50 Years of VVAW

JUL MILLER

From the National Office

This year we mark the 50th anniversary of the establishment of Vietnam Veterans Against the War (VFW) in New York City on April 15, 1967, a small number of Vietnam veterans marched together during a huge anti-war protest under a hastily-produced banner declaring them to be "Vietnam Veterans Against the War." That was the impetus for the eventual establishment of VFW in June of 1967.

By 1967, many of us who eventually joined VFW were in different places in our lives. Many of us were in uniform after serving for a number of years and moving against the war. Some had already served and were looking for a way to stop their war. Even more had recently joined the military thinking that they were defending their country, "Killing Commies for Christ," as they were told. Greater numbers were still too young to serve, but were welcomed into the draft machine too soon. Thousands of these would also find their way to VFW over the years.

It might be argued that we in VFW were a part of what Dr. King called for—a "radical revolution of values." We were determined to improve our own lives and the lives of those affected. As many of us thought that if the country saw its veterans marching against the war they fought in, the country could be turned around. Even though VFW had a direct impact on the movement against the Vietnam War, we soon learned that the system needed such wars. The system did not see us as heroes fighting for peace and social justice. The system saw us as a threat to its existence, along with all the other threats, such as Black Liber-
a
tion, Women's Liberation, Student Power, etc.

So, we continued to fight, to organize, to exist. Fifty years later, we are still here—no longer young idealists, but still "angry young men and women" doing what we can to promote social and political activism in the long-term struggle for peace and social justice. Wherever VFW members exist, they are willing (and mostly able) to join the fights, local and national. We remain true to our origins.

Now, our country, and the rest of the world face new threats from a radical right wing Tea Party Administration. This group of misleaders want to deconstruct the state machinery on the backs of the poor, the sick, the elderly, the very young, racial and religious minorities, the LGBTQ communities, and vets. It is a billionaire's club that is all about their bottom line, a line that keeps most of us on the bottom, grasping for crumbs.

One of the more obvious signs of where this so-called Administration wants to take us is seen in the recent debate surrounding the attack on the Affordable Care Act (ACA). Tea Party members and moderates inside the Republican Party went to—to in an effort to repeal the ACA, all with the full support of the Bloomberg-in-Chief. This fundamental campaign promise was to be the major signal achievement of the Tea Party Administration.

However, as the population learned about the real details of this planned repeal, they began to make noise. Republican town halls across the country erupted into shouting matches, as the politicians tried to convince their constituents of the positive aspects of the new plan. Facts got in the way. Numbers got in the way. Soon 60% of these polls began to see the folly of their solid opposition to this attempt to hijack their health care. Finally, President Tweet and his minions had to back off.

Then, there is the somewhat un-comfortable situation of the ongoing investigations into the Tweet Administration's intentions to back off. This year we mark the 50th anniversary of the Vietnam War protest under a hastily-produced banner declaring them to be "Vietnam Veterans Against the War." That was the impetus for the eventual establishment of VFW in June of 1967. For Bill and I, partner, an old anti-war activist who I met after my late husband, Bill, Davis died in 2007. For Bill and I, this past February I spent three weeks traveling throughout Vietnam with a brief stop in Cambodia to see Angkor Thom, including a side trip to Phnom Penh for a look at the Cambodia Genocide Museum. Although the see the Cu Chi tunnels. Although the Vietnam veterans Marching against the war they fought in, the country could be turned around. Even though VFW had a direct impact on the movement against the Vietnam War, we soon learned that the system needed such wars. The system did not see us as heroes fighting for peace and social justice. The system saw us as a threat to its existence, along with all the other threats, such as Black Liberation, Women’s Liberation, Student Power, etc. So, we continued to fight, to organize, to exist. Fifty years later, we are still here—no longer young idealists, but still “angry young men and women” doing what we can to promote social and political activism in the long-term struggle for peace and social justice. Wherever VFW members exist, they are willing (and mostly able) to join the fights, local and national. We remain true to our origins.

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Join VVAW as we gather to celebrate our 50th Anniversary. No elaborate events, just gathering with VVAW members and friends for talking, eating, and drinking. For those who can't travel, we'll be having some virtual online events as well. Make sure to check www.vvaw.org for current details.

Sunday, September 10, 2017
Milwaukee, Wisconsin
1:00 pm to 6:00 pm
Falcon Bowl
801 E. Clarke Street
Milwaukee, Wisconsin
Light refreshments available.
Cash bar.
Bowling? (414) 264-0660

VVW 50th Anniversary

Hotel rooms available
808 night Sept. 7-. Sept. 12
Park East Hotel
916 E. State St., Milwaukee
For reservations call (414) 276-8800 or (800) 328-7275
Mention Vietnam Veterans Against the War for the reduced rate.

Saturday, September 16, 2017
New York City
2:00 pm
Connolly's Pub and Restaurant
121 West 45th Street
New York

20 Years of The Veteran

Barry Romo

Thanks to Jeff Dangerous, Billy Cuenane, and Travis Landchild for their cartoons. Thanks to Dave Millard for some of Steve Millard's drawings this issue. Steve was a Combat Artist with the 18th Military History Division in CuChi and the 25th Infantry Division from 1968-1969.

Last fall, VVAW gave more money to the Vietnam Association for Victims of Agent Orange/Dioxin (VAVA) to build housing for victims of Agent Orange in Vietnam. More details in a future issue of The Veteran.

VVAW applauds the release of political prisoners and veterans Oscar Lopez Rivera and Chelsea Manning. We welcome future articles on their incarceration and release.

* We're sad to announce VVAW member Eleanor (Aunt Shorty) Lopez Rivera, who was featured in the Fall 2016 issue of The Veteran, passed away. She will be missed.

* Mention Vietnam Veterans Against the War for the reduced rate.

* All praise to Jeff Machota on 20 years of putting out The Veteran. He is not a vet but loves VVAW so much. He got his start in the struggle for peace and justice by working to end Apartheid in South Africa and didn't stop. He worked on the Jesse Jackson presidential campaign. He is an anti war activist from the Gulf to Iraq, an advocate for good affordable health care and a supporter of the rubber workers striking in Decatur IL. If it is racist he is against it, including demanding the removal of racist sports mascots nationally and locally.

* I used to put out The Veteran and readers would race to find all the misspelled words. Now the paper looks very professional. What a man, thank you Jeff for helping to keep VVAW alive and kicking!!

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...I should make it clear that while I have tried...to give a voice to the voiceless Vietnamese...I am as deeply concerned about our own country as there is anything else. For it occurs to me that what we are submitting them to in Vietnam is not simply the brutalizing process that goes on in any war where enemies face each other and seek to destroy. We are adding cynicism to the process of death, for they must know that after a short period there that none of the things we claim to be fighting for are really involved...they must know that their government has sent them into struggle against Vietnamese...and the more sophisticated rarely realize that we are on the side of the wealthy and the secure while we create a hell for the poor" -- (April 1967)

During our commomeration of the establishment of VVAW in 1967, it is fitting and more appropriate for us to recognize the powerful statement made by Dr. King's speech at Riverside Church in New York that same year.

For nearly two years, Dr. King witnessed, with growing concern, how the growing war against the Vietnamese people undermined domestic policies and plans to eradicate poverty and improve civil rights in this country. As far back as July 1965, King made short statements against the war in Vietnam made by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. at Riverside Church in New York that same year.

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When a nation elects a Trump to be its president it causes one to stop and think. My first thought was that this was a handout candidate because the last president in my lifetime to go down was Jimmy Carter. It would be worth watching to see if this generated in the populace this resulted in reactions in the US and outside. And we don’t yet know what the backlash will be from his executive orders, appointments, and policies. It could be devastating.

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Notes from the Boonies

P.AUL WISNIEWSKI

The ad below is for illustration purposes only. VFW does not endorse or support this produce.
In 1987, the VVAW National Office, along with the Chicago Chapter, was a part of the many campaigns of the moment—treatment Agent Orange, exposing the inadequacies of the VA, and watching for the next target of US foreign intervention. High on our list of activities was planning and enacting a 20th Anniversary celebration. As had become customary in Chicago, we planned a celebration for Memorial Day in May 1987, held at the very public corner of Wacker Drive and Wabash Avenue, where there was a concrete island. In the past, a monument to veterans stood there. It somehow morphed into a Vietnam memorial fountain, and disappeared for years, a long shabby veterans' story. In any case we would, twice a year, bring several banners and a portable speaker system to rally the 50 or so VVAW members and friends and assorted lefties who appeared on Veterans Day and Memorial Day.

On this Memorial Day, it was a new world. City workers built a speaker's platform with microphone. Chicago city police, who regularly paid scant attention to our activities were attentively around the area and Chicago's Mayor, Harold Washington, arrived and spoke. Previously, usually only one or two police/Vietnam vets would stop by to visit. On this Memorial Day, Mayor Washington declared Vietnam Veterans Against the War Day.

**Memorial Day Memories**

Pete Zastrow

Recently I got a video called "The Class of 65" from an acquaintance of Les Benett, a Vietnam buddy of mine. It is about two senior high school classes in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, one public and the other parochial. The tragic thing about these two classes is the number of young men who were killed in the Vietnam War. Edison High lost 66, the highest toll of years, and with others I had just met. There were those who had driven in from their homes 10 minutes away, to my grueling 22 hour bus ride from PA, to those who flew in from the coast. Electricians, journalists, postal workers, photographers, musicians, the same eclectic blue collar/white collar mixture that stood up 35 years ago and yelled, "One, two, three, four, we don't want your fucking war." We gave 'em an "F"!

State Senator is a member of VVAW. This article first appeared in the Fox 2002 issue of The Veteran.
Our Conundrum

If you cleave to victory

You will be vanquished like water in cupped hands

—D. Nurkse

It’s official. The debate is over. Questions answered. Doubts laid to rest.

Our war is a major debacle. OurVA is impervious. Stay, we fail. Leave, we fail.

—Barry L. Reece

Veterans and the Affordable Care Act: Why the Repeal Would be Devastating

JEN TAYLOR

Right now, many veterans are very concerned, and rightfully so, about the changes that President Trump has been proposing for the Department of Veterans’ Affairs (VA) and how they will be dismantling the VA health care system with “reforms.” Unfortunately, veterans who have served in combat and have faced the horrors of war are the first to rally against the threats to the Affordable Care Act (also known as the ACA or “Obamacare”). We know too well that our sacrifices have not been recognized, and more often than not, is in addition to it, it is not always accessible or meets everyone’s needs.

Even through the American Health Care Act (AHCA) and the most recent repeal plan proposed by Speaker Ryan this session—failed to garner enough votes to make a second attempt at the end of March, Ryan and President Trump, amongst others, continue to discuss repealing the ACA. To understand what this would mean, let’s look at just a few of the provisions in the American Health Care Act. The non- partisan Congressional Budget Office (CBO) scored the bill and reported that it would result in 24 million Americans losing their health insurance by 2026.

Changes in tax credits from income-based to age-based would have put health insurance out of reach for low-income veterans. Annually, allowing insurance companies to charger older adults even more (5 times as much as a younger adult, compared to 3 times under the ACA) would have put health insurance out of reach for older Americans. Significant funding cuts to Medicaid, combined with changes to the program to either block grant or per capita program, would fundamentally alter the Medicaid program as we know it, affecting all recipients whether they are new borns or residents in long-term care. In last-minute negotiations before the bill was pulled, they were even considering removing protections for those with pre-existing conditions as well as taking away essential health benefits, which sets a minimum of what plans must cover to be considered health insurance.

A recent report by the Urban Institute, released in September 2016, researched the effects of the ACA on veterans. While veterans in general are less likely to be uninsured than the general population, about 11% of veterans under age 65 did not have health insurance before the ACA started in 2014. Of the ACA, the uninsured rate among veterans under age 65 fell 38% from 2013 to 2016. Veterans were insured under the ACA have millions with affordable insurance coverage. The ACA has also extended protections to nearly all of us, including no lifetime caps, protections for those with pre-existing conditions, a set of standard benefits that must be covered, protections in cost as we get older, and much more. If the ACA were fully repealed with a replacement plan, 32 million Americans will become uninsured by 2026.

In addition to the repeal of the ACA, there are still other threats to how we all access our health care. Congressional leaders have proposed changing Medicaid to block grant or per capita program. These threats have not gone away since the fall of the American Health Care Act. This would restrict Medicaid funding either by a set amount per state per day or a set amount per person. Basically, the states would have less funding; this means cuts. With the expansion of Medicaid, millions of low-income Americans were able to access insurance. If Medicaid is weakened so that its funding is given out in block grants or per capita grants, fewer people will be able to get coverage, states will have to cut what essential benefits it covers, and worse. Don’t forget, Medicaid is the largest payer of long-term care in our country, covering many of our loved ones through in-home and nursing homes.

Lastly, Congressional leaders, like Speaker Ryan, along with the newly-appointed HHS Secretary Price are eyeing privatizing Medicare or turning it into a voucher program. Most veterans have Medicare (at least Parts A & B) to provide coverage when you need to get care at a non-VA facility. Keep in mind that Vietnam-era vets who don’t already have Medicare are eligible for transferring into Medicare as we speak. Don’t be fooled by Ryan and Price! These plans will wreak havoc for premium costs and throw Medicare into a death spiral. If these plans for Medicare go forward, you most likely couldn’t afford to get similar coverage to what you have now under your plan unless you are willing or able to spend a lot more money. Take action! Find out where your Representative and Senators stand on privatizing the VA, repealing the ACA, cutting Medicaid, and turning Medicare into a voucher program. Make your voices heard. You can reach your Representative and Senators through the Congressional switchboard at (202) 224-3121. Let them know that you’re a vet in their district who stands against privatizing the VA, against repealing the ACA, and against cutting Medicaid and Medicare. The efforts to prevent the repeal of the ACA since Congress returned to session in early January is working as they could not successfully pass Ryan’s American Health Care Act. Keep up the pressure!

No Thanks

TOM DIXON

I want to be conciliatory. I don’t want to be on the warpath about the VA. We need to continue to speak out for our veterans. But, if you were working as they couldn’t afford to get similar coverage to what you have now under their plan unless you are willing or able to spend a lot more money. Take action! Find out where your Representative and Senators stand on privatizing the VA, repealing the ACA, cutting Medicaid, and turning Medicare into a voucher program. Make your voices heard. You can reach your Representative and Senators through the Congressional switchboard at (202) 224-3121. Let them know that you’re a vet in their district who stands against privatizing the VA, against repealing the ACA, and against cutting Medicaid and Medicare. The efforts to prevent the repeal of the ACA since Congress returned to session in early January is working as they could not successfully pass Ryan’s American Health Care Act. Keep up the pressure!

Stop this militarization of American society. It has made us safer. It has not made us better. Honor us by creating fewer of us. Reduce our ridiculous footprint of 700 bases throughout the world, many of which can only be honestly considered offensive not defensive. Start funding teachers and community workers, and rebuild our infrastructure, and fully fund the programs that keep our country safe. Build a better world, not one of destruction and alienation, from falling into poverty. Thank me for my service by making this a better nation for all of our citizens, not with more of your empty rhetoric and unnecessary invasions.
50 Years Later - Reflections on the Vietnam War

Warren Hunt

Although my personal opposition to the Vietnam War began while I was there, it took many years of studying the historical context of the war before I was able to clearly understand it and coherently express it. To have opted to remain ignorant and blame the loss of the war on the media and student protesters would have been an insult to those who paid a far greater price than I did for our strings.

I served in Vietnam from July 1968 to July 1969 as a radio operator with the First Infantry Division. I was drafted in late 1967, two of my classmates in the Vietnam War, six of them during the years I served in Vietnam. During the campaigns of World War II, a total of five of the unit's signal corporals were killed. Of the twenty young men in my school cohort, the class of 1966, twelve served in the armed forces, nine of us served in Vietnam, and three were seriously wounded. By the time I was drafted in late 1967, two of my classmates had already been injured in the war. A third childhood friend survived his wounds, but was never the same after that, and committed suicide at the age of 50.

Even before entering the service, I sensed that there was not a great deal of enthusiasm for the war. Americans did not seem to have a sense of urgency, as was the case during the Second World War. Our country was then clearly in mortal peril, and Americans understandably rallied to the defense of their homeland. On the contrary, I often heard the ironic observation that the North Vietnamese had not attacked California, so why are we bombarding them?

Nevertheless, I went to Vietnam with the hope that it would be all worthwhile in the end and that, like my parents' generation, I could recoup the life experience that I had felt contributed to something historically significant that would lead to a better world. Unfortunately, what I experienced in the war and learned after returning from Vietnam did not justifiably that hope.

The Vietnam War was not worthy of the sacrifice and suffering of my lifelong friends and the members of my unit who were killed and injured by incoming or were massacred when the VC overran Nui Ba Den. It did not justifiably having to frequently dodge shrapnel for a year and live forever with the memory of seeing a GI blown to bits from a direct hit by a 122mm rocket. Nor did it justify the 58,000 US military deaths and the over 300,000 total American casualties. Most of all, it did not justify the killing and maiming of millions of Vietnamese by bombs, bullets, unexploded munitions and the bizarre effects of exposure to massive doses of defoliants.

Looking back on it, I now understand the awful sense of dread and insecurity I felt the entire time I was in Vietnam. It was the feeling that every molecule of that country was trying to shake us out. My grinding respect for the enemy gradually evolved into a realization that their situation was not unlike that of our forefathers during their revolution against British colonialism.

For us Vietnam veterans, the story did not have a happy ending. Instead of dramatic footage of marines victoriously raising the stars and stripes, we were taunted by televised images of marines pushing back our frantic South Vietnamese allies as they rushed the last Huey choppers leaving the US Embassy, desperately trying to escape the coming retribution at the hands of the conquering Communist forces, distraught at their abandonment by the most powerful nation on earth.

Over forty years have passed since the end of the Vietnam War. The victory of the People's Army of North Vietnam did not result, as predicted, in the inexorable spread of communism to the rest of southern Asia. On the contrary, the end of the war much has changed for the better. We now have full diplomatic and prosperous trade relations with a unified Democratic Republic of Vietnam. Although the country is still ruled by a Communist government, it is gradually liberalizing its economy and has become a favorite tourist destination, especially for young Americans. Many of them are children or even grandchildren of Vietnam veterans. Perhaps, in some inexplicable sense, we did win the war.

The irony of it all haunts me: if Vietnam is able to cultivate a fruitful relationship with us now, after surviving its devastating invasion and uniting under Communist rule, why couldn't we all have just agreed to skip the war and leap together into the future?

Warren E. Hunt was in Vietnam with Co. A, 121st Signal Battalion, 1st Infantry Division from July 1968 to July 1969.

Trump Card

We have a new president. No blue president. No true president.

He's tearing down the Constitution Without justification and contrary to the principle of self-determination on which our country was founded. About 64 Vietnam vets' names were included in the ad, which noted that it was only a partial accounting of signatories.

Today, we, as an organization, should add our voice to those calling for a complete review of the policies that equated all struggles for national self-determination with an attack on this country. VVAW should be calling for a nuclear-free zone in SEA Asia, the withdrawal of our military from Korea and Okinawa, and for the peaceful discussions and negotiations between the Korean parties that would lead to a meaningful reduction of tension in the area.

Millions protesting the war on the Peoples of Indochina didn't prevent the US from going to war against Iraq, but a deeper look at US foreign policy since 1945 is needed, and at this time in our country's history, that examination might have a positive effect.

Trump Card

We have a new president. No blue president. No true president.

He waves red flags all day Taunting us to charge him. But we know he has a sword Hidden behind his back. Ready to run us through If our horns get too close.

He's taking revenge on all the world Because it only made him a president, He's taking revenge on all the world If our horns get too close.

He's tearing down the Constitution.—Susan R. Dewar

The Veteran—Susan R. Dewar

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(Vietnam Veterans Against the War being arrested at the Pentagon, April, 1971, (photos by Maurice Simon))

VWV, Then and Now

Al Donohue

On Sunday, November 19, 1967, The New York Times published an advertisement headlined, "Vietnam Veterans Speak Out." It called the war "wrong, unjustifiable and contrary to the principle of self-determination on which our country was founded." About 64 Vietnam vets' names were included in the ad, which noted that it was only a partial accounting of signatories.

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Al Donohue is a member of VVAW from 1971 until forever.
still recommend it as one of the most bizarre museums combining history and art that I have ever seen. One fifth of Ha Long Prison in Hanoi has been preserved and except for showing our prisoners having a great time playing volleyball, the depiction of the French is gruesome and well done. Of all the museums thank goodness I had a heads up from one of my former students – teaching English in Hanoi, small world – and went to the Women’s Museums. I couldn’t think of the equivalent here. It covered the women’s role in the war as well as all the different customs of the many ethnic women in the country. It seemed to be the most honest, pointing out problems, especially for rural women.

Perhaps the most inspiring was Project Renew, an NGO devoted to making Quang Tri Province safe from cluster munitions and other explosive remnants of the war. It is an organization I am confident after meeting with the director, that its staff and volunteers put donations to good use. It is also close to the DMZ where I walked across the bridge that separated the country during the war. In Hue, the evidence of the brutal fighting during Tet is still evident in the Citadel and the Imperial City. In Sapa, near the Chinese border, we spent time trekking with amazing Hmong guides and spent a night in their village. They are still living without many needed services, but were amazingly warm and welcoming.

So what to make of this beautiful country today? We felt no anti-American feeling. The majority of Vietnamese were born after the war ended, to them it is ancient history. They just want to learn English so they can get a decent job and provide for their families. It is definitely not the socialist utopia I thought I was fighting for so many years ago. Public education and health care are not free for the vast majority of people. It is a developing country that is growing with what appears to be no clear plan. The people are better off than they were even fifteen years ago, but all development comes with a price. Little care seems to be placed on the environment. Capitalism is on steroids and the Vietnamese now are competing with the Chinese and Japanese pump money into many ventures. Huge high rises are being built on the outskirts of the cities, especially near Hanoi, for those leaving the poverty of the countryside. New hotels and tourist facilities are mushrooming.

The people are incredibly industrious. They are warm and very friendly. The food is great and the street food in Hanoi is something to experience – but you must be careful with the occasional scooter coming onto the sidewalk competing with the restaurants. It is a much more affordable place to visit than developed countries. Young backpackers are everywhere, taking advantage of the cheap hostels, food, and transportation. But the Vietnamese are smart and prices will go up depending on demand. Although American tourists are in the minority, other foreign tourists are coming in droves. For a people who have lived through so much war, one hopes their future will be filled with peace and prosperity. Some of the Vietnamese veterans of the war we met were disappointed with government corruption, the lack of human rights, and government censorship. On our last evening, three university students joined us on a bench in Hanoi overlooking the beautiful Hoan Kiem Lake, wanting to practice their English. They too were unhappy with their government and wanted more democratic rights. However, they loved their country and were optimistic that the future will improve. And in case you were wondering, most of the people we met thought Trump was an idiot!
Carl Douglas Rogers, a key figure in founding VVAW, died in Los Angeles last fall of cancer he attributed to Agent Orange. He served a tour in Vietnam with an Army unit as a chaplain's assistant from March 1966 to April 1967. The son of a newspaper columnist in Ohio, Carl had an amazing ability to vent outrage in creative ways. He marched alongside Martin Luther King Jr., appeared on numerous radio and television programs, and became the subject of feature stories in the mainstream media. And at a time when the mainstream media was whole-heartedly beating the drums, flying the flag, patriotically promoting the war.

As noted in "The Turning: A History of Vietnam Veterans Against the War", "'Rogers, who could step tomorrow into a Wheaties ad (he wears a crew-cut and teaches Sunday school at New York's Presbyterian Church) has been in the news since his return from Vietnam,' observed [a profile in] Commonweal magazine...

Yet Carl maintained a flair for creative responses to governmental outrages. Another innovative project he worked on was Help Unsell the War, which countered the Pentagon's gazillion-dollar propaganda machine with a blizzard of anti-war ads created by simpatico advertising agencies on billboards, posters, radio and TV, in magazines and newspapers across the country. Radio ads featured testimonials from Vietnam vets, such as John Kerry's 1971 address to Congress on behalf of VVAW. And, with typical gusto masking anger over the war's casualties, Carl helped stage The War Is Over concert in Central Park in New York in May 1975. The concert featured Phil Ochs, Joan Baez, Pete Seeger, Tom Paxton, Paul Simon, Patti Smith, Richie Havens, Harry Belafonte and Peter Yarrow, among others, singing anti-war anthems to a cheering crowd of 50,000 of Carl's closest friends and fellow peaceniks.

Carl Rogers

Carl Douglas Rogers, R.I.P.

JAN BARRY

Jan Barry is a poet and writer. A co-founder of Vietnam Veterans Against the War, he is active in Veterans For Peace and Warrior Writers/Combat Poets, which provide creative arts programs for veterans and family members.
"Look up to the sky, up towards the north. There are three new stars brightly shining forth. They're shining oh – so bright from heaven above. Gee, we're gonna miss you, everybody sends their love." [1]

Those words, from the song "Three Stars," were composed by Tommy Dee (Donaldson) in 1959 as a tribute to Ritchie Valens, Buddy Holly, and J.P. "The Big Bopper" Richardson, who were killed in a plane crash earlier that year. The event was also remembered as "The Day the Music Died" in Don McLean's classic 1972 song "American Pie." I readily admit that I am overly influenced by the truths and insights so abundant in this song, and dare to suggest a "radically new democratic political movement" in a document known as the Port Huron Statement, the theoretical manifesto of the New Left. At the height of the war in Vietnam he traveled to Hanoi and reported upon the damage American bombing had done to civilian neighborhoods, schools, and hospitals. He helped to organize the protests at the 1968 Democratic National Convention, and stood tall as one of the Chicago Seven. Along with his wife, Sudanese, he inspired divergent resistance to the Vietnam War until its end, and advocated for amnesty for draft evaders after the hostilities ended. He became a powerful spokesman for the environment, animals rights, solar energy, and renters' rights and was elected to the California State Assembly (1982-1992) and State Senate (1990-2002). Tom Hayden was a tireless progressive activist and educator. In 15, in response to the Obama administration's decision to withdraw the US troops from the war-torn Iraq, he introduced the Hayden's 50th Anniversary Commemoration of the Vietnam War, he organized and chaired sessions of peace activities and accomplished some resounding acknowledgement of the historical importance of the Vietnam anti-war movement. His last of 19 books, "HILL NO: The Forgotten Power of the Vietnam Peace Movement" was published by Yale University Press in January of this year. The final sentence declares "Mistakes were made, serious mistakes, but our America is a better place because we stood up against all odds." The same can be said of Vietnam Veterans Against the War. I have previously submitted an article for this issue of The Veteran remembering the life of Charlie Liteky (on page 12). He was a Catholic Chaplain in Vietnam, accompanying an infantil patrol when they were ambushed. Charlie crawled out under withering fire and dragged or carried twenty men to safety despite being wounded twice, an action that earned the Congressional Medal of Honor (CMOH). In the 1980s he left the priesthood and married Judy, a former nun, and became aware of America's involvements in Central America. He traveled to Nicaragua, El Salvador, and Guatemala, and to protest what he had seen there, became the first American in history to give back the CMOH. Charlie was one of four vets who fasted on the steps of the Capitol in protest of the Reagan administration's policies toward Central America, and that widely-publicized fast probably prevented a full US military invasion of Nicaragua. Years later, Charlie was on the streets of Baghdad in 2003 when America's Shock and Awe bombs were falling upon the citizens of Iraq. Charlie Liteky's autobiography will be published later this year. Marilyn Young was a Professor of History at New York University, and had a determined anti-war and anti-militarism voice that was heard worldwide. The New York Times obituary described her as "a towering figure in the history of US foreign relations, a celebrated critical historian of the Vietnam War and US intervention overseas. But her prominence as a scholar was matched by the strength of her political convictions, and by her unwavering use of her public platform to fight misogyny, US empire, and unending war." The author of numerous books, her 1973 "American Expansionism" was one of the first books to recognize a recurrent theme of militarism supporting American imperialism since the Civil War. A determined feminist, her "Promissory Notes: Women and the Transition to Socialism" examined feminine roles in revolution and the third world countries around the globe. Marilyn Young's best-known book is "The Vietnam Wars 1945–1990," a meticulously documented but very humanistic examination of the US can be said on Vietnam and the Cold War policies and ideologies that fueled its fury. In the liner notes, Howard Zinn called it "a marvelous achievement," and noted that it had been "written with grace, wit, and passion." That is a wonderful description of Marilyn Young! Marilyn could use words like a swordsman uses a rapier, but her intellectual brilliance was balanced by an infinite sense of humor. She loved a good laugh, a stick of Scotch, and good, caring people. She was disfrutada over America's ongoing follies in the Middle East, and dismayed at the election of Donald Trump. I have a favorite photograph of her, relaxing on our back porch while a deer wandered past the door. The Vietnam era was a time of great passions, appalling truths but enthusiastic hopes, and lofty ideals. Some were written, some came as songs, and many were shouted in the streets or on campuses. Most of America's history since that time has inspired continued outrage, and Tom Hayden, Charlie Liteky, and Marilyn Young used their talents to storm and shut the face of our country's deadly policies and cultural calamities. They spent their lives inspiring us to believe that something far better was possible, against all odds. Looking back at the folk songs, I hope we can all recognize three new stars. As the second verse of Tommy Dee's song states:

"With your stars shining through the dark and lonely night. To light the path and show the way, the way that's right. Gee, we're going to miss you, everybody sends their love." [2]
I got the news as soon as I awoke. Even though I knew he was seriously ill, it still came as a shock. It seemed like we had just had a conversation, and I was still having too many things I would still like to hear him speak and write about, and now would have to go without. He had been such a figure in our same organization, Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), and in our course of battle against black and white racism and justice for our neighbors one afternoon, we were still feeling the need to hear him speak and write about, even if the飕藉 was over. He had been such a catalyst, working toward united action. It was a good model for us who aspired to be organizers.

My next knowledge of Tom was through the newspapers. He had gathered a ruckus by joining Herbert Aptheker of the Communist Party of St. Paul and student leader, in going behind enemy lines to North Vietnam, to make a direct contact between the US peace movement and the national movement in Vietnam. The SDS students had heard about the Vietnam War and its impact on the US students and community folks, off the campuses, and had organized themselves to go out and to work, bringing people together, asking lots of questions, drawing people out to participate in things, asking lots of questions, bringing people out to participate in things, and involving a lot more people to get to the source of what was happening. Tom was always laid back, non-confrontational, but still serving as a catalyst, working toward united action. It was a good model for us who aspired to be organizers.

As the war in Iraq unfolded and our movement was growing around the state, we decided on a statewide meeting in Champaign-Urbana, home of the University of Illinois. I offered to get Tom to be the keynote speaker — he had just written a book on Iraq — and he agreed, and did an excellent job. In that speech, Tom wanted to make a deep lesson click in my mind. Wars end in three ways: when the enemy retreats, when the soldiers refuse to fight, and when a Congressional majority refuses to pay for it. Pick all three, any two or one. Especially three, and the war's not crowned up front.

Members of the campus Green Party were at that conference, and had given them some space in my office for their national work on the Ralph Nader campaign. A few months later, they invited both Tom and I to speak at their national convention at the University in Lawrence, Kansas. My talk was in a small group workshop, but with about 50 people, with Tom listening in. It went well, Tom later telling me "You have a great form. Both prose and poetry are very well done. Both prose and poetry are well done, and you have strong, relevant arguments. Both prose and poetry are well done, and you have strong, relevant arguments. Both prose and poetry are well done, and you have strong, relevant arguments. Both prose and poetry are well done, and you have strong, relevant arguments. Both prose and poetry are well done, and you have strong, relevant arguments. Both prose and poetry are well done, and you have strong, relevant arguments. 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Both prose and poetry are well done, and you have strong, relevant arguments. Both prose and poetry are well done, and you have strong, relevant arguments.
I am saddened to report that one of America's true heroes, Charlie Liteky, has gone to his final reward. At age 85, just six months after his beloved wife Judy died of cancer, he went to join her.

He had spent his final months at the VA Hospice facility in San Francisco. Charlie Liteky was a Catholic chaplain in Vietnam. On December 6, 1967 he went out with a patrol and they were ambushed by a large enemy force. Charlie crawled out under intense enemy fire and dragged more than 20 wounded soldiers back, coming within 15 meters of an enemy machine gun, placing his body between the gun and the wounded. One of the wounded was too heavy to carry, so Charlie placed the man on his chest and crawled on his back, using his heels and elbows, and brought him to safety. He gave last rites to soldiers under fire, directed the medevac helicopters in despite heavy fire, and he was wounded in the neck.

For this action, he was awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor by President Johnson. Well after the war, Charlie left the service and the priesthood and married a former nun, Judy, who introduced him to numerous victims of the American funded and equipped war in El Salvador. In 1986, he went to Central America to see for himself, and on July 29, 1986 he placed his model and a letter to the president at the base of the Vietnam Memorial wall in Washington, DC to protest America's activities in El Salvador and Nicaragua. The National Park Service retrieved the medal and letter, and they are on display at the Smithsonian Museum of American History.

On September 1, 1986, along with three other veterans, he began a water-only fast upon the Capitol steps to protest, an action that mobilized a movement that prevented the US from openly invading Nicaragua. In later years he was a frequent protester at Fort Benning's School of the Americas, now called the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation. In May of 2003, he went to Baghdad as a human shield, hoping to discourage the Shock and Awe bombing that was devastating that Iraqi city. An autobiography is expected to be published later this year.

I was privileged to know Charlie Liteky, and to spend time with him on a number of occasions. I do not recognize many heroes from the war in Vietnam, but Charlie Liteky was a true American hero there, and throughout his later years. He was a quiet-spoken, spiritual and thoughtful man, aghast and bewildered by mankind's cruelty and institutionalized killing of other human beings. Charlie Liteky was an inspiration to all who knew him, and to anti-war activists around the world. May he find peace with Judy in a very special place in heaven.

Present!

John Kettwig is a Lifetime Member of VFW, and the author of "... and a Hard Rain Fell. A GI's True Story of the War in Vietnam." First published by McElderry in 1985, it is still available at most bookstores.

...Another Brother

Louie DiBenedette

This year marks the 50th anniversary of Vietnam Veterans Against the War (VVAW). We will never forget our brothers and sisters, both American and Vietnamese who died or were maimed on the battlefields of southeast Asia.

Today I am writing about another brother, Antonio Oporta Mejia, a Nicaraguan Sandinista. Antonio is a product of the 1984 war of National Liberation who died of complications from the wounds of that war.

I have many memories of my brother and friend. We first met in Managua at the Veterans Peace Convoy in 1988. We were greeted with beautiful flowers welcoming us along the route as we traveled into Managua. Upon our arrival, we were greeted by Daniel Ortega and a whole host of paralyzed vets.

Afterwards, we attended a wheel chair basketball game. Antonio asked me to buy and wear the same color shirt that his team wore and he came to me to his home in Boaco, which is north of Managua.

Boaco was known as Contra Land. Almost every family had a member killed by the Contras. Boaco was coffee country and a money maker for the Sandinistas. The Contras were doing all they could to destroy the coffee crop. We slept with open eyes those nights. Upon leaving I gave Antonio some money to start a hardware craft shop. Later, he bought a taxi and hired a driver.

When I proposed an action at the White House, which would protest the CIA intervention in the 1990 elections and the actions of the Contras, Antonio and other paralyzed veterans supported the action, which consisted of North Americans picketing the White House. At one point, I threw a human blood over the wheelchair entrance plaque on the east gate. The wheelchair entrance symbolized the Sandinista vets. We also carried a photo of Antonio, representing all paralyzed vets. I was arrested and tried a year later. We knew Daniel Ortega lost the elections that year. He would, however, eventually gain the presidency after a long 17 years. Daniel remains President to this day.

All voting is now done by elections, not gun.

In 2015, Antonio developed a severe wound on his leg due to complications of 29 years in a wheelchair and Type 2 Diabetes. Shortly thereafter, he developed a very serious issue on his hip. Barometric treatment (a barometric oxygen machine that feeds oxygen to the wound) did not seem to work. He was also exposed to degenerative arthropathy on his hip, HPACF (ballistic trauma), tropon skin changes, toxic skin infections, and paralysis from a gun wound. Eventually, his right lower leg was amputated due to uncontrolled infection, all products of the War of Liberation. The prognosis was never good and there was no cure. Pain meds no longer became useful.

I called Antonio each day and we had good memories. He always thought of me as his best friend. I will miss my friend... another Brother. Antonio Presente!

Louie DiBenedette is a long time anti-war activist and a VFW Commander in Tuscany, Italy. Currently, Louie regularly participates in local and regional anti-war marches and protests.

National Guard Troops May Be Used to Round Up Aliens

Never thought I'd be doing this in the Guard...
Our Neighbor
DANIEL CORRAL

Our family moved to the US from Mexico in the 1970s. Our paternal grandfather, Ignacio Corral, had worked all over the country for about 20 years and had decided to move his family to the Aurora, Illinois area. Our parents lived in the house next to our grandparents, the house they had built using the two yards. We always had guests and visitors. And one day around 1984, Dr. Smith drove into the house across the street. He didn't have any water or electricity, so my grandfather didn't know English and Dr. Smith didn't know Spanish, but they both understood each other just fine. Neither of them had any volume control, so everyday they'd see each other and yell hello to each other across the way, and our grandmother Margarita would send us over with plates of food and hot sauce, Dr. Smith's favorite.

Dr. Smith spent his days building things; we didn't really know what or how, but he let us know that whatever stones we had or wood from building or tearing down things, he would take it. One day we took apart the whole sidewalk, and Dr. Smith happily used the concrete pieces to build things at his house. We realized that he was making art. He made his home a masterpiece, but it was more, a message. His whole yard was also art, the site of what would be known as the African-American Heritage Museum and the Black Viet-erecto Archive. His mother taught him how to make art, and he spent hours building, crafting, and teaching. All day he had his signature tobacco pipe with him, his hat, and his laugh. We'd hear him teaching everyone who would stop to see what it was he was doing, from the kids from the neighborhood, to people who passed by. Then we started seeing people from out of town, come whole neighborhoods, because they thought of the people our society and others didn't. But we? We were his neighbors. He came to our parties, had a plate he always laughed and spoke highly of my grandparents. He always prayed and said our house was always a full house, and it made him happy. He moved back home to Louisiana in the early 2000s, after a museum came and bought many of his works of art. He went and did the same thing, turning other people's garbage and disposable materials into art. Teaching the children who passed by through the yard to see what it was he was doing, from the kids from the neighborhood, to those who long considered disposable human beings—that they are indeed magic.

I still call Dr. Smith today, to see how things are doing, and he calls me. Sometimes he'll visit and there is a group of influential people there at the site of his original home and site in Aurora. And when I walk over to say hello and give him a hug, people ask me who I am and how do I know Dr. Smith? And I look at him, smile, and say to them, "he is our neighbor."
On January 5, 2017, the second day of the 115th Congress, Representative Barbara Lee introduced the Victims of Agent Orange and dioxin Act of 2017. The Act directs the Department of State to provide assistance to address the health needs of individuals harmed by Agent Orange/dioxin. The Act is designed to provide assistance to institutions of Higher Education to extend to you, as well as the rest of those affected individuals, to repair and rebuild substantial homes for these institutions and their families, and to remediate geographic areas of Vietnam that contain high levels of Agent Orange. The bill amends veterans benefits provisions to provide benefits to the children of male (currently only female) Vietnam veterans who are affected by certain birth defects. The VA shall require any health care provider with whom the VA enters into a contract for the provision of health care to such children to provide the VA access to the medical records of such children for research into the intergenerational effects of Agent Orange.

During my August 2016 visit to Vietnam for the Vietnamese American Women for a Safer World’s Annual Conference of Agent Orange (VAVA) International Conference on Agent Orange/dioxin, I met Pham Thi Nhi. She is an Agent Orange survivor, who has faced major medical issues, including severe hip dysplasia that causes her body to tilt on the left side, creating unstable walking and moving without assistance. Nhi is very active in VAVA and wrote a letter to President Obama prior to his visit to Vietnam asking him to meet with the victims of Agent Orange. Her plea represents some of the many victims who because of the severity of their cognitive and physical issues are not able to articulate their lives and struggles. Here is her letter:

I have left my hometown, leaving behind my ailing parents to listen to your address in the US Congress. When you visit Ho Chi Minh city, I wish you could come to my home. I was born in 1966, in a small village in the province of Quang Nam, where many children are suffering from disabilities as a result of war legacies. As for me, for almost 50 years ever since I learned how to perceive things around me, there hasn't been a moment when I was not physically and mentally suffering from the effects of dioxin. I am a second-generation victim of Agent Orange in Vietnam. American soldiers are long gone, yet the pain that's left behind still remains, and I wish you could come here.

Mr. President, I've seen you cry on TV many times before. On one of the most recent occasions, you shed a few tears while speaking about lives of innocent Americans being taken away by gun violence. I know that the tears of a powerful leader like you are capable of global impact, are capable of leading to many changes. But to me, when it comes to pain and tears, be it the pain and the tears of a President or any other person, they are all the same, and should deserve the same level of attention.

We, the victims of Agent Orange, have seen tears streaming down our faces for decades of years now. Every day, a few tears are shed even when the pain subsides, we cry tears of despair thinking about a grim and endless future filled with endless suffering from this wicked poison. There's nothing we can do about it.

Our tears do not make chemical companies think twice about producing Agent Orange in Vietnam. Our tears do not make those calling the shots in the US government stop. I've never met you, Mr. President, yet I could see in you a sense of affordability, of friendliness. You're a responsible man, a loving father and husband, and a compassionate leader. You've always valued peace, friendship, and equality. Because of that, I wish you could come to my hometown Quang Nam someday, or to Quang Tri, Hue, Da Nang, and many other provinces here in Vietnam. You'll enjoy the beautiful scenery here, and you'll get to meet wonderful, hard-working Vietnamese. But you'll also shake hands with those who have lost a limb or the ability to walk with cleft palates, all because of one decision made decades ago by your predecessors. I pray that you will shed a tear while doing so.

Victims of gun violence in America, like those suffering from the effects of Agent Orange in Vietnam, are human beings. All of them have goals and dreams, and they too share the right to live and to hope, instead of having their right taken away from them, or having to suffer both physically and mentally.

Even though I am a second-generation Agent Orange victim, I cannot fully describe the pain that has persisted through half a century. Only by witnessing it first-hand will you understand why your superpower of a nation US cannot take responsibility for the suffering of each and every victim. 3,000,000 victims in Vietnam (200,000 affected physically and mentally) and 30,000,000 people, 80,000 are third-generation, and in some places there have been reports of fourth-generation exposure) have been waiting for that more than a long time ago.

This beautiful country has gone through more than its fair share of pain and suffering from war. The people of Vietnam care for each other, we care for the lives of the unfortunate, but no matter how much we care, our circumstances will always prevent us from easing the pain, both materially and emotionally. The victims of Agent Orange in Vietnam are always fighting, to rise above hardships, and make positive contributions to the community. But we say that mainly to comfort ourselves and ease the pain, because it's impossible to stay positive when every day you go out there, you see images of handicapped fathers and mothers with their exposed children, whose faces are barely recognizable, as they struggle through their daily dose of pain, piling themselves and feeling left out. Even so, I and other victims always have one thing on our mind: that is to leave the past behind, and look to the future. We are all happy to see you come to Vietnam, to see the two nations building new bridges to move closer to one another.

I understand that your schedule is packed, and that we are not part of your agenda. Yet, I hope that you and your fellow American citizens will show compassion, to listen, to share, to care, to sympathize with our pain, and later convert that into real action.

When the United States District Court for the Eastern District of New York issued a legal judgment, lawsuits, millions of Agent Orange victims once again felt the pain. But they will not lose their hope: the truth lies in humanity's capacity, the tears of a powerful leader like you is like a blind eye?

As long as our heart still beats, we should not know what pain feels like, we should know what it means to sympathize. Isn't that right, Mr. President?

I have thought about this for a long time, and ultimately all I ever wanted was to find justice for all the victims of Agent Orange. Thus, I have reached a decision to do with my body for medical research. American scientists, as well as scientists from around the world, can use my body as a test, as proof, to make Americans aware of the devastating consequences that their use of dioxin during the war has led to. Should that happen, I can die happy knowing that all my sacrifice would be worthwhile.

I wish that this letter reaches you and all those Americans responsible. I also wish that Vietnamese and worldwide media would lend me an ear, listen to my story, and join me on this quest for justice.

Don't let us cry in despair any longer.

Pham Thi Nhi

Mr. President, Hear Our Pleas

Mr. President, Your Hear Our Pleas

Susan Schnall is the author of THE VETERAN: THE RISE AND FALL OF LINCOLN MCCONNELL, and a Vietnamese American veteran who was court-martialed by the US Navy for anti-war actions in 1969.

They are called this generation’s Agent Orange – the open fire pits operated on more than 230 US military bases across Iraq and Afghanistan during our wars there. Every kind of waste–from plastics, batteries, old ordnance, asbestos, pesticide containers, and tires to biomedical, chemical, and nuclear waste; dead animals; and human waste, body parts, and corpses–was incinerated in them. The word “incinerate” misleads, however, suggesting an enclosed burning facility with pollution controls. These barbaric burn pits were dug on military bases in the midst of housing, work, and dining facilities, without any pollution controls. Tons of waste–an average of 10 pounds daily per soldier–burned in them every day, all day, and all night, blackening the air; coating clothing, beds, desks, and dining halls with ash laden with hundreds of toxins and carcinogens. The burn pits recklessly violated the US Environmental Protection Agency (US EPA) and Department of Defense (DOD) waste disposal regulations; the US Environmental Protection Agency (US EPA) and Department of Defense (DOD) waste disposal regulations; and, predictably, base commanders spent hundreds of billions each fiscal year on defense industries and weapons of war but penny pinches in injured veterans.

A final word on the ultimate war victims. The people of Iraq have been multiply poisoned from our initial 1991 war there through the current war on ISIS. The arc of poisons begins with the oil fires in Kuwait set by fleeing Iraqi soldiers, which burned for 7 months, depleted uranium used by the US in the first Gulf War (1991) and in the Iraq War (2003–2011), and extends to the burn pit air toxins from US bases that wafted onto more than 230 US military bases in the midst of housing, work, and dining facilities, without any pollution controls. Tons of waste–an average of 10 pounds daily per soldier–burned in them every day, all day, and all night, blackening the air; coating clothing, beds, desks, and dining halls with ash laden with hundreds of toxins and carcinogens. The burn pits recklessly violated the US Environmental Protection Agency (US EPA) and Department of Defense (DOD) waste disposal regulations; and, predictably, base commanders spent hundreds of billions each fiscal year on defense industries and weapons of war but penny pinches in injured veterans.

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A buddy killed, an inability to do something about it, the wrong war to die in, the chain of command and a feeling of powerlessness (Operational Specialty) all converge in my memory of my part of the American war in Vietnam. Upon being drafted after graduating from college, blind-sided by Nixon's canceled deferment for graduate school in the spring of 1968, I was directed to the 17th Air Cavalry. The officer in charge was the commanding officer of the helicopter company. He was a native of Saigon, the ultimate party town of the Vietnamese, who stayed in the Delta. No more parties in town. I felt like a Nazi in France in 1942. I had too much experience for this American war.

I had a safe MOS, helicopter maintenance, which was better than infantry for the risk. I had the cutest MOS, because if you were a Vietnam helicopter gunner, you'd have a 50% chance of being killed. But I did have to fly, so I had a MOS in the infantry. I was deployed to Bien Hoa, and was deployed to Vietnam. I flew the Cobra helicopter, its main role was to find the enemy and get our dress outfit, I was appalled by the dress uniform with the hat on display in front of the lectern. By a scarf synched with the battalion colors. It was a ritual, a ceremony of tradition, a reminder of what we were fighting for. The memorial service for a fallen comrade was held in the chapel, the officers were crying to a man because Tom was loved and no one was the politician that the preacher; he finally just shut up. The major was not there, for he had been removed from command for violating regulations by sending a lone pilot up without a gunner/co-pilot who might have spotted the bad guys and saved both lives. Thought that would never happen, but it did.

I never saw him again. Tom was downed by a hand-held rocket in a bliss of exhilaration. The enemy was looking for a air cavalry officer was kind of comy. There was a black board surrounded by a scarf synched with the battalion colors. It was a ritual, a ceremony of tradition, a reminder of what we were fighting for. The memorial service for a fallen comrade was held in the chapel, the officers were crying to a man because Tom was loved and no one was the politician that the preacher; he finally just shut up. The major was not there, for he had been removed from command for violating regulations by sending a lone pilot up without a gunner/co-pilot who might have spotted the bad guys and saved both lives. Thought that would never happen, but it did.

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Joining the military is another one of the avenues of upward mobility, white people, and not a lot of poor people from one another. The promise is that if you lay your life down for your country, your country will do what was promised us. I was born in a trailer parked on the road because of my father’s military duties. He was homeless, and with the forced resignation of my mother, I was raised in a trailer park. My father was forced to drop out. She made more money as a sergeant in the Air Force, and my parents were unable to get out of the trailer park. From Guaman my father did as an Air National Guard personnel. The sexist military policy said that she had to be a man. I was not trusted. My mother was forced to drop out. I was born that same day, two weeks early. My father was a newly enfranchised veteran who was not provided military housing and went around to mobile home associations to offer his services as a handyman part-time. I was sent to save on rent. Thus, I spent the first years of my life in a trailer park, my mother getting assistance from the Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) program even though my father was employed by the military full-time.

Poverty did not leave us until my father took Clinton’s buyout package in the 90s. My mother became a contact person for the military and went around to mobile home associations to offer her services as a handyman part-time. I was sent to save on rent. Thus, I spent the first years of my life in a trailer park. My mother getting assistance from the Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) program even though my father was employed by the military full-time.

Thanks to the scaling back of benefits. Not one of my military friends were given just the benefits they were promised for their service, they had to fight for it. Many who were fighting for healthcare immediately after they came home from war died before they got what they were promised. It’s hard not to think that this isn’t by design, it’s cheaper to buy a soldier than it is to pay for their healthcare. Also, if you join the military as an undocumented person, that will not grant you citizenship; but if you die in the service, they will at least bury you a citizen.

Many people are unaware of just how much the military has been gutted. During WWII over 30% of the nation was in the military, during Vietnam, 25%, and today, 1%. Yet, the United States spends more than the next 17 nations combined on military spending - if that money is not going to military service members, where is it going?

It’s certainly not going to help veterans. Many of us know about the 55,000 veterans personnel who were killed or missing in action in Vietnam. What many of us don’t know is that about 150,000 Vietnam veterans have died by suicide, a 1:3 ratio of those killed or missing in action. With these current unending wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, this suicide rate continues on, unabated.

Many charities have sprung up to try and help these veterans; but we are suffering not just from PTSD or physical wounds, but what Rev. Dr. Nakisha Brock called a moral injury, which we shouldn’t have seen in Vietnam or Iraq or Afghanistan in the first place. We know it’s wrong, especially after we serve there. No charity can fix this sin of the nation. We need the nation to admit it was wrong to conduct these wars, and apologize to our armed services for using them for ill. If not for the innocent dead citizenry of those nations, then at least for our veterans.

Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. knew this in his famous address in 1967, “Beyond Vietnam.” He knew that the lies that caused that war, the Gulf of Tonkin resolution, would cause the United States to lose its soul in continuing to fight it. They lied! We military service members cry out today, as it is revealed there were never any weapon of mass destruction in Iraq and the Bush administration knew it before they sent us to die, killing millions of Iraqis and Afghani citizens, we know, say the veterans of Vietnam. The evidence of the lost soul of our nation is in every veteran’s suicide - 22 a day.

Let me tell you the same reasons Rev. Dr. King opposed Vietnam back then are the same reasons why Iraq Veterans Against the War fights against the military-industrial complex today - though we didn’t see this at first. At first, we just knew it was wrong. That they lied. Our organizing strategy was based simply on us telling the truth. We did not realize we were becoming a political pawn against the Bush administration. If we tell the truth, the war will become unpalatable to the public, and it will end, so we thought. We marched on the DNC in 2008 to secure a promise from then candidate Obama to end the wars. We got that promise, which was never delivered. First Obama tried drones, then drones, then the fear of ISIS rose and now the Syrian war; I’ve lost count of the times the government has said there aren’t “boots on the ground” and yet military personnel are there as advisors and drone operators, and military spending continues unabated. President Obama was the mastermind at lying through his teeth as a peace candidate.

While we succeeded in making the public hate the wars we failed to end them. We rebuffed our strategy. I started thinking about all the lies. I was no longer a feminist I was studying, about the intersectionality of oppression. I joined the army to make a difference. I was promoted as the place from which we must organize. Not just for the straight white male veteran who was lied to, but from the woman of color experience, trans people in the military, from the perspective of those who were suffering the most of all the citizens of Iraq and Afghanistan. From the perspective of the veteran who died by suicide, unable to cope with participating in wars with no end, with no purpose beyond corporate gain. We had to start organizing from the perspective of the US communities who were the most robbed because of rampant spending on militarism, from the majority of people of color communities who were occupied at home because of the programs for local police to buy military equipment they didn’t know how to use. Like the police pointing military-grade weaponry straight at citizens in Ferguson - military folks you know don’t point a gun at someone unless you’re going to shoot them.

We realized that the root was not the individual wars, but the militarism that feeds our society. Since my father’s time, there is a backdoor draft, in which the mythology of the military being able to lift you out of poverty is the only hope on the prayer you know the thing they have to have to lay down for their country. In hopes you don’t have to kill to get anybody to get those benefits from Costco.

We are lending the veteran’s voice to many organizations outside the peace movement. With immigrants, we talk about deported veterans. With the environment, we talk about the vast expense to protect the extraction fossil-based economy that we don’t need anymore. For Black Lives Matter, we talk about over-militarized police and occupation of communities. For women, we talk about the sexual assault and degradation we faced in the military and our ability to achieve justice. With Native Americans, we talk about the veteran’s voice, because militarism is so ingrained in our society. This voice reaches beyond left vs. right or politics. We are a mainstreaming force in every way as it is very easy for the military to speak out for these basic rights against militarism.

For the poor, for labor, we talk about all that dang money that isn’t even going to us in the military; we were sent to fight without even the proper armor, yet our combat pay is cut. Where the hell is all of this money going?

The mythology that surrounds veterans is being used as a smokescreen for private contractors. It is public risk, and privatized gain. In 2015, the Pentagon spending was $589 billion.

continued on page 18
In the week after Thanksgiving, my cousin Reggie and I traveled to the Standing Rock Indian Reservation in North Dakota with our friends from Iraq Veterans Against the War (IVAW), to be in solidarity with the Indigenous protectors camped there against the Dakota Access pipeline. There were to be over 2,000 US military veterans that weekend, joining with hundreds of other tribes to stand against the North Dakota governor-ordered evacuation of the camps that Monday, December 5.

We arrived the weekend prior at the Oceti Sakowin Camp, and were greeted generically by a military tent set up, set up by the Cheyenne River Sioux Nation. A group of veterans with IVAW went to a welcome ceremony by the Sioux Nation, and we stayed to walk around the camp and pay our respects to the Sacred Fire. The fire burns day and night, without end, and is kept by elders. There was hot tea and coffee available for all, and many prayers and songs shared. In the morning, the women led a Water Ceremony from the fire, the Cannonball River, which was beautiful.

When our friends and brothers—Oliver, Aaron Hughes, Matt Howard, and many others—returned from the welcome ceremony and from the med camp, we took a walk to the elder camp and were invited to a Sacred Grass Dance. So it was beautiful to be in Standing Rock: lands where Sitting Bull was murdered; where American Indian Movement leader Russell Means was shot in the back; and where now the 7 bands of the Great Sioux Nation were coming together for the first time in many years—again for the protection of the earth and their rights as Indigenous peoples. It was a historic moment to be a part of, in which hundreds of First Nations peoples from all over the continent and world came together to make a stand.

It was an honor to be there. We were privileged to be among over 10,000 people that week, along with over 4,000 vets. There were so many things we were able to be a part of. We were there on December 5, when the veterans made aceremonial apology to the Sioux nation, and we were present the day before at the Sacred Fire when it was announced that the US Army Corps of Engineers had denied the Dakota Access pipeline permit to drill under the Missouri River.

I remember at the veterans’ apology, the elder Faith Spotted Eagle spoke about her father, a WWII veteran that lived with PTSD. He had given instructions for all of his children to not enter into military but instead to fight the wars that we have here, for justice and peace, on occupied First Nations lands. The elder continued to list off many of the struggles that they have fought for hundreds of years, among them the VFW and other organizations and policies against them by the US government, the forced imprisonment of children in boarding schools, the forced sterilization of Indigenous women, etc. I remember Faith Spotted Eagle saying that now both veterans are united, the ones fighting wars outside and the ones fighting wars against oppression here: “The intersects of your PTSD intersects perfectly with our PTSD.”

I also remember a story that the military vets shared about the welcoming ceremony, in which they were given instructions by the elders that they was to be no direct actions by the vets, that instead they were being asked to pray, to heal, to be a presence of peace. And one of the vets approached the elders then, shaking, saying that he was so happy that there were not going to be any taking of the hills, and that he could now focus on spending his time helping around the camp and healing.

Veterans have a right to heal. We as citizens of this nation and world have a right to live without war, to live in peace. Indigenous peoples have a right to self-determination, sovereignty, lands, etc.—a true peace. Instead what we have is a system that operates as a military industrial complex, for lands, riches, and power. This isn't peace, it is violence. And when the Sioux people built a call out for veterans Council Fores to come together, many over the earth came to join them—a path towards building a true peace and to end the violence of one systems. We have indeed a long way to go.

And as my friend and brother, Bill Orrall, Vietnam Veteran Against the War (VAW) has said: “Struggling for freedom is liberating in and of itself. It gives life an existence and purpose. Where there can be justice, and model a beloved community in the here and now, that will more and more fully be in the days to come.

Re: Shaking Fester is board chair of Iraq Veterans Against the War. Re: ‘Shaking’ was a nuclear, biological, chemical specialist and led the national guard in 2006 once he realized there were no weapons of mass destruction, and the Bush administration knew this before setting out Colin Powell.

Veterans Must Join the Poor People’s Campaign continued from page 17

billion on discretionary spending. The proposed budget - this is budgeted, not discretionary military budget - for 2017 is $542 billion. Lockheed Martin has 287 billion dollars of contracts and pays 3 million people to lobby congress yearly. Boeing, Raytheon, Northrop Grumman, BAE Systems. They all have DoD contracts totaling 3 billion dollars. Reporters reported this past December that the Pentagon rejected a study saying that we could save $125 billion by renegotiating these contracts and other administrative costs. All of these companies are engaging in blatant war profiteering, while veterans fight to get the government to recognize we were dying from lung cancer caused by the use of burn pits. The public thinks the majority of the military budget is not going to the very elite, but to their uncle who is going to the VA to treat his diseases associated with Agent Orange — and the homeless military, which make up about 1 in 4 of every homeless person. The privatization of the military provided the blueprint for the privatization everywhere else. So, what happens is that taxpayers pay for young people like me to join the military. Once I realize that the benefits won't come through and I'm getting paid less than if I worked at Starbucks, I know that my job was doing my military job for 80 to 150k a year. This lures me out of securing any time in grade for the military, so I do not get what little benefits are promised because I am thinking I am going to get big bucks now. It is completely unknow how many defense contractors our Department of Defense employs or even how many have died while in service for private defense companies. Somehow, if I die in the military I get a street named after me, if I die doing the same job as a contractor they couldn't be bothered to tally me up with all of my fellow dead. The military is forbidden to tell us the information, they claim they cannot prevent our country being overthrown by a military coup. So, we could not stop our benefits from being denied as a matter of course to save money.

Could we not stop the privatization of our own jobs. When I told one of my mentors, Ricardo Martinez, about this, he asked me a question I still do not know the answer to: what happens to a democracy when its military are basically mercenaries? You can see this dynamic applied to all of our public institutions today. Starve the public system, declare it a failure, privatize public funds, and militarize that profit. Capitalism requires infinite resources and cheap labor in order to function, and it's running out of that frontier to exploit.

Most resources have been claimed and conquered. The money to be made is in the exploitation of the workers and the privatization of public monies and property. That's the only thing left. It is to rob the poor of the little taxes they pay and give it to the rich on top of the tax breaks they get in the form of subsidies and tax breaks and wealth through multinational corporations. It's no surprise to me that the rise of stateless terror groups, and other military budget - for 2017 is $542 billion. Lockheed Martin has 287 billion dollars of contracts and pays 3 million people to lobby congress yearly. Boeing, Raytheon, Northrop Grumman, BAE Systems. They all have DoD contracts totaling 3 billion dollars. Reporters reported this past December that the Pentagon rejected a study saying that we could save $125 billion by renegotiating these contracts and other administrative costs. All of these companies are engaging in blatant war profiteering, while veterans fight to get the government to recognize we were dying from lung cancer caused by the use of burn pits. The public thinks the majority of the military budget is not going to the very elite, but to their uncle who is going to the VA to treat his diseases associated with Agent Orange — and the homeless military, which make up about 1 in 4 of every homeless person. The privatization of the military provided the blueprint for the privatization everywhere else. So, what happens is that taxpayers pay for young people like me to join the military. Once I realize that the benefits won't come through and I'm getting paid less than if I worked at Starbucks, I know that my job was doing my military job for 80 to 150k a year. This lures me out of securing any time in grade for the military, so I do not get what little benefits are promised because I am thinking I am going to get big bucks now. It is completely unknow how many defense contractors our Department of Defense employs or even how many have died while in service for private defense companies. Somehow, if I die in the military I get a street named after me, if I die doing the same job as a contractor they couldn't be bothered to tally me up with all of my fellow dead. The military is forbidden to tell us the information, they claim they cannot prevent our country being overthrown by a military coup. So, we could not stop our benefits from being denied as a matter of course to save money.

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A member of Vietnam Veterans Against the War, the author took part in the 1971 Winter Soldier Investigations where he confronted committing crimes and atrocities.

A Radio-Telephone Operator (RTO) with the 25th Infantry Division in 1968-69, cantalupo (a nickname, actually Ross Canton), served in Vietnam with the 25th Infantry Division and teaching at three high schools. He describes himself as a war criminal who fired white phosphorus mortars and called in napalm bombs on civilians using weapons banned by the Geneva Convention.

He returned to the scene of his action in 2015 “to survive my looming suicide...” to where Bong Bong had photographed the Napalm Girl. “That was also where he ordered villagers to tie down while they destroyed their village and where “Lolita, Baby, San Devil and I lay dying not for God, or flag, or country, but simply because we were The Chosen, drones killed from up poor black, brown, or white families by an upper-middle-class drone pilot.”

He described his boot camp training saying “We were goods, dinks, coons, criminals, savages, nothing resembling us, and we were so human. And, it worked.” When I was fourteen, I was a cardboard man, when I was stabbing a dummy in a death by a bayonet, when

I was on the edge of terror, it was the only voice I heard. But four months in Vietnam changed me. The kids along Highway 1 chanting ‘G1 Numba One’ as they begged chocolate bar or cokes looked no different than the kids from my tenement, Asian rather than black, or Puerto Rican or Pollok or Jew. They were hungry maybe, more desperation in their eyes, but under the grime and stink, they were no different than the kids I grew up with carrying hopes and fears and dreams. And so I heard a different voice, my own. How long does it take to kill a man - from inside? How long before I rose. Above my body. Is this my soul parting above my life. Is this my soul parting above my life. Is this my soul parting above my life? Is this my soul parting above my life?

With an Air America pilot in Saigon so

well holy shit.

(From a “very Hanoi March, Chicago, 1974

...and the CIA worked with and facilitated domestic gangsters we know as the Mafia. They had no problem with gangsters for gangsters to go to Cuba to assassinate Castro. Fortunately for Cuba and especially Africa, the Cubans outnumbered the mob.

An early warning of the academic nature of the book comes on page 19: “Also, for a year before I started interviewing people, I’d read everything I could about your war, the CIA, and the CIA. I was knowledgeable, plus I looked like a good Methodist.”

No, good Methodist is not an oxymoron. Some are actually Christ-figure. Go figure.

Talk about balls, coffins if you prefer, Valentine started at the top. He sent former CIA Director William Colby a copy of his book, “The Hotel Tlacolulan,” which is the story of his father who enlisted in the army when he was sixteen and was captured by the Japanese in the jungles of New Guinea. Along with British and Australian POWs, he was kept at the Hotel Tlacolulan from which he escaped. 

Colby read the book and was impressed so he agreed to meet with Valentine. Colby told him to meet with the get the story he wanted about the CIA. He want saw Valentine with the former agents letting them believe he had Colby’s blessings to open up. So they told their stories.

These agents were men who had been the victims of CIA illegal operations. They went to the best schools but for many of them the CIA was the only place they could work where their criminal instincts would be

I was doing with killing, done with death, done with war. For a long moment, the wounded soldier held my eyes, then he turned and slowly crawled away.

He recounts his horrendous injuries from a mortar exploding a few feet away that hurled his body into the dark sky and then crashed down leaving him covered in warm blood. He remembers a nurse nicknamed, Peaches, who helped him through hours, days and weeks of care and of whom he says she is simply fell in love. “And then I rose. Above every body. Above my body.”

He sent former CIA Director William Colby read the book and was impressed so he agreed to meet with Valentine. Colby told him who to meet with the get the story he wanted about the CIA. He want saw Valentine with the former agents letting them believe he had Colby’s blessings to open up. So they told their stories.

Elephant grass, cantalpo raised his rifle, “I put his head in the crosshairs, held my breath and pulled the trigger on the trigger guard. I didn’t squeeze the trigger. I couldn’t. Not anymore. Lonny was dead. Long in the throat and chest by the North Vietnamese Army. Lonny was dead. Shot in the throat and chest by the North Vietnamese Army. Lonny was dead. Shot in the throat and chest by the North Vietnamese Army. Lonny was dead. Shot in the throat and chest by the North Vietnamese Army. Lonny was dead. Shot in the throat and chest by the North Vietnamese Army. Lonny was dead. Shot in the throat and chest by the North Vietnamese Army. Lonny was dead. Shot in the throat and chest by the North Vietnamese Army.

Colby was sixteen and was captured by the enemy soldier who was shot in the throat and chest by the North Vietnamese Army. He sent former CIA Director William Colby a copy of his book but those of you who trust people are in my opinion, a very American way of looking at the world. Is this not allow for my reconciliation.” This is my soul parting above my life. Is this my soul parting above my life? Is this my soul parting above my life?

But for many of them the CIA was the only place they could work where their criminal instincts would be unleashed. So, they told their stories.

Well holy shit.

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I don't remember my dreams. Not anymore, anyway, not for a long, long time.

When I dream before, I dream trauma dreams. Dreams that were not really dreams, but re-enactments, a reliving of terrifying moments during firefight or mortar attacks I survived.

That was 1969, and I was in a hospital in Saigon or Yokohama recovering from brain surgery to remove shrapnel from my frontal lobe. The trauma dreams were mixed with Demerol dreams, spectacular, panoramic, Technicolor, psychedelic dreams akin to poe-yite-inspired dream journals, and what is invaluable, the vividness of landing on Guadalcanal he was 9.5 fingers. He told me that instead of dreaming of being overrun, he woke up saying, 'You didn't listen so you're going to suffer. I shoot him...in the chest. I take my .45 from its holster, pull the hammer back, aim it. Then the moon came out and I saw the boot treads. I hammer back, aim it. Then the moon came out and I saw the boot treads. They've gotten past the traps and Claymores and crawl forward. I wake up from the dream and see a boot tread near my face. Slowly, I take my .45 from its holster, pull the hammer back, aim it. Then the moon came out and I saw the boot treads. I hammer back, aim it. Then the moon came out and I saw the boot treads. My brother is new to Vietnam. I'm breaking him in. I receive a message from a pilot...in a reconnaissance plane. The pilot names a mechanical part he needs. I take out a pen, spread a napkin on the ground, and tell my brother to hold that it while I write it down. My brother laughs at me. I take out my forty-five pistol. I say, 'If you do that again, I'll kill you.' My brother laughs. I shoot him...in the chest. I wake up saying, 'You didn't listen so you're going to suffer. I shoot him...in the chest.'

There's a courage to writing down such dreams. As readers and veterans, we can look at them and see how damaged our minds have become by the horrific experience of war. We can see a dramatic re-enactment of a real-life experience morph into a violent reaction in a confused PTSD state.

The day after Pearl Harbor, my father, like thousands of others, tried to enlist in the Marine Corp. He signed the papers and stood up to shake hands with the recruiter and the officer noticed he had a digit missing on his little finger. It was from a drill press accident...and it prevented him from becoming a marine. He shipped off for the war and joined the street and the company reviews. He didn't seem to care that he had only 9.5 fingers. He told me that instead of landing on Guadalcanal he was performing anti-submarine patrol around the island...and the little finger accident probably saved his life.

He was a sonarman on a destroyer in the South Pacific during the war. Whenever I attempted to talk to him about it he always shrugged it off. About all that he would talk about was the fact that his ship was the first to fire on the Japanese mainland and they were part of the occupation force after the war. His brother, I had a great tour. He said that he was 93...and he had a great tour.

Michael Nelson was a chaplain's assistant with the 22nd Combat Aviation Battalion stationed on Dong Ha and Marble Mountain in the Marble Mountain Vietnam Dreams

Dreams, Vietnam by Marc Levy

(Winter Street Press, 2017)

Vietnam Dreams
R G Cantalupo (reviewer)

I doubt whether there is another book like Levy's in the lexicon of Vietnam War experience books. Certainly, I have never read or heard about one. Dream entries like this one from 26 June 1970. We're being overrun by sappers. They've gotten past the traps and Claymores and crawl forward. I wake up from the dream and see a boot tread near my face. Slowly, I take my .45 from its holster, pull the hammer back, aim it. Then the moon came out and I saw the boot treads. I hammer back, aim it. Then the moon came out and I saw the boot treads. My brother is new to Vietnam. I'm breaking him in. I receive a message from a pilot...in a reconnaissance plane. The pilot names a mechanical part he needs. I take out a pen, spread a napkin on the ground, and tell my brother to hold that it while I write it down. My brother laughs at me. I take out my forty-five pistol. I say, 'If you do that again, I'll kill you.' My brother laughs. I shoot him...in the chest. I wake up saying, 'You didn't listen so you're going to suffer. I shoot him...in the chest.'

There's a courage to writing down such dreams. As readers and veterans, we can look at them and see how damaged our minds have become by the horrific experience of war. We can see how a dramatic re-enactment of a real-life experience morph into a violent reaction in a confused PTSD state. And, hopefully, the writing and recording of such dreams helps those of us with similar traumatic dreams to process them, to dilute or titrate the violence we all experienced, into some semblance of relief or resolution.

I honor Levy's dream journey. Reading his book invokes memories of my own traumatic dreams and pushed me to imagine and re-process them. I believe this is essential in our journey back toward a healthy assimilation of The World. I encourage anyone who has, or continues to suffer from, traumatic dreams to read it and begin their own dream journey. I believe it is one of the ways we as combat veterans can move toward reconciliation of the brutality done to us, and the brutality we perpetrated on others.
The CIA and the Phoenix Program

SANDFORD KELSON (REVIEWER)

Douglas Valentine details that the CIA created the Phoenix Program in 1967 during a "neutralize" the leaders and supporters of the Communist-led insurgency in South Vietnam. The program was designed to combat against Vietnamese patriots resisting US aggression in their country. The US considered these patriots the enemy. The Phoenix Program, and laws written by American officials for the South Vietnamese "government", to allow the US to watch every word. The Phoenix Program was so successful in overthrowing the South Vietnamese "government" that it targeted those who could not be well-informed. It was given the right to administratively detain and murder of American citizens. The Phoenix Program paid bribes for slips of the same sides of the coin. They are the capitalist ideology applied to foreign and domestic security policy. The CIA as Organized Crime: How the CIA payroll. Valentine explains that the unstated yet obvious goal of the CIA was to allow the US to identify, detain, and interrogate US citizens for population and political control. It targeted those who could not know the truth. The Deep State brands ordinary people as easily duped and uses many modern propaganda techniques, such as Madison and subsequent commentators, like Lippmann and subsequently, James Madison, author of the US Constitution, said to be involved in Phoenix. His book is based largely on CIA insider information. He has first-hand information that provides us with names, dates, and specific stories about a continuous process of USG criminality, including torture, against the interests of the American people. Additionally, facts and knowledge Valentine has accumulated as an investigative journalist over many decades are the subject of this book. Michael Valentine's collective writing has shown him to be one of the most important journalists in US history. If you haven't yet heard of Doug Valentine, it may be because corporate media outlets have been doing the job for him. Whether manufacturing or spinning our lies to make money, they believe you need to "ratify" the decisions of those elected. Valentine explains that the unstated yet obvious goal of the program was to terrify the entire civilian population into submission. The Phoenix Program changed how America fights its wars. Political and psychological warfare became continuous and continues to be an integral part of all American military actions.

Douglas Valentine explains that the US National Security Establishment has invented many forms of terror to control, organize and pacify societies has become the preferred template for policies against American empire and fighting its preferred template for policing the militarily. Valentine's book explains American military actions. It continues to be an integral part of all America fights its wars. Political and moral rights as dangerous truths. The Deep State brands ordinary people, calling them the "great beast." Valentine warns us that the unstated national security policy today, the US government relies on CIA insider information. He found out about Donald Trump's election. He believes the public should not engage in pointless discussions about their tormentors. More recently, Karl Rove, a Republican political operative, said something very similar to Madison, Lippmann and Berney. He has frequently spied on peaceful and law-abiding US citizens for population and political control. US history extensively and clearly documents that our government has spied on peaceful and law-abiding US citizens, calling them the "great beast." Valentine warns us that the unstated national security policy today, the US government relies on CIA insider information. He found out about Donald Trump's election. He believes the public should not engage in pointless discussions about their tormentors. More recently, Karl Rove, a Republican political operative, said something very similar to Madison, Lippmann and Berney. The Global War on Terror and its domestic counterpart are flip sides of the same coin. They are the capitalist ideology applied to foreign and domestic security policy. An unstated national security policy is consolidated in fewer and fewer ideologically correct hands as the empire expands and its contradictions become more apparent.

Doug Valentine's book is based largely on CIA insider information. He has first-hand information that provides us with names, dates, and specific stories about a continuous process of USG criminality, including torture, against the interests of the American people. Additionally, facts and knowledge Valentine has accumulated as an investigative journalist over many decades are the subject of this book. Michael Valentine's collective writing has shown him to be one of the most important journalists in US history. If you haven't yet heard of Doug Valentine, it may be because corporate media outlets have been doing the job for him. Whether manufacturing or spinning our lies to make money, they believe you need to "ratify" the decisions of those elected.
Changes: The Coming of Age in the South During the Vietnam War

Dr. Bob Vadas (reviewer)

The back cover of this book entices the reader by asking, “How much of this tale is fact, and how much is fiction? That’s for you to figure out!” and I suppose the fan was supposed to begin there. Perhaps it is a reference to Tim O’Brien’s view that “all war stories are false...but all war stories are also true.” This story tests the parameters of believability with the unending and graphic porn-like descriptions of too many absolutely loveless and almost robotic sexual adventures, it is difficult to understand who the author is trying to appeal to. Perhaps, like the main character, the story might interest those 17-22 year-olds who simply exist to please themselves, pun intended, as this book was difficult for me to find its end. The book resembles a Kerouac-like road trip complete with the Buffs and the Doors, and accompanying cultural nonsense. If you like only to get smashed and party, then read this book but the only cool thing about our hero is his ‘63 Corvette.

So, is it a true story? I could not tell however, most of the vernacular and music, from CCR to his beloved Alice Cooper, checked out, though if you remove the Doors, or Fans, forget it. The author did, at times, slip up with his history, referencing the DEA, as example, thus, nearly a year before Nixon signed it into existence on July 28, 1973. He also perpetuated urban myths such as the long-told and unverifiable accounts of Donkey Show’s south of the border. I ended the story, not soon enough, without knowing or even caring.

Dr. Bob Vadas, a professor of the State University of NY at Potsdam and takes students annually to Vietnam.

Changes: The Coming of Age in the South During the Vietnam War by JD Morgan (CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2016)

Long Way Out: A young woman’s journey of self-discovery and how she survived the Navy’s modern cruelty at sea scandalized by Nicole Waybright (SpeakPeace Press, 2016)

After eight years of writing and research, Nicole Waybright finalized her memoir, “Long Way Out” that tells the story of her coming-of-age struggles while deployed as an officer on a US Navy destroyer. Waybright reports the psychological critical moments that she experienced when she discovered she was not cut out for military life, during her tour of duty and the military mission. Her book sets forth the factual detail based on her survival of the Navy’s modern cruelty at sea scandalized by Nicole Waybright (SpeakPeace Press, 2016). Waybright reports the psychological critical moments that she experienced when she discovered she was not cut out for military life, during her tour of duty and the military mission.

Waybright was stationed aboard the USS Curtis Wilbur (DDG-54) in 1997-1998. She reports the incredibly stressful Navy life during five years of service before her honorable discharge. Her nightmare remained the adventure, romance, and excitement her parents and others, including herself, thought would await her in a world of opportunity for a woman so few had previously had the opportunity she earned. This intense ordeal forced her to think about her authentic self after studying the military for her career and catalyzed discovery of her authentic self when she submerged into an intense study and self-realization of Jungian psychology.

At Boston University on a Naval ROTC scholarship Brenda graduated with an M.S., Cum Laude, in Mechanical Engineering. Later as a summer intern with the CIA she had sea duty on a summer cruise aboard the destroyer USS Spruance (DD-963). After college graduation and then six months of Surface Warfare Officer School in Newport, Rhode Island, Brenda flew to Sydney, Australia to rendezvous with her first ship, whose home port is the US Naval Base at Yokosuka, Japan.

A determined daughter of conventional patriotic parents, Brenda absorbed their ideals and planned a practical career in the US Navy dreaming to attend Naval Nuclear Power School. She hoped to serve on one of 10 US nuclear-powered aircraft carriers since women were banned from serving on the 70-plus nuclear submarines. To qualify for nuke school, she had to win the essential defensive warfare position (SWO) pin. However she experienced chronic sleep deprivation, difficult technical duties, and discovered her past academic success was insufficient for complex shipboard problems. Then she had to deal with a new Lieutenant Commander who made life miserable.

Midway through her memoir she met the new Executive Officer, Lieutenant Commander Heather Gates. A woman’s blue eyes piercing her like daggers. The XO’s routine of profanity and screaming at subordinates destroyed morale and endangered the ship. The Captain ignored her outrageous conduct since the Navy hierarchy wanted the XO to help recruitment of the new women naval officers. Not surprisingly, after twelve years she was relieved of command and discharged from the Navy for cruelty toward her crews and conduct unbecoming an officer. Yet her record appeared unassailed until discharge when even was known to end her disgraceful naval career.

At the end of the story, Waybright became a full-time writer, featured speaker and resided in New England. She found her radicalized self exploring building a culture of peace. She was honorarily discharged from the Navy in 2001.

Long Way Out  A young woman’s journey of self-discovery and how she survived the modern cruelty at sea scandalized by Nicole Waybright (SpeakPeace Press, 2016)

Daniel Lavery (reviewer)

Daniel Lavery graduated Amherst, satisfied a Navy duty, and then a ship to Vietnam. He resigned, turned peace activist and became a civil rights attorney for Cesar Chavez’s UFW and the ACLU. His memoir, All the Difference, describes his change from a twin to an advocate crossing for justice. www.danielalavery.com

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Vietnam: A History of the War by Russell Freedman
(Holiday House, 2016)

This history book starts with a Benjamin Franklin epigraph that is a broad truth: "There never was a good or bad war, but war. The Vietnam War ranks at the top of the list of bad wars and on the third page is a statement that John Kerry made in 1971 to the US Senate. "In our opinion and in our experience there is nothing in Vietnam that threatens the United States of America. And to attempt to justify the loss of one American life by linking such a loss to the preservation of freedom...is to use the height of criminal hypocrisy."

Kerry was not exaggerating when he used the word criminal. It does not matter how big the authority is, a war which has killed thirty-eight thousand Americans and two million Vietnamese, it is an establishment of criminals.

Any political solution would have worked better than that war, but American racism and chauvinism got in the way of a simple, non-violent solution: Recognize Ho Chi Minh’s government when he kicked the French colonialists out of Vietnam at the battle of Dien Bien Phu way back in 1954. This book explains Vietnam's deep commitment to independence that dates back to the Chinese period before the time of Christ. By the time the Vietnamese had ousted the Chinese imperialists and later the Japanese imperialists in 1945 and the French colonialists in 1954, they had had enough of being dominated. By anybody.

Russell Freedman recounts America's first mistake: Not helping Ho Chi Minh to establish a new and unified country after he had wrested independence from colonial France. How we thought we loved independence, since we made such a huge deal out of it. We kicked the French colonialists in 1954. By the time the Vietnamese had ousted the French imperialists in 1995, they had had enough of being dominated. By anybody.

He concludes, "All I can do when I marched and protested as a member of the Vietnam Veterans Against the War, tell us in the Cold War soldier hearings when we admitted to war crimes and atrocities.

With admirable wisdom, he points out, "Perhaps reconciliation is not an end, but a beginning, a healing process that starts with compassion and ends with grace."

Cantalupo is a war hero, and he is also a peace hero who has written a valuable book that is filled with compassion, grace, and redemption.

The Light Where Shadows End: A Veteran's Journey Through Death, Recovery, and a World Without Home by r.g. cantalupo (New World Publishers, 2016)

A highly-decorated hero of the Vietnam War, r.g. cantalupo has produced a masterpiece of war, suffering, and redemption. This book grips you and won't let you go until you reach the end. As an example of his vivid, strong memories, here is an excerpt of his near-death battlefield experience:

"And then I rose. Above my body.

"...When my soul returned to the medicave, the only words I heard, came neither from a god nor an angel, but a man - green, insectlike in his helmet, his voice muted by whirling blades chopping through the heavy air, yelling - 'Wake up! Wake up, soldier! What's your name!? What's your name?!

"Cantalupo shows the sickening ease with which Americans accidentally killed comrades during the madness and chaos of combat. Of his friend Lonny, he wrote, "Lonny was dead. Shot in the throat and chest by his own men. Friendly fire. Friendly. As if killing was somehow friendlier if done by your own men."

After Lonny is killed, cantalupo makes eye contact with a badly wounded enemy soldier groaning in the grass. He raises his rifle, prepared to kill him. But he stops himself. "I lowered my rifle. I was done. I was done with killing, done with death, done with war. For a long moment, the wounded soldier held my eyes, then he turned and slowly crawled away."

In 2015, in a journey towards reconciliation, Cantalupo returns to Vietnam and meets former members of the People's Army, against whom he fought in Trang Bang in 1968-69. But the legacy of leaving hundreds of thousands of unexploded bombs to kill more children, of fourth generation birth defects and genetic mutations caused by our massive spraying of Agent Orange - will not allow for my reconciliation."

He concludes, "All I can do is witness and tell, tell as I told the American public when I marched..."
Counter-Recruitment and the Campaign to Demilitarize Public Schools by Scott Harding and Seth Kershner

(Palgrave Macmillan, 2015)

Professor Scott Harding and author-researcher Seth Kershner have joined forces to grapple with a highly readable, well-researched and extremely useful overview of counter-military recruitment efforts in America. In 180 pages (including copious notes and appendices) the authors once again prove the old adage, “good things come in small packages.”

The book includes a fine introduction, penned by writer and long-time activist David Cortright, that presents the topic and summarizes the issues. Also, front and center, is an always welcome and helpful list of “Commonly Used Abbreviations.” Beyond the front matter, you’ll find five pertinent chapters and a brief conclusion.

But that’s not all. The authors include two important and useful appendices: Sample Lesson Plans for Classroom Teachers and Additional Resources that reference many organizations and websites. Finally, the work is highly footnoted with a substantial bibliography.

In “Counter-Recruitment and the Campaign to Demilitarize Public Schools,” Harding and Kershner promote the idea that middle school and high school are places where the military does not belong. They write, “A key theme in this book is that school militarization has reached scandalous levels in the United States, and urgent action is needed to reverse this harmful trend.” The authors focus mainly on counter-recruitment efforts in high schools looking at ways activists, teachers, parents, and educators can “challenge de-facto guidance counselors — who have enlistment quotas to fill — are not above using ‘deceitful practices’ and/or giving misleading or incomplete information to get kids to sign up.

The push by the military to get access to even younger populations, like middle school kids, brings to mind the phrase variously attributed to Aristotle, the Jesuits, and Lenin, “Give me the child before he is 6, 7, 10 and I’ll have him forever.”

Counter-recruiters, in response, see their work as protecting children and teens from sophisticated military salesmanship while protecting schools from the military’s calls, “total market penetration” or “(wait for it…) ‘school ownership’”

Counter-recruiters are also concerned with protecting student privacy and the primacy of parental consent. Goals include providing information to children and families so they can make informed choices and understand their rights, like the ability to opt-out of the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery or to de-enlist from the Delayed Entry Program. This consumer advocacy technique reminded me of draft counseling approaches used during the Vietnam War. Back then, draft counselors did all they could within the law to help young men understand their rights and procedures under the Selective Service System.

Harding and Kershner consider and report on several strategies used by activists involved in counter-recruitment. Such tactics include not being perceived as anti-military but rather as advocates for kids, and using “American themes” in their presentations raising issues like privacy concerns and freedom of choice when it comes to testing and opting out of JROTC.

The authors point out that counter-recruitment work is “multidimensional.” They stress the importance of a personal contact with students and parents as key. They strongly recommend getting students involved as peer counselors and as activists helping to end JROTC in the schools. Additionally, counter-recruiters lobby school boards or school administrators to get into schools and/or try to get them to monitor the behavior of military recruiters who may be abusing their visitation privileges.

Be assured that there is a lot more useful information here. For example, the authors discuss ways of linking counter-recruitment efforts to preventing future wars, discuss ways to assess the impact of local efforts, consider the possibility of nationwide coordination and present references to legal opinions/rulings that establish the rights of children to have a presence in schools.

“Counter-Recruitment and the Campaign to Demilitarize Public Schools” is a down-right informative and effective title. I also found it to be heart-felt. These authors clearly write from experience and truly believe that something must be done to counter-balance what is going on in our schools. Those currently involved in counter-recruitment will be refreshed and inspired by it. Further, I suspect the authors hope that activists, parents and educators who are not involved in counter-recruitment may find themselves wanting to look at what’s going on in their neighborhoods and take necessary action.

In closing, note that the book features many anecdotes and quotes from folks who are doing this work. Here is one particularly powerful testimony: “I think that child soldiering is wrong in Nigeria, and it’s wrong in the United States too. When we have military recruiters that are sitting at a desk speaking with 14-year-olds in our school, that’s child soldiering and it’s happening in our own back yards... These kids are being filled with lies... That’s unacceptable.”

Gerald R. Goglia is a FYAW member, secular and ecumenical, and author of “Days of Decision: An Oral History of Conscientious Objections in the Military During the Vietnam War.” He was discharged from the army in 1969 as a Catholic Conscientious Objector.
March 16, 2017, is the 49th anniversary of the My Lai Massacre, located in South Vietnam. It was Saturday morning, March 16, 1968, when approximately 115 US Army soldiers of the American 1st Infantry Division, 1st Calvary Regiment, killed between 340 and 504 South Vietnamese civilians. These commemorations are a call to remember the violence of the Vietnam War.

In the book “Kill Anything That Moves” by Nick Turse, he states on page 11, “The war’s casualty figures are staggering indeed. From 1955 to 1975, the United States lost more than 58,000 military personnel in Southeast Asia.” We have to ask why? Why did so many die? The most important realization has come out of writing this article, that it is always comes back to me, because my country did this. I cannot divorce myself from this reality. When I came back from Vietnam I finally had to face the truth, that I was the enemy in Vietnam. That realization was to eventually put me in two psychiatric hospitals.

My core belief system was completely dismantled. I felt like a stranger in a strange land. And, whenever I tried to convince people that we were the barbarians in Vietnam, the more people avoided me. People don’t want to hear that toxic truth, because I was violating the existing beliefs of society. I was the 16-year-old girl who blurted out that her father raped her. This kind of information is taboo, and the only course was to blame the victim.

I have met many Vietnam veterans who were involved in atrocities, and that pain has continued in excruciating. Some of them have worked through what happened, but the path of healing was through their having to be done behind closed doors with counselors. Our society is never part of that healing, because they don’t want to hear the truth. And, of course, we have to ask why? They do not want to feel the shame, the National Shame.
because it is so frightening. If they were to feel that shame, they would have to redefine their entire lives.

In the end, I came to realize, that whenever the truth hits you, and your core belief system, there is an urgent need to deny its reality. That is why denial becomes a sacred cow.

I have personally known many Vietnam veterans who were destroyed by their experiences in Vietnam. At least four of my friends died from Agent Orange exposure, including my brother-in-law. One died from a head-on car collision, one died homeless on the streets, and two hung themselves.

It does not surprise me that more Vietnam veterans have committed suicide than were killed in Vietnam. According to the Veterans Administration, one veteran commits suicide every hour in this country.

The survivor, then, is a disturber of the peace. He is a runner of the blockade men erect against knowledge of "unspeakable" things. About these things, Viktor E. Frankl, who wrote "Mans Search For Meaning," was very instrumental in my healing, when he wrote, "Suffering ceases to be suffering when it has meaning."

In 1994, and 2016, I made trips back to Vietnam, with special emphasis on spending time at the My Lai Massacre site. This past year, I helped raise $8,600.00 with the help of Veterans for Peace, to restore a very large mosaic tile mural, that depicts the massacre of those civilians in the last moments of their lives. It is a very powerful piece of art.

While I was there, I met a Vietnamese woman who is the co-director of the My Lai Museum. She has worked there for 17 years, and has met countless tourists who make the journey to this place. I told her I was a veteran, and that millions of Americans who were adamantly against the war, see this memorial as being very important. I also said to her, that as far as I was concerned, the My Lai Massacre site was sacred ground. In an instant, she broke down and cried.

The emotional connection I felt was beyond understanding. I think it was the closest thing to love I had felt since I came back from Vietnam in 1971. Shortly after I met her, she asked me if I wanted to meet one of the lone survivors of the massacre. His name is Pham Thanh Cong, who was 11-years-old when US troops came into his village that early morning on March 16, 1968. An American soldier threw a hand grenade into his family hut, and killed his mother, three sisters and a six-year-old brother. He was protected by their bodies during the explosion. He himself was wounded in three places.

It was a privilege to meet him, but I have to admit, I was somewhat apprehensive, because I had been an American soldier in HIS country. Shortly after we met, he asked me if I had been at My Lai during the massacre, I assured him that I had not, and that it was in the Central Highlands two years after the massacre. I could tell he was relieved.

We talked for about ten minutes through an interpreter. There was a brief recording of that conversation that I was able to take. As we parted, In the end, I kissed him on the cheek, and told him I loved him.

Mike Heath is an Army Medic in Vietnam. His father was a career Army officer and WWII combat veteran. He spent most of his early childhood innoculated in military culture. When he came back from Vietnam, he picked up a camera to photograph the life of his childhood. He feels that this is the most powerful weapon in war and that liberation of denial in everything.
Unspeakable

John Katancik (Reviewer)

The full title of Chris Hedges’ latest book is Unspeakable: Talks with David Talbot about the Most Forbidden Topics in America. Chris Hedges has emerged as one of the most thoughtful, acerbic, and outspoken commentators in American literature over the past few years and has been a professor of journalism at Harvard Divinity School and war correspondent for The New York Times. Hedges has challenged his reader’s acceptance of the American status quo in such landmark books as “War Is a Force That Gives Us Meaning,” a deeply disturbing statement of the role of militarism in our society and the dangers of modern war to the emotional and spiritual health of anyone who witnesses American Fascists: The Christian Right and the War on America; “Death of the Liberal Class,” and Wages of Rebellion: The Moral Imperative of Revolt.

His regular columns on Truthdig.com are always informative and usually intensely challenging. Hedges was a regular participant at the Occupy Wall Street protests in 2012 he sued President Obama and the US Congress, along with Daniel Ellsberg, Noam Chomsky and others, challenging the authority of the National Defense Authorization Act which allows detention of citizens suspected of providing “support” to Al Qaeda, the Taliban, or other groups hostile to the US. Ultimately, the courts ruled that Hedges and the others “lacked legal standing” to challenge the government’s authority. Hedges teaches college credit courses at maximum-security prisons, and supports his family with his writing and speaking.

“Unspeakable” is the transcript of a lengthy interview between Chris Hedges and David Talbot, author of “Brothers: A Hidden History of the Kennedy Years,” and “The Devil’s Chessboard: Allen Dulles, the CIA, and the Rise of America’s Secret Government” which reviewed (very enthusiastically!) in a previous issue of The Veteran. Basically, he believes our country is on the brink of war, in the meantime, the two men enjoyed a lengthy and mutually respectful conversation in and around Hedges’ hometown of Princeton, New Jersey. The topics range from “Life at the New York Times” where Hedges found a climate of corporate ass-kissing and ineffective journalism reporting from “official” government briefings versus getting out into the real world and talking with the peasants and people most directly affected by current events, to reflections upon the Trump/Clinton election. “The Seductions of Power,” “The Bankruptcy of the Liberal Elite,” “Crime and Punishment,” “The Morality of Capitalism, Climate Change, Pornography, and Meat,” and “Maintaining Your Humanity Even While Cruelty Reigns.” These are troubling, even dangerous times in America and Chris Hedges dares to examine the cause and effect of many key issues of the day.

“Did the prospect of a Hillary Clinton presidency disturb you any less than a Trump reign?” Talbot asks, and Hedges responds. “Our political and economic elites—including Trump and Clinton—are hostile to genuine change. They don’t work for us. They don’t work for the planet. And they are well paid for it. The wars will still be waged no matter who wins the White House to enrich the arms manufacturers. Wall Street will still carry out its casino capitalism and push us ever closer towards another financial meltdown. The security and surveillance state will still make us the most monitored and watched society in human history. The trade agreements will still be signed to further weaken national sovereignty and send more jobs overseas. The prisons will still swell with the bodies of the poor. Social programs will still be diminished or terminated in the name of authority. These corporate forces lie beyond the control of the state; indeed the state has become the vehicle for further consolidation of corporate power and profits. We do not have any institutions left that can be authentically called democratic, if we define democratic to mean the expression of the popular will. Civic virtue has been transformed into economic rationality. We have to start rebuilding from scratch outside of the system, including the creation of third parties that openly defy corporate power.”

“Unspeakable” is a small book, only 149 pages, and you can read it in a couple of evenings. It is scary, as Hedges believes our country is on the verge of something he calls Christianized fascism. “Violence,” he observes, “has been directed against all who appear to have been empowered at the expense of a disenfranchised white working class – African Americans, Muslims, undocumented workers, homosexuals, feminists, artists, and intellectuals.” He foresees an onslaught of violence, rage, and a search for scapegoats. Power will be seized by “ethnic nationalists, warlords, gangsters and demagogues.” Factories will close, we will see high unemployment and hyperinflation.

“When a society disintegrates, as ours is disintegrating, when you acculturate people to speak in the language of violence, you will eventually get violence. I don’t know how far it will go. But it will get worse.”

Chris Hedges has seen, up close and at great personal risk, civil wars and ethnic conflicts in Central America, the Balkans, and the Middle East. He is a spiritual man, and a patriot with deep concerns about the America his children will inherit. As Vietnamese veterans, we have seen many similar examples of the cruel exploitations and inhumane corporate profiteering that he describes, and many of us share his concerns. Few of us can put our background knowledge or insights into words as eloquently or effectively as Hedges, but we can certainly learn a lot from him. “Unspeakable” is a terrific little book, and highly recommended.

The Girl in the Picture

for Phan Thi Kim Phuc

Whatever you run from becomes your shadow. - traditional

If you’re a namvet, a survivor of sorts, shell come for you across the decades, casting a shadow in the dying light of your dreams, naked and nine, terror in her eyes

Of course you will have to ignore her - if you wish to survive over the years - but then your daughters will turn nine and then your granddaughters nine

As the shadows lengthen.

So, you will have no choice on that one night screaming down the Ridge Road, lights off, under a full moon, she standing in the middle of the road, still naked and nine, terror in her eyes

Now you must stop to pick her up, to carry her back home to where she came from, to that gentle village where the forgiving and the forgotten gather at high noon. There are no shadows.

-Doug Rawlings

Destroyer

At the Hikiuia bar there’s a chart laminated on the table with depths and heights of beautiful Pearl Harbor.

My thoughts go winging away like the tradewind clouds floating overhead that day the destroyer enters Pearl Harbor bay.

In a Key West tiki bar I remember Pearl Harbor and the day we went in.

An “ocean greyhound” in the garden.

Long Tom five-inch guns pointing straight ahead to misty mountain forest rising from the sea bed.

Hawaii. DD 950 on her way to war.

Alone and on Sunday morning.

They’re still there waving their bony hands saying “Don’t go, let us walk.”

Three sailors rented a jeep and around Oahu then set sail for Viet Nam to kill whomever the capitalists said.

Young man do listen and listen with your head and listen with your heart.

The Veteran

I am sitting in the radio shack and as usual it is very hot, the three small windows give almost no ventilation and I feel I can hardly breathe. I am so hot I close the door so John can get some sleep. But tonight I don't care. Two days ago and this short-stint is our last. Most of my stuff is stowed in my duffel. My flight is scheduled to leave Tan Son Nhut Airbase in the morning. I have been in country for twelve months, ten of those on this radio Teletype machine. It is time to go home.

rumors have been flying around about a countrywide offensive by the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese. Most of the soldiers don't believe a word, but those of us who have been working the radio know that something is up. For the first time since I've been here, there have been a dozen messages in one day, most in the past three hours, now it's midnight, Jan 30th turning to Jan 31st, the Lunar New Year.

I am on duty, and one of the two other operators, is asleep in our hooch attached to the radio shack. USARV HQ has come on the radio with the alarm if there is a message, but tonight the officer of the day requested that I monitor the radio constantly. Now he's back to tell me we are on high alert and that Nick, the third radio operator, is at the command bus with our portable unit.

"Oh and by the way all flights in and out were canceled until at least 3rd Feb." SHIT!!! Does that mean I stuck here another frigging week... SHIT!!!

He just smiles and walks out.

I pick up an alert on the radio from the three separate units at the same time - the Marine base at Natrang, the 1st Infantry up the road from us, and the Army and Marines had driven a message from Saigon that they are at the 11th Cav has started fighting begins. The 11th Cav is scheduled to leave Tan Son Nhut Airbase in the morning. I have been in country for twelve months, ten of those on this radio Teletype machine. It is time to go home. I stand up and turn to write down the alert and that Nick, the third radio operator, is at the command bus with our portable unit.

As evening approaches the man under mortar attack. I am awake, the alarm on the Teletype is screaming in my ear, I have been asleep for some time because the morning haze and the smoke from the mortar attack I am involved in an APC attack. I look out my window, the moon is rising over the hill and the smoke is starting to foul the air. The APC are moving up the hill and light is starting to show in the sky behind the APC.

As night two passes into day, I am awake, the alarm on the Teletype is screaming in my ear, I have been asleep for some time because the morning haze and the smoke from the mortar attack I am involved in an APC attack. I look out my window, the moon is rising over the hill and the smoke is starting to foul the air. The APC are moving up the hill and light is starting to show in the sky behind the APC.

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For decades, the global scientific community has warned of the two greatest risks to humanity's survival: nuclear war and climate change. Recently, they have cited how the Trump administration has accelerated both risks. The "Doomsday Clock" was created by the Academy of Atomic Scientists during the Cold War to warn of the likelihood of a nuclear war. In late January, The Bulletin of Atomic Scientists moved the hands of this clock to two and a half minutes before midnight, the closest they have been since the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1963. Notably, it was the first time these hands were moved on the basis of statements made by one man: Donald Trump.

Trump's cavalier remarks, "What good are nuclear weapons if you can't use them?" his proclamations about good are nuclear weapons if you can't use them? his proclamations about "Climate," was scrubbed from the White House website. Trump's liaison team requested the names of all federal employees who had participated in any of the international conferences dealing with climate change, obviously, the preliminary step in purging all departments and agencies of such personnel; fortunately, these requests were not honored.

Likewise, there has been a gag order on all agencies and departments having activities relevant to the climate. Any document with mention of the climate must be submitted to the Trump administration before release to the public. The previous Secretary of State, John Kerry, considered as his greatest achievement his role in convincing 196 nations to sign the Paris Accord, the most comprehensive international agreement yet produced to address climate change. His successor, Rex Tillerson, as the CEO of ExxonMobil, the world's largest oil corporation, spent hundreds of millions of dollars financing campaigns and institutions to undermine the scientific proof that pollutants created by use of fossil fuels intensified the rate of climate change. Ironically, it was the scientists at ExxonMobil in 1981 who noted the damaging effects of fossil fuel emissions on Earth's atmosphere. Recently Tillerson signed an agreement with Putin giving ExxonMobil drilling rights in the Russian portion of the Arctic Ocean.

Trump now has a compliant legislatures and a complacent judiciary. With 85% of the media controlled by six giant corporations, traditional channels for expression of concern are denied the public. It appears the only route to follow is that just pioneered by women from around the world who united in protest of Trump's misogyny and treatment of them. Such action is now a moral imperative for this generation if we are to have a positive response to that inevitable question our children and grandchildren will ask us, "You knew they were destroying our planet; what did you do to stop them?"
Take a look.
This is where we have come.
Twenty-two veterans take their own lives every day. Many of them are young veterans, who were sold a bill of goods like we were. Many of whom believed that they were on an honorable mission only to find out that, like us, they were pawns in the scheme of the rich. However, these youngsters are part of an all-volunteer army. That means that the public is deathly silent when they come home dead and injured. That means that when they look for assistance often the response is “well you volunteered.”

Militarism is now the chief export of the US and we are internationally viewed as the biggest threat to world peace. Seriously, Gallup did an international poll in 2014 and the US was seen by 24% of the people as the biggest threat to peace. Second place, I think, went to China or Pakistan at 8%.

We have been killing people with drones to the point where we as Americans don’t care. It is clean and we don’t get hurt. But we do not realize the consequences, the recruitment of more people to hate us. Now we have a reckless Commander in Chief, more of a child in a man’s suit, playing soldier, being disengaged as one of ours gets killed while killing thirty innocents (eight children, including a US citizen).

I truly believed that our generation would be the last to suffer this fate. I thought that as we grew older that we would stand up and forbid our politicians to send us into another debacle, but we didn’t. We allowed it to happen again and again and again from incursions into Central American to endless war in Afghanistan and Iraq. And we lead the world in the sale of arms to other countries. So, we are perpetuating not only our own wars but those of other countries.

I hate to say this but sometimes I feel that all the soldiers and sailors and airmen who died for this country may have died for nothing. I know I said all from the Revolution on. We are only 240 years old but we have lost many aspects of our democracy and have become the world’s bully. Those who died fighting the Nazis a mere 75 years ago would not recognize our country. The 750,000 who died in the Civil War would be so disappointed to see that we are no longer a country of the people, by the people, and for the people, and the people don’t seem to care. The Founders, who realized that in order for this country to succeed would require an engaged populace and never a peace time army, are probably rolling over in their graves and saying to each other, “Well we tried!”

I wish we would try.

Jim Wohlgemuth is a member of VFW who lives in Nashville, Tennessee.
In 1970, we began the first rap groups in Vietnam. The first-hand experiences helped many Americans to see the unjust nature of that war.

VVAW also took up the struggle for the rights and needs of veterans. In 1970, we began the first rap groups dealing with traumatic aftereffects of war, setting the example for readjustment counseling at vet centers today. We exposed the shameful neglect of many disabled vets in VA hospitals and helped draft legislation to improve educational benefits and create job programs. VVAW fought for amnesty for war resisters, including vets with bad discharges. We helped make known the negative health effects of exposure to chemical defoliants and the VA's attempts to cover up these conditions as well as their continued refusal to provide treatment and compensation for many Agent Orange victims.

Today our government still finances and arms undemocratic and repressive regimes around the world in the name of "democracy." American troops have again been sent into open battle, including active duty GIs stationed throughout the United States, 30,000 throughout the United States, growing rapidly to a membership of over 30,000,000. Vietnam Veterans Against the War, Inc. (VVAW) is a national veterans' organization that was founded in New York City in 1967 after six Vietnam veterans were sent into battle in the Middle East and covert operations, and to teach the real lessons of the Vietnam War. We will do all we can to prevent future generations from being put through a similar tragedy, and we will continue to demand dignity and respect for veterans of all eras. This is real patriotism and we remain true to our mission. Anyone who supports this overall effort, whether veteran or not, veteran or not, may join us in this long-term struggle.

JOIN US!

Support VVAW!

VvAW Membership

P.O. Box 355

Champaign, IL 61824-0355

Membership Application

Name ____________________________

Address ____________________________

City ____________________________ State ______ Zip ______

Phone ____________________________

Email address ____________________________

Branch ____________________________

Dates of Service (if applicable) ____________________________

Unit ____________________________

Military Occupation ____________________________

Rank ____________________________

Overseas Duty ____________________________

Dates ____________________________

Yes, add me to the VVAW email list.

Do not wish to join, but wish to make a donation to the work of VVAW.

Sign me up for a lifetime membership in VVAW. $250 is enclosed.

Membership in VVAW is open to ALL people who want to build a veterans' movement that fights for peace and justice and support the work of VVAW and its historic legacy. Most of our members are veterans of the Vietnam era, but we welcome veterans of all eras, as well as family members and friends to our ranks.

The annual membership fee is $25.00 (not required of homeless, unemployed or incarcerated vets).

Signature ____________________________

Date ____________________________

Total Amount Enclosed ____________________________

Make checks payable to FEHR. Contributions are tax-deductible.

Our insignia has come to represent veterans fighting against new "adventures" like the Vietnam War, while at the same time fighting for a decent way of life for veterans and their families. Our insignia is over 40 years old. The insignia, VVAW®, and Vietnam Veterans Against the War, Inc.® are registered trademarks belonging to VVAW and no other organization or group may use it for any reason without written permission from the VVAW Board of Directors.

We took the MACV patch as our own, replacing the sword with the upside-down rifle with helmet, the international symbol of soldiers killed in action. This was done to expose the lies and hypocrisy of US aggression in Vietnam as well as its cost in human lives. The original MACV insignia was put forward by the US military, which was not protecting the (sword) the Vietnamese from invasion from the People's Republic of China (the China Gates), but was instead trying to "save" Vietnam from itself.

This notice is to alert you to a handful of individuals calling themselves the "Vietnam Veterans Against the War Anti-Imperialists" (VVW-AI). VVW-AI is actually the creation of an obscure ultra-left sect, designed to confuse people in order to associate themselves with VVW's many years of activism and struggle. They are not a faction, caucus or part of VVW, Inc. and are not affiliated with us in any way. We urge all people and organizations to beware of this bogus outfit.

We believe that service to our country and communities did not end when we were discharged. We remain committed to the struggle for peace and for social and economic justice for all people. We will continue to oppose senseless military adventures and to teach the real lessons of the Vietnam War. We will do all we can to prevent future generations from being put through a similar tragedy, and we will continue to demand dignity and respect for veterans of all eras. This is real patriotism and we remain true to our mission. Anyone who supports this overall effort, whether veteran or not, veteran or not, may join us in this long-term struggle.

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The loud banging on my front door was startling. It was 3 am. My first thought was someone needed help. I had just returned from spending a week sleeping outdoors in April in Washington, DC and the bed felt good. Operation Dewey Canyon III had concluded and I was back in California.

I had returned from Vietnam in early 1969. Homecoming was unsettling. Everything seemed to be wrong and either I or the world was out of sync. It was hard to define but the rejection and the indifference was real. I still had time to serve on my enlistment. I was given a cushy assignment as I counted the days. But I was continuing to unravel around the edges.

The anti-war activities were raging and they looked a lot different stateside than they did in Vietnam. The more sense they made the more uneasy I became. I was not comfortable around the anti-war groups and I don't think they were comfortable around me. I soon met the people I needed to talk to at Cal-State University, San Bernardino. I was assigned to the ammo dump on the far side of the base. I was assigned to be late 50's early 60's vintage. He was OD green jungle fatigues. He sported Captain's bars but didn't look like-minded vets. We vets had already been marginalized and discarded but now in the eyes of the "Greatest Generation" we were bordering on treason.

We frequently held planning sessions at an house and as 1970 was coming to a close, the big event, Operation Dewey Canyon III, was about to take center stage. Barry handled all of the national coordination, which was substantial. As April approached, our organization was relatively small and we were always looking to attract new members. And that is when he showed up.

No one knew him. Nothing about him fit. He just appeared at one of our planning meetings. Our typical dress was OD green jungle fatigues. He wore stateside fatigues that looked to be late 50's early 60's vintage. He sported Captain's bars but didn't look old enough to be a Second Lieutenant. Everything about him was wrong but he managed to work his way in. We were all very distracted at the time. Barry was especially busy we just let the "Captain" slip by. He was granted an airline ticket for DC.

The night before we left there was a final meeting. The Captain showed up. As the meeting broke up the Captain approached me and wanted to trade a film canister of pills for some weed. I declined but gave him some weed. He said there was some really good drugs in the canister and I would probably change my mind. He stuck them in my refrigerator. There was a lot of excitement about our pending departure and it was no time to split hairs. Soon we were on our way to DC. It was an amazing week and the support that VVAW received was tremendous. Richard Nixon was furious at the anti-war vets. The anti-war movement was embodied by us. I was so glad to be a part of it.

But where was the Captain? No one had seen him since we arrived. He was no-show for the flight home. We were now absolutely convinced we had taken some type of undercover agent into our welcome organization. And there it was again. The banging on my front door was louder and voices were now yelling. I made my way in the early morning darkness to see what the fuss was about. As I opened the door the San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department presented me with handcuffs and a search warrant. First stop was the refrigerator and a new nightmare was just beginning.

They thoroughly searched the house as they savored the opportunity to punish me. After all, many intelligence officers had worked months to see this night happen. There were frequent snide comments about my being a communist and that they knew I was taking money from Hanoi. The long arm of Richard Nixon had neutralized me and I was never again able to participate in VVAW work. And I learned later that I was not the only one. Other VVAW members around the country met similar fates.

**Steve Miller **

*Steve Miller served in USAF from 1966 to 1970. In Vietnam, he was with the 15th Air Defense Wing at Kadena, Okinawa. As an Air Freight Specialist, he was with the USAF's 14 Compartment teams that flew C-130s, C-123s and C-7s. They delivered everything and anything needed. For 12 months prior to deployment, he worked 12-hour night shifts propelling cargo and marauding bases.**

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**Nixon's Revenge**

*Steve Miller**

The San Bernardino heat was relentless. My cushy job was gone. I was married and living off base. Too bad. I was to report to an assigned barracks to pull CQ all night and then back to the dump in the morning. But I knew this would be over soon. I had applied for and had been granted an early release in order to attend college San Bernardino Valley College (SBVC).

I attempted to begin the discharge process when I was given the bad news. They told me they couldn't find my paperwork: translation, "You aren't getting out." Furious, I contacted Senator Alan Cranston who was a strong anti-war advocate. In short my paperwork was found and I was discharged. Now, I was not only anti-war but very angry. I traded an Oldsmobile for unknown "intelligence" groceries that wanted a lot of film on me.

I started school more adrift than ever. It was at SBVC where I found there was no "free speech" option for active duty service members and I spoke candidly to the OSI. They identified me as Officers from the Office of Special Investigation (OSI). Theyescorted me into our welcome organization. I was not comfortable around the anti-war groups and I don't think they were comfortable around me. I soon met the people I needed to talk to at Cal-State University, San Bernardino. I was assigned to the ammo dump on the far side of the base. I was assigned to be late 50's early 60's vintage. He was OD green jungle fatigues. He sported Captain's bars but didn't look like-minded vets. We vets had already been marginalized and discarded but now in the eyes of the "Greatest Generation" we were bordering on treason.

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