

Board of Directors Candidate Questionnaire

1. **Name:** Mark Foreman
2. **Date joined VFP:** 1990
3. **Dates of military service:** Nov. 22, 1966 – Nov. 22, 1968
4. **Current city of residence:** Milwaukee
5. **Involvement with VFP at the chapter level, or as an at-large member:**

I was Milwaukee VFP Chapter 102's president from 2006-2008. I initiated building and installing 1700 grave markers in a Milwaukee city park to symbolize US troops killed in Iraq. The display was purposely installed next to the Veterans Day Parade route in 2007 (similar to Arlington West). In June of 2008 I co-founded a Homeless Veterans Initiative, which not only serves homeless veterans, but serves as an outreach platform for the voice of VFP. The Homeless Veterans Initiative was established to fulfill VFP's fourth purpose: "Seek Justice for Veterans and Victims of War".

6. **Involvement with other peace and/or justice organizations:**

- a. Board member of the Milwaukee chapter of Jobs With Peace from 1990-1995.
- b. Board Chair of Milwaukee Peace Education Project from 2005-2009.
- c. President of VFP Milwaukee Chapter 102 from 2006-2008.
- d. Board Chair of the Homeless Veterans Initiative in Milwaukee from 2008-2012.
- e. Active member of Wisconsin Peace Action since 1995.
- f. Member of Wisconsin Network for Peace and Justice since 1995.

7. **Other board experience:**

Listed in #6

8. **What attracted you to VFP?**

After coming back from Vietnam in 1968 I found that VFP was the only veteran's organization in our nation that was dedicated to abolishing war.

9. **The fifth point of the VFP Statement of Purpose is: "To abolish war as an instrument of national policy." What would you say to someone who says that this is ridiculous or impossible?**

If someone said that war can't be abolished, I'd say they're being un-American, because anything is possible in America. Using war to resolve

conflict is not only ridiculous, it's insane. Humanity is doomed if we continue to use war as an instrument of foreign policy. If we truly cherish life on this planet we have to keep the ends within the means. It's only a matter of time before the war profiteers use all of the weapons at their disposal to "win", which will be the day that all of us lose. If we care about our children, our living earth, our humanity, we need to create laws that will abolish war.

10. Currently there is a lack of minority veterans in VFP. What tactics might VFP utilize to address this underrepresentation?

I learned during my urban teaching career that if I expect minority students to respect me, I first need to respect them. VFP needs to work at earning the respect of minority veterans by going into their communities and asking how we can help. Once we learn what their specific needs are, we can then create programs to support their needs, such as Food Programs, Clothing drives, shelter, etc. These programs can be paid for by writing grants and other methods of fundraising.

VFP has become a one pony, anti-war protest organization that needs to start thinking and acting out of the box if we want to gain respect from the minority community, not to mention the community at large. If we truly want to attract minority veterans into our organization we first need to recognize that many of them live in communities infested with drugs and violence. They live in a type of war zone right here at home. I would like to see VFP become involved with ending violence here at home. VFP spends most of its time protesting wars over seas when there are more Americans killed in gang violence every year than in the wars we fight over seas. Here's what I suggest: (which is a paradigm shift for VFP)

VFP is a 501c3, non-profit organization. Our tax-exempt status allows us to raise money for Human Service programs designed to help veterans in minority communities, such as: a housing programs, food and clothing programs, VA Benefits programs, and transportation programs. If VFP committed to doing this we would garner a whole lot of respect and credibility in the minority community, not to mention the broader community, while at the same time furthering our voice for peace.

11. What role do you see for the national office of VFP vis a vis the chapters?

If the national office would give more attention to our Statements of Purpose I believe they could then start a work group to become a resource center for VFP chapters who want to be more involved with fulfilling specific purposes.

12. What is your vision for VFP's future? How do think we should strategically move forward?

More clarification and emphasis needs to be placed on our five purposes. The national board should form five committees, each one being responsible for creating a strategic plan of action for each one of our five purposes. A work group should then be formed to manage the outreach with the chapters.

Each chapter would be responsible for choosing one or two of our purposes to work on. I don't know if the chapters would agree to this type of top-down direction, but I think it would help the organization strengthen its voice for peace.

13. As you know, the board's top priority is to set VFP's direction and makes sure we have the resources to get there. What kinds of experience do you have in development or fundraising for other organizations?

Four years ago I co-founded the Milwaukee Homeless Veterans Initiative. Milwaukee Chapter 102, through my vision, agreed that helping homeless veterans would be a good way to fulfill the fourth purpose of VFP: "To Seek Justice for Veterans and Victims of War", as well as gain respect and support from our community. I've written all of the grants for this program and brought in \$72,000 to help run our programs last year.

14. What do you think is the best way to achieve social change? What do you think are the relative strengths and weaknesses of electoral politics; grassroots activism; nonviolent resistance/civil disobedience?

Social Change: Social change happens through two methods; By force, or by example. We obviously don't believe in force, so we should create a good example for our communities and treat others the way we want to be treated.

Electoral Politics: In a "people's democracy" our representatives should be creating policies that are good for the people. However, as long as our representatives are being bought off by wealthy special interest groups, electoral politics only serves those who have the most money. We need campaign finance reform before electoral politics will be relevant to the needs of the people.

Grassroots Activism: Grassroots activism is the heart and soul of a people's democracy. But activism comes in many forms, ie., a. Protesting, b. Networking, c. Human Services, d. Organizing, etc. I believe that Organizing and Human Services effect the greatest change for the longest period of time.

Nonviolent Resistance/Civil Disobedience: These are effective ways of getting attention, but only for a brief period of time and usually yield few results.

15. VFP's current membership totals approximately 5000 veteran members while there are approximately 27 million veterans in the US. What ideas do you have for expanding both the number of members as well as the influence VFP has both in our communities and on the national stage?

I remember hearing at the national VFP convention in Dallas back in 2006 that VFP's membership totaled 7000. If that's correct, we as an organization need to make a paradigm shift.

My suggestion for attracting more veterans to VFP is for us to get more involved with Human Services for veterans. Most veterans appreciate and respect veterans organizations who understand that they need help. The community at large would also be more impressed with us, and our voice for peace, if we were actually helping veterans who need support.

Candidate statement

I served as a Navy Corpsman in 1968 with the 3rd Battalion, 5th Marines in Vietnam. After five weeks in country I was wounded and received a 100% physical disability rating from the VA. While in Vietnam, I refused to carry a weapon and as soon as I got home I threw my purple heart in the garbage. War is nothing less than social insanity... while the war profiteers make off with billions of tax payer's dollars.

I received a Master's degree in Art Education from UW-Milwaukee and taught art in the Milwaukee public schools for 20 years. I joined VFP in 1990 and served as Milwaukee Chapter 102's president for three years. In my three year term as president our chapter doubled its membership and partnered with Wisconsin Peace Action, and Wisconsin Network for Peace and Justice. I co-founded the Milwaukee Homeless Veterans Initiative in 2008, which I've been board chair of for the past three years. I've also served on four different boards of directors for peace organizations.

I feel no greater purpose in my life than working for peace... knowing that VFP is the most credible voice of all in the peace community. I hope to become a partner with the rest of the board to craft an even more affective voice for peace. The American Empire is using its powerful military to dominate the world, making our role more important than ever.

If elected to the national board of VFP, I will dedicate my experience and my passion to the challenges ahead.

PEACE,

Mark Foreman