



# VIETNAM VETERANS AGAINST THE WAR, INC

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Dear VVAW Supporter,

I'd like to thank you for your continued support for Vietnam Veterans Against the War (VVAW) over the years. **Without your involvement we could not successfully continue the important peace and social justice work that we began back in 1967.** My name is Joe Miller, and I am currently one of the National Coordinators for VVAW. I served in the Navy from 1961 to 1968, first as a Communications Technician (Linguist) with the Naval Security Group (NSG) up to 1964, then as an administrative clerk (Yeoman) from 1964 to 1968. I was "on station" aboard the USS Ticonderoga (CVA-14) during the Gulf of Tonkin "incidents" in August 1964, and my background with the NSG allowed me to know the facts behind the official lies about those events. That is where my politicization began. By the time of my discharge in 1968, I was more than ready to join the anti-war movement, and I linked up with VVAW in Chicago in 1969. For most of the past forty plus years I have maintained my connection with VVAW, and I see the positive impact we have had over time, not least of which is our work in support of the current generation of veterans in Iraq Veterans Against the War (IVAW).

Of course, we in VVAW are pleased to see the drawdowns in Iraq and Afghanistan, but, as veterans, we know that wars – especially long wars – do not "end" that easily. Residual forces will be kept "in place" or nearby – just in case. We cannot become complacent or celebrate too soon. And, we must all recognize that in many ways, wars do not "end" for the participants on either side. As with earlier wars, many GIs and veterans are coming home with scars, mental or physical, and it is the responsibility of the veterans' movement to ensure that they all get the needed treatment. We also need to make sure that educational and other benefits are protected, or extended, for all veterans. This is where we connect with the "Occupy" movement. In truth, GIs and veterans are a significant segment of the 99%. **The rich and powerful send us off to war; it is incumbent upon them to ante up.** GIs and veterans from both VVAW and IVAW not only stand in solidarity with the "Occupy" movement, we have been actively participating in events.

**Your continued support for VVAW has allowed us to continue fighting for Veterans, Peace and Justice.** We have been able to fight not only for Vietnam-era veterans through our Military Counseling Services, but help all generations of GIs and veterans, including the young men and women fighting in Iraq and Afghanistan.

VVAW's military counselors – Ray Parrish and Johanna (Hans) Buwalda – tirelessly work with service members and veterans of all generations. This fall William, a Vietnam-era veteran, sought out the military counseling service. He made an appointment to meet with Hans for counseling and to work on upgrading his discharge. His Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) had controlled his life since his military service. He had been unable to sleep, unable to concentrate, unable to go to school. Right before his first appointment at the counseling office, he became very anxious about opening up and changed his mind. But William agreed to have Hans come to him so they could get acquainted. At first, he was unable to stay still. But after an hour of talking, William became comfortable and was ready to fill out paperwork and start the evaluation process for his discharge upgrade. The fact that VVAW has both a benefits counselor and a mental health provider is extremely beneficial to people like William, who are very hesitant to meet new people.

**The effects of trauma go beyond any one war and cannot be addressed in purely conventional ways. Sometimes it takes meeting someone outside of the office, on their terms, when they are ready to help.** In 2005, Mike, who had done several tours as a Marine, came back with PTSD – he knew he had a problem but he didn't want counseling. But his wife,

Christine, came in and began seeing Hans regularly. Hans had a few short calls with Mike over the years, inviting him to contact her whenever he felt ready to do so. A few weeks ago, Mike came in to see Hans. He said that her work saved their marriage, and he began counseling too. VVAW's military counselors go above and beyond to help fight for veterans by fighting for each veteran that comes in, whether it means coming to them, or patiently waiting until they are ready. Hans and Ray work with loved ones, regardless of whether the veterans themselves are ready to start working on their problems. **Without your support, VVAW could not continue its Military Counseling service or provide support to the new generation of veterans fighting for peace and justice.**

IVAW's Field Organizing Program commemorated Veterans Day across the country with Operation Recovery Campaign actions highlighting service members' right to heal, by raising awareness to the ongoing issues of PTSD, Traumatic Brain Injuries (TBIs), and Military Sexual Trauma (MST). In Killeen, TX – home of Ft. Hood – Operation Recovery focused their efforts on the continued lack of resources for service members at the base. Gen. Campbell, the new commanding general at Ft. Hood, was put on notice last Memorial Day for the abuse of service members' right to heal after numerous failed attempts to meet with him to discuss the mental health epidemic at Ft. Hood. **Through your support, Operation Recovery at Fort Hood has met with hundreds of service members and their families to collect personal stories and share resources.**

It has become clear that service members are being prescribed medications and self-medicating, instead of getting the counseling and help that they have sought out. Due to the negative stigma around mental health issues, service members are being re-deployed when they are not ready to do so. The Army is not doing enough, by any means, to help our service members. The lack of resources and understanding for service members experiencing PTSD, TBI, or MST has resulted in an alarming numbers of suicides. Every 36 hours an active duty service member commits suicide and the suicide rate increased 150% from 2001 to 2009. IVAW's Operation Recovery Campaign is on the ground, working with the 99%, providing the desperately needed resources and support, and changing the fundamental structures in the military that is allowing this to happen. **Your support for VVAW allows IVAW's Field Organizing Program to continue fighting for peace and justice for GIs and veterans of the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq.**

In these hard times, we understand the demands on everyone's limited resources. **So, we are deeply thankful when our members and supporters still manage to provide tax-deductible donations to VVAW's work, at whatever level.** These donations enable us to maintain our free counseling services, support IVAW, and sustain our continued organizing efforts in opposition to unnecessary and illegal wars affecting the 99% in our country and in the nations our government wages wars in, now and into the future. We thank all of you for your continued support!

Sincerely,



Joe Miller, VVAW National Coordinator

I am sending Vietnam Veterans Against the War \$35 \$50 \$100 \$250 \$500 Other to support its work for peace and for decent benefits for all veterans. Donations to VVAW are tax deductible. You can also donate online at [www.vvaw.org](http://www.vvaw.org), a one-time or monthly donation.

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