

# Peace in Our Times



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

*The Wars in Our Schools*

## An Ex-Army Ranger Finds a New Mission

By Rory Fanning

Early each New Year's Day I head for Lake Michigan with a handful of friends. We look for a quiet stretch of what only six months earlier was warm Chicago beach. Then we trudge through knee-deep snow in bathing suits and boots, fighting wind gusts and hangovers. Sooner or later, we arrive where the snowpack meets the shore and boot through a thick crust of lake ice, yelling and swearing as we dive into near-freezing water.

It took me a while to begin to understand why I do this every year, or for that matter why for the last decade since I left the military I've continued to inflict other types of pain on myself with such unnerving regularity. Most days, for instance, I lift weights at the gym to the point of crippling exhaustion. On summer nights, I sometimes swim out alone as far as I can through mats of hairy algae into the black water of Lake Michigan in search of what

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JROTC cadets march with large American flag during a Memorial Day parade in Chicago.

## Designated Ground Zero

By Denny Riley

It was 1966 and I spent a year of nights in the target room of a fighter wing whose mission was to bomb North Vietnam into irrelevance. The bombing had begun 10 months before, so I expected everything significant would already be blown to bits when I arrived, but that was not so. Hanoi and Haiphong were off limits to attack, as were many railyards and bridges, all MIG bases, SAM and AAA sites, unless they engaged our birds and the men who flew them. Many targets that seemed obvious were designated JCS, for Joint Chiefs of Staff, and were not to be molested unless the JCS said so. That surprised me when I first reported to the target room, although I was in for bigger surprises than that one.

The work was Top Secret. Before I was shipped out to the fighter wing, I'd spent two years waging the Cold War in the target room of a Strategic Air Command bomb wing at an airbase out on the northern prairie. Our nuclear weapons were aimed at the Soviet Union and rested on a hair trigger that if pulled would knock out civilization in one eyeball-melting moment. In the target room we compiled and constructed the strip charts, radar photos, checkpoint coordinates, call signs and all target information needed to navigate our bombers from here to there. It all went into a black leather satchel, one for each bomber. We called it the Bomb Run Insert or BRI. It was revised regularly and stud-

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Ruins of Muang Khoun, former capital of Xiangkhouang Province, destroyed by the U.S. bombing of Laos in the late 1960s.



## Letters



### Refusing Hateful Rhetoric

My best friend in California comes from a Pakistani Muslim family. She and her children are bilingual and speak perfect English. (By the way, I wonder how many hateful Islamophobes speak two languages?) Last fall, she called me with tears in her eyes and hurt in her voice. She said her 12-year-old son got into a fistfight at school that day. A kid had been taunting him, calling him all kinds of names. The slurs were clearly picked up from the kid's parents, and the bully even openly bragged about being a fan of a certain Republican presidential candidate. My friend's son is a kind and gentle soul who avoids confrontation. But this day, physically threatened, with the teachers consistently failing to prevent it, he decided he had no choice but to protect himself.

The hateful rhetoric against Muslims currently permeating the public sphere is dangerous on many levels. On one level, we are creating an increasingly hostile environment for Muslim Americans to navigate in order to keep their safety, integrity, and civil rights intact. On another level, our children are also learning this hate. And without the ability to sift through it, to determine what is hate masquerading as patriotism, they are poised to continue it into the future. Such is the cycle of violence. As military veterans, we have an obligation to put an end to it right now.

My elders, when they were children, were chased home by white supremacists, and lived with the constant fear of racist violence and political and social disenfranchisement. It was not long ago that this so-called land of the free, home of the brave amounted to no less than an apartheid state. How close are we to this today? Are we going to let this incessant intolerance tear apart everything we worked so hard for, picketed so hard for, sat in and boycotted and marched and protested and bled and died for?

I, for one, refuse. This country belongs to the peaceful, not the hateful.

Kourtney Mitchell  
VFP Board of Directors

### Boycotts Were There at the Birth of Our Nation

Boycotts were there at the birth of our nation, symbolized by chests of tea thrown into Boston Harbor to protest colonial tyranny. The 20th century saw many more boycotts of products, targeting racism, labor abuses, and apartheid. There was the anti-Nazi boycott of German goods in the 1930s called by Jewish War Veterans of America. There were the civil rights, grape, and lettuce boycotts of the 1960s, and the boycotts targeting products from apartheid South Africa in the 1980s.

Some of these boycotts were more successful than others. But as Jewish War Veterans President Rabbi Stephen Wise said in 1933, "We must speak out, and if that is unavailing, at least we shall have spoken." Boycotting governments that practiced racism was seen as a moral imperative, regardless of the eventual outcome.

Of course, countries like Nazi Germany and apartheid South Africa only made life worse for their oppressed peoples. But both nations eventually collapsed, in part because they were seen as pariah states and rejected by the rest of the world.

Unfortunately, our government is reacting to the current boycott of Israeli products in the worst way possible, by targeting Muslim Americans and passing laws criminalizing human rights campaigns. Our New York State Legislature has even introduced laws identifying boycotts as illegal, with penalties for nonprofits and businesses that refuse to buy from Israel.

Greedy politicians, flush with Israeli lobby cash, are eagerly dismantling our First Amendment rights. Apartheid in Israel is undermining our democracy here at home.

Fred Nagel  
Veterans For Peace  
Rhinebeck, NY

## A Note from the Editors

### Questions to Make Your Head Hurt

This issue of *Peace In Our Times* contains some disturbing questions—the kind that can challenge your world view, give you a cognitive dissonance headache, maybe even make you angry.

Are our soldiers heroes?

Is there anything noble about war? Can it ever bring justice?

Was invading Afghanistan wrong?

What would "winning" the war against ISIS look like?

Is the U.S. military a terrorist organization? Is it run by radical extremists?

Does the war on terrorism kill more civilians than terrorism?

Is the United States an imperialist power?

Is our violence a response to the violence directed at us or the cause of that violence? Has the United States practiced genocide?

Should the United States apologize to Cuba?

Are we a democracy?

If that list doesn't give you a headache or make you angry, take it to your next family gathering and ask your Uncle

Frank what it does for him.

These are the kinds of questions that almost never get asked outside of anti-war activist meetings or conversations. They're the kind of questions that don't get asked in most classrooms except on that rare day when a veteran is the guest speaker.

And yet they are the questions that go straight to much of the misery and suffering in this world; the questions that go straight to the fact that youth in this country lucky enough to go to college graduate with soul-crushing debt, that black infant mortality in our big cities is as bad as in the poorest African nations, that we have a Fourth World public transportation system, that we are rushing to the year when the glaciers are gone and the planet broils.

"Oh, c'mon now" your uncle says, "do you have to be so negative?"

No ... no, you don't. But to avoid asking such questions, to not want to know the answers, is to live in Disneyland, Uncle Frank.

—Mike Ferner

### Daniel Berrigan, 1922–2016



### Peace in Our Times

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# The Lie of Patriotism

By Chris Hedges

When Rory Fanning, a burly veteran who served in the 2nd Army Ranger Battalion and was deployed in Afghanistan in 2002 and 2004, appeared at the Donald Trump rally in Chicago in March he was wearing the top half of his combat fatigues. As he moved through the crowd, dozens of Trump supporters shouted greetings such as “Welcome home, brother,” and “Thank you for your service.” Then came the protest that shut down the rally. Fanning, one of the demonstrators, pulled out a flag that read “Vets Against Racism, War and Empire.”

“Immediately someone threw a drink on me,” he said when I interviewed him on my teleSUR show, *Days of Revolt*. “I got hit from behind in the head three or four times. It was quite the switch, quite the pivot on me. Questioning the narrative, questioning Donald Trump’s narrative, and I was suddenly out of their good graces.”

Nationalists do not venerate veterans. They venerate veterans who read from the approved patriotic script. America is the greatest and most powerful country on earth. Those we fight are depraved barbarians. Our enemies deserve death. God is on our side. Victory is assured.



Rory Fanning talks to a Border Patrol Agent in California during his walk across the United States.

Our soldiers and Marines are heroes. Deviate from this cant, no matter how many military tours you may have served, and you become despicable. The vaunted patriotism of the right wing is about self-worship. It is a raw lust for violence. It is blind subservience to the state. And it works to censor the reality of war.

“A lot of soldiers who’ve come back from war see themselves as anything but heroes,” Fanning said. “To throw that term around loosely is dangerous. It’s a way to manipulate soldiers. It buys their silence.”

“Soldiers are not encouraged to talk about the realities of war when they come

back,” he said. “They’re labeled a hero or warrior. That’s a major problem. It leads to further seclusion, isolation with soldiers. We talk about the suicide rates amongst veterans—22 a day. It’s because we’re not allowed to talk about what we saw overseas, how unjust it was, how we feel like bullies. How many innocent people have been killed since 9/11? Throwing out words like ‘heroes’ does a disservice to the experience of veterans and all the innocent people that have been killed since then.”

War, up close, bears no relation to the myth. It is depraved and cruel. It has nothing to do with noble ends or justice. Killing is a dirty, ugly business. There is a vast disparity between war’s reality and the myth peddled by the press, the entertainment industry, politicians, and churches.

“What I didn’t know as I entered [Afghanistan] with the 2nd Army Ranger Battalion was that the Taliban had essentially surrendered after the initial assault by the Air Force and the special forces,” Fanning said of his first tour, which started in late 2001. “Our job was essentially to draw the Taliban back into the fight. Surrender wasn’t good enough for politicians after 9/11. We wanted blood. We wanted a head count. It really didn’t matter who it was. So we’d walk up to people, people who had been occupied

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## Iraq Marine Veteran’s Message of Peace

My name is Mike Hanes and I am with the San Diego chapter of Veterans For Peace. After my experiences in the Iraq invasion as a Force Recon Marine, I came to the conclusion that the glory, idealism, and patriotism that was sold to us growing up, and later as service members, was to perpetuate an elite agenda of militarism, profit, and resource exploitation. I now see war simply as a means to extract/secure resources, ensure industrial profits, and keep the populace in a perpetual state of fear.

War is the most insane creation that humanity has ever invented! It ensures a position of de-evolution rather than a state of evolution. We want our next generation to be better than us, not in a state of regression. As we move forward in the 21st

century, it is vitally important for us to elevate our consciousness and understanding of human behavior in order to promote values that are in line with peaceful problem-solving. A great place for us to start is with ourselves. Trying to be more empathetic rather than judgmental. Giving of ourselves a little more. Lending a helping hand to others. This is the premise of post-traumatic growth for all people, rebuilding and strengthening the individual and those around you.

In an age of rapid technological advancement and information sharing, we have the capability to both shift our values quickly and make war a thing of the past. It is time to transcend the war mentality and bring humanity together. So how



do we create a world of peace? Martin Luther King Jr. stated that “those who love peace must learn to organize as effectively as those who love war.” In the two-year period I have been with Veterans For Peace, I have seen great organization from this group of dedicated men and women. To follow that up, the great futurist Buckminster Fuller stated that “you never change things by fighting the existing reality. To change something, build a new model that makes the existing model obsolete.” This reality hits us hard in an old outdated socioeconomic system based on competition, scarcity, strategic advantage, and the priority of profit over human wellbeing.

**Left: Forager Mike Hanes finds some watercress in a stream on Jeju Island, South Korea. Above: Speaking at a protest to stop construction of a U.S. airbase on Okinawa.**



Today in the 21st century, we have the capability to do much better and we must! I encourage all veterans and peacemakers, young and old, to think out of the box in creating that new model of cooperation and sustainability; to band together being a voice for logic, reason, and sanity in making global peace a reality.

May peace prevail,

Michael Hanes

Mike Hanes was a Recon Marine during the 2003 invasion of Iraq. He strives to alleviate poverty and global suffering due to scarcity and war, putting his efforts into efficient technical solutions such as hydroponic food production, and other intelligent resource management principles. He also aids combat veterans in the transition process, encouraging them to become problem-solvers. He is the creator of Forager Mike’s superfoods and Dang Hot Sauce (foragermikes.com).

# New Mission

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I can only describe as a feeling of falling.

A few years ago, I walked across the United States with 50 pounds on my back for the Pat Tillman Foundation in an obsessive attempt to rid myself of “my” war. On the weekends, I clean my house similarly obsessively. And it’s true, sometimes I drink too much.

In part, it seems, I’ve been in search of creative ways to frighten myself, apparently to relive the moments in the military I said I never wanted to go through again—or so a psychiatrist told me.

According to that doctor, I’m desperately trying to recreate adrenalizing moments like the one when, as an Army Ranger, I jumped out of an airplane at night into an area I had never before seen, not sure if I was going to be shot at as I hit the ground. Or I’m trying to recreate the energy I felt leaping from a Blackhawk helicopter, night vision goggles on, and storming my way into some nameless Afghan family’s home, where I would proceed to throw an empty sandbag over someone’s head and lead him off to a U.S.-controlled, Guantánamo-like prison in his own country.

This doctor says it’s common enough for my unconscious to want to relive the feeling of learning that my friend had just been blown up by a roadside bomb while on patrol at two in the morning, a time most normal people are sleeping. Somehow, at the oddest hours, my mind considers it perfectly appropriate to replay the times when rockets landed near my tent at night in a remote valley in Afghanistan. Or when I was arrested by the military af-



Rory Fanning (right) with Ranger buddy on his last day of Afghanistan deployment.

dents heavily propagandized by the U.S. military, and that, in turn, has been changing my life.

## Filling in the Blanks

The first time I went to speak to students about my life with the Rangers in Afghanistan, I was surprised to realize that the same nervous energy I felt before jumping

year advertising budget. I think you’re more likely to see the recruiters in schools where kids have less options after graduation.”

We arrive at the appointed classroom and I’m greeted warmly by the social studies teacher who invited me. Photos of Ida B. Wells, Martin Luther King Jr., Malcom X, and other revolutionary black leaders hang neatly on a wall. He first heard about my desire to talk to students about my wartime experiences through Veterans For Peace. “There is no counter-narrative to what the kids are being taught by the instructors in Junior ROTC, as far as I can tell,” he says, as we wait for the students to arrive. He goes on to describe the frustration he feels with a Chicago school system in which schools in the poorest neighborhoods are being shut down at a record pace, and yet, somehow, his school district always has the money to supplement the Pentagon’s

something approaching a hush. They clearly respect him. I hope a little of that will spill over in my direction.

“Thanks,” I begin, “for having me in today. My name is Rory Fanning and I’m here to tell you why I joined the military. I’ll also talk about what I saw while I was in that military, and why I left before my contract was up.” The silence in the classroom stretches out, which encourages me and I plunge on.

“I signed up for the Army Rangers to have my student loans paid for and to do my part to prevent another terrorist attack like 9/11. ... My training was sometimes difficult and usually boring. ... A lot of food and sleep deprivation. Mostly, I think my chain of command was training me in how to say yes to their orders. The military and critical thinking don’t mix too well.”

I talk on about the almost indescribable poverty and desperation I witnessed

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*I began speaking to high school students heavily propagandized by the U.S. military, and that, in turn, has been changing my life.*

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ter going AWOL as one of the first Army Rangers to try to say no to participation in George W. Bush’s Global War on Terror.

I’m aware that my postwar urge for limits-testing is not atypical of the home-front experiences of many who went to war in Afghanistan or Iraq and, for some of them, judging by the soaring suicide rates among Global War on Terror vets, the urge has proven so much more extreme than mine.

More than a decade after leaving the army as a conscientious objector, I can finally own up and testify to the eeriness of what we all brought home from America’s 21st-century wars, even those of us who weren’t physically maimed or torn up by them.

Here’s the good news at a purely personal level: The older I get the less I’m inclined toward such acts of masochism, of self-inflicted pain. Part of the change undoubtedly involves age—I hesitate to use the word “maturity” yet—but there’s another reason, too. I found a far better place to begin to put all that energy.

I began speaking to high school stu-

into Lake Michigan or lacing up my gym shoes for a work-out was coursing through my body. But here was the strangest thing: when I had said my piece with as much honesty as I could muster, I felt coming over me the very sense of calmness and resolution that I’d been striving for with other rituals and could never quite hang onto—and it stayed with me for days.

I am one of the few white people in a deteriorating Chicago public high school on the far south side of the city. A teacher is escorting me down multiple broad, shabby hallways to the classroom where I am to speak. We pass a room decorated with a total of eight American flags, four posted on each side of its door. “The recruiting office,” the teacher says, gesturing toward it, and then asks, “Do they have recruiting offices in the suburban schools you talk to?”

“I’m not sure. I haven’t spoken to any on this topic yet,” I reply. “They certainly didn’t have an obvious one at the public high school I went to, but I do know that there are 10,000 recruiters across the country working with a \$700 million-a-

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*Chicago-area high school students aren’t used to hearing such talk. The public school system here has the largest number of Junior ROTC students—nearly 10,000 of them, 45 percent African-American and 50 percent Latino—of any school district in the country.*

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funding of the JROTC (Junior Reserve Officer Training) program.

The kids are just beginning to filter in, laughing and acting like the teenagers they are.

“Okay, everyone, settle down, we have a guest speaker today,” the teacher says. The volume in the room dies down to

in Afghanistan, a country that has known nothing but occupation and civil war for decades and about which, before I arrived, I knew less than nothing. “The buildings in Kabul,” I tell them, “have gaping holes in them and broken-down Russian tanks and jets litter the countryside.”

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I can hardly restrain my amazement. The kids are still with me. I'm now explaining how the U.S. military handed out thousands of dollars to anyone willing to identify alleged members of the Taliban and how we would raid houses based on this information. "I later came to find out that this intelligence, if you could call it that, was rooted in a kind of desperation." I explain why an Afghan in abject poverty, looking for ways to support his family, might be ready to finger almost anyone in return for access to the deep wells of cash the U.S. military could call on. In a world where factories are few, and office jobs scarce indeed, people will do anything to survive. They have to.

I point out how unbearably alien Afghan culture must seem to American military officials. Few speak a local language. No Americans I ever ran into knew anything about the culture of the people we were trying to bribe. Too often we broke down doors and snatched Afghans from their homes not because of their ties with either the Taliban or al-Qaeda, but because a neighbor had a grudge against them.

"Most of the people we targeted had no connection to the Taliban at all. Some even pledged allegiance to the U.S. occupation, but that didn't matter. They still ended up with hoods over their heads in some godforsaken prison."

I can tell that the kids are truly paying attention, so I let it all out. "The Taliban had surrendered a few months before I arrived in Afghanistan in late 2002, but that wasn't good enough for our politicians back home and the generals giving the orders. Our job was to draw people back into the fight."

Two or three students let out genuine soft gasps as I describe how my company of Rangers occupied a village school and our commander cancelled classes there indefinitely because it made an excellent staging point for the troops—and there wasn't much a village headmaster in rural Afghanistan could say to dissuade history's most technologically advanced and powerful military from doing just what it wanted to. "I remember," I tell them,

"watching two fighting-age men walk by the school we were occupying. One of them didn't show an acceptable level of deference to my first sergeant, so we grabbed them. We threw the overly confident guy in one room and his friend in another, and the guy who didn't smile at us properly heard a gunshot and thought, just as he was meant to, that we had just killed his friend for not telling us what we wanted to hear and that he might be next."

"That's like torture," one kid half-whispers.

I talk about why I'm more proud of leaving the military than of anything I did while in it. "I signed up to prevent another 9/11, but my two tours in Afghanistan made me realize that I was making the world less safe. We know now that a majority of the million or so people killed since 9/11 have been innocent civilians, people with no stake in the game and no reason to fight until, often enough, the U.S. military baited them into it by killing or injuring a family member who more often than not was an innocent bystander."

*I can tell that the kids are truly paying attention, so I let it all out. ... 'The Taliban had surrendered a few months before I arrived in Afghanistan in late 2002, but that wasn't good enough for our politicians back home and the generals giving the orders. Our job was to draw people back into the fight.'*

"Did you know," I continue, quoting a statistic cited from University of Chicago political scientist Robert Pape, "that 'from 1980 to 2003, there were 343 suicide attacks around the world, and at most 10 percent were anti-American inspired. Since 2004, there have been more than 2,000, over 91 percent against U.S. and allied forces in Afghanistan, Iraq, and other countries. I didn't want to be part of that, so I left.'"



**The West Charlotte High School Army Junior ROTC marches in the Dr. Martin Luther King Day parade in New York City on January 17, 2007.**

#### Full Disclosure

Chicago-area high school students aren't used to hearing such talk. The public school system here has the largest number of Junior ROTC students—nearly 10,000

a conversation about war and their lives, I hear stories about older siblings deluged by telemarketer-style calls from recruiters. "It's so annoying," one says. "My brother doesn't even know how the recruiter got his information."

"Recruiters have contact information for every junior and senior in this school," I say. "And that's the law. The No Child Left Behind act, signed soon after 9/11, insists that your school, if it wants to receive federal funds, hands over your information to the Department of Defense."

It becomes clear that these students have very little context for their encounters with the U.S. military and its promises of an uplifting future. They know next to nothing, for instance, about our recent history in Iraq and Afghanistan, or our permanent state of war in the greater Middle East and increasingly in Africa. When I ask why so many of them signed up for the JROTC program, they talk about "leadership" opportunities and "structure" for their lives. They are focused, as I was, on having college paid for or "seeing the world." Some say they are in JROTC because they didn't want to take gym class. One offers this honest assessment: "I don't know, I just am. I haven't given it much thought."

As I grill them, they grill me. "What does your family think about your leaving the military?" one asks.

"Well," I respond, "we don't talk about it too much. I come from a very pro-military family and they prefer not to think of what we are doing overseas as wrong. I think this is why it took me so long to speak honestly in public about my time in the military."

"Did other factors weigh on your decision to talk openly about your military experience, or was it just fear of your family's response?" an astute student asks.

I answer as honestly as I can: "Even though, as far as I know, I did something no one in the Rangers had yet done in the post-9/11 era—the psychological and physical vetting process for admission to the Ranger Regiment makes the likelihood of a Ranger questioning the mission and leaving the unit early unlikely—I was intimidated. My chain of command had me leaving the military looking over my shoulder. They made it seem as if they

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**Ten thousand military recruiters, armed with a \$700 million annual budget, target students mostly like to be left behind by other opportunities.**



# Violence Always Comes Home



**Mourners and victims of CIA drone strike in tribal areas of northwest Pakistan.**

**By Arun Kundnani**

The promise of the “global war on terror” was that it was “better to fight them there than here,” as President George W. Bush put it. That promise brought mass violence to Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Palestine, Yemen, and Somalia—in the name of peace in the West. It was essentially an old colonial formula of security at home sustained by a hidden system of violence in the periphery—where routine extrajudicial killing is normalized.

That killing is given a veneer of legality by the “Authorization to Use Military Force” that the U.S. Congress passed in the days after 9/11, which already defined the whole world as a battlefield in the “War on Terror.” President Obama continues to rely on this authorization for his drone-killing program.

Under President Obama, the War on Terror became a matter of bureaucratic routine, undramatic and unopposed. He was elected on a wave of opposition to Bush’s War on Terror, but he failed to take the United States in a fundamentally different direction. That neutered most of the remaining opposition and made permanent what had been presented as a “state of emergency.” Neoconservatives invented the terror war but Obama liberalism normalized it; at which point, mainstream journalists stopped asking questions.

Take, for example, a March 7, 2016, report in *The New York Times* on a drone

bombing in Somalia that killed 150 people. In the article, it is not called a bombing but a “strike.” A “strike” is an appropriate word for a punch in the face, not for a bombing that kills 150 people. And the people killed were, according to *The New York Times*, not killed but “removed.” Apparently this “strike” was “precision-guided,” as the White House says that avoiding civilian casualties is a “very very high priority.” The truth is the military has no idea how many civilians are being killed. Nevertheless, the White

House says this bombing is a “good example” of how the U.S. military can work together with other governments.

Contrast that language with the language we use to describe another form of violence that also kill civilians, but in European and American cities rather than in East Africa. This violence is not labeled a “strike” but a “terrorist attack.” The perpetrators are “terrorists,” “extremists,” “radicalized.” They “hate our values.” The consequences of their terrorist violence is documented extensively: stories of victims and survivors are sought

out and broadcast continuously on every channel, printed in every newspaper. We are mesmerized by this violence, even as the violence of our own government remains invisible.

Indeed, this is the effect of words like “terrorism,” “extremism,” “radicalization”: to make us separate in our minds their killing of civilians from our killing of civilians. Because, almost by definition, our own violence can never be called “terrorism” or “extremism.” We never ask whether we have become “radicalized,”

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*All empires require violence to sustain themselves, and the violence perpetrated overseas by imperial powers always flows back, in one form or another, to the ‘homeland.’*

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become more willing to use violence in a wider range of contexts. Our violence is always rational, reactive, precise; theirs is always barbaric, fanatical, indiscriminate.

In this way, we fail to understand that we are in a cycle of violence with our enemies. Public opinion is taken in by the notion that our violence is somehow more civilized, that it is more civilized to kill through the technology of remote control than by strapping a bomb to yourself. We fail to acknowledge that we too bomb hospitals, journalists, and children.

Since the end of the Vietnam war, we no longer see many pictures or hear stories of the killings that result from our bombs. There are no human beings under the bombs. There is no documentation of the effects of our violence. We know that last year we dropped 22,110 bombs in Iraq and Syria. The Pentagon says these bombs “likely” killed only six civilians, along with “at least” 25,000 Islamic State fighters. The true number of civilian deaths, though, is likely to be in the thousands as well.

We all know the War on Terror kills more civilians than terrorism does, but we tolerate this because it is “their” civilians being killed in places we imagine to be far away.

All empires require violence to sustain themselves, and the violence perpetrated overseas by imperial powers always flows back, in one form or another, to the “homeland.” In modern times, that violence also always takes on a racial character. The British Empire, for example, relied upon racist ideology to maintain its authority, both domestically and in colonial settings, particularly in the face of resistance to its rule. Blacks and South Asians from the colonies who settled in Britain after the Second World War encountered the racism that imperialism had fostered there, even after the British Empire itself no longer existed.

The U.S. empire is no different in this respect. When we think of racism in the

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# New Veteran-Led Campaign Challenges Islamophobia

By Brian J. Trautman

Violence against U.S. Muslims is growing faster than at any time since 9/11; assaults, including shootings and vandalism, on Muslim individuals and their places of worship have tripled since the Paris and San Bernardino terror attacks. According to the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR), last year set a record for the highest number of incidents targeting U.S. mosques.

Hostility toward Muslims because of their religious faith is fundamental to the root and expression of Islamophobia. A 1997 report by the Runnymede Trust defined Islamophobia as “an outlook or worldview involving an unfounded dread and dislike of Muslims, which results in practices of exclusion and discrimination.” The report also identified eight common misconceptions about Islam, such as a belief that the religion is inferior, primitive, and barbaric and embodies a political ideology rather than a true religious faith. For these reasons, among others, it can be argued that Islamophobia is a form of racism.

The hate propaganda and political demagoguery observed in the current presidential election season has fueled Islamophobia and contributed to the sharp rise in hate crimes. Sadly, it is quite possible that the anti-Muslim responses to the Brussels terror attacks from Donald Trump, Ted Cruz, and others may have incited more Islamophobia and put Muslims at greater risk of victimization.

There are about 3 million Muslims in the United States and more than 1.6 billion worldwide. They have the same right to religious freedom, freedom from fear, and human dignity as members of any other religion, particularly in a nation that touts itself as a beacon of hope and the “Land of the Free.” As citizens, we have a moral responsibility to act to protect and preserve these rights. There is no room for apathy or complacency on this matter.

Determined to defy and challenge Islamophobia before more innocent Muslims are targeted and harmed, Veterans For Peace (VFP), working closely with Iraq Veterans Against the War (IVAW), has organized a campaign called Veterans Challenge Islamophobia. This national campaign is a broad-based, action-oriented effort calling on military veterans everywhere to defend the values of religious freedom, equality, and individual rights embedded in the U.S. Constitution. The campaign strives to prevent further abuse of our Muslim neighbors while building strong, positive relationships with Muslim communities to



Former VFP President Elliott Adams at a Trump rally.

help guard them against hate-motivated threats and behavior.

VFP understands that terror groups like ISIL do not speak for Islam and, in fact, the vast majority of ISIL's victims are Muslims. To quote Muslim Navy veteran and VFP member Nate Terani, ISIL's atrocities represent “utter cowardice carried out by thugs who know NO religion except violence and destruction. They are NOT members of my faith, which

help guard them against hate-motivated threats and behavior.” Islamophobia, therefore, has the real potential of strengthening ISIL, especially if left unchallenged.

Besides being used as a mechanism to denigrate Muslim Americans, Islamophobia has been employed as a vehicle to demonize Muslims in foreign lands, functioning as a convenient tool for lawmakers pushing to reject war refugees from the Middle East or as a pretext for sending

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*‘Bigotry and racism violate all of the values we believed we were defending during our military service.’*

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preaches the sanctity of creation.” In a recent op-ed, Paul K. Chappell, retired Army captain and a member of VFP's advisory board, argues that ISIL deliberately provokes Islamophobia for the purposes of recruitment. The terror organization requires two specific conditions before this objective can be fulfilled: “It needs to dehumanize the people it kills, and it also needs Western countries to dehumanize Muslims.” Chappell contends that ISIL “commits horrible atrocities against Westerners because it wants us to overreact by stereotyping, dehuman-

izing, and alienating Muslims.” Islamophobia, therefore, has the real potential of strengthening ISIL, especially if left unchallenged. Besides being used as a mechanism to denigrate Muslim Americans, Islamophobia has been employed as a vehicle to demonize Muslims in foreign lands, functioning as a convenient tool for lawmakers pushing to reject war refugees from the Middle East or as a pretext for sending

more military troops to the region. VFP also believes that the pro-torture rhetoric of several presidential candidates is linked to Islamophobia, a position that VFP has articulated publicly. The ongoing vilification and targeting of Muslims both here and abroad demonstrates the urgent need for, and importance of, the Veterans Challenge Islamophobia campaign.

The formal statement of the campaign reads as follows:

“We are U.S. military veterans, many of whom saw combat in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Vietnam, who are appalled by

the current spate of bigotry, racism, and hatred expressed toward Muslims, the huge majority of whom are law-abiding and productive citizens.

“Bigotry and racism violate all of the values we believed we were defending during our military service. The ideals contained in the Constitution, to the degree they have been manifested in America, have been a beacon to much of the world because of the diversity, openness, and respect for people of all faiths that most Americans live by. It will be a great calamity if we let fear give rise to hatred.

“Fear-mongering endangers our national security and gives rise to hatred and racism that play into the hands of an enemy that wants to convince Muslims around the world that the West, led by the United States, hates them, and that joining ISIL or similar organizations is the only way to truly observe and defend their religion. We can never defend ourselves effectively by playing into our adversary's strategy, giving credibility to their recruitment propaganda. We endanger ourselves whenever we make that mistake.

“We call on all Americans to let their voices be heard and to stand up for the values of tolerance, respect, and love. As Pope Francis told Congress, ‘to imitate the hatred and violence of tyrants and murderers is the best way to take their place.’”

The above statement can be found online at [veteranschallengeislamophobia.org](http://veteranschallengeislamophobia.org), where veterans can sign on to support the campaign and non-veterans can sign up for campaign news while helping make sure the voices of veterans are heard as we defend freedom of religion and stand against bigotry.

At the end of February, VFP sponsored Muslims Are Not Our Enemy, a rally outside the Islamic Society of Boston Cultural Center, New England's largest mosque. The campaign has inspired the hashtag #VetsVsHate, a movement of veterans who have posted personal messages of solidarity to social media and held nonviolent protests at political events nationwide. In South Carolina, Alabama, Nevada, and Arizona veterans have displayed banners with slogans such as “Veterans to Mr. Trump: End Hate Speech Against Muslims” and “We Stand With Our Muslim Brothers and Sisters.” During some of these protests, several veterans were accosted and roughed up by security officials and belligerent political supporters.

The attempts to manufacture fear and hatred of Muslims in our society must be stopped. All veterans, whether or not they agree with VFP on other issues, can be prominent and influential leaders in the struggle against Islamophobia and in persuading their fellow Americans to oppose hate.

Brian Trautman is a post-Cold War Army veteran who serves on the VFP national board of directors. He teaches peace studies and economics at Berkshire Community College in western Massachusetts and resides near Albany, N.Y. He is on Twitter @BriTraut.



Boston VFP member Pat Scanlon addresses Boston rally against Islamophobia Feb. 27.



# Army Chaplain Resigns to Protest Use of Assassin Drones

By Ann Wright

U.S. Army Reserve Chaplain Captain Christopher John Antal resigned from the U.S. Army Reserves on April 12, 2016, in opposition to U.S. policies regarding militarized drones, nuclear weapons, and preventive war. Antal stated he could not serve as a chaplain for an “empire” and could not “reconcile his duty to protect and defend America and its constitutional democracy and his commitment to the core principles of his religious faith including justice, equity and compassion and the inherent worth and dignity of every person” with policies of the United States.

His letter of resignation stated that he resigned because he could not support “unaccountable killing” through the U.S.

armed drone policy and the executive branch claiming “the right to kill anyone, anywhere on earth, at any time, based on secret evidence, in a secret process, undertaken by unidentified officials.”

Antal also cited his opposition to the U.S. nuclear weapons policy, calling it a policy of “terror and mutually assured destruction that threatens the existence of humanity and the earth.”

In his letter of resignation, Antal refused to support the U.S. policy of “preventive war, permanent military supremacy and global power projection” in what he calls “imperial overreach through extra-constitutional authority and impunity from international law.”

From September 2012 through February 2016, Antal was the chaplain of the 3rd Infantry Division at Fort Benning, Georgia. *continued on next page ...*



U.S. Army Reserve Chaplain Captain Christopher John Antal.

## Violence

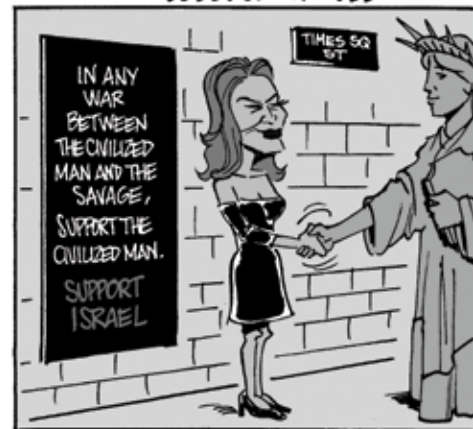
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United States, we tend to think primarily of its domestic history. But, especially since the beginning of the 20th century, American racism has also been bound up with empire.

Specifically, since the end of the Cold War, U.S. foreign policy planners have regarded the Middle East as their most troublesome territory, a region where resistance seems to be especially strongly felt, particularly against the United States’ key regional ally, Israel. Following the example of European imperial powers, large sections of the U.S. political and cultural elite have turned to racial ways of explaining resistance to its authority. Rather than seeing the Palestinian movement, for example, as rooted in a struggle against military occupation and for human rights, it has been more convenient to think that Arabs are inherently fanatical. In other words, the problem is their culture, not our politics.

With the War on Terror, that rhetoric was generalized to Muslims as a whole: their religion seen as somehow especially prone to terrorist violence. The U.S. gov-

EQUATING MUSLIMS WITH SAVAGES IS FREEDOM OF SPEECH!



violent nature. The imperialist violence upon which U.S.-led capitalism depends cannot be acknowledged in liberal society, so it is transferred onto the personality of the Muslim and seen as emanating from outside ourselves. Imperial violence is then only a proportionate response to the inherently aggressive and threatening nature of the fanatical Muslim enemy. By screening out resistance in this way, a Western self-image of innocence and beneficence can be maintained.

This Islamophobic logic also leads us to misunderstand the nature of enemies such

PROTESTING AGAINST IT IS NOT...



talist globalization. They have known no critique, only conspiracy theory, and are drawn to apocalyptic rather than popular struggle. Nevertheless, for all its lack of actual political content, the ISIS narrative of a global war against the West feels to its adherents like an answer to the violence of racism, poverty, and empire.

This means that the most appropriate response to ISIS is to see it as a symptom of the “normal” functioning of the modern, global system, rather than as an external element corrupting the system from outside or from the pre-modern past. Its use of social media, its rejection of the national borders of the 20th century, and its linkages to the petroleum economy all demonstrate that ISIS is a child of globalization.

ISIS is certainly a monster, but a monster we helped to make. It was born in the chaos and carnage that followed the 2003 invasion of Iraq. Its sectarian ideology and funding have come from the Saudi and Gulf ruling elites, our closest regional allies after Israel. Russia and Iran have also played their role, propping up the Bashar al-Assad regime—responsible for far more civilian deaths than ISIS—and prolonging the war in Syria that enables ISIS to thrive. Meanwhile, the groups that have been most effective in fighting ISIS—the Kurdish militia—are designated as terrorists by Western governments because they are considered threats to our ally Turkey.

What then would an appropriate re-

sponse to the War on Terror look like? We must end the bombings, which only deepen the cycle of violence and reinforce ISIS’s narrative of a war of the West against Islam; and end our support for the regimes that have enabled ISIS’s rise, especially the Saudi elite, the most reactionary influence in the region.

Of course, ISIS’s ideology and governing practices should also be exposed and denounced at every opportunity—for their oppression of women, enslaving of minorities, hatred of freedom, and so on. But to do so from the stance of a global conflict between liberal values and Islamic extremism only leads to the dead end of a militarized identity politics. We should not allow ourselves to be intimidated into ceasing our criticisms of the obvious double standards and contradictions of the War on Terror.

But these points are not enough. The antiwar movement should be bolder in asserting that only an antiracist, anti-imperialist, and anticapitalist politics can provide a genuine alternative to jihadism; that more radicalization, in the genuine sense of the word, is the solution, not the problem; that terrorism thrives in environments where mass movements advancing visions of social progress have been defeated.

The German philosopher Walter Benjamin stated that behind every fascism is a failed revolution. The same is true of terrorism: ISIS exists because the Arab revolutions of 2011 failed. We must therefore defend the spaces of radical politics, for the right to dream of another world. Counter-terrorism strategies erode such spaces.

Finally, the refugees must be defended, not only because they are victims, but because they carry with them a knowledge of our past failures. We must allow them to teach us about ourselves.

Arun Kundnani is the author of *The Muslims are Coming! Islamophobia, Extremism, and the Domestic War on Terror*. His website is [kundnani.org](http://kundnani.org)

*ISIS is certainly a monster, but a monster we helped to make. It was born in the chaos and carnage that followed the 2003 invasion of Iraq.*

ernment’s own violence—torture, drone bombings, and military occupations, which result in many times more deaths than “jihadist terrorism”—can then be more easily defended.

Thus, one of the functions of Islamophobia is to give us an apparent explanation of the violent conflicts that an empire inevitably involves itself in, an explanation that enables us to avoid confronting the fact that we are an empire, and instead locate the source of that violence in a barbaric culture, with a fixed and inherently

as ISIS. The young people who travel from Europe and the United States to Syria to volunteer for ISIS are not driven primarily by religious extremism, but by an image of war between the West and Islam. Theirs is a narrative of two fixed identities engaged in a global battle: truth and justice on one side; lies, depravity and corruption on the other.

ISIS recruits are not corrupted by ideology but by the end of ideology: They have grown up in the era of Francis Fukuyama’s “end of history,” of no alternatives to capi-



# Solitary Confinement Is Torture and Must Be Abolished

By Chelsea Manning

Shortly after arriving at a makeshift military jail at Camp Arifjan, Kuwait, in May 2010, I was placed into the black hole of solitary confinement for the first time. Within two weeks, I was contemplating suicide.

After a month on suicide watch, I was transferred back to the United States, to a 6-by-8-foot cell in a place that will haunt me for the rest of my life: the U.S. Marine Corps Brig in Quantico, Va. I was held there for roughly nine months as a “prevention of injury” prisoner, a designation the Marine Corps and the Navy used to place me in highly restrictive solitary conditions without a psychiatrist’s approval.

For 17 hours a day, I sat directly in front of at least two Marine Corps guards seated behind a one-way mirror. I was not allowed to lie down. I was not allowed to lean my back against the cell wall. I was not allowed to exercise. Sometimes, to keep from going crazy, I would stand up, walk around, or dance, as “dancing” was not considered exercise by the Marine Corps.

To pass the time, I counted the hundreds of holes between the steel bars in a grid pattern at the front of my cell. My eyes traced the gaps between the bricks on the wall. I looked at the rough patterns and stains on the concrete floor—including one that looked like a caricature grey alien, with large black eyes and no mouth, that was popular in the 1990s. I could

hear the “drip drop drip” of a leaky pipe somewhere down the hall. I listened to the faint buzz of the fluorescent lights.

For brief periods, every other day or so, I was escorted by a team of at least three guards to an empty basketball court-sized area. There, I was shackled and walked around in circles or figure-eights for 20 minutes. I was not allowed to stand still, otherwise they would take me back to my cell. I was only allowed a couple of hours of visitation each month to see my friends, family, and lawyers, through a thick glass partition in a 4-by-6-foot room. My hands and feet were shackled the entire time. Federal agents installed recording equipment specifically to monitor my conversations, except with my lawyers.

U.N. Special Rapporteur on Torture Juan Mendez condemned my treatment as “cruel, inhuman, and degrading,” describing “the excessive and prolonged isolation” I was placed under for that period of time. However, he didn’t stop there. In a preface he wrote for the 2014 Spanish edition of the *Sourcebook on Solitary Confinement*, he strongly recommended against any use of solitary confinement beyond 15 days.

As Mendez explains: “Prolonged solitary confinement raises special concerns, because the risk of grave and irreparable harm to the detained person increases with the length of isolation and the uncertainty regarding its duration. In my public declarations on this theme, I have defined prolonged solitary confinement as any pe-

riod in excess of 15 days. This definition reflects the fact that most of the scientific literature shows that, after 15 days, certain changes in brain functions occur and the harmful psychological effects of isolation can become irreversible.”

Unfortunately, conditions similar to the ones I experienced in 2010–11 are hardly unusual for the estimated 80,000 to 100,000 inmates held in these conditions across the United States every day. In the time since my confinement at Quantico, public awareness of solitary confinement has improved by orders of magnitude. People all across the political spectrum—including some who have never been in solitary or known anyone who has—are now beginning to question whether this practice is a moral and ethical one. In

June 2015, U.S. Supreme Court Justice Anthony Kennedy called the prison system “overlooked” and “misunderstood,” stating that he welcomes a case that would allow the court to review whether or not solitary confinement violates the prohibition against cruel and unusual punishment in the U.S. Constitution.

The evidence is overwhelming that it should be deemed as such: solitary confinement in the United States is arbitrary, abused, and unnecessary in many situations. It is cruel, degrading, and inhumane, and is effectively a “no-touch” torture. We should end the practice quickly and completely.

*Chelsea Manning has served three years of a 35-year sentence for leaking secret government documents.*



## Chaplain Resigns

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ary 2013 Chris Antal was an Army chaplain to a signals battalion supporting the 3rd Infantry Division at Kandahar Airbase in southern Afghanistan. While his unit did not have operational responsibilities for drones, Chaplain Antal saw drones launch and land where he gave services for military personnel killed in Afghanistan whose remains were being transported back to the United States. Additionally, he was concerned about the use of drones after hearing about a drone attack in which a grandmother had been killed while picking okra in a field near her home in the region around the military base.

On Veterans’ Day 2012, identifying himself as an Army chaplain in Afghanistan, he posted “A Veterans’ Day Confession for America” on the Unitarian Universalist site, A Quest for Meaning, in the form of a poetic testimony.

Antal wrote, “We have sanitized killing and condoned extrajudicial assassinations ... war made easy without due process, protecting ourselves from the human cost of war. We have deceived ourselves ... denying the colossal misery our wars inflict on the innocent.” He had delivered this sermon to military personnel and contractors who had freely gathered for a worship service in the Unitarian Univer-

salist tradition at Kandahar Air Base.

Antal’s commanding officer was informed about his article and told him “you make us look like the bad guys” and “the message does not support the mission.”

The commander said he had lost confidence in Antal and had him investigated, grounded from travel and officially reprimanded by a letter from a general officer at division level. He was sent back to

the United States with a “do not promote” evaluation and discharged from active duty. Antal challenged the punishment through New York Senator Kirsten Gillibrand and her congressional inquiry resulted in his re-activation and promotion to captain in the U.S. Army.

The Rev. Antal spoke on March 30, 2016, at the Veterans For Peace symposium “Inside Drone Warfare: Perspec-

tives of Whistleblowers, Families of Drone Victims and Their Lawyers,” held at the University of Nevada Las Vegas Law School with military and CIA drone whistleblowers. The symposium was held during the week of vigils called “Shut Down Creech 2016” at Creech Drone base, 60 miles outside of Las Vegas.

During his talk at the symposium, Rev. Antal said that the U.S. Army had on military policies by changing its description of the duties of chaplains regarding speaking with a “prophetic voice” and on issues of “moral turpitude.” The phrases “speaking with a prophetic voice” and “issues of moral turpitude” were eliminated from the 2015 version of the chaplain regulations. While the 2015 regulation charges chaplains to speak “with candor as an advocate to confront and support resolution to challenges and issues of the command,” what happened to him when he spoke with candor demonstrates that the Army does not want chaplains speaking truth to power.

*Ann Wright is a 29-year U.S. Army/Army Reserves veteran who retired as a colonel. A former U.S. diplomat, she resigned in March 2003 in opposition to the war on Iraq. She served in Nicaragua, Grenada, Somalia, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Sierra Leone, Micronesia, and Mongolia. Co-author of Dissent: Voices of Conscience, she is a lifetime member of Veterans For Peace.*



# Ground Zero

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ied by the bomber crews day in and day out.

But a mission greater to us than defeating the Soviet Union was having our work—our readiness—pass inspection when a team from SAC headquarters descended on us unannounced, and this made it all mundane. The claxon sounded with regularity and everyone scrambled as though the nuclear moment had arrived, but none of us believed it would happen any more than we now believe in the foreboding of climate change. The Cold War, even from the proximity of the target room, was boring and also out on the northern prairie, so when the bombing of North Vietnam began all of us young airmen wanted to get to Southeast Asia. In SAC we worked side by side with older guys who'd flown bombers in WWII. They shook their heads at our naïveté, but I didn't even notice.

The information I'd worked with in SAC was highly classified, so when I shipped out to the fighter wing I thought I knew everything, but I didn't. I didn't know a damned thing about the other war.

The day I reported to the fighter wing's target room I was rushed into working with aerial photos of a mountaintop base under attack in Laos. Aircraft from our base



The author, Denny Riley, today.

were strafing and bombing the approaches. I pitched in, the first time in two-and-a-half years in the Air Force my efforts didn't seem like a drill, but I did say out loud, "We're not supposed to be bombing Laos." I meant it as a question, as in, "Can someone explain this to me?"

The sergeant in charge gave a little chuckle and lifted his chin as though he understood my surprise and said, "Don't worry about it."

I've thought about that moment for 50 years. It was my moment. It was my time to say, "I'm not worried about it. I'm just not working on it until I get it explained because one thing I know is we're neutral on the civil war in Laos." But I was a young man who, rather than proceeding on moral fiber, proceeded on how bad the trouble would be if I broke a rule and got caught. I knew if I refused to work on the targets in Laos I'd be dragged off, ground up, and spit out with a bad discharge, and that struck a fearful note, so I went along with what was going on. I tried to believe someone in command had a better gauge on right and wrong than I did. But in 1966 our war in Laos was a CIA operation and the CIA needed missions flown and the Air Force was told to fly those missions. Everyone was doing as they were told, just like me. We bombed Laos everyday.

I worked nights in the target room. We prepared the

target materials for the pilots who'd come in for their briefings in the very early hours, long before the sun came up on Southeast Asia. Saigon's decoded message gave us the coordinates, we found the proper maps, drew the perimeter range of enemy defenses, and marked the target coordinates with a small red triangle around a yellow dot at the Designated Ground Zero, the DGZ.

Three o'clock one morning I was alone in the target room when an F-105 pilot who that day had drawn an armed-reconnaissance flight walked in and asked if there was anything meaty in his area. Armed-reconnaissance meant his mission was to fly over a designated area of Southern Laos, what we called Steel Tiger, and strafe or bomb anything that moved. We joked, "A nun on a bicycle, a boy on a water buffalo," but it was true. Anything that moved whether a nun, a boy, or a farm animal was to be killed.

This pilot hated armed reconnaissance flights. He was tired of flying over farms and jungles and finding nothing. The Laotians hid if they heard an aircraft. He wanted to expend ordnance on something, anything.

I knew of a JCS target that looked like two old barracks beside a dirt road, halfway tucked into the jungle. I showed him the aerial photo of the target, showed him where it was on the map. He didn't take the photo or map with him, though. He told me if he wasn't warned off the target in the briefing he was all set.

It was wrong on every level, even within the confines

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*He flew up there and with 50-millimeter cannons and two 750-pound bombs destroyed the barracks. When he returned, his debriefing created a stir. He'd hit a JCS target without orders to do so. He told the debriefer he saw a dozen soldiers on the road. I stood nearby but he never looked at me, never looked at me again.*

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of believing everything in Laos should be killed, but I gave him the target because he asked what was there and I knew, and I was proud of that, and for a moment I was important in the war.

He flew up there and with 50 millimeter cannons and two 750 pound bombs destroyed the barracks. When he returned, his debriefing created a stir. He'd hit a JCS target without orders to do so. He told the debriefer he saw a dozen soldiers on the road. I stood nearby but he never looked at me, never looked at me again.

After I got out I came home wanting only to be a civilian, I felt pretty bad about everything I'd done my four years in. Any way I looked at it, everything I'd done looked wrong. I was out of the service but couldn't sink my teeth into anything. I'd get fired up then the fire would go out and I'd move on. One day I decided I'd write about the target room. I went to the library. I found a book, *Voices from the Plain of Jars*, a collection of stories told by Laotians we attacked every day for 11 years while we dropped two-and-a-half million tons of bombs on one million Lao people. I took the book home and sat down to read it.

I was hit hard. These were the words of people who lived at the receiving end of the coded messages from Saigon, the people whose generational homes and cemeteries were in the aerial photos, whose lives were lived where I'd drawn a target symbol.

My heart began to race, vision blurred and every-

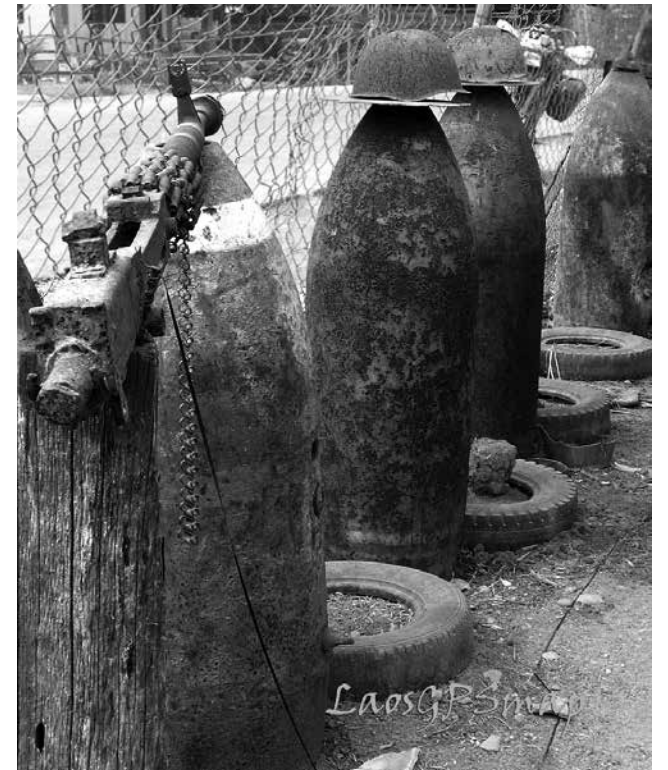
thing lost color, became grey and black. My breathing felt labored, heavy. I wobbled out of my apartment to the front steps of my building and settled down clutching the book. I was going to die and wanted to be found gripping the truth that killed me.

It took maybe an hour until my body calmed down, but the idea of self, of who I am, never recovered. I didn't tell anyone what happened. I didn't look for other veterans to talk with. I didn't go to the VA. I kept it to myself. Life meandered along.

I met a girl and life grew better. Fifteen years later I was advertising sales manager for a computer magazine in a three-story brick building in San Francisco.

Three sales people worked for me in cubicles outside my office. Two were basically kids but one, Mark, was one of those hardboiled sales guys who'd seen it all.

I was older than him, and I'd seen a few things too, but somehow I'd arrived at that time with a wonderful wife and two healthy toddlers. One day Mark and I were in my office going over numbers. We relaxed a moment and he asked me what I'd done in the Air Force and when I told him about the war he gave me a hard time about it. "How could you do it, man? Why did you even go over there?" As if I hadn't had those thoughts. As though it wasn't my life we were talking about but instead a diorama that begged the comment of every American.



U.S. bombs in a scrap metal yard, Xekong Province, southern Laos.

Giving myself a hard time is different from someone too young to have been in the war giving me a hard time. A day came when he gave me reason to fire him and though firing someone is never pleasant, I was glad to get rid of Mark but I can't forget him. He was still one of my ad reps when the first Bush threatened Iraq with bombardment unless Iraqi forces quit Kuwait.

Other people in the office were either against bombardment or thought anything our leaders did was okay because the United States does the right thing. I was asked what I thought.

Bombing stopped for me when I got out. I didn't read war news. Laos had been on my mind until I read *Voices from the Plain of Jars*, when I backed away from thinking. But they asked, so I told them the Air Force is a terrorist organization that drops bombs from high altitude on civilians, the logical and expedient conclusion of my experience, yet too far-fetched for my educated and scrubbed co-workers. Rather than considering my words or asking me to explain, they stopped including me in conversations.

Vietnam War veterans aren't received as people who learned a vital truth, but as people who are damaged by

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# Banished from Their Own Country

By Lida Dianti

To some U.S. veterans, the tragedy of war is more than the violence or conflict on the ground. It is a shadow that follows them home in the form of unemployment, PTSD, and substance abuse. Noncitizen veterans—despite spending years of their lives defending this country—must not only unpack shellshock but also face the threat of deportation.

Though they are promised naturalization, far too many noncitizen military veterans, who are generally green card holders, never actually naturalize and are subject to deportation if they pick up a criminal conviction when they return home, even if it is just for a misdemeanor offense. Thousands of immigrants have served to uphold the systems that purport to protect the American people only to be vilified by the same institutions they risked their lives to defend.

Many deported veterans contend that military recruiters misled them, telling them that they would become a U.S. citizen by virtue of joining the military. As a result, immigrants often are completely unaware that they can be deported even with their veteran status.

Margaret Stock of Cascadia Cross-Border Law in Anchorage, Alaska, who has represented deported servicemen, expressed a common misconception among immigrant veterans.

“They raised their right hands and swore to defend the Constitution,” Stock told the *Los Angeles Times*. “They thought that made them citizens.”

Other veterans say that they in fact filed their naturalization paperwork while they were in the military, but the federal government lost the paperwork or never

responded. Still others say that the military could have helped them naturalize during basic training, but failed to do so. The Pentagon reports that since 2009, about 9,800 men and women have earned their citizenship during basic military training. More than 89,000 people have received citizenship through military service since 9/11.

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*‘[T]heir deportation is like a life sentence—it means permanent separation from their families, their lives, their livelihoods, and the only country that most of them have ever known.’*

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It is important to note that naturalization after deployment has long been a benefit provided to servicemen. As early as the Civil War, immigrants have played a pivotal role in the U.S. military. One in six troopers in George Custer’s 7th Cavalry at the Battle of the Little Big Horn was an Irish immigrant. The promise of U.S. citizenship after military service has been a long-standing practice that provided immigrants with a highly valued avenue to naturalization. The history of military service in America would be significantly different without the inclusion of immigrants and the promise of citizenship that followed.

In recent years, as veterans return from Iraq and Afghanistan, they find adjusting to civilian life difficult. Many struggle with PTSD and substance abuse as they work to regain a sense of the lives they led before suffer-

ing the trauma of war.

The ACLU of California is partnering with Deported Veterans Support House, a shelter and resource center for deported veterans based in Tijuana, Mexico, on a project to end the unjust deportations of U.S. military veterans. Although a 2011 Immigrations and Customs Enforcement (ICE) memo provides veterans special consideration in deportation hearings, more often than not, this consideration is ignored or applied inconsistently.

Since January, the ACLU of California has documented 70 cases of veterans deported to countries around the world and is evaluating each case for possible avenues for legal relief to enable these veterans to come home.

“For these men, their deportation is like a life sentence—it means permanent separation from their families, their lives, their livelihoods, and the only country that most of them have ever known,” said Jennie Pasquarella, attorney and immigrants’ rights director for the ACLU of California. “They honorably served our country, and they also served their time in the criminal justice system. They should not serve a life of exile as well. It’s time for the United States to bring them home.”

Currently the ACLU is representing Daniel Torres in his quest to become a U.S. citizen. Torres is a former Marine who served in Iraq and is now living in Tijuana. When Torres enlisted, he took an oath “to support and uphold” the Constitution and defend the only country he called home. He certainly was “American” enough to serve in Iraq. But what he possessed in tenacity, military prowess, and leadership, he lacked in legal immigration status.

“We’re not just some foreigners that got deported,” Torres told NPR. “We feel like Americans that have been banished, in exile from the country we love the most.”

*Lida Dianti is communications intern at the ACLU of Southern California.*

## Ground Zero

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a bad experience.

Bush, though, had thrown down his gauntlet and he couldn’t appear soft, and his family’s fortune was drenched in oil, so on January 17, 1991, we began a five-week bombardment of Iraq that destroyed everything an Iraqi family needed to get them through the day.

As the bombardment began I was in my office with the door closed fudging sales projections and wondering once again how a perfectly decent hippie such as I had gone so wrong. Mark suddenly burst in and blurted, “They started bombing Iraq!”

“Nuts,” I said and stared at him, and he stared back. After a long moment he turned and went back out.

I was overwhelmed. That bombs were falling was too much for me. The expression “I couldn’t believe it” fails what I felt. I could believe it. It was much too vivid. I was in the target room looking at target photos. I was reading *Voices From the Plane of Jars*. I was at the DGZ. Bombs came down. We bombed ourselves and I’d planned the targets.

I was breaking down and I wanted to be alone. I rushed from my office. Everyone was gathered in little knots talking all at once. No one saw me head for the stairs. I went down to the warehouse, went back among the shelves and cried. I didn’t simmer. I wept.

The warehouseman walked in. He heard, then saw me. He walked back out. I don’t know if he told anyone but I hope he did. I was mortified, but proud to be the messenger, the veteran of what everyone upstairs was talking about, the veteran whose reaction was his unabashed statement.

*Denny Riley is an Air Force veteran of our wars in Vietnam and Laos and a member of VFP Chapter 69 in San Francisco. His writing has appeared in Counter-Punch and Z Magazine. A novel he recently completed, How to Roll a Number, is looking for an agent.*

## Iraq Vet Comes Home



**Daniel Torres being greeted by Marine Vietnam combat veteran Oscar Muñoz.**

By Barry Ladendorf

On April 20, I spent a couple of hours at the San Ysidro boarding crossing from Mexico into the United States along with VFP members Jan Ruhman and George Johnson and other vets, supporters of Daniel Torres, and the press. We were waiting to welcome home former Marine Daniel Torres. Daniel came to the United States as a young child with his family. He was raised in Utah, where his father worked. He was not at the time of his enlistment a U.S. citizen. He lied about that because he wanted to serve his adopted country and prove his loyalty.

It was later discovered that he was not a citizen and he was eventually deported to Mexico and stayed at the deported veterans house in Tijuana. He was never criminally charged. He was finally given a five-year tourist visa that enabled him to come through the border as we waited.

The following day, a hearing was held on application for U.S. citizenship before an immigration judge in San Diego. Torres was represented by an immigration law specialist from the ACLU and was granted U.S. citizenship. He will return to Mexico to finish his last year in law school and then will return to the United States to attend law school.

Thanks to Willie Hager, Jan Ruhman, George Johnson and all VFP members who have stood in solidarity with our deported vets and have made our Tijuana chapter a success.

While I was at the border, a Homeland Security officer who looked like he was ready for combat came over to me, looked at my VFP shirt, and wanted to know who was sponsoring this event. I said Veterans For Peace. He said, “I’ve heard of Veterans For Peace.” I thought, you’re going to hear more about us.

It was a great day of solidarity with an Iraq veteran.

*Barry Ladendorf is president of Veterans For Peace.*



# Who will you remember on Memorial Day?

By Roger Ehrlich

On a day that began as “Decoration Day” in 1868, with orphans and widows placing flowers on graves of the Confederate and Union dead, we now pretend that only the deaths on “our side” of war are worth remembering.

I remember my British and Austrian grandfathers who fought on opposite sides of WWI, the “War to End All Wars.” I remember how bells rang around the world in mourning of all those who died, in hopes that disarmament would end all wars.

I remember how my grandfather’s service to his country did not protect him from being taken in May 1938 by the Nazis because he spoke out for the rights of all Austrians including Jews. I remember how after enlisting and serving in the U.S. Army in Europe my father found out when he got his files from the FBI and found that his loyalty, like that of his veteran father, was baselessly questioned during the “Red Scare.” And I remember my father opposed the arms race and the Iraq War.

It is natural to first remember those who are closest to us. But in a nation mostly of immigrants we should know better. Combat veterans, civilian victims, and their families are all equally human beings. Honoring and remembering some deaths while ignoring others not only perpetuates war, but also ignores the “moral injuries” of war which some now recognize as a significant cause of veteran suicide.

It is ironic that those of us who did not “give the ultimate sacrifice to protect American Freedom”—those who are not dead and unable to talk—are expected to sit in patriotic approval while pundits—often funded by arms manufacturers—claim that was what it was all about.

On this coming Memorial Day morning Veterans For Peace will be camped in a shady grove near Lincoln Memorial in Washington D.C. within sight of the Vietnam Wall.

I was there last year and I’ll be there again this year, with the 24-foot tall, touring Swords to Plowshares Memorial Belltower. The Belltower was dedicated by Veterans For Peace on Memorial Day 2014 at the site of the WWI-era belltower in Raleigh, N.C. The inscription on the bronze door says, “And they shall beat their swords into plowshares.”

At rituals when we’ve raised the tower, Jews, Christians, Mus-







**Veterans interact with the Swords into Plowshares Belltower on the Mall in Washington, D.C., Memorial Day 2015. Photos by Ellen Davidson**

lims, and others have recommitted themselves to realizing this prophecy. Everywhere the tower has traveled visitors are invited to add inscriptions and bear witness to how they, their relatives, and others close to them have been affected by war. Frequently we record their story and photograph them with their plaque. After they hang it on the tower we invite them to open the door and ring the big bell. Often they leave with expressions of gratitude and tears in their eyes.

There's something about the tower—perhaps the personal inscriptions about loss from so many points of view—that brings the unexpected. Surprisingly open conversations with active duty troops who pause on their morning run from Arlington Cemetery, tearful testimony from leather-jacketed combat veterans—there for the “Rolling Thunder” rally—who actually appreciate that there are inscriptions to Viet Cong victims of UXO and others in Arabic. I had my explanation of the tower translated into Chinese and French by tour guides whose buses load and unload nearby. Many clearly appreciated the inclusiveness and redemptive message of our tower compared to the triumphant nationalism of other monuments.

To be on the Mall at dawn by our tent with the VFP flag flying overhead, the windblown memorial plaques rippling high on the tower, and Lincoln Memorial in the background is a privilege.

Donations, a visit to our table with literature about VFP, moral injury, suicide, Agent Orange and other issues are gratefully welcomed.

We have added a 70-foot-long V-shaped fabric wall to display some of the 150 “Letters to The Wall” that were delivered on Memorial Day 2015. We will set this up again near the belltower in Washington to encourage people to write more letters and encourage “Full Disclosure” about the many profound and terrible impacts of the American war in Vietnam. The new letters, including letters sent in to the Vietnam Full Disclosure project, will be delivered by VFP members from around the country on Memorial Day morning.

*Roger Ehrlich is co-creator of the Swords to Plowshares Memorial Belltower and an associate member of VFP Chapter 157, Raleigh, N.C.*





## New Mission

... continued from page 5

could drag me off to jail or send me back into the military to be a bullet stopper in the big Army at any time if I ever talked about my service in the Rangers. I did, after all, like all Rangers, have a secret security clearance." Heads shake. "The military and paranoia go hand in hand. So I kept quiet," I tell the kids. "I also started reading books like Anand Gopal's *No Good Men Among the Living*, a reporter's brilliant story of our invasion of Afghanistan as told from the perspective of actual Afghans. And I began meeting veterans who had experiences similar to mine and were speaking out. This helped boost my confidence."

"Is the military like Call of Duty?" one of the students asks, referring to a popular single-shooter video game.

"I've never played," I respond. "Does it include kids who scream when their mothers and fathers are killed? Do a lot of civilians die?"

"Not really," he says uncomfortably.

"Well, then it's not realistic. Besides, you can turn off a video game. You can't turn off war."

A quiet settles over the classroom. Finally, after a long silence, one of the kids suddenly says, "I've never heard anything like this before."

What I am feeling is the other side of that response. This first experience of mine talking to America's future cannon fodder confirms that, not surprisingly, the recruiters in our schools aren't telling the young anything that might make them think twice about the glories of military life.

I leave the school with an incredible sense of calm, something I haven't felt since my time began in Afghanistan. I tell myself I want to speak to classrooms at least once a week. I realize that it took me 10 years, even while writing a book on the subject, to build up the courage to talk openly about my years in the military. If only I had begun engaging these kids earlier instead of punishing myself for the experience George W. Bush, Dick Cheney, and their cohorts put me through. My resident paranoia seems to melt away, and the residual guilt I still felt for leaving the Rangers early and in protest—the chain of command left me believing that there was nothing more cowardly than "deserting" your Ranger buddies—seems to evaporate, too.

My thought now is full disclosure going forward. If a teenager is going to sign up to kill and die for a cause or even the promise of a better life, then he or she should know the good, the bad, and the ugly about the job. I have no illusions that plenty of kids—maybe most of them, maybe all of them—won't sign up anyway, regardless of what I say. But I swear to myself: no moralism, no regrets, no judgments. That's my credo now. Just the facts as I see them.

### A New Mission

I'm on an operation that feels strangely familiar. Think of it as a different way to



Chicago Veterans For Peace members beneath an anti-recruiting banner they sponsored.

be a Ranger in a world that will never, it seems, be truly postwar. The world, however, is in no rush to welcome me on my new mission.

I start making calls, create a website to advertise my talk, send out word to

rooms of kids. I have nine long months to arrange meetings with only 12 schools. I decide that I'll even throw in some extra schools as a bonus. I create a Facebook page so that teachers and principals can learn about my talk and book me di-

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*In a world without a draft, JROTC's school-to-military pipeline is a lifeline for Washington's permanent war across the greater Middle East and parts of Africa. Its unending conflicts are only possible because kids like those I've talked to in the few classrooms I've visited continue to volunteer.*

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teacher friends that I'm available to speak in their schools. A month passes and no one calls. The phone just doesn't ring. I grow increasingly frustrated. Fortunately, a friend tells me about a grant sponsored by the Chicago Teachers Union designed to expose kids to real-world educational experiences they may not hear about in school. I apply, promising to speak to 12 of the 46 schools in Chicago with JROTC programs during the 2015–16 school year. The grant comes through in September, and, better yet, it promises that each student I talk to will also get a free copy of my book, *Worth Fighting For*.

I don't for a second doubt that this will ensure my presence in front of class-

rectly. Notices of both my website and that page are placed in teacher newsletters and I highlight the Chicago Teachers Union endorsement in them. I'm thinking: slam dunk! I even advertise on message boards, spend money on targeted ads on Facebook, and again reach out to all my teacher friends.

It's now April, seven months into the school year, and only two teachers have taken me up on the offer to speak. It's starting to dawn on me that in our world, life is scary, and I'm not the only one heading for Lake Michigan on cold winter mornings or gloomy nights. Teachers out there in the public schools are anxious, too. It's dark days for them. They

are under attack and busy fighting back against school privatization, closures, and assaults on their pensions. The popular JROTC program is a cash cow for their schools and they are discouraged from further rocking a boat already in choppy waters.

You'll bring too much "tension" to our school, one teacher tells me with regret. "Most of my kids need the military if they plan on going to college," I hear from another who says he can't invite me to his school. Who, after all, wants to make waves or extracurricular trouble when teachers are already under fierce attack from Mayor Rahm Emanuel and his unelected school board?

In a world without a draft, JROTC's school-to-military pipeline is a lifeline for Washington's permanent war across the greater Middle East and parts of Africa. Its unending conflicts are only possible because kids like those I've talked to in the few classrooms I've visited continue to volunteer. The politicians and the school boards, time and again, claim their school systems are broke. No money for books, teachers' salaries and pensions, healthy lunches, etc.

And yet, in 2015, the U.S. government spent \$598 billion on the military, more than half of its total discretionary budget. That's nearly 10 times what it spent on education. In 2015, we also learned that the Pentagon continues to pour some \$1.4 trillion into a fleet of fighter planes that may never work as advertised. Imagine the school system we would have in this country if teachers were compensated as well as weapons contractors. Confronting the attacks on education in the United States should also mean, in part, trying to interrupt that school-to-military pipeline in places like Chicago. It's hard to fight endless trillion-dollar wars if kids aren't enlisting.

I spoke at a college in Peoria, three hours south of Chicago. "My brother hasn't left the house since returning home from Iraq," one of the students told me with tears in her eyes. "What you said helped me understand his situation better. I might have more to say to him now."

It was the sort of comment that reminded me that there is an audience for what I have to say. I just need to figure out how to get past the gatekeepers. So I'll continue to write about and advertise my willingness to talk to soon-to-be-military-age kids in Chicago.

I'm not giving up, because speaking honestly about my experiences is now my therapy. At the end of the day, I need those students as much as I think they need me.

*Reprinted with permission from TomDispatch.com*

*Rory Fanning walked across the United States for the Pat Tillman Foundation in 2008–09, following two deployments to Afghanistan with the 2nd Army Ranger Battalion. He is a housing and antiwar activist living in Chicago. A member of Veterans For Peace, he is also the author of Worth Fighting For: An Army Ranger's Journey Out of the Military and Across America (Haymarket Books, 2014). Follow him on twitter @RTFanning.*



## North of Vietnam

Every generation has its war  
the one we fought  
the one we fled  
or the one we watched from afar  
as I watched Vietnam from Canada,  
condemning Nixon and his hawks  
menacing men with menacing eyes  
hair wired to their heads  
the unmaimed ones  
who played the game  
with Agent Orange and napalm  
and B-52s like Hitchcock's birds  
that swarmed Hanoi at Christmas,  
black confetti, sky of bombs  
children streaming blood.

There was nothing we could not  
see  
from Canada  
across our pristine parallel,  
warmed by beer and northern  
weed  
conscripting penicillin  
to fight little wars on our behalf,  
safe in a permanent Pentagon  
shade  
mining bright uranium  
and pasting NORAD like a fig leaf  
on every Dakota silo.  
The guard we stood was Yorkville,

ribbon of darkness, four strong  
winds  
children teaching parents well  
calling all resisters north  
four dead, Oh-High-Oh.  
The war we fought was sticks on  
ice  
taking the mighty Russians down  
three oceans wrapped around us  
pillows for our sleep.

We did not mourn those soldiers  
much, men as young as we  
The Tet Offensive, Rolling Thunder  
the ones who died at Hue  
or wished they had  
when they limped home  
to a land no longer theirs,  
Rusty Calley-My Lai shame  
Okies from Muskogee,  
they went against our times  
lest we let them forget  
so let them wear  
the stench of their foul president  
and hide in VFW posts,  
slink off to attics with their heroin  
sleep their tortured jungle sleeps  
they could have come to Canada

Now this light of evening



forty years along  
unknotting those long differences  
and settling with such grace  
upon this place,  
this wall  
which rises out of Washington  
and holds each name,  
each chiseled dent of nothingness  
that pencils reach to trace  
and outstretched fingers fill,

black flowers writ in granite  
under Lincoln's gaze,  
'that from these honored dead'  
we who turned our eyes away  
might look at last and see:  
they did what soldiers ever do,  
they served as best they knew,  
and in their death  
wear not their masters' wrongs.

The darkness of those days  
they bore for us  
until their hour was done  
and in the morning  
they bled in rice paddies  
among soft winds and grasses  
which ripple yet at evening  
by this wall.

—David Blaikie

## The Lie

... continued from page 3

... involved in civil war before that, with tons of money at our disposal. We'd said, 'Hey, we will give you this amount of money if you point out a member of the Taliban.' An Afghan would say, 'Sure, absolutely. There's a member right there.' So we go next door. We'd land in their neighbor's front yard, put a bag over every military-aged person's head, whether they were a member of the Taliban or not, give the person who identified that person money. Then that person would also get that neighbor's property. In a country with as much desperation and poverty as Afghanistan, you'd do anything to put money or food on your family's table. Essentially that's what we were doing. But we were also bringing people who had absolutely no stake in the fight into the war. We were creating enemies.

"I signed up after 9/11 to prevent another 9/11 from happening," he went on. "But soon after arriving in Afghanistan I realized I was only creating the conditions for more terrorist attacks. It was a hard pill to swallow. We were essentially bullies."

The disproportionate use of force on the part of the American occupation forces not only left huge numbers of civilians dead, but served as a potent recruiting weapon for insurgents.

"We'd have a rocket land in our camp," said Fanning, who is a member of Veterans For Peace and the author of *Worth Fighting For: An Army Ranger's Journey Out of the Military and Across America*. "We wouldn't necessarily know where it came from. It came from that general direc-

tion over there. We'd call in a 500-pound bomb. It would land on a village."

The terror visited on Afghans was soon replicated by the terror visited on Iraqis.

Michael Hanes was in the Marine Corps from 1994 to 2004. He was in Iraq in 2003 in the most senior recon platoon—the Marine Corps equivalent of the Navy SEALs—the 1st Force Reconnaissance Company, 1st Marine Division. He was in numerous raids. Now he is a member of Veterans For Peace, and I interviewed him with Fanning for my show.

*'You're taking Grandma  
and throwing her up  
against the wall and  
interrogating her. That  
hits you right here.'*

"I was in the Iraq invasion," Hanes said. "We pushed up into Baghdad and things [became] very real for me when we began to kick in doors, place charges in doors and rush into these homes and terrorize these people."

"Probably about 50 percent or more of the intel that we got was just dead wrong," he went on. "Busting in these doors, you come into a family's house and there's elderly women, young little girls, three, four years old, just screaming and horrified, just terrified to where they literally soil themselves. They pee their pants. You're taking Grandma and throwing her up against the wall and interrogating her. That hits you right here. It hits you re-

ally hard. I began to ask myself, what the hell am I doing? If you happened to be a young man [in a raided home], in your early 20s or anywhere in that range where you can carry a weapon, then by mere association of being a young male, a possible insurgent, [Fedayeen Saddam] loyalist, whatever the case may be, you were taken out of the home to be interrogated. Who knows what happened to them? ... I know [Marines] were there all night interrogating them. Who knows if they even made it back to their family?"

"With the drone attacks you have a range, an outside range, where so many civilians are being killed," Hanes said. "It's a terrorist-producing factory. If you lose your child, if you lose your mother, any of your family members to this ... we have to think about that. Put yourself in that position. If I lost my child I would be desperate. What would you do? It's easy to understand why someone would strap a bomb to themselves and blow themselves up."

The physical brutality and violence are accompanied by the overt racism that is characteristic of military occupations.

"We didn't refer to the people in Afghanistan as Afghans, they're hajji," Fanning said. "This is a term of respect for someone who's gone to make the trip to Mecca, but we'd use it in a derogatory term."

"The terms 'sand nigger,' 'hajji,' 'barbarian,' 'terrorist,' all of these things were thrown around as if the people there were subhuman," Hanes added.

The lies of the state and the wider society became painfully apparent.

"We're sold the idea of—we're going to liberate people, we're fighting terrorism. Then we realize we're the ones ter-

rorizing people," Hanes said. "That torments you psychologically. I've lost a few friends to suicide."

The two veterans say they have found solace in acts of civil disobedience. Hanes traveled to Okinawa with other members of Veterans For Peace to protest the U.S. bases. He was stationed there two decades earlier.

Hanes as a protester "was on the other end of the spectrum," he said in referring to his time as a Marine in Okinawa. When he was there to protest, he said, "I was spending time with the people, listening to their struggles, and actually seeing what's happening over there. I participated with them in protests. I stood in front of trucks. I lay out on the road. I blocked construction crews."

Hanes and Fanning say they will continue to defy the bloodlust of empire, at home and abroad, as a way to heal the wounds of war and affirm life. They have no intention of allowing the hate talk and racism at a Trump rally, or anywhere else, to be unchallenged. From their time in the military they understand the danger of dehumanizing others.

"You've got to stand up to confront creeping fascism," Fanning said. "Silence is consent."

*Reprinted from truthdig.com with permission.*

*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.*

By Ramzy Baroud

# Why BDS Cannot Lose

A flurry of condemnations of the boycott of Israel seems to have fallen on deaf ears. Calls from Western governments, originating from the UK, the United States, Canada, and others, to criminalize the boycott of Israel have hardly slowed the momentum of the pro-Palestinian boycott, divestment, and sanctions movement (BDS). On the contrary, it has accelerated.

It is as if history is repeating itself. Western governments took on the pro-South African anti-apartheid movement, fighting it at every corner and branding its leaders. Nelson Mandela and many of his comrades were called terrorists.

Once he passed away in 2013, top U.S. politicians vied for the opportunity to list the late African leader's great qualities in their many press conferences, speaking of his commitment to justice and human rights. However, Mandela's name was not removed from the U.S. terrorism watch list until 2008.

The Reagan administration called the African National Congress—the main platform for the anti-apartheid struggle—a terrorist group, as well. The ANC's strategy against the apartheid government was “calculated terror,” the administration said in 1986.

Many South Africans will tell you that the fight for equality is far from over, and that the struggle against institutional apartheid has been replaced by equally pressing matters. Corruption, neoliberal economics, and disproportionate allocation of wealth are only a few such challenges.

But aside from those who are still holding on to the repellent dream of racial superiority, the vast majority of humanity looks back at South Africa's apartheid era with revulsion.

The South Africa experience, which is still fresh in the memory of most people, is now serving as a frame of reference in the struggle against Israeli apartheid in Palestine, where Jews have been designated a privileged race, and Palestinian Muslims and Christians are poorly treated, oppressed, and occupied.

While racism is, unfortunately, a part of life and is practiced, observed, and reported on in many parts of the world, institutionalized racism through calculated governmental measures is only practiced—at least, openly—in a few countries around the world: Burma is one of them. However, no country is as adamant and open about its racially motivated laws and apartheid rules as the Israeli government. Almost every measure taken by the Israeli Knesset that pertains to Arabs is influenced by this mindset: Palestinians must remain infe-



rior, and Jews must ensure their superiority at any cost.

The outcome of Israel's racist pipe dream has been a tremendous amount of violence, palpable inequality, massive walls, trenches, Jews-only roads, military occupation, and even laws that outlaw the very questioning of these practices.

Yet, the greater its failure to suppress Palestinian resistance and to slow down the flow of solidarity from around the world with the oppressed people, the more Israel labors to ensure its dominance and invest in racial segregation.

“The whole world is against us,” is quite a common response in Israel itself to the international reaction to Israel's apartheid practices. With time, it becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy and feeds on past notions that are no longer applicable. No matter how many companies divest from Israel—the latest being the world's largest security corporation G4S—and, no matter how many universities and churches vote to boycott Israel, Israeli

society remains entrenched behind the slogan and its disconcerting sense of victimization.

Many Israelis believe that their country is a “villa in a jungle”—a notion that is constantly enforced by top Israeli leaders. Right-wing Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is purposely advancing the crippling fear in his own society. Unable to see the unmistakable crimes he has carried out against Palestinians for years, he continues to perpetuate the idea of the purity of Israel and the wickedness of everyone else.

In February, he spoke of the need to create yet more fences to keep his “villa in the jungle” safe, and, to quote, “to defend ourselves against the wild beasts” in neighboring countries. The statement was made only a few weeks before the launch of the annual Israel Apartheid Week in numerous cities around the world. It is as if the Israeli leader wished to contribute to the global campaign which is successfully making a case against Israel as being an apartheid state that ought to be boycotted.

Israel is, of course, no “villa in the jungle.” Since its inception over the ruins of destroyed and occupied Palestine, it has meted out tremendous violence, provoked wars and harshly responded to any resistance carried out by its victims. Similar to the U.S. and UK designation of Mandela as a “terrorist,” Palestinian resistance and its leaders are also branded, shunned, and imprisoned. Israel's so-called “targeted killings”—the assassination of hundreds of Palestinians in recent years—have often been applauded by the United States and other Israeli allies as victories in their “War on Terror.”

Comforted by the notion that the U.S. and other Western governments are on their side, most Israelis are not worried about exhibiting their racism and calling for more violence against Palestinians. According to a survey released March 8 by the Pew Research Center, nearly half of Israel's Jewish population wants to expel Palestinians to outside of their historic homeland.

The study was conducted between October 2014 and May 2015—months before the current intifada began in October 2015—and is described as a first-of-its-kind survey, as it reached out to over 5,600 Israeli adults and touched on myriad issues, including religion and politics. Forty-eight percent of all Israeli Jews want to exile Arabs. However, the number is significantly higher—71 percent—among those who define themselves as religious.

What options are then left for Palestinians, who have been victimized and ethnically cleansed from their own historic homeland for 68 years, when they are described and treated as “beasts,” killed at will, and suffer under a massive system of apartheid and racial discrimination that has never ceased after all these years?

BDS has, thus far, been the most successful strategy and tactic to support Palestinian resistance and steadfastness while at the same time holding Israel accountable for its progressively worsening policies of apartheid. The main objective behind BDS, an entirely nonviolent movement championed by civil society across the globe, is not to punish ordinary Israelis, but to raise awareness of the suffering of Palestinians and to create a moral threshold that must be achieved if a just peace is ever to be realized.

That moral threshold has already been delineated in the relationship between Palestinians and South Africans, when Mandela himself said, “We know all too well that our freedom is incomplete without the freedom of the Palestinians.”

He was not trying to be cordial or diplomatic. He meant every word. And, finally, many around the world are making the same connection, and are wholeheartedly in agreement.

*Dr. Ramzy Baroud has been writing about the Middle East for over 20 years. He is an internationally syndicated columnist, a media consultant, author of several books and the founder of [PalestineChronicle.com](http://PalestineChronicle.com). His latest book is *My Father Was a Freedom Fighter: Gaza's Untold Story*. His website is [ramzybaroud.net](http://ramzybaroud.net).*





# Cowardice and Exoneration in Kunduz

By Robert Koehler

“The people are being reduced to blood and dust. They are in pieces.”

The doctor who uttered these words still thought the hospital itself was a safe zone. He was with Doctors Without Borders, working in Kunduz, Afghanistan, where the Taliban and government forces were engaged in hellish fighting, and civilians, as always, were caught in the middle. The wounded, including children, had been flowing in all week, and the staff were unrelieved in their duties, working an unending shift.

Their week ended at 2 a.m. last Oct. 3 when—as the world knows—a U.S. AC-130 gunship began strafing the hospital, the crew apparently acting on the mistaken belief that this was a Taliban compound. The strike lasted for an hour, continuing even though the humanitarian organization contacted the Pentagon and pleaded that it stop.

A total of 211 shells hit the hospital. The Intensive Care Unit was wiped out. Every patient in the unit except for a 3-year-old girl was killed, some burning to death in their beds. A total of 42 people—patients, staff and doctors—died because of this lethal mistake.

One of the dead was Dr. Osmani, the young doctor quoted above, who had just begun ophthalmology training in Kabul but still worked at the MSF facility in Kunduz on weekends, according to an eyewitness account by Kathleen Thomas, another doctor there, an Australian, who survived.

“Our colleagues didn’t die peacefully like in the movies,” she wrote last month in *The Guardian*. “They died painfully, slowly, some of them screaming out for help that never came, alone and terrified, knowing the extent of their own injuries and aware of their impending death. Countless other staff and patients were injured; limbs blown off, shrapnel rocketed through them, burns, pressure-wave injuries of the lungs, eyes and ears. Many of these injuries have left permanent disability. It was a scene of nightmarish horror that will be forever etched in my mind.”

Some mistake.

This is all news again, of course, because the U.S. government, having investigated the incident, has just released a 3,000-page, mostly classified report exonerating itself. This comes as no surprise.



**Madina, 8, who was at the Doctors Without Borders hospital hit by U.S. airstrike in Kunduz, is comforted by a nurse at another hospital in Kabul.**

It admitted the bombing was an unfortunate mistake and 16 military personnel involved in the incident have received “administrative actions” as punishment. Also, since the tragedy, the United States has made “condolence payments” to the victims: \$6,000 to families of the dead, \$3,000 to the injured.

It seems to me all this requires a moment or two of profound silence, as we try to absorb both the tragedy and the absurdity of these events, which unite in a sort of horrific shrug of indifference to the predictable consequences of war.

*The New York Times*, for instance, informs us: “Still, the release of the investigation’s findings and the announcement of the disciplinary measures were unlikely to satisfy Doctors Without Borders and other human rights groups, which on Friday reiterated their calls for an independent criminal investigation.”

Of course Doctors Without Borders will not be “satisfied” with these findings, as though, my God, any finding or any action whatsoever by the U.S. military—gosh,

the payout of six grand per dead Afghan or the stern punishment of a few scapegoats—could bring balance and resolution to the horror Kathleen Thomas describes. Just the use of that word—“satisfied”—trivializes the infliction of suffering, whether intentional or merely recklessly accidental, beyond comprehension.

But this is the language of war, as spoken by those who wage it and those who uncritically report it: a language of implicit moral relativism.

The same *Times* story, describing the

money would be unspendable, and the game called war would be unplayable, if it weren’t for the linguistic pre-exoneration that removes all humanity from those who will die (think: collateral damage) and all responsibility from those who will kill.

But with the exoneration solidly in place, anything goes. Every side in war plays with the instruments of hell. The *Times* also recently reported that war zone hospitals everywhere are more vulnerable than they’ve ever been and the “rules of war” seem to be in tatters.

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*[T]he ‘rules of war’ seem to be in tatters. Maybe this is because war can’t be contained by ‘rules.’*

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report’s account of what happened, explained: “The aircrew appeared to be confused by the directions from the Americans on the ground in the minutes leading up to the attack. At one point, the crew was told it would need to hit a second target after the strike it was about to commence, and ‘we will also be doing the same thing of softening the target for partner forces,’ that is, Afghans.”

This is the reality: An action that wound up killing 42 hospital workers and patients—men, women and children, some of whom were burned alive in their beds—was instigated in order to “soften the target” ... which is nothing less than linguistic exoneration of murder. Or rather, pre-exoneration.

And this is war. This is what the United States allots 54 percent of its annual discretionary spending—some \$600 billion—to perpetuate. I’m quite certain this

Maybe this is because war can’t be contained by “rules.”

For instance, not only have there been six attacks on hospitals in Aleppo, Syria—perpetrated by both government and rebel forces—in the past week, but also: “In 11 of the world’s war zones, between 2011 and 2014, the International Committee of the Red Cross tallied nearly 2,400 acts of violence against those who were trying to provide health care. That works out to two attacks a day.”

What might “satisfy” Doctors Without Borders or the maimed and grieving victims of the Kunduz tragedy? In my view, nothing less than an American commitment to global demilitarization.

This is called atonement.

*Robert Koehler is an award-winning Chicago-based journalist and nationally syndicated writer.*



**Doctors Without Borders hospital in Kunduz, destroyed by U.S. shelling Oct. 3, 2015.**



# U.S. Should Apologize to Cuba, Not the Other Way Around

*American anger—and the blockade—was about property rights, not human rights*

By Eamonn McCann

I wonder, did President Obama put in a good word for the Lansky's during his visit to Cuba? The family wants its hotel back. Says spokesman Gary Rapoport: "It was through my grandfather's hard work that the hotel was built. By rights it should be our property."

The Hotel Riviera epitomized the glamour of an era long gone. Its casino was among the hottest of Havana hotspots, its guest list a roll call of the celebrities of the age—Marlon Brando, Ava Gardner, Marlene Dietrich, Gary Cooper, Errol Flynn, Buster Keaton, and Rocky Marciano, as well as figures such as Winston Churchill. The hotel was run by the Mob. Meyer Lansky was the Mob's accountant. He had a mutually enriching relationship with dictator Fulgencio Batista, but was to lose everything when Batista bolted for the airport on New Year's Day 1959 as Castro's guerrillas exulted into the city.

Meyer was himself a celebrity gangster, represented in *The Godfather II* as Hyman Roth, bookkeeper and bagman for Vito Corleone. His grandson recalls: "Innocent people may have been killed now and then, but not like the crimes of today. That is why my grandfather's era of crime is so popular. They were like gentlemen killers and they dressed nice."

It's arguable Lansky's role in Cuba was no more damaging than that of the operators of mines, sugar plantations, or refineries—Coca Cola, Exxon, etc.—respectable enterprises that had ridden roughshod over Cuban rights until Castro put a halt to their gallop and whose compensation claims are now among 7,000 submitted to the U.S. government for ne-

gotiation as an element in the "normalization" process.

It was in retaliation for the seizure of U.S. property that the blockade of Cuba was first imposed. It was not a denial of human rights but of property rights that incurred Washington's wrath.

The strength of the compensation lobby shouldn't be underestimated. The nationalization of U.S. assets has been estimated in the *Inter-American Law Review* as the "largest uncompensated taking of American property by a foreign government in history." Both Republican and Democratic members of Congress have deemed it an issue needing resolution before tentative détente can develop into friendly relations. The Lansky's won't win the \$70 million they say they are owed, but they'll get something.

## Historical Blindness

That the overthrow of the alliance of the Batista regime and U.S. freebooter

*The hotel was run by the Mob. Meyer Lansky was the Mob's accountant. He had a mutually enriching relationship with dictator Fulgencio Batista, but was to lose everything when Batista bolted for the airport on New Year's Day 1959 as Castro's guerrillas exulted into the city.*

capitalism can still be seen by some as an illegitimate act that must even now be set to rights says a lot about the historical blindness and sheer arrogance of successive Washington administrations: the



cheek of a small country cocking a snoot at the indispensable nation!

Obama didn't touch down in Havana with an apology in his pocket for the United States having first slathered Cuba in sleaze, organized an invasion by far-right desperadoes, made at least five attempts on Fidel Castro's life, imposed a blockade in an effort to impoverish the

priate opener. But no. Obama wanted to challenge Cuba's human rights record instead.

Raul Castro got his retaliation in first, with a reminder that the human rights to healthcare and education are better realized in Cuba than across the straits in Florida. He might have added there is no prisoner on death row in Cuba, in contrast to the droves awaiting death in the privatized prison cells of the U.S. system. Or that, in contrast to the dismaying drift of events in the United States, Cuba has one of the most liberal abortion laws and one of the lowest rates of infant mortality in the world.

He might have remarked that if Cuba were a satrap state in the Middle East rather than an island in the Caribbean, he could chop the heads off as many political opponents as he liked without Obama uttering a syllable of concern.

## No Paradise

None of this is to present Castro's Cuba as a sepia-toned paradise. Down through the years, the tendency of many on the left to swamp any criticism of the latest chosen land in a gush of sentimentality—Cuba is by no means the first example—has served no progressive purpose. Hitching hopes of socialist advance to the fate of a faraway country idealized out of all recognition has served as a comforting alternative to the slog of trying to make a revolution in the place where you actually are.

But there's a balance of political morality to be made in the meantime, and the weight of morality is on Cuba's side.

While we wait for an updated version of Meyer Lansky to saunter into his nostalgia-themed Havana casino, just one more time: ¡Cuba sí! ¡Yanqui no!

Eamonn McCann is a journalist, author and political activist from Northern Ireland. McCann was tried in Belfast in May–June 2008 for his actions as one of the Raytheon 9, a group who attacked and damaged the Raytheon factory in Derry. The jury unanimously acquitted McCann and his co-defendants of charges of criminal damage to property belonging to multinational arms company, Raytheon.

## Missileers

**They are bright young women and men ready to bring the world to an end.**

**They believe they are saving the world, not seeing they are instruments of a system gone mad.**

**They sit in their bunkers, always alert, holding the keys to the future in their hands.**

**The future is dark from their bunkers, deep in the earth. They grow bored.**

**Nothing happens. Day after day, they remain alert to nothing.**

**They are ready to follow orders, ready to do their part to bring the world to an end.**

**They are instruments of a system gone mad.**  
—David Krieger







*A youth takes part in a protest seeking justice after the murder of indigenous activist leader Berta Cáceres in Tegucigalpa, Honduras, March 17, 2016.*

## By Alex Emmons

In March, Honduran activist Gaspar Sanchez spoke at a briefing on Capitol Hill, urging lawmakers to support an impartial investigation into the murder of environmental activist Berta Cáceres.

Cáceres had mobilized native communities to speak out against the Agua Zarca Dam, a hydroelectric project backed by European and Chinese corporations, before being killed by two unknown gunmen last month.

In April, back in Honduras at a protest outside the Honduran Public Ministry in Tegucigalpa, Sanchez unfurled a banner demanding justice for Cáceres's murder.

When nearby soldiers saw him, they dragged him away from the crowd and brutally beat him, stopping only after the crowd of protesters came to his defense.

Sanchez is a member of the organization Cáceres founded, the Council of Popular and Indigenous Organizations of Honduras (COPINH). The group's leadership believes that Sanchez's assault was meant to send a message against speaking out internationally, and that if the crowd had not intervened, Sanchez would likely have been imprisoned.

But Honduran activists are refusing to stay silent.

Back on Capitol Hill, two days after the beating, a panel of human rights leaders hosted by Rep. Hank Johnson (D-Ga.) told lawmakers about the dangers of speaking out against the U.S.-backed Honduran government.

Victor Fernandez, a prominent human rights attorney and lawyer representing the Cáceres family, insisted that her assassination was carried out by either the Honduran government or by "the paramilitary structure of companies."

"Honduras is the victim of international theft due to its national resources," said

Fernandez, speaking through a translator. "What we have now is our natural resources—minerals, rivers, forest. Cáceres was killed because she was confronting the extractive model."

Bertha Oliva compared the current situation to the early 1980s, when the CIA funded, armed, and trained Honduran government death squads that murdered hundreds of opposition activists.

Oliva founded the Committee for the Relatives of the Disappeared in Honduras (COFADEH, by Spanish initials) in 1981, after government forces kidnapped her husband from their home. He was never seen again.

"When we first began in 1982, we faced death squads," said Oliva, also speaking through a translator. "Now, it's like going back to the past. We know there are death squads in Honduras."

In 2009, a coup toppled Honduran President Manuel Zelaya, who had long been seen as a leftist threat to the interests of international corporations. In 2008, Zelaya blocked a series of hydroelectric dam projects, citing concerns raised by native Hondurans. Less than a year after he was deposed, the new government had already approved 40 dam contracts. When current President Juan Orlando Hernández came to power in 2013, his slogan was "Honduras is open for business."

The coup was accompanied by a huge rise in political violence. By 2012, state security forces had assassinated more than 300 people, and 34 members of the opposition and 13 journalists had disappeared, according to data compiled by Honduran human rights organizations. The political assassinations added to the violence from emboldened gangs and drug traffickers, making Honduras one of the most dangerous countries in the world. In 2012, Reuters reported that it had the highest murder rate of any country.

Although the murder rate has since declined, political violence in Honduras has continued. Since the end of 2012, at least 22 prominent environmental activists have been killed, according to Global Witness.

Due to the Honduran government's abysmal human rights record, critics have called on the United States to stop supporting the coup regime.

Citing the flow of drugs as a rationale, the U.S. government gave at least \$57 million in military aid to Honduras between 2009 and 2014, not including the tens of millions of dollars spent on U.S. military contracts in Honduras. The Pentagon has not released figures for 2015 or 2016.

The U.S. military also maintains a force of more than 600 troops in Honduras, as part of a program called "Joint Task Force Bravo." U.S. Special Forces play a large role in training their Honduran counterparts. In February, the *Wall Street Journal* published a video report showing Green Berets teaching Honduran soldiers how to raid homes.

The United States also helps maintain at least 13 military bases in the country, three of which were built after the coup, according to David Vine, author of *Base Nation*.

Congress has placed restrictions on military aid to countries with poor human rights records, but the State Department rarely applies them. The "Leahy Law," for example, requires the State Department to suspend military aid to any country that it determines "has committed a gross violation of human rights." Congress has even singled out Honduras in State Department appropriations bills, requiring the Secretary of State to withhold aid if he finds the Honduran government did not "protect the right of political opposition parties, journalists, trade unionists, human rights defenders, and other civil

society activists to operate without interference." The State Department, however, is still sending aid.

Under the spending laws passed last year, Congress can withhold 50 percent of the military aid budgeted to go through the State Department.

Following Cáceres's murder, 62 members of Congress also signed a letter calling on the administration to "immediately stop all assistance to Honduran security forces ... given the implication of the Honduran military and police in extrajudicial killings, illegal detentions, torture, and other violations of human rights." More than 200 activist organizations signed a similar letter, requesting that Secretary of State John Kerry suspend military aid until an independent investigation into Cáceres's murder is completed.

Panelists at the briefing last Thursday argued that the Honduran government should receive the condemnation, not the assistance, of foreign governments.

Fernandez, Cáceres's lawyer, said, "This government produces so much corruption, it can't just have subtle backing from world governments."

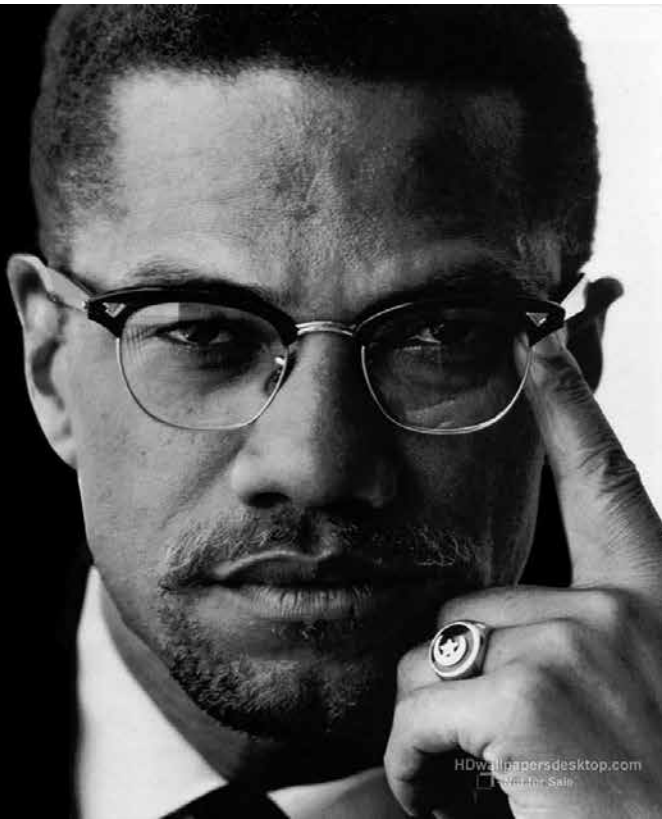
When asked by The Intercept whether U.S. aid is contributing to human rights violations in Honduras, State Department spokesperson Mark Toner responded by condemning Cáceres's murder. "We strongly condemn the murder of civil society activist Berta Cáceres," Toner said, "and extend our deepest condolences to her family, friends, and the people of Honduras, who have lost a dedicated defender of the environment and of human rights." The Pentagon declined to comment, deferring to the State Department's response.

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# Why Solidarity in the 21st Century Means Understanding Race and Class as One Entity, Not Two



By Danny Haiphong

White supremacy and capitalism were constructed for the same purpose: to exploit humans, turn them into commodities, and enrich private owners of capital. This remains true in the 21st century. The Black working class of this era's post-industrial, crisis-ridden U.S. capitalism has been made disposable by a system that once required its free, slave labor to develop and thrive. Endless neocolonial wars rage throughout the planet. These wars are justified by the same white supremacist ideology that preconditions Black life to the economic margins. On this basis, solidarity between oppressed peoples can only be achieved when a movement strikes against race and class as one entity, not two.

The question of solidarity must be approached from an objective analysis of present day society. The United States is a class society. It is ruled by dictates of capitalist profit and private property. Large U.S. monopoly corporations and banks accumulate exorbitant profits from the labor of workers all over the world. At the same time, the majority of people in U.S. society suffer from impoverishment due to capitalist exploitation. This cuts across racial lines.

However, the United States is also a racist society. Black Americans, indigenous Americans, and self-identified Latinos are the most impoverished communities in the country. These communities also face levels of repression, segregation, and state violence that White Americans do not experience. White supremacy, as the ruling ideology of U.S. capitalism, justifies such oppression through the dehumanization of "non-white" life and the humanization of "white" life. This permeates every social, political, and economic institution in U.S. society.

So while it is important to understand the layers of U.S. society, it is just as important to possess consciousness of the source of the oppression. All forms of exploitation are ultimately ruled by the class that controls the dominant political economy of this period: capitalism. The extreme concentration of wealth, where 62 individuals alone own more capital than half of the planet's population combined, lays bare just what is responsible for the disease of capitalism. And the capitalist class that owns all of this wealth has built a global system of Empire to facilitate large-scale theft.

What unites all oppressed people, then, is their relationship to the capitalist state. The state mitigates and manages the affairs of the U.S. capitalist class. For example, it is Washington that ultimately enforces "free trade" deals such as NAFTA to create a more friendly "investment" environment for multinational corporations. Washington also facilitates arms deal contracts with countries like Saudi Arabia to ensure that its allies

continue to fund terrorism and repress independent development throughout the world to the benefit of oil and arms corporations. Everything the capitalist state does thus revolves around enriching the capitalist class at the expense of oppressed and working class people.

This does not mean that Black workers in the United States have the same experience as workers in Bangladesh or Somali workers fending off starvation from U.S.-sponsored sanctions. There are variations to how workers experience exploitation based on their social and economic relationship to capital in a given moment of history. However, all of them face the same enemy in one degree or another. This is what Malcolm X realized after his travels throughout the African continent just prior to his assassination in 1965. Malcolm X identified with the national liberation struggle in Algeria because he saw the Algerians (and Chinese, Vietnamese, and Cubans, among others) as providing a great service to Black people in the United States by weakening the international influence of the U.S. capitalist state.

The basis of solidarity, then, should ultimately derive from an internationalist perspective. It means working together with the peoples of the world in the struggle against the common enemy of imperialism. This will take work and much education. While much of the world is no stranger to white supremacy and colonialism, some may not completely understand the intricacies of racism against Black people in the United States. At the same time, many Black Americans and oppressed peoples of color may not fully understand the importance of standing with Libyans, Cubans, and all oppressed people against U.S.-backed imperial warfare. Eight years of the Obama era and nearly a generation of counterinsurgency does have its negative consequences, after all.

But this should not deter us from upholding a banner of internationalism and solidarity in our day to day work. Reactionary conditions should harden and strengthen our orientation to these important principles. Millions of people continue to perish or starve because of the United States and its imperial allies. And the system of capitalism that dictates what this alliance does abroad continues the assault on Black people and peoples of color within its artificial borders. Solidarity will make us stronger in the quest for political power. The question shouldn't be whether people around the world elevate the struggle of Black Americans, but how we can organize on an internationalist basis to confront our common enemy.

Danny Haiphong is an Asian activist and political analyst in the Boston area. He can be reached at [wakeupriseup1990@gmail.com](mailto:wakeupriseup1990@gmail.com).





# Healing Viet Nam War Trauma in Australia

*For the second year in a row Veterans For Peace put out a call for letters to be written to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial for delivery to The Wall on Memorial Day. The letter below is one of more than 200 we received.*

Many of the men of my generation fought alongside U.S. troops in Vietnam. Some were regular army—but an awful lot were conscripts—kids barely out of school.

Growing up in Australia after WWII was probably quite similar to growing up in the USA—there were a lot of jobs around and most of us had relatively untroubled childhoods—even if there was not much money around. So, for these young men, having to go and fight in Vietnam was an enormous shock—particularly as WWII had been so romanticized in the movies that we grew up watching. The things they saw and experienced—and had to participate in—and the fact that you were never safe, even on R&R, meant that, apart from physical wounds—and the Agent Orange damage—very many of those boys came home with undiagnosed and untreated emotional and mental health issues.

Twenty-odd years later I was doing “work assessments” for these ex-servicemen, as a result of them having made an appeal for a veteran’s pension, because they stated they were disabled and unable to work. The system automatically assumed they were faking and did not believe them. This was their last resort after having been rejected twice already.

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*Every last one of these men was an emotional wreck ... . Some had tried to hold it together but, over the years, had fallen apart. Many lost jobs, lost families, self-medicated with drink and/or drugs, and, in some cases, lost everything.*

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I was part of the assessment process to provide reports containing evidence on which they could base the decision to deny or accept the claim. One was a WWII veteran who had been an officer during the Vietnam War. He had to take these school kids and prepare them for the insanity and horror that faced them—and lead them into the fray.

Every one of these men was an emotional wreck—many of them for the entire time since they had got home. Some had tried to hold it together but, over the years, had fallen apart. Many lost jobs, lost families, self-medicated with drink and/or drugs, and, in some cases, lost everything. They went into the army as school kids and came out with their lives totally trashed.

Everyone I saw, without exception, had PTSD. You could spot it a mile away. All their emotions were on the surface and they were hyper-alert, fragile and angry at the same time. It was heartbreaking. Reading their files and hearing their stories was shocking—the way they had been treated, as if they were making it up. Especially those who had “Agent Orange” stamped on their file.

I’ve had grown men sit crying in my office—just because someone was finally listening to them and taking them seriously. I had to go see one man at his home because it was the only place he felt safe. And his wife had to ride shotgun because he was so angry that she was worried he might lose his temper at me, just because I came from “the Department.” Can’t say I blame him, either.

As for the WWII officer I mentioned before, he held



**Australian soldiers in Viet Nam.**

it all in until he retired, self-medicating in the acceptable way, with booze. He was old enough to be my dad. He just sat in my office and cried, and talked about the guilt he felt at sending all those young men to that awful war to be killed, maimed and broken. He loved those boys as if they were his own kids—and he felt totally responsible for what happened to them. None of his peers could understand what happened to him when he retired. They all thought he was putting it on, because he kept the front up while he was still active military. But it was the structure that allowed him to do that, and helped him to block it out. Once that was gone, he fell to pieces. And he was alone in trying to cope, because of the disbelief and the stigma.

I was regularly offered security outside my office because these poor men had to run the gamut of everyone in the rehab team during their assessment visit: doctor, occupational therapist, physiotherapist—and finally me, the rehab counselor. And my boss, the rehab doctor, had the bedside manner and empathy of a drill instructor. It was my way or the highway with him. He was not a bad man, but had no idea of compassion or empathy at all. Mental illness was not part of his universe.

By the time these poor men had seen him, and all the rest, they were exhausted (some had travelled hundreds of miles) and were ready to throttle someone. Not the least because all this came after the drama of having got the summons to come for the assessment. They all received a formal and quite threatening letter a week or two beforehand—telling them to come in and be assessed. From the day they received the letter, they had been bouncing off the walls with stress, not sleeping, and generally being

angry and frightened they would be judged and not believed, and thus lose this last chance for help. I begged to be allowed to write letters to make them more human and explanatory, but the bureaucracy did not allow it.

I always refused security when it was offered, and I never needed it. How would it have made these veterans feel to come see someone with a guard at the door? The whole system made them feel as if they were not fellow humans, just fakers and liars looking for a buck.

I did no formal assessments. I just got them to tell me what their everyday life was like. And my “formal” report told their stories, of life, work and family, warts and all, and I made them human in the eyes of the suited folks on the tribunal whose middle-class lives bore no resemblance to what these men had to live with every day.

Nobody I saw was “just a number” at the tribunal. Because I was a “professional,” notice was taken of what I said and they got the money they needed and deserved.

Therein lies a major problem—oftentimes only “professionals” seem to get listened to—and a lot of them are like my old boss. Some of these veterans were not able to hold down a job, yet they had been fighting for years to get their pension, because nobody would take them seriously if it wasn’t physical. That attitude still makes me steam.

I think of those men often and hope they eventually managed to get some effective help. EMDR (Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing) was just starting to get noticed in Australia at the time. The Vietnam Vets’ Association was doing good work, but the local psychiatrists were a total waste of oxygen. There were only about two in all of Sydney that were human and empathic, but even so, all they knew how to do was throw drugs at the problem, which was like a band-aid over a severed artery. There were a lot of suicides.

I suspect that it was the same, or worse in the USA for your returned young men after Vietnam. Hearts and minds broken, along with bodies, oftentimes with little or no support or help. We at least had a Veterans’ Hospital (where I worked) and free healthcare. But in Oz, the best work that was happening then, as now, was being done by the organizations set up by and for the veterans themselves and those who cared about them. I am guessing it will be the same in the United States too. Empathy and compassion are more readily available from those who have walked the same path, and support is more likely to be accepted from them as well. Shared experience takes down a lot of barriers.

I hope very much that grassroots support like yours is growing and bringing the new generations of service men and women into your fold. We older generations surely have a responsibility to share the love and support and the lessons we’ve learned along the way. All the very best to you.

— Margaret Gallagher, Wales, UK

*Margaret Gallagher worked as a rehabilitation counselor for the Department of Veterans’ Affairs in Sydney, assessing ex-servicemen for their pension applications.*



**1970 demonstration in Brisbane, part of national protests against Australia’s military involvement in the Viet Nam War.**



By Margot Pepper

It's no surprise that a movie with some of Hollywood's finest acting, writing, directing, and filmmaking failed to win a single Academy Award, particularly since the movie criticizes Hollywood for its unethical political discrimination.

*Trumbo*, directed by Jay Roach, is about James Dalton Trumbo (December 9, 1905–September 10, 1976), the screenwriter who broke the Hollywood Blacklist. When I first saw the trailer, I broke down in such convulsive sobs I worried neighbors would hear. You see, I lived with the Trumbos for a year in the Hollywood Hills and the eight-year-old inside me didn't expect him to reappear as though for a hug, his thick mustache yellowing like the pages of a cherished book, sporting a khaki mechanic jump suit with "Trumbo" embroidered on the pocket.

The trailer and film capture perfectly Trumbo's feisty, non-compromising spirit and integrity, encapsulating the contradictions of the avuncular man who joked with my mother as they watched me dog-paddling in his pool, "Come the revolution, we'll all have swimming pools."

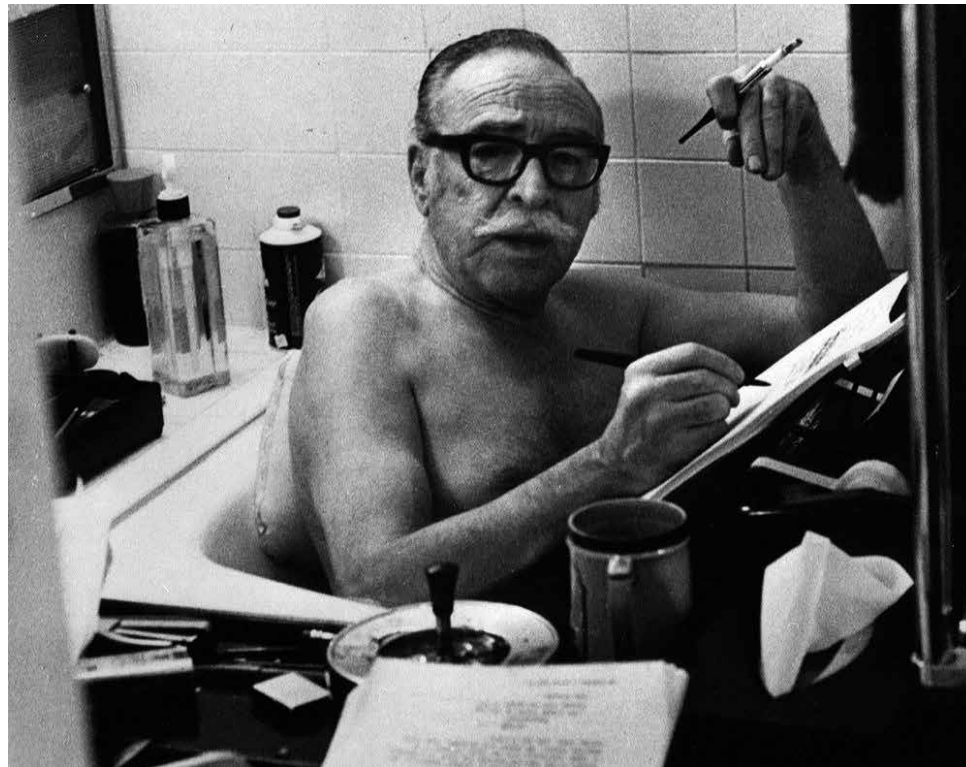
Thanks to David Rubin's casting and brilliant character acting by Bryan Cranston, by the end I couldn't tell whether I was watching Trumbo himself or black and white footage of Cranston, so completely did the film allow me to suspend disbelief. In the film, Diane Lane juggles, recalling Cleo's vaudeville days. (Indeed, Cleo taught me to juggle and stand on my head!)

#### Dalton Trumbo

*Trumbo* screenwriter John McNamara has received flack for painting communism, my parents' and Trumbo's ideals, with humane brush strokes. When Trumbo's daughter Niki confesses she would rather share her sandwich with a schoolmate who has forgotten his, even if she might still be hungry, Trumbo proudly tells her she is a communist. The embodiment in a child of the altruistic ideals that birthed socialism—empathy and equitability, despite personal sacrifice—conveys pacifism, not the grave threat of violent overthrow McCarthy alleged.

While perhaps my parents' community's means to these universalities might be rethought today, their recognition that a "capi-

# Living with Trumbo Under the Blacklist



*Trumbo at work in the bathtub.*

talist democracy" is an oxymoron, is finally dawning on popular consciousness. After all, can a system that condones distributing half its wealth to 1 percent of its population

the United States as "Two Americas." Though my parents and the intelligentsia in their community were pacifist, working to support socialist politicians through the

parents were not eager to be among these.

My father, George Pepper, a black-listed Hollywood organizer and later producer who worked under the pseudonym George P. Werker (Luis Buñuel's *Robinson Crusoe* and *The Young One*), dodged a subpoena by fleeing with my mother, Jeanette Gillerman, to Mexico City, where I was born. After Trumbo was released from 10 months in jail, in 1951, the Trumbos joined my parents' friends, writers Hugo Butler and Jean Rouverol, on a caravan to Mexico. Soon enough my parents were absorbed by a supportive intellectual community that at one time or another also included Luis Buñuel, Bertold Brecht, Miguel Covarrubias, Henry Ehrlich, Otto Preminger, Marilyn Monroe, Frida Kahlo, Diego Rivera, Diego's model Nieves Orozco, and B. Traven.

Sadly, the film rewrites history to skip Trumbo's exciting two-year Mexico period. Mexico, not the United States, is where Trumbo, under the pseudonym Robert Rich, wrote a few screenplays for the King Brothers including *The Brave One*, which won an Oscar.

When my self-exiled father died of lung cancer, Trumbo's wife Cleo, my mom's best friend, returned to Mexico City to be of support, and then took me back to the States until my mother settled her affairs.

Thus began my year of foster care at the Trumbos, bringing an enchanted second act to what would have otherwise been an unmitigated tragedy. Not only did I see Trumbo writing in his bathtub—his

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*Thus began my year of foster care at the Trumbos, bringing an enchanted second act to what would have otherwise been an unmitigated tragedy. Not only did I see Trumbo writing in his bathtub—his toes all shriveled and cigar ashes occasionally drifting into the water—contrary to the movie, he welcomed interruptions at the marble bar that he had converted into a desk in his poolside 'study.'*

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and the other half to the remaining 99 percent be either equitable or a democracy?

Trumbo described America as "fundamentally" racist, with racism "the keystone of national policy both domestic and foreign." James Baldwin likewise described

electoral system, they were demonized as treasonous. Thousands of radicals like my father were blacklisted throughout dozens of industries as "potential Communists," which meant their termination or exclusion from their professions.

My parents' close friends, Dalton Trumbo, Albert Maltz, John Howard Lawson, and Ring Lardner Jr. (*M\*A\*S\*H*), were jailed with six other Hollywood screenwriters and directors for "contempt of Congress"—refusing to answer the illegal questions about their private political affiliations put to them by the House Un-American Activities Committee or HUAC (the sound made when spitting out a big wad of phlegm). At the time, their First Amendment rights were trampled and they did not invoke the Fifth. Because thus far no one in Hollywood had been jailed for admitting to being Communists, there was no proof of self-incrimination. Once these first "Hollywood Ten" were jailed, the Fifth Amendment, when invoked, protected subsequent defendants from testifying against themselves and going to jail, though not from censure or job loss. My

toes shriveled and cigar ashes occasionally drifting into the water—contrary to the movie, he welcomed interruptions at the marble bar that he had converted into a desk in his poolside "study."

I knew Trumbo as a director because of his work on the internationally acclaimed antiwar movie he had adapted from his novel, *Johnny Got His Gun*. A couple of times, Timothy Bottoms, the lead actor, came to the house—after he had recovered. He had suffered a breakdown prompted by his insistence on simulating, by floating in water, the soldier he would play, who had lost all limbs in the war and could not hear, see, or speak. It is a shame that the film *Trumbo* omits this classic novel and testament to Trumbo's genius.

While Trumbo succeeds on a heart level, politically, and historically some critics say it falls short. Historian Larry Ceplair author of *The Inquisition in Hollywood* and *Dalton Trumbo: Blacklisted Hollywood Radical*, was consulted for *Trumbo*. He says it "seriously undercut Trumbo's politics and the deadly serious

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*Trumbo defying the House Un-American Activities Committee in 1947.*



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nature of writing on the black market,” leaving out sinister U.S. policy and Trumbo’s own incisive words.

It’s possible that McNamara’s choice to vilify Hedda Hopper—instead of government repression, witch-hunts mastermind Senator Joseph McCarthy, or Trumbo’s chief investigator, Robert E. Stripling—was a hangover from the blacklist days. I don’t fault *Trumbo* filmmakers for this. Today, if generally Hollywood movies mirror Stalinist propaganda films in that they’re poorly written and insulting to the average intelligence, it’s because the blacklist purged the industry of content and any rendition of reality at odds with the “American dream” or prevailing economic system. Unfortunately, omitting historical context or class consciousness, the sleight of hand favored by Hollywood during the Cold War, has spread to other print and media industries.

One such omission from the film is Trumbo’s suppressed statement submitted to the

Ceplair says the real Trumbo, was “rife with contradictions but he lived comfortably with them.” Further, “The real Trumbo possessed a rapierlike wit and riposting style. He was famed for his ability to skewer his critics.”

Trumbo had other friends who, if substituted for the fiction composite, would not have muddied the historical record. The Trumbos’ years in Mexico hanging out with my parents would have sufficed.

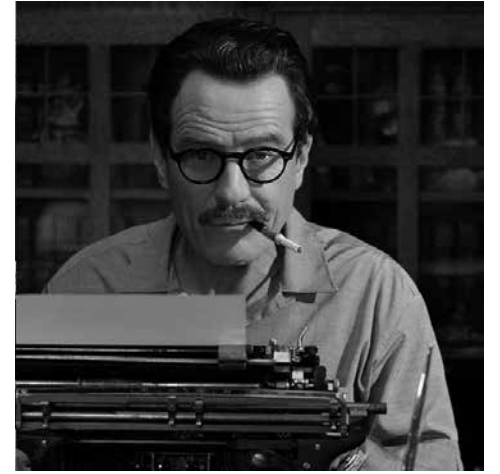
Several of my parents’ friends were deported from Mexico, others jailed, one was even illegally renditioned in Mexico—“kidnapped by the FBI and brought back across the border,” according to my mother. My parents’ mail was read, some seized, including royalty payments from the States, their lives spied on. My mother lost her job teaching economics at Mexico City College when the administration discovered she had been blacklisted. My father, frustrated that he could not return to the States and fearing deportation for

of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg, the only two U.S. civilians killed for conspiracy to commit espionage during the Cold War, the film’s historical context, at least for someone in the know, was indeed strong enough to re-traumatize her.

She began sobbing and crying out, “Their two little children! Two innocent people sentenced to death!” Over and over. And though the tiny audience crammed into my mom’s assisted living studio reassured her, my mother had become fixated on the government’s needless electrocution of the couple and she could neither focus nor follow nor care about the trivialities of a movie after that.

“Evidence is surfacing about Ethel Rosenberg’s innocence and their wrongful deaths,” activist, educator Lynn Odenheim Kalmar reassured my mom. Her family also fled to Mexico during the Cold War. “It’s okay. You’re safe. It’s over now.”

“It’s not over! Those children never had their parents. It’s not okay,” my mother cried. A contributor to Robert (Rosenberg) Meeropol’s Rosenberg Fund for Children, my mother knows the U.S. government orphaned Robert at age six.



Bryan Cranston as Dalton Trumbo.

that contain their work, including my father, George Pepper. Even so, the chilling repercussions of the Cold War, like uranium fallout, and like the writings of one of its survivors, will persist.

Margot Pepper is a Mexican-born journalist whose work has appeared in *Common Dreams*, *Utne Reader*, *Monthly Review*, *Z-net*, *Counterpunch*, *Dollars & Sense*, *Prensa Latina*, *NACLA*, the *San Francisco Bay Guardian*, *City Lights*, *Hampton Brown*, *Rethinking Schools*, *El*



Cleo Trumbo and Margot Pepper, age 8, taken by Mitzi Trumbo.

House Un-American Activities Committee in 1947: “Already the gentlemen of this committee and others of like disposition have produced in this capital city a political atmosphere which is acrid with fear and repression ... a city in which no union leader can trust his telephone ... a city in which men and women who dissent even slightly from the orthodoxy you seek to impose, speak with confidence only in moving cars and in the open air. You have produced a capital city on the eve of its Reichstag fire. For those who remember German history in the autumn of 1932 there is the smell of smoke in this very room.”

Post-9/11, the words have even greater resonance. But it is likely that including more of Trumbo’s speeches might have limited distribution of the film.

Ceplair also disapproves of the Arlen Hird character, a fictitious character added for the sake of dramatic tension, often mocking Trumbo’s contradictions.

organizing in Mexico, increased his tobacco consumption and died of cancer, just like the fictitious Arlen Hird.

Regardless of its flaws, I’m grateful to Roach, McNamara, Monica Levinson, and crew for rescuing the domestic Cold War from the memory hole and inserting Trumbo’s historical contribution into popular consciousness. Just as Trumbo broke the blacklist by openly claiming authorship of the screenplay for Otto Preminger’s *Exodus*, it is likely that Roach and McNamara have, with *Trumbo*, broken the blacklist against Hollywood movies sympathetic to the spirit of communism. Ceplair agrees that “*Trumbo* is the best of the blacklist films.”

At first, when I showed my mom the DVD, she thought Cranston was Trumbo. She didn’t recognize her best friend, Cleo, though. “Oh sort of,” she said. She followed and laughed along for a while. But when a headline mentioned the execution

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*While perhaps my parents’ community’s means to these universalities might be rethought today, their recognition that a ‘capitalist democracy’ is an oxymoron, is finally dawning on popular consciousness. After all, can a system that condones distributing half its wealth to 1 percent of its population and the other half to the remaining 99 percent be either equitable or a democracy?*

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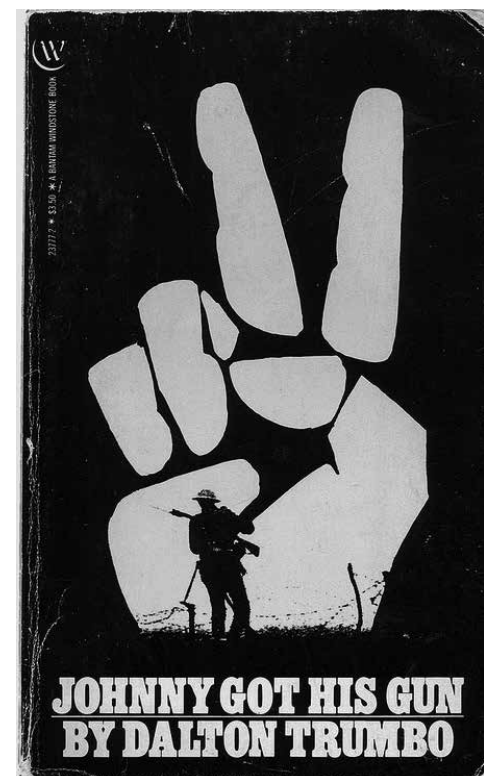
Said Meeropol, “After my parents’ arrests, my relatives were so frightened of being associated with ‘Communist’ spies; that they refused to take me into their homes. First I lived in a shelter. Later I lived with friends of my parents in New Jersey, but I was thrown out of school after the Board of Education found out who I was. After my parents’ execution, the police even seized me from the home of my future adoptive parents, and I was placed in an orphanage.”

The blacklist was a different kind of bomb with silent explosions and invisible radiation that still lingers.

On December 19, 2011, the Writers Guild of America restored the late Dalton Trumbo’s name as the writer of the 1953 romantic comedy *Roman Holiday*, almost 60 years after the fact. A similar awards scene, after which a teary Cleo says to Trumbo, “It’s over,” referring to the blacklist, is the happy ending to the film. This statement is but a half-truth.

The blacklist will truly be over when corporate radio, television, books, and Hollywood movies stop screening out works that reflect the politics and economic interests of our multiracial 99 percent and when *all* the blacklist victims get their names restored on films and DVDs

Tecolote, El Andar, and elsewhere. She is the author of a memoir about her year working in Cuba (*Through the Wall: A Year in Havana*), a book of poetry (*At This Very Moment*), and most recently a dystopian science fiction thriller, *American Day Dream*. Learn more at [margotpepper.com](http://margotpepper.com).





# One Woman's Arduous Voyage

*Long Way Out*

By Nicole Waybright with Jim Bastian  
SpeakPeace, 2016

By John Heuer

Imagine you've just been commissioned an ensign in the U.S. Navy. You've been flown to Sydney, Australia, to sign on an Arleigh Burke Class guided-missile destroyer as a gunnery officer and realize that you know very little about gunnery, or seamanship for that matter. You're one of the first women to serve as a naval surface warfare officer aboard a combatant ship. You're 5' 3" tall, weigh 110 pounds, are deathly seasick on your inaugural voyage aboard the *USS Curtis Wilbur*, and realize that you have a minimum 5-year Navy obligation for the ROTC scholarship that put you through college. How do you spell panic? And this was before the executive officer (XO) from hell signed on the *USS Curtis Wilbur*.

Reading Nicole Waybright's *Long Way Out*, about her experience as a fledgling Navy officer, reminded me that the most enjoyable day during the first half of my 26-year career at the university was the day my superintendent announced that he was moving to the coast and leaving the Design and Estimating Department. "David" was such a talented tyrant that no one in his department was aware that he was not the only employee singled out for David's psychological abuse. At least David didn't actually hurl objects at his employees in the middle of a profane torrent of verbal abuse, or put the entire company at risk for his incompetence as an officer like Ms. Waybright's XO.

Nicole Waybright's riveting account of her experience living through a historic Navy scandal is told via third person. "Brenda" represents the author in a narrative in which all the names have been changed. In the wake of the Navy's Tailhook scandal, when 83 women and 7 men were sexually assaulted during a traditional celebration of Navy and Marine aviators in 1991, the Navy came under congressional pressure to eliminate longstanding patterns of military sexual abuse and promote women service members and officers in an affirmative action program. Unfortunately, some misguided Navy brass chose the wrong woman to promote to captain. Brenda's XO was eventually relieved of command for "cruelty and



Nicole Waybright speaking at a Veterans For Peace rally.

maltreatment" and "conduct unbecoming an officer."

Brenda takes considerable pride in being a woman officer, which creates serious psychological stress as she realizes that her talents are not particularly suited for success as a naval officer. All her life she followed her fa-

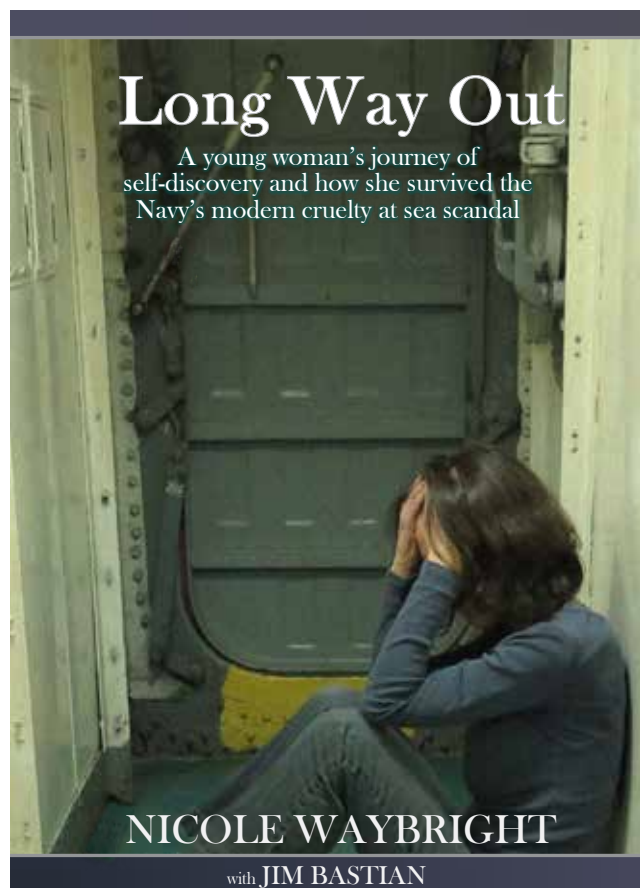
a "nationalistic language" in the form of such phrases as "the troops are our heroes," "they defend our freedom," "they fight so we don't have to," "we have to fight them over there so we won't have to fight them here."

"These phrases are in fact propagandistic," she says,

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*Having grown up idealizing a military career as epitomizing the highest form of patriotism, Brenda begins to doubt that sailing the western Pacific in an 8,000-ton billion-dollar warship, test-firing all sorts of explosives without any regard for the oceanic habitat of marine life, is not exactly defending freedom for America.*

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ther's advice to seek a technical education. He ridiculed liberal arts students for wasting their time in studies that would not contribute to a successful career. Brenda completed her college degree in mechanical engineering by virtue of her impressive ability to memorize data for purposes of testing. However, while short-term memory may help a candidate pass a test, it does not build a comprehensive grasp of the principles being studied.

To complicate matters, the culture of naval surface warfare officers was one that enforced sleep deprivation, so that they were vulnerable to chronic fatigue.

As Brenda gives her all to succeed as gunnery officer and watchstander on the bridge of a warship, she is confronted with some stark realizations. First she recognizes that she has forsaken her true love, the study of Spanish literature and art, in order to please her parents, who have their hearts set on a successful technical career for their only child.

Her second realization is perhaps even more profound. Having grown up idealizing a military career as epitomizing the highest form of patriotism, Brenda begins to doubt that sailing the western Pacific in an 8,000-ton billion-dollar warship, test-firing all sorts of explosives without any regard for the oceanic habitat of marine life, is not exactly defending freedom for America.

In the epilogue, Waybright discusses the emergence of

"and have had the effect of stifling honest conversation and critical thinking regarding recent wars, fought by an all-volunteer force."

Also in her epilogue, which includes sections on Jungian psychology, naval history, and war culture, the author challenges the reader to "individuate from parents and institutions, to become a distinct self, and to survive crisis and conflict and emerge on the other side as a new or renewed person." She cautions that such journeys are "not for the faint of heart."

Nicole Waybright, aka Brenda Conner, survived extraordinary challenges in the Navy and received an honorable discharge in 2001. She has since earned a master's degree in Spanish literature and still studies Jungian psychology. She is the most recently confirmed member of the national board of directors of Veterans For Peace. *Long Way Out* is an excellent read, highly recommended by this reviewer.

*Long Way Out* is available on [ecrater.com](http://ecrater.com) (print) and Amazon (print and Kindle)

John Heuer registered with the U.S. Coast Guard right out of high school and served in Viet Nam in 1968 as an ordinary seaman in the Merchant Marine. On his return voyage to the United States he decided that he would not return to Viet Nam as a soldier. He is currently a member of Veterans For Peace national board of directors.