



VIETNAM VETERANS AGAINST THE WAR, INC

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Dear VVAW Supporter,

I'd like to thank you for your continued support of Vietnam Veterans Against the War (VVAW). Without you, we could not continue the important work that we began in 1967. Over the last forty-six years we have carried out the struggle for veterans, peace and justice. My name is Brian Materrese and I am a member of the VVAW Board.

During the Tet Offensive in 1968, I received my draft notice. I joined the Army and was sent to the Army Intelligence School for six months at Fort Holabird in Baltimore, Maryland. I was stationed as a Special Agent with the US Army Intelligence in Providence, Rhode Island, and then Boston, before I received my orders to go overseas to Vietnam in 1969. I put in for a Hardship Discharge so that I could stay near my parents because my father had a disability and my mother had cancer. At first I was turned down, but I reapplied for the discharge and was approved the day before I was supposed to leave. I was relieved to be out of the service. I did not want to go to Vietnam. I was most definitely not happy in Army Intelligence, working on projects like Lantern Spike and Garden Plot, which were designed (and used) as "exercises" to use our own military to suppress civil disobedience in the US.

After my discharge, I went to school. I joined in some demonstrations around the Kent State shootings. But I didn't get fully involved with VVAW until I was watching the coverage of VVAW's Dewey Canyon III on the television with my dad, and he said, "What are you waiting for?" From that point forward I became very involved in the active New York chapter of VVAW. At the SUNY College of Old Westbury, I helped start a local chapter of VVAW. On June 6, 1976, I joined eleven other VVAW members and took over the Statue of Liberty – the second time VVAW used this tactic – as part of a national day of action in response to cuts to veterans' benefits.

I also helped organize a Winter Soldier panel on drugs, highlighting how the VA had only 21 beds in the entire country for drug rehab. After college, I went to work for New York City's Off-Track Betting (OTB) Corporation. I served as the shop steward for our union until the NYC OTB went bankrupt and closed at the end of 2010. After my retirement, I joined VVAW's Board and have been very active in the resurgence of the New York/New Jersey chapter of VVAW.

I am proud to be part of Vietnam Veterans Against the War as we celebrate 46 years of organizing for veterans, peace and justice. And I know we would not be here today without your sustaining support.

We have been quite busy this summer! VVAW participated in the June Chicago Homeless Vets Standdown. Every year, VVAW is honored to provide volunteers to help with cleanup the day before and then to help staff the kitchen during the Standdown. Over 700 guests and 250 volunteers are fed over two days! VVAW also provided cleaning supplies and utensils for the Standdown. In addition to free meals, homeless veterans are able to receive medical triage, meet with various social service agencies, and get free haircuts and supplies. The Chicago Homeless Vets Standdown was sponsored by VVAW, the VA, VFW, VietNow, and Iraq Veterans Against the War (IVAW).

On June 21, VVAW presented the Veterans Service Award to Jim and Virginia Proffitt along with the VietNow organization for their 24 years of selfless devotion to the Homeless Veterans of Chicago. Jim and Virginia started the Homeless Sandwich Run in 1989 with 30 sandwiches, coffee

and Jim's car. Fifty-one Sundays a year, they drive out into the back streets and alleyways of the city and distribute over 1,000 sack lunches, coffee, clothing and other necessities directly to the Homeless. In addition, Jim, Virginia and VietNow members have worked together with VVAW in the kitchen of the Chicago Homeless Standdown for over 20 years.

VVAW was also very honored to meet with Troung Tan Sang, the President of Vietnam, on July 26. VVAW and other organizations in the New York Vets Peace Coalition had been working with the Vietnamese Ambassador to set up a meeting between veterans of both countries when we were informed that the President of Vietnam would be joining us. On behalf of VVAW, I attended the reception with Susan Schnall and others.

VVAW staff continues with our archiving project, with over 80 issues of VVAW's newspaper, *The Veteran*, now online. You can view both scanned versions of the newspaper to see it in its original format as well as searchable web pages. *The Veteran* was the first voice of Vietnam veterans in America, and has consistently addressed issues of peace and justice. It has featured original articles on Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and Agent Orange since its first year of publication in 1971. We plan to have all 115 issues online by the end of the year! You can view them online at: www.vvaw.org/veteran. Check out *The Veteran* this fall for more information about our meeting with the President of Vietnam.

We hope you can make a **tax-deductible** contribution to support VVAW's work, at whatever level. Every donation, no matter the size, enables us to carry on the struggle for veterans' rights by issuing our free semi-annual newspaper, supporting events to help our homeless brothers and sisters, sustaining our continued efforts to achieve decent benefits for all veterans, and opposing unnecessary and illegal wars waged by our country. **Again, thank you for your continued support to further VVAW's mission of peace, justice, and the rights of all veterans.**

Sincerely,

Brian Matarrese

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VVAW National Coordinator



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

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