

Peace in Our Times



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

The Golden Rule Sails Again

Veterans For Peace Restores First Peace Boat

By Arnold "Skip" Oliver

Veterans For Peace now has its own navy. Thanks to an improbable chain of circumstances, the sunken wreck of the modern era's first peace ship was donated to the organization and then lovingly and laboriously rebuilt over the past five years.

In a dramatic ceremony June 20 the Golden Rule was re-christened and slid down the ways of the Zerlang & Zerlang boatyard into the chilly waters of Humboldt Bay in Northern California. Thus begins a new voyage of peacemaking in the waters around North America and beyond.

Photo by Jane Braxton Little



The new skipper, Steve Neinhaus

History

During the late 1940s and 1950s, above-ground nuclear weapons tests conducted by the United States, Great Britain, and the Soviet Union were producing readily detectable clouds of radioactive fallout that traversed the entire planet. Radiation contamination began turning up in cows' milk and mothers' milk. Despite government assurances that there was nothing to worry about, public concern grew, and many began to question the nuclear arms race.

In response, a group of antinuclear activists purchased a 30-foot ketch, which they named the *Golden Rule*, and set sail toward the Marshall Islands in the Western Pacific Ocean. Their goal was to openly sail into the target area of the U.S. hydrogen bomb blasts; they were willing to sacrifice the boat and their own lives if necessary to stop the tests. They informed the U.S. government of their plans and publicized the impending voyage widely.

The *Golden Rule* set sail from San Pedro, Calif., on February 10, 1958, but never made it to the test site. The ship was twice boarded by the U.S. Coast Guard near Hawaii, and her crew members were arrested, tried, and jailed in Honolulu.

While the boat was docked in Hawaii, the *Golden Rule* crew became friendly with the Reynolds family, who were circumnavigating the globe on their *Phoenix of Hiroshima*. Skipper Earle Reynolds was a scientist who

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Antinuclear activist Albert Bigelow (second from left) with crew members William Huntington, Orion Sherwood, and George Willoughby in Hawaii in 1958

Photo by the Honolulu Star-Bulletin. Courtesy of Swarthmore College Peace Collection. Albert Bigelow Photo Collection

Letters

Important Work

What an important and wonderful thing you are doing.

I am the niece of a Vietnam vet who only passed away last year. But it is not hyperbole to note that the war killed him. He returned after two tours, married and had two children. But the war never left him and he sank deeper into alcoholism and depression. It ruined his marriage, it destroyed his health. It stole his youth.

The Veterans for Peace movement is one of the most important social justice groups in existence today. Thank you for spreading the truth and refusing to let the powers that send men and women off to die have the final say.

Much peace,
Carleen M. Loper

Name Change of War Crimes Times

I remember taking part in three or four conversations last year in which people were saying, “such a good paper, but not a good name” ... so glad it has made a transition!

Sherry Conable
Santa Cruz, California

Can we really have Peace in Our Times?

History shows that America has been at war 222 out of 239 years since 1776. Militarism is an establishment inherent in capitalism which is called upon to build up and use military power to preserve class oppression, tighten the grip on the exiting, and conquer new spheres of economic and political sway of the exploiting classes. Militarism comes on the scene in capitalist states pursuing a policy of expansion and an arms race, preparing for wars of conquest. the objectives, level and forms of militarism are determined by

imperialist policy.

This long war on humanity and its ultimate objectives is world conquest under the cloak of human rights and western democracy. Capitalism also creates an insouciant society, where people cannot tell genuine from fake leadership, and the ruling private elites will not permit real leaders to emerge. Moreover, there is no organized movement in opposition to the democrat/republican neo conservatives.

The name change to ‘Peace in Our Times’ lulls the vigilance and attention of the people with an illusionary phrase not in touch with reality, as human dignity is something one need not look for in the world of capitalists. Let’s call it what it is WAR CRIMES!

George Lewis
Veterans for Peace
Ventura County Chapter

Editor’s reply:

Dear George:

As a founding member of Veterans For Peace and as a contributing editor of this paper, I have to take exception to your suggestion that we revise our title back to *War Crimes Times*. I think our new masthead much better reflects the spirit of VFP since its inception—to abolish war. And to fight for peace. Trust me, we have heard from a few people that VFP’s vision of a world without war is straight from Pollyanna. But we disagree. It is that vision, the only one really that makes sense for all of us, that drives us forward. It worked for Albert Einstein after the horrors of World War I, and it should work for us. We need peace in our times. Thanks for writing, and thanks for joining with us in this fight.

Best, Doug Rawlings,
Veterans For Peace
Maine Chapter

A Note from the Editors

This issue of *Peace in Our Times* is graced with the personal stories of three veteran medics: Spc. Robert Weilbacher, an Army combat medic stationed in South Korea who is currently battling the Army to recognize the conscientious objector status granted him by their own CO Review Board (p. 4); Navy corpsman Mark Foreman, who witnessed extreme brutality and madness in combat service with the Marines in Vietnam (p. 3); and Doug Peacock, who served for 18 months as a Green Beret during the Vietnam war and has spent 30-plus years grappling with the dark knowledge and significant psychic scars gained from that experience (p. 5).

These should be required reading for anyone who wants to understand the considerable anger, stress, and anxiety that plagues many veterans—especially combat veterans, although basic training and other aspects of military culture can also leave a heavy mark. From reading just these three pages, you can get a pretty good sense of where that slow-burning fire comes from that resides in the bellies of so many veterans-turned-peace activists.

A publication of Veterans For Peace (VFP), *Peace in Our Times* exists to share the angst and wisdom of such veterans, as well as others who struggle alongside them to understand and to change the pathology of our nation’s military-industrial war-making mindset.

As usual, many of the articles published herein are about bearing witness. From Baltimore to Baghdad, Charleston to Vietnam, the West Bank to Okinawa to Jeju Island, peace veterans and their allies are coming together to confront violence, to turn it around, and to help heal the wounds of war. Publishing these stories in one place helps connect the dots between seemingly disparate struggles, and

IF YOU WORK
FOR PEACE



nurtures unity and solidarity within and between different movements.

Whether about veterans helping veterans overcome addiction and gain tech skills (p. 7), the brilliant campaign launched by VFP UK to stop under-aged kids from being used as cannon fodder by the military (p. 15), or “Barefoot Artists” painting murals for a “typical” Palestinian village (p. 16), our stories illustrate what you might call the three Cs of peace activism—caring, compassion, and creativity.

In a public act of mass creativity, VFP members gathered at the Vietnam War Memorial in Washington, D.C., this Memorial Day to deliver over 150 letters addressed to The Wall or to those whose names are listed on it (p. 10). Powerful acts such as these do reverberate, and we will do what we can to support and grow such efforts in order to break through the sound barrier of corporate-owned, mainstream media.

We hope you will help us grow by finding creative ways to distribute *Peace in Our Times* in your community. Although we know they will enjoy the reading, don’t just give the paper to your peace-loving friends; drop off a few copies at your local library, coffee shop, bookstore, hairdresser, laundromat, dentist or doctor’s office. Offer one to your neighbor. Order a bundle for your local veterans hospital or vet counseling center and request that they put them out next to all the other military publications.

CORRECTION

The Agent Orange article by Bill Fletcher in the spring issue of *Peace in Our Times* lists the incorrect number for the legislation currently in Congress. The correct number is H.R. 2114.

Peace in Our Times

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Nick Anderson, Houston Chronicle

By Mike Ferner

In the Mouth of the Beast

War's Truth Is in the Details



Mark Foreman, just before he was deployed to Vietnam

"It was pitch black, so I started feeling my way up the mountain with my hands leading me toward the sound of the moans. I found one Marine entangled in a bush and asked him if he was hit. He weakly said, 'all over Doc.'

"It was too dark to see where he was bleeding, so I began feeling his head and face. There was a thick clump just below his left eye, so I tied a battle dressing over it, then tore his shirt open and found six sucking chest wounds. Air gurgled out of each of the holes when he took a breath. I put Vaseline gauze bandages over each hole to keep his breath from escaping. Next, I found a deep laceration on his right wrist, but it wasn't bleeding. He was in deep shock and his circulatory system had shut down.

"Carrying him down the hill in the dark with my platoon sergeant, we finally reached a jeep that would take him to a helicopter landing zone to be medivac'd to a field hospital. Just as the driver started heading down the mountain, the Marine stopped breathing, but when I started mouth-to-mouth, I felt a mist of warm blood spraying into my face.

"I realized then that the thick clump I felt on his cheek earlier was actually his left eyeball. His throat was so clogged with blood that the air was blowing out his eye socket instead of reaching his lungs.

"I had to do a tracheotomy on him ... and fast. I yelled at the driver to stop, found my scalpel and cut a small, deep slit in his throat just under his Adam's apple. I took a ballpoint pen out of my back-pack, took it apart, and inserted the hollow cartridge through the slit in his throat and began blowing air into his lungs. It worked! His lungs filled with air and the Vaseline gauze bandages held.

"Then his heart stopped. Again, I yelled for the driver to stop. My sergeant took over the breathing while I started closed cardiac massage. We came to the helicopter landing-pad, lifted him out of the jeep and continued our efforts plus trying to start an IV, but his blood vessels had collapsed.

"We kept trying to keep him alive until the medivac helicopter and doctor arrived, three hours later. After checking him, the doctor looked up and said he'd been dead for two hours.

"I didn't know when to stop trying to keep him alive. We weren't taught to diagnose death in hospital corps school."

Thus, at 19, was Mark Foreman introduced to war.

The son of a master plumber dad and a fulltime mom in Ames, Iowa, Mark graduated in 1966, "with lousy grades." He dreamed of going to art school, but couldn't afford college. So as a healthy 18-year-old he automatically fell into a demographic with many other young men—available cannon fodder. Before the year was out, he enlisted.

He chose the Navy hospital corps to keep out of the draft and avoid Vietnam, but didn't learn until after boot camp and most of hospital corps school that corpsmen serve with the Marines and had a very short life expectancy in combat.

Regardless, he told his platoon leader upon arriving in Vietnam late in March 1968, "I won't carry an M-16 and I won't kill anybody while I'm over here, I'm going to save as many lives as I can."

"Even if they were going to kill me, I didn't want to kill them because I knew it would destroy me," he said, adding, "I was a conscientious objector without knowing it."

Mark saw the brutality and madness of combat. The Marine he performed a tracheotomy on that night was killed accidentally by his own squad leader trying to

show his men how to set up a trip-flare. The flare ignited accidentally and the sergeant tried putting it out with his flak jacket, forgetting it contained three grenades. They exploded, injuring everyone in the squad and killing the one Mark worked on.

The night of May 8, Mark's under-strength company of 83 Marines stumbled into an encampment of 1,500 North Vietnamese Army (NVA) regulars. The NVA welcomed the Marines with a furious, 10-minute burst of machine gun and rifle fire, filling the air with thousands of red tracers. "The roar of that many machine guns was unbelievable. I thought my brain was going to explode."

Then, as if on cue, the firing stopped. Mark and a fellow corpsman, Harry Bowman, heard the gut-wrenching screams from the wounded and climbed out from cover to bring them in.

Mark found one Marine sitting against a boulder whose "arms and legs were flailing as if he was being swarmed by bees," he recalled.

"Something white was covering his face. As I got closer I could see it was a large portion of his brain. He'd been shot through the top of the head, splitting his skull wide open. Training never showed me anything like this. I crawled next to him and wrapped my legs around his torso while I tied two battle-dressings over the top of his head. But when I let go, he ripped the bandages off. I knew he couldn't live much longer, but I called out for help. A Marine crawled over and I asked him to hold his arms while I replaced the bandages."

For most of an hour, Mark worked on that Marine, listening to the wounded howling all around him. "The screaming was unbelievable ... it was overwhelming."

"I felt like I was in a black tunnel ... I had just experienced a young guy with his brains hanging over his face ... it's hard to admit what happened next ... I became paralyzed. My whole body was buzzing. I couldn't move ... lost my hearing ... went blank into some kind

of shock. I remember being conscious but my hearing went dead."

The next thing he could remember was about eight or nine hours later.

"When I 'came to,' my senses started coming alive again. I could hear moaning now instead of screaming. But I knew everyone had to be on hair trigger and if I started crawling around I'd get shot by one of my own guys or the NVA. So I just crawled between the roots of a big tree with Harry. We didn't talk. We just fell asleep."

"I woke up just as dawn was giving form to the trees. The NVA opened up on us again with every thing they had. Again the roar. This time we were sitting ducks because it was getting light."

Again, the shooting suddenly stopped. Again wounded Marines screamed for help. Mark and Harry crawled out from behind cover. Another burst of machine gun fire rang out and a Marine yelled, "Doc Bowman's been hit ... they got Harry."

Mark turned and saw Harry lying on his back on top of a big rock, 30 feet away.

"His arms and legs were hanging motionless. I crawled to him, grabbing his wrist to feel for a pulse. He was dead. I saw the bullet hole that went straight through his heart. I felt no emotion. The world had become insane and Harry was lucky to be done with it."

Harry had been trying to reach a Marine whose left arm was blown off. Mark knew he would bleed out fast without a tourniquet so he reassured him, "You're gonna be all right, I'm coming."

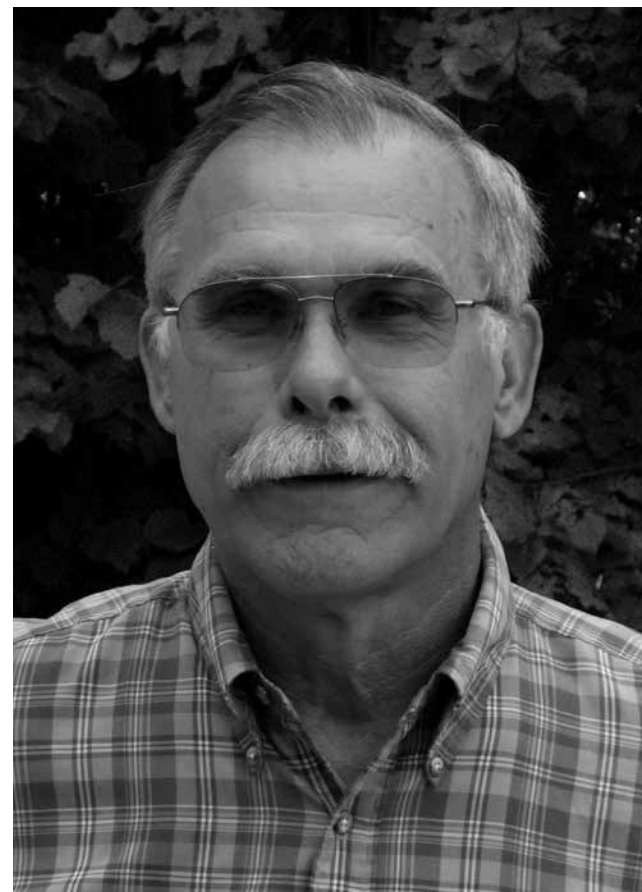
"I'm OK doc, but I'm bleeding bad ... you gotta stop the bleeding," the Marine answered.

As he crawled around Harry's body, machine-gun fire hit Mark, knocking him down the hill head over heels.

"I felt like I'd been hit by a cement truck and electrocuted with 50,000 volts of electricity ... everything began to move in slow motion. I could see my right leg slowly spinning, as if it was made of soft rubber. That's when I knew I'd been hit in the leg."

The bullet hit Mark just to the right of his groin, too high for a tourniquet, shattering his hip before exiting. He lay in the open, convinced he would bleed to death or be killed by the NVA. "I hoped it would be a good,

continued on page 9...



Mark Foreman today

By Chris Hedges

Thou Shalt Not Kill



Photo courtesy of Robert A. Weilbacher

Spc. Robert Weilbacher during an outing on Dobongsan Mountain in South Korea, where he went 'to escape the military and clear my head.'

The military in the United States portrays itself as endowed with the highest virtues—honor, duty, self-sacrifice, courage, and patriotism. Politicians, entertainers, sports stars, the media, clerics, and academics slavishly bow before the military machine, ignoring its colossal pillaging of state resources, egregious war crimes, abject service to corporate profit, and the blind, mind-numbing obedience it inculcates among its members. A lone soldier or Marine who rises up inside the system to denounce the hypermasculinity that glorifies violence and war, who exposes the false morality of the military, who refuses to kill in the service of imperial power, unmasks the military for what it is. And he or she, as Chelsea Manning has learned, swiftly pays a very, very heavy price.

Spc. Robert Weilbacher as a new Army combat medic stationed in South Korea listened to stories told by combat veterans, many suffering from trauma and depression, about the routine and indiscriminate slaughter of civilians in Iraq and Afghanistan. He was horrified. He considered himself a patriot. He had accepted the notion that the U.S. military was a force for good, intervening to liberate Iraqis and Afghans and fight terrorists. But after hearing the veterans' tales, his worldview crumbled. He began to ask questions, to think. And thinking within any military establishment is an act of subversion. He soon decided he did not want to be part of an organization that routinely snuffed out the lives of unarmed people, including children.

'The intent of [Officer Candidates School] was to normalize violence It was very effective. I didn't think about what I was doing. All I was thinking about was being a Marine Corps officer.'

He applied in February 2014 for a classification known as Conscientious Objector (1-0).

He instantly became a pariah within his unit. He was taunted as a "traitor," "coward," "faggot," and "hippie." He was assigned the most demeaning jobs on the base. He became an example to his fellow soldiers of the physical and emotional harassment, as well as humiliation, that is visited on all who dare within the military to challenge the sanctity of war and discipline.

"I feel as if my own government is torturing me," he said when I reached him by phone in his barracks at Fort Campbell, Ky.

Weilbacher, 27, grew up in poverty, raised by a single mother, in the inner city of Columbus, Ohio. As a student at Ohio State University, he started two organizations to help feed the homeless. He wanted to serve humanity. And, in the warped culture in which he lived—American culture—the best way to do that was to join the military, which was organized, he thought, around "noble ideals."

"The public perception, including at Ohio State, which has a big ROTC program, is that soldiers are heroic," he said. "They're serving their country. They're in the best Army in the world. I didn't question this. I watched the commercials with the climactic background music for the Marine Corps—'the few, the proud, the Marines.' The Marines have the biggest masculine factor. I thought, I have the credentials to be a Marine officer.

"Every message given to me by popular culture was that violence was a means of conflict resolution," he said. "This was especially true in the inner city where I grew up and where there is a lack of education."

When he graduated from college he signed

up for Marine Officer Candidates School and was sent to Quantico, Va., for boot camp.

"When we marched in formation we shouted out cadences," he said. "Most of the cadences were about killing. We shouted 'Kill! Kill! Kill!' We shouted 'What makes the green grass grow? Blood! Blood! Blood!' The intent of OCS [Officer Candidates School] was to normalize violence, to condition us. It was very effective. Again, I didn't think about what I was doing. All I was thinking about was being a Marine Corps officer."

But four weeks into his training in early 2012 he was injured and had to drop out. He was devastated. He did not want to begin the whole application process again with the Marines, and he enlisted in the Army in April 2013. He went to Fort Sill, Okla., for basic training. He was then trained as a medic at Fort Sam Houston, Texas. He enrolled in airborne school at Fort Benning, Ga., and during the second week of training was injured during a practice for landing falls.

In December 2013 he was deployed to Camp Hovey in South Korea, 10 miles from the border with North Korea. He was attached as a medic to the 4-7 Cavalry. He began to hear disturbing stories about the wars in the Middle East, stories about whole families being blown up or gunned down by U.S. troops in the streets of Iraq and Afghanistan. He lived among soldiers who were suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder. Many were drinking heavily. He listened to them talk about being prescribed anti-depressants by Army doctors and then being redeployed to Iraq and Afghanistan. He may have been a medic, but he was required to carry a weapon and to use it in combat. He knew that for him, to do so would be impossible.

"I joined the military because I wanted to help people, to fight for the greater good," he said. "And then I learned about innocent people being routinely blown up in war. I started researching the statistics on collateral damage in Iraq and Afghanistan.

"When we are trained as medics we are told that our task is to preserve fighting strength. Being a medic in the Army is not about helping the people who need it most. Treatment is first directed toward casualties that have the best chance to survive. Army medics exist to perpetuate warfare.

"I began to read about the wars in Vietnam and World War II," he said. "I read about Nagasaki, Hiroshima, Agent Orange, radiation, and how it's still affecting people today, how people are still dying or being born with congenital defects. I found Noam Chomsky and Howard Zinn. I had never heard of them. I guess there was a good reason I had never heard of them. I read *A People's History of the United States*, by Zinn. I read *Understanding Power*, by Chomsky. A lot of my influences, even though I am an atheist, came from religious figures like Gandhi, Father John Dear, and King. I read 'Pilgrimage to Nonviolence.' I know why they do not tell us the truth about war. We have a volunteer army. If people knew the truth it would decrease the numbers who want to join. I had been betrayed." Then, in early February 2014, he went to the website

of the Center on Conscience and War, led by Maria Santelli and Bill Galvin. Soon he contacted the two activists and told them he was a conscientious objector.

Everything about military culture, from its celebration of violence and hypermasculinity to its cult of blind obedience, began to disturb him. He was disgusted by the military's exploitation of women who worked in the bars and clubs near where he was stationed in South Korea.

"Filipino women were brought over to sing in the bars," he said. "They were great singers. They worked in bars where Korean women had been 'comfort women' during the Japanese colonization. The bar owners took the passports of the Filipino women. ... Soldiers bought drinks and sexual services from these exploited women. I had a big issue with that. It demonstrated a lack of values."

When he was off base he would meditate in Buddhist temples. That helped, he said, to keep him sane.

Although Army regulations required that his application be sent to the Department of the Army Conscientious Objector Review Board (DACORB) within 90 days, it took more than 200 days for the document to arrive there. On Dec. 16, 2014, he was granted conscientious objector status and an honorable discharge. But the deputy assistant secretary of the Army for review boards, Francine Blackmon, unilaterally

'Being a medic in the Army is not about helping the people who need it most. Treatment is first directed toward casualties that have the best chance to survive. Army medics exist to perpetuate warfare.'

overrode the DACORB determination and denied his application, even though Army regulations state that a review board decision is final. Now, in a final bid to achieve conscientious objector status, he has turned to the American Civil Liberties Union.

This will be his last bureaucratic battle with the Army. He has followed the rules for two years. He will not, he said, be in the Army in 2017 at the scheduled end of his tour.

Chris Hedges is a journalist, activist, and author of best-selling books including *War Is a Force That Gives Us Meaning* (2002) and *Days of Destruction, Days of Revolt* (2012, written with cartoonist Joe Sacco). He spent nearly two decades as a foreign correspondent and has reported from more than 50 countries.

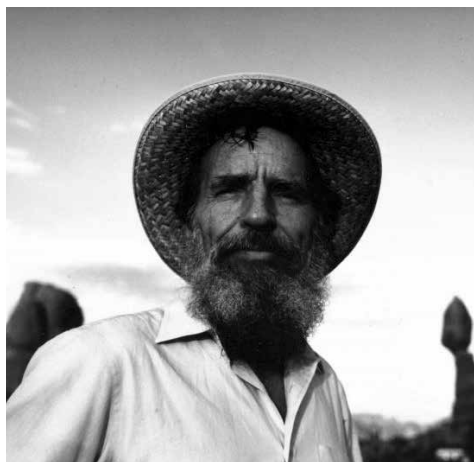
Doug Peacock Shows Us How to Walk It Off

Doug Peacock is an inspiration to environmental activists who come out of the Earth First! mold. He served 18 months as a Green Beret medic in Vietnam. He was the model for the character George Washington Hayduke in Edward Abbey's classic The Monkeywrench Gang. He demonstrates the therapeutic value of both justice-oriented political action and getting back to nature. In the following passages from his memoir, Walking It Off, he reflects on having a fictional character based on him, providing insight into the psyche of the "returning warrior." Among his other works are In the Shadow of the Sabertooth, The Essential Grizzly, and Grizzly Years, and the movie, Peacock's War. His website is dougpeacock.net.

Depression stripped me of my sense of humor and reduced the volume of my voice by half. ...

I craved a crack of insight into this darkness. I turned back to Ed's writings, seeking utility, and then to other sources.

Abbey had views on war and warriors, which he had invested in George Washington Hayduke, who made his fictional appearance in 1975, five years before official recognition of the syndrome known as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Ed nailed the PTSD with visionary accuracy and sketched the character of Hayduke with the insight that George's great anger resulted from witnessing injustice—such as events in Vietnam—and that this rage could be turned into a positive weapon, especially in the war against industrial desecration of the wilderness.



Edward Abbey

Though Hayduke didn't look like he was especially fragile or appear to be the sort of guy who would agonize over matters of the spirit, the source of that anger had everything to do with soul; his great anger and damaged soul were in fact polar worlds in balance.

My war was neither fiction nor an unfortunate slice of life from which one skips cleanly away. There remains the unavoidable price to be paid for discovering that all

things are indeed permitted. Beyond this door lies dread as well as knowledge.

[W]hen I saw the photographs of the My Lai massacre in *Life Magazine* ... [and I] turned each page, layers of denial peeled off my brain. ... in Vietnam, individual monstrous events, the murder and rape of civilians, happened every day. Massacres of noncombatants, little My Lais, were common. But the scale of the My Lai massacre made me literally tremble. My soul shuddered. That image of slaughtered babies lying bloody in the ditch was seared across my consciousness forever.

I was nearby when hundreds of men, women, and children were massacred by America. ... It was my last day in the field, the boonies as they were called, on my second tour at the A-camp of Bato, in Quang Ngai Province, a little more than 30 miles south-southwest of My Lai. Later that morning I boarded my last helicopter for the ride up the coast to Danang. We flew directly over the hamlet of My Lai. I had no idea, of course, that at that very moment American GIs were systematically executing as many as a half of a thousand unarmed civilians as we soared over.

What sickened me and drew me to the slaughter at My Lai was the knowledge that more than a hundred American troops had been on the scene, many more saw or knew what was going down, and so very few (with the notable exception of Warrant Officer Thompson) spoke out or acted to try to stop the killing. A thousand times, I dreamed or imagined myself at My Lai and wondered exactly what I would have done; I couldn't quit reliving this fantasy. I believed then, want to believe now, that I would have done everything in my power to make the soldiers who were killing humans, many of them children, like cattle or pigs, stop—or die trying.

Of course, the fantasies were impotent. Instead, I went on stumbling through a disordered life with a renewed vigilance aimed at precluding more My Lais, hardly a practical readjustment tactic. New wars could trigger these ghosts. You never really left the killing zone, and perhaps, I never will.

Another problem of my particular kind of war is that you were supposed to die, but I didn't. This failure somehow permeates one's ability to live a normal life.

Thirty-some years after leaving Vietnam, like thousands of other veterans, I remain hypersensitive to war. The discussion of butchery in the remote world is never quite safely compartmentalized; it's no dark abstract or journey up a river of esoteric horror. Armed mobs and confrontations may jolt us, waking phantoms, shades

that re-emerged during certain times of stress or crises that trigger rampant recall of the otherwise selective memory of war, failures of recollection that shield and insulate the fragility of the soul.

Three years into my wanderings in the Western mountains and deserts, a government rating decision arrived: 'Evaluation of post-traumatic stress disorder is increased to 100 percent, on a permanent basis.' The determination of "Total and Permanent" was made within the Veterans Affairs, a process that included a number of doctors, hearing officers, and appeal boards. But I continued to deny aspects of the diagnosis and to hide others. There was a fragile logic in this: I refused to let what seemed to me an unavoidable and common consequence of war to mortally disfigure the core of my being. At the same time, the government



Doug Peacock

was stating quite clearly that I was totally wacko and forever unsuited to operate within what they called civilization.

We lived in two different worlds: the so-called mainstream, as represented by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, and my own, culturally skewed toward the wild, but, I thought, valid enough slice of reality. The VA had labeled me a misfit, and I considered the society it represented a pathological nightmare to which no one should consider readjusting. The message was that I was now the outsider, isolated if not unique. I accepted, and accept, their appraisal.

I believed the conventional interpretation of this disability—chronic adaptive disorder—misleading. Those few story nuggets my uncles, who fought in WWII, shared with me have informed and stayed with me for years. There is great need for the knowledge and the journey of modern men of war. And, as every warrior should know, within the traumatic memory of war and violence, which the soldier often ini-

tially avoids, there resides an invitation for change. Here is an opportunity to cross back over from the domain of the shaman to the human world with the story of the journey and the knowledge it contains.

"Total and Permanent Impairment" could be seen as a modern, metaphorical equivalent of bestowing "death eyes," which would have been a great honor in a shamanistic culture. Disabled vets might wear the invisible tattooing as a mark of distinction, a ritual scarification denoting your changed status, and as a warning to others that you have traveled beyond.

Whether acquired through war or some other trial and peril, the idea of "death eyes" means to see with complete objectivity, like the eye of nature, to see not good or evil but what is there prior to any judgment.

Soldiers often return with death eyes; these may be the eyes of depression, to which all life looks dead, or the eyes of an-

ger and withdrawal. ... This is not, I submit, a condition addressed by anger-management classes. The warrior has faced fear and an adversary too powerful. The soul flees. The instinct, at the onset, is to hide out from life until the opportunity arises to be reborn into more merciful borderlands.

In war, as in myth, no mortal can look at the naked face of reality and escape unscathed, innocence becomes impossible. It remains for men to complete this passage; the dark wisdom is absolutely relevant, the perfect time for all warriors, men as well as women, to return—if they can endure it—with the story of their journey.

I had no wisdom but I nevertheless believed it was our cruelty—the individual inhumane act—that keeps the freight of murder, genocide, and torture hurtling through the night. The converse is that the individual act of restraint, grace, and compassion, with its attendant affirmation of the value of an individual life, can begin a revolution.

War, Murder and the American Way

By Robert C. Koehler

He sat with them for an hour in prayer. Then he pulled his gun out and started shooting.

And today our national numbness is wrapped in a Confederate flag. The young man who killed nine members of Charleston's Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church on June 17 was an old-school racist. "I have to do it," Dylann Storm Roof is said to have explained. "You rape our women and you're taking over our country. And you have to go."

Roof's roommate told ABC News the next day that he was "big into segregation and other stuff" and "he wanted to start a civil war." And this is America, where we have the freedom to manifest our lethal fantasies.

But this is bigger than racism and the pathetic monster of white supremacy. Racism is a name for one of the currents of righteous hatred that coils through our collective unconscious, and over the decades and centuries it has motivated terrible crimes against humanity. But the "civil

[S]ome people become the enemy, not in a personal but merely in an abstract sense. ... When we call it war, it's as ... wholesome as apple pie. When we call it mass murder, it's not so nice.'

war" that Roof participated in is, I think, much larger and much more meaningless. And not all the participants are loners.

"In a pattern that has become achingly familiar to him and the nation," the *New York Times* reported, "Mr. Obama on Thursday strode down to the White House briefing room to issue a statement of mourning and grief as he called on the country to unify in the face of tragedy."

Indeed, it's the 14th time, according to *The Guardian*, he has done this since he's been in office. It's the 14th time he has said words like "I am confident that the outpouring of unity and strength and fellowship and love across Charleston today from all races, from all faiths, from all places of worship indicates the degree to which those old vestiges of hatred can be overcome."



America, America, land of the mass murderer.

Mass murders have increased fourteen-fold in the United States since the 1960s, sociologist Peter Turchin wrote two-and-a-half years ago, after the Sandy Hook killings. In his essay "Canaries in a Coal Mine," Turchin made a disturbing comparison: Mass murderers kill the same way soldiers do, without personal hatred for their victims but to right some large social wrong. He called it the "principle of social substitutability"—substituting a particular group of people for a general wrong.

"On the battlefield," Turchin wrote, "you are supposed to try to kill a person whom you've never met before. You are not trying to kill this particular person, you are shooting because he is wearing the enemy uniform. ... Enemy soldiers are socially substitutable."

"That is to say," I noted at the time, "the definition and practice of war and the definition and practice of mass murder have eerie congruencies. Might this not be the source of the social poison? We divide and slice the human race; some people become the enemy, not in a personal but merely an abstract sense—'them'—and we lavish a staggering amount of our wealth and creativity on devising ways to kill them. When we call it war, it's as familiar and wholesome as apple pie. When we call it mass murder, it's not so nice."

Dylann Roof had a toxic "cause"—to reclaim the Old South, to reclaim the country, from an unwelcome human subgroup—but the solidarity in which he acted wasn't so much with his fellow racists as with the strategists and planners of war. Any war. Every war.

Perhaps this is why, when I hear Obama laud "the outpouring of unity and strength and fellowship and love" in the wake of the Charleston murders, I feel only despair: despair as deep as a knife wound. War, not love, is structured into the nation's economic and social fabric. We invest trillions of dollars into its perpetuation, across Central Asia and the Middle East and wherever else the strategists and planners see evil, which is to say, opportunity.

Every murderer believes the violence he is wielding is "good violence." Think Timothy McVeigh, whose fertilizer bomb killed 168 people at the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City in 1995. He called his victims "collateral damage," co-opting the official language of the Gulf War in which he served. Mass murderers mimic and find their inspiration in the official wars we wage as a nation. Take away the massive public relations machinery that surrounds these wars and the deaths they cause are just as cruel, just as wrong. The abstract "enemy" dead, in every case, turn out to be human beings, who deserved to live.

And every war and every mass murder spread fear and hatred—and inspiration—in their aftermath. We can't go to war without spawning imitators. The next day, *USA Today* reported, the vigils at two South Carolina churches, in Charleston and Greenville, were disrupted by bomb threats and the churches had to be evacuated. So did Charleston's county building.

"At some point," Obama said, "we as a

country will have to reckon with the fact that this type of mass violence does not happen in other advanced countries. It doesn't happen in other places with this kind of frequency—and it is in our power to do something about it."

Until we begin demilitarizing our relationship with the world, such words uttered by presidents are as empty as the words Dylann Roof uttered in prayer at Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church on Wednesday night.

Robert Koehler is a nationally syndicated columnist and self-proclaimed peace journalist. He has been a Chicago-based reporter, editor and columnist for over 30 years. He is a featured writer on such sites as *Huffington Post* and *Common Dreams*. His website is *commonwonders.com*. His book, *Courage Grows Strong at the Wound* was published in 2010. He teaches a class at DePaul University called *Peace Journalism*.



Mass murder, whether in a church or in battle, starts with dehumanizing the target.

Mentoring in a Veterans Drug Court

Seeing addiction as a symptom of a society that violates human sensibilities for profit

By Wilson (Woody) Powell

Room 512 in the Mel Carnahan Court-house building has no windows. The men seated in stackable black chairs around its periphery are, for the most part, looking inward. They are military veterans gathered for a meeting that occurs every two weeks prior to facing the judge, an hour later, in court.

Nineteen participants, six veteran mentors, are there to share their progress, their experience, strength and hope, in a highly structured effort to bring normalcy and sobriety to lives disrupted by PTSD and the drugs taken to erase memories and kill feelings.

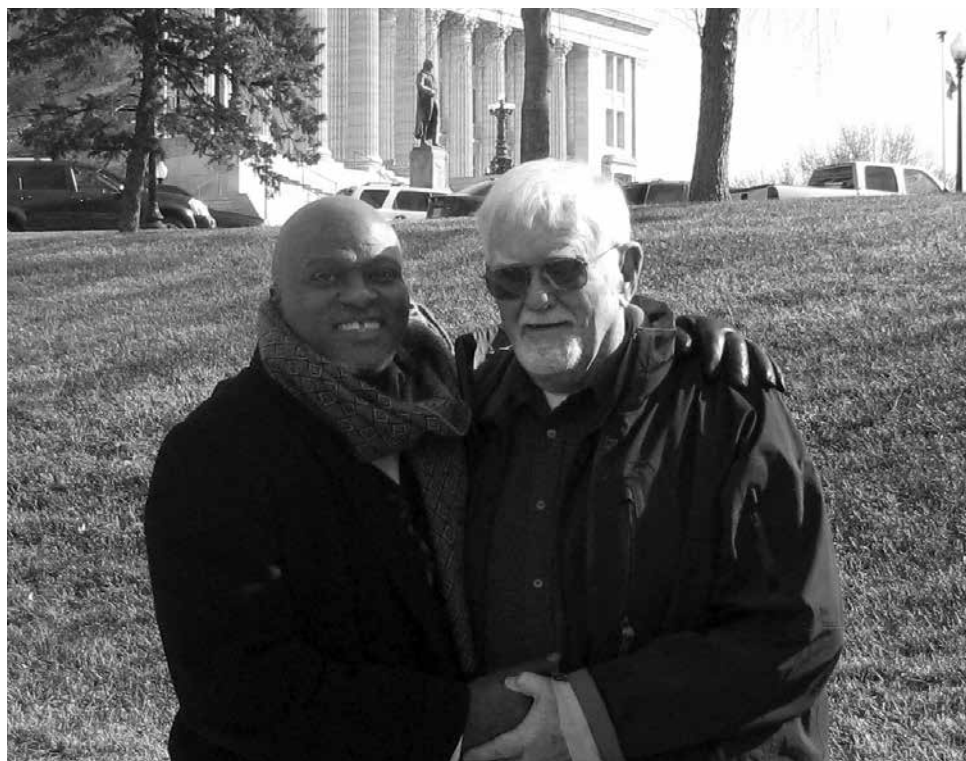
This is the Veterans Drug Court of St. Louis, Mo. On average, participants undergo 18 months of supervised drug and alcohol treatment, regular and random “drops” (urine sampling), psychiatric evaluation and treatment, community service stints, “self-help” meetings, sign-off sheets, and regular appearances before Judge James E. Sullivan to gauge progress and stimulate compliance.

Robert is the first to speak. He has the lined, somewhat flattened face of an old fighter graced, however, with a wide, thoroughly genuine smile. When he came in the room he went around, shook hands and hugged everyone there. He was especially affectionate toward the mentors.

Robert is one of the few with a job. It sucks, way underpaid for the heavy lifting work, but he’s grateful and has found the courage to seek another, better one, despite his felony record. What once kept him back is now loosening its hold as he gains confidence in himself.

A new guy just takes it all in. He has a slightly stunned look on his face. I’m sure he didn’t know what to expect when he reported for this first time at the courthouse. He knows the details of the program, the structured course he will have to follow to avoid a prison sentence. He’s a pre-sentenced participant, as opposed to those who are first sentenced, then offered the program that can, if they succeed, wipe the slate clean. Dontel is this young Navy vet’s name, and the resentment he feels shows in a steely gaze common to many of the younger vets when they first come in. He’s probably expecting a lecture.

Well, he won’t get it here. Each meeting someone different leads. We tell our stories, or the parts that apply to the pain another is feeling. The mentors are all vet-



The author (right) with Kennedy Davis, Vet Court grad and executive director of the Vet Court Technology Clinic.

erans and in recovery themselves. Some may even have records. We relate.

Russ shakes his head, smiling wryly, and talks about his telephone, which hardly ever rings now. “It used to ring all the time, day and night. Come on out, it’s a party, plenty of dope—or, man, I’m strung out. What you got? You know, everyone wanting me to get high with them or help them get there themselves. Now? I’m poison. The phone is dead.” He smiles as he goes on to tell of making new friends from the “self-help” meetings, and his fellow vets in the program right here. He’s relaxed.

We go around the room. Some are still silent, listening, trying to see their place in this unfolding chapter in their lives. They know this is a critical juncture. They know, from talking with others outside this room, that some of them won’t make it. If they don’t, it could mean prison or “going in the wind” (awaiting arrest at some future time). They are wondering if they can; wondering if they really want to. Sobriety can be a scary place when your only comfort for years has been a drug.

Others are moving along, beginning to “get” it, to smile and laugh now and then and tell a bit of what life is becoming, marking small changes in outlook along the way.

That is the challenge of this court and the challenge for us mentors: to guide these veterans through a stormy sea-change in their thinking. Our tools are simple: the ability to listen, to share honestly our own experience, to help out with matters of process that confound, to genuinely care what happens to our charges. During the weeks between court appearances, we meet with our charges, talk with them on the phone, make ourselves available, maybe do a little

research on a specific issue.

After meeting, we go into court and accompany the guys before the bench one by one as the judge reviews their progress. We are there to provide support and give the judge our insights when asked.

Judge Sullivan was never in the military, never, to our knowledge, had a DUI, but he’s made a genuine effort to understand the mindset of the addict. He is also thankful for our service. In his case, that translates into respect for the individual, not just an empty sentiment.

Part of understanding the addict is accepting failures along the way. That is why there are sanctions and protocols to deal with the almost inevitable “slips.” The offender pays for it with a few nights in jail or community service, but is also encouraged to develop the tools to avoid it next time. The key word, so far as Judge Sullivan is concerned, is “honesty.” Oh, he expects the usual range of excuses (“I

didn’t know that Nyquil had alcohol in it and I had a cold”) and slaps them down hard, insisting all the while on the truth. People come to realize that the truth is their savior, no matter the behavior.

A wide range of counseling and treatment options are provided, either directly or indirectly, by the Veterans Affairs Administration, most of it local. However, some specialized PTSD treatment for very difficult cases may require leaving the state.

Jimmy, massively tattooed, with 2-inch disks inserted in his ear lobes, desperately wanted to get free of his addiction but was held back by his emotional responses to his experiences in Iraq. There’s more to the story, involving his very dysfunctional family of addicts, but this is the part we could address.

Working with the VA and with a pro-bono lawyer to get releases from the various courts laying claim to Jimmy, we got him into an intensive PTSD treatment program in Topeka, Kansas. It helped to the point where Jimmy was able to graduate out of the court system. However, he relapsed after a few months. The mentors kept tabs on Jimmy, just in case, and got him back into treatment. We are all a work in progress.

Relationships develop, mentor-mentee, and it is inevitable that the mentors wind up with a personal stake in each of our charges. When they succeed, graduate, go back out and begin to engage the world on its terms, we feel joy.

When, despite a lengthy, determined struggle, there is relapse, we feel sad, but also hopeful that the lessons learned while in the system will eventually take hold. Once a vet has been exposed to people who really care and love him or her and has been given tools to cope with life’s injustices, there is a very good chance that, down the line, that vet will remember and pick up those tools once again.

Woody Powell is a Korean war veteran, former executive director of Veterans For Peace and a current member. He is the co-author, with Zhou Ming-Fu, of *Two Walk the Golden Road*.



Learning new skills at the Vet Court Technology Clinic.



Mural painted by Nether at the site where Freddie Gray was arrested, Gilmore Homes, Baltimore.

Letter from Baltimore

By Allison Deger

The Baltimore housing projects where 25-year-old Freddie Gray tried to outrun police before he was detained and dragged into the back of a police van and later died as a result of a severed spine, are spacious and clean but there are no yards. Manicured hedges line the Gilmore Homes development. Low-rise buildings ring a basketball court where dozens of children play with newly installed rope nets.

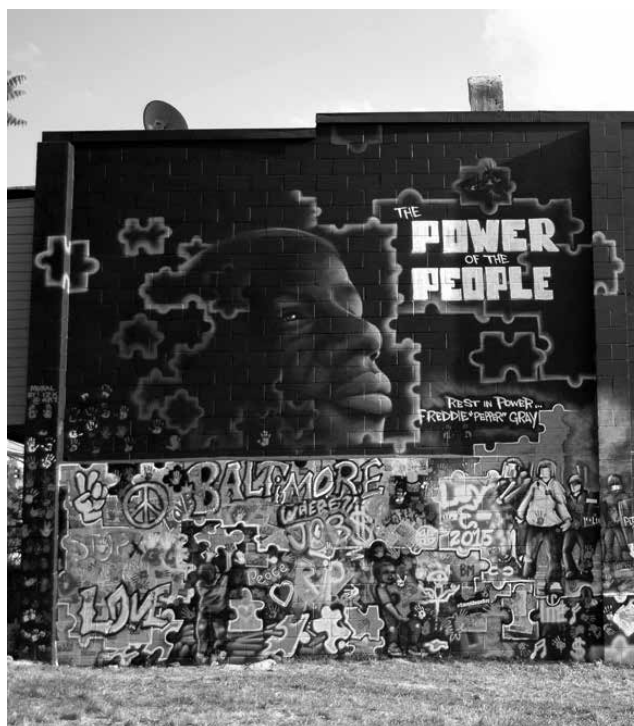
Eddie Conway, a former Black Panther turned producer for the Real News Network who spent 45 years in prison, paid for nets. Before Conway, Gilmore's residents shot basketballs into milk crates fastened to a plywood backboard. Needless to say, Conway is now a local hero, along with a street artist named Nether who painted three murals on Gilmore's exterior walls. These massive two-story paintings have become local tourist stops and mourning sites. In front of one of them sat a pair of black boots still in the box. Nether said they were a gift for Gray purchased before his death.

Having covered two wars and spent nearly three years reporting from the occupied Palestinian territory and Israel, I decided to visit the Baltimore projects in May in the wake of the National Guard's deployment. Although they bear little resemblance to the Middle Eastern conflicts I have seen, the televised images of the National Guard and tear gas, and public art works on walls that capture politics and death drew a superficial parallel I wanted to investigate further.

Gray is deeply missed in Gilmore's tight-knit community. It's the kind of place where everyone knows everyone. Gray was popular and had boyish good looks. He was known to spend his spare time outside, playing music on his phone and dancing with his closest friend and brother-in-law Juan, 27, a carpenter who makes jewelry boxes who asked me not to publish his last name. The two were inseparable over recent years. Juan smirked as he thought back to Gray's dance moves.

"He was my best friend. That's the person I've been through everything in my life with," Juan said. When Juan was 14 a stray bullet killed his paraplegic mother meters from where Gray was arrested. When it happened, Gray was there for him.

Gray died on April 19, 2015, and before long sections of Baltimore were on fire and there was unrest till charges for homicide and wrongful imprisonment were filed against six Baltimore city police officers. The National Guard was called in to patrol, mostly in the area where Gray was arrested, Sandtown-Winchester, or "Sandtown" as those who live there call it. Tensions escalated after the Bloods and the Crips penned a unity letter against police, and Mayor Stephanie Rawlings-Blake described the demonstrators as "thugs," prompting outcry from residents and other city officials who said her remark was derogatory.



While Baltimore is no longer at a fever pitch, locals are still angry with police over the handling of riots. Public schools were closed, shops were boarded up, and a cement barrier guarded by officers was erected, which locked in Sandtown's residents under the pretense of preventing the riots from spreading. After dark, plumes of tear gas fired by police wafted into homes. Countless people in Sandtown told me those days felt like a "military occupation."

"In other countries we see it all of the time. Like this is another regular day in like Greece, or wherever, in Brazil," said an activist with Baltimore Bloc, an organization that advocates for victims' families.

"Driving through West Baltimore with the National Guard patrolling the streets just felt so surreal," Gracie Greenberg, 25, who volunteered as jail support for arrested protesters, said. She violated curfew in order to get those who had been released at night home safe. "It looked like an occupied war zone," Greenberg said, "what I would imagine one to look like."

Moreover, those closest to Gray are still grieving. "I have nightmares," said Kiona Craddock, 25, a neighbor of Gray's grandmother who filmed the arrest on her phone. She remembers Gray looking at her straight in the eyes and saying, "I can't breathe," while police stood over him.

Joe Giordano, 41, a Baltimore native and photojournalist for *City Paper*, met me at a soul food restaurant near where Gray was arrested. He covered all of the protests and was one of two journalists detained without charge. Giordano said during the first clash authorities held back for 40 minutes while youth from Sandtown ig-

After dark, plumes of tear gas fired by police wafted into homes. Countless people in Sandtown told me those days felt like a 'military occupation.'

nited their neighborhood. "They locked it down after the police car was destroyed, after the check-cashing store was destroyed, after the CVS was destroyed, after two MTA [Maryland Transit Administration] vehicles were burned," he said. "I really don't get it. It's one of the things that sticks out in my mind. I don't understand why they waited so long."

By the time I arrived, the guard had left and the general curfew was lifted. Incidentally, the city has a year-round curfew for youth 14 years and under, a controversial law enacted last year under which minors can be brought to detention centers if found on the street after 9 pm.

Signs of the confrontations and looting after Gray's death were in plain sight. Sandtown is a food desert and the only market where fresh vegetables are carried is now charred. Vacant and dilapidated buildings line the main streets. Many of the spaces were burned out during the 1968 riots and never rebuilt. Others were boarded up two weeks ago as protection from the recent riots.

Looking forward, Juan hopes the six officers involved with Gray's death will serve time in prison. When State's Attorney Marilyn Mosby announced that they would be prosecuted for homicide and wrongful imprisonment, it was a surprise to many. But for Gray's friends and family she was fulfilling an election promise.

Mosby took her post last January when she beat incumbent Gregg Bernstein, who was in office during

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Baltimore Letter

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an uptick of murders in Baltimore. Mosby campaigned hard, and community members who are now protesting for Gray organized at least 60 protests against Bernstein. While Bernstein was perceived as soft on cops who kill and on gang violence, Mosby emerged as an advocate for victims' families. Her cousin was killed outside her front door in a shooting when she was just 14.

While popularly supported—"We think we have Mosby on our side," Juan said—she now faces challenges. Baltimore's police unions have called for her removal from the case. They say her marriage to Nick Mosby, a Baltimore councilman, is a "conflict of interest."

Mark Foreman

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clean shot. It would be a quick way to get the hell out of this insanity."

That didn't happen but what did over the next five days came straight through Alice's looking glass.

A Marine crawled into the open to pull Mark behind cover. Not a shot was fired. Others crawled out, piled some rocks around Mark and crawled back to cover.

Certain he'd bleed to death, he pressed a battle dressing to his wound anyway. An hour later he had a "moment of ecstasy" when he realized he'd survive if he could just get to a hospital.

That second day of the battle, over half the company was dead or wounded. Survivors started to become unwound. One stood up and walked as if strolling through the park. Others couldn't move.

A medivac chopper hovered above the trees, trying to send down a rope ladder. The NVA shot it down. Another attempt 30 minutes later met with the same results.

Orders came in to blow up enough trees to create a landing zone. For the next five days, engineers, constantly under fire, blew up one huge tree a day.

During that time, a fighter jet flying 300 miles per hour dropped two 500-lb. bombs. The Marines' captain radioed the pilot, "You stupid, motherfucking idiot ... you just killed seven of my men."

Artillery support came next, keeping the NVA at bay, but by the third day, with food and ammunition running low, five large boxes of supplies had to be dropped by plane. Only one fell inside the Marines' perimeter.

Two days later, 100 Marines made it to the top of the mountain. The NVA had vanished. A medivac chopper descended through the opening in the trees close enough to take on Mark and other wounded. A second medivac helicopter with 36 Marines on it hit a tree branch as it pulled up, flipped over, killing the co-pilot and severely re-wounding the rest.

After six days and five nights of fighting, only 20 Marines were able to walk out. "The rest of us were either dead, wounded, or gone mad," Mark recalled.

"When I woke up three days after having the first of many surgeries there was a two-star general walking through the ward handing out purple hearts like candy to children. I wanted to throw mine in his face as hard as I could but was too weak."

Mark's military experience was unusual. Of the millions of U.S. veterans, less than 1 percent actually experienced combat. "So how can the general public have any idea how insane war is?" he asked. But, he added, every veteran goes through basic training where physical violence can be frequent and dehumanization is policy.

Juan's message to Mosby: "Don't let them intimidate you."

Murder—specifically the murder of unarmed black men by police—is a serious and unfortunately prevalent issue facing Maryland. While violent crime was subsiding in the rest of the country, the ACLU reported last March that between 2010 and 2014, 109 people in the state died in encounters with police. Nearly 70 percent of the victims were black. Of those, 40 percent were unarmed. "The number of unarmed Blacks who died (36 people) exceeded the total number of all Whites who died (30 people), armed or not," wrote the ACLU.

Alarming only 2 percent of the 109 killed were charged with any crime, meaning encounters with police in Baltimore can be dangerous if not deadly, even when the person being detained has committed no crime. Resi-

dents know this in emotion, if not in hard statistics. Locals in Sandtown referenced the ACLU report to me. Juan told me last year he was arrested and roughed up by police only to be released without charges.

Moreover in the 1970s, Maryland passed what is known as the "Law Officers Bill of Rights," legal protections where police are given ten days before they have to answer to detectives. That means if Juan were killed by an officer, the officer would walk from the scene. But if Juan were to do the same, he would go straight to jail. For Sandtown residents this shows there are two sets of laws that govern their world, one for the police, and one for them. Although there are groups working to change this policy, reform was shot down in the Maryland legislature one month before Gray died.

Sandtown is a community that does not trust the system to bring a guilty verdict. While residents were certainly unhappy with having federal marshals on the streets, their focus was not on the clashes and curfews, but on the trial.

"I knew that the charges were just a temporary solution to a long term problem," Antonio Kolson, 40, a Sandtown resident, said of the six officers who are being prosecuted for Gray's killing. While the charges show the city is taking Gray's death seriously, at the same time Kolson was quick to note that the police involved were given treatment he sees as special: "The going rate on a murder is a no bail, but they got a bail and are suspended with pay."

[T]he ACLU reported last March that between 2010 and 2014, 109 people in the state died in encounters with police. Nearly 70 percent of the victims were black.



Ethereal Architect, stone sculpture by Mark Foreman

Mark Foreman's experience helps make sense of huge numbers of veteran suicides, homelessness and anti-social behavior. Fortunately, Mark was able to turn his horror and pain into compassion and service to others.

He used the G.I. Bill to attend the Chicago Academy of Fine Arts followed by 10 years carving stone, "the best post-Vietnam War therapy I could have had. It allowed me to create what I thought was beauty, every day for those 10 years."

He earned degrees in art education and taught Milwaukee public school students for 20 years, until pain from his hip wounds became too severe. He retired in 2005 and will continue drawing 100 percent of his military pay, adjusted for inflation, for the rest of his life.

Mark co-founded the Milwaukee Homeless Veterans Initiative, where he serves as volunteer outreach coordinator. He also serves as treasurer on the VFP Board of Directors. Mark's memoir can be read at: www.peaceinourtimes.org

Mike Ferner served as a Navy corpsman during the Vietnam war and was discharged as a conscientious objector. He is a former president of Veterans For Peace and author of Inside the Red Zone: A Veteran For Peace Reports from Iraq, published in 2006.

Kolson and nearly everyone I spoke with treated these issues as local Baltimore issues. Ferguson, Oakland, and other U.S. cities where killings of unarmed black men have prompted a national conversation about race and policing were not on the tips of the tongues of Baltimoreans. They see these same relations, but on a micro scale.

What struck me most was the hopefulness of the community. When I have covered similar deaths in the West Bank, there is no expectation that a Palestinian can win in court against an Israeli soldier. Conversely in Baltimore residents believe if they concert their efforts and keep protesting through the upcoming trial for the officers who dragged Gray into the back of the police van, there is a sliver of a chance guilty verdicts will follow.

As I left Sandtown, Juan insisted on a closing point: "Racism is not among the people, racism is among the laws that are created by the people—I definitely learned that." His opinion of law enforcement is mixed. He has interacted with good and bad cops. But as he sees it, there is no accountability for the officers who do kill unarmed civilians, specifically black men. And that lack of accountability when translated in practice in Gilmore Homes means Juan, his friends, and his relatives walk around feeling at risk.

"If we don't unite and stay strong there are people out there just waiting to take us from our families," Juan said.

Allison Deger is an assistant editor for Mondoweiss based in Jerusalem. Her work has been published by The Nation, Equal Times, Alternet, Truthout, the Jewish Journal, and others.

Memorial Day 2015

Antiwar Veterans Join the Conversation at the Vietnam Wall

Article by John Grant
Photos by Ellen Davidson

Anthropologists have found that in traditional societies, memory becomes attached to places."

—T.M. Luhrmann, *New York Times* Op-ed, May 25, 2015

Members of Veterans For Peace came from as far away as San Diego to be part of the annual Memorial Day ceremonies at the Vietnam War Memorial on the mall in Washington, D.C. A wide range of Americans were in attendance on a beautiful, sunny day. Some rubbed names of loved ones with pencils onto pieces of paper; others left significant items at the base of the Wall. These are collected and warehoused.

Vietnam veteran poet Doug Rawlings from Maine devised a program called Letters to the Wall. It's an ongoing project of Full Disclosure, a Veterans For Peace effort aimed at countering the current U.S. government



Doug Rawlings hands out the letters to be delivered.

and Pentagon propaganda campaign commemorating the Vietnam War. The Pentagon project, operated with \$15 million a year in taxpayer funds, was begun on the 50th anniversary of the Marine landing in DaNang in March 1965.

Full Disclosure members attempted unsuccessfully to meet with Pentagon managers of the program to discuss the limitations of its website, especially a

timeline of events concerning the war. The timeline emphasizes things like Medals of Honor awarded to U.S. soldiers, but leaves out much of the complexity and the unpleasant realities of a war that began at the close of World War II in 1945 when U.S. leaders chose to support French re-colonization of Vietnam. Vietnamese guerrillas were U.S. allies against the Japanese and admired their American comrades-in-arms. After the French capitulated, the war went on until 1975, when the United States left Vietnam. Going through the website and reading the timeline, it's easy to get confused and think that the Vietnamese somehow attacked us and that our soldiers were responding bravely to being attacked. Indisputable historic facts such as how the agreed-upon unification elections designated for 1956 were scotched by U.S. leaders (who knew Ho Chi Minh would win by up to 80 percent of the vote) are altogether missing on the Com-



Clockwise from top left: Tom Palumbo; Mike Tork; Doug Rawlings and the author with the wreath; a letter delivered to the wall; Bruce Berry with a drawing he made of a fallen comrade; Chuck Heyn.



memoration website. The overwhelming reality that U.S. soldiers were sent halfway around the world as an occupying army is lost in the interest of honoring the courage and sacrifice of Vietnam veterans.

Here's how Rawlings de-

scribed the letter project for those interested in writing a letter:

"Let those American soldiers who died know how you feel about the war that took their lives. If you have been seared by the experience of the American war in Vietnam, then tell them your story. Veterans, conscientious objectors, veterans' family members, war resisters, anyone whose life was touched by the war—all of us need to speak. All of our experiences matter."

One hundred and fifty letters were collected, and at 11 a.m. on Memorial Day, VFP members walked to the Wall and dropped them at the base of the panels, along with all the other items left there. On the envelopes, written by hand, each letter said: "Please Read Me." The letters are all collected online at VietnamFullDisclosure.org

Besides tourists and families, there were many Vietnam veterans at the Memorial Day event. A dozen or so Medal of Honor recipients from the war were on hand. The keynote speech was given by retired Col. Jack H. Jacobs, a Medal of Honor recipient. His remarks were surprisingly short compared to the other speakers, and like all but one speaker, he emphasized how those named on the war died fighting for freedom here in America. The exception was Diane Carlson Evans, a nurse who served in Pleiku; she spoke

Dear America

Remember me?

I was the girl next door.

Remember when I was 13, America, and rode on top of the fire engine in the Memorial Day parade? I'd won an essay contest on what it meant to be a proud American.

And it was always me, America, the cheerleader, the Girl Scout, who marched in front of the high school band ... carrying our flag ... the tallest ... the proudest ...

And remember, America, you gave me the Daughters of the American Revolution Good Citizen Award for patriotism, and I was only sixteen.

And then you sent me to war, America, along with thousands of other men and women who loved you.

It's Memorial Day, America. Do you hear the flags snapping in the wind? There's a big sale at Macy's, and there's a big parade in Washington for the veterans.

But it's not the American flag or the sound of drums I hear—I hear a helicopter coming in—I smell the burning of human flesh. It's Thomas, America, the young Black kid from Atlanta, my patient, burned by an exploding gas tank. I remember how his courage kept him alive that day, America, and I clung to his only finger and whispered over and over again how proud you were of him, America—and he died.

And Pham ... He was only eight, America, and you sprayed him with napalm and his skin fell off in my hands and he screamed as I tried to comfort him.

And America, what did you do with Robbie, the young kid I sat next



to on the plane to Viet Nam? His friends told me a piece of shrapnel ripped through his young heart—he was only seventeen—it was his first time away from home. What did you tell his mother and father, America?

Hold us America ...

Hold all your children America. Allen will never hold anyone again. He left both his arms and legs back there. He left them for you, America.

America, you never told me that I'd have to put so many of your sons, the boys next door, in body bags. You never told me ...

—Peggy Akers

Peggy Akers served as a nurse in Vietnam.



of veteran suicides and other painful postwar issues.

As a Vietnam veteran (I was a 19-year-old radio direction finder who located Vietnamese radio operators, so they and their comrades could be killed), I have no issue with honoring the sacrifice and bravery of men and women who served in Vietnam. Even in a bad, unnecessary war, these qualities exist alongside cowardice and atrocity. Fifty-eight thousand names are on the wall, a great many of them drafted. There were also many young men just like me, who volunteered and went to Vietnam clueless as to what it was about, what it meant, or why you were even there. I was lucky and had it pretty easy. Still, there were a few times when I might have been killed if things had gone badly for me. My name could have made it onto that Wall. This gives me and others

like me a voice and a right to express views that may differ from the standard line. All that's required is it be done in a dignified manner.

In a *New York Times* op-ed on Memorial Day, anthropologist T. M. Luhmann described the Vietnam Wall this way: "When the Vietnam Veterans Memorial opened in 1982, people were startled to find the black gash in the earth and its list of names so moving. And then they started to leave things at the wall—letters, cards, photographs, votive candles, a teddy bear, cans of fruit salad. Some of these items seem like attempts to talk with the dead, but others seem like ways of being present, or ways of making the memorial in some small part something they themselves have made. The objects seem to say: These men are gone, but with this gift we are part of one another. It is easy

in our individualistic culture to think of memories as private and selves as interior. That is an illusion. Our memories and dreams dwell incarnate in the world."

The Wall is a nationally recognized, public space, and VFP members feel it's important that our view of the war be represented there at national, public events like Memorial Day. There is no intention to be provocative; it's a simple fact that many Vietnam veterans don't share the belief that those on the Wall died fighting for our freedom here in America. It's my understanding that most combat veterans would argue that when in combat one fights for survival and for one's brothers-in-arms—not freedom at home. The fighting-for-freedom line is a conformist response based on the desire to have one's sacrifice and experience recognized as part of a noble effort. It's also part of the Pentagon's desire to put a good spin on its wars. To willfully ig-

nore the unpleasant realities of the war and the terrible things done to the Vietnamese, who never threatened Americans, can only make future wars easier to engage in.

A number of people were seen opening and reading the letters left at the Wall. One young woman sitting with a friend at the base of the Wall reading the letters said she was very moved. She thanked us for the project.

A range of affinity organizations produced flower wreaths to be symbolically set up in front of the Wall. We had one representing Veterans For Peace and the Swords Into Plowshares Belltower. Wearing Veterans For Peace and Full Disclosure t-shirts, behind two vets from a motorcycle club, two us placed

the wreath at the Wall. As one might expect, we received some glowering looks. The point was to publicly and respectfully represent a counter-view to the prevailing message of the day. We wanted to represent the range of Americans who believe the Vietnam War had absolutely nothing to do with freedom in America and that the full, unvarnished history of the war needs to be fully disclosed and discussed.

As many VFP members expressed, it was a good day.

John Grant served in Vietnam. Since then, he's been studying and rethinking what U.S. counter-insurgency war means. He is a writer, photographer, and videographer living in Philadelphia. He has been a VFP member for 27 years.



Mike Marceau delivers a letter to The Wall.

Trade Wars

Monsanto's Return to Vietnam

By Desiree Hellegers

Ho Chi Minh City—Set against the backdrop of the Obama Administration's push for fast track authority to conclude the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), this year's two-week tour of Viet Nam led by Veterans for Peace (VFP) Chapter 160 raised troubling questions not only about the ongoing after-effects of the war, but about Monsanto's introduction of genetically modified (GMO) seeds to Viet Nam. Monsanto, one of the single largest producers of the estimated 20 million gallons of Agent Orange (AO) sprayed in Viet Nam between 1961 and 1971, stands to garner windfall profits if the TPP is passed. Widespread contamination from the toxic defoliant AO and a landscape littered with unexploded ordnance (UXO) including landmines and cluster bombs are among the legacies of what's known in Viet Nam as the "American War."

The Pentagon recently launched a commemorative campaign to mark the 50th anniversary of Viet Nam War events and to honor the Americans and allies who fought in the war. One of its many troubling aspects is its Orwellian spin on a high-tech war that bathed Vietnamese jungles and waterways in toxic chemicals—one of the largest, most reckless scientific experiments in human history.

VFP Chapter 160 members Suel Jones, Chuck Searcy, Don Blackburn, Chuck Palazzo, and David Clark all served in the American War in Viet Nam, and each eventually returned, drawn by memories and a desire to help alleviate Vietnamese suffering engendered by the war. Aged in their 60s to early 70s, the vets anticipate they'll have maybe another five years to lead their annual tour, by which they raise funds for partner organizations as well as to cover the chapter's modest administrative expenses.

The day after we arrived in Viet Nam, April 17, 2015, a



The author holds a boy at Tu Du Hospital in Ho Chi Minh City.

class action lawsuit was filed in France on behalf of millions of AO-affected Vietnamese against Monsanto and 25 other U.S.-based manufacturers of dioxin-laden AO. Although a 1984 settlement provided limited relief to American GIs whose maladies linked to AO exposure include prostate and lung cancer, bone cancer, diabetes, Parkinson's and heart disease, attempts to get legal redress or financial compensation for the estimated three million affected Vietnamese have repeatedly failed. Grand reparations promised by Nixon at the 1973 Paris Peace talks never materialized, and the relatively paltry aid the United States has supplied comes with strings attached—ongoing pressures to enact various forms of "structural adjustment," which the TPP seems designed to accelerate.

U.S. Ambassador Ted Osius is the first ambassador since normalization of U.S.-Viet Nam relations in 1995 to openly acknowledge the lingering effects of AO on the Vietnamese people. Osius told our delegation that meaningful political relations between the U.S. and Viet Nam necessitate "facing the past." "If we hadn't addressed the Agent Orange issue, I don't think we'd have the credibility to address" other shared concerns, he said, chief among which he numbered climate change, global health, education, and trade. Osius claimed the TPP would provide "huge benefits" for Vietnamese workers while ostensibly strengthening environmental protections and regulations governing food safety. He acknowledged,

[Ambassador Osius] acknowledged the role that the TPP will play in privatizing state institutions, which under the terms of NAFTA and the WTO, are frequently relegated to the status of unfair trade barriers. Under the TPP, he told us, "non-performing state institutions" would be subject to elimination.

however, the role that the TPP will play in privatizing state institutions, which under the terms of NAFTA and the WTO, are frequently relegated to the status of unfair trade barriers. Under the TPP, he told us, "non-performing state institutions" would be subject to elimination.

From Hanoi to Hue to A Luoi, Danang, Na Tranh, and Ho Chi Minh City—we saw evidence of ongoing suffering engendered by the war. One of our first stops was the Vietnam Friendship Village, a care center on the outskirts of Hanoi serving AO-affected children and veterans. Managed by the Veterans Association of Viet Nam (VAVN), this reconciliation project is partly supported by an international committee that has included VFP members since its founding 20 years ago. In each city we visited, we met with local chapter members of both the VAVN and the Vietnamese Association of Victims of Agent Orange (VAVA), the Vietnamese organization that continues to struggle for legal and financial redress for those identified as AO victims.

At a meeting in Hanoi with VAVN, General Phùng Khắc Đăng invoked the role of U.S. corporations in the production of AO, acknowledging its terrible effects not only on Vietnamese but also on U.S. soldiers and citizens. In Danang, one VAVA representative shared wartime memories of chemical spraying. Another remarked: "It destroyed anything with leaves. It kills us. It kills the people. It kills all the trees and animals." He went on to explain that Viet Nam's main focus currently is "how to develop the country," but regarding the war and Agent Orange, he said, "We just turn the page, [but] we don't delete it."

When Chuck Searcy wondered why, considering the tragic consequences of Agent Orange, the Vietnamese



Mother and daughter in A Luoi

government has allowed Monsanto to open offices in Viet Nam, where the company now markets GMO seeds, including corn, the VAVA rep replied, "When we signed up for the [WTO agreement], we had to take them—they have to be here," he said. In other words, the WTO rel-

egated local and national environmental and health laws to the status of "unfair trade barriers."

To understand likely impacts of the TPP on Viet Nam, one has only to look at what happened in Mexico following passage of NAFTA. The U.S. flooded Mexico with cheap American corn, including Monsanto's GMO strains, a move that not only gutted the Mexican corn market, but resulted in widespread GMO contamination of the country's diverse indigenous corn strains.

The human health effects of AO are dramatically evidenced in the most heavily sprayed province of Quang Tri, located next to the U.S.-demarcated "demilitarized zone" or DMZ. It is one of an estimated 28 "hot spots" scattered throughout Viet Nam, many of them former sites of U.S. bases where Agent Orange was transported and stored. In Quang Tri Province, we learn, 1,300 families have between three and five children who suffer from the debilitating effects of Agent Orange exposure. Our first encounter is with a family supported by VFP 160 and partner organization Project RENEW. Born between 1972 and 1985, four out of five adult children in the family are severely disabled. Only the second child, along with his own offspring, seems to have dodged the chemical bullet. As the Vietnamese are increasingly discovering, AO's genetic mutations can skip generations. Unable to stand upright as a result of a host of congenital health issues, the four disabled adult children scurry about on all fours, wearing puzzled expressions that are markers of the developmental disabilities that frequently result from AO exposure.

But Agent Orange is not the only miserable remnant of war in Quang Tri Province; far from it. The United

continued on next page ...

Baghdad/Albany

*The TV glows green like the obsolete computer
in the attic
blurred shapes that could be buildings or simply
the geometry of electrons
bright circles of lens flare as accents
an abstract electronic image they say is Baghdad.*

*I don't know Baghdad, don't know where
the missiles are falling
I don't know which buildings are burning,
which roads are blocked
I don't know Baghdad, but I do know Albany.*

*They say the missiles are launched from ships
200 miles away
they say they land with "amazing accuracy."
There could be ships in New York harbor
firing Cruise missiles at the Empire State Plaza,
at the Governor's Mansion on Eagle St.
200 Cruise missiles raining down on Albany tonight
with "amazing accuracy"*

*taking out Lark St., the Bookstore, the Flower Shop,
Elissa Halloran's gone up in smoke*

*Ben & Jerry's a sea of mush
Bombers' Burritos blasted to bits by its namesakes.*

*With amazing accuracy one missile misses
by only 1 percent
takes out my house, rattles the windows of
St. Peter's Hospital.
Wounded shopkeepers and teachers,
their children bleeding
show up at Albany Medical Center; the halls are jammed
with improvised beds; a team of doctors and nurses
die in an explosion in the parking lot.*

*The sound of planes overhead, the trucks
on New Scotland Ave.
are the invading army, blasting into Albany.
A young mother driving home from work is shot
by nervous tankers as she drives across
the Normanskill Bridge.
on Willett St. the 1st Presbyterian Church is in ruins
downtown St. Mary's Church burns, City Hall collapses.*

*Galleries burn, paintings and photographs melt
with the wallpaper
no poetry can be heard on Lark St., or Hudson Ave.,
or North Pearl.*

*And in Watervliet the homes of laborers and
postal workers, of waitresses
and truck drivers are flattened when the Arsenal is hit
(the enemy says it was a cynical and evil move
to place a military facility there).*

*The electricity stops, the water fails,
the Price Choppers and
Hannafords are looted, Mobil & Hess stations are on fire
Dunkin' Donuts a pile of plastic and bricks
next to the broken bottles of what was once Justin's.*

*And School 19, where citizens sought refuge
from their burned houses
is mistaken for a command center and hit
by a bunker buster.*

*I watch TV, watch a city destroyed by an invading army
it could be Baghdad, or Basra
it could be Saigon, or Leningrad*

*I don't know Baghdad
but I do know Albany.
And it's burning.*

—Dan Wilcox

*Dan Wilcox is a member of Veteran for Peace, Albany,
N.Y.*

Monsanto

... continued from previous page

States dropped more bombs on Viet Nam than were used throughout World War II in both European and Pacific theaters combined, and Quang Tri Province was the most heavily bombed region. The range of prosthetic devices on display at the Quang Tri Mine Action Visitor Center reflects Project RENEW's work to meet the needs of more than 900 individuals injured by accidental detonation of the unexploded ordnance or (UXO) scattered across an estimated 80 percent of the province. Another 1,100 amputees currently await limbs. Also on display at the center are crayon drawings by Quang Tri children learning in school-based programs to identify unexploded ordnance.

of AO-exposure until their late teens. The older of the two, now 40, lay moaning in a bedroom in the rear of the house. His 36-year-old sister is still cognizant enough to anticipate her own future when she sees his emaciated and contorted limbs.

In Ho Chi Minh City, our final tour stop, we visit Tu Du Hospital/Peace Village ward, home to some 60 AO-affected children, along with a handful of adults who have grown up at the facility. On the ward, a couple of children eagerly demanded to be hugged, while others, some with feeding tubes in their noses, looked at us with uncomprehending gazes. A child at the far end of a room stared blindly in front of him. Like many AO-affected children, one of his eyes was entirely missing, a blank space where a socket might be. In another room, a hydrocephalic child of indeterminate gender with a head the size



Photo by Susan Raines

Families with three to five disabled children are common in Quang Tri Province.

*The more than 60,000 Vietnamese killed by
land mines, cluster bombs, and other UXO
since the war now exceeds the 58,000 American
GIs killed during the war.*

The more than 60,000 Vietnamese killed by land mines, cluster bombs, and other UXO since the war now exceeds the 58,000 American GIs killed during the war. And still the United States remains one of only a handful of countries worldwide that have refused to sign on to U.N. treaties banning landmines and cluster bombs.

In Nha Trang, we visited a woman and her sister who are caring for two adult children, neither of whom registered signs

of a watermelon lay motionless in a crib.

The following day, April 30, the anniversary in the United States of the "fall of Saigon," we rose early to attend "Liberation Day" festivities in Ho Chi Minh City. A reception that followed in the "Reunification Palace" was presided over by Deputy Prime Minister Nguyen Xuan Phuc and attended by about 100 people representing organizations from 40 countries and territories around the world. In a comment from the floor, Virginia Foote,

president of the U.S.-Vietnam Trade Council, pledged, "as an American," to continue to work on the economic development of Viet Nam as well as on "the war legacy issues." She spoke of attending the groundbreaking ceremony at the Land Mine Action Center in Hanoi only a few days before and of the "new money [that] is coming in," to "support and assist Viet Nam." She also referenced some "very tough trade negotiations" and the need to "struggle forward with the TPP."

On April 30 in the United States, with little fanfare, California Rep. Barbara Lee introduced the Agent Orange Victims Relief Act of 2015. Supported by the U.S.-based Vietnam Agent Orange Relief and Responsibility Campaign, the bill would provide funds to substantially mitigate AO contamination throughout Viet Nam, and for health care and direct services for Vietnamese AO sufferers. It would also expand relief for American veterans and provide new support for their children

who suffer from AO-related congenital health problems.

Amid new initiatives to secure justice for Agent Orange survivors and ongoing negotiations for a trade deal that stands to significantly shape the future of both countries, the corporate controlled media in the United States has been offering us a steady diet of cinematically compelling footage of abandoned Vietnamese forever scrambling toward helicopters and hanging from rooftops. Meanwhile, in Viet Nam, VFP 160 and its partner organizations continue to strive together to address the suffering we left behind.

Desiree Hellegers is a board member of Portland Peace and Justice Works/Cop-watch, an associate professor of English at Washington State University Vancouver, and the author of No Room of Her Own: Women's Stories of Homelessness, Life Death and Resistance.

A longer version of this essay was originally published by CounterPunch.

Golden Rule

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had studied the effects of radiation in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. He and his wife Barbara witnessed the jailing of the *Golden Rule* crew and became inspired by their example of civil disobedience. They concluded they “had no choice” but to continue the mission, and sailed the *Phoenix* toward the test zone with their children, Ted and Jessica, and Japanese crew member, Nick Nikami. When they reached the target area, Earle was taken into custody. Though branded traitors in the United States, the Reynolds were celebrated as national heroes in Japan, and became lifelong peace activists.

Ripple Effects

The bold examples set by the *Phoenix* and the *Golden Rule* helped ignite a worldwide storm of public outrage against nuclear weapons that resulted in the cessation of U.S. atmospheric tests in 1958, and led to the Limited Nuclear Test Ban Treaty of 1963. The pact banned nuclear tests in the atmosphere, under water, and in outer space.

These nonviolent direct-action voyages fired the imagination of a generation, and many peace and environmental protest craft followed, from New Zealand’s *Vega* and the Australian Pacific *Peacemaker* to the *Sea Shepherds* and Free Gaza flotillas.

The connection to Greenpeace is direct. In 1971, *Golden Rule* supporter Marie Bohlen attended a meeting in Vancouver of people concerned about nuclear weapons testing. She suggested a voyage to the U.S. nuclear test site in the Aleutian Islands à la *Golden Rule*. Soon the rusty trawler *Phyllis Cormack* was renamed the *Greenpeace* and headed north toward the Alaskan Archipelago. The rest, as they say, is history.

Just as important, the use of nonviolence as a fundamental guiding principle by the crews of the *Phoenix* and *Golden Rule* would also influence future generations of activists, as would their abiding respect for the humanity and dignity of those with whom they disagreed. The seas of the world have never been quite the same since.

The Original Crew

The *Golden Rule*’s first crew richly deserves honoring. They stood firm for peace and nonviolence before it was fashionable. In 1961, two of them, Albert Bigelow and James Peck, were among the original 13 Freedom Riders in the American South.

Other crew members are equally noteworthy. William Huntington was director of the U.N. Quaker program, and George Willoughby became a founder of Peace Brigades International. Several were conscientious objectors during World War II.

Skipper Albert Bigelow, a former U.S. naval lieutenant



The *Golden Rule* helped ignite the antinuclear weapons protest movement.



The *Golden Rule* prepares to launch June 20.

commander, had an epiphany in 1945 upon learning of the nuclear destruction of Hiroshima.

“It was then that I realized for the first time that morally, war is impossible,” he wrote. Bigelow came to believe that the nuclear arms build-up by all sides was a “race to extinction” that had to be stopped.

Bigelow was also deeply affected by his family’s experience in hosting two “Hiroshima Maidens,” young women who had been exposed to the atomic blast in 1945 and had been invited to the United States for corrective surgery. Eventually, he joined the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers), and adopted their principles of nonviolence.

While contemplating the *Golden Rule*’s voyage toward the test zone, in 1958 Bigelow wrote, “How do you reach men when all the horror is in the fact that they feel no horror? It requires, we believe, the kind of effort and sacrifice that we now undertake.”

Golden Rule Lost then Found

The *Golden Rule* was sold in Hawaii late in 1958. Stories of her whereabouts after that are murky, until she turned up in Eureka, Calif., in such a state of neglect that she finally sank in a storm in 2010. She was raised from the depths by boatyard owner Leroy Zerlang.

As he was preparing to dispose of the wreck, Zerlang did some research on the title and was startled to realize that the *Golden Rule* had played an important role in the history of the Cold War. He put out some feelers over the internet to a number of museums and historic boat groups.

Shortly after that, non-sailor peace activists Fredy and Sherry Champagne dropped by Zerlang’s boatyard. They had heard something vague about a peace boat and decided to check it out. Fredy swears that, when he walked over to the wreck and put his hand on her keel, the *Golden Rule* spoke to him and asked for another life. Longtime members of Veterans For Peace Chapter 22 in Garberville, Fredy and Sherry approached Leroy, whom they had never met, and asked

if he would provide yard space and facilities if Veterans For Peace handled the restoration. They shook hands on the spot, and thus began the revival of the *Golden Rule*.

Soon, other Northern California Veterans For Peace members learned about the damaged ketch and agreed it was salvageable. Chuck DeWitt of Humboldt Bay Chapter 56 began the restoration work in 2010 and was soon joined by others. From the start, the intent was to restore the boat to its former peacemaking glory and to continue the *Golden Rule*’s mission of educating about the dangers of nuclear weapons, as well as of nuclear power and carbon-fueled climate change. In 2012, the *Golden Rule* became an official national project of Veterans For Peace.

The Restorers

The *Golden Rule* restoration team is an eclectic mix of veterans, sailors, shipwrights, historic boat lovers, and peace activists. Although the project receives support from a diverse collection of people and groups with common values and goals, Veterans For Peace is the sponsoring organization, and most *Golden Rule* Committee members also belong to VFP. The project welcomes anyone interested in working to operate and maintain the boat and promote its mission.

Chuck DeWitt and the Zerlangs, Leroy and wife Dalene, were the driving force behind the lengthy reconstruction effort. The Zerlangs donated space in the boatyard, a workshop, tools, and expert advice. They lined up support from a number of local lumberyards and marine supply and hardware stores. DeWitt worked on the boat almost daily for five years, planning and directing the re-build and providing the necessary relentless determination. Many other volunteers, too numerous to mention individually, joined the project.

The Launch

On June 20, 2015, the reborn *Golden Rule* was rechristened, launched and floated in Humboldt Bay. The mood was festive, to put it mildly. Atomic bomb survivor and Hiroshima Maiden Shigeko Sasamori broke a bottle of champagne over the bow and spoke movingly. Longtime peace activists David McReynolds and Bradford Lyttle, who knew the *Golden Rule* voyagers, were there. Original crewman Orion Sherwood, who is still going strong, attended, as did Jessica Reynolds Renshaw, who was 14 when she and her family sailed the *Phoenix* into the Marshall Islands nuclear test zone. Other children and grandchildren of original crew members also participated. Spokespeople from Greenpeace, Physicians for Social Responsibility, and Veterans For Peace praised all those responsible for restoring the *Golden Rule* and its mission of peace.

What Comes Next

The *Golden Rule* will soon ride the waves again as a living museum and floating classroom. As they did 58 years ago, boat and crew will educate future generations on the risks of nuclear technology, the importance of the ocean environment, and above all, the power of peacemaking.

The initial voyage of the renewed *Golden Rule* will be to San Diego, in time for the Veterans For Peace national convention, August 5–9, 2015, with the theme of Peace and Reconciliation in the Pacific. What better time for the arrival of the *Golden Rule*?

Arnold “Skip” Oliver is professor emeritus of political science at Heidelberg University in Tiffin, Ohio, an avid sailor, and member of Veterans For Peace and the Golden Rule Committee. He can be reached at soliver@heidelberg.edu. For more information, go to VFPGoldenRuleProject.org.

Veterans Film Targets British Army over Child Recruitment

A series of controversial films launched in late June by Veterans For Peace UK highlight the realities of armed service for young soldiers. The films parody iconic Action Man toys and appear to be advertisements for a new Battlefield Casualties addition to the range, but the “adverts” are in fact a dark satire on the reality of life and death in and after the army, an attempt by the veterans group to put pressure on the government to raise the army recruitment age to 18.

The bleak but trenchant films, with a voiceover from actor and comedian Matt Berry, showcase three toy soldiers, PTSD Action Man (“with thousand-yard stare action”), Paralyzed Action Man (“legs really don’t work”) and Dead Action Man (“coffin sold separately”). Veterans For Peace says the films are an attempt to draw attention to the way the British Army targets teenagers and even young children in its search for new recruits, while ignoring and downplaying the often brutal repercussions of military service in their advertising.

The UK is one of fewer than 20 countries worldwide that still recruits 16-year-olds into its armed forces.

up shortfalls in the infantry, which is by far the most dangerous part of the Army—the infantry’s fatality rate in Afghanistan was seven times that of the rest of the armed forces.

Veterans For Peace says the films attempt to illustrate what, for many, are the real stories of military service. “Army recruitment adverts aren’t going to show a paralyzed serviceman changing his colostomy bag or a veteran committing suicide,” says Daniel Campbell, an ex-Royal Engineer who joined the British Army at 16, “but these are some of the realities of military service. These films are an effort to show that in a hard-hitting, but honest way.”

Campbell, 27, who suffers PTSD from his time in Iraq and Afghanistan, says the military’s treatment of soldiers with the condition borders on “callous indifference,” with veterans forced to rely on charities for support. The Army still regards post-traumatic stress as a weakness rather than an injury. Soldiers are discouraged from getting a diagnosis or treatment while they’re in



“The British military’s official toy range claims to be suitable for ages five and up. I’m interested in why they think a Predator Drone playset is a suitable

toy for children. I’d propose these toys are part of a long-term recruitment effort by the Ministry of Defense,” says Cullen. He says that the films send a strong message that young people should think twice before believing military advertising: “The Army has this ability to take war, which is broadly described throughout history as being a living hell of suffering, pain, and despair, and manage to rebrand it for each new generation as an exciting and character-building adventure.”

Ben Griffin, a former SAS soldier who deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan, says the films address the broader effect of pro-military advertising: “It is the policy of the British Army to focus its propaganda on children and teenagers. This is not just for recruitment purposes, but also to build passive support among the population for the future wars our soldiers will fight in. These films reveal some of the negative outcomes of military service. They challenge the sanitized messages projected by militarists, the myth of the prestigious war injury or the heroic death.”

Veterans for Peace UK is using the film to encourage people to write to their MPs to demand the age of army recruitment be raised to 18, in line with almost all other developed countries. Ben Griffin says, “It isn’t widely known that along with Iran and North Korea, the UK still recruits 16-year-olds into its armed forces, is this what David Cameron means by ‘British values’? We’re asking the Ministry of Defense to stop recruiting children in order to fill its most dangerous army jobs.”

A screening of the satirical advertisements produced by VFP UK and an exhibition of the boxed Action Man toys and playsets featured in them was hosted by the Red Gallery in London. The films, as well as information for UK citizens who wish to write their MPs, are available online at battlefieldcasualties.co.uk.



Army recruitment adverts aren’t going to show a paralyzed serviceman changing his colostomy bag or a veteran committing suicide,” says Daniel Campbell, an ex-Royal Engineer who joined the British Army at 16, “but these are some of the realities of military service.”

Most countries only recruit adults aged 18 and above. Soldiers who join the British Army at a young age are substantially more likely to suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and other mental health problems. Younger recruits also have a higher risk of alcohol problems, depression, and suicide than either their civilian counterparts or older military personnel. The Army has said that it looks to the youngest recruits to make

the forces, and once they leave they’re expected to fend for themselves.

The suicide rate for 16- to 20-year-old males in the armed forces has been 82 percent higher than for civilians of the same age.” The films, directed by Price James of Agile Films, were written and based on artwork by the artist Darren Cullen, who says the idea was inspired by the UK military’s own line of toys, HM Armed Forces.



THE UK IS ONE OF ONLY NINETEEN COUNTRIES WORLDWIDE THAT STILL RECRUITS 16 AND 17 YEAR OLDS INTO ITS ARMED FORCES
(OTHERS INC. NORTH KOREA & IRAN)



THE ARMY CHANNELS THE YOUNGEST AND POOREST OF THESE SOLDIERS INTO FRONT-LINE COMBAT ROLES, MEANING THEY’RE TWICE AS LIKELY AS ADULT RECRUITS TO BE KILLED IN WAR



THE SUICIDE RATE FOR 16-20 YEAR OLD MALES IN THE ARMED FORCES HAS BEEN 82% HIGHER THAN FOR CIVILIANS OF THE SAME AGE.

Barefoot Artists in Al Aqaba

A 'typical' Palestinian village

Article and photos by Dud Hendrick

Haj Sami Sadiq is a seemingly jovial and guileless man. More important and obvious, he is the effective, charismatic, resilient, and resourceful mayor of Al Aqaba, a somewhat typical Palestinian village of 300 overlooking the Jordan valley 20 miles northeast of the city of Nablus in the West Bank.

I had the pleasure of meeting Haj Sami in the spring of 2014, when I accompanied Lily Yeh (barefootartists.org) as an apprentice. Our Barefoot Artists team of five, including renowned portraitist Rob Shetterly (americanswhotellthetruth.org) and two Taiwanese Lily-disciples, had been commissioned to paint a mural in a courtyard adjacent to Al Aqaba village classrooms.

That work netted Barefoot Artists an invitation to return to Al Aqaba in March 2015. We were commissioned to paint a mural on one of the village's most prominent walls—the 25'x25' east side of the community spice factory. Though our work in the Old City of Nablus had proven our team compatible and competent, we were not confident we could actually deliver in Al Aqaba. Lily's proposal was characteristically ambitious and our team, including two septuagenarians and one close behind, would be working in 80- to 90-degree temperatures on three tiers of scaffolding. As you see, the results speak loudly in favorable testimony. Further validation—we've been invited to return in 2016.

Lily Yeh is a miracle worker. She is indefatigable and, if team members are to salvage any self-respect, they are pulled merrily along in her vortex.

But the real story is that of Haj Sami Sadiq and his village. I have depicted Al Aqaba as a "typical" Palestinian village. It is that, inasmuch as it is located in the West Bank and is besieged by Israeli military. All that follows here is remarkably

common in the daily lives of the nearly two million Palestinians residing in the West Bank in what is inarguably an apartheid state.

In 1967, about 1,000 people lived in Aqaba. Since the Six-Day War of that year, the entire West Bank has been under an onerous Israeli occupation. For decades the Israeli Defense Forces have maintained a military base in Aqaba and have routinely conducted training operations using live ammunition. Israel has designated much of the land on which Aqaba sits as a military firing zone. Thirteen villagers have been killed and over 50 have been wounded, victims of, at the least criminal carelessness, more honestly, murder.

Haj Sami was a 16-year-old boy in 1971, when he was shot by an Israeli soldier. He was struck three times, leaving him paralyzed with one bullet remaining lodged close to his heart. After the shooting he was first treated in an Israeli hospital, then transferred to a Jericho facility for physical therapy. The period tells us much about the man. He spent 29 years in Jericho, initially under close supervision, as he suffered through periods of intense pain. While in the hospital he began work as a telephone operator. Eventually he rose to become the director of administration. He returned to Al Aqaba in 1999 to become mayor.

In 1995, following the Oslo II peace accords, the West Bank was carved into Areas A, B, and C. Al Aqaba was within Area C, which comprises 60 percent of the West Bank. Here Israel has full military and civil control, including authority over all building permits. Though much land in Area C is undeveloped, Israel rarely permits Palestinian construction for residential, commercial, or industrial purposes—94 percent of applications are denied. On the other hand, Israeli settlements, though illegal by international law, continue to be permitted and built throughout the West Bank. In 1972, 1,000 Israeli settlers resided in Area C; by 1993 there were 110,000, in 2012 more than 300,000, as against 150,000 Palestinians.

Meanwhile, Palestinian homes are routinely demolished. Many homes have been destroyed in Al Aqaba and 97 percent of village buildings have demolition orders against them, including the mosque, clinic, and kindergarten. In 2011, the road to the east was destroyed by the Israeli military and soldiers have destroyed crops, plants, and trees. The Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions estimates that 48,000 Palestinian homes have been demolished (illegal under the Geneva Convention) in the occupied Palestinian territories since 1967.

To complete the picture, Palestinians



The 2015 Barefoot Artists' mural decorates the east side of Al Aqaba's community spice factory.

in Area C are also cut off from services including water, education, and shelter. During our visit we were invited to sit in on a regional water council meeting chaired by Haj Sami Sadiq at which participants discussed a vexing reality. Israel routinely denies Palestinian villages access to aquifers and springs, as well as the right to drill wells.

In a sworn affidavit to the United Nations in 2011 Haj Sami stated that Al Aqaba village's agricultural pool was destroyed by Israel in 1999. He further reported that Israeli authorities had issued a demolition order on another pool the same year it was built—2009. He warned that the water situation for his agricultural community was worsening due to Israel depriving Palestinians of their basic rights. Meanwhile, he said, (illegal) "settlers in the Jordan Valley are supplied with an abundant amount of water that surpasses their needs." According to some estimates, each Israeli in the West Bank consumes as much water as four Palestinians.

Since assuming the leadership of his village, Haj Sami Sadiq has sought and received assistance from foreign government and private sectors. The California nonprofit Rebuilding Alliance has funded several buildings (constructed in defiance

of the Israeli permitting process) and reports Haj Sami has attracted investment from 17 international organizations. The embassies of Japan, Belgium, and Norway have each funded significant projects here. USAID even financed the paving of the access road to the village.

On the other hand, the liberal Israeli newspaper *Haaretz* reported in 2014 that U.S. military aid to Israel since 1962 has totaled nearly \$100 billion and the Congressional Research Service reports that in 2012, the United States began giving Israel \$3.1 billion a year and will continue doing so through at least 2018. Palestine receives no military aid from the United States. Witnessing Palestinian circumstances firsthand hammers home in colors as brilliant as the Lily Yeh flowers on Al Aqaba's walls the complicity we Americans share by allowing our tax dollars to be so criminally misspent.

The virtually endless human rights abuses imposed by Israel on the Palestinian people are systematic and calculated. The Palestinians' very dignity is under daily assault. All I've seen and heard leads me to an unavoidable conclusion. What the Israeli government has been doing here for decades, enabled by their compliant media, and by their benefactor,

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Lily Yeh, Haj Sami Sadiq, and Rob Shetterly with 2014 mural

‘There Is Nothing Left of Johr al-Dik’

By Johnny Barber

Northern Jordan—I have hesitated reading the anonymous soldier testimonies released by Breaking the Silence regarding the Israeli attack on Gaza last summer. I didn’t want to read the admissions that seemed all too obvious, all too predictable. As with other testimonies released by Breaking the Silence, I expected stories of civilians being targeted, random wanton destruction, and lax protocols that made it all acceptable. Just fol-

lowing the news of last summer’s attack and the narratives provided by Gaza residents would draw you to the same conclusions. I didn’t need soldiers’ confessions to collaborate these facts.

lowing the news of last summer’s attack and the narratives provided by Gaza residents would draw you to the same conclusions. I didn’t need soldiers’ confessions to collaborate these facts.

*Once again, Nasser has been
forced from his land.
His home was leveled, his fields
destroyed, the trees razed.*

I am currently in Jordan with a friend trying to return home to Sheja’iya, in Gaza. We have been here for three weeks waiting for word on the Rafah border crossing. Although we hear rumors about possible openings, to date the crossing is sealed. We have spent our days sitting with both Syrian and Palestinian refugees. I have spent too much time in coffee shops, drinking too much coffee and reading too much news.

Yesterday over coffee my friend Intimaa and I were debating which was the most beautiful spot in Gaza. The list always gets reduced to two areas, the farmland around Faraheen or Johr Al-Dik. Sitting smoking shisha I recalled the silence in the rolling fields of Johr Al-Dik, interrupted by the occasional barking dog or the chirping birds. I recalled the crops of eggplant, tomatoes, and cucumbers that struggled to thrive with a water source contaminated by salt. I recalled the wind rustling through the fruit trees, the slanting sun illuminating the olive trees at dawn.

And I remembered Nasser, his beautiful children, and the tragic story of his life. How in the spring of 2010 his wife, Naama, was cut down in the front doorway by a flechette shell fired from an Israeli tank. It was late afternoon, the sun was shining, and the kids were playing nearby. I recalled how the ambulances were blocked from entering the dirt road to the home. How Naama bled to death there, in front of her children. We stood in front of the house as Nasser pointed out the watchtowers and the placement of the

tank that fired the deadly shell. The Israelis claimed there were militants in the area, but offered no explanation as to why Naama was targeted and killed.

Nasser recalled how his house was shelled less than one year later, destroying the second floor, injuring two of his sleeping kids, forcing him and the children to retreat to the village. Once again, Israel claimed there were militants in the area. The home they were staying in was near the graveyard. One night Nasser found his children crying at their moth-

er’s grave. He and his family returned to the land, living in tents under his trees until the funds were secured to rebuild his home. They hung a white flag from a pole near their home to alert the Israelis that they were there and they posed no threat. Nasser realized he or his children could be killed at any time.

Nasser and his kids are part of what I love about Johr Al-Dik, families surviving on their land and refusing to give up even in the face of unbearable Israeli aggression.

Last evening, I relented and downloaded the soldier’s testimonies, “This Is How We Fought In Gaza.” Scanning the Table of Contents, Testimony 18, page 56, caught my attention. It is titled, “Check it out, there’s nothing at all left of Juhar al-Dik.”

Check it out, there’s nothing at all left of Juhar al-Dik

Unit: Armored Corps • Rank: First Sergeant • Location: Deir al-Balah

Before we entered we saw orchards on a slope, a low fence beyond them and then Juhar al-Dik up on this little hill. You’ve got the barrier [between Israel and the Gaza Strip] and then Juhar al-Dik is on some high ground that overlooks it, and it’s very green. Of all the houses that were there, I think I saw maybe four or five still intact, or relatively intact. Most of it was D9s (armored bulldozers). They just took down all the orchards. Not a single tree left. Lots of houses. The D9s destroyed lots of houses.

Quotes from men in the company: “Listen man, it’s crazy what went on in there,” “Listen man, we really messed them up,” “Fuck, check it out, there’s nothing at all left of Juhar

al-Dik, it’s nothing but desert now, that’s crazy.” The D9s worked on it for three weeks. When they didn’t have a specific job like leading our way or opening up a specific route for us or some other mission, they just went and flattened things. I don’t know what their specific order was, but they were on a deliberate mission to leave the area razed, flattened.

I contacted a friend at PCHR for an update on Nasser and his family. He texted me this terse message, “Hi dear, Nasser and his family were forced to evacuate to an UNRWA shelter in Buriej camp. His house was destroyed completely. I’m in touch with him. They survived a very critical condition during their evacuation.” Once again, Nasser has been forced from his land. His home was leveled, his fields destroyed, the trees razed.

Consider this in the context of rocket fire from Gaza and consider this in the context of the wider “War on Terror.”



A Palestinian woman walks past the ruins of houses in Johr al-Dik in central Gaza.

Nasser and his children are one family in Gaza. What exactly do you wish them to do? They are given limited options. They cannot leave Gaza. They have been living in a U.N. school since August. Many

*Nasser will persevere.
He will rebuild his
home, replant his fields,
and tend to his children.*

of the schools have been housing homeless families since the attack ended, the children cannot learn. UNICEF estimates nearly half of Gaza’s 900,000 children need “psycho-social first aid.” (Children make up 50 percent of Gaza’s population, why aren’t Israel’s attacks framed as a war against children?) Unemployment is

45 percent or more. Farmlands, and therefore food sources, have been destroyed. Clean water and electricity are scarce. Building materials are banned. Israel’s crimes against civilians continue unchallenged, and they are already planning the next attack. My friend Intimaa managed to speak directly with Nasser. He didn’t have very much to say. Once again he is rebuilding. He said he simply doesn’t know what to do. Every time he builds a house, Israel destroys it. He is grateful that at least his children are all well, and for the time being, safe. In closing he said, “You know the situation. There is nothing left.”

What’s next for Nasser and his young family? What choices are expected of them? How should they protect themselves? On the international stage Israel continually talks of “peace” and “fighting terror.” Nasser and his children know better.

When I sat for tea with Nasser, back in 2011 (two “wars” ago), his children still managed to laugh as they played in the garden. Nasser was a soft-spoken, gentle man, prone to chain-smoking cigarettes. He worried about his kids. He was calm,

deliberate, and determined. At the time, I didn’t see any signs of anger. He didn’t speak of retribution. In an earlier draft of this piece, I ended with a question, “But with all that has transpired, if hatred were to rear its ugly head dare you blame him?” But this is the mind of those who attack him, poisoned by hate. Perhaps it is better to point to the resilience of the human heart that continues to love and persevere in even the most desperate circumstances. There is something left in Johr al-Dik, something the Israelis fail to see, and something bombs will never eliminate. The spirit of the people remains. Nasser will persevere. He will rebuild his home, replant his fields, and tend to his children. He will hope for the day that Israel will be held accountable for its crimes, but he will not wait.

Johnny Barber writes on the Middle East. He can be reached at dodger8mo@hotmail.com.

Okinawa and Jeju

Islands of Resistance to U.S. Domination

By Bruce Gagnon

In late May a delegation of Veterans For Peace (VFP) members traveled to Washington, D.C., to present a letter from our organization to Okinawa's Gov. Takeshi Onaga. It declared our solidarity with the people of his island in their 70-year struggle to remove U.S. military bases. The governor and many mayors from island towns came to the nation's capital to give voice to the 80 percent of Okinawan citizens who are fed up with the U.S. military's insufferable abuse of their environment and their people.

The movement on Okinawa has been steadily growing, as has outrage that their land was seized by the United States after the end of WWII. Candidates opposed to construction of a new base in Henoko were victorious in last year's Nago city mayoral election and gubernatorial election, as well as the elections in all districts of the Lower House.

Obama's Pivot

Obama's announced "pivot" of 60 percent of U.S. military forces to the Asia-Pacific is a disaster for indigenous peoples living across the region. The "rebalancing," as it is called in official Washington, of Pentagon forces is having huge impacts from Guam to the Philippines, South Ko-

rea, Japan, and Australia. The island base construction projects on Okinawa and Jeju Island are drawing the most opposition from local citizens and supporters around the world.

The U.S.'s sense of entitlement to take lands and destroy environments is ample evidence of how the idea of American exceptionalism remains a key fixture in the building of the corporate global empire backed up by military might.

On Jeju Island, South Korea, the United States has twisted the arm of the government and forced it to build a Navy base in the 500-year-old Gangjeong fishing and farming village. I know about this arm twisting because I was personally told by a woman at the South Korean Embassy in Washington several years ago when I called to protest the base construction, "Don't call us, call your government. They are forcing us to build this base."

The Jeju base will port U.S. aircraft carriers, nuclear submarines, and Aegis destroyers outfitted with "missile defense" systems aimed at China—key elements in U.S. first-strike attack planning. The Asia-Pacific pivot is all about U.S. control and domination of China. At the U.S. Strategic Command they call it "Full Spectrum Dominance."

The pivot requires more barracks for U.S. troops (base expansion is under way



Photo by Reuters

Okinawan student raises his fist and shouts anti-U.S. slogans with his colleagues to protest the rape of a young Japanese woman and the U.S. military presence in Japan.

in Darwin, Australia, to house them), more airfields for Pentagon warplanes (the Marine airfield at Henoko, Okinawa, is being built out into Oura Bay where coral and the endangered dugong sea mammal will be destroyed), and more ports-of-call for U.S. warships (thus the Navy base on Jeju, where UNESCO-recognized endangered soft coral forests are being killed by ocean floor dredging).

What happens to communities destroyed by U.S. base expansion is of no concern to Washington. The heartless planners of the U.S. corporate empire don't care about sea life and coral. Nor do they care about the citizen protests across the Pacific. They intend to control China

by pointing a loaded gun at Beijing: Either do as we say or you will be taken down.

This expensive and destabilizing military encirclement is similar to what U.S.-led NATO is currently doing to Russia. In fact, NATO has become a cancerous global military alliance and is now reaching into the Pacific by signing up Japan, South Korea, and Australia as NATO "partners."

Resistance to Environmental Destruction

For the past eight years the people on Jeju Island have daily carried on their nonviolent campaign against the Navy base construction. Their sacred "Gureombi" rocky coastline has been blasted and covered with cement. Massive caissons have been planted as breakwaters just off shore. Despite 700 arrests with fines and more than 50 jailed (one as long as 15 months, just for blocking cement trucks), the people continue to resist. Now the Navy wants even more land from the villagers to build housing for thousands of military personnel. The goal is to eliminate Gangjeong village and replace it with the typical Navy town landscape of bars, nightclubs, tattoo parlors, and warehouses.

In Henoko on Okinawa two U.S. Marine V-shaped runways will extend out into pristine Oura bay covering a total area of 500 acres. Of this total area, 4,000 acres is to be in-fill, dredged from the sea. Already, large concrete blocks weighing as much as 45 tons have been dropped on 75 seabed sites, destroying 94 colonies of coral. Okinawans regularly protest at base gates and try to block sea construction operations in their kayaks. As on Jeju, protesters are manhandled and arrested by the Japanese government.

The United States denies any responsibility for the massive environmental destruction on Okinawa or Jeju Island, asserting that it is an internal problem in

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Jeju International Team member Sung-Hee Choi talks with people before they crawl under the razor wire along the sacred Gureombi coastline.

Jeju and Okinawa

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each country. Washington claims that the right-wing Abe government in Tokyo just “has a dispute” with Okinawa, and the United States should not be involved. Washington maintains that it is the South Korean government, which has a Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) with the Pentagon allowing the United States to use any base at any time, that is building the Jeju Navy base. However, it is well known that the U.S. Navy handed the specifications for the port to the South Korean Navy.

It's no wonder the people across the Asia-Pacific are outraged. More of Guam is being taken for U.S. base expansion and weapons training grounds. The Navy has turned Pearl Harbor, once the breadbasket of Hawaii, into a toxic pit. The United States is back in the ports and airfields of the Philippines, proving that American-style imperialism is alive and well.

Antelope Bird

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the old rock 'n' roll number “Get a Job,” “get a job, dada dada.” Our building super, Louis, a gentleman, but, like most supers, not that busy, was up in our place one morning fixing the radiator. He walks in and Charlie spots him and says “Get a job, you son of a bitch.” Louis was both genuinely insulted and amused and went around the lobby telling people about the Smiths' bird. I felt bad about it. He also sings “You Are My Sunshine,” a song written and made popular by a former governor of Louisiana, actually. It goes “You are my sunshine, my only sunshine, you make me happy when skies are grey.” Sometimes Charlie telescopes phrases, truncating them. Hilda, who comes to clean on Tuesday mornings is a big fan of Charlie's and he looks forward to her arrival, asking, “Where's Hilda?” She is very religious and goes to church every morning. So she comes in the apartment door and into the living room. Charlie is out of his cage and sitting on top of it. “Hola, Charlie,” says Hilda. “Hola, Hilda” says Charlie. And then, “You are my son, my only son.” Like the annunciation, but this time from a parrot.

Charlie also sings “Home On the Range,” but doesn't quite get it right. “Home, home on the range, where the antelope bird is heard” and then he trails off in a kind of a whistle. He also does one bar of “I'm a Lone Cowhand.” I tried to teach him “Istanbul Was Constantinople,” but he could never get the hard “K” sound of Constantinople and would break down into a paroxysm of guttural “ka, ka, ka, ka” sounds every time he tried it. He blew the hard “K” sound in “The Interna-

Stand with the People

In Washington in May, VFP national board member Tarak Kauff delivered the letter to Okinawan Gov. Onaga stating that if invited, VFP would send a strong delegation of our members to stand with the people there against U.S. bases. Representatives of the governor told Tarak, “You have our invitation. Please come and see for yourself.”

VFP is now moving to organize a delegation to visit both of these island campaigns in the fall of 2015. Already, several VFP members have visited Gangjeong village and many more are eager to show their active support for the resistance there. As Washington becomes hyper-aggressive in its pivot to control China, our veterans movement must find ways to help shine an international light on the isolated but brave struggles on Okinawa and Jeju Island. We must put our bodies alongside those who fight to save their natural environment and suffer human rights violations. After all, their governments are under clear U.S. direction when

tionale” as well, to the disappointment of our household. He would try “‘Tis the final ka ka ka.” He just couldn't get “conflict” out of his beak. But he redeemed himself by learning how to whistle the song, not that well, because I can't hit all the notes, but passably and recognizably. When our friends Bill Schaap and Ellen Ray were visiting, Charlie started whistling the great anthem of the worldwide working class and Bill, incredulous, exclaimed to Ellen, “He's whistling ‘The Internationale,’” as I beamed proudly.

I tried to teach him the Bessie Smith song “Give Me a Pigfoot and a Bottle of Beer.” When Eli brought his friend Jeremy Kohn home from grade school one afternoon, he unburdened himself with the only line he gets in the whole song. When they walked through the front door Charlie let out with a “Check all your razors, and your guns” and Jeremy shook his head saying to Eli, “Only in your house.” Charlie also intones philosophically, and lamentably, since both Debby and I are now getting into movies at the senior rate, “Enjoy yourself, it's later than you think.”



Michael Steven Smith lives and practices law in New York City with his wife Debby (and Charlie). He is the author, editor, and

co-editor of many books, mostly recently *Imagine: Living In A Socialist U.S.A.* He has organized and chaired the *Left Forum* and is also co-host of the *Pacifica* radio show *Law and Disorder* and on the board of the *Center for Constitutional Rights*.

A longer version of this article can be found at peaceinourtimes.org.

they crack down on the peaceful resistance campaigns.

After Japan was defeated at the end of WWII, the United States took control of Korea and installed the oppressive dictator Syngman Rhee as president. Koreans who collaborated with the fascist Japanese were put in charge of the new Korean government. Thus were created the conditions that ultimately led to the Korean War. A

4-3 (April 3, 1948–May 1949) massacre, and it remains a key motivating force behind their determined eight-year campaign against the Navy base.

The U.S. peace movement has much to learn about the historical, cultural, and environmental legacy of U.S. occupation of Okinawa and Jeju Island. Everyone who has gone to these two places and witnessed the fierce nature-centered struggle

*There is only one way to defeat
the U.S. corporate global imperial
military empire, and that is by
globalizing the resistance.*

fragile ceasefire on July 27, 1953, stopped the hostilities, but to this day a state of war exists between North and South Korea.

Soon after the United States took control of Korea, the peasants on Jeju Island revolted against the new occupation by Washington and its puppet regime of former Japanese collaborators. The United States directed a counter-insurgency campaign on Jeju that killed as many as 40,000 people. For many years this story was hidden from Korean history books, and only recently have new generations of Koreans learned of this horrific slaughter.

In Gangjeong village though, the people have not forgotten the story about the

of the people comes back changed and even more deeply committed to nonviolent revolution here at home.

There is only one way to defeat the U.S. corporate global imperial military empire, and that is by globalizing the resistance. We must stand hand in hand with our peaceful brothers and sisters on these islands and say to them, we are in solidarity with you. Your struggle is our struggle too.

Bruce K. Gagnon is coordinator of the *Global Network Against Weapons & Nuclear Power in Space*. He is a member of *Veterans For Peace* and lives in Bath, Maine.



South Korean police haul away protesters on Jeju Island as they attempt to block Navy base construction vehicles.

Barefoot Artists

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the U.S. government, is not only a crime against humanity, but a betrayal of the Israeli people themselves.

Israel (along with the United States) is becoming increasingly isolated and critics are speaking with one voice. In 2005, Palestinian civil society called for a campaign of boycott, divestment, and sanctions against Israel until it complies with

international law and respects Palestinian rights. Modeled after the successful campaign waged against the apartheid regime of South Africa, the strategic economic campaign against Israel has grown steadily over the last 10 years and the Palestinian rights movement is gaining traction. It could be the only route to a real and lasting peace for Israelis and Palestinians.

Dud Hendrick is a member of VFP Chapter 001 in Maine and lives on Deer Isle, Maine.

‘Where the Antelope Bird Is Heard ...’

By Michael Steven Smith

We bought Charlie almost 23 years ago. We hadn’t intended to buy a bird. It was supposed to be a zoo visit. My wife Debby found out about this cool place in Tribeca, The Urban Bird. All the baby birds for sale were just out there, standing on perches, sleeping in little cozy nests. No cages. Just young parrots—all kinds, sizes, and colors. Green ones from South and Central America, white ones from Australia, blue and scarlet ones from Indonesia, and Charlie, a grey one with a red tail from Central Africa. Charlie was featherless at the time and living above the store in the nursery. But I am getting ahead of my story.

All the birds in the store were babies, with one exception. One old bird was liv-

ing in my tone of voice. Moe would wander over. And Charlie would wait until he got over to his cage and say “You grey son of a bitch.”

When Eli would practice guitar in the living room where Charlie lives in his cage he frequently would meet with Charlie’s free associations. Once a day Charlie unburdens himself with every phrase he knows, going on and on until it could make you crazy or you leave the room. That’s how he learned how to say “I’m gonna kick your ass.” Eli would yell that at him, hoping he would shut up, but to no avail.

On the morning of 9/11, I was supposed to meet my friend John Pellaton for breakfast at Windows on the World, atop Tower Two of the World Trade Center. We were to meet at 8:00 a.m. But John had a meet-

[The doctor] said, ‘That will be \$900 please.’ I replied, ‘But he was a victim of terrorism.’ ‘Just a second,’ she said, and hustled down the hall. She came back and informed us that a fund had been set up for animal victims of terrorism and that ‘there will be no charge.’

ing in a cage, hanging high from the ceiling, in the back of the store, commanding a view of all who entered. I opened the door and Eli, our son, age ten, and I walked in.

The old bird spotted us. He was old and bitter. The two guys that had owned him had abandoned him when they split up. He saw us and yelled out “I’ve got a yeast infection.” “What?,” said Eli, looking up first at the bird and then at me. Before I could answer, the bird added a “fuck you.” Instantly Eli responded, “Dad, can we get a bird like that one?” And so we did.

Parrots bond with one mate for life. Since we were part of the flock it would be one of us and with Eli at camp, it would be me or Debby. The issue was settled when Charlie, sitting on my index finger, bent down and bit me. “You son of a bitch,” I exclaimed and reflexively dropped the poor bird. He never forgot it. And he bonded with Debby. He even tries to feed her, so that she will lay a good egg. Even though she rebuffs his attempts, he still loves her. And when he is mad he still says “you son of a bitch” in my voice.

Along with Charlie we had an outsized grey cat named Moe. Charlie was smarter than Moe and used to mess with him. “Come here, Moe,” he would command,

ing and called just before to cancel. The first plane hit the building at 8:40 a.m. So we were still at home at the time the crash shook our apartment. When it shook it again for the second time we thought we were being bombed. With the big cat and Charlie we weren’t very portable, so we stayed put the first night. Everyone in our building left, except for us, Moe, Charlie, and a blind bass player on the sixth floor. The FBI roused us the next morning. We left large Moe for later, packed up Charlie in his traveling cage, and headed up to friends. Everything was blanketed with a thick layer of toxic dust, the ash from the ruins of the buildings and their contents. We trudged north swinging Charlie in his cage. “It’s OK. It’s OK,” Charlie assured everyone we encountered along the way.

But it was not OK. We almost lost him. Five weeks later Debby and Eli, now nine years older than when we got Charlie and home from Oberlin College, noticed that Charlie kept closing his eyes and nodding out. He even fell off his perch. We rushed him to the Animal Medical Center on the upper east side where, only in New York, they have a specialist who only deals in parrots. She checked him out, put him on an IV and kept him overnight. He had “avian respiratory disease.” This



Michael Smith with Charlie Parker

was serious. Think of the canary in the mine shaft. By the next morning, however, he was doing much better and could come home. When we called to see how he was doing the doctor said she guessed he was better because he just bit her assistant. She also said, “That will be \$900 please.” I replied, “But he was a victim of terrorism.” “Just a second,” she said, and hustled down the hall. She came back and informed us that a fund had been set up for animal victims of terrorism and

ment in Battery Park City on the other end of the World Trade Center ruins.

So there we were in our living room, practicing law, with all our files stacked up on the table. Running an office with Charlie as a participant was really a challenge. Every phone call was an opportunity for him to say “Hi, it’s Mike Smith, how are ya?” Or give our phone number. Debby was on the phone with an insurance adjuster trying to settle a case. The guy was giving her a hard time. Charlie

Charlie is very protective of Debby. He heard the guy on the phone and was getting increasingly agitated, pacing back and forth on his perch. He couldn’t stand it. Finally he yelled out, in my tone of voice, real loud, ‘I’m gonna kick your ass, you son-of-a-bitch.’

that “there will be no charge.” She gave Debby some antibiotics and Charlie was nursed back to health.

Our office is kitty-corner from where the World Trade Center used to be. After 9/11 we lost it for a year. Contamination. We could have found another office downtown, but we could not get phone service. So six weeks after 9/11 a big schtarcker cop from Staten Island with a tattoo and a flashlight helped us schlepp our files down from a darkened fourth-floor suite and we took them to our apart-

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There is one other “son of a bitch” story. Charlie sings. Not whole songs, but good chunks of them. He knows parts of

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