



Exposing the True Costs of War and Militarism Since 1985

VETERANS FOR PEACE

Organized locally. Recognized internationally.

VFP Newsletter

veteransforpeace.org

Fall 2020

SHUT DOWN CREECH

**Human blockade
by two activists
delays traffic into
base for nearly
half an hour—and
no arrests!**



"Shut Down Creech" Anti-drone vigil, Monday, Sept. 28, 2020

A group of 15 peaceful protesters from Nevada, California, and Arizona converged for a weeklong protest at Creech Air Force Base in Nevada to oppose the remote-controlled killing that takes place in the desert just north of Las Vegas. Organized by CODEPINK and Veterans For Peace, the bi-annual protest known as "Shut Down Creech" was different this year due to the concerns and constraints of the COVID-19 pandemic—especially because many of the regulars are elders, and are at higher



Creech AFB Anti-drone Blockade, 7:00 am, Friday Oct. 2, 2020

these activists were compelled to take a strong and determined stance against the illegal and inhumane remote killing by U.S. drones that occurs daily at the Nevada air base.

Most of the activists were reluctant to engage in civil disobedience because of the risk of COVID-exposure during a possible jail detention. However, Maggie Huntington from Flagstaff, Arizona, and Toby Blomé from El Cerrito, California, ultimately participated in a "soft blockade" to impede commute traffic into the base up until the point that the time limit expired that the Las Vegas Metropolitan Police gave to warn

risk of complications and death. The event included both social distancing and mask wearing at the twice-daily commute-hour protests held at the base. Precautions were also followed at "Camp Justice," the protestors' base camp down the road. In spite of the risks,

Thanks to all for a successful convention!

We are so grateful for all those who joined us for the 2020 Online Convention. This year will definitely be a year to remember!

When we made the decision to go online, we had *no* idea how it was going to go and if it was going to be possible to replicate the things that make our in-person convention so valuable—such as face-to-face conversations, which could only take place in virtual meeting rooms instead of in hallways or over dinner.

*OVER 400 PEOPLE JOINED US
THROUGHOUT THE CONVENTION—MAKING
THIS ONE OF THE HIGHEST ATTENDED
CONVENTIONS YET!*

Among the highest attended sessions were the Opening Welcome Session and Nuclear Plenary; Connecting Movements Through Veteran Activism—a conversation facilitated by Jane Fonda: Save Our VA; Veterans For Black Lives Discussion; U.S. Military and the Climate Emergency; The War on Afghanistan: How We Got Here and Where Do We Go From Here; Resisting Nuclear War and Militarism in the Pacific; and of course our Saturday evening event featuring keynote speaker Dahr Jamail.

Special appreciation to the New Mexico chapter members who helped plan some of our main plenary sessions,

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WINTER ISSUE

CHAPTER REPORTS DUE

→ FEB. 10, 2021 ←

Please keep report to 200 words.

Include the reporter's name along
with chapter #/name/location.

**Photos must be high resolution
to look good in print.** 1200 pixels
wide or more works well. Please
include a caption and try to
identify everyone in group shots.

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LETTER: Old Gardening Party

Dear Editor:

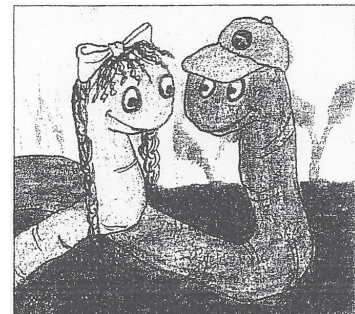
Thank you for the summer issue emphasis on gardens for peace and veteran healing. My grandfather made me a gardener when he said, "We're digging coffee grounds into the garden to make the plants grow better." He's the only adult who talked to us kids straight about war, saying, "Boys. War is horrible. I was in WWI. My brother died there. I hope none of you ever have to do it." When he took us fishing, he said, "We're getting bait from the garden, because worms like coffee too. We can take a few, but we have to leave most of them, 'cause they work to keep the soil healthy."

When I surrendered my army medic bag in 1970, I gardened, started children's gardens, and began writing about the Old Gardening Party (OGP), keeping the world safe for children, gardening, and storytelling. I'm in Minnesota, but the *Cleveland Plain Dealer* nominated me for President in 1979 on the OGP ticket. I lost by a landslide to Reagan, and Carter, but consoled myself in the garden. I've been National OGP Director ever since.

The OGP recommends pulling weeds by hand as a model for international conflict. Nationally, we support hands-on removal of "war weeds" by diplomacy, not bombing. We favor "composting" war criminal terrorists via arrest and rehabilitation. The OGP opposes spraying weeds because it kills pollinators, earthworms, and other beneficial insects. We also adamantly object to violent weapons "defense" which unnecessarily kills soldiers and illegally kills civilians.

Larry Johnson

Member, VFP Chapter 27, Twin Cities, MN
Old Gardening Party National Director



Tyler and Tina, OGP Earthworms

Veteran Altruism vs. Trumpism

Garett Reppenhagen
Veterans For Peace
Executive Director



I'm sure many veteran suicides are motivated by feelings of shame, disgust, and helplessness. The intense experiences and crises of conscience brought on by military conflict create an environment with ample opportunity to develop moral injury.

I have both PTSD and moral injury. The PTSD is treatable and I can learn to live with the symptoms. But the VA will never create a pill that can cure my self loathing and reverse the betrayal of my society.

I was able to survive my transition home, after serving as a sniper in the U.S. Army in Iraq, through activism and service. My need to somehow atone and forgive myself for my participation in the perpetration of violence and death in Iraq has driven my quest to balance the karmic scales and put good back into the world. This repentance sometimes takes the form of service projects. By helping to reverse and repair harms caused by—often as a direct result of—U.S. foreign policy and war, I also heal myself.

Veterans For Peace has multiple service projects started by members as national working groups or campaigns. The Iraq Water Project installs water filtration units that help ensure clean water supplies for Iraqi villages. The Deported Veterans Advocacy Project supports veterans that were deported to Mexico after their U.S. military service. One of our most noteworthy, VFP's expat Chapter 160, based in Viet Nam, works in concert with U.S. and Vietnamese organizations to mitigate the legacies of

Agent Orange and Unexploded Ordnance (UXOs). It is not surprising that many U.S. veterans who fought in that conflict are drawn to trying to help the people of Viet Nam recover from the lasting remnants of the destruction they participated in.

Many veterans become attached to the concept of serving others and it becomes part of their identity. That is the source of their pride. They would not only help others, but even put their own lives at risk to do so. Although the intention of helping others through military service is something that should be honored, many of us realize that we were used and betrayed—that we were providing any real service to our country, or to others in need, was just a myth. Therefore, to serve in a genuine way after we take off the uniform is both empowering and healing.

Emerging veterans organizations focus on continued service. Mission Continues helps veterans get involved in local nonprofits and community projects and pays them a stipend to do so. Team Rubicon trains and deploys veterans to help with disaster relief. Most veterans organizations are designed to just help other veterans. But VFP is dedicated to a higher mission.

Acting to change U.S. policy and challenge the nation's militarization is one of the biggest services of all that veterans can provide. Not only can we help end current conflicts, we can prevent future wars. Organizing to end war will not only make sure future harm does not come to foreign nationals around the globe; it will also prevent service members from following in our footsteps of committing harm and suffering lifetime trauma as a result of our military experiences.

Some veteran activists and volunteers are driven by moral injury. Acts of altruism help us heal by giving us positive outlets for channeling the anger we may feel about being betrayed by our political leaders. That is why it is so frustrating to hear President Trump call fallen service

members and veterans "losers" and "suckers." It is a strange paradox, since in many ways I feel like both a loser and a sucker. I bought into a lie about what U.S. military service really was and in turn became an instrument of the military industrial complex, supporting political ambitions and taking part in extractive colonialism. I was injured as a result. But the reality is, in war there are no winners. We all lose, and most especially the common person. Our nation's gigantic defense budget depletes resources that could go to public support. By using bully force around the world to secure "U.S. interests," our international credibility is fractured and we undermine our national

*WE HAVEN'T TURNED FROM
THE PRIDE OF SERVICE,
WE HAVE DOUBLED DOWN.*

security by building more enemies that are twice as emboldened by U.S. aggression.

Of course, Donald Trump sees "losers" and "suckers" from a different perspective. He is disconnected with why anyone would serve others. His privileged view of life, nurtured in a womb of capitalist values, is that someone shouldn't do anything that does not directly benefit them solely. His world is full of transactional relationships and competitive advantages. Exploitation with willful ignorance of externalities is a common trait of the greedy egoist.

This newsletter will most likely reach your mailbox right after the election, but we know that no matter the outcome, Veterans For Peace members will remain wary of the deceit of our institutions and systems, and continue our long-haul work for change. We haven't turned from the pride of service, we have doubled down. We lean into altruism to find restitution and forgiveness and, for once, to discover a mission of honest service guided by our own hearts and good intentions.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



Adrienne Kinne
President
Veterans For Peace
Board of Directors

Shark bait.

That is what young, naïve, women—girls really—were referred to as when they showed up to the Defense Language Institute (DLI). At least that was the term used in the mid-nineties. The younger and more naïve, the more the term applied. The shark was any and every older, usually higher-ranking male who was up for action and saw new arrivals as their next mission. I don't know where the term came from, but I know it was handed down from class to class before I was stationed in Monterey, California, and it's likely the tradition continued after I graduated.

Shark bait.

It wasn't just a term guys used to describe young women who would be easy prey. It was a term whose common existence and acceptance legitimized military rape culture. It seemed innocuous. After all, what's so wrong with a shark hunting down and overpowering its quarry? But while the male aggressor gets to be seen as merely being driven by survival instincts, the woman is dehumanized as just another piece of flesh thrown into the feeding frenzy. I say men are the sharks and women are the bait, but men could easily be bait too—sometimes to women, but more often to fellow men serving as soldiers, airmen, sailors, and marines.

Shark bait.

I haven't thought about DLI in a long while. For years, I only remembered the good things, or so I thought. And then I stopped thinking about it altogether. But

life's experiences eventually catch up to you. I was a counselor and social worker; I should have seen it coming. You don't realize how young you are when you are 17 and 18 years old. It's only when you get to be 35 and the kids in your life are turning into teenagers, and then all of a sudden they are almost eligible to enlist in the military, and it hits you like a ton of bricks how young you were at that age. And you remember how you trusted that the adults in your life had your best interests at heart, especially if you are serving together in the United States Military. I mean, we weren't just a family by happenstance, we chose to wear the uniform, we chose to be a part of something. And we were told to trust our fellow soldiers with our lives. But some of the same fellow soldiers who stood shoulder to shoulder next to you by day hunted you like a shark by night. And all your fellow comrades had to say about the situation was, "Here comes another one. Shark bait." Way to look out for one another.

Shark bait.

The term "shark bait" came back to me in an online discussion group with fellow women veterans and VFP members a few months back, and it stuck in my craw. Back in the day, it seemed so benign a term. I still remember the way some of the guys in my platoon would eye newbies and nudge each other, while muttering "shark bait." They were laughing and smiling and it seemed like such a joke. If they used the term, then it was okay to think of people that way. Women just happened to be the most common prey in that situation.

You never think that you are the bait. And then, with any luck, the years pass and you grow up. And you look around at the kids in your life and feel with every fiber of your being how disgusting it is to think of teenagers as bait. When I became a sergeant after nine years in the military and had young kids joining my unit straight out of AIT, it never occurred to me to hunt them. It never dawned on me to make them a

conquest to be attained. That is when I began to realize how wrong some of my experiences in the United States Army were. That realization was still pretty submerged, but it was coming closer to the surface. It only took another fifteen years, give or take, for me to see it for what it was.

Shark bait.

I use the term "military rape culture" because the military teaches us to dehumanize each other so that we can dehumanize the enemy. Part of that dehumanization legitimizes all kinds of sexual aggression, including rape. I know the military and VA like to use the term military sexual trauma, but that term has never sat right with me. It just reeks of PR, sanitizing, re-branding bullshit. When stats show one in three women and one in ten men have been sexually assaulted in the military, by fellow members of the armed forces, then you can bet it is a systemic problem. They have named it, and treated it, but what have they done to prevent it? Even now, in 2020, the military establishment insists upon internally investigating sex crimes—despite that women soldiers like Pfc. Vanessa Guillen are being disappeared!

Time's Up!

The public has finally called out the Catholic Church, and Hollywood, and the Boy Scouts. When are we going to wake up and realize that the military is part of the same corrupt system that allows people with rank and power to manipulate and abuse young adults coming into their charge? As long as the sharks are protected, the culture will remain unchanged. The military, like all of these corrupt institutions, needs to change, or it needs to be disbanded.

Special thanks to Natasha Erskine, for our thoughtful conversation and exploration of what it was like to serve as women in the military, among many great topics as part of VFP #StandDown Live, Wednesdays at 5pm Eastern time, Veterans For Peace Facebook & YouTube.

LETTER TO R. C., KILLED 12 MAY 1970

I met you in the midst
of one harsh summer
when the roses burned
on their weathered stems.
Behind your jokes
and all the other words
you told me of your death;
and I ignored all this,
the weight of inexorable time.
One day you were killed
and I will not understand.
We knew in that summer
that you were ill-intended
for this place; you tried
to tell us your time was short.
And one day the sun rose
on a wide green forest
and a thread of highway
awaiting the rain;
I met a vague shared friend
and the letter. I spilled
a few weak words
of protest and disbelief.
Somewhere you had died,
will die, and are dying still.
Later I will hope to find
it had been a mistake
and see you in a hundred halls,
in strange hospitals.
Until I see that it is not you,
that the terse words of the letter
were not false.
And imagination crumbles
as I recall
how I failed to listen
as you told me of this,
of this future that had held the fact
and endless repeating of your
single death.

—William H. Clamurro

William H. Clamurro, *The Vietnam Typescript* (Bluestem Press, 2018). Clamurro requested and was granted 1AO status in 1969, and served in Viet Nam as an unarmed army medic.

HAIKU OF WAR

After missions
He could wash choppers out
But not memory.

Three flares dead ahead
Burn holes in China Sea night
Guiding us to war.

Nighttime rockets kill
After dawn fishing boats come
Back from the sea still.

Patrol boat moves off
Grenades dropped around ships
Fish float by with tide.

He went off to war
And now when he catches fish
Returns them from shore.

—Michael Gillen

All but the last of these are reprinted from *Wild Geese Returning* (Post Traumatic Press, 2010). Gillen sailed with the U.S. Merchant Marine during the Vietnam War, earning the Merchant Marine Vietnam Service Medal. He is a member of Thompson Bradley Chapter 31.

Convention Thanks

...continued from page 1

and to Pace e Bene for the collaborative commemoration of Hiroshima and Nagasaki 75 years after the atomic bombings.

So many members helped make this convention possible, planning and hosting amazing workshops, participating in discussions, and being active in the chats. Some of them have shared their reflections for this newsletter (see pages 6–7). **We appreciate all of you for making this convention possible and successful!**

We aren't sure what next year will bring, but in the meantime we are looking forward to continuing the conversations virtually, so stay tuned for ways to pick up where we left off!

Garett Reppenhagen
VFP Executive Director

CONVENTION REFLECTIONS



This year, due to COVID-19, VFP was forced to hold its convention online. This meant that all the preparations and plans that had already been set into motion had to come to a screeching halt, and a new set of plans and direction implemented. This by no means was an easy fix; there was talk of postponing the event until next year, and dealing with the ramifications of those actions. The Board of Directors decided that the convention would happen online. After all, we reasoned, all of our meetings had moved to online conferencing, and we should form a group to study that possibility.

Garett thought he knew someone who could help out, but logistics posed a problem. Then the planning took on a life of its own, with members adding their knowledge and skills to the mix. Again, Garett and staff went about using their newly acquired knowledge of the video conferencing software, and put together, in my opinion, a fantastic event, to the point that I still can't believe that this was a first-time undertaking. My wife said, "You may as well have been there, we haven't seen much of you this week!" That's how well organized the plenaries, workshops, and presentations were. [Using] Chat Rooms [for socializing was different], but fun. The only thing that was missing was the tabling.

There was a slight mixup with the business meeting, but when has there not been?

This organization owes Garett and staff a world of gratitude for the remarkable job they did, all the while maintaining their regular duties.

I rate this Convention A+.

Michael Dempsey, Secretary, VFP Board of Directors

The 2020 virtual convention was successful beyond my wildest dreams! The poetry, the music, the workshops and plenaries were so accessible. The conferencing software made it possible for those who signed up to get an up-close and personal experience. The bonus was having the best attended business meeting ever! The convention was an artistic and financial success. Kudos!

Dave Logsdon, Vice President, VFP Board of Directors

I'd like to say "Thank you" to Veterans For Peace, particularly those who worked behind the scenes, for putting on an invaluable and successful convention. From the Veterans Yoga Project to start the day; to the workshops featuring the profound wisdom of our American Indian brothers and sisters; to the work done in Viet Nam to get rid of unexploded ordnances and helping our Vietnamese brothers and sisters deal with the unspeakable horror the use of Agent Orange by our nation has caused; to the [education and commemoration around U.S.] dropping of nuclear bombs in New Mexico, Hiroshima, and Nagasaki—the convention did a valuable service to all by driving home the message that war is horrendous for all human beings as well as our planet.

The mission of Veterans For Peace has never been more relevant and needed. It was great to hear from Jane Fonda about the work she has done and continues to do today. The talk given by Dahr Jamail was timely, and very inspiring. It is an honor to work side by side with Veterans For Peace members to promote our mission throughout the world.

*Roy C. Bath, Coordinator,
VFP Dan Lyons Chapter 178, Ft. Collins, Colorado*

What is there to say?

To begin, it was incredible in so many ways, the first being how our front-office folks—Garett, Colleen, Samantha, Shelly, Gail, and Casey—were able to [rise to] the challenge of “getting up to speed” to produce an online experience that was absolutely amazing for all of those able to attend. Thank you for making this year’s convention something to be very proud of. I have attended many media calls online, and I do believe this was the best that I have been involved in. Again, thank you for a wonderful experience.

Our convention commemorated “Human Rights over Nuclear Might” ~ Remembering Hiroshima and Nagasaki, on the 75th anniversary. At a time when much of the regular media only gave it lip-service and shock and awe, with little reflection on the true cost of non-combatant and military lives, we stood firmly providing a voice for many who could no longer speak.

Veterans For Peace this year offered workshops on Saving Our VA, War Tax Resistance, Military Contamination, Stopping RIMPAC, The Climate Emergency (our universal forefront struggle), Incarcerated Veterans (an issue I personally dealt with for almost 10 years), Counter-Recruitment, U.S. and Israeli Violence Toward Palestine, Veterans for Black Lives, Peace in Korea, and the Deportation of Veterans—Bringing Them Home! In addition to these workshops, there were lively discussions in the breakout rooms run by many volunteers—some I could be on, and too many I missed due to obligations.

As an organization, we have only touched the surface of the challenges and issues before us. But, due to the COVID pandemic, something important happened. As a working-class individual, this format [gave me the ability] to sign into a workshop, either on our phone or laptop, and to continue to listen during working hours. (I was still able to earn a paycheck!) And I did not have to pay for a room, hotel, restaurant meals, or additional travel costs, nor lose vacation time (which I don’t have)! That was an unforeseen luxury of this format. This online presence makes our work easily available and accessible to those who may not otherwise be able to participate, as has happened to me since I joined VFP. Additionally, VFP posted and allowed access to these workshops later via Facebook/YouTube, thusly providing an even richer experience. While we were unable to socialize and mix with our friends, missing each other’s faces and nuances and camaraderie, we still had this ability to return and review some of what we may have missed.

This does not mean that there were not the occasional flutters and hiccups, but nothing that was not rapidly overcome by our national staff. My hat’s off to each of you for a wonderful job well done.

In summary, I would hope that this format could be included into all of our future Veterans For Peace conventions, [making attendance] affordable for many and [content] easily shared. We have been lied to many times for the sake of saving an

economic system that exploits human life and the value of our labor; I know that VFP will continue to stand up for what is morally correct. Again, a big thanks to our staff.

Al Glatkowski

USMM, Vietnam Veterans Against the War (VVAW/OSS)



Cara Bissell, Memorial Day 2020

One fact

I learned at this convention—the Japanese people, while forced by McArthur to adopt “Article 9,” soon after embraced it: “We will [go to] war never again.”

Like every VFP convention, for me, there did not seem to be enough time to take everything in. Listening to others reciting their poems and reading my own poem brought fellow conventioners [emotionally] together. I was glad the “Make Your Own Podcast” workshop was able to be viewed after the convention was over, because the “Incarcerated Veterans” panel discussion was presented at the same time during the convention. Alice and I woke up to gentle Yoga / Meditation classes a few mornings. I particularly took note of Chapter 13’s advertisement (Artist/Designer Georgia Conroy) on the first page of the Commemorative Convention Booklet’s advertisement section, and I appreciate the work of Chapter 13 members who contributed to the “CRITICAL MASS TUCSON” discussion—still a work in progress. Dahr Jamail’s keynote address had **THE CONVENTION’S KEY** that is in my “sig file” along with my “Love Forever With Each Passing Day’s Ongoing Progression In Our Higher Power” (Ifwepdopiohp):

“We each do the right thing because

...

You never know!”

[It is not ours to know the outcome]

Ifwepdopiohp,

Cara Bissell, VFP Chapter 13, Tucson, Arizona

Peace, Justice, and Black Lives Matter

“TRUE PEACE IS NOT MERELY THE ABSENCE OF WAR.
IT IS THE PRESENCE OF JUSTICE”

—Jane Addams, 1931 Nobel Peace Prize Laureate

by Odeiu Powers

We enter a new season as protests continue for justice system reforms that finally deliver equal protection before the law for all Americans, including Black people who are still being denied this basic human right. The calls to end racially-biased injustice are now being silenced by casting the oppressed as threats and the oppressors as victims to the systems that they created and uphold.

George Floyd should have been the end of any extrajudicial murders at the hands of police for at least the summer. That brutality was open and vicious enough for any country with a conscience to rally behind destroying a system that would produce such vileness.

Instead, we got a few weeks of outrage from the masses while cops continued to kill us with more Americans being publicly beaten or shot nearly weekly since then.

Black people and reform supporters have marched since Spring. With the exception of a few riots after Floyd's murder, “mysterious” extremists have been agitating violence in the marches to help return public sentiment to the same anti-Black and pro-cop dynamic that led to Floyd's murder in the first place. Even so, 93% of Black Lives Matter protests have ended without violence. However, police were five times more likely to use force against Black Lives Matter protestors than others and their heavy-handed responses escalated violence.

That escalation was intentional. Of course, agents of injustice can't openly claim to be against justice for all. Instead, the appeals for justice process and funding redesign have been silenced with the manufactured violence of protests as evidence of a war against the nation, the police, and general decency. Now the targets of historically-cemented injustices

are white people. A recent Harvard study of incarceration disparities yielded one definitive finding: the entire justice process is driven by racism. Justice and racial oppression cannot coexist in peace.

“No justice, no peace” isn't just a protest slogan. We all benefit from a just, equitable, and peaceful society. Stand with the people who fight for a just and equitable system; not those who oppose us. Keep showing up for us at marches, at your local townhall meetings, and in polling booths. Believe and hear us when we speak; especially when we speak against agents of our oppression and even if those agents have long been framed as heroes. Know justice. Know peace.

Odeiu Powers is a Navy veteran who deployed in support of the Afghanistan and Iraq conflicts. She is a new member of Veterans For Peace.



New York City, June 15, 2020. Photo: Ellen Davidson

are viewed as the troublemakers, terrorists and enemies of peace.

Still, please remember that this is not a war we chose, started, or even intensified. For decades we have begged, kneeled, marched, voted, lobbied, and had laws passed to protect us, then watched helplessly as biased judges, district attorneys, and of course, police watered them down to meaninglessness.

As sentinels of peace, you must at least know what injustice looks like. Black people make up 13% of the U.S. population, but account for 22% of people murdered by the police. We are also five times more likely to be stopped without cause by police than

Sources:

BLM Protests Peaceful:

<https://acleddata.com/2020/09/03/demonstrations-political-violence-in-america-new-data-for-summer-2020/>

NAACP Injustice statistics:

<https://www.naacp.org/criminal-justice-fact-sheet/>

Harvard Study on Massachusetts

Criminal Justice: <https://news.harvard.edu/gazette/story/2020/09/black-latinx-people-overrepresented-in-massachusetts-prisons-study-says/>

STAND DOWN for #BlackLivesMatter

On May 25, 2020 George Floyd (an African American male) was killed in Minneapolis, Minnesota, by Derrick Chauvin (a white police officer), by kneeling on George Floyd's neck for nearly nine minutes, with assistance from at least three fellow officers. This murder of an unarmed Black American by an officer of the law took place a full four months into the COVID-19 global health pandemic which attacks our lungs and upper respiratory system, has been shown to disproportionately affect the Black community, and is spread through prolonged close contact. The entire atrocity was captured on camera and witnessed by billions of people around our beautiful blue planet. Overnight, our global family erupted in protests of support for the importance, and validity, of Black Lives. The Black Lives Matter movement went viral. From Palestine to Paris, from Japan to Johannesburg, people marched, stood in silence, created murals, and lit candles to celebrate the life of yet another undeserving victim of the American injustice system.

By May 28, 2020, the city of Portland, Oregon, was in a state of emergency after protests over George Floyd erupted in Minneapolis, Minnesota, on May 26 and swept through more than 400 U.S. cities by the week's end. These protests



were largely peaceful and the protesters were even seen to be practicing best practices with social distancing and the wearing of masks. Freedom of speech and our right to organize is protected by the First Amendment. The response to these protests from the federal government was from the same playbook as their response to COVID-19—from slow and inadequate at addressing the root causes, to likely problematic and inflammatory. By June 6, 2020, the Pentagon had authorized the use of the National Guard in response to days of unrest amid peaceful protests in Washington, D.C., with the use of two military helicopters deployed to disrupt protests by hovering low over the protesters igniting the spark.

Veterans For Peace #StandDownLive went on air Wednesday, June 10, 2020, with our first episode calling for the National Guard being deployed to various cities to question their orders, examine the reasons they volunteered to serve

the flag, and resist any illegal orders to suppress the rights of Americans. Our first guest was Siri Margerin, a long-time advocate for GI Rights and the coordinator of the San Francisco Bay Area GI Rights Hotline. The initial focus of the weekly live webinar was to get our active duty military and police officers to look at themselves and their institutions through a critical lens of self reflection and ultimately to put down their weapons and stand in solidarity with the Movement for Black Lives.

Our panel of veterans engages guests in conversations calling attention to the injustice in our country and beyond at the hands of the Military industrial Complex. The Stand Down Live format is designed to engage with a live audience on Facebook and Youtube and grow the conversations intersecting at race/ethnicity/gender, class consciousness, local-to-global peace work, and social/environmental justice.

Please join hosts Natasha Erskine, Mike James, and Miles Megaciph for this weekly live conversation. Every Wednesday we air live on the Veterans For Peace Facebook and YouTube pages at 5pm Eastern Time, 4pm Central, and 2pm Pacific.

See you online!

Stand Down Live

The New White Man's Burden

by Tom Contrestan

So, lately, I've been thinking about just how wrong Rudyard Kipling got it 125 years ago. Of course, he was a product of his times, as he defended Victorian British imperialism with all its racist aspects. He said that it was the duty of white, European men to march into far-off "heathen" lands, guns a-blazing, in order to bring Christ, civilization, and modern progress to "backward" native people. In reality, they introduced brutal military oppression, economic exploitation, and deadly new diseases in exchange for cheap labor and natural resources.

The problem is that this kind of thinking is still with us today. My generation (Baby Boomers) grew up watching *Amos and Andy*, *Jungle Jim*, and *Tarzan* in the popular culture. Seeds of prejudice were sown in impressionable minds—Tarzan had to

be a white male. Although I never used "the N word" nor heard it used in our home, my parents and I kept deferentially quiet when other family members and neighbors would ask "...but would you want your sister to date one, or your daughter to marry one?" We kept quiet. Although there was no Jim Crow apartheid in Jersey City in 1960, and we looked down on those southerners we saw in the news, there was plenty of latent bigotry just below the surface.

I, like so many progressive whites, celebrated the election of Barack Obama in 2008. We patted ourselves on the back, thinking how far we'd come, and welcoming a new "post racist America." Yet, we neglected to take into account that there were still people being stopped for "driving while black" or jogging in

continued on page 19...

New Climate Crisis Working Group formed at 2020 VFP Convention

Contacts: Steve Morse (steve_morse@mac.com); Vince Dijanich (vinniejdee@gmail.com)

The Veterans For Peace Climate Crisis Working Group had its first meeting on August 4, 2020, in a discussion room at the virtual VFP Convention, which followed directly after the plenary on Militarism and the Climate Emergency. Since early September, we have been meeting every two weeks, with 20 or more participants.



Chapter 34 members have participated in several Climate actions in New York City. Banner and Photo: Ellen Davidson

Former Executive Director Woody Powell, who is active in the current group, had gathered information from a number of members who were involved in, or expressed interest in climate activism. Steve Morse and Vince Dijanich, both from Oakland, California, initiated the group.

As a Veterans For Peace working group, we will emphasize the relationship between war/militarism and the climate crisis—a connection that tends to be undervalued, overlooked, or just not spoken of in most climate groups.

As climate groups increasingly seek to address oppression of Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) and connect with the anti-racist upsurge, our group joins in this, and in addition emphasizes the deep links between militarism and racism.

We have a subgroup meeting regularly to work on Goals and Objectives and Mission Statement, and to gather existing literature on militarism and the climate crisis in order to put together an educational piece that can be shared with VFP chapters and with the public. We also are working to adapt a slideshow on climate change developed by Chapter 91 in San Diego, California.

Veterans For Peace Executive Director Garrett Reppenhagen is convening a subgroup focused on climate legislation, working

with congressional aides and getting VFP's voice out there concerning climate and legislation.

We strive to be a mutually supportive place for members who are doing climate work. We want to be a resource for VFP, and offer help and encouragement to any VFP members or chapters who are doing climate work or are interested in taking it up.

Please join us! We welcome your participation, your energy, enthusiasm, experience and ideas.

Veterans on both coasts collaborate in forming new China Working Group

Contacts: Mike Wong (mikevfp69@gmail.com)—Western U.S.; Michael Kramer (ambar35@comcast.net)—Eastern U.S.

San Francisco Chapter 69's vice president, Michael Wong, has been organizing against the new Cold War on China, working with both the Chinese and peace communities in the Pivot To Peace (peacepivot.org) campaign. [See Mike's op-ed on page 25.] When the Chinese community held a rally and march against anti-Asian racism, which drew 1,000 participants from both the Chinese and peace communities, Mike spoke for Veterans For Peace. At the VFP national convention, Mike joined with members of the East Bay and Northern New Jersey chapters to present a webinar on Peace with China. Following the national convention, a dozen members of VFP from several chapters including the East Bay, Northern New Jersey, and San Francisco formed a China Working Group, which has just been approved by VFP National.

Today's Cold War on China and Russia is even more dangerous than the first Cold War, because the current arms race involves much more advanced and destructive conventional weapons, and new types of nuclear weapons and counter-weapon systems such as stealth bombers, hypersonic ballistic missiles, and anti-missile systems that are much more complex and run a much greater risk of war by miscalculation, accident, or uncontrolled escalation. Last year's false nuclear alarm in Hawaii is a perfect example of what can go wrong, risking a nuclear war and the termination of all humanity.

Recently, the U.S. has upped the ante, sailing two carrier battle groups through the South China Sea (resulting in games of "chicken" between U.S. and Chinese naval and missile forces), flying U.S. spy planes out of Taiwan (a violation of the "one country" agreement that previously has stood since Nixon's "opening to China" in 1972), and flying B-1B and B-52 bombing missions towards China. Some in the Chinese community, who are following events closely, now fear war is becoming increasingly likely.



SOA Watch planning November Encuentro

Veterans For Peace and School of the Americas Watch (SOA Watch) have a long history of collaboration, something that is essential if we want any chance of making real change. In spite of a pandemic, the resistance continues. As we continue pushing forward, SOA Watch is using this time to build new alliances while strengthening old ones.

Please visit the SOA Watch website (soaw.org) for a summary of some of the important work being done by SOAW's amazing staff. Among other things, they organized a series of virtual gatherings this fall in recognition of the 30-year anniversary of SOA Watch, titled, "Rooted in Resistance: Defending our Communities and Ending State Violence in the Americas," including a virtual concert held October 17. I hope many in VFP will attend the virtual *Encuentro*, coming up November 21–22.

GET ALL SOA WATCH ANNOUNCEMENTS AND ALERTS:
GO TO SOAW.ORG AND JOIN THE LISTSERV.

As some of you may know, a Spanish court convicted SOA graduate Inocente Montano for his role in the murders of five University of Central America (UCA) Jesuit priests, and their housekeeper and her young daughter. It only took 30 years, but some justice has been served. Perhaps not enough, given all the actors involved in this heinous act, but it is a start. Certainly, the U.S. government and the School of Americas (WHINSEC) need to be held accountable.

After the conviction, the Jesuits at the UCA issued a statement, which is posted on the SOA Watch website: <https://soaw.org/conviction-of-soa-grad-for-jesuit-massacre-in-el-salvador/>

I pulled out one part of that statement, because I feel it is worth highlighting and remembering:

Judicial convictions for homicide or terrorism are never cause for joy. They express the sad reality of a moment in history and the worst of the human condition, its ability to gravely offend life and break with the brotherhood to which we are all called. But they are a formal, legal, and democratic recognition of the truth, and an encouragement and a guarantee of non-repetition of these inhuman acts.

A former lieutenant in the FMLN once told me that the truth has long legs and will eventually catch up. I guess he was right, and this [conviction of Inocente Montano] illustrates why we should never give up.

Finally, friends, please donate what you can so that the work can continue. Thank you.

*Mike Tork, VFP lifetime member
and SOAW Board treasurer*



VFP Golden Rule update

Contact: Helen Jaccard (helen.jaccard@gmail.com);
Gerry Condon (projectsafehaven@hotmail.com)

Although COVID-19 has made it impossible for the Golden Rule Project to give educational presentations and take people sailing, they have found other ways to take action and move their anti-nuclear mission forward. On August 16, 2020, *Golden Rule* sailed near Waikiki Beach in Honolulu, in coordination with an 80-car caravan organized by the Cancel RIMPAC Coalition. Banners on the *Golden Rule* read "DeMilitarize the Pacific" and "Cancel RIMPAC." RIMPAC, or Rim of the Pacific, is the largest Naval war practice in the world. From August 17–31, Hawaii's skies were filled with rockets, mortars, missiles, and drones. There has long been opposition to RIMPAC from Native Hawaiians and peace and environmental activists. "Every two years, RIMPAC has destroyed our island resources while naturalizing the imperial violence," said activist Kyle Kajihiro.

While many events observing the 75th anniversary of the nuclear bombings of Japan were canceled due to COVID-19, the Golden Rule Project held an alternative event. Nine masked people gathered on rural sacred land at the future La'i Peace Center, a project of Sakyadhita Hawai'i. The meaningful gathering included Katsumi Takemoto, a second-generation Nagasaki *hibakusha* (A-bomb survivor), a soothing Tibetan meditation led by Venerable Karma Lekshe Tsomo, and ceremony, silence, and sharing that included a discussion about myths surrounding the end of World War II.

At this year's virtual Veterans For Peace convention, the Golden Rule Project brought in voices of those who have lived through nuclear disaster and militarism. With the theme "Human Rights over Nuclear Might," it was a great opportunity to educate VFP members about the impacts of the nuclear age and militarization in the Pacific and around the world. Golden Rule Project Manager Helen Jaccard introduced the speakers for the Opening Plenary on nuclear weapons and gave an update on the *Golden Rule*. Gerry Condon, president of the Golden Rule Committee, hosted the workshop "Resisting Nuclear War and Militarism in the Pacific," in which panelists addressed how U.S. militarization, colonization, and nuclear testing impacts indigenous people and the environment in Hawai'i, the Marshall Islands, Guam and Okinawa.

Homeless Veterans Working Group

Contacts: Dave Dittmore, Chair (ddittmore@aol.com)
Dede Donovan, Secretary (donovand@usfca.edu)

The Homeless Veterans Working Group (HVWG) meets approximately monthly. Each member has a different focus. Housing (urban), rural homeless vets, necessities of life distribution (including sleeping bags), health care, vocational education, and civic action to increase awareness of the needs of homeless vets are all on the list. Some of us are working to address the immediate needs of single women veterans and veterans with children, and advocating for the expansion of family shelter housing. Another priority is on advocating for homeless prevention programs such as rapid rehousing, the expansion of veteran (VASH) vouchers and shelter per diem.

VFP's HVWG is at present discussing partnerships with other organizations with an eye to a national impact. The group is also seeking new members, especially from the East Coast, South and Midwest. There is a lot of work to do. Please join us!

Looking out for veterans on the streets of San Diego

BY JACK DOXEY

The Homeless Veterans Working Group (HVWG) was formed ten years ago, with sponsorship from the Veterans For Peace national office, for the specific purpose of helping homeless veterans. There are many ways to help our brothers and sisters living on the streets.

One very successful project I have been involved with here in San Diego, California, is the distribution of sleeping bags throughout the downtown area. As of this date, we have distributed over 4,500 sleeping bags to the homeless. We have collected over \$150,000 dollars in donations and every penny has gone towards the purchase of bags.

Street outreach work is not easy, but it is rewarding. Below are a few observations VFP members and others made after volunteering with our sleeping bag distribution program:

John Milhous, member of Veterans For Peace (formerly homeless): "I noticed an interesting enthusiasm that I have not noticed in some of the other outings. It seemed to me that everyone was all fired up. Another observation has to do with the people on the street. I heard not one complaint from them regarding their plight."



January 2018: VFP San Diego members Stan Levin (left) and Gilbert Fields zip up a brand new sleeping bag given to a man found sleeping in a parking lot. Photo: Hayne Palmour IV, San Diego Union-Tribune.

Julie Pendray, Editor in Chief, *Ramona Patch*

newspaper: "I liked the way you handed out such practical items with no strings attached, without being patronizing or judgmental. I liked how organized and quick the operation was and I enjoyed the social element. I like to observe sometimes before going straight into a story. That way, I can look the homeless in the eyes and not through a lens..."

Deb Schneider, member of Veterans For Peace: "We totally outfitted two men (with the goods we were carrying) who had scant belongings and were sleeping on the pavement. One of the men was a very young navy veteran, who had done two tours with Westpac in the recent conflict. He was so grateful. He is going to Stand Down next weekend... I am sure each of us had similar experiences and I agree with John Milhous that we all shared an enthusiasm for what we were doing. Together we sent some positive energy waves out into the universe...and you know what they say, "every little bit helps"

We always come away humbled by the gentleness and absolute gratitude of the homeless. Each time that I have gone out I am expecting to see at least one homeless person bitter, angry or sarcastic. Yet I am amazed that I have not encountered even one homeless person displaying such behavior. Last Saturday we came upon a veteran lying in the corner of a warehouse building. His friend told us that his nickname is Tennessee. Tennessee is a veteran and has only one leg and he struggles every morning to just get back into his wheelchair. He was completely by himself and he said that I must get to the Stand Down this coming weekend, even if I have to wheel myself the whole way. He thanked us over and over again for all that we gave him.

Our efforts will not cure the homeless problem, but I think we all come away feeling that we made a small difference.

Jack Doxey is active with the San Diego VFP Chapter 91 Homeless Veterans Working Group. He can be reached at jfdoxey@gmail.com.

Deported Veterans Advocacy Project

Contacts: Robert Vivar (robert.vivar@uusdepvets.org), ph. 52-664-807-9008; Hector Lopez (hexveteran1@gmail.com)

The mission of the Deported Veterans Advocacy Project is to advocate and assist U.S. veterans who face deportation, or have been deported by the U.S. government. Currently Veterans For Peace is the fiscal sponsor of the Unified Deported Veterans, located in Tijuana, Mexico. Along with VFP Sgt. Barrios Memorial Chapter 182, they serve on the front lines, intercepting deported U.S. military veterans and assisting them to integrate into the community as productive residents while searching for legal avenues to return them home to the U.S.

We see some hope on the horizon for our deported veterans, with some progress toward justice being made through both legislative and judicial channels.

As the Presidential election nears, we can appreciate the need to create pressure on elected candidates to enact legislation in support of not only repatriating deported veterans, but also providing the necessary resources to fulfill the needs of our veterans. That is why we are in full support of legislation that will be introduced by Rep. Bobby Rush (D-IL), which calls for the repatriation of deported veterans as well as stopping future deportation of veterans. We are collaborating with other organizations that are working with Rep. Rush to accomplish this action, such as American Right to Family and Family Reunification, among others from Chicago, Illinois.

We are also named as amici in the 9th circuit appeal of *Monssef Cheneau v. William Barr*, which has immense consequences for many individuals, including deported veterans and others with strong ties to the United States, whose claims of derivative citizenship depend on the proper interpretation of § 1432(a)(5).

continued next column...

ON THE STREET

They sleep under bridges and hide in vacant doorways.
We once armed them and told them
to Defend Us.
Once home they became
Homeless and Defenseless.
Our Government's Response:
We're waging new wars,
and you're no longer needed.
You can make our day
by moving out of our way.

—Jack Doxey

Success of this appeal would allow deported veterans under certain circumstances to be considered U.S. citizens and return to the USA.

The ACLU recently won a Federal court case, *Samma v. U.S. Department of Defense*, regarding expedited citizenship of non-citizen service personnel serving honorably, which rolls back enacted policy that was preventing active duty soldiers' access to an expedited process. This decision could not arrive at a better time, since we have been contacted by an active duty Marine and several co-Marines experiencing difficulty in obtaining assistance with their citizenship requirements at their base. We were able to connect this Marine brother to the ACLU, as well as an attorney, for assistance in completing their citizenship process.

Robert Vivar



A Special Appeal from former deported veteran Hans Irizarry

My name is Hans Irizarry, former U.S. Army Specialist (1997–2000), Operation Desert Fox (1998–99). In 2004 I was arrested for CPCS 3 and sentenced to 4-1/2 to 9 years in prison. In 2008 an immigration judge deported me to the Dominican Republic.

Today I am still suffering the punishment of this deportation. My daughters grew up without a father figure and my father passed without me being able to be there to look him in the eyes and say “I love you, Dad.”

Today I am back in the country I call home—the country I fought for and was willing to give my life for. My family needs me, my daughters need me, and my friends are happy to see me here as well: I need them all in my life.

Now I am fighting a new fight. I am trying to get a pardon from the Governor of the State of New York, Andrew M. Cuomo. But I cannot do this alone. First I thank God, and then every member of VFP for their support in this new fight that is just beginning. Please sign my petition to Governor Cuomo at:

[https://www.change.org/p/
andrew-m-cuomo-leave-no-man-behind/](https://www.change.org/p/andrew-m-cuomo-leave-no-man-behind/)

We Are Many

Directed by Amir Amirani (2014)

Documentary • 1h 50min

Reviewed by Benjamin Schrader

We Are Many is an excellent documentary that examines the global peace movement against the war in Iraq. Amir Amirani interviews activists and policy makers who had a role in either promoting the war or fighting against it. The documentary starts with 9/11 as the seeds for Iraq, as it was being discussed merely days after the attack. Over the next couple years the case for Iraq would be made by the Bush administration, but with the administrations loud banging of the war drums came a mobilization of the people who would come together for the largest protest in history. While the protests would not stop the invasion, they would have ripple effects and show that their efforts were not futile.

Watching the documentary brought up a ton of memories for me, from where I was on 9/11 to the year I spent in Iraq to my years as an activist. I joined the U.S. Army as a 19D Cavalry Scout, in July of 2001, two months before 9/11, but I didn't leave for bootcamp until a month after. While I knew at the time that the country was headed toward war, I was not dissuaded from joining, and it enforced my reasons for joining. I was a Republican who had campaigned for Bush the previous year. In bootcamp we learned to kill, and we were indoctrinated into following our chain of command without regard for right or wrong.

Thankfully I was able to hold onto a bit of my individuality due to the fact that I joined the military with two friends, so we had each other to lean on and question what we thought might be right or wrong.

We were stationed in Germany, and it was here that I first began to be exposed to a wide variety of international perspectives. But as *We Are Many* shows, the media in both the U.S. and the UK helped promote the war and push the narratives that the politicians were selling. And in the Army mess halls it

almost exclusively aired Fox News, the worst of the outlets. While Afghanistan was in full swing, we were instead sent to Kosovo in 2002-2003 for what was supposed to be a six-month peace keeping deployment, but it was extended for another four-months because our replacements were being sent to Iraq. It was while we were in Kosovo that Bush and Blair would decide that they would go to war no matter what. In February of 2003, Colin Powell would give his infamous speech to the UN Security Council. I was watching the speech from the MWR on Camp Bondsteel, and the next day I found the transcript of his speech and printed it out. I scoured through the speech and highlighted the reasons as to why we were going to Iraq. At the time, I felt that if those

to my eyes. Not only the fact that so many people wanted to end the BS war before it began, but that the war took place regardless of will of the masses.

March 19, 2003 is a date I will never forget, as it was the day that the invasion would begin (subsequently, I would defend my MA and my PhD on the same date years later). I had just left Kosovo for a two week leave to come home to Colorado, but was stuck in the Chicago airport due to a blizzard in Denver. I remember being in a crowded sports bar sitting at the bar with the TVs showing the invasion as if it were a sporting event, which turned my stomach. Some guy saw my haircut and asked if I was in the military, which I said yes, and they bought my dinner and drinks all night. But I felt in shock at the moment, as for some

“THERE ARE TWO FORCES AT WORK, ALWAYS, HATRED OF INJUSTICE, WHICH MAKES YOU ANGRY, AND BELIEF THAT YOU CAN MAKE A BETTER WORLD, WHICH MAKES YOU OPTIMISTIC, AND ANGER AND OPTIMISM COMING TOGETHER ARE A VERY POWERFUL FORCE.”

were the reasons we were going to Iraq, then we should be going to Iraq. But as Col. Lawrence Wilkerson, who was Colin Powell's Chief-of-Staff, discusses in the film all of the information was BS.

Days after Powell's speech there would be the largest protest in history, as millions would pour into the streets across the globe and on all continents, even Antarctica. This protest is at the center of the film, highlighting many of the speeches, activists, and organizers that made it possible. But none of this news had come to us in Kosovo. We hadn't heard about the 789 cities that had protests, we hadn't heard the about the millions in Spain, London, and across the U.S. As I watched the protests in the film, it gave me chills and brought tears

reason, I thought diplomacy might win out.

Over the next few months, I would keep learning more and more, though nothing pointed toward Iraq having WMD's. I began learning about what the weapons inspectors had reported, which is highlighted in the film, and from thinkers such as Noam Chomsky, also highlighted in the film, and I started to question my initial belief that Colin Powell was correct in that we should be going into Iraq. But my doubt was solidified when we were sent to Iraq and I saw what was going on firsthand. I was there from February 2004 to February 2005 and not once did we look for WMDs, not once were we on the lookout for possible mobile labs, not once were we briefed on

Shut Down Creech

...from page 1

blockaders of impending arrest. The Friday morning resistance blockage was not expected, so military and law enforcement officers were caught off guard when, in the early morning rush-hour traffic, the two women, aged 65 and 76 years old, stretched a large banner, "**Stop Droning Afghanistan, 19 years ENOUGH!**" across the entrance road into the killer drone base. They also impeded traffic with several small "coffins" bearing the names of other countries targeted by U.S. drones. They then read into a megaphone the names and ages of some of the victims of U.S. drone attacks memorialized on small pink-paper drones. The activists were able to remove themselves from the road in time to avoid arrest and simultaneously communicate a clear message of objection and noncompliance to the intolerable U.S. practice of remote killing, where hundreds of children have already died as "collateral damage."

Due to the element of surprise, the alternative northerly gate a mile up the road from the commuter gate was closed, and it took significant time to reopen and receive traffic. As a result, military traffic was backed up all the way down Highway 95, to the site of the blockade. Dozens, if not hundreds, of cars were delayed getting into the base, for about a half hour. Activists considered the action a very successful achievement toward their goal: To shut down Creech Air Force Base for as long as possible to halt the criminal activity taking place there.

"I'm motivated to participate in this resistance, with the hope that we will teach the soldiers that they must take control

of and understand the consequences of their actions," said Maggie Huntington. She quoted a Chinese Proverb, "**To know and not to act is not to know.**"

Other Shut Down Creech demonstrations held during the weeklong anti-drone protest included: a solemn "funeral procession" along the highway, with mourners wearing black clothing and white masks and carrying small coffins; and an LED light-board letter display in the dark of the early morning, declaring: "**NO DRONES.**"

We also held up Burma Shave-style signs to broadcast messages to commuters, including:

Observation...without judgement...is the Highest Form...of Human Intelligence

**Drone Attacks are...COWARDLY...BARBARIC...RACIST...
WRONG...SHAMEFUL...UNJUST...IMMORAL...**

Other commute-time vigils were built around themes such as:

**War is Not Green/End War for Climate Justice
(The U.S. Military is the #1 Global User of Fossil Fuel)**

**WAR IS A LIE: PRESIDENTS LIE, CONGRESS LIES,
GENERALS LIE, CIA LIES, etc.**

**To learn more about the Shut Down Creech movement, visit:
www.ShutDownCreech.blogspot.com**

We Are Many

...from page 14

terrorists who had links to 9/11. My year in Iraq made me angry and feel betrayed by my chain of command, my president, and my country.

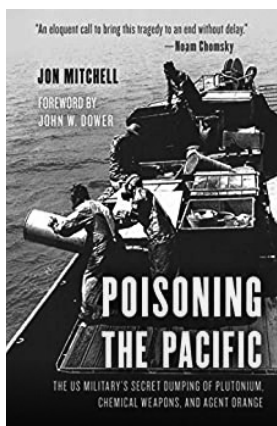
I still had my two friends that I had joined with to lean on. They had always been more liberal than me, and had long been telling me that they thought the war was a sham, but I was stubborn and had to see it for myself. One of my buddies, Garrett Reppenhagen, was the first active duty soldier to join Iraq Veterans Against the War. And as the documentary highlights, the protests on February 15, 2003 were a catalyst for the creation of that organization. But as the film highlights, it was a catalyst for so much more. While the protest did not stop the invasion, it did shape a number

of organizers around the globe, especially in countries like Egypt, the UK, and the U.S. It would create organizers who would eventually create the conditions of possibility for Arab Spring and the ousting of Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak. And it would keep the U.S. and UK from fully engaging in Syria. So the moral of the story is the power of protest, the power of the people, and the need to keep fighting and not give up on peace and justice. Rightly so, during the films credits, video of more recent protests played in the background, the Women's March, Black Lives Matter protests, Extinction Rebellion, and the Poor People's Campaign. These movements are important to peace and important to justice, and we must not give up on them and we must keep fighting because we

can make change.

The film closes with these words, "There are two forces at work, always, hatred of injustice, which makes you angry, and belief that you can make a better world, which makes you optimistic, and anger and optimism coming together are a very powerful force." I agree. I highly recommend this film, and hope that members of VFP will have showings of it in their communities.

*Benjamin Schrader, PhD, is on the Board of Directors for Veterans For Peace and About Face: Veterans Against the War. His academic work focuses on veteran activism and his most recent book *Fight to Live, Live to Fight: Veteran Activism after War* is now available in paperback through SUNY Press.*



POISONING THE PACIFIC

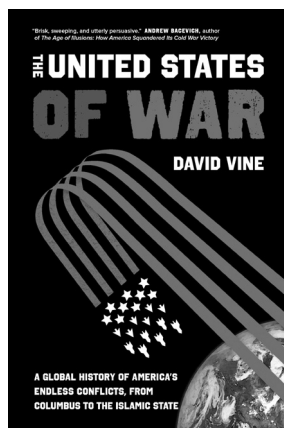
THE U.S. MILITARY'S SECRET DUMPING OF PLUTONIUM, CHEMICAL WEAPONS, AND AGENT ORANGE

by Jon Mitchell

Rowman & Littlefield, 2020

Based upon 12,000+ pages of FOIA documents, this book reveals how U.S. military operations have been contaminating the Pacific region with toxic substances, including plutonium, dioxin, and VX nerve agent. Hundreds of thousands of indigenous people and U.S. service members have been exposed—but the DoD has hidden the damage and refused to help victims.

Jon Mitchell is an investigative journalist with *Okinawa Times*, a newspaper that often covers VFP actions supporting environmental justice on Okinawa. He wrote this book partly to help veterans understand how military operations have poisoned them and their families along with local residents of the Pacific region. In concert with the book's publication, a slew of the Okinawa FOIA-released documents (related to chemical and biological weapons, asbestos, dioxin, lead, etc.) will be uploaded and available to the public on the publisher's website, to help with VA claims.



THE UNITED STATES OF WAR

A GLOBAL HISTORY OF AMERICA'S ENDLESS CONFLICTS, FROM COLUMBUS TO THE ISLAMIC STATE

by David Vine

Univ. of California Press, 2020

This book explores why the United States has long been a United States of War—that is, why the U.S. military has fought wars or engaged in other combat in all but 11 of its 244 years of existence. Telling a story that spans Columbus's 1494 arrival in Guantanamo Bay and the rise of a global U.S. empire...the book confronts the tens of millions killed, wounded, and displaced by U.S. wars, while offering proposals for how we can end the fighting.

"David Vine is a professor of anthropology at American University, and the author of *Base Nation*, about the myriad U.S. military bases in every corner of the world. I have been working with him on the World BEYOND War 'No Bases' campaign. I thought you all might be interested in his new book."

—Leah Bolger, VFP #132, Corvallis, OR



LEAVING WORLD WAR II BEHIND

by David Swanson

2020

"Swanson demolishes the myths by amassing a huge number of facts, all carefully documented, and leaves us the true, if unpalatable but liberating, history of WWII."

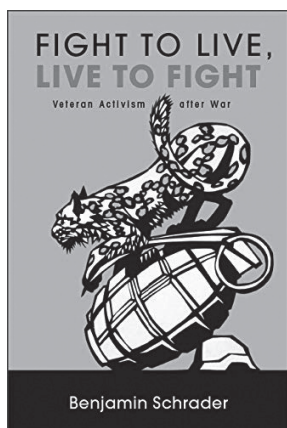
—Kent D. Shifferd, author, *From War To Peace: A Guide To The Next Hundred Years*

"If you, like me, thought that WWII was the exceptional 'good war,' think again. David Swanson brilliantly cuts through the myths surrounding WWII, and in the process cuts through the fog of all wars."

—Medea Benjamin, CODEPINK for Peace, author, *Inside Iran*

"This is a book of wide synthesis and trenchant commentary. Keep it near to hand for those all-too-frequent moments when you hear someone using World War II to justify yet another horrific military adventure."

—Nicholson Baker, author, *Human Smoke: The Beginnings of World War II, The End of Civilization*

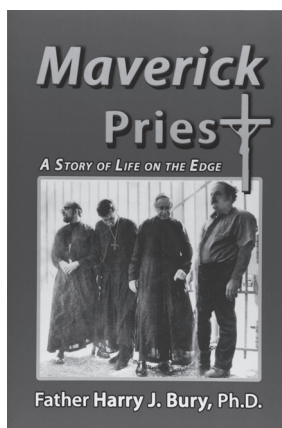


**FIGHT TO LIVE,
LIVE TO FIGHT**
VETERAN ACTIVISM
AFTER WAR

by Benjamin Schrader
SUNY Press, 2019

While veterans are often cast as a “problem” for society, *Fight to Live, Live to Fight* challenges this view by focusing on the progressive, positive, and productive activism that veterans engage in. Benjamin Schrader weaves his own experiences as a former member of the American military and then as a member of the activist community with the stories of other veteran activists he has encountered across the United States. An accessible blend of political theory, international relations, and American politics, this book critically examines U.S. foreign and domestic policy through the narratives of post-9/11 military veterans who have turned to activism after having exited the military. Veterans are involved in a wide array of activism, including but not limited to antiwar, economic justice, sexual violence prevention, immigration issues, and veteran healing through art. This is an accessible, captivating, and engaging work that may be read and appreciated not just by scholars, but also students and the wider public.

Benjamin Schrader is a Veterans For Peace National Board member.



MAVERICK PRIEST
A STORY OF LIFE
ON THE EDGE

Fr. Harry J. Bury, Ph.D.
Robert D. Reed Publishers, 2018

Maverick Priest is the story of a 90-year-old peace activist, still going 90 on the freeway of life. It’s big and heavy, but you can’t put it down. Peace and justice books, often filled with comprehensive analysis and much needed truth, sadly, are too often read only by the already converted. This one holds interest even to those who think differently.

In the late '60s, I was in the broadcast program at the U of M, working with a group getting credit to make anti-war radio documentaries. Being the only one with perceived connection to religion and Christianity, I was sent over several times to interview Father Bury, a leader in the campus questioning of the War in Viet Nam. When he reappeared in the Twin Cities a few years back, I wondered what’s been going on since I graduated and was drafted as a C.O. unarmed medic in 1970. This book answers that question with inspiration for all to fight for peace and justice.

In 1971 Bury and 3 others chained themselves to the U.S. Embassy Wall in Viet Nam, hoping to make the case to stop the war. The war waged on, but opportunities to go to graduate school and teach in the Twin Cities faltered, as Honeywell was a major funder at too many potential colleges

Bury did graduate work in Cleveland, and ended up at Baldwin Wallace, teaching socially conscious business, including in several developing countries. He also returned three times to Viet Nam:

1987—Arguing for an end to the Embargo, so the Vietnamese could do business and thrive.

1994—Difficulty getting a visa, because when the embargo was finally lifted, anyone coming in from the U.S. was immediately suspected as a spy.

2014—On a mission for prison reform, met a South Vietnamese Major who said he was in the same class at SOA with Saddam Hussein and Colin Powell (not the sort of thing those in charge generally want people to know).



There’s the story of being abducted in Gaza, and getting bureaucratically “busted” by the diocese for opening a U.S. account for Mother Teresa’s work here. So, did I tell you about the time Peter, Paul, and Mary (with Paul absent) doing benefit concerts to help continue Fr. Bury’s Peace work.

Toward the end of the book is a significant quote from Saul Alinsky: “If you think you’ve got an inside track to absolute truth, you become doctrinaire, humorless, and intellectually constipated. The greatest crimes in history have been perpetuated by such religious, political, and racial fanatics”

It sounds like I’ve told you a lot, but these are just some highlights. Please sit down and let the book envelop and excite you through the full journey. Available where you get fine books, or at www.harryjbury.com, or the publisher at www.rdrpublishers.com.

Reviewed by Larry Johnson, VFP #027, Twin Cities, Minnesota.

RECOMMENDED READING & LISTENING

This list was compiled primarily from recommendations made by attendees of the 2020 VFP Convention, and by participants in an online discussion on nonviolence hosted by VFP Board Member Joey King.

Use your search engine to find synopses, reviews, and purchase options for the titles listed below. (If you purchase a book, consider spreading the wealth by passing it on to your local library or “little free library.”)

You are welcome to send additional reading/watching/listening suggestions to editor@veteransforpeace.org.

The Village of Ben Suc by Jonathan Schell (Alfred A. Knopf, 1967). (Recommended by Jane Fonda.)

A Great Place To Have A War: America in Laos and the Birth of A Military CIA by Joshua Kurlantzick (Simon & Schuster, 2017).

No Good Men Among the Living: America, the Taliban, and the War Through Afghan Eyes by journalist Anand Gopal (Picador, 2015). (Recommended by Paul Cox.)

Letters from Abu Ghraib by Joshua Casteel (Essay Press, 2008).

Dark Money: The Hidden History of the Billionaires Behind the Rise of the Radical Right by Jane Mayer (Doubleday, 2016). (Recommended by Dr. Hugh Foy of SOVA.)

Understanding the War Industry by Christian Sorensen (Clarity Press, 2020).

Wounds of War: The Psychological Aftermath of Combat in Vietnam by Herbert Hendin and Ann Pollinger Haas (Basic Books, 1984). (Recommended by Suzanne Gordon.)

The Road to Peace Book Series by Paul K. Chappell (<https://paulkchappell.com/>).

The Domsday Machine: Confessions of a Nuclear War Planner by Daniel Ellsberg (Bloomsbury, 2018).

Scorpion King: America's Suicidal Embrace of Nuclear Weapons from FDR to Trump by Scott Ritter (Clarity Press, 2020).

Green Strategy: Path to Fundamental Transformation by Marc Brodine (International Publishers, 2019).

This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs. The Climate by Naomi Klein (Simon & Schuster, 2015).

The End of Ice: Bearing Witness and Finding Meaning in the Path of Climate Disruption by Dahr Jamail (The New Press, 2020).

An Indigenous Peoples' History of the United States by Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz (Beacon Press, 2015).

The Problem of China by Bertrand Russell (Routledge, 2020; originally published in 1920). (Recommended by Michael Wong.)

Destined for War: Can America and China Escape Thucydides's Trap? by Graham Allison (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2017).

Capitalism on a Ventilator: The Impact of COVID-19 in China and the U.S., anthology edited by Sara Flounders (September 2020).

When They Call You a Terrorist: A Black Lives Matter Memoir by Patrisse Khan-Cullors and Asha Bandele (St. Martin's Press, 2018).

All Blood Runs Red by Phil Keith and Tom Clavin (Hanover Square Press, 2019). (Recommended by Michael Dempsey.)

Black against Empire: The History and Politics of the Black Panther Party by Joshua Bloom and Waldo E. Martin, Jr. (Univ. of California Press, 2016). (Recommended by Patrick McCann.)

Some of Us Did Not Die: New and Selected essays of June Jordan (Basic/Civitas, 2002). (Recommended by Becky Luening.)

Down these Mean Streets (30th Ann. Ed.) by Piri Thomas (Random House, 1997 (originally published in 1967)). (Recommended by Becky Luening.)

Hands on the Freedom Plow: Personal Accounts by Women in SNCC edited by Faith S. Holsaert, Martha Prescod Norman Noonan, Judy Richardson, Betty Garman Robinson, Jean Smith Yount, and Dorothy M. Zellner. (Univ. of Illinois Press, 2012).

My Grandmother's Hands: Racialized Trauma and the Pathway to Mending Our Hearts and Bodies by Resmaa Menakem (Central Recovery Press, 2017).

Pathways to Pacifism and Antiwar Activism among U.S. Veterans: The Role of Moral Identity in Personal Transformation by Julie Putnam Hart and Anjel N. Stough-Hunter (Rowman & Littlefield, 2017).

Why Civil Resistance Works: The Strategic Logic of Nonviolent Conflict by Erica Chenoweth and Maria J. Stephan (Columbia University Press, 2011).

Marshall Rosenberg wrote numerous books on nonviolent communication and related topics. Just a few of them are listed below (most of his books are published by PuddleDancer Press):
Nonviolent Communication: A Language of Life, 3rd edition (2015).

Living Nonviolent Communication: Practical Tools to Connect and Communicate Skillfully in Every Situation (2012).

Being Me, Loving You: A Practical Guide to Extraordinary Relationships (2005).

Practical Spirituality: The Spiritual Basis of Nonviolent Communication (2005).

Speak Peace in a World of Conflict: What You Say Next Will Change Your World (2005).

The Surprising Purpose of Anger: Beyond Anger Management—Finding the Gift (2005).

PODCASTS:

On Being with Krista Tippett: **Resmaa Menakem—“Notice the Rage; Notice the Silence”** (<https://onbeing.org/programs/resmaa-menakem-notice-the-rage-notice-the-silence/>).

Veterans For Peace Radio Hour, hosted by VFP Chapter 89 in Nashville, Tenn.: <https://soundcloud.com/user-55976759>

Vietnam Full Disclosure Podcasts: <https://www.vietnamfulldisclosure.org/category/podcast/>

WORLDWIDE WEB:

Love is the Answer by Arnold White, a VFP member: <http://lovegodislove.org>

Center for Building a Culture of

Empathy founded by Edwin Rutsch: <http://cultureofempathy.com/>

Mwende “FreeQuency” Katwiwa: Black life at the intersection of birth and death (TED Talk): <https://youtu.be/R84vqXjXWJc>

MUSIC:

The Ever Fonky Lowdown, epic jazz parable by Wynton Marsalis (2020). Includes the song “It May Sound Like the Drums of War.” Recommended by Paul Appell. <http://www.wyntonmarsalis.org/discography/title/the-ever-fonky-lowdown>

Brittney Chantele Pop/Hip-Hop Artist | Activist (VFP member): <https://www.brittneychantele.com/music>

Megaciph—“No Fear Now” (just love) (VFP Board member Miles Megaciph): <https://www.megaciph.com/>

Watermelon Slim (VFP member Bill Homans), bluesman extraordinaire: <https://watermelonslim.com/>

Austin City Limits: The Best of John Prine Sit back and enjoy 12 of Prine’s best live performances, starting in 1978: <https://www.pbs.org/video/the-best-of-john-prine-qv4uby/>

The New White Man’s Burden

...continued from page 9

a hoodie in the wrong neighborhood, and sometimes getting killed for it.

It occurs to me that people like myself, smug and complacent with all that has been accomplished, and our brothers and sisters who feel oppressed and cheated because they’ve lost a degree of white privilege and entitlement over the past sixty years—all need to take a good look in the mirror. Let us develop more tolerance and forgiveness and truly live the Golden Rule. It’s time for us to evolve as a species and balance ego with love and compassion.

Tom Contrestan is a member of VFP Chapter 114 in Sheboygan, Wisconsin.



“Be The Change” Book Club

by Kathleen Hernandez, Colleen Kelly, and Becky Luening

In 2020, as in other years, members of Veterans For Peace have stood in solidarity with Blacks, Indians, and People of Color (BIPOC), to demand an end to militarism and to call for social justice at home and abroad.

So, why would Veterans For Peace need to establish a Book Club to work on our internal culture as it specifically pertains to racism? Why would we invite our members to take a deep dive into examining our own collective role in upholding white supremacy?

It started at the 2020 VFP Convention.

During our 2020 online convention, many attendees took part in a workshop billed as a “Veterans For Black Lives Discussion.” In this workshop, Black members of Veterans For Peace shared personal experiences of how challenging, painful, and frustrating it is at times working with white progressive activists. This came as a surprise to some of us, since we consider ourselves to be anti-racists, grounded in the belief that we are “good (white) people.” We got that white supremacy is the evil incarnate of social injustice; but many of us were not aware of our own role—or even that we had a role.

As the workshop culminated, a number of attendees expressed a strong desire to educate ourselves. After all, we are an organization of mainly white people. We agreed we would welcome an opportunity to explore with other members, in a safe and open social space, the ways in which colonization, racism, and the intersection of gender and other biases show up in our lives and in our activism. We wanted to examine our own prejudices and how our words and actions affect others and

contribute to shaping the society we live in, including the culture of Veterans For Peace. We figured that increasing our awareness and becoming more accountable to ourselves and others was one thing we could do as individuals to create a better organization and a more just world for all.

So we did what we do best. We organized! We created a VFP “Be The Change” Book Club! For our first book, we chose Robin Diangelo’s **White Fragility** which posits that we white people (seen collectively) are in denial of our own biases and assumptions. White people find it triggering (often subconsciously) to be thrown into a white collective that includes “bad white people” such as white nationalists. It can feel discomfiting, embarrassing, and shameful to be called out for our own racist behaviors. We cannot see our own unexamined white privilege and power as a socialization process that we have been inducted in since birth. Being able to perceive the affects of our own socialization is really challenging and when our own white patterns of behavior are pointed out we are triggered and respond with a variety of racial responses such as denial, indignation and resentment. Diangelo explains how our “white fragility” serves to maintain dominance triggered by discomfort born of superiority and entitlement. This D’Angelo explains; is a powerful means of white control and advantage.

You’re invited!

All members are welcome to take part in the VFP “Be The Change” Book Club to learn more about yourself and others by coming together for meaningful discussions geared toward personal and organizational growth, in a mutually supportive atmosphere reflective of the VFP mission of “building a culture of peace.” We hope to expand participation to include chapter book groups as well. If you’re interested in participating, please sign up at: <https://veteransforpeace.salsalabs.org/vfpbookclub>

VFP CHAPTER REPORTS

#019 – COACHELLA VALLEY, CA

Jon Castro Chapter 19 was to be honored in a Riverside County virtual International Day of Peace ceremony on September 21, 2020, but due to technical difficulties with the conferencing platform, the event was put off (new date TBA). The consensus of the participants was that world and personal peace is so important, and there are so few Peace Day ceremonies in our state, the event would be rescheduled. We must persevere, because the world is very dark right now and our work inspires hope.

Riverside County's first local Peace Day ceremony was held in 2006, and the event has become a tradition. This year, the Riverside County Board of Supervisors proclamation, which names VFP Chapter 19, includes the following clause:

"the 2020 theme for the "International Day of Peace" is 'Shaping Peace Together,' a theme that recognizes that we are not each other's enemies, but rather we face a mutual challenge with COVID-19 that underscores the need for solidarity and cooperation across borders to overcome this global pandemic that threatens our health, security and very way of life."

Tom Swann Hernandez

#027 – TWIN CITIES, MN



Chapter 27 members Eric Garcia and Dave Logsdon stand with the "Instant Art Car" prototype in front of the Minnesota Capitol in St. Paul, Minnesota. Photo: Emma Leigh.

Chapter 27 is excited to help model the "Instant Art Car" concept. We are working with the good folks at USMagnetix to create these art car magnets that can be slapped on (and off) your everyday vehicle in a matter of minutes. You'll be able to order VFP magnets, in kits or à la carte, in the near future at USMagnetix.com, or email me at dlvp27@gmail.com.

For this year's International Day of Peace (September 21), our chapter participated on a panel bringing our perspective to the local "Ten Days of Peace" campaign.



"No Honor in Genocide": Spokane Tribe Color Guard followed by Chapter 35 members carrying VFP flags, August 22, 2020. Photo: Derek Troup, Associate Member VFP#035.

At this writing, plans are being made for an observation of "Indigenous Peoples' Day," the second Monday in October. We hope to bring our peace bus and art car to the Mankato site of the December 26, 1862 mass hanging of 38 Native Dakota people, and hold a silent vigil and bell ringing there.

Dave Logsdon

#031 – PHILADELPHIA, PA

Philadelphia Chapter #31 is now officially the Thompson Bradley Chapter #31, named in honor of much-beloved member Thompson Bradley, who died in September 2020. Drafted into the army in the 1950s, Tom had a long career as a professor of Russian language and literature at Swarthmore College, and was a life-long antiwar veteran and supporter of progressive causes. A poem dedicated to Tom appears on p.6 of the Winter 2020 Veterans For Peace Newsletter.

W.D. Ehrhart

#035 – SPOKANE, WA

We in Washington State recognize the need for potent strategies to undermine creeping fascism during COVID-19 isolation. Seeing aggressive behaviors by police, border patrol agents, and militarists, we are watching Portland carefully.

In early August, eight of our members joined Pax Christi at Riverfront Park to commemorate the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki with readings, reports, and recollections.

We joined arm-in-arm with the Unitarian Peace and Justice Committee in calling for a name change of Ft. George Wright Drive. A hundred and fifty people attended the gathering where tribes connected to Spokane drummed and spoke about the 1858 hanging of Yakama Sub-Chief Qualchan's, 15 minutes after he arrived for peace negotiations with the cavalry, in retaliation for the military's defeat at Steptoe Butte, also due for name change. VFP flags were invited to follow the Native veterans color guard, which followed horses with prayer

handprints to honor the 800 horses slaughtered by Col. Wright. Fabric patches were distributed stating “No Honor In Genocide” and banners reading “End White Supremacy” and “We Will Transform America” were carried in the procession. Afterward, a banner was hung renaming the street “Genocide Avenue.” Spokane City Council will take up the matter.

Our Drones Quilt Project was recently relocated from the Community Building lobby where the quilts had been on display since March, along with Hiroshima 75th Anniversary event posters.

Care 4 Peace 4 All!

Hollis Higgins

#041 – CAPE COD, MA

Our 25th Annual/Quarter Century “Voices of Peace” Poetry Contest was conducted online due to the pandemic restrictions, but was a great success nevertheless. A total of 480 poems were submitted electronically, representing 19 schools across the Cape and Islands, with 42 teachers facilitating student participation. We celebrated 73 winners with the online publication of our book of poems as well as videos of many of the winners reading their poems—created and uploaded by them! These videos are available to everyone on our website, vfcapecod.org. We were overjoyed to be able to successfully adapt to the new conditions and to keep our 25-year non-stop run going!

Throughout the summer, members of Chapter 41 added their voices to Black Lives Matter and other local justice events happening on the Cape.

Finally, our request to donate a “Hidden Wounds Memorial” to the town of Barnstable (the largest town on the Cape) has been approved, and the final design and placement are now in process. The memorial will be installed on the Town Green within the town’s largest grouping of veterans memorials, in a highly visible place of honor. The timing of the dedication event will be determined after the installation of the monument. We feel a solemn excitement as we at last approach the completion of our years-long effort to recognize Cpl. Jeffrey M. Lucey, USMCR, and his fellow veterans in this way.

Duke Ellis

#046 – MONTEREY, CA

Chapter 46 is proud to announce two very special new members, Richard Ranta and Glen Spellman. Both men are incarcerated in California State California Training Facility (CTF) in Soledad. While serving their time, they have staffed a Veteran Service Office (VSO) inside the facility—the only incarcerated VSO in the country. Glen and Richard have helped over 2,000 other incarcerated veterans and their families get earned benefits that have been illegally denied or withheld. Transition information and assistance is provided as well. Chapter

members Phil Butler and Rolland Fletcher volunteer inside CTF, offering coaching and mentoring to them and to a group of 70 or so Vietnam veterans. Our chapter members welcome these new Veterans For Peace and we applaud their contributions to other veterans in prisons throughout the nation.

The Monterey Chapter hosted a video meeting with Congressman Jimmy Panetta, Friday, September 4, on the 75th anniversary of events ending WWII. The Congressman spoke on those events, and on issues affecting the Central Coast. He also shared details about the military presence in Monterey County—the number of installations, the number of active duty men and women, the valuable roles they play in our national security, and the economic impact in Monterey County. The event was well attended by more than 40 activists, veterans, and community leaders.

Michael Dempsey

#075 – PHOENIX, AZ

Greetings from the Mark Von Hagen Chapter of Veterans For Peace in Phoenix, Arizona. Many of our chapter members, like most individuals who are conscious of their humanity, are outraged at the seemingly never-ending shootings of unarmed Black men and women by law enforcement officers. So we join, with those who invite us, to “Say Their Names!”: Ahmad Arbery, George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and many more. Without exception, their monikers are indelibly etched into our minds and hearts.

As members of Veterans For Peace, we believe our military service was, above all else, to protect and uplift the Constitution of the United States for all who reside in this nation. Nowadays, however, many of us find ourselves in a quandary. How should we view our military service when all too often Lady Justice peeks from behind her blindfold when Black Americans are brought before her? Our collective concern for this issue, coupled with our unwavering commitment to justice, enables us to speak will with a clarity that will resound this year as we embrace it from sea to shining sea.

To this end, the late Congressman John Lewis has given us our marching orders. As he commanded us: “Never give up. Never Give in. Never become hostile . . . Hate is too big a burden to bear.”

To your journey!

Ahmad Daniels

#090 – BROOME COUNTY, NY

On August 6, 2020, members of VFP Chapter 90 and other peace groups gathered at First Congregational Church in Binghamton, New York, for the 34th annual commemoration of all those killed and wounded by the nuclear attacks of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August of 1945. VFP Chapter 90 President Jack Gilroy spoke at the bell-ringing ceremony in

Chapter reports continued on page 22...

VFP CHAPTER REPORTS



VFP92 contingent of Pete Schoonmaker, Albert Penta, and Will Alleckson at Refuse Fascism rally held September 5, 2020 at Westlake Park in Seattle, Washington. Photo: Kim Loftness.

Chapter 90, Broome County, New York, continued...

front of the church where photos of that fateful day were on display to mark the 75th anniversary of the bombing of those civilian cities. Dorothy Day's grandchild Martha Hennessy, soon to be sentenced to prison for her nonviolent action at Kings Bay Trident Missile base in Georgia, spoke to the gathering via phone. Jim and Ann Clune read an essay written by Dorothy Day after the Hiroshima/Nagasaki Incineration.

Broome County VFP has been working closely with Broome County Peace Action for years. Some of us belong to both organizations. In September of 2020 our two groups came together for a combined virtual meeting where we discussed September plans for participating in International Peace Day with students at Binghamton University (Sept. 21), organizing an event at the county courthouse in support of the United Nations' call to abolish nuclear weapons (Sept. 26), and, the last week in the month, traveling to nearby Pennsylvania, a swing state, where we used Burma Shave style signs to broadcast messages such as, HATE...DOES NOT...MAKE US... GREAT...VOTE!

Vera Scroggins / Jack Gilroy

#092 - SEATTLE, WA

Pandemic notwithstanding, we're pluggin' along, partaking in continuing demos, etc. —with masks!—whenever possible.

When Trump's goons were in Seattle (and Portland), our chapter —thanks to Randy Rowland's spearheading— put an ad in the Fort Lewis (JBLM) Ranger and McCord Airlifter Newspapers supporting troops who stand down—i.e., refuse to “deploy” against their fellow citizens during peaceful BLM protests.

In early September, VFP members Pete Schoonmaker, Will Alleckson, Albert Penta, and Kim Loftness attended a VFP92-endorsed Refuse Fascism rally commencing the 60-day struggle up to the election. We passed out Peace and Planet News papers. Pete spoke for the chapter, acknowledging occupation of Duwamish territory, and stated VFP's Mission against rising U.S. fascist transgressions here—predominantly by the militarized racist police—and abroad. Then there was a spirited march to Seattle Center, “We Refuse to Accept a Fascist America!”

Below is a note from new VFP Associate Member Beth Brunton:

“On our way to the huge, silent BLM March, we noticed the VFP flag flying high above the crowd. As at the MLK Day, May Day, and other marches, there was VFP member Ray (Nacanaynay) welcoming all of us arriving at the march with the familiar VFP flag. We were marching to stop the triple evils of racism, poverty, and militarism, and for racial justice. No justice, no peace.”

Kim Loftness

#102 - MILWAUKEE, WI

Racial justice and police reform have been Chapter 102's summer focus. We have joined a number of activist organizations, mostly Black-led, in calling for substantial cuts and redistribution of the budgets of the Milwaukee Police Department and Milwaukee County Sheriff.

The police department accounts for nearly half of the entire city budget. We have joined in calling for a \$75 million reduction—about 25 per cent of the police budget—to be reallocated for housing and health services, including violence prevention. We also support an \$11.6 million, or 25 percent cut in the sheriff's budget, shifting funds to community needs. We are working to build ongoing relationships with other community groups in the coalition, knowing this will be a long struggle.

We continue working to Save Our VA, including hosting a well-attended virtual talk with Suzanne Gordon, the author, activist, and expert on VA health care, and supporting the Milwaukee Area Labor Council and unions representing VA hospital workers. Together, we oppose privatization of veterans health care, and the harassment and anti-union activity VA workers have been experiencing.

Our 14th annual Armistice Day commemoration on

November 11 will be a virtual program with David Swanson, executive director of World Beyond War, as the featured speaker.

Bill Christofferson

#104 – EVANSVILLE, IN

Our chapter members have been conducting a series of virtual workshops with our partners in peace, Nonviolent Owensboro (Kentucky), to collaborate on bringing Paul Chappell, founder of Peace Literacy, to Owensboro, virtually, for their Faith Fest in November.

Member Larry Miller has nurtured a progeny from the International Peace Tree, a linden planted in northern Vanderburgh County in 1918 to commemorate the Armistice. Evansville's Oak Hill Cemetery and Arboretum has accepted the young tree for transplanting in the veterans' section on Armistice Day 2020. Members of our chapter will be on hand for a brief commemorative ceremony and the placement of a granite marker to dedicate the tree as a lasting reminder of humanity's deep and eternal longing for peace.

We observed the International Day of Peace on September 21 by convening an online meeting to discuss the question, "Is Peace Possible?" We were joined by members of our allies, Nonviolent Owensboro, for a lively discussion on what we can do to help encourage that possibility.

As the pandemic continues to limit travel and personal interaction, our chapter seeks ways to keep in touch with our membership and focus on fostering the concept of achieving peace in our time.

Lynn Kinkade

#112 – VENTURA COUNTY, CA

Chapter 112 is fine tuning our website and our Facebook pages are being wonderfully managed by invaluable associate member, Sheila Smith.

For the first time ever, the chapter is holding its regular meetings via video conferencing, which has rejuvenated the chapter. We began what we called a "Reconnect Campaign," joining forces with Casey Stinemetz who has been applying her skills to help rejuvenate chapters.

The Camarillo Democratic Club invited us to its regular business meeting where we were greatly appreciated. Associate member Shane Meserve was the guest speaker from our chapter.

The town of Oxnard was the site of a heartfelt commemorative 200-car rally in honor of Vanessa Guillen, the 20-year-old Army soldier who was murdered at Ft. Hood. Weeks afterwards we got an invitation to a virtual vigil for Vanessa hosted by LULAC (League of United Latin American Citizens). The LULAC vigil naturally segued into counter-recruiting alerts given by four women veterans who offered seldom-heard stories of their own experiences in the military, which reflected

poignantly upon the troubles being experienced at Ft. Hood, including the killing of Vanessa Guillen.

The chapter sponsored an opportunity for the public to view the 1982 documentary about the nuclear industry, Dark Circle, through the auspices of the Oxnard Film Society, arranged by Army veteran member George Sandoval.

We established an elections committee in order to get through the business of having new chapter elections for chapter executive board and officers.

A chapter letter of support for local climate change protections was sent to the County Board of Supervisors.

Michael Cervantes

#114 – SHEBOYGAN, WI

Greetings from our little city on the big lake. On account of the pandemic, it's been a relatively uneventful summer around here. We did show our VFP colors at several Black Lives Matter protest events in town in June and July. It was good to get out in the streets and raise some hell for a righteous cause. Since then, there have been more police killings in places like Kenosha, Wisconsin, and POTUS Trump "helping out" with federal agents and troops, adding to the turmoil. And the beat goes on... At this writing, only seven weeks 'til November 3rd!

There were two music and poetry events that took place at our Peace Park in June and August. Issues addressed included Black Lives Matter, environmental justice, and life during the pandemic. This writer's poem, "I Am a Veteran For Peace" was read (see p. 10 the Summer 2020 Veterans For Peace Newsletter).

John Kreuger's gathering in Green Bay is on hold due to COVID limbo, but is still being organized. It will cover the impact of Agent Orange, Halliburton burn pits, and other toxic assaults on humans and the environment by our beloved Military-Industrial Complex. For more information, contact John at kent1952@live.com

As we go to press...more revelations of Trump's lying to the American people comes to light in a new Bob Woodward book, but his base remains unmoved. Go figure.

Peace to our brothers and sisters in the struggle. Stay well.

Tom Contrestan

#168 – LOUISVILLE, KY

Summer 2020 has been a tumultuous time for those of us who care about peace and justice. Louisville has been ground zero for over a hundred days of protests against militarized policing, seeking justice for Breonna Taylor, the young Black woman murdered by LMPD. Our chapter supported the protest movement with donations to the local Black Lives Matter groups and associate member Angie Reed Garner provided communications support for the movement. In this time of COVID-19, we continue to work for peace as much as we are

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VFP CHAPTER REPORTS



PHOTO BY HAROLD TRAINER

Louisville Chapter 168's VFP Radio Hour team, left to right: Steven Gardiner, John Wilborn, Patrick King, Carol Rawert-Trainer.

Chapter 168, Louisville, Kentucky, continued...

able. Chapter 168 member Mike James (Cincinnati) helped to organize the VFP National Convention. Chapter VP Carol Rawert Trainer is our representative on our local community radio station, WFMP 106.5 LP FM, Louisville, and participates in the new VFP "Be the Change" book club. We continue to produce a monthly show on WFMP, the Veterans For Peace Radio Hour, which is available for download at forwardradio.org.

Steven Gardiner



VFP 2020 Awards

VFP Chapter of the Year

Sgt. Barrios Memorial Chapter 182, Tijuana, Mexico

Presented by Willie Hager

Howard Zinn Lifetime Achievement Award:

Dr. Bernard Lown

Presented by Larry Gilbert

Leadership in Peace Award:

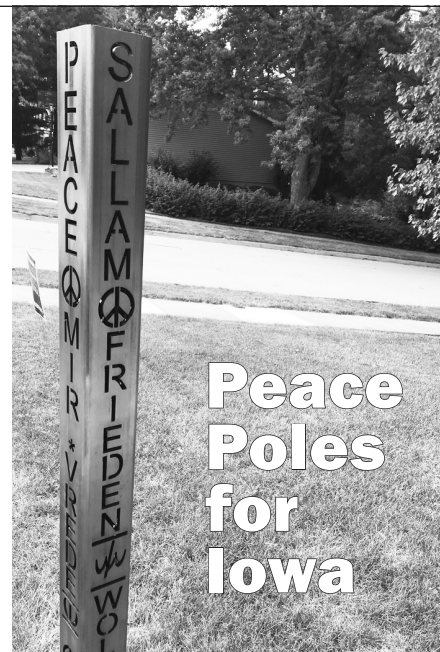
Andrew J. Bacevich

Presented by Mike Peterson

Gandhian Non-violence Award:

Mark Foreman

Presented by Patrick McCann



There are several thousand peace poles in the world. Here in Eastern Iowa, Veterans For Peace have placed several wooden peace poles. The first one, made by Kevin Ringole at the veterans wood-working shop at the Veterans Memorial Building in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, is modeled after the first peace pole erected in Hiroshima, Japan a few years after the end of WWII. It was installed in Jones Park, a public park in Cedar Rapids.

The three Veterans For Peace chapters in Iowa combined can claim installations of peace poles in Des Moines, Iowa City, Clinton, and Cedar Rapids, with plans to place them in Waterloo, Dubuque, Davenport, and Muscatine in 2020–21. It is a worthwhile project, giving us at least a partial answer to the question, "How can we be meaningful in the age of COVID-19?" We offer to share our experience with other chapters who might wish to take on a peace pole project.

Our latest poles are made of stainless steel, courtesy of Iron Workers Local 89 in Cedar Rapids who donated sufficient 4"-square tubing to make 10 poles 6 foot high. They arranged for the inscriptions—words for "peace" in different languages—to be laser cut by local Sheet Metal Workers Local 263, also of Cedar Rapids. The pole pictured above was installed by Iowa Amvets Local 28, in Clinton, Iowa. At night, the inscriptions are illuminated by internal solar-powered lights. Another option is to fill the hollow tubes with dark colored cement.

VFP Chapter 169 is working with survivors of the USS Liberty on a design of a pole specifically to honor those killed on June 8, 1967.

Joe Aossey, Chapter 169 & John Jadryev, Chapter 161



MIKE WONG

Is COVID-19 A 9/11 MOMENT?

This April, U.S. Surgeon General Jerome Adams compared COVID-19 to other American crises, saying this was “our 9/11 moment.” In May, President Trump said, “This is going to be our Pearl Harbor moment, our 9/11 moment...It’s going to be happening all over the country.”

Is this “our 9/11 moment?” And if so, what does that mean? Let’s look back at 9/11—and what came of that.

On 9/11, the nation was shocked in a way America had probably not been shocked since Pearl Harbor in World War 2. The fall of the two towers was dramatic, and the American response was quick and massive. First we invaded Afghanistan and overthrew the Taliban. The Taliban originally offered to surrender Osama Bin Laden, but demanded evidence first. Instead we issued an ultimatum, then invaded with proxy forces, taking the country. But in doing so, we let Osama Bin Laden and the core of Al-Qaeda escape to Pakistan from his Tora Bora hide-out. The U.S. military attacked Tora Bora and had Bin Laden and Al-Qaeda almost surrounded. The plan was for U.S. troops to cut off Bin Laden’s exit route toward Pakistan, but at the last minute President George W. Bush failed to give the order for U.S. troops to move, and the American commanding general then had to rely on Afghan forces to cut off Bin Laden’s escape. Subsequently, Bin Laden escaped to Pakistan. Why did Bush make that fateful error? It was never explained, but after Bin Laden’s escape, America’s “War on Terror” went on to involve U.S. military actions—overt and covert—around the world, in country after country, seeking “terrorists.”

Next we invaded Iraq and overthrew Saddam Hussein, claiming he had links to Al-Qaeda, was part of an “Axis of Evil,” and had “Weapons of Mass Destruction,” all claims which later proved false. Thus began two major American wars which have morphed on in different forms to this very day, nineteen years

later. The Obama administration, elected on a platform of peace, added two more wars, Libya and Syria, which also have not ended but continued morphing into different forms, all of them bad. Not to mention numerous smaller, often covert wars in Africa, the Philippines, Latin America, and elsewhere around the world, in which we are now bogged down with no end in sight. Our blood and treasure have been spent, all with a mostly negative return on investment.

Our wars in the Middle East have sent a million or more refugees a year flooding into Europe from the Middle East, including from Syria, Afghanistan, Libya, and Iraq—all countries attacked by us. There are currently nearly 80 million refugees and IDP’s (Internally Displaced

Persons) in the world, many fleeing U.S.-instigated wars and regime change operations. In Europe these refugees have sparked protests, terrorist attacks, political turmoil (Greece, Brexit, political battles over refugees), changes of government, fragmentation within the EU, and a de-stabilization of Europe, our closest allies.

The result has been a general weakening of our once strong position in the world. At the end of the Cold War, we were called the unquestioned “sole superpower” in the world. Now people both at home and aboard are asking if we are a declining power, and if our time is drawing to an end.

In terms of American casualties, the death toll of COVID-19 is over forty four times greater than 9/11. The count as of this writing is 132,000+ and counting, compared to 9/11’s roughly 3,000. Moreover, the end is not in sight, and damage to the economy is unprecedented and it’s end is also not in sight. In fact, the cost to both lives and economy may be just beginning.

How does this compare to the downward spiral which we fell into after 9/11? After 9/11 we didn’t just go after Bin Laden and Al Qaeda, we attacked a series of nations unrelated to them, causing endless entanglements and quagmires, which drained our resources and pulled us down. Today, we are under assault by a virus. But while fighting the virus with half measures, we are in full attack mode against China, denouncing it almost daily for human rights issues, passing bills in Congress to sanction it for violating our foreign policies on human rights and international affairs, filing lawsuits to sue it for COVID-19, arresting Chinese citizens for unilateral U.S. sanctions violations, attempting to dictate Chinese internal policy in Hong Kong and Xinjiang, escalating confrontations in the South China Sea and the Taiwan straits, and engaging in a new conventional and nuclear arms race in Asia. Why? Because as Hillary Clinton put it, “I don’t want my grandchildren to live in a world

continued on page 26...

ANNOUNCEMENTS

The **Peace** **Sentinel**

The Peace Sentinel is the latest personality of the quarterly Veterans For Peace newspaper, and our goal is to reflect the many perspectives of our members and supporters. The inaugural issue dives into a broad range of topics like systemic military violence (“Family of murdered soldier accuses Army of cover-up” by Ann Wright), movement-building (“Elections Are the Enemy of Movements—Including Ours” by Sam Coleman), food aid and sustainability (“Vets and others organize massive food drive” by Penelope Shoshana Dexejaeger), the healing power of art-making (“Emerging Veteran Art Movement continues long tradition of military art”), international humanitarian projects (“Iraq vet treats animals, moral injury in Nicaragua” by Benjamin Thompson), and the myriad ways of speaking truth to power as we dismantle militarism and build a truly sustainable and equitable world. We look forward to hearing your feedback and we want to publish your work! If you’d like to submit to *The Peace Sentinel*, we are now accepting news, opinions, features, poetry, photos, cartoons & other visual art, at:

<https://tinyurl.com/vfpnewspapersubmissions>

—Emily Yates, Editrix

In case you’re wondering...

The newspaper put out by New York City members Tarak Kauff and Ellen Davidson (with help from Mike Ferner, J.J. Johnson, Ken Mayers, and Doug Rawlings), originally published under the umbrella of VFP National, has shifted to being a New York City Chapter 34 publication, in partnership with VFP’s Viet Nam Full Disclosure Campaign.

Formerly titled *Peace In Our Times*, the paper is now published under the name *Peace & Planet News*, with an increased emphasis on climate change and other fallout from U.S. military operations. A special Black Lives Matter issue was published this fall. More info at <https://www.vietnamfulldisclosure.org/>



9/11 MOMENT? ...continued from page 25

dominated by the Chinese.” In other words, we are acting to stop China’s peaceful economic rise, fearing that if China develops its economy, in the future it may challenge us. Some American leaders perceive China as an “existential threat.” Meanwhile, we are not moving effectively against COVID-19 and climate change, two actual existential threats that can best be met by working with China. In both fields, China is slightly ahead of us and has repeatedly stated that COVID-19 and climate change require international cooperation to defeat, an obvious truth. Yet here we are, seeking conflict and possible war with the key nation most able and willing to work with us for mutual survival and benefit.

Are we repeating the same type of mistakes that we made after 9/11? Then we vigorously attacked and fought nations who were not our enemies, while diverting attention and resources from our real enemy. Bin Laden and Al Qaeda were our real enemies then; COVID-19 and climate change are our real enemies now.

If we want to survive both COVID-19 and climate change, the only viable path is to work with China, not against China. The United States and China have previously had many joint research projects, and both have benefited from those projects. China is now helping countries around the world—including some of our NATO allies—with COVID prevention, management, treatment, PPE, and other support. Beyond the virus, climate change looms large in our future, and this is an absolute existential threat that we must deal with or suffer irreversible damage to our nation and our entire planet. If we don’t act quickly,

it will be too late, and our planet and our nation will never recover from overwhelming devastation. In addition to COVID-19 and climate change, our new Cold War with China is creating an arms race in Asia that includes new nuclear weapons of much greater complexity than during the first Cold War, and thus a much greater risk of an actual nuclear war through either accident or miscalculation.

In other words, by our actions, we are creating or exacerbating threats that could destroy us. The standard joke goes that the definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over again, and expecting different results. This is exactly what we are doing. We are repeating the same mistakes made after 9/11, multiplied exponentially.

The likely outcome is the same result; devastation and an unraveling of our country and our world. We were seemingly the world’s “lone superpower” at the end of the first Cold War, but we sabotaged it by our own overreach and folly. Let us not do the same things over and over again, for we will not get different results.

Michael Wong is Vice President of San Francisco Veterans For Peace Chapter 69, and has been published in the anthologies, Veterans of War, Veterans of Peace, edited by Maxine Hong Kingston, A Matter of Conscience, by William Short and Willa Seidenberg, and in Waging Peace in Vietnam, edited by Ron Carver, David Cortright, and Barbara Doherty. He is also featured in the documentary film, Sir! No Sir! about the Viet Nam-era GI anti-war movement. Mike is a retired social worker with a Master of Social Work degree.

UPCOMING EVENTS



NOV 21-22, EN TODAS PARTES

SOA Watch Virtual Encuentro

Find event description and registration information at <http://soaw.org>.

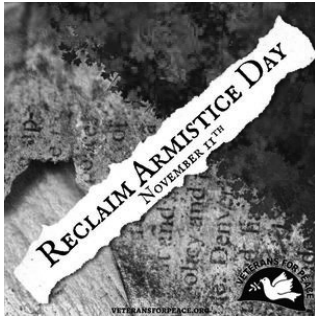
ONGOING

VFP Social Hours

Every Tuesday and Thursday at 2 pm Eastern Time | 1 pm Central | 12 pm Mountain | 11 am Pacific. Go to our home page and look for the Zoom meeting link under "Events."

SPECIAL INTEREST

- **VFP Book Club** (see p. 19 for details)
- **Nonviolence Discussion** hosted by Joey King (jbkranger@aol.com)
- **Southwest Regional Gatherings** hosted by VFP Board Member Joey King (jbkranger@aol.com)



Help Us Celebrate Armistice Day 2020!

Over one hundred years ago the world celebrated peace as a universal principle. The first World War had just ended and nations mourning their dead collectively called for an end to all wars. Armistice Day was born and was designated as "a day to be dedicated to the cause of world peace and to be thereafter celebrated."

After World War II, the U.S. Congress decided to rebrand November 11th as Veterans Day. Honoring the warrior quickly morphed into honoring the military and glorifying war. Armistice Day was flipped from a day for peace into a day for displays of militarism.

Veterans For Peace has taken the lead in lifting up the original intention of

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veteransforpeace.org

vfp@veteransforpeace.org

Veterans For Peace is an international organization made up of military veterans, military family members, and allies. We accept veteran members from all branches of service. We are dedicated to building a culture of peace, exposing the true costs of war, and healing the wounds of war. Our networks are made up of over 140 chapters across the United States and abroad.

Statement of Purpose

We, as military veterans, do hereby affirm our greater responsibility to serve the cause of world peace. To this end we will work, with others both nationally and internationally...

- To increase public awareness of the causes and costs of war
- To restrain our governments 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
- To seek justice for veterans and victims of war
- To abolish war as an instrument of national policy.

To achieve these goals, members of Veterans For Peace pledge to use non-violent means and to maintain an organization that is both democratic and open with the understanding that all members are trusted to act in the best interests of the group for the larger purpose of world peace.

*THANK YOU FOR BEING PART OF
VETERANS FOR PEACE!*

November 11th. As veterans we know that a day that celebrates peace, not war, is the best way to honor the sacrifices of veterans. We want generations after us to never know the destruction war has wrought on people and the earth.

Veterans For Peace has been celebrating Armistice Day almost since the organization's inception, with a few chapters doing yearly events. Since 2008, with the passing of an official Veterans For Peace resolution, it became a VFP national effort. Each year, chapters across the country "Reclaim Armistice Day" by pushing the celebration of peace into the national conversation on November 11, 2020.

Veterans For Peace is calling on everyone to stand up for peace this Armistice Day. Tensions are heightened

around the world and the U.S. is engaged militarily in multiple countries, without an end in sight. Here at home we have seen the increasing militarization of our police forces and brutal crackdowns on dissent and people's uprisings against state power. We must press our government to end reckless military interventions that endanger the entire world. More than ever, we feel an urgent need to build a culture of peace.

We have compiled a list of COVID-safe actions for you to take this year. If your chapter needs assistance organizing a virtual action in lieu of an in-person gathering, please email us at membership@veteransforpeace.org.

Let's keep the conversation going around peace this Armistice Day, and let us know what you have planned!



Veterans For Peace
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I SAW MYSELF IN MY ENEMY

They ran over us and took over our position.
 Americans, Chinese and Koreans
 all died within seconds,
 oddly enough, embracing each other.
 I searched thru their bodies and found on all
 letters from home and pictures of family
 and it struck me—
 I saw myself in my enemy.
 The color of their skin was different,
 shape of their eyes were not quite like mine,
 but so *much more* was just like me.
 Like a thunderbolt, it struck me.
 Never again will my government convince me
 that others are not like me,
 because you see,
 I saw myself in my enemy.

—Jack Doxey, U.S. Army 1952–1954
 (poem dated 1958)

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