

FROM  
WARRIORS  
TO  
RESISTERS

*U.S. Veterans on Terrorism*

*With a new Introduction by*  
**COLONEL ANN WRIGHT (RET)**

<http://www.resistersbook.org/>

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We also appreciate Carolyn Forché's permission to quote  
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**THIS THIRD EDITION IS DEDICATED TO:**

**BILL CORRIGAN** (*d. February 25, 2005*)

**PETER DE MOTT** (*d. February 19, 2009*)

**LIL CORRIGAN** (*d. March 14, 2013*)

**WAYNE WITTMAN** (*d. February 24, 2016*)

**CHARLIE LITEKY** (*d. January 20, 2017*)

**RON SIEMER** (*d. February 25, 2017*)



*There is a cyclone fence between  
ourselves and the slaughter and behind it  
we hover in a calm protected world like  
netted fish, exactly like netted fish.*

*It is either the beginning or the end  
of the world, and the choice is ourselves  
or nothing.*

—CAROLYN FORCHÉ, "Ourselves or Nothing"



## EDITOR'S PREFACE TO THE THIRD EDITION



Our third edition of *From Warriors to Resisters: U.S. Veterans on Terrorism* features a new introduction by Colonel Ann Wright (Ret), updated author bios and resources, and a history of the SOA Watch movement by Hendrik Voss.

These veterans share their hard-won transformations. In different times and places, their eyes opened to the exploitation of vulnerable people and could not close again. Our writers became thoughtful critics of U.S. policy and militarism—some while still in uniform. Their evolutions (the late Peter De Mott called his a “conversion”) led to lives of solidarity and activism.

When first published in 2002, our contributors were veterans involved in efforts to close the notorious School of the Americas, also known as the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation. In 2005, the second edition expanded to include younger veterans from the post-9/11 War on Terrorism. Years later, they are seasoned activists, organizers, and healers.

While definitions of terrorism vary, it's commonly agreed that terrorists use illicit violence or intimidation to achieve political objectives. Some of our warriors-turned-resisters further observe that: terrorists can be state or non-state actors, their victims are often but not always civilian, and terrorists' goals can be economic as well as political.

Terrorists use violence or the threat of it to create a coercive climate of fear. They degrade their victims, treating them as *mere means* to the terrorists' *ends*. By contrast, our writers call for respecting the inherent dignity of all human beings—in daily life, in policy discussions at all levels, and in our political practices. Nonviolence is the means for achieving and sustaining justice and peace.

By now, five of our original resisters have died. Most recently, they include Medal of Honor winner—and renouncer—Charles Liteky. (On the same day Charlie died, January 20, 2017, Donald Trump was inaugurated as the 45th President of the United States.) This is a tribute edition—honoring Charlie, Wayne Wittman, Peter De Mott, and Lil and Bill Corrigan. Their insights and courage still clarify and embolden, still call us to solidarity.

And one more loss: in February 2017, my dear friend and publishing mentor at fxBEAR, Ron Siemer, also passed. He had been my collaborator on this book project from the start. Ron was as essential as he was humble. He deeply admired these warriors-turned-resisters and delighted in bringing their stories to a wider audience. I'm forever grateful to him.

Charlie, Wayne, Peter, Lil, Bill, and Ron: *¡Presente!* You are with us during this Trump era, with its heightened rhetoric, polarization, and dangers. Your words strengthen us as we keep our eyes open, challenge our own privilege, organize for social justice, and protect our imperiled planet. Dear friends, *¡presente!*

—Margaret Knapke, January 2019

## INTRODUCTION TO THE THIRD EDITION

by Colonel Ann Wright (Ret)



**W**ith the presidential administration of Donald Trump and so much to resist in his policies, it is very timely that we have a new edition of *From Warriors to Resisters: U.S. Veterans on Terrorism*.

September of 2018 marked the 17th year of President George W. Bush's Global War on Terror, which began immediately after the events of 9/11, events which themselves grew out of earlier U.S. policies in the Middle East. The Global War continued through the remaining seven years of the Bush administration, the eight years of the Obama administration, and now into the Trump administration. This "war" on terrorism has had a predictable and predicted backlash with young men and women from around the world joining in the fight against U.S. invasions and occupations—a fight with brutal and horrific consequences for citizens of the countries in which these battles are taking place. Over five million citizens of Syria have left their country due to the violence that began with the U.S. war on Iraq and has continued with the extremist ISIS attempts to form a caliphate in Sunni Iraq and Syria.

Since Donald Trump has been President of the United States, we have seen his administration continue the Global War on Terror with an increase in U.S. military operations in Iraq, Syria, Somalia, Mali, and Yemen. The United States is now into the 18th year of attempting to impose a U.S. military "solution" on the people of Afghanistan.



With the U.S. Army in Grenada in 1983  
(personal photo).

We have seen the Trump administration attempt to ban Muslims from seven countries from entering the United States, including a complete ban on refugees from Syria, citing the danger they supposedly represent to U.S. national security. We have seen refugees from the violence in Central America treated horribly by the U.S. government—with children taken from their parents, put into detention, and classified as “unaccompanied.” We have seen President Trump close down the functions of the U.S. government in his attempt to fulfill a campaign promise to build a wall on the southern border of the United States.

We have seen an *increase* of \$54 billion for wars (an increase of 10% of the U.S. military budget). Simultaneously, there have been dramatic *reductions* of domestic initiatives addressing human needs and of international programs seeking a nonviolent resolution of

international disagreements (the latter through a 34% reduction in funds for diplomacy). Many U.S. diplomats have resigned from the U.S. government due to Trump’s policy of destruction of diplomacy and the U.S. Department of State.

With all of this as background, and because of my own journey as a former U.S. diplomat and retired U.S. Army colonel during this past turbulent decade and a half, I am honored to have been asked to write the introduction to this new edition of *From Warriors to Resisters*. I have been asked to summarize my own passage from Warrior to Resister.

On the Warrior side, I served 29 years in the U.S. Army/Army Reserves and retired as a colonel. I worked in eight presidential administrations, beginning with Lyndon Johnson and ending with George W. Bush. Not only was I in the U.S. military, I was also a U.S. diplomat for 16 years and served in U.S. embassies in Nicaragua, Grenada, Somalia, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Sierra Leone, Micronesia, Afghanistan, and Mongolia. I was on the small U.S. diplomatic team that reopened the U.S. Embassy in Kabul, Afghanistan. I was a part of the U.S. government, the good and the bad, for almost forty years.

Now to the Resister side. In March 2003, I resigned from the U.S. diplomatic corps in opposition to President Bush’s decision to invade and occupy Iraq, an oil-rich, Arab-Muslim country that had had nothing to do with the events of 9/11. I was one of only three federal employees of the U.S. government who resigned in opposition to the war on Iraq. In my letter of resignation,<sup>1</sup> I gave my reasons for resigning over that war, including the predictably large number of civilian casualties. But I also detailed my concerns on other issues: the lack of U.S. effort toward resolving the Israel-Palestine conflict, the U.S. failure to engage North Korea to curb nuclear and missile

development, and the curtailment of civil liberties in the United States through the Patriot Act.

Now, three presidents into the Iraq War and other unsettled conflicts, the problems that I was concerned about in 2003 are even more dangerous a decade and a half later.

After my resignation from the U.S. government in 2003, I slowly became familiar with voices of dissent here in the United States. As a U.S. diplomat, I knew of dissent in the countries where I had been assigned, but I was not particularly knowledgeable about protest in the United States, other than what I read in newspapers.

Almost a year after my resignation, I met members of Veterans For Peace. They kindly accepted me into the circle of military veterans who were challenging U.S. war policies—and who were supporting those still in the U.S. military who were publicly speaking out against war policies. VFP introduced me to other organizations helping those who had decided, for the sake of their consciences, that they must leave the military without permission—go AWOL. Some resisters were punished for their decisions of conscience; others became whistleblowers about what they saw as their government's criminal acts and abuses.

Over the nearly 16 years since my resignation, I have followed in the footsteps of those who have spent decades challenging our government on so many of its policies. I have:

- protested the Iraq War, with arrests in front of the White House and in the U.S. Congress for speaking out against the war funding, as well as joining thousands with Cindy Sheehan at Camp Casey in Crawford, Texas, in “What Noble Cause?”

- challenged U.S. military bases in Jeju Island, South Korea, and the new U.S. Marine base runway at Henoko, Okinawa,
- challenged the U.S. assassin drone program by traveling on peace missions to Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Yemen, as well as at U.S. drone-training sites at Creech Drone Base in Nevada and at Hancock National Guard Base in Syracuse, New York,
- supported military resisters Camilo Mejía, Stephen Funk, Ehren Watada, James Yee, and Diedra Cobb, as well as whistleblowers Chelsea Manning, Edward Snowden, John Kiriakou, and Tom Drake,
- and traveled to Gaza and the West Bank to underscore U.S. complicity in Israeli illegal settlements, apartheid walls, inhuman checkpoints in the West Bank, and the illegal land and sea blockade of Gaza. Challenging the blockade included being on boats of the Gaza Freedom Flotilla; numerous participants were arrested, imprisoned, and deported from Israel.

AFTER MY RESIGNATION, I became a supporter of School of the Americas Watch, with its remarkable 28-year history of challenging U.S. policies of military and police training in Central and South America, policies which have led to horrific human-rights abuses by many graduates of U.S. government training. SOA Watch has provided extraordinary leadership in challenging these human-rights abuses—and in providing us with the stories of those who have challenged our government's policies and ended up in jail for their acts of conscience.



Col. Ann Wright (Ret) participating in Veterans For Peace march (personal photo).

I was a military officer at the U.S. Southern Command when it was located in Panama and then a U.S. diplomat in Nicaragua, so I know well the abuses of the U.S. government in Central and South America. It has been a very important emotional process for me to stand with the victims of torture, in acknowledgement of my complicity while serving in military commands that were a part of the human-rights abuses in our hemisphere.

If I include myself, *From Warriors to Resisters* chronicles the lives of 15 military veterans who have challenged U.S. military training that led to human-rights abuses. We served in wars ranging from World War II, Korea, Vietnam, and the Cold War, to Iraq and Afghanistan. Most of the veterans in this book have served jail or prison time for various forms of nonviolent civil resistance—six of them as activists with SOA Watch. (To date, there are 250 SOA Watch

prisoners of conscience who collectively have served more than 100 years in federal prison for nonviolent actions at Fort Benning, Georgia, the current location of the international training facility. Since 2001, the SOA has been renamed the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation, or WHINSEC.) SOA Watch founder, Navy veteran, and former Maryknoll priest Roy Bourgeois has been an inspiration for veterans in their transformation process from military to non-killing beings.

These stories in *From Warriors to Resisters* represent the ability of humans to change, to go from persons trained to kill others on behalf of their government, to persons who refuse to participate in state-sponsored murder and terrorism.

I am proud to have joined the ranks of these people of peace, not war.<sup>2</sup>

January 2019

## NOTES

1. Col. Ann Wright, letter of resignation to Secretary of State Colin Powell, March 19, 2003, <https://www.govexec.com/defense/2003/03/mary-a-wrights-resignation-letter/13704/>.
2. Editor's note: Col. Ann Wright (Ret) and Susan Dixon co-authored *Dissent: Voices of Conscience: Government Insiders Speak Out Against the War in Iraq* (Kihei, Hawai'i: Koa Books, 2008).

# Veterans Resisting the School of the Americas (and More)

*by Roy Bourgeois*

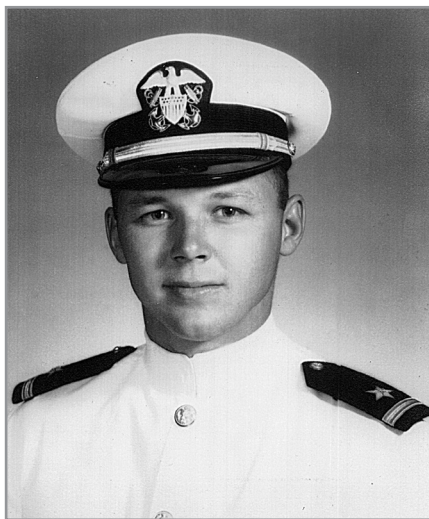


In 2012, after serving as a Catholic priest for 40 years, Roy was expelled from the priesthood because of his public support for the ordination of women. That same year he published a booklet titled *My Journey from Silence to Solidarity*,<sup>1</sup> which is now in its second edition and also available in German and Spanish. Roy also advocates for gender and LGBTQ equality within the Catholic Church.

**G**rowing up in a small town in the bayous of Louisiana, I was taught to be patriotic. When I left college with a degree in geology, and our country's leaders told us we had to go off to Vietnam and stop the spread of communism, I did not question them. I became a naval officer, spent a couple of years aboard ship, and then volunteered for shore duty in Vietnam.

Vietnam became a turning point in my life. We soldiers were young and in a country far from home, knowing so little about its people, culture, and history. We were warriors, believing our cause was noble. Then something happened. The suffering and death and the body bags coming back home began to change us. We started questioning our country's violence as a dead-end street. At the time I could not articulate it, but I was beginning to feel what Dr. Martin Luther King was saying: "The ultimate weakness of violence is that it is a descending spiral, begetting the very thing it seeks to destroy."<sup>2</sup> Hope, which was always very alive in my life, began to disintegrate in Vietnam.

But grace was at work. I met a missionary at a nearby orphanage who was caring for hundreds of children, many of them wounded by our bullets and napalm. In the midst of all the madness and violence—he was a peacemaker, a healer. Spending time with the



Roy Bourgeois as naval officer in the 1960s (personal photo).



Receiving the Purple Heart from Admiral N. G. Ward (personal photo).



Visiting children at missionary's orphanage (personal photo).



Fasting in front of Ft. Benning in 1990. From left to right: Fr. Brian Pierce, OP; Fr. Jack Seery, SJ; René Hurtado; Miguel Cruz; Kathy Kelly; Fr. Roy Bourgeois, MM; Fr. Jim Barnett, OP; Charlie Liteky; and Peter Eaves (personal photo).

children helped get me through my year in Vietnam, helped me hold on to hope.

I returned home to my family and friends, very grateful to be alive. But I came back, as so many of us did, different. I entered a seminary of the Maryknoll Order, a group serving the poor in 28 countries. After being ordained a Catholic priest in 1972, I went to Bolivia, where a slum on the outskirts of La Paz became my home for the next five years. There the poor began to teach me about U.S. foreign policy in Latin America.

Bolivia was struggling under a brutal dictator, General Hugo Banzer, who had come to power through a violent coup that was supported by the United States. During this time, the United States was also supporting the repressive militaries of Chile, Argentina, Peru, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua—arming and training the men with the guns who were at war with the poor.

Bolivia's poor taught me about the human condition of suffering. The majority of the people don't receive a just wage for their labor—and they struggle for survival. They live in shacks without running water. They don't have schools for their children, and when they get sick there are no medicines to heal them. In short, the poor of Latin America die before their time. They are hungry for food—and they are hungry for justice.

In their struggle for survival, the poor and oppressed become educated. They begin to see the causal relationship between their poverty and the wealth of the United States. They know that there are more than enough resources in their countries for everyone to live comfortably. But what is there to be shared instead has ended up in the hands of small, powerful elites.

The suffering poor of Latin America are doing what we would do if we lived in such dehumanizing poverty day after day. They are saying, "*Basta!*" (Enough!). They are organizing and calling for a more equitable distribution of wealth and resources. However, when the poor organize and speak out, the men with the guns are there to silence them; the soldiers defend that socioeconomic system exploiting the poor. It angered me to see my country giving guns and training to the bullies doing the killing. It was all about providing the muscle to protect U.S. economic interests in Latin America—at any cost to the Latin Americans.

The prisons of Bolivia began to overflow with tin miners, factory workers, and university students. With the help of the local bishop, I was able to get a pass and visit political prisoners. Many were being tortured, which I reported to members of Congress in the United States. I was later arrested and forced to leave Bolivia.

Back in the United States, I became very involved in El Salvador after Archbishop Oscar Romero was assassinated and four U.S. churchwomen were raped and killed by the Salvadoran military. (Two of those women were friends of mine.) I went to El Salvador and, as in Bolivia, I found my country giving guns and training to those doing the killing.

When hundreds of Salvadoran soldiers started combat training at Fort Benning, Georgia, I rented an apartment near the post, called it "Casa Romero," and started organizing. After I gave talks at local colleges and churches about the U.S.-sponsored repression in El Salvador, it was time to take the message to those soldiers at Fort Benning. Linda Ventimiglia, who was in the Army Reserves and had trained at Fort Benning; Fr. Larry Rosebaugh, an Oblate priest who had worked in Brazil; and I were the messengers.

We dressed as high-ranking military officers and entered Fort Benning at night. We carried a powerful boom box that contained the last sermon of Archbishop Romero, given at the cathedral the day before he was assassinated. His sermon had called for the military to stop the killing. Linda, Larry, and I climbed a pine tree near the barracks of the Salvadoran soldiers and waited. When the lights went out, we boomed Romero's message to the soldiers—and it was like poking a bee hive. We were arrested, brought to trial, and sent to prison for 18 months. But the truth could not be silenced, and we spoke from prison.

The bloodshed continued in El Salvador. On November 16, 1989, six Jesuit priests, their co-worker, and her 15-year-old daughter were massacred. A U.S. congressional task force investigated and reported that those responsible were trained at the U.S. Army School of the Americas (SOA) at Fort Benning.

I returned to Fort Benning and, just outside the main gate, rented a small apartment and began the SOA Watch. Joined by Kathy Kelly, Charlie Liteky, Jim Barnett, and others, we camped at the main gate and went on a water-only fast for 35 days. After the fast we started our research. Through the Freedom of Information Act and human-rights reports, we documented hundreds of SOA graduates involved in massacres, torture, and rape.

As word about this school of assassins (all paid for by U.S. taxpayers) began to spread around the country, a movement was born—a grassroots movement rooted in nonviolence and connected in solidarity with the suffering poor of Latin America. It grew rapidly and became very diverse—made up of thousands of college students, parents, grandparents, veterans, religious, and others. We worked hard at educating and lobbying our senators and representatives.

A growing number of members of Congress called for the school's closure when it was learned that SOA manuals advocated torture. The Pentagon, realizing the days of their school were numbered, came up with a plan of changing its name. By a close vote in Congress, SOA became the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation (WHINSEC) on January 17, 2001.

No one was fooled. It was a new name, but the same shame. The late Rep. Joe Moakley of Massachusetts was right when he said that re-naming the school was like pouring a bottle of perfume on a toxic waste dump. The school is still deadly. It's still about men with guns, still about keeping the militaries of Latin America in power to protect U.S. corporations and sweat shops, and still about allowing the privileged to live very well off the backs of the poor.

After the September 11 attacks, the commanding officer of Fort Benning and the mayor of adjacent Columbus said that the United States was at war with terrorists, and they requested that the SOA Watch call off its annual protest in front of Fort Benning. But the tens of thousands in the movement said that it was more important than ever to protest. After all, President Bush has repeatedly said that we are at war with terrorism, and should go after those training camps for terrorists wherever they are. A good place to start is on our own soil at the SOA/WHINSEC.

So on November 17-18, 2001, over 10,000 from all over the country gathered at Fort Benning's main gate and said, "Not in our name!" We remembered those killed in the September 11 attacks, the 75,000 killed in El Salvador, the 200,000 killed in Guatemala, and the thousands who continue to die in Colombia at the hands of a military armed and trained by the United States.

More than 100 were arrested at the November protest and some

likely will be going to federal prisons. They will join more than 70 prisoners of conscience in the SOA Watch movement who have served time. Prison is difficult, but whenever the government sends us there, the movement is energized and grows.

Our country produces and sells more weapons than any other nation. The United States possesses more weapons than ever before. Yet we have never felt less secure than we do today. The word “idolatry” best expresses what this is all about—the putting of one’s trust in false gods.

After many years, I returned to Vietnam this past summer. I felt it was important to go back to the place that had had such an impact on my life. I brought with me a letter that said: “As a Vietnam veteran I have returned to your country to apologize for all the suffering and death we caused you. Over these years I have asked God’s forgiveness for what we did in Vietnam. I now ask for yours.”

One of the many Vietnamese to whom I gave my letter was a Buddhist monk. In our long conversation, he said, “Our greatest enemy is ignorance. Our sword must be wisdom.”

In light of terrorism and the macho talk of our president, and in light of SOA/WHINSEC and U.S. foreign policy in Latin America, I think about the monk’s words a lot today.

## NOTES

1. Roy Bourgeois, *My Journey from Silence to Solidarity*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (Yellow Springs, OH: fxBEAR, 2013), <http://www.roybourgeoisjourney.org/>.
2. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., *Where Do We Go from Here: Chaos or Community?* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 2010), 64. (First published by Harper & Row Publishers, Inc., 1967.)

## Betrayal

by Laura Slattery



Laura Slattery graduated from the United States Military Academy, West Point, New York, in May 1988. She was commissioned as a second lieutenant in the Medical Service Corps and was stationed at Schofield Barracks in Hawaii with the 25th Infantry Division. Since leaving the military in 1991, she has worked as an international volunteer in Mexico and El Salvador, a hospital chaplain, a high school teacher, and a Catholic Worker. Laura received her MA in Theology from the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley, California, in 1988.

At the time she wrote the narrative below (2002), Laura was working for Pace e Bene Nonviolence Service as their International Liaison and their LGBTQ Coordinator. With her colleagues at Pace e Bene, she co-authored the workbook *Engage: Exploring Nonviolent Living*.<sup>1</sup> Starting in 2010, Laura worked as the Executive Director of The Gubbio Project, an organization in San Francisco providing “sacred sleep” to homeless people each day in church sanctuaries.

**B**etrayal is an ugly word. Accusation of it laced my mother’s response when I asked if she had any military photos of me. “Do you think I’m stupid?” came her stinging reply. “You want those pictures so you can burn them in effigy like you did your jacket? I saw the picture of you,” she said.

She was referring to the picture that had appeared in the paper of me, hanging my last Battle Dress Uniform (BDU) jacket on the chain-link fence at the gate of Fort Benning at the School of the Americas protest last November (2001). I explained that my action was done with the utmost reverence, accompanied by a prayer, but that did not matter. I had been walking a fine line with her due to my nonviolent activities for a long time now, and September 11th and the subsequent bombing of Afghanistan had only aggravated the situation. In her mind, my symbolic renunciation of my military career betrayed not only my country, but her as well. She had supported and encouraged me during my years in the service, and has bragged about my military career often. I am still at times introduced as “the daughter who went to West Point.”

That sense of betrayal weighs heavily on me as I write this article, a veteran speaking against a military institution in particular and military solutions in general. What will my friends with whom I went to school and served, who risked their lives and continue to do so, think? My allegiance was always more to them and to the principles of integrity and justice, than it was to some vague notion of country. I do not feel I have betrayed my country by calling



Laura Slattery, West Point cadet  
(personal photo).



Photo by U.S. Army. Used with permission.  
Taken by Sgt. Donald Grimes and published  
in *Hawaii Army Weekly*, July 13, 1989.

for the closing of the School of the Americas (SOA), now known as the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation. If anything, my actions help make the country stronger, by calling on people to uphold the principles of democracy upon which it was founded. But what of my friends and family?

It's hard for me to think of myself judged by my former fellow servicemen and -women. It's even harder to have them think that I am judging them. Though the latter is an inevitable consequence of taking a stand against military action or a military school, my judgment is reserved for those who use our national self-interest as a justification for wars, rather than those who are called upon to serve in them.

During these past ten years of civilian life, I have been moving slowly away from my internal and external connections to my military experiences and toward my present work in nonviolence. At times I have felt at home with both the military community and its supporters, and also with the activist community; other times I have felt alienated from one or the other. My experience at Fort Benning this past November highlighted this.

During the solemn funeral procession I connected easily with those demonstrators trying to expose some of the truths about the SOA and close it down. I was on the right side of the fence that was erected to keep the protesters off Fort Benning. But when the



Veteran Laura Slattery marches in solemn funeral procession at Ft. Benning, GA, in November 2001. She carries BDU jacket she will hang on the newly constructed, high-security fence, which demonstrators will transform into a memorial wall for Latin American victims of SOA/WHINSEC.

Photo courtesy of Linda Panetta, <http://www.soawne.org/> and <https://www.opticalrealities.org/>.

puppeteers, anarchists, and youth took up the position at the fence with shouts, drum banging, and a bit of mayhem, I felt my old “disconnect” with protesters creep in. I identified more with the soldiers then. Though I knew I was on the right side of the issue, I felt like I was on the wrong side of the fence.

Something happened to this longstanding dichotomy, however, when I hung my last jacket on the fence. I broke free from my internal continuum of soldier on one side and protester on the other. I chose a third way—a step away from the two choices and toward humanity. I

still love my friends with whom I served and value their perspectives, desire for service, and love of country. Nonetheless, I do not believe in military solutions. And though I wish the activist community were much more organized and focused, my commitment to justice demands that I stand with those who are seeking, nonviolently, to change the status quo that maintains the United States in the number one position in the world, to the detriment and death of many in the Third World.

Reflecting upon my action several months later, I see now that it was, in a sense, a homecoming, both for the jacket and for myself. I gave the jacket back to whom it really belonged, to those who still believe that violence is a possible solution. In a class I once learned that Gandhi instructed soldiers to stay in the military if they still believed in the power of violence. He told them that it was their moral obligation to continue to use violence to defend others unless they became convinced that it did not work. Giving up my last jacket was a coming home for me because it was a letting go of the last vestiges of a hope that I held: hope that U.S. military involvement and instruction in the ways of war could have some outcome other than the killing of my brothers and sisters, and the sowing of seeds for more war. I laid down part of my history so that I could fully, with both hands, grasp active nonviolence as my means to change society and resolve conflicts.

And that is good, and I believe fully that nonviolence holds the answers. Still, the tiny voice—of my mother, myself, or soldiers—that accuses “betrayal” dies hard. Bertrand Russell sheds some light on this for me when he writes: “Conventional people are roused to fury by departures from convention, largely because they regard such departures as criticism of themselves.”<sup>2</sup> The military is based on

convention, and I had been a faithful follower. Departing from that has been difficult indeed.

It is natural to want to believe in our government, to want to support it, to want to believe that everything will be all right, and that we are the “good guys” in the fight against evil. The annual protest at the School of the Americas, and perhaps any nonviolent action that calls for an evaluation of the present system, is likely, then, to be met with anger and a sense of betrayal by the mainstream. I want to support and believe in our government as well, but my experience of living in El Salvador in 1992 after the conclusion of the U.S.-supported twelve-year civil war won’t allow me to do so fully.

Nor will the knowledge of some of our government’s past and current activities in Latin America, which include: support of brutal dictatorships in Haiti and Nicaragua, the staging of coups in Guatemala and Chile, the attempt to overthrow a democratically elected government in Nicaragua, and the past teaching of torture and the continuation of teaching of Low Intensity Conflict (i.e., war against an unsupportive civilian population) at the School of the Americas to Latin American soldiers. The United States has claimed our interventions and military aid are necessary to maintain security in the region.

From my research and experience of living in El Salvador, Colombia, and Mexico, I saw that our government has often confused economic opportunities with national security. And it is the poor of Latin America who pay the price. By putting our economic interests before the rights of the poor and training soldiers in those countries in the ways of Low Intensity Conflict, we betray the principles of freedom and democracy upon which our country was founded.

I am left with the question: Who has betrayed whom? As a cadet I was required to memorize a speech by Douglas MacArthur that extolled the virtues of duty, honor, and country. I hold those values dear, more so today than when I was at the Academy, for I have seen firsthand the price that many pay for freedom.

When I am tempted to feel that I have betrayed my brothers and sisters in arms by speaking out against a military institution, I remember what I have learned and seen in the past ten years, and know that I betray my brothers and sisters in Latin America, and my integrity, if I fail to speak out. The values of duty, honor, and country are slowly losing their luster by wave after wave of exploitation by our government of the peoples of the world, especially in the Global South. Betrayal of those values comes not with my separating myself from the military, but with my failure to do so.

## NOTES

1. Laura Slattery et al., *Engage: Exploring Nonviolent Living* (Long Beach, CA: Pace e Bene Nonviolence Service, 2005). This book is described as “a study program for learning, practicing, and experimenting with the power of creative nonviolence to transform our lives and our world.” This and similar titles are available at <https://paceebene.org/>.
2. Bertrand Russell, *The Conquest of Happiness* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1930), 131.

## Resisting the War Against the Poor

by Charles J. Liteky



Charles J. Liteky served as a chaplain with the U.S. Army from 1966-1971; he was known to the men in his company as Fr. Angelo. In November 1968 he received the prestigious Congressional Medal of Honor from President Lyndon Johnson, for actions performed in the Bien Hoa Province of Vietnam.<sup>1</sup> Perhaps the best way to introduce Charlie is by quoting a few excerpts from that citation:

*The President of the United States of America, in the name of Congress, takes pleasure in presenting the Medal of Honor to Captain (Chaplain) Charles James Liteky . . . , for conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty . . . . Chaplain Liteky was participating in a search and destroy operation when Company A came under intense fire from a battalion size enemy force. Momentarily stunned from the immediate encounter that ensued, the men hugged the ground for cover. Observing two wounded men, Chaplain Liteky moved to within 15 meters of an enemy machinegun position to reach them, placing himself between the enemy and the wounded men. When there was a brief respite in the fighting, he managed to drag them to the relative safety of the landing zone. . . . In a magnificent display of courage and leadership, Chaplain Liteky began moving upright through the enemy fire, administering last rites to the dying and evacuating the wounded. . . . On several occasions when the landing*

*zone was under small arms and rocket fire, Chaplain Liteky stood up in the face of hostile fire and personally directed the medivac helicopters into and out of the area. . . . Upon the unit's relief on the morning of 7 December 1967, it was discovered that despite painful wounds in the neck and foot, Chaplain Liteky had personally carried over 20 men to the landing zone for evacuation during the savage fighting.<sup>2</sup>*

Charlie left the priesthood in 1975, worked with veterans in drug rehab and benefits counseling, and married activist Judy Balch in 1983. Judy would play a significant role in inspiring Charlie to critically examine U.S. foreign policy. In 1986, Charlie returned his Congressional Medal of Honor to the U.S. government as a personal protest of the deadly U.S. interventions throughout Central America. Regarding that decision, he stated: "In 1968, I was awarded the Medal of Honor for saving lives. In 1986, my conscience called me to return it to help save other lives, those of Latin Americans." He served two terms in federal prison for nonviolent protests of U.S. policy, particularly the existence of the School of the Americas.

Judy Liteky died on August 20, 2016, and Charlie followed on January 20, 2017. His memoir, titled *Renunciation: My Pilgrimage from Catholic Military Chaplain, Hawk on Vietnam, and Medal of Honor Recipient to Civilian Warrior for Peace*,<sup>3</sup> was released at his memorial in March 2017 by friends who had helped Charlie complete that project.

Charlie wrote the following narrative for the 2002 edition.

**I**n the summer of 1966 I joined the U.S. Army. I was 35 years old, 16 years senior to most of the young men answering the draft call to serve God and country. I was a Catholic priest, six years ordained

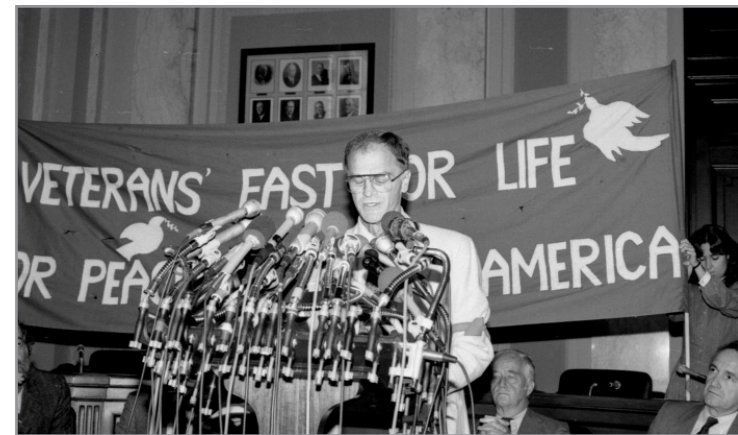
and answering a different call: a religious call to support young men in the prime of their youth, who were willing to risk their lives without question for a cause called “freedom and democracy,” in a place called Vietnam.

My first assignment as an Army chaplain was to a basic-training center located at Fort Benning, Georgia, one of many nationwide first stops for 18-year-old and over draftees. I was to provide their spiritual and sometimes psychological support. I was a priest in camouflage, recognizable as a minister only by small black crosses sewn on to my fatigue shirt collar. Politically, I was a clerical hawk, the worst kind of political hawk, because we have brought moral sanction to given military endeavors.

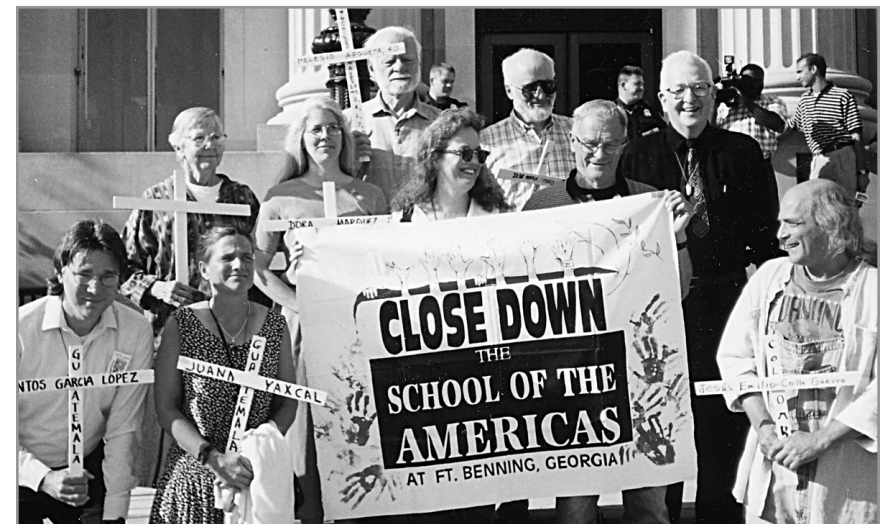
At that time I believed in the “just war” position as it was taught by the Catholic Church. I considered any war against communism just. I knew little to nothing about Vietnam and its centuries-long struggle to free itself from foreign domination: first by the Chinese, then the French, the Japanese, and the French again, before the U.S. arrived. To the Vietnamese we were just one more in a long line of



Charles “Fr. Angelo” Liteky, Army Chaplain (Captain) of the 3/7<sup>th</sup> Brigade, 199<sup>th</sup> Light Infantry Division, with Gipper. Photo courtesy of Paul Phillips, who was with the Delta Company, 3/7<sup>th</sup> Brigade, 199<sup>th</sup> Light Infantry.



Charlie at Capitol Hill press conference On October 7, 1986; it was Day 37 of their water-only Veterans’ Fast for Life. Photo courtesy of Bill Becker; see <http://www.williamgbecker.com/veteransfast.html>.



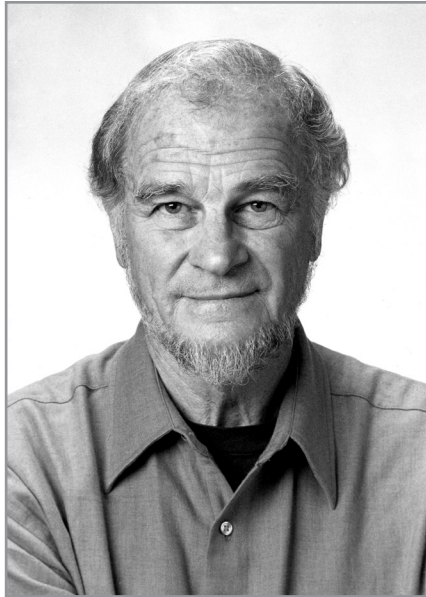
Charlie Liteky and Margaret Knapke hold sign in front of courthouse after sentencing of SOA-10 in June 2000 for civil disobedience at Ft. Benning, GA. Other members of the SOA-10 are: the late John Honeck with Judy Bierbaum (left front); Sister Megan Rice, Kathleen Fisher, Gerhard Fischer, Rev. Brooks Anderson, and the late Rev. Charles Butler (rear); and Tom Bottolene (right front). SOA Watch photo.

colonial powers engaged in the selfish search for wealth and power. We condemned communism for its total control over people's lives, yet the injustice of colonialism was tolerated without negative comment.

By the time I realized what I had done by supporting and participating in the Vietnam War, it was too late to be anything but sorry. I'll carry the burden of that sorrow for the rest of my life. Literally millions of lives were wasted:

Vietnamese, Laotian, Cambodian, Australian, Korean, and American. Most of the killed and wounded were noncombatants: old men and women, young boys and girls, mothers and infants. I spent most of my time writing letters of condolence to wives and mothers of young men killed in action. Memorial services conducted in forward base camps became routine. Gradually I became accustomed to the pain and suffering war creates; I left the Army in 1971 with my humanity severely damaged.

The war was winding down in the early '70s. No one in or out of the military wanted it to go on. It was a lost cause. Finally, a U.S. military intervention had gone sour. The bitter taste of defeat has



Charlie Liteky in 2001, after completing one-year sentence at Lumpkin Federal Prison Camp for civil disobedience at Ft. Benning, GA (personal photo).

remained in the mouths of military and political participants to this day. A kind of intervention paranoia called "the Vietnam syndrome" has settled over the nation that causes politicians and military leaders to be wary of sending fragile American youth on military excursions anywhere. President George Bush, Sr., tried to put the Vietnam syndrome to rest after the Gulf War victory, but the syndrome will never fade away entirely as long as there is one Vietnam vet alive with his or her memory intact.

Thousands of Vietnam vets had their wake-up call either while they were still in Vietnam or shortly after their return to the States. (I was not one of them. I wish I had been. It would have made my personal failure easier to live with.) Those vets came to the realization that the war was not about "freedom and democracy," but about U.S. economic interests. Enraged at the government that had deceived them and robbed them of their youth, they threw their combat medals at the Capitol in Washington, DC.

My moment of truth did not come until 10 years after the Vietnam War had ended. It happened in the middle of a civil war in the little Central American country of El Salvador. I was with ten Vietnam veterans on a fact-finding trip regarding atrocities reportedly committed by the Salvadoran Army. Women seated in a semicircle—white-shawled and black-dressed, young and old—were holding photographs of mutilated male bodies, given to them by the military as visual aids to help them identify their mysteriously missing sons and husbands.

Those horror stories told by simple peasant women (stories implicating my government and my fellow citizens) finally crashed through the emotional defenses I had built around my psyche.

I could no longer protect myself by denying the harsh realities of war. Suppressed memories of Vietnam came rolling back like angry waves and finally reached the guarded shores of my consciousness. As I began to wake up, I prayed for the courage to face this hard fact: that I had been a moral supporter of an immoral war in Vietnam.

During the seeming millisecond between my wake-up call in El Salvador to the present moment, actually a time span of 17 years, I have been trying to make up for the unquestioned trust I placed in the political leaders of the Vietnam era. Certainly I was not alone in my near-blind trust. To my knowledge, not a single military chaplain of any denomination spoke out against the immorality of the Vietnam War. (This says something about the spiritual poverty of us all.) I had heard the dissenting voices of clergy and laity at home, but I reasoned that they just did not understand. Ironically, I had been the ignorant one, calling the informed ignorant.

Now I spend the majority of my time reading, writing, speaking, and protesting about U.S. foreign policies that create death, injury, and destruction—by direct and indirect intervention—in Third World countries. It is typical in these countries for 1-2% of the population to control 90% of the wealth, forcing the rest of the people to live in what amounts to economic slavery to assure the comfort of the wealthy.

The poor majority live their short lives on a mere survival level; they have little to no healthcare or opportunities for education. But those poor, whose lives revolve around procuring daily nutritional requirements for themselves and their families, can endure only so much. Personal dignity demands that they fight for their lives, rather than gradually die of starvation and the diseases that accompany malnutrition.

What do we in the United States do for our impoverished neighbors to the south, to help them in their daily struggle for survival? The U.S. government equips and trains their militaries in state-of-the-art methods of counterinsurgency (also called Low Intensity Conflict), designed to keep the poor in line. The taxpayer pays for this military education. U.S. national interest is the end that justifies any means, despite whatever policymakers might say about the plight of the poor! Just as “whatever it takes” is often used in the military when orders are given to carry out a mission, so also foreign policy is drafted without scruples.

In 1990 I heard about the existence of a U.S. military educational institution called the School of the Americas, located at Fort Benning, Georgia—the same post where I had begun my career as Army chaplain in 1966. The purpose of the SOA has always been to train Latin American officers, so that they can implement U.S. foreign policy in Latin America more effectively. I already knew enough about U.S. policy in El Salvador and Nicaragua to sense the sinister role of the SOA; further research revealed the school’s sordid history, with literally hundreds of graduates cited for human-rights abuses throughout the region. These abuses were at odds with stated U.S. policy objectives as well as the SOA’s human-rights rhetoric, but they were perfectly consistent with what I knew of Low Intensity Conflict as a tool for maintaining an economic hierarchy.

Today many U.S. citizens are waking up to the reality of what our military is being used for (namely, the undermining of attempts by the poor to organize against their oppression), and we are appalled. In the spirit of resisting the tyranny that gave rise to our own nation, we should help rather than hinder the efforts of the poor to struggle for a life free of economic slavery.

In Vietnam I was on the wrong side of a protracted war against the poor; today I'm determined to be on the right side. I will continue to work for and with the poor, resisting First World economic dominance that is currently ensured by U.S. military support and training. Step One is to close the School of the Americas at Fort Benning, Georgia.

## NOTES

1. Chaplain (Captain) Charles "Angelo" J. Liteky receiving Medal of Honor from President Lyndon B. Johnson, November 19, 1968, C-SPAN3, American History TV, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1\\_zgRki7C-w](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1_zgRki7C-w).
2. Medal of Honor Citation for Chaplain (Captain) Charles J. Liteky, The Hall of Valor Project, <https://valor.militarytimes.com/hero/441>.
3. Charles J. Liteky, *Renunciation: My Pilgrimage from Catholic Military Chaplain, Hawk on Vietnam, and Medal of Honor Recipient to Civilian Warrior for Peace* (CreateSpace Publishing, 2017), <http://www.charlieliteky.org/his-book-renunciation.html>.

## Keeping Vigil at "The Gate"

by Jeff Moebus



Jeff Moebus, a two-tour Vietnam veteran, retired from the U.S. Army in 1998 after 28 years of service. On June 3, 2001, Moebus completed a 52-day fast and vigil at the front gate of Fort Benning: he had fasted one day for every week that Congressional Medal of Honor recipient Charlie Liteky was serving in federal prison at that time, for his SOA protests at Fort Benning. Jeff named two purposes driving the fast and vigil: "to offer up a personal sacrifice as an act of remembrance, repentance, and reconciliation for all victims of the SOA/WHINSEC," and "to bring spiritual and faith-based forces to bear on the process by which the SOA/WHINSEC either will be transformed into an agent and agency of true peace, justice, liberty, equality, reconciliation, and love—or will be closed down."

Later that same year—"two weeks to the minute after the first plane hit the first tower" on 9/11—Moebus commenced another fast, this time in Jackson Square, across from the cathedral in the heart of the French Quarter of Old Towne New Orleans. "OPERATION ISAIAH 2:4: A Fast and Prayer Vigil for Peace, Justice, Truth, Repentance, and Reconciliation" occurred in two installments, the first one for seven days and the second for 23 days. (Jeff was interviewed during his fast by Rox Media.)<sup>1</sup>

In 2004, Jeff attempted to launch a nationwide campaign to bring impeachment charges against "the Cheney/Bush regime" for its "dereliction of duty and responsibility in its failure to first prevent and then stop the Terror Event of September 11, 2001."

Jeff and his wife, Kathy, lost most everything during Katrina in 2005, and they moved to the San Francisco Bay. Kathy died there in 2008, following her “10-year War with cancer”—first of the breast and ultimately of the liver.

Jeff relocated to Sitka, Alaska, in 2012, where he is co-founder of Veterans Against War (Sitka Platoon)—which is the descendant of Vietnam Veterans Against Another Vietnam, launched back on the streets of New Orleans during OPERATION ISAIAH 2:4.

Jeff wrote the following journal entries during his fast at “The Gate” at Fort Benning, in April, May, and June of 2001.

**T**he Mass Reading today was from the Acts of the Apostles, and was about Saul’s conversion experience that left him temporarily blind and ultimately Paul. It called to mind another conversion experience, the one that has led me from the act of retiring from the Army after 28 years of service (22 on active duty) as a master sergeant, to the fact of getting a ban-and-bar letter from the commanding general at Fort Benning for “crossing the line” at the November 2000 SOAW Vigil, all in the span of a little more than two years.

In 1992, I stumbled across some “alternative” websites that viewed Christopher Columbus’ action not as a “discovery” but as an “invasion,” and not as the bringing of “civilization” to a “new world,” but as the onslaught of exploitation, enslavement, and extermination in the name of “Christian civilization.” This was a view of history that was completely alien to me, was vaguely unsettling, and was, in fact, the beginning of the end of my life as a centurion in Empire.

Fast forward to 1994. There is an Indian Uprising in a place called Chiapas down at the extreme southeastern end of Mexico, hard up against Guatemala. It is linked to the implementation of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and introduces the Internet



Jeff fasting and vigiling at Ft. Benning’s main gate, June 2001 (personal photo).

as a weapon to be used by peoples in resistance. I am sucked in by a blizzard of Zapatista information about the root causes of their rebellion. I am introduced to concepts, institutions, organizations, and worldviews that are completely alien to my sheltered perspective on life at the end of the 20th century, including neoliberalism, globalization, free trade, and structural adjustment programs. Again fast forward to 1999. It is June in Anchorage, Alaska. I am by now retired. The plight of the Native Alaskan jumped off the streets of Anchorage and launched me into a crash course on the history and outcome of the interaction between the Indigenous and the invaders of that particular part of the world.

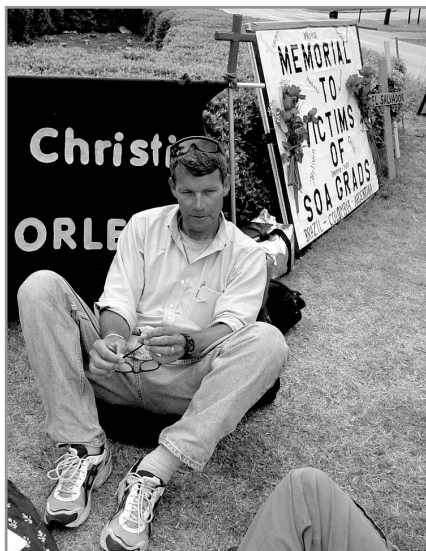
Next thing I knew, it was Thanksgiving 1999, and I was in Chiapas on a human-rights/environmental-justice delegation sponsored by the Mexican Solidarity Network, the Rainforest Action Alliance, and ACERCA (Action for Community and Ecology in the Regions of Central America). . . . The Empire that crucified Jesus is the same Empire that Columbus worked for, and is the same Empire that is

crucifying the oppressed, marginalized, impoverished, and wretched of the earth, and the earth itself.



WOULD JESUS CARRY an M-16 against the farmers in Colombia? Would he teach others how to use one? Can a body, mind, and heart trained to kill a neighbor still have the ability to follow the central Christian commandment to LOVE that neighbor? These are questions I want to discuss with the good people who pass by this gate, who take courses on this base, and who live in this town.

The only reason that Empire is still in business is because it has the power and might of the military force at its disposal. . . . I am coming to believe more than ever that it is possible to take back the planet, one step—one heart and mind and soul—at a time. And the place to begin is with the soldier. I will be inviting Fort Benning soldiers to consider alternatives to military service, including conscientious-objector status. If we could get even one Latin American or U.S. soldier (or one of the civilians employed here) to rethink his (or her) profession and how she or he is being used as a cog in a vast, monstrous machine, we will have taken a step toward victory. It's really just a matter of consciousness-raising, no?—for everybody.



Moment of repose at Ft. Benning fast, June 2001 (personal photo).



Jeff at September 2001 fast in New Orleans, shortly after the 9/11 attacks. Video-frame image by Bart Everson, <https://barteverson.com/>.

THE REAL ADVERSARY is the worldview that generates U.S. political, economic, military, and diplomatic policy and action toward Latin America. So why am I doing the Fast and Prayer Vigil here and not in Washington, DC? Because the ghosts of the victims of the SOA/WHINSEC hang out at the Fort Benning Road Gate,

and they need comfort and solace, solidarity and support. But, above all, they need prayerful and reflective action. I have realized that when Judy Liteky called The Gate “a sacred place,” it wasn’t because of what the living have done there, but because of what the dead cannot do there.



I CONFESS A need to “feel good about myself.” I confess a greater need to feel good about my country and what it does to the crucified peoples of Latin America. I confess a desire to be able to look at the relationship that exists between the United States and the masses of Latin America and not see expropriation, exploitation, enslavement, and extermination as methodology and objective.



I AM SIGNED on as a GI Rights Network counselor. Our task is to provide counsel to U.S. service members and their families who are confronting difficulties and are looking for ways to address and solve those difficulties. I got my first GI Rights Network call last evening: a

young Benning soldier and his family confronting some unpleasant realities about life in the Army. We had a good initial chat, and then we spoke for almost two hours as I laid out for him his options, the process and procedure for pursuing each option, and possible outcomes. It kind of reminded me of back when I was an Inspector General in the Army, serving as something of an ombudsman for GIs confronting the system.



THE NEWS FROM Quebec weighs on the heart and the mind. The Summit of the Americas is laying the final framework for establishment of the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA). . . . The necessary documents have been signed and strategies have been established to ensure implementation of the FTAA by 2005. . . .

The vision articulated by President William Taft in 1912 thus moves closer to realization: “The day is not far distant when three Stars and Stripes at three equidistant points will mark our territory, one at the North Pole, one at the Panama Canal, and one at the South Pole. The whole hemisphere will be ours in fact as, by virtue of our superiority of race, it already is ours morally.” Taft went on to describe the imperative of U.S. foreign policy in the rest of the hemisphere as likely including “active intervention to secure for . . . our capitalists opportunity for profitable investment.”<sup>2</sup>

Similarly the mission statement of the U.S. Southern Command, which has strategic and tactical operational responsibility for everything south of the Rio Grande, includes the following terminology: “protecting the supply of strategic natural resources and access to the markets.”<sup>3</sup>

The only way that Empire will realize the envisioned free trade zone in the Western Hemisphere—from the North Pole to the South Pole—is if it is enforced by state-of-the-art military and national security state repression, terror, and tyranny. It is the worldview that is attempting to implement the FTAA that our minds must grasp if we are to understand why the SOA/WHINSEC exists.



YESTERDAY’S PRAYER BOOK offering is from Latin America, and is gripping in its simplicity and its power: “O God, to those who have hunger, give bread; and to those who have bread, give the hunger for justice.” I am forced at least daily to confront my status as one of the Comfortable, the Complacent, and the Complicit, and to ask hard questions about what I intend to do to change that.



BREAD NOT STONES. At approximately 8:04 this morning, the voice of the people was most definitely heard as we cranked up the Fast and Prayer Vigil at the Fort Benning Road Gate. Next to the sign showing the numerical Day of the Fast is a board carrying the Message of the Day. It is, and has been for several days now, “BREAD NOT STONES.”

The message is that the oppressed, marginalized, impoverished peoples of Latin America (and Africa and Asia and Oceania and Europe and North America, while we’re at it) do not need Stones; they need Bread. They don’t need soldiers trained in the art and science of Low Intensity Conflict, counterinsurgency, or counter-drug commando operations. They need teachers and nurses and

doctors and sanitation engineers and carpenters and plumbers and clean water and food and land to grow it on. Well, you get my drift. At any rate, at approximately 8:04 a.m., somebody responded to the message. As the in-coming traffic onto Fort Benning barreled by, somebody tossed a loaf of Nature's Own 100% Whole Wheat Bread at the sign (or me, I guess). And sped on by.



ADORNING THE HUGE sign announcing that you are entering Fort Benning is the emblem of The Infantry Center, a blue shield with a vertical (point up) bayonet emblazoned on it and the words "FOLLOW ME" arcing above the blade. For 11 days now, I've been staring at that and wondering why it bothers me so. Suddenly, it hit me.

I have one of those Bibles-on-a-CD that lets you do word searches. Punching in "follow me," I found what I thought I remembered: Jesus had used that exact phrase on no less than 18 occasions during his public ministry as recorded in the Gospels. This is another reason to be here at Benning: to offer a countervailing tendency to all those hearts and minds being filled with the idea that "Follow Me" is a war cry, a summons to advance into the teeth of combat and to close with and kill the enemy.

In point of fact, "Follow Me" is a peace song, a summons to advance into the teeth of a world gone mad in the pursuit of and service to idols, and to close with and transform, through revolutionary nonviolent love, thy enemy. Being here may help one or two of these young soldiers recognize or remember this simple fact.



TODAY IS A water-only fast day in honor and remembrance of the third anniversary of the assassination of Guatemalan Bishop Juan Gerardi. He was assassinated two days after the publication of the *Recovery of the Historical Memory Project (REMHI)* report,<sup>4</sup> which documents two decades of terror in that country at the hands of the military and its paramilitary allies. More than 150,000 people were killed and another 50,000 detained and disappeared during the period. Bishop Gerardi had ordered the report as a means to uncover the truth and begin the process of forgiveness and reconciliation.

One of the men to be tried for his murder, Colonel Byron Disrael Lima Estrada, is a graduate of the SOA who then went on to head the D-2 Military Intelligence agency at the time of the genocide campaign in Guatemala's civil war. The policies and actions carried out during the civil war by the Guatemalan government through its military and associated paramilitary forces were simply a continuation of the process begun in 1954, when the U.S. overthrew a democratically elected government at the behest of United Fruit and other transnational corporate interests. The threat of democracy in Latin America was just beginning to emerge back then. . . . Bishop Juan Gerardi was murdered for daring to seek, uncover, expose, and declare the truth. I fast in his honor and memory.



HAD AN INTERESTING variety of drop-ins today. One was a young lieutenant waiting to start Ranger school next week who actually knew quite a bit about Chiapas, NAFTA, and the Zapatista uprising, and who agreed that the FTAA will undoubtedly bring about similar upheavals throughout the rest of Latin America. I could sense that he viewed that prospect from the perspective of job security. I couldn't

help but wonder how his young wife seated in the back seat, lovingly tending to their 3-month-old baby, viewed the matter.



A QUESTION FROM Fr. César Jerez Gavan, SJ, on the occasion of a commencement address in the United States (Jerez was the Jesuit Provincial in Central America and a very close, trusted advisor and friend of Archbishop Romero): “Do you plan to use your degree for your own profit, be it profit in the form of money, power, status, or respect? . . . Will you become people who use your knowledge for the furtherance of justice, or live the ‘good life’ of manipulated, unconcerned people . . . , who grant honorary degrees to people from the Third World, but refuse to join them in the fight for justice and liberty . . . ?”

And an observation from Fr. Jon Sobrino (the Salvadoran liberation theologian who survived the Jesuit massacre in 1989 only because he was out of the country at the time): “Those who respond to the suffering of the poor often recover in their own life the deep meaning they thought they had lost; they recover their human dignity by becoming integrated into the pain and suffering of the poor. From the poor they receive, in a way they hardly expected, new eyes for seeing the ultimate truth of things and new energies for exploring unknown and dangerous paths. . . .”



THE THEOLOGY OF liberation and the theology of nonviolence together can and will defeat the theology of Empire. I know that like I know that the sun will rise in the east tomorrow morning. We just

have to figure out how to open up the space to permit that to happen, to be able to receive the grace that is simply waiting to be unleashed. Articulating and living the Gospel in peace and social-justice work can be formidably challenging if not outright tricky; few of us in North America have ever been really exposed to the connection, at least in the ways that Latin Americans have. These are more ways that the impoverished peoples of those lands have untold wealth to offer us.

## NOTES

1. Jeff Moebus in 2001 Rox Media interview (aired in 2002), <https://rox.com/media/nopeace/>. Jeff starts at 10:07 minutes.
2. William Howard Taft, as quoted by Eduardo Galeano in *Open Veins of Latin America: Five Centuries of the Pillage of a Continent*, trans. Cedric Belfrage (New York, NY: Monthly Review Press, 1974), 121. (Reissued by same, 1997), 107.
3. Editor’s note: U.S. Southern Command’s current mission statement has been revised. Earlier statements are archived; see <https://www.southcom.mil/About/History/>.
4. Human Rights Office of the Archdiocese of Guatemala (ODHAG), *Guatemala: Nunca Más! (Never Again!): Recovery of Historical Memory Project* (Guatemala City: ODHAG, 1999). First published in USA in Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1999.

## For a Mother Who Lost Five Sons in El Salvador

*by Lil Corrigan (writing for herself and Bill Corrigan)*



William James Corrigan was born in 1920 and grew up in Rhode Island. He joined the Navy several years after high school, in 1942. His service included Flight Training at Pensacola, Florida, and Aviation Radio at the Naval Air Technical Training Center in Millington, Tennessee. He was also stationed at Banana River, Florida, and San Diego, California.

Lillian Kamack Corrigan was born in 1923 in Connecticut; she moved to Atlanta, Georgia, when she was 12 years old. After Catholic high school and business school, she joined the Navy WAVES at age 20. She met Bill at Radio School in Millington, Tennessee—where she worked in the code room. They married while both were stationed in Florida.

After the war, they raised four children in Atlanta. Bill attended Emory University, graduating in Political Science. He then worked for Lockheed as an engineer. That position took the Corrigan family to Iran from 1976 to 1979, when Khomeini came to power. When not raising their children, Lil spent a lot of time volunteering—both with handicapped children in Iran and disadvantaged children in the United States. Both Lil and Bill were steadfast social activists—and that activism included a two-month prison sentence by Bill for a nonviolent act of resistance at Fort Benning, Georgia. (Arguably, Lil served it as well.)

Beginning in early 2003, Bill and Lil protested weekly in the Marietta Square (in Marietta, Georgia) against the war in Iraq.

When Bill became too weak to stand at the protest, he sat on a park bench with his sign: **SUPPORT THE TROOPS, NOT THE POLICY**. Bill died in Marietta on February 25, 2005, at the age of 84. Lil followed on March 14, 2013, at the age of 90, in Kennesaw, Georgia. In her last years, Lil remained engaged in social-justice concerns and couched them in a growing interest in cosmology.

Lil wrote the following narrative in 2002.

**W**e, Bill and Lil, are part of the so-called “Greatest Generation.” The phrase tends to romanticize World War II and denotes a sense of moral goodness, but war is neither good nor moral. It is dirty, mean, painful, and lonesome. Yet we both went off as young people do—patriotic, idealistic Americans to serve in a war we both believed in.

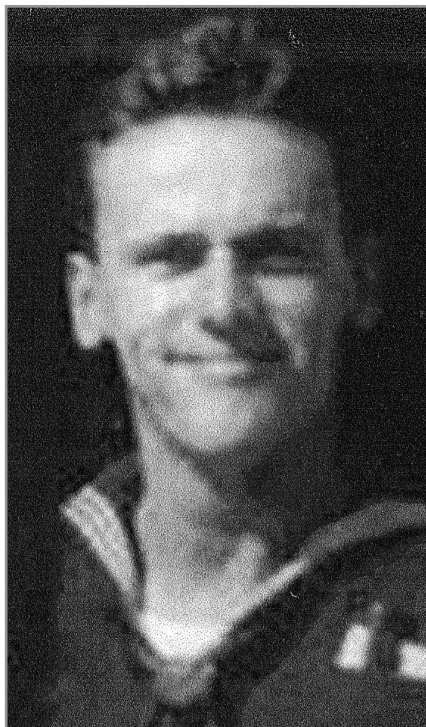
We met in the Navy in Aviation Radio School; courted at Memphis, Jacksonville, and Banana River (now Cape Canaveral); and were married in St. Edward’s Catholic Chapel at the Naval Air Station in Jacksonville, Florida. As we walked back from the altar, we looked up and noticed German prisoners-of-war sweeping the choir loft after our 8:00 a.m. Mass.

War becomes a defining moment in one’s life. Looking back, we think not only of our own experiences, but of all those friends and relatives who were deeply affected, physically and mentally, by that war. No one comes back from war unchanged. However, everyone wants to put “his war” behind him. And so like many other veterans at that time, Bill came home to Georgia to get his college education under the GI Bill, while I settled into marriage and raising the growing family. We knew everything was beautiful and that we would be the perfect family.

Things didn't go quite so smoothly, neither in the family nor in society. The South was in turmoil. Black people were rising up to demand their civil rights. This was a time of much soul-searching for us. We were very affected by Vatican II (convened by Pope John XXIII) and the Civil Rights Movement led by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

We became active locally, and our realization of the unjust social conditions experienced by the poor deepened. The assassination of Dr. King moved us deeply, and I became very involved with the Poor People's Campaign (which Dr. King had been organizing when he was killed) in Atlanta and Macon, Georgia. Eventually I went to Washington, DC, for Solidarity Day; Bill stayed home with the kids.

In the 1980s we became increasingly involved with the peace movement, and especially followed the events taking place in Latin America. In a letter to Senator Sam Nunn dated February 27, 1981, shortly after the assassination of Archbishop Romero, I wrote: "... This administration has said it intends to downplay 'human rights' and to concentrate on 'terrorism.' How foolish is that talk, when the



Bill Corrigan early in his Navy career  
(personal photo).



Lillian Kamack as Navy WAVE  
(personal photo).

abuse of human rights is terrorism. Though the rape and killing of four American women (three of them nuns) in El Salvador was an act of the greatest terrorism, the administration has been strangely silent. . . ." That statement in '81 on terrorism seems rather prophetic today.

Bill and I participated in several trips to Central America in the '80s. We saw with our own eyes and heard with our own ears what U.S.-sponsored war was doing to

the innocent and poor people of those countries. We witnessed not only war against the poor, but also war against "Liberation Theology." We returned home committed to working for social justice. We saw the repression in Latin America as yet more oppression of people of color, as well as their churches.

In early 1990 I wrote a letter to Congressman Joe Moakley, who had recently led a congressional investigative committee to El Salvador. After thanking Mr. Moakley (our beloved, late Congressperson) for his commitment to discerning the truth about the horrendous killing of the Jesuit priests in November 1989, I encouraged him to get a copy of the "Santa Fe Document." That document had influenced policy during the Reagan years, as well as Nelson Rockefeller's



Corrigans at vigil (SOA Watch photo).

opinion that the decision of the Latin American Catholic Bishops at Medellín—namely, to exercise a “preferential option for the poor,” what is known as Liberation Theology—was “not in the interest of the United States.”

Obviously the SOA/WHINSEC still thinks Liberation Theology is “not in the interest of the United States,” for as late as 1998 (and it’s probably still in use) a telling paper was distributed by the SOA’s Public Relations Department to visitors. In answer to the question, “Why the controversy over the school?” it says in part, “Many of the



Lil with friend Lynn McClintock at Ft. Benning vigil, in the early 2000s.  
Photo courtesy of Linda Panetta, <http://www.soawne.org/> and  
<https://www.opticalrealities.org/>.

critics supported Marxism-Liberation Theology in Latin America. . . .” That thinking in the 1980s led easily to the message painted on many walls in San Salvador: “Be a patriot, kill a priest.”

When Bill and I heard that Fr. Roy Bourgeois and some folks we knew were conducting a lengthy fast at the main gate of Fort Benning in 1990, we decided to join them for a few days. We learned of the largely unknown School of the Americas and its training of the Salvadoran military (including the soldiers who had killed those Salvadoran Jesuits in 1989). We have continued our presence at the gate every November since then, and our knowledge of the atrocities committed by the graduates of the school has grown considerably.

In 1995 Bill was arrested at Fort Benning for his participation in the reenactment of the killing of the Jesuit priests, their housekeeper, and her daughter. It was amazing how this small group of witnesses

had come together from all over the country—not knowing one another, but mutually committed to being a voice for justice. They became known as the SOA-13. Bill went to prison for two months, a first-time offender at age 76. During the trial he told Judge Elliott: “I enjoy a responsibility as a citizen of this country, and I want to show an example to my three sons who are here and my grandchildren, that if something is wrong you must do what you can to set it straight.”

He continued: “When my wife and I went to El Salvador in ’87, we went to a church and there was a lady weeping about the death of her five sons. They had all been killed by the military. She was saying in Spanish to us that she wanted us to become ambassadors of peace and go back to America and try to stop what was going on. It was very emotional.” Bill felt obligated to go onto the property of Fort Benning as her ambassador.

Bill and I saw many of our constitutional laws broken during this sad period in Central America. We learned from an article in *The Atlanta Constitution* of 5,000 U.S. forces who had fought secretly and illegally alongside the Salvadoran military. Some of those Americans died and were honored in a service at Arlington Cemetery in 1996. The article said in part: “Reports of firefights involving U.S. troops were kept secret, and field commanders were told in no uncertain terms not to nominate soldiers for combat awards.” I wrote a letter in response, published in the newspaper and titled “Political Tragedy”: “The enemies targeted under this ‘heroic’ policy are an archbishop, six Jesuit priests, and the entire unarmed village of El Mozote. As the awards were passed out, were some saved for the four American churchwomen who were raped and murdered by Salvadoran (and maybe U.S.) military?”

Sadly, Bill and I remember too well the terrorist hoses, dogs,

and clubs used on nonviolent people of color in the ’50s and ’60s in America. Sadly, we remember protesting the illegal terrorist *contra* army, which was inflicted by the U.S. government on Nicaragua. Sadly, we learned of the litany of death-squad killings and human-rights violations in El Salvador that were the result of terrorist training at the SOA/WHINSEC.

On September 11, 2001, our own country was devastated by mind-boggling terrorism. Our hearts have been broken, and our grief for those who died is great. Unfortunately our government reacted immediately with military retaliation—leaving no opportunity for thoughtful, nonviolent options for justice. We continually fail to see the history of violence that the U.S. has inflicted on other countries.

Martin Luther King, our greatest American prophet, said: “The ultimate weakness of violence is that it is a descending spiral, begetting the very thing it seeks to destroy. Instead of diminishing evil, it multiplies it.”<sup>1</sup> In his famous speech “Beyond Vietnam,” he spoke of confusing dissent with disloyalty; he called America “strange liberators”; he said America was on the “wrong side of world revolutions”; he called us to a “radical revolution of values”; he called “the greatest purveyor of violence in the world today . . . my own country.” But he also called for us to “Come home, America”—and he had a dream for America.<sup>2</sup>

Like Martin Luther King, Bill and I have a dream. We dream of a moral America that will hold every country and all suffering people “in our national interest.”

We dream of a generous, caring America capable of exporting our highest democratic values, freedom, and human rights for all people.

We dream of a self-critical America, a truthful America that can

acknowledge its complicity in crimes against humanity—with this honesty then leading us to repentance and reconciliation. We dream that SOA/WHINSEC will begin this process.

Then Bill and I can stand proudly as part of the “Greatest Generation.”

## NOTES

1. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., *Where Do We Go from Here: Chaos or Community?* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 2010), 64. First published by Harper & Row Publishers, Inc., 1967.
2. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., “Beyond Vietnam: A Time to Break Silence,” April 4, 1967, [https://www.crmvet.org/info/mlk\\_viet.pdf](https://www.crmvet.org/info/mlk_viet.pdf).

## The Making of a War Resister

by Jack Gilroy



Jack Gilroy joined the Naval Reserve while in high school and was discharged to allow his enlistment in the U.S. Army Infantry. After Army and college, Jack taught high school in upstate New York.

During the Vietnam War, Jack was told to “love it or leave it”—so Jack, his wife, Helene, and their four children emigrated to Australia where Jack taught high school in New South Wales. After shaking up the NSW Education Department with anti-nuke activities, Jack realized his real mission was to love his country and raise hell at home. He has been doing that ever since.

Jack’s human-rights activism includes writing provocative novels and plays. Among the latter are *Sentenced to Death for Not Killing: The Ben Salmon Story*<sup>1</sup> and *The Predator*, a killer-drone story, which has played at universities and other venues.

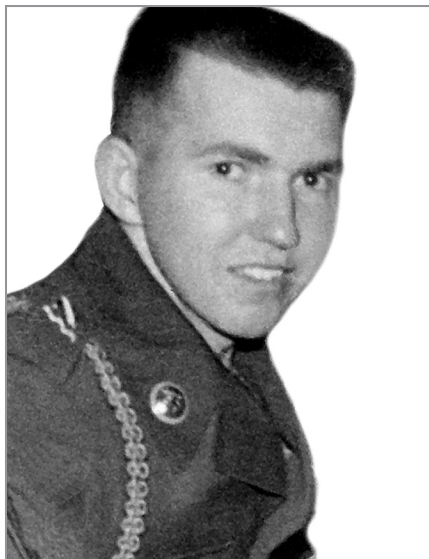
In 2014, Jack served three months in the Jamesville Correctional Facility in upstate New York, for participating in a nonviolent die-in at Hancock’s 174th Attack Wing drone base in Syracuse. He assures us he was not “corrected.”

Jack wrote the following narrative in 2002.

**O**n September 11, 2001, I was in federal prison serving a six-month term for protesting the teaching of terror by the United States government. My conviction was not for a felony but for a criminal misdemeanor—which was actually a petty offense. On two

occasions, I had walked across a white line at the roadway entrance to Fort Benning, Georgia. My first offense was carrying a coffin filled with petitions to close the United States Army School of the Americas (SOA). A few years later, I walked onto the post carrying a cross bearing the name of Maria Sánchez—a Central American woman, one of thousands of Latin Americans killed by graduates of the SOA.

Allenwood Prison Camp was my third federal prison since my sentencing in Columbus, Georgia. I was assigned to a job cutting metal pipes and flat iron frames for the Allenwood Federal Penitentiary. One of the guards told us of the attack on the Twin Towers. By the end of the day, the shock of the event was vibrating throughout the prison camp. By the following morning, I was called into a prison office and asked bluntly: “What does your organization think about yesterday’s attack?”



Jack Gilroy, U.S. Army (personal photo).



Jack and friend near the Czech border (personal photo).

I told the prison case manager that I couldn’t speak for the School of the Americas Watch, but if he wanted to know what I thought of the attack, I’d be glad to speak to the issue. I noted the horror of the criminal act and the need to find out the organizers and bring them to justice, to dig deep into the terror brought against our people.

Then I briefed the man on our own injustices: our Iraq sanctions policy and the intentional death of children by destroying Iraqi water reservoirs and sewage plants; our invasion and bombing of foreign countries since the end of World War II; and the countless CIA assassinations and government coups we have sponsored. I gave him a laundry list of nations—mostly poor, mostly people of color that we have attacked: Korea, China, Iran, South Vietnam, North Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Libya, Lebanon, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Honduras, Panama, Colombia, Grenada, Iraq, Somalia, Serbia, Sudan, and Afghanistan.

I was dismissed, but five minutes later I was called back to his office and two guards were waiting for me. I was taken to a lieutenant and he ordered me around like a drill sergeant taking a fresh recruit off a bus. I asked what was going on and was told to keep quiet. I’d learn soon enough, he said. Then he marched me to a clinic and made me strip naked for an inspection by a physician’s assistant.

“Why?” I asked. I was told that I may have been in a fight over the events of the previous day and they were looking for physical evidence. If I didn’t tell them the names of the other inmates, I would go to the hole. I told the lieutenant to send me to the hole; he would not get any information from me. “Put your clothes back on and come with me,” he ordered. Through the compound we went, the lieutenant at my side—as passing inmates looked on, aware that I was under house arrest.



Jack and Helene Gilroy, December 2001, shortly after his release from prison (personal photo).

A woman lieutenant, tall, in her thirties, polite and friendly, began an interrogation. “Tell me about your organization,” she said. “What organization?” I asked. “The organization that got you in federal prison,” she said. “My organization didn’t get me in prison; the United States government put me here.”

Later a captain interrogated and then dismissed me, telling me to go back to my unit and await movement to another prison. The deep irony of it all was that I—along with 23 others from SOA Watch—were at that very moment in prison because we had tried to stop the teaching of terrorism by the United States government to Latin American soldiers at the School of the Americas. And here I was, the only non-felon in the whole prison camp, yet the only one under suspicion for possibly being sympathetic to the 9/11 attackers! I followed the captain’s orders and awaited transfer to another prison. No one ever came.

In the following weeks, my job in a World War II bomb storage bunker—cutting iron bars and frames for prison windows—changed to constructing anti-truck bomb barriers around prison entrances. My fellow workers, mostly young Blacks, felt they were the victims of a war, the so-called War on Drugs. Many of them had already served five or more years with many more years of confinement ahead of them. None of them were violent; in fact, prison camps do not accept inmates with a record of violence. “I know what terrorism is,” said one man. “It’s sending me to prison for 19 years, keeping me from my family. It’s not being able to see my little girl go off to school and not being with my boy when he goes into high school.”

How could I disagree with the men? They admitted they had sold drugs to pay for their habit or to make a few dollars on the side. I thought back to my own childhood—three boys in one bed, no refrigerator or car, and an economic depression. I stole coal from the mine owners, as did most of my friends, and sold it door to door. The buyers knew it was stolen but they themselves were poor and knew a bargain. If I had grown up in a drug culture, I’d probably be selling drugs to make some cash myself. I could identify with these young men. They cried out for justice. They needed a sentence for treatment and care, not mere punishment.

Obviously, military and political leaders in our nation accept little responsibility for teaching terror. I thought about the military education given to Tim McVeigh, and how McVeigh had little feeling for the people he killed in Oklahoma City. McVeigh, a fellow decorated for his killings in Iraq, said the victims of Oklahoma were merely “collateral damage,” a U.S. military euphemism for the death of innocent people in war time.

McVeigh's execution came shortly before I was moved from the Atlanta Penitentiary to Petersburg Federal Prison in Virginia. My seat mate on the prison bus was a veteran of the Tet Offensive. He had loved the excitement of the war, but hated the U.S. government for what he was forced to do against the Vietnamese people. He went to prison shortly after returning from the war.

Then he went straight for 27 years—before robbing a bank with a sawed-off shotgun. “I learned how to handle myself in the infantry, but it never paid well. Now was my chance to get some bucks. I bought a new Harley and drove it all over Florida and Louisiana and visited every beer joint and whorehouse I found. Then I handed myself in. I found Jesus.”

Maybe it was sheer coincidence or maybe the Spirit was telling me something, but, weeks later, on the next 12-hour bus trip—my legs in irons, hands and arms in block cuffs—I sat next to a clean-cut but angry-eyed man of about 32 years. He said nothing for hours, but when he began his soliloquy he stared straight ahead and talked non-stop for a very long time. I had told the young man nothing of my School of the Americas Watch connection, but he had a lot to tell of his Ranger experiences.

He claimed he was one of the team that “kidnapped Manuel Noriega” in Panama. Were his tale and the other military ventures made up? Perhaps, but I don't believe so. He was not proud of what he had done. His voice and demeanor was one of shame and anger. Twenty years younger than my previous bus partner, his missions were all in Central and South America. He rattled off countries his Ranger team had hit: “Panama, Honduras, Nicaragua, Colombia.”

“What did you hit?” I asked.

“Buildings, villages. We had briefings before each mission.”



Jack fraternizing with “Billionaires for Bush” at SOA Watch vigil at Fort Benning, GA. Photo courtesy of Joyce Donohue.

“What did you do on these missions?”

He snapped his head my way and glared. It was one of the few eye-to-eye contacts we made. “Take out objective,” he snarled.

He then stared forward and told how his team usually jumped from landing helicopters but sometimes parachuted into target zones. He said they had Latin American officers with them, but that the only role those officers had was to observe and question the occasional prisoners. We talked about how he felt after his experiences. He said it was only after leaving the Army that he began a deep examination of his actions. I hesitated to ask him why he was in prison, but when I did he calmly turned toward me.

“I robbed a bank,” he said with a smile.

Meeting and sharing a seat with bank robbers was coincidental, but there was irony in their military experiences and their resulting hatred for the military. Professional psychologists might read their comments as compensation for their criminal behavior. But

I heard their stories as confessional: two pensive men in chains acknowledging their sins. I sat back and thought about my own military experiences during the Cold War.

I was with a combat infantry team that never saw combat. We thought we were ready because we trained constantly in the mountains of Austria and along the Czech border in Germany. We knew that if the Russians did come, they would roll over us. None of us wished for war but we often said that, if it came, we were ready to die. We had been programmed by our parents, school teachers, church, media, and government that the godless Russians had a design on Western Europe and, once they secured that, conquest of the United States of America would follow.

It wasn't until after my infantry experience that I began to question the United States' motives and actions. As a high school teacher in the '60s, I began to assist students who (unlike myself when I was a high school student) began to ask why we were killing people far from our homeland, people who posed no threat to us. Some of my students became conscientious objectors, a few went to Canada, many went to Vietnam—and five of my young men came home in body bags. I knew I had to speak for these young men. They became my epiphany, my reason for war resistance.

About 10 years ago, some of my students asked about those who had gone to Vietnam from our high school. "Some of them sat in the same seats you are sitting in," I told them. On their own, my students of the '90s found the names of the wasted high school graduates who had once sat in their seats. They raised money, purchased a huge granite boulder, and had a West Virginia foundry forge a brass plate that listed the names of the young men and these quotes:

**War loves to prey upon the young.**

—SOPHOCLES, 450 B.C.

**Older men declare war, but it is the youth  
that must fight and die.**

—HERBERT HOOVER, 1944 A.D.

#### NOTE

1. Jack Gilroy, *Sentenced to Death for Not Killing: The Ben Salmon Story*. Script available at: <http://www.bensalmon.org/uploads/8/2/5/7/82576010/sentencedtodeathbensalmon.pdf>.

## Refusing Complicity, Choosing Service

by Wayne Wittman



Wayne Wittman served in the U.S. Navy from 1948 to 1951. As a civilian, he wore many hats. He was employed as a State of Minnesota rehabilitation professional, and he was a Catholic deacon. An active trade unionist from 1958 to 1991, he was called by some in the St. Paul area “the conscience of the AFL-CIO.” For 20 years, he helped organize support for strikers and laid-off workers.

Wayne became critical of U.S. foreign policy during the Vietnam War; he joined Veterans For Peace (VFP) in 1987. He was a charter member of VFP Chapter 27 (Minneapolis) and chaired the VFP Chapter 27-SOA committee. He made numerous trips to Fort Benning, Georgia, to protest the existence of the School of the Americas, and he participated in solidarity delegations to Latin America. He was also a member of the Minnesota Alliance of Peacemakers (MAP); another VFP and MAP member described Wayne as “a gentle Lion.”

Wayne’s reach was truly global—and always local. Committed to Minnesota trade unionism to the very end, Wittman died on February 24, 2016, of a heart attack he suffered on a bus as he made his way home from a meeting of the State AFL-CIO Retiree Council. He was 86 years old.

Wayne wrote the following narrative in 2002.

“**N**ot to be served but to serve” was the theme of the St. Paul-Minneapolis Archdiocesan permanent diaconate ordination class of 1984. As a member of this class I thought I was a pretty good fit. I had been a Minnesota state employee as a rehabilitation counselor for 26 years. I really enjoyed helping people with disabilities find ways to remain independent. I was successful enough to be valued by my employer, and my supervisor had recommended me for the diaconate program three years earlier. The last of our five children had finished high school, my youngest daughter and her older brother were in college, and the older three had finished college and were employed. So the children would not be branded as “preacher’s kids.”

My wife, Joan, and I did not know what God had in store for us, but we both felt we would do the best we could with whatever came along. I had been an activist for opportunities for people with disabilities, a labor-union officer, and was active in opposing the Vietnam War—so I saw my ordination as a spiritual affirmation of my life choices and life style. I knew that I would be required to take a vow of obedience, but I did not think Archbishop Roach would require me to do anything that I couldn’t do, or that would be hurtful to the Church that I loved. I had taken an oath to obey the President of the United States when I enlisted in the Navy in 1948, so this wouldn’t be a new experience for me.

Born on September 11, 1929, I was 12 years old when the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941. I experienced our country going through this tremendous era of patriotic zeal, when we all seemed to be tuned in to the goal of defeating the Germans and the Japanese. As a teenager, I marked the progress of the war and

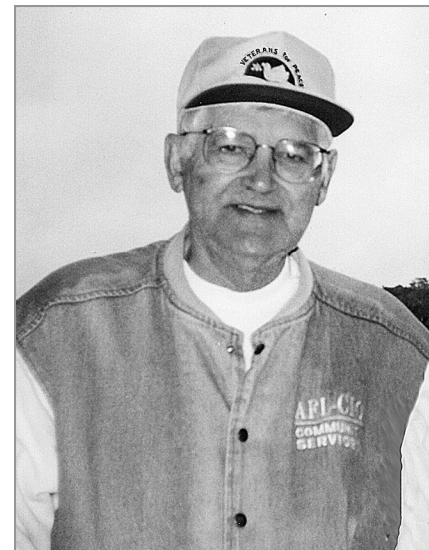


Navy corpsman Wayne Wittman with mother and sisters, August 1950 (personal photo).

I was impatient to get old enough so that I could do my duty and get into the military, as I saw my older acquaintances doing. In August 1945, when I was 15 years old, the war ended; my dream of having a military career was put on hold as my mother wanted me to finish high school.

I graduated from Humboldt (Iowa) Public High School on May 22, 1948, and I was sworn into the U.S. Navy on May 25, 1948.

I enlisted in the Navy as a “hospital recruit,” which meant that the Navy agreed that I would be sent to Hospital Corps school and become a hospital corpsman. I had some interest in studying medicine, and this would give me a feel for that profession, but I was looking at the Navy as a career. I went through boot camp and Hospital Corps school with no problem, and was assigned to Long Beach Naval Hospital and subsequently to the Naval Training Center in San Diego.



Wayne wearing his allegiance to Vets For Peace as well as the AFL-CIO (personal photo).

Coming from a poor family in a small town, I championed a Navy career as the most rewarding way for anyone to spend their life, even when I knew that the Marines used Navy corpsmen for their medics, and I had heard the Hospital Corps had the highest per capita casualty rate of any of the services. I had requested sea duty several times, but my request had been denied. I found that a serviceman in peacetime is

not appreciated like he is when there is war, and my war came on June 25, 1950, when North Korea invaded South Korea. On July 1, 1950, I was ordered to sea duty on a ship with the 7th fleet, bound for support of the UN forces in Korea.

I recall examining my government's response to the invasion of South Korea by North Korea, and our role in the United Nations' intervention, attempting to repel aggression according to the principles of the United Nations Charter. I felt our action was warranted if we were to have a world where nations respected each other's territorial integrity, which I thought was the most effective path to world peace. (This is a position I still hold and still think has the most promise for world peace.)

I loved the Navy and I was sorely disappointed when my Navy career ended, as I was found to have advanced pulmonary



Wayne bearing witness at Colombian Army post in 2010. From left, SOA Watch activists are Ed Kinane; Roy Bourgeois; Ann Tiffany; Fr. Joseph Mulligan, SJ; Wayne Wittman; Rebecca Kanner; Sr. Moira Kenny, RSM; and Margaret Knapke. Photo courtesy of Tom Bottolene, <http://www.circlevision.org/>.

tuberculosis, and the Navy found me physically unable to perform the duties of an active-duty hospital corpsman. After several years in the Veterans' Hospital in Minneapolis, Minnesota, I went to college and studied the social sciences in order to be a high school social-studies teacher. My studies included political science, economics, and history. I found the devastating effect of war on our world and our culture to have been a tragedy throughout history. But I was encouraged that we—as a world—had found principles that would allow us to avoid war, if we were persistent in applying them.

As a student I met Joan, and we got married and started having children. I finished college, got a job, and things were going along pretty normally. Then, in the latter part of the 1960s, I suddenly noted that my government was intervening in the internal affairs of another country. When that intervention became a full-scale war, I started to protest my government's actions in Vietnam. As a military veteran, I became a leader in our community's local protest

movement, especially in my church, my union, and my political party. There was a movement that I was a part of called Veterans For Peace. In 1973 our involvement in the Vietnam War finally ended, and I thought we surely had learned not to intervene in the internal affairs of other nations.

Then, as an activist in political affairs in the 1980s, I noted that my government had initiated actions in Nicaragua that were illegal, and that concerned me. I remembered that in the '60s and '70s people had doubted my credibility because I had not physically been to Vietnam, and this had handicapped me as a Vietnam War protester. So in February 1987 I took a travel seminar to El Salvador, Nicaragua, and Costa Rica. I was appalled at the oppression in El Salvador and my government's complicity in it. I also found that we were arming, paying, and supplying a force called the *contras*, whose role was to terrorize the population of Nicaragua and disrupt the democratically elected government of that country.

It seemed that the principles promoting peace, for which I had been willing to risk my life in the UN action repelling aggression in Korea, were now being violated by my government with impunity. I found that I was not alone, as other military veterans voiced the same concerns. There was an opportunity to join a veterans' peace-action team monitoring U.S. actions in Nicaragua. I joined in November 1987 to monitor a truce in Nicaragua, and while with this team I learned about a renewed organization called Veterans For Peace, Inc.

### **The Veterans For Peace Statement of Purpose:**

We, having dutifully served our nation, do hereby affirm our greater responsibility to serve the cause of world peace. To this end, we will work:

- to increase public awareness of the cost of war,
- to restrain our government from intervening, overtly and covertly, in the internal affairs of other nations,
- to end the arms race and to reduce and eventually eliminate nuclear weapons, and
- to abolish war as an instrument of international policy.

To achieve these goals, members of Veterans For Peace pledge to use nonviolent means and maintain an organization that is democratic and open, understanding that members are trusted to act in the best interests of the group for the larger purpose of world peace.<sup>1</sup>

THE VETERANS FOR Peace national convention in 1992 acted in support of nonviolent actions to close the School of the Americas at Fort Benning, which is adjacent to Columbus, Georgia. Steve McKeown, one of our VFP chapter members, then spearheaded an effort to take old discarded doors to various events in the Minneapolis-St. Paul area with the slogan "Shut the Door on the School of the Americas." Persons were asked to sign the doors as petitions, and the doors were taken to local congresspersons to petition them to close the SOA.

By June 1993 we had over 20 doors with more than 10,000 signatures and did not know how to use them. A decision was made to take the doors to Fort Benning and present them to the commandant of the SOA with our request to close the school. The

doors were loaded into a utility trailer and a contingency of 13 people in three vehicles journeyed to Columbus, Georgia. Fr. Roy Bourgeois was informed of our plan and arranged a reception with the local media. We arrived in Columbus, Georgia, on June 14, at which time we held a press conference and informed the Fort Benning personnel and the community of our plan to enter the fort the next day.

On Flag Day, June 15, we were met at the gate of Fort Benning and informed that, if we persisted in entering the fort, we would be arrested, fined, and imprisoned. We had not thought we would be stopped as we were just expressing our constitutional rights; instead our constitutional right to petition our government for redress of grievances was violated. We left the doors with Fr. Roy, but told the Army, "We will be back!"

Two months later at the national Veterans For Peace convention of 1993, our Minnesota Chapter 27 presented a resolution for a VFP national rally at the gates of Fort Benning in January 1994, which would call for closing the SOA. Fr. Roy Bourgeois was the keynote speaker at this convention, and our chapter was given special recognition for our "Close the SOA" effort. We have heard that *Newsweek* magazine picked up on the trip we made in June 1993 and later did the story "A School for Dictators," which appeared in their August 1993 issue.

Our Veterans For Peace chapter has continued to be an active participant in the effort to close the SOA, and many other groups in our community have taken leadership in the effort as well. Our VFP chapter was able to present a resolution calling for closing the SOA before the Minnesota AFL-CIO; it passed in Minnesota, later was presented to the National AFL-CIO, and subsequently has been adopted as their position. It is important that we continue to expose

the SOA, as it clearly shows how our foreign policy serves the “haves” and oppresses the “have-nots.” It is obvious now that the military in Latin America is used to oppress the poor and keep them from having a fair shake in life. We need to change this policy in order to promote world peace and justice and express concern for others—particularly the poor.

Many of us firmly believe that when we, the people of the United States, have the facts, we want to do the right thing. For us to be honored as a people, we need to examine our nation’s story; where we are less than honorable, we need to change and do what will promote life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness for everyone. Many of us—when we found out what was happening in Latin America, and recognized our complicity in the terrible oppression of the people—could not sit idly by and see such atrocity, intimidation, and human degradation continue. Fr. Roy Bourgeois and others found that the School of the Americas has been central to the oppression of the Latin American people. SOA Watch, subsequently, has provided leadership and exemplified perseverance in the struggle to call attention to the plight of the poor and our need to change our policies.

Some of our most valued freedoms are our rights to free speech and free assembly, as well as the right to petition our government for redress of grievances. Our right to search for and act on the truth as we see it is essential to our freedoms. This principle is what many of us thought we were defending when we risked our lives in the service of our country, and we are still willing to risk our lives to preserve this principle today.

#### NOTE

1. The Veterans For Peace Statement of Purpose (slightly updated from 2002), <https://www.veteransforpeace.org/who-we-are/our-mission>.

## Why Was I a Soldier? Why Am I Now a Peace Activist?

*by Ellen Barfield*



Ellen Barfield served in the U.S. Army from 1977 to 1981, finished college with Army money in 1984, and has been a full-time nonviolent activist since 1988. She was born in Georgia, grew up in Texas, and now lives in Baltimore, Maryland. (Twenty-five years were shared with her husband and fellow activist, the late Dr. Lawrence Egbert.)

She stood trial in February 2002 and was jailed for an act of civil resistance to the war against Afghanistan, committed at the Maryland Air National Guard base.

Ellen currently serves on the national board of the War Resisters League, on the board of the Center on Conscience and War, and on committees for Veterans For Peace (VFP), School of the Americas Watch, and Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom. She co-founded VFP’s Women’s Caucus, is Head VFP Representative to the United Nations Department of Public Information, and coordinates VFP’s Baltimore Phil Berrigan Memorial Chapter #105. Ellen also has participated in peace delegations to and solidarity work with Palestine, Nicaragua, and Iraq.

Ellen wrote the following narrative in 2002.

I had expected something like the atrocity of September 11th for quite a while. After all, I have seen long, drawn out atrocities—like

the horrific economic exploitation and impoverishment of Central America, which is maintained by murderous SOA/WHINSEC-trained government troops; and the genocide by starvation in Iraq, maintained by U.S. domination of the United Nations.

I decry ALL of these atrocities and call them all terrorism. My government calls the first by that name—but commits, helps, or encourages the others. I am horrified but not surprised at the tremendously violent response my government is perpetrating on innocent Afghans after 9/11. In a unipower world, the powerful clutches unto its breast the “right” to use force—and in doing so makes its own citizens targets of the fury and frustration of others, those who disagree with its policies but have no legitimate and effective way to object.

I have traveled a long path to get to the understanding I now have of U.S. policy.

I joined the Army to get the money to finish college. Though my parents and I never discussed the matter, after I married I did not believe I could ask them to help me any more with college money. My husband, Kurt, had joined the Army before we married, and when he later got overseas orders for a tour without dependents, I decided to join as well.

I had no intention of making it a career. I come from a rather militarized family (with my mother’s father an Air Force officer and my father’s four brothers all Navy officers), but I did not feel any particular patriotic fervor to serve. Not being a male, I guess patriotism always felt like school spirit to me—wearing the colors, cheering the players (soldiers) from the sidelines, being told God was on our side (in Texas, football is nearly a religion). That idea—that God wanted one set of people to defeat another set of people, on



Ellen Barfield, U.S. Army (personal photo).

the football field or in war—always rang false, but the issue seemed remote to me. I just wanted to do my time and get my money for school.

I did not question the military mission in Germany, my first duty station, but that is where I began questioning Western life in general. I had the tremendous good fortune to have a book store on my base run by an officer’s wife who was quietly progressive. I wish I could find her now and thank her for making good periodicals available to me then.

Through magazine ads, I joined the Sierra Club, the American Civil Liberties Union, the National Organization for Women, and

the Union of Concerned Scientists. Reading their literature, I got an education about the environment, energy usage, civil and human rights, feminism, and nuclear weapons. I began to want to do something about these issues, so the seeds had been planted, though I doubt I knew the word “activist” at the time.

A 1980 assignment to Korea provided my first close-up exposure to real poverty. Even cheap electrical items (like toaster ovens) from the store on base were highly regulated because of their black-market value. When I went off base I saw swarms of raggedly clad people—some begging, some prostituting themselves, many just working far too hard for far too little. I also saw a growing middle class producing export goods for the U.S., and occasionally the very wealthy Koreans who owned the factories. It was a real education for a young, sheltered and naïve, middle-class woman from the United States.

During my year there, Republic of Korea army troops perpetrated the Kwang Ju massacre of over 2000 Korean civilians. My unit, along with all 40,000 U.S. troops in the country, was placed on high alert and began anti-riot training. We got through several days of lectures about controlling supposedly deadly crowds of civilians before the crisis blew over. I did not think much more about it at the time.

I have since learned why Kwang Ju happened. There had been a



Ellen at work in the War Resisters League office. Photo courtesy of Judith Mahoney Pasternak.



Ellen Barfield (center) protesting at the National Security Agency in May 2014. Photo courtesy of Robert Brune of the DC Media Group.

coup in South Korea in 1979, and the U.S. installed a more compliant puppet regime. The city of Kwang Ju had a history of independence, so not just students but the whole city demonstrated against the illegally installed government. While it was Korean troops who did the killing in Kwang Ju, we U.S. troops were right behind them, and our mission was to crush any ideas the Korean people had of running their own country.

I got out of the Army, went back to college and got my degree, and began being a good little wage earner and consumer—though I continued to read the literature of those progressive groups I had joined earlier. But my home, Amarillo, Texas, was too small and conservative to support many branches of national organizations, so my progressive membership was solely through the mail.

Several years later some courageous folks started holding activist peace camps at the Pantex nuclear-weapons plant outside Amarillo. I attended a few camps and began learning about nuclear weapons

and militarism. I finally joined the Red River Peace Network of camp organizers and became a full-time volunteer at the Peace Farm, the intentional community Red River established across the highway from the Pantex plant. All this activism caused Kurt and me to grow apart, and we divorced. I moved to the Peace Farm and was its director for about a year.

I met my current husband, Lawrence Egbert, in the Red River Network. (Editor's note: Egbert died in 2016.) He and I traveled with a Pastors for Peace caravan through Central America in late 1995, and we lived in León, Nicaragua, for seven months. That was where I got my real education on Central America issues. (Coming into peace work in the late 1980s, I had missed the height of the U.S. solidarity movement.)

While Korea provides low-wage workers to assemble U.S. consumer goods, Nicaragua is part of the U.S.' self-appropriated resource base, which is the whole Western Hemisphere. To a large extent, the U.S. sees Nicaraguans as just being in the way: a few of them grow bananas or coffee for export, but about 70% are surplus to the current labor force. In fact, Korean poverty is nothing compared to Nicaraguan poverty. Nicaragua was unlike other Central American countries in the 1980s, in that it was not SOA-trained government troops but U.S.-backed rebels (or *contras*) who carried out their long nightmare of slaughter and destruction—but the purpose and result were the same.

The analysis of Western culture which I began by reading those magazines in Germany has helped me see the way U.S. power works. The number one U.S. export is militarism—by weapons and training when that will suffice, as in Central and South America; and by troops when the U.S. public screams for obvious blood, as in Afghanistan.

The U.S. government is willing to do whatever it takes to keep the world's goodies disproportionately flowing in, so that U.S. citizens can eat strawberries in January and pumpkins in June; drive behemoth gas-guzzling SUVs and live in huge, overheated, suburban mansions; and most especially so a few U.S. citizens can get obscenely wealthy, and the rest of us can dream of doing so. There is, of course, poverty in the U.S. (and I am not in any way blaming the poor here), but our culture grotesquely overconsumes.

One way I have chosen to practice the real patriotism of challenging my country to rise above its baser instincts is to risk arrest by trespassing and speaking out at places which embody U.S. abuses of power. I have lost track of the number of my arrests now, but it is around thirty. Many of these actions—like numerous times at the Nevada nuclear-weapons test site, and several years at the SOA/WHINSEC—have been highly choreographed dances between the activists and the authorities, where they let us make our point and carry us away, but avoid allowing us to speak out at trial by declining to document our detentions.

My first jail time was served after resisting at the Pantex plant by simply kneeling in front of the gate and singing a song decrying the Hiroshima bombing. It was four days before we three protesters got released on several thousand dollars bail, which was set by the vindictive prosecutor of the small, Texas panhandle county which hosts the Pantex plant. At the trial for that action, expert international-law witnesses for the defense testified only before the judge when their testimony was ruled inadmissible for the jury. The jurors must have resented that exclusion, because they gave us a small fine and probation.

I have served a few short sentences for other actions, and expect

to incur longer sentences as my record lengthens and I commit more serious actions. For instance, I plan to break the ban-and-bar order that I finally got at Fort Benning for taking political discourse onto the post, and likely will face six months in a federal prison for that. I also anticipate doing a Plowshares action involving the disarming of some horrific weapon.

Jailhouse witness is only a part of what I do, but I think it is important. Gracefully suffering what society thinks is the worst it can do to a dissenter, while living in solidarity with the people society wants to throw away, and simply *being* a dissenter after having supported U.S. policy with my body as a soldier—all these send powerful messages.

## Finding My Way

by Peter De Mott



Peter De Mott was born in Washington, DC, on January 6, 1947, of parents he described as “poor but honest.” Peter joined the Marines in November 1967, and left after two years and nine months. He enlisted in the U.S. Army in August 1971; it was during his four-and-a-half-year Army stint that he began to recognize a “common humanity” across borders and to realize “the futility of war.” He joined the Catholic Worker movement in 1979.

Peter married Ellen Grady in July 1984, and they had four daughters. At the time Peter wrote the following narrative, he was working as a general contractor and handyman, doing carpentry, masonry, roofing, and gutters. He moved pianos, painted houses, trimmed trees, and cleaned chimneys and windows. He also worked mightily at cleaning up and overhauling social structures.

On St. Patrick’s Day in 2003, he and three Ithaca Catholic Worker colleagues poured their own blood at a military recruiting center, in anticipatory protest of the bombing of Iraq. They became known as the Saint Patrick’s Day Four and served sentences of four to six months in federal prisons. In 2006, a documentary film titled *The Trial of the St. Patrick’s Four* was released.<sup>1</sup>

Peter died on February 19, 2009, after a tree-trimming accident.

He wrote the following narrative in 2002.

Wanting to realize my culturally conditioned fantasies of adventure and heroism, I began my rather illuminating military experience in November 1967 when I enlisted in the United States Marine Corps. A little over a year later, after completing boot camp (where I learned instantaneous, unquestioning obedience to orders) and receiving training in the field of communications, I arrived in Vietnam.

There I worked both as a telephone switchboard operator and as an air traffic controller. I spent almost all my time in Vietnam in relatively “secure” areas, sprawling military bases isolated from the local people. I participated in no firefights, saw no “action,” and returned to the United States following a twelve-month tour of duty. I was seemingly unpoliticized and untraumatized by my time in Southeast Asia (which cannot be said of many of my comrades-in-arms).

While in Vietnam I attended Roman Catholic Mass regularly and on occasion would go to confession, as I had been brought up to do. As a dutiful young Marine who followed orders well, I had no idea that my work in Vietnam was helping to bring about the deaths of some two million people there, maim and displace countless others, and severely damage and degrade the local environment. That sad realization came to me only much later. While in Vietnam, I operated under the influence of a training film my fellow recruits and I had viewed in boot camp, which justified U.S. involvement in the war as a defense against communist aggression. (We were told the communists were struggling to extend their “evil empire.”) Like millions of other soldiers down through the course of history, we were taught by the power elite to look at ourselves as heroic patriots willing to make the ultimate sacrifice in defense of our native land and its cherished ideals.



Peter De Mott with daughter Kate, May 1996 (personal photo).

After a tour of duty in Vietnam, I found myself serving as a military policeman at the Marine Corps base at Twentynine Palms, California. There I became more and more disillusioned with life as a Marine, with its stultifying duties and inflexible discipline. I left the Marines in the summer of 1970 and about a year later joined the United States Army, after signing an enlistment contract which promised me a course of study at the Defense Language Institute in Monterey, California. For a year I applied myself to acquiring Turkish there, and then received orders for a NATO assignment in Ankara, where I worked in a three-man office in the Turkish General Staff Building.

My duties could be described as primarily clerical in nature and did not prove particularly demanding. What I liked most about Turkey were the frequent trips all over the Anatolian Peninsula as well as Thrace, visiting areas of historical or archeological significance. From



Peter delivering peace message, January 1996  
(personal photo).

Turkey I also traveled to the Soviet Union, Germany, Syria, Ireland, Italy, and Greece. In those years I viewed the Army as an interesting job, which provided me with training and travel experience and an opportunity to meet and know other cultures. My role as a pawn in a geopolitical struggle for global resources did not intrude upon my consciousness.

Finally I had an eye-opening experience during my trip to the Soviet Union, when I realized that the people there had the same hopes and dreams as the folks back home. Having grown up on a diet of propaganda that the Russians made up a godless country bent on world domination, I saw and experienced instead their common humanity, which helped to change my perspective profoundly.

Once again feeling rather disaffected with the sterility and bureaucracy of military life, I turned my back on the Army in

February 1976 and returned to my hometown to complete my college education. Following graduation, I explored the possibility of becoming a diocesan priest by going to a seminary in Saint Paul, Minnesota—but dropped out after a year and got involved in the Catholic Worker movement.

The Catholic Worker taught me many things I'd never heard about before: pacifism, nonviolence, voluntary poverty, personal responsibility for contemporary injustice, and service to Christ in the person of the victims of military and corporate violence and greed. The Catholic Worker also introduced me to nonviolent civil disobedience and its history and practice in our country. A process of conversion had begun in me, as I began to question authority and realize the need to make myself as marginal to evil as possible.

My arrest at an "arms bazaar" was the initial outward, visible act of my conversion process, an ever-evolving journey leading me (please, God) on the *Via Crucis* (the Way of the Cross). Christ tells us that if we wish to be His disciples, then we must deny ourselves, take up the cross, and follow Him in faith and obedience. The cross represents both the lot and the glory of those who nonviolently resist systemic, institutional injustice, and then experience the retribution of the high and mighty as a consequence. Jesus commands us to love one another, and He tells us that no one has greater love than a person who lays down his or her life for a friend. Every act of civil disobedience (which is equally aptly termed "divine obedience"), performed in a spirit of love, helps to restore humanity to a communion of solidarity, unity, and mutual aid.

So, with this consciousness, I took part with Fr. Roy Bourgeois and others in a protest at an arms bazaar in Rosemont, Illinois (by Chicago O'Hare International Airport), in February 1979. An arms

bazaar amounts to nothing more than a marketing event put on by weapons manufacturers, who invite members of the “defense departments” of various countries to view and then purchase the weapons systems on display there. The United States sells billions of dollars’ worth of weapons annually all over the world. Expenditures for these lethal instruments of war deny life to those whose basic needs for food, clothing, shelter, medicine, and education then go unmet.

As President Dwight Eisenhower put it:

Every gun that is made, every warship launched, every rocket fired signifies, in the final sense, a theft from those who hunger and are not fed, those who are cold and are not clothed. This world in arms is not spending money alone. It is spending the sweat of its laborers, the genius of its scientists, the hopes of its children. . . . This is not a way of life at all in any true sense. Under the cloud of threatening war, it is humanity hanging from a cross of iron.<sup>2</sup>

Since my first act of civil disobedience more than two decades ago, I have undergone arrest many times at the Pentagon, the White House, the School of the Americas, and various military bases and weapons manufacturing sites. Two Plowshares disarmament actions (which symbolically yet concretely beat the nuclear sword into a plowshare, in accord with the vision of the prophet Isaiah) are included in that list. These acts have resulted in periods of incarceration in a variety of jails and prisons, cumulatively about two years in all. Separation from family and friends has been difficult, conditions behind bars less than ideal.



Peter (right) with the St. Patrick's Day Four. From left: Danny Burns, Clare Grady, and Teresa Grady. Photo courtesy of Amanda Zackem.

I realize, however, that nothing of good and lasting value comes without a price, and I have been privileged to be part of the worldwide struggle for peace and justice, along with so many others who have done so much. To the extent that we sit passively by during these challenging times—when the fate of the earth and all its life forms hangs in the balance—to that very extent we give our tacit approval to the forces amassed to destroy us.

On September 11, 2001, I happened to be working with a friend from Chile when I learned the shocking and terrible news about the planes slamming into the World Trade Center. My friend commented, “You reap what you sow.” He was remembering September 11, 1973, when a U.S.-backed coup in Chile killed its democratically elected president; bombed the presidential residence; tortured, raped, and murdered thousands; and sent many (including my friend) into

exile. The Chilean dictator Augusto Pinochet, who then assumed power, dispatched agents to foreign countries (among them the United States) to assassinate those exiled Chilean nationals whom Pinochet saw as threats.

Sadly, what the U.S. aided and abetted in 1973 in Chile represents only a small portion of a much larger picture of domestic as well as international terrorism, stretching back in history to the genocide practiced by the military of our country against its Indigenous population (millions of whom have died). Sadly, too, the violence and destruction currently meted out by our military in Afghanistan, Iraq, Colombia, and Vieques (to name a few) could beget more reciprocal violence from desperate people. I believe that Jesus' command—to love your “enemies” and do good to those who hate you—provides the only answer to the horrific cycle of violence now engulfing the entire human family.

## NOTES

1. *The Trial of the St. Patrick's Four*, director Adolfo Doring and producer Amanda Zackem (Dispersion Films, 2006), <https://vimeo.com/145415169>.
2. Dwight D. Eisenhower, from “The Chance for Peace” speech given to the American Society of Newspaper Editors on April 16, 1953, just months into his presidency. [https://www.eisenhower.archives.gov/all\\_about\\_ike/speeches/chance\\_for\\_peace.pdf](https://www.eisenhower.archives.gov/all_about_ike/speeches/chance_for_peace.pdf).

## Naming Reality

by Bill McNulty



Bill McNulty resides in Setauket, on Long Island, New York. He and his wife, Carol, raised six children and have eight grandchildren. Bill was connected to the military for 16 years, including schooling and active duty. He was an officer in the U.S. Army Artillery. As a civilian, he worked in insurance, taught school for 14 years, and retired as a carpenter.

Bill has been working to close the SOA since 1991, when he first met Roy Bourgeois. Bill served six months in federal prison in 1998 as one of the SOA-25, for an act of nonviolent civil disobedience challenging the School of the Americas. He also works with the North Country Peace Group, the South Country Peace Group, and Pax Christi Long Island. And he has a longstanding weekly radio program devoted to political commentary on WUSB 90.1 FM (Stony Brook University).

Bill identifies with what he calls “the secular faith-based community” and, with them, has “taken the message of resistance to the street for over fifteen years.” He believes that “we are not called on to be successful, but rather to be faithful to our principles, and so we continue.”

Bill wrote the following narrative in 2002.

**B**eing a veteran suggests conformity with conventional wisdom. I am currently in a different place, but it took time to get there. May I tell you some of my story?

My military career (or maybe better said, my military exposure) spanned 16 years. After eight years in a Catholic elementary school, I went to St. Francis Xavier Military High School in New York City. I then went to Fordham College and was part of the ROTC program. Upon graduation in 1956, I was commissioned a second lieutenant and sent to Fort Sill, Oklahoma. After active duty, I remained connected to the active reserve until honorable discharge in 1964.



Bill McNulty at St. Francis Xavier Military High School (personal photo).

Never during these years did I give serious thought to the fact that the training I was receiving might bring me to kill someone or be killed myself. That's the way we were in the 1950s. The connection between my Church and the military was strong. No one questioned authority. Obedience, duty, and responsibility were woven together into a comfortable blanket of acceptance. Only once did reality briefly enter the picture, when in 1958 I received a notice to prepare to go to Lebanon. Nothing ever came of that.

I remained fixed in those beliefs. There was personal sympathy for those going to Vietnam, but no understanding of what was going on there. After all, a person well protected from knowledge of an emerging civil-rights struggle would be unlikely to know much about Indochina. Riots in the streets, I thought, must be the work of communists and other un-American types. Nixon would restore order.



Bill brings the memory of Maj. Gen. Smedley Butler to the solemn funeral procession at Fort Benning on Nov. 18, 2001. Photo courtesy of Liz Quirin, *The Messenger*.

Central America was the next mystery for me. With no knowledge of that region and six children to raise, still nothing penetrated my psyche. During the *contra* war in Nicaragua, I do remember saying to my wife, "I don't know what's going on down there, but I am sure we are protecting someone's money."

Reagan's raid on Libya, for reasons that later became suspect, jarred my complacency. Then came the invasion of Grenada. That was the first time I witnessed and fully comprehended the use of an openly controlled press. Reporters were allowed on the island only after the fighting ended, and even then were accompanied by a Pentagon handler. Later, the stated provocation for this invasion (namely, the building of an airfield with a long runway by the Russians) turned out to be a lie. The airfield was known to be a

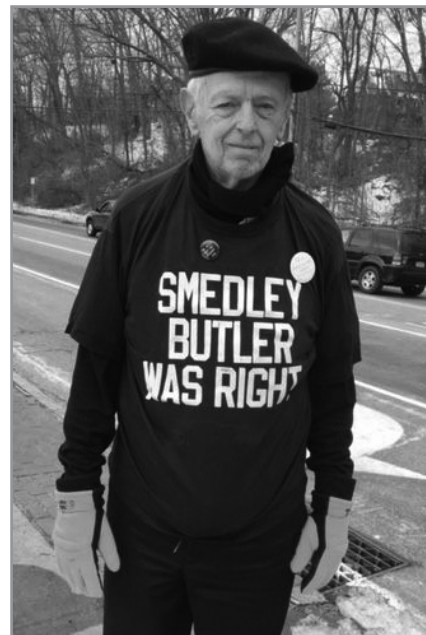
commercial one being built by Canada.

The U.S. intervention in Panama was next, in 1989. Our former ally there, Noriega, was a known drug dealer. An invasion designed to remove Noriega took place, and this time the target was the poorest part of Panama City. Some four or five thousand people were killed. (The bodies disappeared before anyone could count them.) The new president of Panama was soon involved in the drug trade as heavily, if not more so, than Noriega had been. Consequently, the rationale for this military foray also became suspect to me.

Significantly, Noriega was tried and convicted in a trial whose focus was so restricted that no evidence of the illegal *contra* war was admissible. The *contras* were a construct of the United States formed in response to the successful Nicaraguan revolution. The *contras*' activities were funded by illegal international arms sales here in the United States, which effectively circumvented congressional restrictions. Noriega had ceased to be cooperative and had to be silenced by forced removal from office and incarceration.

Only a few short months later, I began to hear of Iraq. Its leader, Saddam Hussein, a former U.S. ally, sought advice from our ambassador to his country. When asked if the U.S. would have any problems with his reclaiming a part of his country (partitioned away by the British many years before), April Glaspie responded that her country would view this as an internal matter between Arab states. The outcome of what came to be called Desert Storm, in addition to reversing the invasion of Kuwait, guaranteed that the capital gains from their oil sales continued to flow through the banks of Britain and the United States. Further, the war was the means used to remove arms from Iraq, which we had previously sold to them.

In fact, the Gulf War was the defining moment for me. This



Bill protests in the spirit of Maj. Gen. Smedley Butler in 2017 (personal photo).

change in perception led me to many places: Griffith Air Base in Utica, New York; the Bath Iron Works in Bath, Maine; the trials of peace activists in Norfolk, Virginia, and Elizabeth City, North Carolina; the Intrepid War Museum in New York City; Haiti; the Trident submarine manufacturing center in Groton, Connecticut; and churches and schools and all sorts of places where I could learn, listen, and speak.

It brought me into contact with many people: I met, spoke to, and spent time with John Schuchardt; Daniel Ellsberg; Father Daniel Berrigan; Philip Berrigan and his wife, Liz McAlister; David Dellinger; Father Bill Brisotti; a host of people in Colrairie, Massachusetts, who are involved in war tax resistance and land-trust living; and Catholic Worker folks from all over the country.

As I searched for some way to actively participate in the world that I was beginning to see with opened eyes, I began writing to people who were in prison for acts of resistance. Taking that step appealed to me at that time. It was non-threatening but yet a step. One day I received the name of a Catholic priest serving time in a federal prison in Tallahassee, Florida. "What's a Catholic priest doing in jail?" I thought. His name was Roy Bourgeois. I wrote and



Bill at WUSB radio station, at Stony Brook University. Photo used with permission of WUSB, who wishes to specify that the photo depicts a station volunteer whose views represent his own and not those of WUSB.

he answered. In his response he made reference to the School of the Americas (SOA). Over the years as I have reflected on this incident, I have thought that if I hadn't written that letter, by now I'd be running a bingo—but instead I became involved with Father Roy and ended up in prison.

I invited Father Roy to come to Long Island upon his release from jail. Several of us organized a tour of some 27 different speaking locations on Long Island. I was his chauffeur and as a result heard his talk 27 times. I watched people's faces as he reached the point in his story where he would say, "This one's for you, brother." He was recounting the words he had spoken one night from the top of a pine tree outside some Fort Benning barracks, just before playing a tape of Archbishop Romero's final homily to the Salvadoran soldiers resting there. "Final homily" because Romero was murdered at Mass the day

after giving it in San Salvador—having appealed to the soldiers to stop killing their people. All of us were inspired and deeply touched.

From then on, SOA became a main issue for me and for many others in the Long Island/Metropolitan New York area. I recognized the issue as one through which people could be introduced to the larger related issues of economic disparity, militarism, domination, and violence. People could reach new perspectives, as far as they were ready to go, always returning to the main objective of closing the SOA.

When talking with other veterans, in order to establish common ground, I frequently say that the SOA doesn't represent any military they have been part of. However, a dialogue, once established, may bring out some similarities. During one such exchange with arresting MPs at Fort Benning, some admitted that they knew they were part of an empire, even acknowledging it to be a failing one.

On another occasion, during an SOA Watch (SOAW) fast on the Capitol steps, I encountered a major from the SOA. I expressed admiration for his courage in doing his surveillance work alone. I was with 200 friends, so I felt secure. He said, "That's why we do what we do, so you can be free to protest." I answered, "With all due respect, that's what they tell you is the reason. Do you know of Smedley Butler?" When I told him that Butler, a retired Marine Major General, in retrospect saw his whole career as one serving the protection of money, the major said, "I never heard that before," and walked away.

The reality of why we do what we do around the world is in that story, but cannot be made clearer than it is in the promotional material provided by the U.S. Space Command. They say, openly and repeatedly, that we must dominate space militarily to protect U.S.

interests and investments. Smedley must be turning in his grave.

But we resisters keep trying. Positive things happen. There are other stories I could tell, but one in particular stands out. At a recent Memorial Day parade, where a group of us had a presence in the line of march, I engaged a Vietnam veteran. He had seen my Veterans For Peace hat. I introduced myself, and he said, "I know that name. You were in prison and I read about it in the newspaper." He called his young son, a Boy Scout, out of the line of march, saying, "I want you to meet a man of courage and conviction." I said, "Son, your father is a man of courage," and with that asked the father if he would like to join us. "Not yet," he answered.

As the parade swung out onto the street, I heard a loud call, "Bill!" There was the father saluting me. I gave him an eyes left and a very enthusiastic salute in return. At the cemetery later, as we were listening to the tributes and waiting for our turn to honor the deceased, the father and son came to stand beside me.

The human spirit resists the efforts and actions of cynical and misguided leaders who tell us whom to hate. These same leaders continue to endorse measures and policies based on greed, power, and violence. But people can be helped to see past this. SOAW consistently and skillfully gives us the chance to aid this process of gaining insight and dispelling myths. We will keep working to close the School of the Americas, to make clear what it represents, and to turn around the thinking of those authorities who—just this year at the November 2001 Fort Benning vigil—called the nonviolent ones misguided.

We must look closely at statements that represent conventional wisdom: for example, former NYC Mayor Giuliani saying, "September 11 was an unprovoked attack on us"; or Senator Hillary

Clinton saying, as she referred to the same event, "This was an attack on our way of life." Statements like this must be examined.

The ability to change gives hope. I continue to be impressed and motivated by Paulo Freire's saying: "The most revolutionary act is to name reality."

## Major General Smedley Butler on Interventionism, 1935<sup>1</sup>



Major General Smedley D. Butler (1881-1940) is one of the most famous of U.S. Marines, first for his service (he received the Medal of Honor twice, along with other honors), and later for his repudiation of militarism serving profit and empire. Butler's classic *War Is a Racket*<sup>2</sup> was first printed in 1935.

There isn't a trick in the racketeering bag that the military gang is blind to. It has its "finger men" (to point out enemies), its "muscle men" (to destroy enemies), its "brain guys" (to plan war preparations), and a "Big Boss" (super-nationalistic capitalism).

It may seem odd for me, a military man, to adopt such a comparison. Truthfulness compels me to. I spent 33 years and four months in active service as a member of this country's most agile military force—the Marine Corps. I served in all commissioned ranks from a second lieutenant to Major-General. And during that period, I spent most of my time being a high-class



Maj. Gen. Smedley D. Butler. File photo sourced from Wikimedia Commons (public domain).

muscle man for Big Business, for Wall Street, and for the bankers. In short, I was a racketeer for capitalism.

I suspected I was just part of a racket at the time. Now I am sure of it. Like all the members of the profession, I never had a thought of my own until I left the service. My mental faculties remained in suspended animation while I obeyed the orders of higher-ups. This is typical of everyone in the military service.

Thus I helped make Mexico, and especially Tampico, safe for American oil interests in 1914. I helped make Haiti and Cuba a decent place for the National City Bank boys to collect revenues in. I helped in the raping of half a dozen Central American republics for the benefit of Wall Street. The record of racketeering is long. I helped purify Nicaragua for the international banking house of Brown Brothers in 1909-1912. I brought light to the Dominican Republic for American sugar interests in 1916. I helped make Honduras "right" for American fruit companies in 1903. In China in 1927, I helped see to it that Standard Oil went its way unmolested.

During those years, I had, as the boys in the back room would say, a swell racket. I was rewarded with honors, medals, promotion. Looking back on it, I feel I might have given Al Capone a few hints. The best he could do was to operate his racket in three city districts. We Marines operated on three *continents*.

### NOTES

1. Excerpted from Maj. Gen. Smedley Butler's article, "America's Armed Forces 2: 'In Time of Peace': The Army," *Common Sense* magazine, Vol. 4, No. 11, November 1935, 8-12, <https://msuweb.montclair.edu/~furrgr/Vietnam/butler.pdf>.
2. Maj. Gen. Smedley D. Butler, *War Is a Racket: The Antiwar Classic by America's Most Decorated Soldier* (Los Angeles, CA: Feral House, 2003; original printed in 1935).



*by Stephen Funk*



When Stephen graduated from Stanford with a degree in international relations, his diploma was given, ironically, by Condoleezza Rice. He now lives in Austin, Texas.

**I** am Stephen Funk, a U.S. Marine Corps reservist who has refused to be involved with this war. I declared myself a conscientious objector in April 2003, and have been working to spread knowledge

of conscientious objection as a legal option out of the military. I also went public to try to dissuade young people from making the same mistake I did, by getting them more information. American youth are especially vulnerable to enlistment, since the No Child Left Behind Act was passed and military spending on deceptive advertising has increased sharply.

Challenging the war from my position was extremely difficult, and I am very proud of my public stance.

I was born and raised in Seattle, where I joined protests against globalization at the WTO (World Trade Organization). I have always considered myself an activist, and I stand with the oppressed peoples of the world. Since high school I have worked with several campaigns for the disadvantaged, for political prisoners, and for peace and justice in our communities.

I moved to Los Angeles for college, where I protested for socioeconomic justice at the Democratic National Convention. I left Los Angeles because I felt the school I attended was too politically apathetic, and moved to the Bay Area in hopes of attending UC Berkeley. Despite all this, I was persuaded to join the Marines. I was out of school for the first time, depressed from the confusion and lack of direction in my life. A recruiter was able to sell me on what



Stephen Funk, U.S. Marine Corps.  
Photo courtesy of Jeff Paterson.

I might learn in basic training. Leadership, teamwork, discipline, and, most importantly, a sense of direction and belonging were what convinced me. It was a decision I made when I was 19 and in a clouded state of mind.

The boot-camp experience quickly snapped me back into reality, but by that time it seemed too late to do anything. The purpose of military training is to churn out non-thinking killing machines. All humans have a natural aversion to killing, and being forced to shout out “Kill, kill, kill” every day is a major stress on the mind, body, and soul. One must go through a transformation in order to accommodate the unnatural way of life that the military teaches. I, however, resisted, and as a result my moral convictions against violence grew stronger. A marksmanship coach told me that I had a “bad attitude,” that in a real situation I wouldn’t score as well as I did. Without thinking, I replied that he was right, because killing people is wrong. It was as if I had taken a deep breath after holding it for two months, and there was no way I could ever go back and “go along with the program.”

I had figured out that war itself was immoral and could not be justified. Yet everyone told me it was futile to try to get out. We were trained to be subordinate in our thoughts, words, and actions. It’s hard to go up against all that, even when you know you are right. In February my San Jose-based unit was called up to support the attack on Iraq. I could no longer just obey.

For the next six weeks I kept in contact with my command, explaining why I had not yet reported. I completed my conscientious-objector paperwork that I had started earlier, and I attended anti-war protests with hundreds of thousands of others.

In the face of this unjust war, based on deception by our leaders,

I could not remain silent. Having a chance to do some good, but playing it safe instead, would have been true cowardice. On April 1, after a press conference in front of my base, I turned myself in. I spoke out so that others in the military would realize that they also have a choice and a duty to resist immoral and illegitimate orders. You don't have to be a cog in the machinery of war. Everyone has the unconquerable power of free will. I wanted those who may be thinking about enlisting to hear and learn from my experiences.

Under media attention, the military initially claimed my application for discharge would be handled quickly and fairly, and that I would likely receive only non-judicial punishment for my unauthorized absence. Now that public scrutiny has died down, the military says that I deserve to be convicted. I feel I am being punished simply for practicing my First Amendment rights, and they are seeking an unfit punishment to dissuade others from becoming conscientious objectors.



Stephen addressing protesters on the second anniversary of the start of the Iraq War.

Photo courtesy of Charles Jenks,  
<http://www.grassrootspeace.org/>.



Stephen fusing art and activism  
 (personal photo).

On base, I've been harassed a few times. Some people have told me I'm a traitor, a coward, and unpatriotic. I have also had a few death threats. However, I have also received tremendous positive feedback, even from some of the enlisted people. As my commanding officer explained to the press, "The Marine Corps understands there are service members opposed to the war." I am certainly not alone.

In writing my application for discharge, I was completely honest about who I am. Part of that meant acknowledging that I am gay. I believe that homosexuals should be able to serve if they choose, and that "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" is an awful policy that only helps the military perpetuate anti-gay sentiment among its ranks. However, I am not an advocate for gay inclusion in the military because I personally do not support military action.

I am proud to be a part of the war resisters' movement and have been in touch with refuseniks from Israel, Greece, and Palestine, and others worldwide. My case pales in comparison to some of the things being brought against international refuseniks. We need to show these brave young men and women that their acts of defiance are appreciated and honored.

## Regaining My Humanity

by Camilo Mejía



Camilo Mejía served as an active-duty infantryman from 1995 through 1998, and then continued his contract as a reservist in the Florida National Guard. In March 2004—having served seven months in the Middle East as a staff sergeant, including five months of combat in Iraq—he filed for discharge as a conscientious objector. He had concluded that the war against and occupation of Iraq was “illegal and immoral,” and he refused to fight.

In May 2004, he was sentenced by a special court-martial to the maximum penalty of one year in prison for desertion; his CO hearing took place in prison. An unbroken Mejía would later declare, “Behind these bars I sit a free man because I listened to a higher power, the voice of my conscience.”

Camilo compiled the statement below from his application for conscientious objection and his prison writings. He was released from the Army prison at Fort Sill, Oklahoma, on February 15, 2005.

Camilo has remained connected to the peace and justice movement as a volunteer organizer. In 2007 his memoir, *Road from Ar Ramadi: The Private Rebellion of Staff Sergeant Camilo Mejía*,<sup>1</sup> was published and used to conduct truth-in-recruiting organizing throughout the United States. Camilo also has been involved in the immigrant-rights movement, the environmental-justice movement, the LGBTQ movement, and more—always emphasizing the need to create unity through intersectionality.

At present, Camilo is working for a community organization

where his work revolves around creating social-justice networks and coalitions to advance a progressive agenda. He resides in Miami, Florida, with his teenage daughter, Samantha.

I was deployed to Iraq in April 2003 and returned home for a two-week leave in October. Going home gave me the opportunity to put my thoughts in order and to listen to what my conscience had to say.

People would ask me about my war experiences, and answering them took me back to all the horrors—the firefights, the ambushes, the time I saw a young Iraqi dragged by his shoulders through a pool of his own blood, or the time I saw an innocent man decapitated by our machine gun fire. Or the time I saw a soldier broken down inside because he had killed a child, or the time I saw an old man on his knees, crying with his arms raised to the sky, perhaps asking God why we had taken the lifeless body of his son. I thought of the suffering of a people whose country was in ruins and who were further humiliated by the raids, patrols, and curfews of an occupying army.

And I realized that none of the reasons we were told about why we were in Iraq turned out to be true. There were no weapons of mass destruction. There was no link between Saddam Hussein and al-Qaeda. We weren’t helping the Iraqi people and the Iraqi people didn’t want us there. We weren’t preventing terrorism or making Americans safer. I couldn’t find a single good reason for having been there or for having shot at people and been shot at.

Coming home gave me the clarity to see the line between military duty and moral obligation. I realized that I was part of a war that I



Camilo with members of his extended family at the Peace Abbey, just prior to surrendering to U.S. military authorities (personal photo).

believed was immoral and criminal, a war of aggression, a war of imperial domination. I realized that acting upon my principles had become incompatible with my role in the military, and I decided that I could not return to Iraq. By putting my weapon down, I chose to reassert myself as a human being. I have not deserted the military or been disloyal to the men and women of the military. I have not been disloyal to a country. I have only been loyal to my principles.

When I turned myself in, with all my fears and doubts, I did it not only for myself. I did it for the people of Iraq, even for those who had fired upon me—they were just on the other side of a battleground where war itself was the only enemy. I did it for the Iraqi children, who are victims of mines and depleted uranium. I did it for the thousands of unknown civilians killed in war. My time in prison is a small price compared to the price Iraqis and Americans have paid



"Come forward. Free your minds."  
Photo courtesy of Charles Jenks,  
<http://www.grassrootspeace.org/>.

with their lives. Mine is a small price compared to the price humanity has paid for war.

Many have called me a coward. Others have called me a hero. I believe I can be found somewhere in the middle. To those who have called me a hero, I say that I don't believe in heroes, but I believe that ordinary people can do extraordinary things.

To those who have called me a coward, I say that they are wrong, and that, without knowing it, they are also right. They are wrong when they think that I left the war for fear of being killed. I admit that that fear was there, but there was also the fear of killing innocent people, the fear of putting myself in a position where to survive means to kill. There was the fear of losing my soul in the process of saving my body, the fear of losing myself—to my daughter, to the people who love me, to the man I used to be, to the man I wanted to be. I was afraid of waking up one morning to realize my humanity had abandoned me.

I say without any pride that I did my job as a soldier. I commanded an infantry squad in combat and we never failed to accomplish our mission.

But those who called me a coward, without knowing it, are also right. I was a coward not for leaving the war, but for having been a part of it in the first place. Refusing and resisting this war was my moral duty, a moral duty that called me to take a



Camilo Mejía (personal photo).

principled action. I failed to fulfill my moral duty as a human being and instead I chose to fulfill my duty as a soldier. All because I was afraid. I was terrified, I did not want to stand up to the government and the army, I was afraid of punishment and humiliation. I went to war because at the moment I was a coward, and I apologize to my soldiers for not being the type of leader I should have been.

I also apologize to the Iraqi people. To them I say I am sorry for the curfews, for the raids, for the killings. May they find it in their hearts to forgive me.

One of the reasons I did not refuse the war from the beginning was that I was afraid of losing my freedom. Today, as I sit behind bars, I realize that there are many types of freedom, and that in spite

of my confinement I remain free in many important ways. What good is freedom if we are afraid to follow our consciences? What good is freedom if we are not able to live with our own actions? I am confined to a prison but I feel, today more than ever, connected to all humanity. Behind these bars I sit a free man because I listened to a higher power, the voice of my conscience.

To those who are still quiet, to those who continue to betray their conscience, to those who are not calling evil more clearly by its name, to those of us who are still not doing enough to refuse and resist, I say, "Come forward." I say, "Free your minds."

#### NOTE

1. Camilo Mejía, *Road from Ar Ramadi: The Private Rebellion of Staff Sergeant Camilo Mejía* (New York, NY: The New Press, 2007).

## My Story

by Michael Blake



Former U.S. Army Specialist Michael Blake is one of the lucky ones. His opposition to war was taken seriously by a military review board, and he was granted conscientious-objector status.

Since returning home, Michael has been part of veterans' efforts to stop glorifying war and instead advocate for humane policies. For example, in the fall of 2016, Michael and other Iraq War veterans went to Standing Rock, North Dakota, to help the "water protectors" stop the building of the Dakota Access Pipeline. Thousands of vets from across the country participated in this mobilization. During the event, a formal apology was offered on behalf of the U.S. military for hundreds of years of land-grabbing and genocide against the Indigenous people of this land.

Michael is committed to "protecting Mother Earth from the destruction and pillaging of energy corporations and from the short-sighted policies of extractive patriarchal culture." He seeks to "reclaim the original Indigenous warrior spirit" by confronting and transforming a human culture that is dangerously out of balance.

Michael has been engaged in peer-support efforts with fellow veterans, too. In 2011, he went to massage school; he has found giving and receiving bodywork to be very healing. He continues to study and deepen his practice, and he offers his services for free in Ithaca, New York.

Michael wrote the following narrative for the 2005 edition.

I always wanted to be a soldier. As a child, I would set up my Army men to fight battles on the living room rug. My friends and I ran around the yard, shooting and yelling to our hearts' content. Everyone got to be a hero and kill the bad guys. And no matter how many times you died, you still got to come home for dinner at the end of the day.

In fifth grade, I read a book about the Civil War called *The Boys' War*. It fascinated me that the armies of the North and the South had recruited ten-year-old boys. The idea of a child my age participating in a war shocked me, and it also caught my interest. I felt—even at that young age—that war would probably be a terrible thing to be involved in, but the subject captivated me.

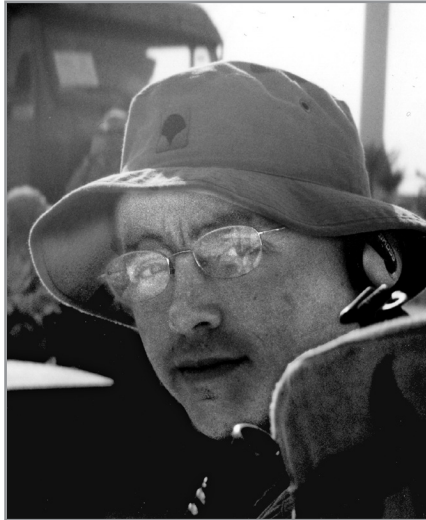
In high school, I still had an intense interest in war and history, but most other subjects bored me. I wanted to be free of the social games that dominate so many teenage lives. I wanted to graduate and build a new character from the ground up, with real experience. I wanted to be strong, disciplined, honorable, and respected. I wanted to travel and do things that I'd never forget.

Uncle Sam must have read my mind, because I saw some recruiting commercials that told me I could have all those things and I could serve my country while I got them. All I had to do was sign my life away. Of course, recruiters don't call it that. But you sign a binding legal document that requires you to stay in government service for as long as the government decides to keep you. When wartime comes, all bets are off.

The Marines contacted me first, but they seemed too gung-ho and elite. I thought the Air Force and Navy wouldn't provide enough of a challenge. The Army seemed the most likely choice for me: they

provided the best enlistment bonuses and the widest choice of jobs, and I thought their basic training would build my character. My Army recruiter reassured me about all these things and the job specialty that I was choosing.

I believed that if I picked a noncombat job, I would not have to be directly involved in combat (my recruiter assured me of this, too). I envisioned a

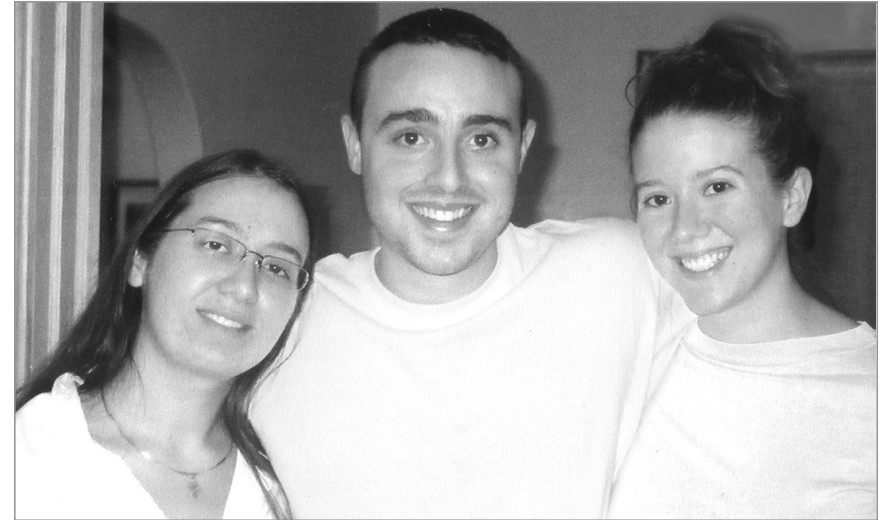


In Iraq (personal photo).

fantasy battlefield in which there was a “front line” and I was behind it, doing the duties of a supply specialist in relative safety. I liked the image and signed my life away, two months after I turned eighteen.

In basic training, I was surprised to meet many people in their late twenties and thirties. Many of them had joined not because they loved their country, but simply because they needed a job. But regardless of the reasons we were there, we all now belonged to the government and had to be reprogrammed to do its bidding.

The drill sergeants broke us down and rebuilt us in a nine-week blur of pain, desperation, submission, and eventual deliverance. I learned how to kill—not by firing a weapon, but by learning how to execute an order. All the pain and mind games were to get us to obey any order, without question. I myself would follow any order, from sweeping a floor to firing a weapon, without any second thought. I realize now why it is so easy for a soldier to do terrible things—



Michael with sisters (personal photo).

because he or she has been trained to obey or suffer the consequences.

At Fort Carson, Colorado, I was assigned to a tank unit—and soon realized that my noncombat supply job would be very close to combat. In Iraq we would be leading fuel or supply trucks over long distances to make rendezvous. Whenever somebody in our unit needed food, water, ammunition, supplies, or fuel, we would get it to them. I realized that I would be spending a lot of time on roads I didn’t know, bringing supplies to far-flung outposts. My concept of a front line was fading fast.

In April 2003, I deployed to Iraq. My unit arrived a few days after Baghdad fell. Ours were the first American faces that people saw in many of the towns we went through, on our way from Kuwait. They came out of their homes to greet us. They were very curious about our equipment and what we wore, but mostly about our intentions. They seemed happy to be rid of Saddam Hussein, but they were

cautious about having us in charge. Men with guns often behave alike, no matter what uniform they are wearing or what flag is on their shoulder.

Interacting and talking with the locals was discouraged by our chain of command. We had to have constant awareness of our surroundings and the possibility that the people around us could be hostile or dangerous.

After a few weeks in Iraq, I started to see the Army for what it really was, a brutal killing machine, and I was just another cog in that machine. I became sick of the destruction and senseless waste of human life. Every raid and ambush and mortar attack simply led to another act of violence in reprisal. I didn't see anything in black and white anymore; it was all grey. The good guys and the bad guys didn't exist, and neither did the front line.

By the end of my yearlong tour, I realized that I could no longer do my job in good conscience. No matter how insignificant my role in the vast machine, I could no longer carry it out.

Upon my return to Fort Carson in March 2004, I began researching different types of discharges and discovered conscientious objection.



Michael with mother (personal photo).



About to return home (personal photo).



Michael Blake announcing that he's a conscientious objector and will not return to Iraq; Veteran For Peace Jack Gilroy is in doorway. Photo courtesy of Joyce Donohue.

I gathered letters of support and spent months working on my application, before submitting it in July 2004 (on the third anniversary of my entering the service).

Most of the officers in my company knew that I wasn't trying to slink out of Iraq duty, because I had already been there. And they knew I wasn't just trying to get out early, because I only had a year left

in my contract. Even if I could get approval for the discharge, it would take most of that year to get it.

I was reassigned to duties away from my unit—away from the day-to-day chaos, and disconnected from anyone else in my unit who might be thinking about objecting. In February 2005, I received an honorable discharge and all of my veteran's benefits. And I can never be called back into service for any reason.

Now I feel obligated to shed some light on conscientious objection, and the fact that mine is one of the few stories to come out of this conflict with a happy ending. There are many reserve and guard units facing two years of mobilization. Citizen-soldiers with jobs and families—soldiers who signed on for one weekend a month and two weeks a year—are being kept overseas for up to 18 months. Every active-duty division is in some stage of the deployment process, whether they are in Iraq or Afghanistan, have just returned, or are about to go. So, within a 36-month period, a soldier can spend

more than 24 of those months in a combat zone. Many of them are doing so right now.

But the biggest secret of all is the stop-loss program. Under stop-loss, the government can hold soldiers with certain job specialties (or all soldiers, if they so choose) indefinitely. All branches of service have implemented the stop-loss, but the Army's far exceeds all the rest. This program stands in sharp contrast to the idea of a volunteer military: you're not a volunteer if you're being held against your will, are you?

Godspeed and safe return to all my brothers- and sisters-in-arms in Iraq, Afghanistan, and all over the world.

## APPENDIX I

### SOA Watch: Then and Now

*by Hendrik Voss, January 2019*

Hendrik Voss is a human-rights activist and graphic designer who lives in a limited-equity co-op in Washington, DC. Hendrik joined SOA Watch in 1999, when he came to the United States to work against U.S. imperialist aggression in the Americas and to avoid the military draft in Germany.

**T**he School of the Americas (SOA) is a U.S. military-training institute for Latin American security personnel located at Fort Benning, Georgia. Renamed the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation (WHINSEC) in 2001, the school has trained assassins, death-squad leaders, and human-rights abusers for dirty work in Latin America since its founding in 1946.

Dubbed the "School of Assassins," the SOA/WHINSEC has become synonymous with torture and military repression for millions around the world. Graduates have a long history of participating in and orchestrating killings, rapes, targeted violence, and the suppression of popular movements. Research continues to turn up SOA grad involvement in human-rights violations across the Americas.

Around 1,000 students per year receive training at the SOA/WHINSEC. Courses are taught in Spanish. The SOA/WHINSEC

is paid for with U.S. taxpayer dollars, money for foreign military training that is authorized by Congress each year.

In 1996, the Pentagon, under intense public pressure, released training manuals used at the school for at least a decade that advocated torture, extortion, and execution. Despite this shocking admission—as well as hundreds of documented human-rights abuses connected to soldiers trained at the school over its long history—no independent investigation into the training facility has ever taken place.

Among those targeted by SOA graduates are educators, union organizers, religious workers, student leaders, and others who work for the rights of the poor. Hundreds of thousands of Latin Americans have been tortured, raped, assassinated, “disappeared,” massacred, or forced into refuge by those trained at the School of Assassins.

The purpose of the School of the Americas has always been to control the economic and political systems of Latin America by aiding and influencing Latin American militaries. One former SOA instructor, U.S. Army Major Joseph Blair (Ret), explained: “The hope is that close personal contacts developed at Fort Benning will result in future U.S. potential to influence Latin American governments.”

Unjust economic policies opposed by the majority of Latin Americans cannot be implemented and enforced by governments without strong military support. George Kennan, a central policymaker for the U.S. State Department, explained in 1948:

[W]e have about 50% of the world's wealth but only 6.3% of its population. . . . In this situation, we cannot fail to be the object of envy and resentment. Our real task in the

coming period is to devise a pattern of relationships which will permit us to maintain this position of disparity without positive detriment to our national security. To do so . . . we should cease to talk about vague and . . . unreal objectives such as human rights, the raising of living standards and democratization.<sup>1</sup>

The SOA is part of a tradition and system of white supremacy. The purpose of the school is to maintain U.S. hegemony over the Western Hemisphere, and it is also a tool to maintain white supremacy over the non-white populations of this hemisphere. Working for justice for the people of the Americas in a principled way means that we have to address white supremacy as one of the root causes of oppression.

From police killings of black and brown people inside the United States, to attacks on Muslim communities, to the U.S.-supported military coup in Honduras, we've seen that the school is *not* an aberration of U.S. policy, but a clear illustration of it.

### **Join SOA Watch in the Struggle for Justice and Self-Determination in the Americas**

History is made by movements—mass movements of people who organize themselves to struggle collectively for a better world.

The SOA Watch (SOAW) movement is a nonviolent force to change oppressive U.S. policy as represented by institutions like the SOA/WHINSEC. SOAW is made up of people from many backgrounds who work towards a positive and fundamentally different alternative to a racist system of violence and domination.

SOA Watch has been tremendously successful. Over the past 28 years, the movement has grown and evolved from a handful of people who gathered at the gates of Fort Benning, to a hemisphere-wide movement. Thousands have been educated and mobilized to take a stand against empire and militarization. New activists—including many youth and students from multinational and working-class communities—are joining long-term SOAW members. This movement has happened because, as Arundhati Roy has written, “The trouble is that once you see it, you can’t unsee it. And once you’ve seen it, keeping quiet, saying nothing, becomes as political an act as speaking out. There’s no innocence. Either way you’re accountable.”<sup>2</sup>

Nonviolent Direct Action (NVDA) is an essential part of SOAW’s overall strategic plan. We intentionally pair specific, powerful, well-publicized NVDAs with political action in an attempt to use the power of constituencies to create change. Since the beginning of the movement, 300 people have collectively served over 100 years in federal prisons and county jails, with another 50 people serving probation and house-arrest sentences. In addition to participating in nonviolent direct actions at Fort Benning, at the Pentagon, and at a U.S. immigration checkpoint in Arizona, SOAW activists have organized fasts, die-ins, banner drops, lock-downs, blockades, and prayer vigils.

The SOA Watch movement has learned that the infamous school is not just a building; it is not just a policy. *The school is a mindset with roots as old as the colonization of the Americas.* It is the belief that land, resources, and human rights are commodities that can be bought, stolen, and destroyed. The SOA mindset is evident in the cruel logic of Plan Colombia and Plan Mexico, in the drive to further

militarize the U.S./Mexico border, and in over 700 U.S. military bases around the world.

The training at the School of the Americas (again, now called the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation) is among the root causes of migration that force people to flee their countries in Latin America. SOA/WHINSEC-trained soldiers are the military muscle that keeps in place a system guaranteeing profits for the elites—and exploitation for the poor. Many immigrants to the United States are victims of U.S.-sponsored military training and atrocities in Latin America.

In the fight to close the SOA/WHINSEC, SOA Watch continues to work towards a world that is free of suffering and violence. SOAW considers for-profit immigration detention centers, the militarization of the border, the “War on Drugs,” and the training of repressive forces at the SOA/WHINSEC as parts of the same racist system of violence and domination.

As a social-movement organization with roots on both sides of the border, SOA Watch has come to see that we too must be able to move. Following intensive movement-wide deliberations, and once again with the leadership of veterans within SOA Watch, the movement decided in 2016 to bring our annual mass mobilization from the gates of Fort Benning, Georgia, to the U.S./Mexico border.

The veteran resisters featured in this volume were and are leaders within the movement *against* U.S. militarism and *for* self-determination in the Americas. They “write from their deep faith in the dignity of the human spirit as well as the possibilities of human community. All are working toward a justice that excludes no one. All have chosen conscious solidarity with the poor over unconscious collusion with privilege. All are wide-awake.”<sup>3</sup>

## NOTES

1. George F. Kennan, "Policy Planning Study 23: Review of Current Trends in U.S. Foreign Policy" (especially VII, Far East), February 24, 1948, in *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1948, General; the United Nations*, Vol. I, Part 2, Document 4, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1948v01p2/d4>.
2. Arundhati Roy, *Power Politics* (Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 2001), 7.
3. Margaret Knapke, from the Introduction to the second edition of *From Warriors to Resisters: U.S. Veterans on Terrorism* (Yellow Springs, OH: fxBEAR, 2005), xiii.

## APPENDIX II

### Editor's Preface to the Second Edition, July 2005

**S**ince the first edition of *From Warriors to Resisters: U.S. Veterans on Terrorism*, the United States has "pre-emptively" attacked and occupied Iraq. Just as U.S. leaders have long sacrificed lives throughout Latin America in pursuit of power and profit, they now are doing so in Iraq—and also putting many well-meaning but misinformed U.S. citizens at risk. The deaths of more than 1700 U.S. soldiers and 22,800 Iraqi civilians have been documented since "Shock and Awe" began in March 2003. (And medical researchers have estimated as many as 98,000 war-related fatalities among Iraqi civilians for the first 18 months of the war, as published in *The Lancet*.)<sup>1</sup>

There is no end in sight to this U.S.-led occupation, and "occupiers" are in great demand. According to a *New York Times* article by Damien Cave, the Army is seeking 101,200 new active-duty Army and Reserve soldiers for 2005.<sup>2</sup> Tens of thousands of military personnel already enlisted are finding their commitments extended with "stop-loss" orders—while others are bringing the war back home with blunt traumas to their bodies and minds. And even as recruiters aggressively and seductively target high school students, murmurings of a draft grow louder by the day. (The good news: antiwar veterans are challenging recruiters' pitches in many of those schools, and the Iraq War is becoming a more difficult sell. According to Cave, at least 37 Army recruiters have gone AWOL during the

current conflict, while others have asked for other assignments and one for conscientious-objector status.)<sup>3</sup>

Dangerous times require good information and strong community. This second edition adds five narratives by warriors-turned-resisters from Gulf War II. . . . I've also included a list of organizations and resources for people considering—or perhaps reconsidering—a military commitment. Surely individuals pondering such momentous decisions deserve more than recruitment hype and oversimplified appeals to duty. And all U.S. citizens deserve accurate information about the real motives driving this war and occupation, and about citizens' and servicemembers' responsibilities under the law. . . .

Sooner or later, truth does carry the day. By now the Bush Administration has been caught in lies it told to justify invading Iraq, thanks largely to dissenters within the government and the intelligence community. These insiders denied that Iraq had any weapons-of-mass-destruction (WMD) capability, and they disputed any connection between al-Qaeda and Saddam Hussein. It's quite clear now: the Bush Administration rejected good intelligence in order to fabricate a case for invasion.

Despite the best intentions of many individuals in the military, U.S. forces have repeatedly fired upon and bombed civilians. Unexploded cluster bomblets attract Iraqi children—who hope the bright yellow canisters might be toys—often maiming or killing them. Shell casings with depleted uranium (DU)—considered WMD by the UN for its pervasive and long-lasting toxicity—have been used extensively during both Gulf Wars; radioactive waste from DU threatens all in the area (including military personnel) and future generations. And, finally, some military personnel have used physical and psychological torture against Iraqi detainees, most infamously in

Abu Ghraib prison; low-ranking troops have been court-martialed.

Yet, in the highest ranks, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld and newly appointed Attorney-General Alberto Gonzales continue to dodge international law—by denying “prisoner of war” status to captured insurgents, for instance. And Gonzales, while still White House counsel in January 2002, recommended to G.W. Bush that “The nature of the new war [on terror] . . . renders obsolete [the Geneva Convention’s] strict limitations on questioning of enemy prisoners. . . .” Apparently Lieutenant General Ricardo Sanchez got the message. In a September 2003 memo, Sanchez—then the highest-ranking U.S. general in Iraq—authorized abusive interrogation techniques for use in Iraq. According to American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) lawyer Amrit Singh, the permitted techniques “violate the Geneva Conventions and the army’s own field manual governing interrogations.”

Numerous legal and human-rights groups are resisting the Bush Administration attempts to place itself above the law. One example: in October 2003, the Center for Constitutional Rights (CCR) and the ACLU—in association with Physicians for Human Rights, Veterans for Common Sense, and Veterans For Peace—filed a Freedom of Information Act request regarding the treatment of detainees held by the United States overseas. On the basis of documents released, the ACLU claims that “abuse of detainees was not aberrational but systemic,” and the CCR maintains that “the Bush Administration has systematically encouraged torture techniques prohibited under the Geneva Conventions and the Covenant against Torture.” Both groups have called for the appointment of a Special Prosecutor to inquire into the abuse and torture of detainees, including those “rendered” to countries where they can be interrogated under torture.

Resistance is growing within military ranks, too. The Pentagon claimed in December 2004 that 5500 military personnel had deserted since the beginning of the war, many refusing to report for a second tour of duty. And, increasingly, military families are resisting losing their loved ones to an agenda more economic than defensive. To them, “supporting the troops” does not mean supporting the war. To them, Bush Administration talk of “spreading freedom and democracy” rings false and hypocritical—and the families’ patriotism now challenges that hypocrisy.

Questioning government war policy—especially when that policy receives a largely uncritical treatment by the mainstream media, and *especially* when one is already in uniform—can be a very frightening and lonely process. But a strong community of resistance does exist, deeply rooted in international, U.S. Constitutional, and moral law. Truly, no one needs to face these difficult questions alone.

—Margaret Knapke

## NOTES

1. Les Roberts et al., “Mortality before and after the 2003 invasion of Iraq: cluster sample survey,” *The Lancet*, October 29, 2004. A summary of *The Lancet*’s 2004 and 2006 surveys of Iraq War casualties, and links, can be found at [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lancet\\_surveys\\_of\\_Iraq\\_War\\_casualties](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lancet_surveys_of_Iraq_War_casualties). *The Lancet* is a peer-reviewed general medical journal.
2. Damien Cave, “For Army Recruiters, a Day of Rules, and Little Else,” *The New York Times*, May 21, 2005, <https://www.nytimes.com/2005/05/21/us/for-army-recruiters-a-day-of-rules-and-little-else.html>.
3. Damien Cave, “For Army Recruiters, a Hard Toll From a Hard Sell,” *The New York Times*, March 27, 2005, <https://www.nytimes.com/2005/03/27/nyregion/for-army-recruiters-a-hard-toll-from-a-hard-sell.html>.

## APPENDIX III

### Resources for Potential Recruits, Military, Veterans, Activists, and Inquiring Citizens

The **American Friends Service Committee’s Youth & Militarism** site offers resources for young people concerned about making their way in the world. Here they can find help with understanding the reality behind military recruitment pitches, conscientious objection, and non-military career alternatives.

<https://www.afsc.org/category/topic/youth-and-militarism>

**Catholic Workers** have played a significant role in the promotion of “houses of hospitality,” social-justice activism, and anti-militarism since the Great Depression of 1933. The movement still thrives, with more than 200 communities throughout the world.

<https://www.catholicworker.org/>

**The Center on Conscience & War (CCW)** is a non-profit organization that advocates for the rights of conscience, opposes military conscription, and serves all conscientious objectors to war.

<http://www.centeronconscience.org/>

**Charlie Liteky memoir and tribute website—**

<http://www.charlieliteky.org/his-book-renunciation.html>

**CODEPINK** “is a women-led grassroots organization working to end U.S. wars and militarism, support peace and human

rights initiatives, and redirect our tax dollars into healthcare, education, green jobs and other life-affirming programs.”

<https://www.codepink.org/>

**Combat Paper Project** conducts creative, community-based workshops for veterans and civilians. From their website: “COMBAT PAPER transforms military uniforms into handmade paper. . . . A uniform worn through military service carries with it stories and experiences that are deeply imbued in the woven threads. Creating paper and artwork from these fibers carries these same qualities. We have found that all of us are connected to the military in a myriad of ways. When these connections are discovered and shared it can open a deeper understanding between people and expand our collective beliefs about military service and war.” <https://www.combatpaper.org/>

**Committee Opposed to Militarism and the Draft (COMD)**

“challenges the institution of the military, its effect on society, its budget, its role abroad and at home, and the racism, sexism, and homophobia that are inherent in the armed forces and Selective Service System.” <http://www.comdsd.org/>

**Courage to Resist** is a group of concerned community members, veterans, and military families that supports military objectors to illegal war and occupation and the policies of empire. They support military resistance, counter-recruitment, and draft resistance. <https://couragetoresist.org/>

**The Friends of Franz and Ben** (i.e., Franz Jägerstätter and Ben Salmon) have dedicated a website to these war resisters. Both men were Catholic conscientious objectors—Franz in World War II and

Ben in World War I. The Friends of Franz and Ben are interested in sharing the wisdom of Franz and Ben with a world in perpetual war. <http://www.bensalmon.org/>

**GI Rights Hotline**—“Some of our counselors are veterans, some are lawyers and some have decades of military counseling experience. We . . . stay up-to-date on the latest military regulations and practices. We provide resources and counseling options. Many of us are not lawyers and therefore cannot give legal advice, but, in cases in which an attorney might be useful, we may be able to help you find one.” <https://girightshotline.org/>

From its inception, **Iraq Veterans Against the War** has called for: “immediate withdrawal of all occupying forces in Iraq; reparations for the human and structural damages Iraq has suffered, and stopping the corporate pillaging of Iraq so that their people can control their own lives and future; and full benefits, adequate healthcare (including mental health), and other supports for returning servicemen and women.” IVAW members include active-duty military, National Guard members, and reservists. <http://www.ivaw.org/>

**Lakota People’s Law Project** is partnering “with the Lakota to help renew their culture and secure their rights to autonomy and self-determination.” “Through our efforts to #GreenTheRez, we aim to promote energy independence on Standing Rock and a renewable energy blueprint for other tribal nations to follow.” Other projects include defending the voting rights of Native residents of North Dakota and defunding pipelines through Native lands. <https://www.lakotalaw.org/>

The **Latin America Working Group (LAWG)** and the Latin America Working Group Education Fund (LAWGEF) “mobilize concerned citizens, organizations, and networks to call for just U.S. policies towards Latin America and the Caribbean. We advocate in the halls of power for human rights, peace, and social, economic, and environmental justice.” <https://www.lawg.org/>

**Military Families Speak Out (MFSO)**—“The mission of Military Families Speak Out is to advocate for all U.S. troops to leave Iraq and Afghanistan now and to speak out against unjust military interventions. MFSO supports policies that utilize diplomacy over military force. We support the troops and work hard to ensure that their needs are met while deployed and when they return home.” <http://www.militaryfamiliespeakout.com/>

**The National Lawyers Guild Military Law Task Force** “includes attorneys, legal workers, law students and ‘Barracks lawyers’ interested in draft, military and veterans issues. . . . MLTF assists those working on military law issues as well as military law counselors working directly with GIs. It trains and mentors counselors and beginning military law attorneys in all aspects of military law through training materials and direct communication. It tracks changes in military law and policy.” <http://nlgmltf.org/>

**National Network Opposing the Militarization of Youth (NNOMY)** opposes “the growing intrusion of the military in young people’s lives.” NNOMY maintains that providing youth with peaceful and viable alternatives for achieving success in life is an important sign of a civilized society. <https://nnomy.org/en/>

**Pace e Bene** has been leading nonviolence trainings, publishing books on nonviolence, and taking action for nonviolent change for three decades. <https://paceebene.org/>

Photojournalist Linda Panetta says: “**Optical Realities Photography** . . . uses photojournalism and educational outreach to raise public awareness about world events, cultures, and the environment. We seek to use our first-hand knowledge and experiences in impoverished and war-torn areas of the world to advocate for economic and social justice.” <https://www.opticalrealities.org/>

**Pax Christi International** is a global Catholic peace movement working to establish: Peace, Respect for Human Rights, and Justice and Reconciliation. <https://www.paxchristi.net/>

Similarly, **Pax Christi USA**’s work has four priority areas: the Spirituality of Nonviolence and Peacemaking; Disarmament, Demilitarization, and Reconciliation with Justice; Economic and Interracial Justice in the United States; and Human Rights and Global Restoration. <https://paxchristiusa.org/>

**Project on Youth and Non-Military Opportunities (Project YANO)** provides an alternative, critical perspective on military enlistment and the marketing of it. Project YANO “primarily serves young people who are looking for job training, wish to go to college or want to make a difference in other people’s lives—but they might not see enough opportunities to pursue these goals. We also work with educators and others who advise young people,

and we support youths who are using activism to change their lives, their communities and the larger world they are part of.”

<http://www.projectyano.org/>

**Roy Bourgeois website** for booklet *My Journey from Silence to Solidarity* and related activism—<http://www.roybourgeoisjourney.org/>

**SOA Watch (SOAW)** works to stand in solidarity with the people of Latin America, to close the SOA/WHINSEC, and to change the oppressive U.S. foreign policy that the SOA represents.  
<https://www.soaw.org/en/>

The organization **Veterans For Peace (VFP)** includes veterans from World War II, Korea, Vietnam, the Gulf War, other conflicts, and peacetime veterans. Members believe that U.S. citizens will be secure at home only when there is peace and justice abroad. VFP seeks to abolish war as an instrument of international policy.  
<https://www.veteransforpeace.org/>

**Voices for Creative Nonviolence** has longstanding roots in active nonviolent resistance to U.S. war-making. <http://vcnv.org/>

**Waging Nonviolence** is “an independent, non-profit media platform dedicated to providing original reporting and expert analysis of social movements around the world. We believe that when ordinary people organize they have incredible power and are the drivers of social change—not politicians, billionaires or corporations.” Topics include, among others: culture, democracy, economic justice, the environment, militarism, Indigenous issues, racial justice, and religion. <https://wagingnonviolence.org/>

**War Resisters League (WRL)** “affirms that all war is a crime against humanity. We are determined not to support any kind of war, international or civil, and to strive nonviolently for the removal of all causes of war, including racism, sexism, and all forms of exploitation.” WRL addresses militarism, nonviolent action, counter-recruitment, war tax resistance, and more.  
<https://www.warresisters.org/>

The mission of **Warrior Writers** is “to create a culture that articulates veterans’ experiences, build a collaborative community for artistic expression, and bear witness to war and the full range of military experiences.” <https://www.warriorwriters.org/>

**Witness for Peace (WFP)** “is a politically independent, nationwide grassroots organization of people committed to nonviolence and led by faith and conscience. WFP’s mission is to support peace, justice and sustainable economies in the Americas by changing U.S. policies and corporate practices that contribute to poverty and oppression in Latin America and the Caribbean. We stand with people seeking justice.” <http://witnessforpeace.org/>

**Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF)** “is an international non-governmental organisation (NGO) . . . . Since our establishment in 1915, we have brought together women from around the world who are united in working for peace by non-violent means and promoting political, economic and social justice for all.” <https://wilpf.org/>

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