánamo detainees could file *habeas* challenges to their detention. In custody, the activists gave police the names of detained men in lieu of their own. The detainee names made it into the court docket and a core purpose of the action was fulfilled: to symbolically give the detainees the day in court they had been denied. (The Supreme Court soon granted *habeas* rights, though their im-

pact has since been whittled away by conservative judges.)

During the January protests just concluded, WAT brought the images and heartrending stories of detainees into the Smithsonian National Portrait Gallery, insisting that the museum’s visitors see and hear them too.

All these expressions of solidarity aim to give voice, visibility, and hope to those voiceless, hidden away and often hopeless. The greatest barrier to the release of prisoners has been official neglect and public indifference. So any effort to remind the world of their very existence helps. Word of such protests makes it through attorneys to their clients at Guantánamo, who have expressed profound thanks.

There is a deeper dimension to the connections forged with the detained men. Here WAT’s status as a largely Anglo-American group, with strong roots in the Catholic Worker and broader social gospel traditions, is significant. So much of the U.S. “war on terror”—and so much terrorism—is predicated on fear, suspicion, separation, and dehumanization.



WAT protesters march past the Washington Monument



WAT members join a Black Lives Matter rally outside the US Department of Justice

Transcending hardened barriers of nation and faith resists the war's very logic.

Torture in Your Backyard

For years, WAT's near single-minded focus on Guantánamo and overseas torture has felt valuable, even necessary. Broadening one's message can mean diluting one's power.

But it has also felt narrow. Guantánamo and other "war on terror" facilities are hardly the only U.S. prisons practicing gross abuse. Extended solitary confinement, denounced by medical and human rights bodies as a form of torture, is used on a vast scale in domestic prisons and jails. To ignore this parallel reality is to see only part of a larger picture of penal violence. It can also put concern for the suffering of distant others over that of people "right here at home"—a bias that has long dogged much domestic activism focused on U.S. foreign policy.



Ray McGovern Speaks at the White House

Indeed, prisoners themselves combined the concerns for torture abroad and in the United States. Inspired in part by the mass hunger strike in Guantánamo in

2013, tens of thousands of inmates in California launched hunger strikes to protest solitary confinement in U.S. prisons.

Their act prompted new, long-term solidarity fasts by U.S. activists linking the issues of indefinite detention and solitary confinement practiced in Guantánamo and California prisons. WAT included messaging about solitary confinement. Longtime opponents of Guantánamo, the National Religious Campaign Against Torture, developed sophisticated advocacy and called the practice, "torture in your backyard." A new premise took hold: that America tolerates Guantánamo in part because it tolerates routine cruelties in its domestic prisons—overcrowding, draconian sentencing, and prolonged isolation. One injustice presupposes the other. Both must be fought.

And then there is the issue of race, at the foundation of America's criminal justice and penal systems.

From Ferguson to Guantánamo

This year's annual White House protest on January 11 featured something not felt in years: hope that Guantánamo might actually close, when Obama released 28 prisoners in 2014, the most of his presidency.

Something else bolstered the protesters' spirits: the rise of the Black Lives Matter movement. With it came both an obligation and an opportunity to deepen the analysis of state power, connect more dots, and link struggles.

The starting point is a chilling parallel, delivered by the collision of news cycles. From the failure on December 3 of a grand jury to indict the police officer who killed Eric Garner, countless Americans concluded that there is no justice for black and brown people. Just days later, the Senate released its report on CIA interrogations, plainly revealing violations

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Torture: Testimony of a Former POW

By Phil Butler

I spent almost eight years as a prisoner of war in Vietnam, from April 20, 1965, to February 12, 1973. During those years more than 90 percent of American POWs were repeatedly tortured for extortion of political propaganda or just retribution. I had the personal experience of being tortured numerous times.

Ironically, we actually received moral strength from telling each other "our country would never treat POWs like this." That moral high road helped sustain us through dark and challenging times. So when news that we were torturing people came out I was initially dumbfounded, then stressed and then physically and emotionally sick over what my country was doing.

My expert testimony is that torture only results in useless information, made-up stories, or whatever the victim thinks the torturer wants to hear. Whenever possible we also slipped in ridiculous statements like one I used in a torture-extracted "confession," that "only officers are allowed to use the swimming pool on the USS Midway." Another friend wrote in an extorted confession "My commanding

officer, Dick Tracy, ordered me to bomb schools and hospitals." These are just two examples of the kind of culturally embedded nonsense people can expect to extract through torture. The Vietnamese were later embarrassed at an international conference when they produced these "confessions" from us.

*If you believe that,
try going out on your
driveway on a cold
night without clothes
on. Kneel down on the
concrete, holding your
body erect with your
arms extended above
your head.*

Recent debates about whether "water boarding" is torture are simply deviant, fatuous, and illusory. Other arguments support coercion in various forms, such as, "stress or unusual" body positions aren't really torture. If you believe that, try going out on your driveway on a cold night without clothes on. Kneel down on the concrete, holding your body erect with your arms extended above your head. In very few minutes you will begin to feel real pain. Then imagine several big tormentors ensuring with whips that you stay in that position. That's torture. Another argument calls captives "detainees" instead of POWs. They are human beings either way. We are holding people in indeterminate isolation from fam-

ilies, Red Cross visits and other Geneva Convention/U.N. requirements. From personal experience I say this constitutes torture of the heart and soul.

The fact is that our Constitution's Fifth, Eighth, and Fourteenth Amendments prohibit torture. Furthermore, Article VI, clause 2 (commonly known as the supremacy clause), states, "All treaties made under authority of the United States shall be the supreme law of the land," meaning that any international treaty Congress ratifies rises to the level of constitutional law. Our country signed the 1949 Geneva Convention on the Treatment of Prisoners of War. Later, in 1975 we signed and agreed to the principles of the United Nations Convention Against Torture. Both of these were ratified by Congress and became laws of our land at the constitutional level. In addition, the United States has ratified over a half-dozen other treaties that prohibit any sort of coercive treatment of detainees, here or abroad. The case for torture, stressful coercion, or mistreatment of any description is a statutorily closed issue of U.S. law, repeated again and again under the laws of our federal government, 50 states and territories, and every county and town in our nation.

We profess to be the most democratic and humane country in the world. But our recently exposed actions in Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Jordan, and other hell-holes make us the biggest liars in history and plainly tell the world we are deceitful, dishonest, inhumane, and immoral.

So this is becoming less a question about torture and inhumane treatment than it is of what kind of society we really are. Will we walk our talk? Or will we become like less civilized countries that have fallen into the abyss of institutionalized torture? Will we allow George Bush

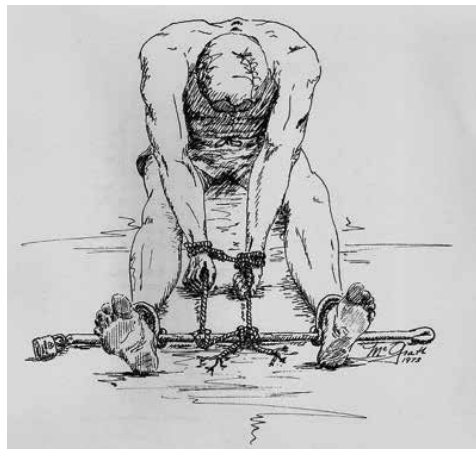


Hayden Lockhart (left) and the author being beaten during the 'Hanoi March' of POWs through downtown Hanoi in 1966

and his chicken-hawk advisers to succeed in institutionalizing torture in our nation? Will they get away with their criminal behaviors without being prosecuted? Will we continue ignoring our Constitution, treaties, and other statutes prohibiting such cruel and unusual punishments?

I ask all Americans to stand up for what is civil, humane, and right. Torture anywhere is immoral, inhumane, disgusting, and degrading. I can only wonder these many years after my POW ordeal why we are even having this conversation.

Dr. Phillip Butler, CDR, USN (ret.) is a former Navy light attack/fighter carrier pilot. He was awarded two Silver Star, two Legion of Merit, two Bronze Star and two Purple Heart medals for actions as a POW. He completed his Navy career in 1981 as a professor of management at the Naval Postgraduate School. He is a former national chair of VFP, co-founder and current president of Chapter 46, Monterey Peninsula. Phil also proudly holds VFP Life Membership number one.



A Battle We Can Win

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green will be seen as trade barriers and will be prevented.

The TPP will have similar consequences for the climate justice movement. It will become impossible to ban extreme energy extraction in our communities because this will be a threat to corporate profits. The Atlantic version of the global corporate trade agreements (TTIP) is pushing for more fracked gas and off-shore oil to be imported from the United States.

Corporate global trade agreements are the economic arm of U.S. imperialism. The TPP is a critical piece of the Asian Pivot to attempt to isolate China and weaken its economy by moving manufacturing to countries like Vietnam, Malaysia, and Brunei. The TTIP is structured to reduce the EU's energy dependence on Russia. This is part of U.S. foreign policy to gather European allies and further isolate Russia. Global hegemony by the United States is in large part about benefitting U.S.- and Western-allied transnational corporations. The U.S. security state works hand in glove with these transnational corporations and treaties like the TPP to benefit the rulers of governments that serve U.S. empire and punish governments that do not.

trade agreements do not confront a critical issue—how countries manipulate the value of currency. Finally, Republicans do not trust President Obama with that much power, while they give up their power. More Democrats are agreeing with Republicans even on this issue as he continues to sell out to corporations on issues like banking regulation and student debt.

Congress is right not to trust the President on corporate trade agreements. Leaks have shown that the Obama administration is extremely pro-corporate when it comes to its proposals. Documents show the main reason countries have been unable to reach agreement is that the administration's positions are distant from those of every other country that does not support such broad corporate power. Further, the leaks also show that enforcement of environmental protections is even weaker in these agreements than they were in Bush-era trade agreements.

All of the big Washington business lobbies are ready to push corporate trade. They see billions in profits as well as a swelling of their power. They know they will become more powerful than governments if these trade agreements become law.

If enacted, the Trans-Pacific Partnership, often called "NAFTA on steroids," will also facilitate and ultimately require some form of U.S. military involvement or militarized police involvement as people rise up, demand a fair shake and the expul-

Veteran Suicides

... continued from page 7

stood, it is obvious that the Pentagon must redevelop its basic training. The methods of training that have been devised have simply surpassed the human mind's capability to handle it. Of course, it all points to a deeper issue of violence within our culture. In the short term, I think peace activists can use this data as a valuable tool when we talk with young people who are thinking about joining the military.

After all, who would want my nightmares?

As I was finishing the first draft of this piece, two disturbing bits of news came my way:

In September, the Tennessee Department of Veterans Affairs released statistics that the number of veteran suicides in the state increased from 197 in 2012 to 214 in 2013. That is an increase of 17 (or 8.63%). That is definitely a trend in the wrong direction. They are trying to unpack those numbers to see how many of these are combat veterans and how many are not. Finally, we learned of the suicide of peace activist Jacob George from Arkansas late last summer. He was a member of Veterans For Peace and Iraq Veterans Against the War. He served three tours in Afghanistan as a paratrooper with the 82nd Airborne Division.

I am also active with the School of the Americas watch (soaw.org) movement. We are trying to close the U.S. "school" at Fort Benning, which trains Latin American military leaders who go back home and do assorted nasty things to their own populations. In this movement, we have adopted a Latin American tradition. When the name of a deceased person is mentioned, we say in unison, *¡Presente!*, which means the dead are still present in our minds. So Jacob George, *¡Presente!* I miss you buddy; your spirit, your music, and your insights. He certainly believed that moral injury



Anti-TPP protest at the U.S. Trade Representative's offices in Washington, D.C..

We Can Win the First Big Challenge of 2015

President Obama and the Republican leadership in Congress have made it clear that their top priority is passing fast track trade promotion authority early this year. Fast track is essentially Congress giving up its constitutional authority "to regulate commerce with foreign nations." It gives almost all of this power to the President. Obama will be able to sign trade agreements before Congress sees them, and then Congress has to quickly vote—up or down, with no amendments—on these agreements that contain thousands of pages of complex legal language. This is the only way that horrendous agreements like the TPP and the Trans-Atlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP, known as TAFTA) can become law.

When you see the first sentence above—Obama and the Republican leadership making this a priority—do not assume we cannot stop them. We can. Democrats realize that these trade agreements will hurt their base. There is widespread opposition in both the Senate and House against fast track as well as the largest coalition of organizations against global trade. The coalition represents tens of millions of people, people power that can dominate Congress.

And Republicans, like Democrats, oppose fast track for several reasons. First, they know that it undermines their constitutional responsibility to regulate trade. Second, these agreements undermine the sovereignty of the U.S. government as well as state and local governments by essentially giving corporations veto power over laws they pass. Third, they recognize that these

sion of global corporate interests that exploit, rape and destroy their economy and ecology.

A Huge Battle

The fight over fast track is shaping up to be a fight between people power and transnational corporate power. This is going to be a huge battle. Opposition in Congress cracks open a door for the people to stop fast track, but if we do not force it open, corporate lobbyists will easily close it.

Stopping fast track will require all of us. There is a path to victory but it will require people from all fronts of struggle to mobilize, show our unity, and stop the corporations. Join that fight by taking the solidarity, action pledge at flushthetpp.org and by sharing it. We will need to raise awareness in our communities and engage in creative direct action to pressure members of Congress to oppose fast track.

The stakes are high. Every issue people are working on will be hurt by these agreements. But, on the other side, if the people mobilize and stop fast track, corporate trade will be dead for the remainder of President Obama's term in office. When the people defeat transnational corporate power in the first big confrontation of 2015, we will be on our way to making 2015 the year we built our power together. We will be freed to create the world in which we want to live and one that increases the chances of a livable future.

Kevin Zeese and Margaret Flowers co-direct Popular Resistance, which has had a three-year campaign to stop the TPP and other trade agreements.

**So Jacob George,
¡Presente!
I miss you buddy;
your spirit, your music,
and your insights.**

was the cause of his problems. Ever since I heard of his suicide, I have been wearing a dogtag with the VA's toll-free number on it (800-273-8255 ext. 1). Jacob was a VA patient. He was going to a mental health specialist, but that obviously was not enough. If you know a veteran in trouble, give him or her this number. It might save a life.

Joey King is a member of the Veterans For Peace National Board.



Photo by U.S. Marine Corps/Sgt. Mark Fayloga

Afghanistan: Skulking Away from a Failed War

By Robert C. Koehler

“The only good Talib is a dead Talib.”

These words, uttered half a decade ago by the head of intelligence for the NATO coalition force in Afghanistan, summon a far earlier American savagery. As the American empire affects to close the door on its war with Afghanistan, the words also serve as a sort of doorstep propping open our further intervention in this broken country.

The war isn’t really ending. Some 18,000 foreign troops will stay in Afghanistan, almost 11,000 of them American, under a new mission called “Resolute Support.” U.S. forces will also have “a limited combat role as part of a separate counterterrorism mission,” according to the *Wall Street Journal*. Incredibly, we’re not letting go. We’re just disappearing the combat mission into global background noise.



We’re continuing to dehumanize part of humanity on the pretext of saving it. The updated version of “the only good Indian is a dead Indian,” redirected to the Taliban, was quoted a few days ago in a *Der Spiegel* article called “Obama’s Lists: A Dubious History of Targeted Killings in Afghanistan.” The article goes into detail about the administration’s infamous “kill lists” and the hunting of upper- and mid-level Taliban leaders via helicopter and drone—assassination by Hellfire missile—which is an extermination methodology guaranteed to kill lots of innocent civilians along with (or instead of) the targeted Taliban operative. But, you know, that’s war.

The official “end” to the Afghanistan war, while it doesn’t mean the end of combat operations, does offer

us a moment of disturbing reflection on what has been accomplished these last 13 years, during the first of our wars allegedly to eradicate, but in fact to promote, terror. We poured at least a trillion dollars into the war, which claimed some 30,000 lives, over two-thirds of them civilians. The first thing that occurs to me is that, officially, these statistics mean nothing.

U.S. Army General John Campbell, commander of the International Security Assistance Force, exemplified this by smothering the human toll of the war in simple-minded verbiage during a secret ceremony held last weekend in a gymnasium at ISAF headquarters in Kabul: “Our new resolute mission means we will continue to invest in Afghanistan’s future,” he said. “Our commitment to Afghanistan endures.”

By the way, the ceremony, commemorating the war’s shutdown, was secret because authorities feared the possibility of a Taliban attack. The United States and NATO, as everyone knows, are the losers, despite the bloated enormity of their military superiority.

But any honest reflection requires a far more serious, all-encompassing look at the war’s results.

War is torture on a national scale. The nation of Afghanistan and its people are, of course, the primary losers in our “investment” in their future—our investment in nation-wrecking.

For instance: “What has happened in Afghanistan over the last 13 years has been the flourishing of a narco-state that is really without any parallel in history,” Matthieu Aikens recently told *Democracy Now!*

Aikens’ article, “Afghanistan: The Making of a Narco State,” which ran recently in *Rolling Stone*, points out that, since the U.S. invasion, opium production in Afghanistan has doubled and the country now accounts for about 90 percent of the world’s heroin traffic. Opium is about 15 percent of the country’s gross domestic product, Aikens said—even though Afghanistan is at the bottom of the drug trade economically. “Afghan farmers only touch 1 percent of the value of the global opium trade,” he said.

Before 2001, opium production had been declining in Afghanistan, but, Aikens told *Democracy Now!*, “the U.S., in its quest for vengeance against the Taliban and al-Qaeda, partnered with the very warlords whose criminality and human rights abuses had created the conditions that led to the rise of the Taliban in the first place. And in many cases, these are the same individuals who were responsible for bringing large-scale opium cultiva-

tion to Afghanistan during the war against the Soviets.”

War is also humanity’s spiritual cancer.

Up and down the ranks, dehumanization of the enemy rules. “The only good Talib is a dead Talib.” This is the thinking that justifies mass bombing raids and kill lists. It also infects the souls of rank-and-file soldiers, such as the “Kill Team” described by Mark Boal in another extraordinary *Rolling Stone* story, this one published in March 2011.

“Among the men of Bravo Company,” Boal writes, “the notion of killing an Afghan civilian had been the subject of countless conversations, during lunchtime chats and late-night bull sessions. For weeks, they had weighed the ethics of bagging ‘savages’ and debated the probability of getting caught. Some of them agonized over the idea; others were gung-ho from the start. But not long after the New Year, as winter descended on the arid plains of Kandahar Province, they agreed to stop talking and actually pull the trigger.”

Boal’s article details the killing—and dismemberment—of Afghan civilians purely for sport and revenge. The details are gruesome: “Then, using a pair of razor-sharp medic’s shears, he reportedly sliced off the dead boy’s pinky finger and gave it to Holmes, as a trophy.”

What a mockery the reality of war makes of the rhetoric that blesses it. The American empire holds a secret ceremony to skulk away from a failed mission. But this war isn’t over. It won’t be over until we vow, as a nation, not to start the next one.

This article was originally printed at commondreams.org.

1945

We cross the Moselle
We cross the Rhine
We kill horses and men

A cold morning
On a windshield, the Stars and Stripes
Roosevelt is dead

Early May in Czechoslovakia
The guns are silent
Birds sing again

Smiles in DP camps
reveal gold teeth the
Nazis didn’t knock out

German werewolves
kill unarmed GIs
Now we all carry Lugers

Looted by Germans
Europe’s souvenirs
grace our barracks

Far from the States
schokolade, cigaretten, kowgummi
make the world go round

Down the Rhine
a Champagne factory
We don’t know how much is enough

We have a fear of going home
We might say
pass the fucking butter

The guns are silent
Birds sing again
Wounds of war are still to come

—Jay Wenk, U.S. Army Infantry, World War II

Guantánamo

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of law for which no one will be punished. White police may get away with murder, just as the national security establishment may get away with torture.

Race and even religion occupy a low profile in the domestic opposition to Guantánamo and torture. Arguments about damage to the nation's laws, values, and security typically lead. But Guantánamo, as a Muslim activist at the White House rally stressed, is unique as a place for the indefinite detention of exclusively Muslim men. The detainees—only a tiny fraction of whom may be described as radical jihadis—certainly see themselves as victims of anti-Muslim persecution, with some making connections between their treatment and racism in the United States. Last summer, while anger at the



Brian Terrell and other WAT members assemble inside the National Portrait Gallery

death of Michael Brown raged, an attorney tweeted from the base: “At the #Guantánamo prison for Yemenis, talking a lot about #Ferguson and the deep roots of the racism & dehumanization here.”

The parallels are unmistakable. Behind racial profiling lies the equation of blackness with criminality. Behind Islamophobia lies the equation that all Muslims are potential terrorists. Supporting both prejudices is the assumption that the lives, dignity, and rights of some people are worth more than others.

In dialogue with diverse voices, WAT pieced together this skeletal analysis linking Ferguson and Guantánamo. The next step was to take it into the streets, the U.S. Capitol and the D.C. jail. The group decided not to speak out on behalf of an abstract, universal humanity, even as it invoked universal rights. Instead, it chose to acknowledge its status as a mostly white group working to break white silence and to invite other whites to do the same.

‘It’s Gonna Take Courage’

This effort to link issues and movements is risky. One is a real or perceived opportunism, wherein partisans of a particular cause enter into coalitions primarily to enhance the prestige of their “own issue.” Another is that making connections between oppressions can diminish the autonomy of individual struggles.

Related to this, viewing all problems as horribly systemic can lead to arguing that the whole system must come down for anything to be solved. The push for intermediate goals like grand jury reform or the speedy release of more men from Guantánamo recedes behind the cosmic goal. Finally, white protestations of anti-racism can easily become mawkish displays of self-righteousness serving to elevate whites.

Aware of these perils, the anti-torture activists making trouble on a rainy January day in Washington, D.C., were not stopped by them. Singing as they marched through the city, the protesters shifted from the lyrics memorializing victims of police violence to those of an



WAT members confront politicians at the U.S. Department of Justice

other of Luke Nephew's songs: “We’re gonna build a nation / That don’t torture no one / But it’s gonna take courage / for that change to come.” Part of the courage needed—whether to end racism or torture—is the will to build bridges, aware of who we are and the power, and limits, of our voices.

Jeremy Varon is an organizer with Witness Against Torture and a professor of history at The New School. He is the author of Bringing the War Home: The Weather Underground, the Red Army Faction, and Revolutionary Violence in the Sixties and Seventies.

This article was originally published at waging-nonviolence.org

Defending GI Rights

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dering their officers and non-commissioned officers, drug ridden and dispirited where not near mutinous.”

Many GIs were coming home and joining the antiwar movement. Others were coming home stoned. One of the most striking things about the GIs in Vietnam was how many were getting hooked on cheap and very available drugs, everything from marijuana to heroin. It was not hard to believe the rumors that the military was responsible for making those drugs available, to try to mollify a rebellious army. Mostly the Vietnam veterans were coming home disillusioned, going home to a country where virtually no one understood or wholeheartedly supported the undeclared war where they had been asked to risk their lives and where some 58,000 of their buddies would die.

Those months in Vietnam had a profound impact on me, in matters both intensely personal and intensely political. If there was one mantra of that era that has stuck, it is that the personal is political. It was eerie being an American woman in Saigon in 1971. Saigon had already experienced the “Tet Offensive,” in which the Vietnamese nationalist forces had made it clear that they had the support of a significant portion of the south's population. It was just a matter of time before the United States would have to withdraw. There were no more U.S. troops allowed in Saigon. They were kept on their bases. I stayed at a gracious old French colonial hotel at night,

having drinks at the bar with cynical journalists, and by day I rode a motor scooter out to U.S. Military Assistance Command Headquarters at Long Binh, about 30 minutes on an empty road that had been the site of fire fights the night before. Every morning I passed a beautiful if dilapidated French villa set back off the road that had been converted into an orphanage. The hand-painted sign in front of the villa read in English, “Please don’t shoot the orphans.”

I would get to the gate of MACV Headquarters at Long Binh and would be waved right through, not because the military police recognized me, but because I was a white American woman, hence presumed safe. When I went to the jail to see my clients, I was treated with a patronizing chivalry by the guard and told to be careful because my clients were desperate and violent. I was only 25 years old and fresh out of law school. Maintaining my dignity, composure, and presence of mind took nearly all of my intellectual and emotional strength. What replenished me were my clients, who somehow managed to maintain their collective sense of humor along with courage and righteousness.

When the mutiny case ended, I returned to the Philippines, to the town of Olongapo, the base town outside Subic Bay Naval Base, where the Pacific Fleet was headquartered. There I and a National Lawyers Guild colleague represented sailors and marines in courts martial and lived a somewhat surrealistic life in a town devoted primarily to pandering to sailors on leave. The Navy was none too happy to have us in town, and in an effort to keep us away from the enlisted men, banned us from

all parts of the base other than the court and law library. Nonetheless, word spread rapidly that some American civilians were in town, and our house became the unofficial “GI Center” for the more courageous GIs who didn’t mind the brass knowing about their opposition to the war. A lot of them just came by for the company ... we were a bit of home.

The U.S. Naval Base at Subic Bay was separated from the town of Olongapo by a canal. As the GIs came across the bridge over the canal, the first bar they hit had a moat around it that was an extension of the canal, a stinky, garbage-strewn moat in which a crocodile floated languidly. To get the marines and sailors into some odd kind of mood, the proprietor had a beautiful young woman selling newly hatched ducklings to the GIs to throw to the crocodile. A lot of those young men had had enough of gruesome death in the war they had just come from, and bought the ducklings to save them from the crocodile's jaws. A somewhat unwieldy number of ducklings ended up at our house, and I had a rather large flock of ducks in the back of the house. I gave them away to the neighbors whenever I could.

Barbara Dudley represented GIs during the Vietnam War, and then practiced law with California Rural Legal Assistance and the Agricultural Labor Relations Board. She has served as president and executive director of the National Lawyers Guild, as executive director of Greenpeace USA, and as director for strategic campaigns of the national AFL-CIO. She is currently the senior policy advisor to the Oregon Working Families Party and teaches part-time at Portland State University.

No More War in Korea!

*Cyber-security experts maintain
Sony hack was an inside job*

**By Christine Hong and
Michael Wong**

Since late last year, the U.S. government has claimed, while furnishing no proof, that North Korea hacked Sony's computers over the regime-change film, *The Interview*. Based on the FBI's allegations, President Obama, denouncing North Korea as a cyber-terrorist, moved swiftly to announce flexible new sanctions aimed at choking off North Korea's access to hard currency and threatened to place North Korea back on the State Department's list of state sponsors of terror. More recently, U.S. officials have disclosed that the NSA penetrated North Korean networks prior to the Sony cyberattack, yet still have not disclosed evidence that points to North Korean culpability. Moreover, experts in the cyber-security community have overwhelmingly argued that North Korea is not responsible for the cyberattack. A chorus of cyber-security

government has mobilized suspect intelligence to march to war. Remember George W. Bush, Iraq, and the so-called WMDs? Today's accusations against North Korea have an all-too-familiar ring.

Evidence from leaked emails indicates a cozy relationship between Sony executives and the military industrial complex in the making of *The Interview*. Not only did the U.S. State Department give its blessing on the controversial assassination scene in which Kim Jong-Un's head explodes, but also the Rand Corporation, the military think tank, consulted on the film with the aim of destabilizing the North Korean government. As Bruce Bennett, a North Korea watcher at Rand, stated in an email to Sony executive Michael Lynton, also a member of Rand's board of trustees, "I have been clear that the assassination of Kim Jong-Un is the most likely path to a collapse of the North Korean government," adding "I believe that a story that talks about the removal



Frozen bodies of Koreans, casualties of the brutal U.S. war in Korea

stan wars. In 2013, the Obama administration implemented a North Korean regime-change scenario in its annual joint military exercises with South Korea, putting B-2 and B-52 bombers armed with dummy nuclear munitions into play on the Korean peninsula. A return to all-out war was possible then. It is possible now.

If we want to prevent a slide into unpredictable dangers including war, now is the

North Korea immediately, and (3) respond positively to North Korea's offer of negotiations to officially end the Korean War. No more war in Korea! No more American military aggression!

Christine Hong is an Asian studies professor at the University of California Santa Cruz. Michael Wong refused U.S. Army orders and deserted to Canada during the Vietnam war. He is cur-



Refugees from the Korean War

analysts has further pointed to the flawed, speculative, and insubstantial nature of the FBI's allegations.

This raises a troubling question: why would the U.S. government not only prematurely indict but also, in an escalating maneuver, leap to apply punitive measures against North Korea? Bearing the hallmarks of a post-9/11 false flag pretext, the U.S. government's rush to fortify its regime-change policy against North Korea raises an even more troubling question: Is the United States creating an excuse to escalate tensions, destabilize the North Korean government, and possibly set off a war, which few Americans want? After all, it wouldn't be the first time our

of the Kim family regime and the creation of a new government by the North Korean people ... will start some real thinking in South Korea and, I believe, in the North once the DVD leaks into the North (which it almost certainly will)."

Interventionist war has been the basis of U.S. relations toward North Korea for several decades. At mid-century, an estimated four million Koreans, the majority civilians, were killed in a dirty war in which the United States possessed near-total aerial superiority. North Korea lost almost a third of its population. Then as now, renewed war on the Korean peninsula would easily be as intractable and devastating as the Iraq or Afghani-

*Is the United States creating an excuse to
escalate tensions, destabilize the North Korean
government, and possibly set off a war,
which few Americans want?*

time to act before American momentum builds. Please join us in demanding that (1) the United States stop its allegations against North Korea without clear proof, (2) cease its punitive sanctions against

rently a member of Veterans For Peace and the Veterans Writers Group led by Maxine Hong Kingston. He is featured in the movie *Sir! No Sir! They blog at intheminfield.com.*



A grief-stricken U.S. infantryman whose buddy has been killed in action

Photo by Sergeant First Class Al Chang

FULL DISCLOSURE

AN HONEST COMMEMORATION OF THE AMERICAN WAR IN VIETNAM

Commemorating the American War in Vietnam

On May 25, 2012, in announcing a 13-year-long commemoration of the American war in Vietnam funded by Congress at \$65 million, President Obama proclaimed: “As we observe the 50th anniversary of the Vietnam War, we reflect with solemn reverence upon the valor of a generation that served with honor. We pay tribute to the more than 3 million

servicemen and women who left their families to serve bravely, a world away. ... They pushed through jungles and rice paddies, heat and monsoon, fighting heroically to protect the ideals we hold dear as Americans. Through more than a decade of combat, over air, land, and sea, these proud Americans upheld the highest traditions of our Armed Forces.”



Our nation’s “official” commemoration studiously avoids the largely painful memories the Vietnam generation carries of that war. While many Vietnam veterans may truthfully be described as having fought “heroically,” it is a lie to say the war was about protecting “the ideals we hold dear as Americans” or that “highest traditions of our Armed Forces” were upheld. Indeed, many who fought in the war were not proud of the things they did; among those still living, a large number continue to struggle with deep moral injury, with feelings of having been betrayed by their government. But of course, if we as a nation were to commit ourselves to examining the truth about our war in Vietnam, we might have to confront some inconvenient facts about who we really are, as opposed to who we pretend to be. An honest appraisal might lead to a change of course, a different future. Never has the passage from George Orwell’s *1984*

seemed more prescient: “He who controls the past controls the future. He who controls the present controls the past.”

Vietnam Full Disclosure—a more honest history of the American War in Vietnam—makes a different argument for the significance of the war and how it ought to be remembered which diverges from uber-patriotic salutations of soldierly valor—though valor there was—to something more substantive, such as the war’s impact on the United States; its impact on Vietnamese; its impact on the world.

The Full Disclosure campaign is a Veterans For Peace effort to speak truth to power and keep alive the antiwar perspective on the American war in Vietnam. It represents a clear alternative to the Pentagon’s current efforts to sanitize and mythologize the Vietnam war and to thereby legitimize further unnecessary and destructive wars. For more information, visit the website at vietnamfulldisclosure.org.

The Usual Question

The usual question—who won the war?—is naive.

The real question that needs to be answered is: Who owns the war?

Who gets to do the moral triage after the ceasefire is declared?

Who gets to declare who was right and who was wrong?

The soldier coming home wounded in body, mind, and soul?

The farmer whose land is sown with blood and unexploded ordnance?

The families with loved ones buried in the ground?

The families with loved ones maimed in body and mind?

Perhaps, all of the above?

These are important questions to ask.

If we have learned anything over the years, it is this: those who own the present moment will shape the past to form the future for the next generation to come.

We need to know who gets to tell the narrative.

Who gets to tell the young not just where or when.

But why. And to whom. And for what. Who gets to hold the mirror?

Those who have suffered through these wars know there is no closure.

There is only sorting away and dusting off when the occasion arises.

Our war never goes away, but that doesn’t mean that our children are condemned to fight the next one.

We need to abolish war. We need our stories to be told.

We need full disclosure.

We who lived the American War in Vietnam—the soldier, the farmer, the families—will provide an alternative to the Department of Defense’s campaign to sanitize and mythologize the U.S. role in the Vietnam War.

In the telling of our narratives we will explore many questions, including these:

Was U.S. involvement in Viet Nam a premeditated plan to destroy any notion by the Vietnamese that they could achieve genuine independence?

Was intervention the result of diplomatic mistakes or political negligence? Or was it a premeditated criminal aggression planned to crush the post-WWII movement of colonized people to free themselves?

In the telling of our narratives we will bring many voices to the stage:

The American war veteran who can speak firsthand of war’s moral injuries

The Vietnamese war veteran who can speak firsthand of war’s moral injuries

The heroic U.S. soldiers who resisted the war

Our brothers and sisters who fought in the streets of America to end the war

Join us. Bring your voices. Bring your questions.

We will gather together to speak truth to power

To claim the narrative away from the war mongers and the war profiteers

We will continue our work to stop the next war.

—Doug Rawlings,
Vietnam combat veteran

Enough Feel-Good Portrayals of War

This letter from Paul Appel was recently printed in the Peoria, Ill., *Journal Star State*.

Civil War veteran Ambrose Bierce defined truth as “an ingenious compound of desirability and appearance.” Modern psychologists study this avoidance of facts using cognitive dissonance theory.

This never letting the facts get in the way of a good story is apparent in the reaction of some people to the movie *American Sniper*. It matters not that several journalists and one court of law have found that some of the stories in Chris Kyle’s autobiography never happened. Just as Clint Eastwood gives the public the Iraq War they want, the U.S. Department of Defense is giving the public the Vietnam War they want with a heavily funded, feel-good portrayal of this war for the upcoming 50th anniversary of its beginning. Several of us who participated in this war are quite upset that it is being presented to younger generations as a noble enterprise. We have started a campaign of our own that reflects our experiences, which can be viewed at vietnamfulldisclosure.org. On Memorial Day, our

group will be delivering letters from those of us seared by the American war in Vietnam, to be placed at the Vietnam Memorial as a form of remembrance for those who died. We will then solemnly walk the wall to honor those who lost their lives, starting with the first U.S. soldier killed and finishing with the last. We will continue the walk for the even greater number who lost their lives from war-related injuries, including suicide from moral injury. Our walk will then continue on to commemorate the approximately 6 million Southeast Asian lives lost. If one uses the same relative number of fallen per meter as the wall does, this walk will have to continue on for miles. I will do the full walk in memory of the 6 million if I am done with planting and can be there.

While dealing with my own cognitive dissonance, I am reminded of Polonius’ advice to Laertes. In “Hamlet,” Polonius tells his son, “To thine ownself be true, And it must follow, as the night the day, Thou canst not then be false to any man.”

Paul Appel is a Vietnam veteran and area farmer. He lives near Altona, Ill.

A Call to The Wall Staughton Lynd Looks Back over 50 Years

Join Veterans For Peace (VFP) as we gather at The Wall in Washington, D.C., this Memorial Day to mark the 50th anniversary of what some consider to be the beginning of the American War in Vietnam. The Pentagon is marking this year by mounting an initiative to convince younger generations that the war was a noble enterprise. We disagree.

We see the war as a grievous mistake if not a horrific crime. We have pledged to meet their campaign with one of our own—the Vietnam War Full Disclosure movement (vietnamfulldisclosure.org). Please join us in expanding the narrative. We need to hear your voice. To begin with, we need you to write a letter. A special letter.

We are calling on you who have been seared by this war to send a letter addressing the Vietnam War Memorial (The Wall) in Washington, D.C., directly. Take a moment to share your memories of this war and its impact on your loved ones and your concerns over future wars. Direct your words to those who died in the American War on Vietnam.

Spread the Word

Send us your letter and then send this request to ten of your friends and ask them to write their letters. And then ask them to send the request to ten of their friends.

At noon on Memorial Day, May 25, 2015, we will place these letters at the foot of The Wall in Washington, D.C., as a form of remembrance, as a service, a commemoration of the terrible toll that war took on American and Southeast Asian families. And as a trumpet call for peace.

Once the letters have been placed, those of us who served in Vietnam will “walk The Wall,” continuing to mourn our brothers and sisters by starting at the panel commemorating our arrival in Vietnam and finishing at the panel marking our departure from Vietnam. But we will not stop there.

We will continue walking beyond The Wall to memorialize the six million Southeast Asian lives also lost during that war. This will be a symbolic act, for if we were to walk the total distance needed to commemorate those lives lost, using the model of The Wall, we would have to walk 9.6 miles. Nevertheless, we will carry the memory of those lives as best we can.

Email your letter to vncom50@gmail.com with the subject line Memorial Day 2015 or mail it to Full Disclosure, Veterans For Peace, 409 Ferguson Rd., Chapel Hill, NC 27516 by May 1, 2015. Email letters will be printed out and placed in envelopes. Unless you indicate otherwise, the contents of your letter will remain confidential and will not be used for any purpose other than placement at The Wall. However, if you want us to publicize your letter, we will post it on our website.

Vietnam War Memorial, Washington, D.C.

Respected brothers,

Greetings.

In early 2003, as war with Iraq became more and more likely, two friends of mine and I attended a founding meeting in Chicago of a group that called itself Labor Against the War.

To my surprise, the meeting was held at the union hall of a local union of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters. One of my traveling companions was a Teamster steward. The Teamsters are not noted for opposition to the government in its conduct of U.S. foreign policy. I sought out a couple of shop stewards and asked them what was going on.

“It was the Vietnam vets,” they told me. “They hit the mike at our local union meeting and said: We have seen this movie before.”

I am an Army veteran. I am not a Vietnam veteran. I, too, had



Dave Dellinger, Staughton Lynd, Bob Moses splashed with red paint by pro-war provocateur in Washington, D.C., August 6, 1965.

seen this movie before, but not in combat.

During the summer of 1964 I was the coordinator of Freedom Schools in Mississippi for what came to be called Mississippi Summer, or Freedom Summer.

During the first week of August 1964, three related things happened in Mississippi.

1. The bodies of civil rights workers James Chaney, Andrew Goodman, and Michael Schwerner were found.
2. The Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party (MFDP) held its founding convention in Jackson, the state capitol.
3. At an improvised memorial service in Philadelphia, Miss., where the three young men were murdered, Bob Moses, project coordinator, told us about the Tonkin Gulf resolution. At the time we did not know that the underlying “facts” of that event had been invented by the Johnson Administration. What angered Moses was that the United States could send armed forces to the other side of the world, allegedly to enhance democracy in Vietnam, but refused to send federal marshals to Mississippi to protect civil rights workers.

This was how I learned of the beginning of combat in Vietnam.

As a first-year assistant professor at Yale I found myself among longtime participants in American foreign policymaking. I debated Eugene Rostow at one of the Yale colleges. I came to know Yale chaplain William Coffin, a former CIA employee but an opponent of the Vietnam war. I took public positions against the war that were later advocated by Yale President Kingman Brewster and the historian who recruited me, Edmund S. Morgan. At the time, however, President Brewster said I was “giving aid and comfort to the enemy,” words from the law of treason.

Escalation

Nineteen-sixty-five drew me more and more toward outright, public, action against the war. Early in the year I chaired a meeting at Carnegie Hall in New York City, at which the keynote speaker was Sen. Ernest Gruening (D-Alaska). In April I was asked to chair what I believe to have been the first big public protest against the war in Washington, D.C., organized by Students for a Democratic Society. In August, on the 10th anniversaries of the nuclear bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, I was arrested along with Moses, David Dellinger, and other “unrepresented people.” We were arrested when attempting to assemble on the steps of the Capitol to state that someone else might be at war with the people of Vietnam, but we were not.

As American troops continued to land in Vietnam, to be stationed in bases like that at Danang, protest also escalated. Early in November a young member of the Society of Friends, or Quakers, burned himself to death within view of the Pentagon office of Secretary of Defense McNamara. (I am a Quaker.) In December, together with Tom Hayden and Herbert Aptheker, I made an unauthorized trip to North Vietnam in a desperate attempt to locate some clues, some openings that might help to make peace possible.

My trip to Hanoi cost me an academic career. Although not as sturdy at 85 as I was 50 years ago, I would do it again.

This is a small and inadequate way to express my solidarity with the thousands of young Americans and hundreds of thousands of Vietnamese who were killed in the Vietnam war.

Alas, such protest is still needed because, like the Rostows and the Bundys, U.S. policy makers still pursue the irrational belief that they can physically present themselves in a foreign country about whose culture they know next to nothing, destroy its existing institutions and cause its civil service and military employees to lose their jobs, leave after a few years, and ... create “democracy.” The only thing we can be sure has been created is death and poverty.

In the prose poem, “The People, Yes,” written by Carl Sandburg, a little girl attends her first military parade. She asks who are the marchers. Those are soldiers, says her adult companion. The little girl reflects. Finally she says, I know something. The response is more or less: Yes dear. What do you know? She answers: “Sometime they’ll give a war and nobody will come.”

Signed,
Staughton Lynd

Walking The Wall: A Song

For Don Evon

Note: My time in Vietnam started in early July, 1969—Wall panel number W21—and ended in early August, 1970—panel W7, line 29—a walk of 25 paces past the names of 9800 dead. This is called “walking The Wall.”

Got to tell you that you’re making me nervous
Every time you thank me for my service
I know you’re trying to be nice and kind
But you are really, truly fucking with my mind

Trust me, it’s not that I really care what you think
You who have had too much of their kool aid to drink
Trust me, you don’t know shit about what service really means
You just need to know that nothing is really as it seems

So take a walk with me down The Wall some late evening
Where we can all listen to the ghostly young soldiers keening
But don’t waste your time thanking them for their service
They just might tell you the truth—all your wars are worthless

—Doug Rawlings, Vietnam combat veteran

GI Resistance to the Vietnam War

... continued from page 1

fold. This wasn't limited to Southeast Asia; desertion rates among GIs were on the increase worldwide. For soldiers in the combat zone, insubordination became an important part of avoiding horrible injury or death. As early as mid-1969, an entire company of the 196th Light Infantry Brigade sat down on the battlefield. Later that year, a rifle company from the famed 1st Air Cavalry Division flatly refused—on CBS TV—to advance down a dangerous trail.

In the following 12 months the 1st Air Cav notched up 35 combat refusals. From mild forms of political protest and disobedience of war orders, the resistance among the ground troops grew into a massive and widespread “quasi-mutiny” by 1970 and 1971. Soldiers went on “search and avoid” missions, intentionally skirting clashes with the Vietnamese, and often holding three-day-long pot parties instead of fighting.

By 1970, the U.S. Army had 65,643 deserters, roughly the equivalent of four infantry divisions.

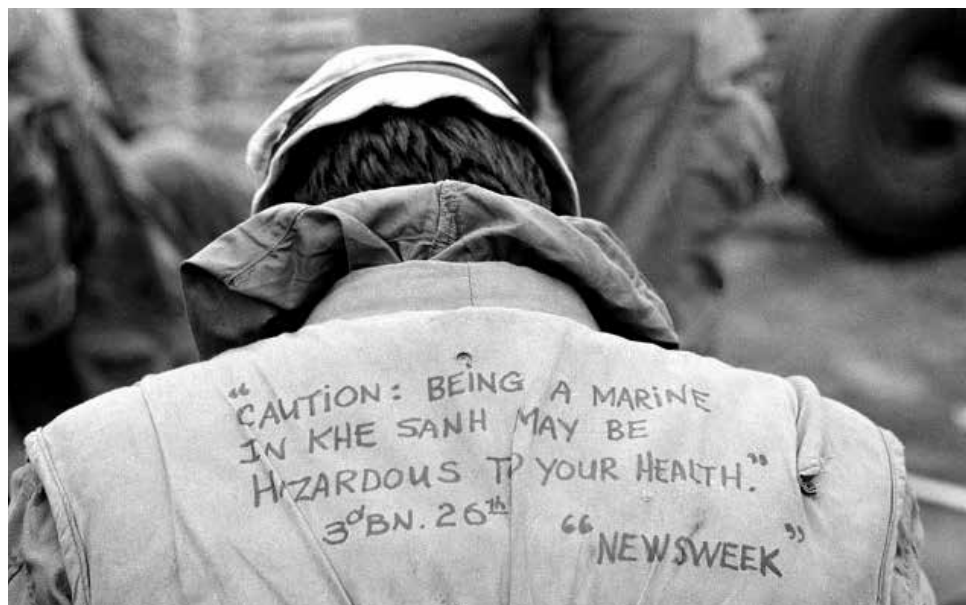
In an article published in the *Armed Forces Journal* (June 7, 1971), Marine Colonel Robert D. Heintz Jr., a veteran combat commander with over 27 years experience in the Marines, and the author of *Soldiers of the Sea*, a definitive history of the Marine Corps, wrote:

“By every conceivable indicator, our army that remains in Vietnam is in a state approaching collapse, with individual units avoiding or having refused combat, murdering their officers and non-commissioned officers. ... Sedition, coupled with disaffection from within the ranks, and externally fomented with an audacity and intensity previously inconceivable, infest the Armed Services.”

Heintz cited a *New York Times* article that quoted an enlisted man saying, “The American garrisons on the larger bases are virtually disarmed. The lifers have taken our weapons away ... there have also been quite a few frag incidents in the battalion.”

“Frag incidents” or “fragging” was soldier slang in Vietnam for the killing of strict, unpopular, and aggressive officers and NCOs. The word apparently originated from enlisted men using fragmentation grenades to off commanders.

Heintz wrote, “Bounties, raised by common subscription in amounts running anywhere from \$50 to \$1,000, have been widely reported put on the heads of leaders who the privates and SP4s want to rub out Shortly after the costly assault on Hamburger Hill in mid-1969, the GI underground newspaper in Vietnam, *GI Says*, publicly offered a \$10,000 bounty on Lieutenant Colonel Weldon Hunnicutt, the officer who ordered and led the attack The Pentagon has now disclosed that fraggings in 1970 (209 killings) have more than dou-



bled those of the previous year (96 killings).

“Word of the deaths of officers will bring cheers at troop movies or in bivouacs of certain units.”

Congressional hearings on fraggings held in 1973 estimated that roughly 3 percent of officer and non-com deaths in

racism that prevailed inside the Navy, black and white sailors occasionally rebelled together. The most significant of these rebellions took place on board the *USS Constellation* off Southern California, in November 1972. In response to a threat of less-than-honorable discharges

‘[O]ur army that remains in Vietnam is in a state approaching collapse, with individual units avoiding or having refused combat, murdering their officers and non-commissioned officers.’

Vietnam between 1961 and 1972 were a result of fraggings. But these figures were only for killings committed with grenades, and didn't include officer deaths from automatic weapons fire, handguns and knifings. The Army's Judge Advocate General's Corps estimated that only 10 percent of fragging attempts resulted in anyone going to trial.

In the Americal Division, plagued by poor morale, fraggings during 1971 were estimated to be running around one a week. War equipment was frequently sabotaged and destroyed. By 1972 roughly 300 anti-war and anti-military newspapers, with names like *Harass the Brass*, *All Hands Abandon Ship*, and *Star Spangled Bummer* had been put out by enlisted people. “In Vietnam,” wrote the *Ft. Lewis-McCord Free Press*, “The Lifers, the Brass, are the true enemy.”

Riots and anti-war demonstrations took place on bases in Asia, Europe, and in the United States. By the early 1970s the government had to begin pulling out of the ground war and switching to an “air war,” in part because many of the ground troops who were supposed to do the fighting were hamstringing the world's mightiest military force by their sabotage and resistance.

With the shift to an “air war” strategy, the Navy became an important center of resistance to the war. In response to the

deck. This fire was apparently set by a member of the crew. In an attempt to put out the fire from above, a hole was cut into the flight deck and hundreds of gallons of water were pumped into the computer room. This ruined crucial computer equipment and the aircraft carrier took on an exaggerated list, prompting concern that it might capsize. After this a nickname for the *Forrestal* among sarcastic sailors was the “Forest Fire.”

In late July, the *USS Ranger* was docked at Alameda, Calif. Just days before the ship's scheduled departure for Vietnam, a paint-scraper and two 12-inch bolts were inserted into the number-four-engine reduction gears causing nearly \$1 million in damage and forcing a three-and-a-half month delay in operations for extensive repairs. The sailor charged in the case was acquitted. In other cases, sailors tossed equipment over the sides of ships while at sea.

The House Armed Services Committee summed up the crisis of rebellion in the Navy:

“The U.S. Navy is now confronted with pressures which, if not controlled, will surely destroy its enviable tradition of discipline. Recent instances of sabotage, riot, willful disobedience of orders, and contempt for authority are clear-cut symptoms of a dangerous deterioration of discipline.”

The rebellion in the ranks didn't emerge simply in response to battlefield conditions. A civilian anti-war movement in the United States had emerged on the coattails of the civil rights movement, at a time when earlier pacifism-at-any-price tactics of civil rights leaders had reached their effective limit and were being questioned by a younger, combative generation. Working-class blacks and Latinos served in combat units out of all proportion to their numbers in U.S. society, and major urban riots in Watts, Detroit, and Newark had an explosive effect on the consciousness of these men. After the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr. major riots erupted in 181 U.S. cities; at that point the rulers of the United States were facing the gravest national crisis since the Civil War. And the radical movement of the late 1960s wasn't limited to the United States. Large-scale rebellion was breaking out all over the world, in Latin American and Europe and Africa, and even against the Maoists in China; its high point was the wildcat general strike that shut down France in May 1968, the most recent point at which a major industrialized democracy came close to revolution.



Some years ago, in a deceitful article in *Mother Jones* magazine, corporate liberal historian Todd Gitlin claimed that the peaceful and legal aspects of the 1960s U.S. anti-war movement had been the most successful opposition to a war in history. Gitlin was dead wrong; as a bourgeois historian, Gitlin is paid to render service unto capital by getting it wrong, and get it wrong he does, again and again. The most effective “anti-war” movement in history was at the end of World War One, when proletarian revolutions broke out in Russia, Germany, and throughout Central Europe in 1917 and 1918. A crucial factor in the revolutionary movement of that time was the collapse of the armies and navies of Russia and Germany in full-scale armed mutiny. After several years of war and millions of casualties, the soldiers and sailors of opposing nations began to fraternize with each other, turned their guns against their commanding officers, and went home to fight against the ruling classes that had sent them to war. The war ended with a global series of mutinies mirroring the social unrest spreading across the capitalist world; some of the most powerful regimes on Earth were quickly toppled and destroyed.

Soldiers in Revolt

Soldiers and sailors played a leading role in the revolutionary movement. The naval bases Kronstadt in Russia and Kiel and Wilhelmshaven in Germany became important centers of revolutionary self-organization and action, and the passing of vast numbers of armed soldiers and sailors to the side of the Soviets allowed the working class to briefly take power in Russia. The French invasion of Revolutionary Russia in 1919 and 1920 was crippled by the mutiny of the French fleet in the Black Sea, centered around the battleships *France* and *Jean Bart*. Mutinies broke out among sailors in the British Navy and in the armies of the British empire in Asia, and even among American troops sent to aid the counter-revolutionary White Army in the Russian Civil War.

The collapse of the armed forces is a make-or-break event for any mass revolutionary movement. In July 1936, Francisco Franco's invasion of Spain from North Africa was hampered by a mutiny that nearly destroyed the Spanish Navy. A study by the Spanish Republican government during the subsequent civil war concluded that roughly 70 percent of the officers of the Spanish Navy were killed in this revolt. During the May 1968 revolt in France, President Charles de Gaulle fled the country to consult with commanders in Germany, in part over his concern over whether he could count on the loyalty of French troops in the event of the mass strike wave continuing and turning into a civil war.

As recent events in Egypt show, any mass social movement that thinks “the army is on the side of the people” is doomed. An examination of what happened inside the U.S. military during the

Vietnam War can help us see the central role “the military question” is going to play in new mass social movements in the 21st century. It isn't a question of how a chaotic and rebellious civilian populace can out-gun the well-organized, disciplined armed forces of the capitalist state in pitched battle, but of how a mass movement can cripple the effective fighting capacity of the military from within, and bring about the collapse and dispersal of the state's armed forces. What set of circumstances can compel the inchoate discontent endemic in any wartime army or navy to advance to the level of conscious, organized, and ongoing resistance? How fast and how deeply can a subversive consciousness spread among enlisted people? How can rebels in uniform take effective, large-scale action against the military machine? This future effort will involve the sabotage and destruction of sophisticated military technologies, an irreversible breakdown in the chain-of-command, and a terminal demoralization of the officer corps. The “quasi-mutiny” that helped defeat the U.S. in Vietnam offers a significant precedent for the kind of subversive action working people will have to foment against 21st-century global capitalism and its high-tech military machine.

As rampaging market forces trash living conditions for the majority of the world's people, working-class troops will do the fighting in counter-insurgency actions against other working-class people. War games a decade ago by the Marines in a defunct housing project in Oakland, Calif., dubbed “Operation Urban Warrior,” highlight the fact that America's rulers want their military to be prepared to suppress the domestic fallout from their actions and be ready to do it soon. But as previous waves of global unrest have shown, the forces that give rise to mass rebellion in one area of the globe will simultaneously give rise to rebellion in other parts of the world. The armed forces are vulnerable to social forces at work in the larger society that spawns them. Revolt in civilian society bleeds through the fabric of the military into the ranks of enlisted people. The relationship between officers and enlisted people mirrors the relationship between bosses and employees, and similar dynamics of class conflict emerge in both military and civilian versions of the workplace. The military is never hermetically sealed off from the forces at work in the larger society that spawns it.

Our rulers know all this. Our rulers know that they are vulnerable to mass resistance, and they know that their wealth and power can be collapsed from within by the working-class women and men whom they depend on. We need to know it, too.

Much of the information for this article has been taken from the book Soldiers in Revolt: The American Military Today, by David Cortright.

Originally published at counterpunch.org.



Photo by Mike Hastie

Betrayal by the Money Changers

This is a picture of a Vietnam veteran at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Portland, Oregon.

Moments after he touched the name of a friend who was killed in Vietnam, he broke down. Not only did he break down for his friend, but he broke down for himself. The still living carry a burden that is so overwhelming. It is a trauma that never receives a Purple Heart—never. Day after day, month after month, year after year, decade after decade. The wound is called betrayal. It is a gunshot wound to the soul. Day after day, month after month, year after year, decade after decade. Drip after drip after drip after drip. Betrayal is the insidious and pervasive wound that eats away the heart and soul.

The vet eventually drifts away from everything and everybody.

That's what happened to a Vietnam veteran friend of mine. He left his home and went to a motel room. Drip after drip after drip. They found him the next morning. He had hung himself in the closet. Why did he do this? Because, Betrayal is the gunshot wound to the soul. Lying is the most powerful weapon in war. It drained everything from his life. The bleeding never stopped. This country never stopped the bleeding. Drip after drip after drip. Here rests in emotional silence, an American veteran known but to God.

—Mike Hastie



U.S. Army medic Mike Hastie in Vietnam

Working at the Intersection of GI Rights and Civil Rights

A lawyer looks back at the start of her career during the Vietnam War

By Barbara Dudley

In 1971, just a month after graduating from law school, I and four other National Lawyers Guild members went to Southeast Asia with the guild's newly created Military Law Project to serve as civilian defense counsel for GIs who were facing courts martial for resisting the war. The military was reluctant to hold trials back in the States for GIs who were opposing the war, lest the folks back home were to understand the level of resistance, so, for the most part, the trials happened on bases in Asia, but military law allowed

Racial tension permeated the American ground troops in Vietnam. The Black Panther Party was giving a voice to a growing radicalism among blacks. Black Panthers were brutally gunned down in their homes by police in Los Angeles and Chicago. Tanks and SWAT teams were becoming commonplace in U.S. cities. This tension was interwoven with the growing resistance to the war in Vietnam. In 1967, Martin Luther King Jr. gave a speech that riveted the nation, but which is largely ignored today as King's legacy is sanitized and de-politicized.

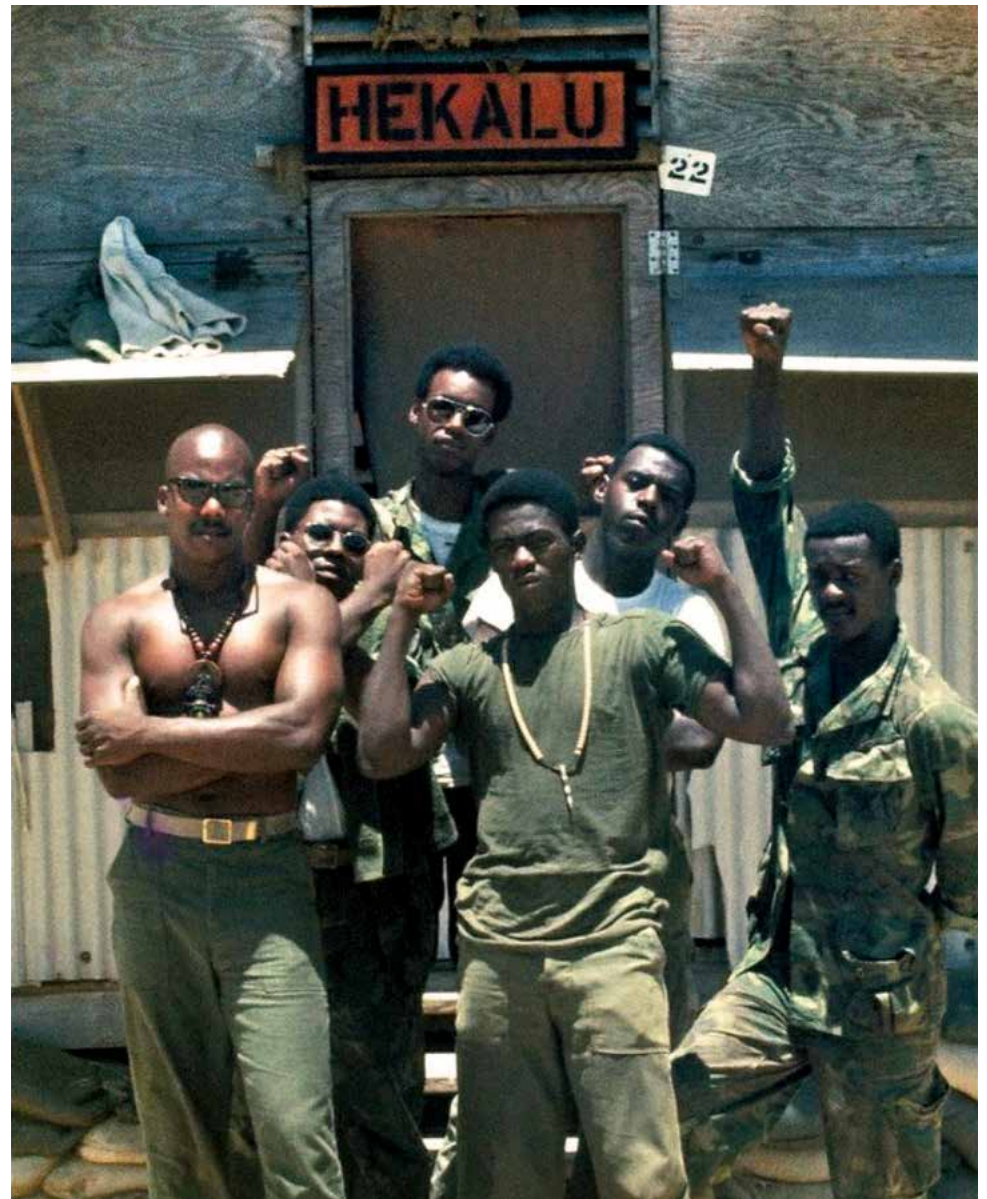
"Since I am a preacher by trade, I sup-

Only the black members of the unit were ordered out on patrol that day. They refused to go.

service members to have civilian defense counsel if any were available. We decided to make ourselves available.

Most of my cases were in courts on U.S. bases in the Philippines at Subic Bay Naval Base and Clark Air Force Base, but in November, 1971, I went to Vietnam for a few months to defend 13 black GIs against charges of "mutiny." These men had been part of a unit at a fire base near the demilitarized zone between north and south Vietnam. They had requested permission to go to Cam Ranh Bay, a large American base nearby, to attend a memorial service organized by the Black Panthers for some black children killed in a church bombing in Los Angeles. Permission had been denied, and they had been ordered out on patrol.

pose it is not surprising that I have several reasons for bringing Vietnam into the field of my moral vision. There is at the outset a very obvious and almost facile connection between the war in Vietnam and the struggle that I, and others, have been waging in America. A few years ago there was a shining moment in that struggle. It seemed as if there was a real promise of hope for the poor—both black and white—through the Poverty Program. There were experiments, hopes, new beginnings. Then came the buildup in Vietnam, and I watched the program broken and eviscerated as if it were some idle political plaything of a society gone mad on war. ... We were taking the young black men who had been crippled by our society and sending them 8,000 miles away



to guarantee liberties in Southeast Asia which they had not found in Southwest Georgia and East Harlem. ...

"In the ghettos of the North over the last three years ... as I have walked among the desperate, rejected and angry young men, I have told them that Molotov cocktails and rifles would not solve their problems. I have tried to offer them my deepest compassion while maintaining my conviction that social change comes most meaningfully through nonviolent action. But they asked—and rightly so—what about Vietnam? They asked if our own nation wasn't using massive doses of violence to solve its problems, to bring about the changes it wanted. ... I knew that I could never again raise my voice against the violence of the oppressed in the ghettos without having first spoken clearly to the greatest purveyor of violence in the world today—my own government."

This was the background for the trumped-up mutiny charges against the GIs I was in Vietnam to defend. Only the black members of the unit were ordered out on patrol that day. They refused to go, thinking it a setup. While they were in their bunker that evening, stun grenades were tossed in, and when they came bursting out of the bunker in panic and confusion, they were met not by the enemy, but by their white counterparts and their lieutenant, and were arrested for mutiny. No one was hurt except one of the black defendants deafened by the grenade blasts.

And no one disputed the basic facts. This, and the subsequent court martial, shaped my view of race relations in the U.S. military in Vietnam. Only by threatening to bring the press into the picture, to get the story published in the press back home, was I able to keep all but one of the defendants out of jail, but all of the others received less than honorable discharges. No one was ever prosecuted for throwing the grenades.

It was not only black GIs who were rebelling against the war from the inside. As it became clear that the United States didn't have a clear objective in the war, that there was no way to "win" without annihilating the entire Vietnamese population, more and more ground troops were reluctant to die for nothing. Hundreds of officers and non-commissioned officers were killed by their own troops while leading patrols; many others died of "unknown causes."

Colonel Robert Heinl Jr. a 27-year Marine combat veteran, wrote the following in 1971:

"The morale, discipline and battle-worthiness of the U.S. Armed Forces are, with a few salient exceptions, lower and worse than at any time in this century and possibly in the history of the United States. By every conceivable indicator, our army that remains in Vietnam is in a state approaching collapse, with individual units avoiding or having refused combat, mur-

continued on page 14 ...

