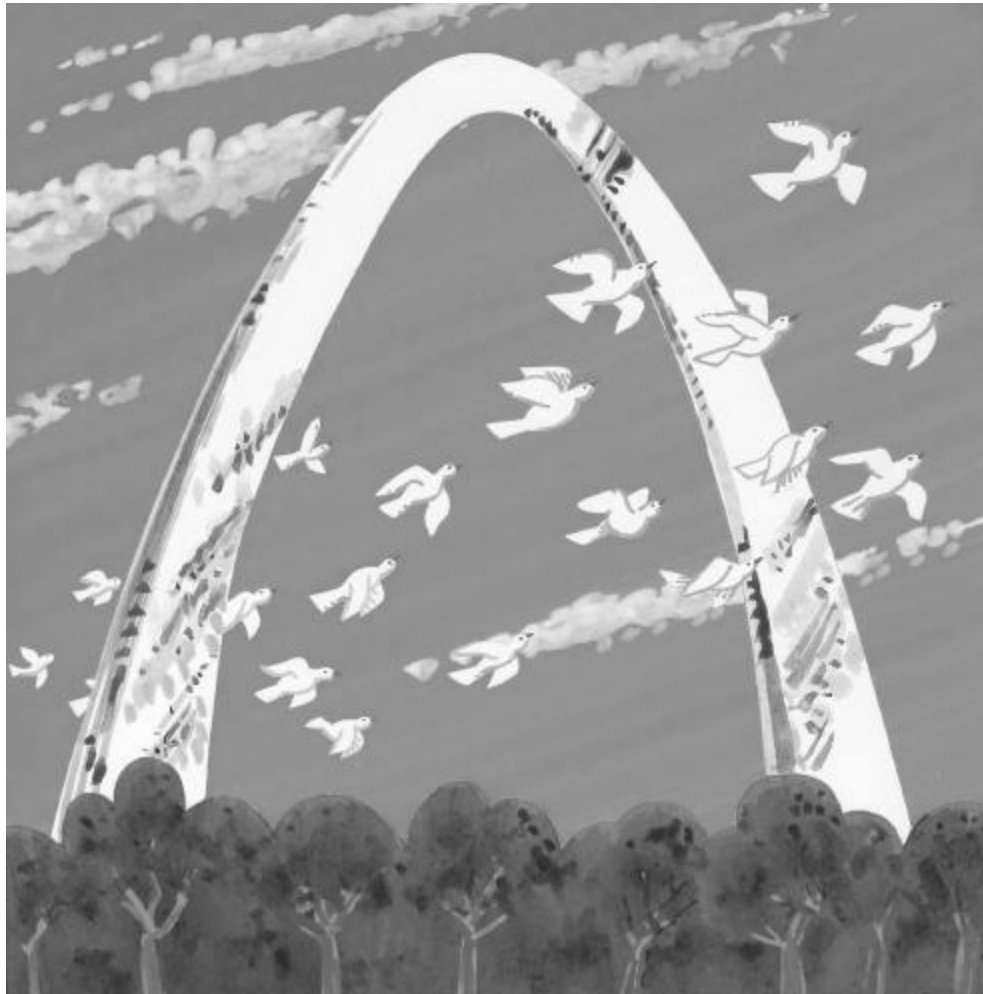


# WORKSHOPS 2007



**A COMPILATION OF PROPOSALS, PAPERS AND SIMPLE DESCRIPTIONS OF  
THE WORKSHOPS PRESENTED AT THE 22<sup>ND</sup> ANNUAL VETERANS FOR PEACE  
CONVENTION IN ST. LOUIS, AUGUST 15-19, 2007**

*It is hoped that the information in this document will be helpful to the future development of workshops of quality and distinction that have been the hallmark of all of our conventions.*

-- the committee of 2007

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# **HERESTHETICS AND THE ART OF POLITICAL MANIPULATION**

## **The Use and Abuse of Public Opinion in Modern American Democracy**

Andiron Lecture Series –University of Evansville

Robert L. Dion

February 8, 2006

### **Introduction**

In the unforgettable words of Admiral James Stockdale, “Who am I? Why am I here?”

I want to share a few ideas today that come from my field of political science and specifically from my subfield of political communication in American politics. For years, I have been especially interested in the relationship between the views of citizens and the policies that emanate from their government. Who is in charge? Do the people rule by keeping their leaders on a short leash? Or is it the case that leaders have the upper hand by manipulating public opinion to their own self-interested ends?

### **Theories of representation and representative democracy**

Let’s start with a bit of democratic theory and then demolish it, shall we?

Representative democracy is predicated on the notion of popular sovereignty. Taking the word and its etymology literally, one would expect that, in a democracy, the people rule. As the great political scientist, V.O. Key, once wrote, “Unless mass views have some place in the shaping of policy, all talk about democracy is nonsense.” So, we begin with the normative premise and the expectation that the opinions of the citizens will be (at least somewhat) faithfully reflected in the authoritative decision making of government actors.

The ideal democratic citizen in what has come to be known as classical democratic theory is someone who has a concern for the common good, someone who is attentive to and informed about politics, someone who has more or less stable and informed opinions on the issues, and someone who regularly goes out of his or her way to express those views through traditional avenues of political participation such as voting. Unfortunately, this kind of person does not exist in the real world – or even on Road Rules.

In the heyday of the behavioral revolution in the social sciences back in the 1950s and 1960s, scholars used an array of techniques to gather evidence to test empirically the degree to which the average person was actually able to meet this idealized standard of the omniscient and participatory citizen. Of course, you know the rest of the story.

Decades of survey research have shown that the average citizen has a very limited attention span, a minimal interest in political affairs, and an exceedingly thin knowledge base when it comes to the basics of civic life. Moreover, sadly, most people most of the time in most elections don’t vote. Scholars also observed at this time that the expressed opinions of the public can become quite volatile in response to modest variations in how a particular question is posed to them.

In the language of the social sciences, this raises the possibility that one can examine the degree to which public opinion serves not as the independent variable but as the dependent variable in a model of democratic influence. In this formulation, public opinion is not so much the cause as it is the effect of government action; it is the actions of political elites inside and outside the government that shape or influence public opinion.

### **Definition of heresthetics and strategic issue framing**

All political issues and policy questions are inherently multidimensional. They have different and sometimes competing or contradictory aspects – John Zaller calls them considerations – that can either be highlighted or obscured. Think of the issue of abortion, which can either be defined as being “about” the rights of the woman or the rights of the fetus (because, in fact, it has to do with both of these). Strategic issue framing is a contest in which competing political elites attempt to impose a particular frame or definition of a policy question in such a way as to furnish their side with a political advantage. It boils down to a struggle over who gets to define what an issue is all about.

This is not an especially new idea. In 1960, the venerable American political scientist, E.E. Schattschneider wrote:

Political conflict is not like an intercollegiate debate in which the opponents agree in advance on a definition of the issues. As a matter of fact, the definition of the alternatives is the supreme instrument of power; the antagonists can rarely agree on what the issues are because power is involved in the definition. He who determines what politics is about runs the country, because the definition of the alternatives is the choice of conflicts, and the choice of conflicts allocates power.

Because every political issue or policy question is multi-faceted and contains a variety of considerations, the individual citizen may often feel confused and conflicted. Frames that are conveyed by political leaders or ones that are imposed by the news media can help to sort out which consideration the citizens should keep uppermost in their minds when confronting a political issue.

Consider a recent event here in our own backyard. Was the rally of the Westboro Baptist Church followers in Evansville last month an indefensible expression of contempt for a grieving family or should it be viewed as an example of free speech rights? Was it an insult to the American military effort in a time of war, or should it have been viewed as an over the top expression of reprehensible anti-gay bigotry?

One could plausibly argue that it is all of these at the same time. However, a broad appeal to abstract principles about the freedom of expression might yield a different response from an appeal based on sentiments regarding the military’s efforts on our behalf. Think of it this way: If you asked people in Evansville if they support free speech, I believe that they would overwhelmingly say yes. If you asked them if they support respect for our troops and their families, the same people in the same community would overwhelmingly say yes. So, what is the true opinion of the people of Evansville regarding this recent event? It’s safe to say that some people in this town were at least somewhat conflicted – even in this extreme case – and the views they express would consequently be a function of how the particular question was posed to them.

The way political questions are posed is usually the direct result of a strategic effort by competing political elites to define it and frame it in favorable ways. This competition over how to frame an issue often takes the seemingly strange form of what is described by Bryan Jones as “noncontradictory argumentation.” As

Schattschneider wrote, “All politics deals with the displacement of conflicts or efforts to resist the displacement of conflicts. The substitution of conflicts looks like an argument about what the argument is about, but politicians are not as confused as they seem to be.”

For example, let’s take the issue of tobacco regulation in America. Baumgartner and Jones describe how opponents of smoking don’t dispute the fact that the tobacco industry creates jobs. Employment considerations are not an aspect of the issue that is central to their concerns as opponents of smoking. Moreover, if they did accept the premise that the tobacco issue is “about” job creation and then take a contrary position within this frame, this would force them to contend either that there are no jobs in tobacco farming (which is demonstrably false) or that these jobs don’t matter (which is an unappealing stance, given our capitalist culture’s devotion to preserving economic prosperity).

Instead, opponents of smoking try to shift the focus of the tobacco debate to a different consideration that is both closer to their main concern and more winnable for their side – the observation that smoking tobacco causes lung cancer. If this becomes the dominant frame within which the discussion takes place, it is now the tobacco industry that will then be constrained either to make the case that smoking tobacco doesn’t cause lung cancer (this is something they actually tried to argue and are now giving up on) or to acknowledge that it does cause cancer, but claim that this doesn’t matter (and this is another unappealing stance).

The political scientist and guru of rational choice theory, William Riker, coined a brand-new word to describe this pattern of elite behavior: heresthetic. He differentiated this from rhetoric, debate, and argumentation. These forms tend to focus on a dispute over the facts, and they try to win people over by introducing new and convincing information. Implicit in this notion is that people have to acknowledge, at least tacitly, that their original position on an issue was wrong. In the case of heresthetic, the question is simply redefined by putting new emphasis on a different aspect of the issue. A person, then, doesn’t exactly have to change positions so much as he or she has to answer a new and different question. For example, a question about Communists in the classroom could be framed as a civil liberties question (Do you favor the guarantees of freedom of expression for all citizens that are enshrined in the Bill of Rights?) or a question of group affect (Do you favor helping Communists?).

For Riker, “The distinguishing feature of heresthetic is that voters are induced to change sides, not by persuasion, but by reinterpretation of the issue.” Riker maintained that rhetoric involves changing preferences through the heavy lifting of fact-driven persuasion. Heresthetic, by contrast, can bring about a new distribution of opinion – even if the public’s underlying preferences remain constant – simply by shifting the salient dimension of the affected issue space. As he suggested:

Heresthetic merely involves displaying the relevance of a dimension, recalling it from latent storage to the center of psychic attention. This process is probably not threatening to most people because it does not require that they acknowledge that they previously erred. Persuasion, on the other hand, involves changing opinion and, implicitly at least, requires recognition of error. In this sense, rhetoric involves more vigorous manipulation of other people’s psyches than does heresthetic.

For the political psychologist William McGuire, this is a “radically different conceptualization which involves activating information already within the person’s cognitive repertory and increasing the salience of supportive information that the target person already accepts.”

### **Three Quick Observations**

Just to sum things up at this point, allow me to pose and answer three simple questions:

First, why do elite political actors use this technique of issue definition and framing? Clearly, they have a strong incentive first to achieve a position of decision making authority and then to hold onto it. Moreover, they are involved in political affairs (at least partly) in order to advance public policy aims in which they believe. Simply put, these strategic political actors want to win, and this is especially true for those who wind up as the losers in a given political contest. Those on the losing end have every incentive to behave entrepreneurially to disrupt an unfavorable equilibrium. As Riker wrote:

Prospective losers are not without defenses...[The y] can attempt to add a dimension to the space. This restructuring allows a clever heresthetician to define a hyperplane separating the voters into a new majority-minority division that is advantageous to him or her. Such attempts at restructuring are one of the main activities of politics...Political scientists in general have not understood that these activities follow a pattern rooted in the nature of the decision process: Any set of voters can be divided into majority and minority in myriad ways, and such redivision can occur as soon as a one-dimensional equilibrium is upset.

Second, why does the mass public seem to accept this technique of having strategic elites frame policy matters for them? Citizens have finite attention spans, perhaps especially when it comes to dreary political questions. They have cognitive limits when it comes to their ability to process an overwhelming amount of stimuli, political or otherwise. People have an overwhelming need to categorize in order to make sense of the stimuli to which they are exposed. As the linguist George Lakoff has written: "Without the ability to categorize, we could not function at all, either in the physical world or in our social and intellectual lives." Framing an issue can provide a useful cue to overcome citizen confusion or ambivalence by calling particular attention to a specific set of considerations. Cognitive psychologists would call this process "priming".

Finally, why does the pervasive use of issue framing by strategic political elites matter? At this point, I am resisting the urge to give the one word answer: "Duh." Research in political communication has shown repeatedly that, by calling attention to particular aspects or dimensions of a political question, it may be possible for strategic elites to bring about swift changes in the distribution of mass opinion without doing the hard work of altering their underlying preferences. Bryan Jones describes this relatively quick change as a "choice reversal", and it is the result of a process in which "people become aware of new aspects of old problems, and this shift in attentiveness causes changes in choice...As individuals move from one dimension of evaluation to a second dimension that is being stressed, ...their policy choices often change."

Simply put, issue framing has been shown to have a significant influence on how we in the mass public define public policy problems, how we diagnose the causes of these problems, how we make moral judgments about them and assign blame for them, as well as which remedies we believe to be suitable for addressing them.

## **Tools of the Trade**

If this is such a powerful technique, then, how exactly is it done? What are the distinguishing features of strategic issue framing, and how do we recognize them?

1. Framing can often be seen when competing elites are trying to impose a particular issue theme for an upcoming election. This is an outgrowth of John Petrocik's research into an idea he calls "issue ownership": some political parties own certain issues, and it is almost always to their advantage to spotlight those issues.

As I said last week on Shively and Shoulders, if I were the Republican party and Mike Tyson were the Democratic party, who would win that contest? Of course, it depends on what the competition is about. If it was a boxing match, I would be certain to fail. We would be competing on Iron Mike's turf, and I would be at an extreme disadvantage. If, however, it was a contest to translate French poetry, the advantage would likely be mine. *Ce serait beaucoup plus facile pour moi de traduire la poesie que de me bagarrer avec un monsieur qui pourrait macher mes oreilles.*

Similarly, if the Democrats can succeed in convincing voters that the next election is about which party can deliver the goods on health care reform or education, then that would surely give them an advantage. An election that is focused on fighting the war on terrorism, however, tends to put Democrats at a disadvantage, because Republicans "own" issues related to national security.

2. Framing can also be seen in the artful use of language. Once the competing elites have more or less settled the question of *what* they are going to talk about, then there is the subsequent struggle over *how* they plan to talk about it. Usually, this language is carefully test-marketed through focus groups or survey research in order to distill it to its most compelling form.

For example, look at the purposive use of the English language by our 43<sup>rd</sup> president, George W. Bush, and his political opponents. Last year, he was determined to bring about bold reforms in the Social Security program through an initiative he insisted on calling "personal savings accounts". Describing it in this way calls to mind a powerful sense of agency and freedom and personal liberty. My money that I earned is going to stay in my hands to secure my future – it won't end up in some rat hole in the vast bureaucracy where the dead hand of government will squander it somehow. Strong stuff.

The Democrats, who were unalterably opposed to his plan, insisted on calling the same proposal by another name: "private accounts." Clearly, this politically loaded imagery activated very powerful associations, too. Private brings to mind privatization, which reminds senior citizens how the bad old Republicans would like nothing more than to dismantle Franklin Delano Roosevelt's crowning achievement, rip up the social safety net, and throw Grandma into the streets.

More recently, the president and his administration have had to defend their practice of wiretapping private conversations of American citizens without a warrant as provided for under the 1978 FISA law. In his discussions of this practice, the president has described it as his "terrorist surveillance program." Undoubtedly, the mention of terrorism in this description is likely to prime some very deep-seated and potent considerations among the mass public – and virtually all of these are likely to be ones favorable to a Republican president who is the commander-in-chief during a time of war. Raising the salience of terrorism helps to drown out (or at least divert attention from) concerns over abuse of power, violations of the law, or infringements on civil liberties. Not surprisingly, opponents of the president – and the bulk of the news media – continue to describe what happened as "domestic surveillance" or "domestic wiretapping".

One can see similar strategies at work in the juxtaposition of the estate tax and the death tax, or the constitutional option and the nuclear option, or suicide bombers and homicide bombers. Similarly, the pollster Frank Luntz has informed Republicans that it is always better to avoid saying that they plan to drill for oil; instead, they are "exploring for energy." President Clinton never talked about increasing government spending; instead, he described it as "making investments".

3. Framing works to call attention to one specific aspect of a given policy question. Of course, by so doing, it directs attention away from other competing considerations that relate to that same policy question. The aim is to increase the salience of that aspect of the question that puts your side in the most favorable position.

A convenient example is the ongoing abortion debate in American politics. Clearly, the decision to terminate a pregnancy has a wide range of possible considerations: the mother, the fetus, the father, the field of

medicine, the moral and religious dimensions, the social implications, and so on. Poll after poll has shown that if the question is framed as being one of defending the rights of a woman to make her own reproductive decisions, then most people express a pro-choice opinion. However, if the decision is portrayed as one concerning the rights of an unborn child, then a pro-life majority emerges. Based on issue framing, the exact same issue can yield different evaluations from the same public.

The same could be said of the 1993 controversy over whether openly gay or lesbian soldiers should be able to serve in the U.S. military. This debate and the strategic issue framing surrounding it were the subject of my dissertation research. When the focus was on the civil rights of gays and lesbians to equal treatment or when the focus was on the individual performance of gay and lesbian soldiers and their fitness to serve, then the mass public by a wide margin was favorable to lifting the ban on gays in the military. However, when the debate shifted to the effects of such a change in policy on military readiness, good order and discipline, and unit cohesion, then the majority of Americans expressed opposition to lifting the ban on gays and lesbians.

### **Implications for democratic accountability – and a conclusion**

So much for the theory and the practice of strategic issue framing. Where does all of the foregoing discussion leave us?

When the public can so easily be induced to shift its opinions based on how a particular policy question is presented to them, what are the prospects for a political system that is ostensibly based on democratic accountability (one in which, as the Democratic presidential candidate, Howard Dean, might have said, “the people have the power”)? Is there such a thing as public opinion at all? If public opinion is so malleable, should it even play a role in determining government policy?

It is worth noting that political elites are not master manipulators who compel the press to assist them in exploiting the cognitive shortcomings of the mass public, and citizens are not helpless before the persuasive framing efforts of elite political actors. Issue frames are not unlimited in their ability to shape and mold public opinion. Those who would try to use issue framing face constraints on their freedom of movement.

First, they have stiff competition from other political actors. Leaders don't operate in a vacuum. One could see the failure of the Bush plan for reforming Social Security as a triumph for Democratic framing that moved the public, but one could also view it as the abject inability of President Bush to impose his desired frame on the matter.

This raises the idea that not all frames are created equal. A successful frame is one that resonates positively with the intended public. Usually, this means that it has to sound plausible and relevant, and it has to be consistent with pre-existing ideas about an individual or a group or a political issue. As Gamson and Modigliani suggest, “Not all symbols are equally potent. Certain packages have a natural advantage because their ideas and language resonate with larger cultural themes; they make it appear natural and familiar.” Moreover, the sender of the message also has to have some measure of credibility for the frame to be accepted.

For their part, the news media can refuse to adopt a frame, and this can short-circuit its dissemination. Outside events can conspire to make an issue more or less prominent, and this can raise the salience of a particular frame. (Think of how terrorism has risen in the public consciousness since 2001, or how the shootings at Columbine drew attention to the risks of widespread gun ownership.) Finally, the people themselves can choose to discount or reject the effort to impose a particular way of viewing a political issue.

Citizens are not dispassionate rational actors or mere lazy organisms at the mercy of external stimuli. They engage the political world with a complete set of predispositions. (In fact, Zaller defines opinions as a marriage of information and predispositions.) The use of heuristics by members of the mass public can limit the ability of a frame to be effectively imposed on an issue. Jamie Druckman's experimental studies, for example, have found that strong partisans are likely to be skeptical about issue frames proffered by leaders of the opposing political party.

This phenomenon of selective perception has been a mainstay of public opinion research for fifty years now. Paul Lazarsfeld and his collaborators described it this way in their classic study of the 1940 presidential campaign:

In recent years there has been a good deal of talk by men of good will about the desirability and necessity of guaranteeing the free exchange of ideas in the marketplace of public opinion... Now we find that consumers of ideas, if they have made a decision on the issue, erect high tariff walls against alien notions.

All of these impediments standing in the way of strategic political actors help to explain why Riker was convinced that heresthetics is an art of political manipulation – and not a science. Elites learn by trial and error which frames are the most potent. Strategic leaders combine past experience, common sense, folk wisdom, interest group information, survey data, and educated guesswork to come up with competing issue depictions, and even then these will very often fail to achieve their desired effects.

There is a meaningful role for the public in this model. Rather than being viewed as passive agents who are simply acted upon by manipulative political actors, the public can be seen as an interactive participant in the assignment of meaning to complex political phenomena. Their views are communicated directly and indirectly to the mass media and to political elites, and these views are factored into a complex interaction (some would call it a “conversation”) that eventually yields common frames of reference for an issue. Although the mass public may be highly sensitive to elite cues about how to evaluate complicated policy issues, the effects of this information are conditioned by its resonance with their own experiences and predispositions.

As I move toward a conclusion, then, it should become clear that I believe there is a responsibility that we all share as citizens to do our best to fulfill our roles as members of a democratic polity. Yes, some political leaders have a propensity to misbehave, but that doesn't mean that we should reward them for it. Similarly, strategic elites may try their best to misdirect our attention from pressing issues or induce us to think of a policy on their terms, but we are not required to follow their lead. In some ways, just being familiar with the practice of strategic issue framing helps us to spot it more readily and choose for ourselves if we want to play along.

If we want the American experiment in democracy to succeed, then we need to step up to the plate. Fortify yourself against heresthetical maneuvering by reading and absorbing high-quality, factual information about the world around you. Turn off Fox News and Hardball and Bill O'Reilly and Keith Olbermann for just a minute – they always give off more heat than light. Their version of political discourse may be entertaining sometimes, but it's akin to conflating the theater and spectacle of professional wrestling with the high athleticism of the Olympics (or the Purple Aces). If you want to go back later on and observe and critique the competing efforts at framing, you will be doing so from a more advantaged position.

I began by saying that scholars universally agree that the ideal democratic citizen does not exist and is not even a realistic goal. But, surely, knowing that we will never be perfect should not dissuade us from trying to be good or even better citizens. Yes, this is going to require more work on our parts, and I understand that we all lead busy lives. As I am fond of telling students, the American democratic system is not like a Ron Popeil Showtime Rotisserie oven – you can't just set it and forget it. Even a car needs regular maintenance, if only just to fill it up with over-priced gasoline. Certainly, it's worth it for all of us to do our modest part to keep the democratic system functioning smoothly. As Thomas Jefferson said, "the price of liberty is eternal vigilance." We do ourselves a disservice as a nation when we collectively decide to pile into the back seat, leave the driving to our leaders, and drift off to sleep.

When Harold Pinter made his Nobel Prize acceptance speech two months ago, he talked about how "despite the enormous odds which exist, unflinching, unswerving, fierce intellectual determination, as citizens, to define the real truth of our lives and our societies is a crucial obligation which devolves upon us all. It is in fact mandatory."

Thank you for your attention. I will now be pleased to answer any questions that you may have.

## **GI RIGHTS – VETERANS BENEFITS**

**Presenter, Ray Parrish, VVAW GI/Veterans Counselor.** The purpose is to prepare attendees to provide counseling to active duty military, including AWOL's, veterans and family members with a focus on PTSD, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and TBI, Traumatic Brain Injuries, the rights of GI's, how to get out of the military (or stay in), how to get VA pension and disability compensation and treatment and how to correct military records and upgrade the character of military discharges.

Attendees will gain a greater understanding the military's discharge policies, the VA disability rules, the requirements for upgrading a military discharges and PTSD treatment options with a focus on the vets4vets rap group model. The workshop will use the "Helping Out; Guide to Military Discharges and GI Rights" by CCCO, Central Committee for Conscientious Objectors; "The Veterans Benefits Manual" and "Military Discharge Upgrading" both from the NVLSP, National Veterans Legal Services Program," guides used by "vets4vets" rap groups and material prepared especially for this workshop.

Workshop attendees will be encouraged to undertake more extensive trainings in order to become counselors with the GI Rights Hotline and vets4vets rap groups and become proficient enough to become certified by the VA as "agents" empowered to represent veterans in VA claims.

Ray Parrish has been VVAW's GI/Veterans Counselor for the past three years. Prior to that, he spent three years doing rehabilitation with homeless people as a mental health caseworker. For the five years before that he was an American Legion Veterans Service Officer. He took that job after lack of funds forced him to close the offices of the Midwest Committee for Military Counseling, where he had been Executive Director from 1987-1995 and one of the founders of the GI Rights Hotline

## **BUILDING THE PEACE MOVEMENT**

**(Can we talk about the Israel Palestine Challenge without killing each other? Please!)**

**Presenter, Michael McPhearson with Combatants For Peace. One of the most contentious and divisive topics in US politics is the Israeli/Palestinian conflict. Most agree that it is a linchpin to**

**calming conflicts in the “Middle East” and curtailing animosity by Muslims and specifically Arabs towards the US, but there are passionate disagreements about how to solve this problem, who should be called the aggressor and what constitutes being anti-Palestinian or anti-Semitic. The anti-war/peace movement finds itself divided to the point where allies cannot have a civil discussion about the topic and the discourse devolves to accusations and alienation. To find a solution we must have dialogue. How do we find away to have a positive and constructive discussion about this important topic?**

## **HOW TO PEACEFULLY MEDIATE WITH COUNTER DEMONSTRATORS**

**Presenter, Stacey Hafley – MFSO.** Tried and true methods for converting confrontation into effective dialogue with counter-demonstrators.

### **ENGAGEMENT OF ACTIVE DUTY SERVICE PERSONNEL**

**Presented by Cherie Eichholz and Sandy Kelson.** During March 2007, Veterans For Peace conducted a veterans convoy through the southeastern United States. In summary, two buses departed from Fayetteville, North Carolina, home of the Army's Fort Bragg, with approximately 15 veterans and traveled to five additional southeastern military base towns. The purpose of the convoy was to engage active duty troops to let those who are opposed to the Iraq War know that they are not alone, to encourage debate about the war amongst themselves and to give them information about legal ways for service people to actively oppose the war if they wish to do so. The convoy engaged in its activities at each base for only one day per town. Nevertheless, there were spikes in active duty personnel from these towns signing the Appeal For Redress, an appeal to Congress requesting an end to the Iraq War, and a spike in memberships in Iraq Veterans Against the War.

There were two main activities in each town: 1) a two or three person demonstration outside the gates of the base at peak traffic hours (i.e. the morning and evening rushes), in which each person held a very simple sign (Iraq Veterans Against the War and Appeal For Redress, as examples); 2) a one-on-one engagement of local military personnel and families at opportune times and places (e.g., the restaurant strip outside a main gate at lunch time and/or local grocery stores and malls). The veterans distributed copies of the GI Rights pocket card, pamphlets explaining the Appeal For Redress, and the films "Sir! No Sir!" and "The Ground Truth." The veterans engaged the troops in conversation about the war.

The purpose of the workshop is to train activists who may wish to replicate the activities in the techniques used by those who participated.

The presentation will be oral. A writing detailing the information will be available for hearing impaired.

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[sandkel@earthlink.net](mailto:sandkel@earthlink.net)

### **WAR TRAUMA: LESSONS UNLEARNED FROM VIETNAM TO IRAQ**

**Presenter, Dr. Ray Scurfield - Vietnam veteran and Associate Professor, School of Social Work, University of Southern Mississippi.** ABSTRACT:

Type of presentation: paper presentation, or roundtable format if Veterans for Peace would like to propose several roundtable participants.

Title: War Trauma: Lessons Unlearned From Vietnam to Iraq

*Proposal]*

Author: Dr. Raymond M Scurfield, Vietnam veteran and Associate Professor, School of Social Work, University of Southern Mississippi—Gulf Coast, Long Beach, MS

Statement: Governmental and political adherents continue to promote the war in Iraq while attempting to deny that there are any meaningful parallels between the Vietnam War and Iraq. Unfortunately, this war promotion and denial of parallels obscures an understanding of the nature and truth about the impact of war---*any* war---on combatants and on their families, and on our country, with resulting major impact on national policies and understanding and healing.

*Lessons unlearned include:*

- ?? myths such as “time heals all wounds” and “heroes and normal persons do not have problems during or following a war”
- ?? the acute psychiatric casualty rates during war *always* are much lower than longer-term psychiatric casualty rates
- ?? pro-military and pro-war advocates typically pit adequate funding for the current war *against* adequate funding for veterans’ programs and benefits
- ?? the single greatest risk for developing war-related PTSD is exposure to combat trauma, and so multiple tours and extended tours put deployed military personnel at very high risk for subsequent psychiatric problems
- ?? any *current* war always has a significant impact on many veterans of *previous* wars.

Accessibility: All handouts will include copies in size 17 font and will be electronically accessible from my university Web-site at [usm.edu/gulfcoast](http://usm.edu/gulfcoast).

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228.234-2062

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## CHAPTER BUILDING A - What is our experience?

**Presenters**, Patrick McCann, Sharon Kufeldt, Ken Mayers, Barry Reisch. Presentations (Santa Fe, Minneapolis, Miami, and Washington, DC.) will be followed by audience participation concerning the experience that people have in building VFP chapters.

## HOW TO BUILD A WAR: THE POST 9/11 CONSTRUCTION OF INEVITABILITY

**Presenter, Steven Williams.** How did the so-called “war on terror” become translated into “regime change” in Iraq? Why did the American public and the news media so seldom question this dubious connection as it was being constructed? In this paper the disparate forces that contributed to a sense of inevitability about the war are examined. If we understand the combination of general, sociological factors along with specific, political ones, we may be able to better prepare for, and if appropriate, resist future occurrences of a similar nature.

## STARTING A SUCCESSFUL PEACE POETRY CONTEST AND READING roundtable

**Presenters, Paul Saint-Amand, Tom Gale, Lee Vanderlaan, Samantha Smith Chapter 45.** The workshop is designed to assist VFP chapters in replicating a model “Peace Poetry Contest and Reading

Event” which can be adapted to any school or school district. It will show how to establish partnership “peace poetry contests” nationally in public and private (K-12) schools, and how to encourage student publication and performance at public readings. The Project’s goal is to nourish students’ creative capacities through poetry and art as they reflect on peace as a source of human strength and enrichment.

### **WEB-PAGE DESIGN**

**Presenter, Ed Scharf. This workshop will provide concrete, step by step tips on designing and maintaining a chapter web page.**

### **CHAPTER BUILDING B**

**Where do we go from here?**

**Presenters, Patrick McCann, Sharon Kufeldt, Ken Mayers, Barry Riesch, Debbie Clark. A continuing discussion of chapter-building, focusing on developing program for the future.**

### **COLOMBIAN CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTORS**

**Presenter, Ted Sexhauer.** Colombia has universal conscription for males, on a fundamentally unjust two-tier basis--high school graduates serve one year; campesinos serve 18 months, in the much more dangerous areas. Also, youths are forcibly "recruited" into guerrilla and paramilitary service. The CO movement is dynamic and growing, and is requesting solidarity and accompaniment by simpatico international/foreign groups.

### **COURAGE TO RESIST**

**Presenter, Jeff Patterson.** Troops speaking out, standing up to unjust war. A brief presentation on the situation of our troops seeking refuge in Canada and a new U.S.-based campaign to support them and the efforts of the War Resisters Support Campaign (Canada). Also, updates on pending court martials of public war resisters, including Army Lt. Ehren Watada.

Panel discussion to feature recently discharged Army Spc. Agustin Aguayo-imprisoned for eight months for refusing to redeploy to Iraq; Representative of the GI Rights Hotline.

The goal of this workshop is to contribute to the collective base of support for the growing anti-war movement inside the military today.

### **EXPANDING THE CIRCLE OF HEALING - PTSD**

**Presenter, Dr. Ray Scurfield - Vietnam veteran and Associate Professor, School of Social Work, University of Southern Mississippi.** Type of presentation: paper presentation, or roundtable format if Veterans for Peace would like to propose several roundtable participants.

Statement: Mental health professionals have focused on individual treatment oriented to reducing the core PTSD psychiatric symptoms” as defined by the *DSM-IV-TR* in their interventions with war veterans., e.g., re-experiencing, numbing/detachment and arousal. While these are important to address, unfortunately, this narrow symptom focus ignores or severely downplays *other* critical elements that are necessary for true healing in many veterans *and* almost totally ignores that war trauma is never a solitary experience—but always occurs within the context of the small operational military unit.:

?? Racism, sexism and gender-based trauma and homophobia trauma

?? Trauma that occurs during the entire medical evacuation process from the moment one is wounded until post-stabilization stateside

?? Peer relationships with other veterans of the same war

An “expanding circle of healing” model is described, in which veterans are challenged to seriously address and possibly relate to a *series of additional relationships*, each of which may be critical to various degrees for veterans as part of optimal healing from war, e.g., expanding the circle of healing to at least consider and possibly include:

- ?? Veterans of *other* generations, eras and theaters
- ?? Non-veterans
- ?? The US government and American society
- ?? The people and land of the country you fought in
- ?? The polarities of both the extreme negatives and exhilarating positives that are inherent the experience of war
- ?? Relationship with a higher power or God, and faith in humanity . . .

Accessibility: All handouts will include copies in size 17 font and will be electronically accessible from my university Web-site at [usm.edu/gulfcoast](http://usm.edu/gulfcoast).

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## **PEACE IS POSSIBLE** **Effective lobbying**

**Presenter, Arthur Boyd, Friends Committee for National Legislation.** Arthur Meyer Boyd is Associate Executive Secretary for the Friends Committee on National Legislation (FCNL) a Quaker public interest lobbying organization established in 1943 in Washington, DC. FCNL, closely related to the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers), is the oldest registered national religious lobby in the United States, and the largest peace lobby in the nation's capitol.

He joined the FCNL staff in August, 1995, having previously been director of a statewide lobbying group in Maryland, a senior executive in a state welfare agency, an assistant county administrator/human services coordinator in a rural Michigan county, and community relations director for a psychiatric hospital. Prior Friends service has included being a regional director for American Friends Service Committee.

### WORKSHOP DESCRIPTION

"Peace is Possible - Here's How." If "War is not the Answer," what is? Learn how a vision of Peace and Justice is being translated into practical steps for U.S. policy. Learn how people like you are changing the debate in Congress about war and peace. What works and what doesn't in bringing a prophetic message of peace to elected officials, the State Department, and the Pentagon. Learn tips and practice techniques you can use with national, state and local policy advocacy issues. With Arthur Meyer Boyd of Friends committee on National Legislation, the largest peace lobby in the nation's capitol. For the "peace is possible" portion, Arthur will bring information about "peaceful prevention of deadly conflict" as a practical approach to avoid or prevent or end wars. For the "here's how" portion, Arthur will bring written tools for grassroots action and a PowerPoint presentation for visual examples. The discussion and interactive exercises will be based on participants' questions and interests and draw on the experiences of FCNL and its constituents in every congressional district and daily visits with Congress.

### ACCESSIBILITY

The workshop will be oral and interactive. The materials on the powerpoint, and related paper handouts will all be conveyed orally during the workshop and available in large print through the Friends Committee on National Legislation website [www.fcni.org](http://www.fcni.org).

#### ON GRASS ROOTS ACTION

8 tips: [http://www.fcni.org/pdfs/brochures/lobby\\_flyer1105.pdf](http://www.fcni.org/pdfs/brochures/lobby_flyer1105.pdf)

meeting with congress: [http://www.fcni.org/getin/resources/meet\\_congress.htm](http://www.fcni.org/getin/resources/meet_congress.htm)

how to schedule: [http://www.fcni.org/getin/resources/printer\\_friendly/lobby\\_schedule.htm](http://www.fcni.org/getin/resources/printer_friendly/lobby_schedule.htm)

tips on communicating: [http://www.fcni.org/pdfs/communicating\\_congress.pdf](http://www.fcni.org/pdfs/communicating_congress.pdf)

page shot of our action center: <http://capwiz.com/fconl/home/>

writing letters: [http://www.fcni.org/getin/resources/printer\\_friendly/write\\_congress.htm](http://www.fcni.org/getin/resources/printer_friendly/write_congress.htm)

lobby by phone: [http://www.fcni.org/getin/resources/phone\\_lobby.htm](http://www.fcni.org/getin/resources/phone_lobby.htm)

page shot of tool kit contents (the above and other resources): <http://www.fcni.org/action/toolkit.htm>

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## PEACEFUL PREVENTION OF DEADLY CONFLICT

Amelie Scheltema [ascheltema@whoi.edu](mailto:ascheltema@whoi.edu)  
Rudolf Scheltema [rscheltema@whoi.edu](mailto:rscheltema@whoi.edu)

Rudi and Ami Scheltema are member/associate member of Chapter 041, Cape Cod VFP, longtime peace writers and activists and Quakers connected with Friends Committee on National Legislation; both are research biologists. In addition, Ami has led nonviolence workshops in prisons as part of the Alternatives to Violence Project (AVP).

#### SUMMARY

A "culture of reaction" is the current way of thinking in our nation. It leads almost inevitably to war and the support by citizens for war. Even in much of our peacework we feel forced to react to, rather than prevent, gross injustices. Can we change national, local, and personal ways of thinking to consider a "culture of prevention"?

The language of "peaceful prevention of deadly conflict" is new, based on Carnegie and United Nations reports of the mid-to-late 1990s and the pamphlet by the Friends Committee on National Legislation. The new language can change our perceptions of what our actions are doing. This workshop addresses Resistance and Education; its sister workshop is "Peace is Possible—Here's How," that trains for successful lobbying.

RESISTANCE: We will examine how we can use the language of "peaceful prevention" to describe efforts to end war by discussing cases in which war has or has not been averted: (1) the genocide between Hutu and Tutsi in Rwanda and the present efforts there in reconciliation; (2) the nonviolent student resistance (supported by the US government) that ended the dictatorship in Serbia.

EDUCATION: Our civil society is presently hungering for a message that says that war is not inevitable for their security. A fearless society is one that understands they have the power to peacefully prevent deadly conflict. Such an understanding releases the energy to eliminate the injustices that lead to violence. If we educate students and communities—and ourselves—to have at the forefront the question "Will this program or action help to prevent deadly conflict peacefully?" we can abolish war. (What great words to bring into counter recruiting!)

No basic workshop like this one yet exists, so it is an experiment out of which we can together forge a model workshop for taking into schools and community groups.

RESOURCES WITH WHICH THE FACILITATORS HAVE HAD SOME EXPERIENCE:

DEFINITION AND POLICIES

**Peaceful Prevention Of Deadly Conflict:** This FCNL pamphlet can be downloaded:  
[http://www.fcnl.org/issues/int/sup/ppdc\\_booklet.htm](http://www.fcnl.org/issues/int/sup/ppdc_booklet.htm) (It would be a fine thing to read before the workshop.)

### IRAQ WATER PROJECT

**Presenter, Art Dorland.** An accounting of the once successful efforts to rebuild water treatment plants in Iraq, their subsequent destruction in war and the remarkable stories of courage and persistence that keeps the program alive, though somewhat modified, in a cauldron of chaos and violence.

### FUTURE OF VETERANS FOR PEACE

**Presenter, Lincoln Grahls.** A review of what VFP has accomplished and an examination of ways by which to engage and keep our membership mobilized after the current crisis has passed in order to prevent militaristic elements from thrusting us into another war because we were sleeping.

### DON'T ASK, DON'T TELL

**Presenters, Hugh Bruce and Tom Swan.** An examination of military policy relative to the gay community past, present and future, with personal histories, court cases, legal precedents, legislative initiatives, statistical analyses, descriptions of comfortable and uncomfortable conventions and practices.

### RETHINKING THE IMPERIALIST NATURE OF WARS

**Presentation--Veterans For Peace Convention  
St Louis Missouri  
August 15-19, 2007  
Submitted by Roger Marheine (VFP member)**

**"Rethinking the Imperialist Nature of American Wars"**

#### **Quotes for Consideration:**

**"America is not to be Rome or Britain. It is to be America."  
Historian Charles Beard (1939)**

**“The United States is the only great power without a history of imperialistic claims on neighboring countries.” (Richard Nixon)**

**“We are the first global power in history that is not an imperial power.”  
(Samuel (Sandy) R. Berger, national security advisor under President Clinton)**

**“The United States does not seek a territorial empire. We have never been imperialists.” (Colin Powell, former Secretary of State under President George W. Bush)**

**“We’ve never been a colonial power. We don’t take our force and go around the world and try to take other people’s real estate or other people’s resources, their oil. That’s just not what the United States does. That’s not how democracies behave. That’s how an empire-building Soviet Union behaved but that’s not how the United States behaves.” (Donald Rumsfeld, former Secretary of Defense under President George W. Bush)**

**“America has never been an empire. We may be the only great power in history that had the chance, and refused—preferring greatness to power.”  
(President George W. Bush)**

### **Introduction:**

In the early years of the twentieth century, outrage over the US government’s assault on the Philippines, generated the Anti-Imperialist League. It was made up of a range of mainstream figures including author Mark Twain and Harvard professor and philosopher William James. A few decades later Smedley Butler’s marvelous ‘War is a Racket’ revealed much regarding the corporate profit motives of imperialist wars. W. E. Dubois argued World War I was largely an imperialist struggle over the control of Africa and other colonies. However, President Woodrow Wilson’s claim that the US entered World War I “to make the world safe for democracy,” coupled with rising revolutionary movements in Eastern Europe and elsewhere, signaled the end to meaningful examination of the US being an imperialist power. Thus, President Dwight Eisenhower would use ‘military-industrial complex,’ and more recently, Chalmers Johnson has expanded the term, referring to a ‘military-industrial-petroleum complex.’

In the debates about the Vietnam War, the word ‘imperialism’ did re-emerge but the term was generally relegated to the periphery of anti-war discussions, perhaps because it was a term associated with the Marxist ‘old’ left and its links to the Soviet style communism or the Marxist ‘new’ left associated with Maoism and Chinese style communism. Often under the guise of pragmatic unity, the focus was on ending the Vietnam War and not complicating the discussion with potentially divisive political views.

Quite remarkably however, since the terrorist attacks of 9/11, *pro-war* advocates have emerged who support an overt ‘imperialism’ that embraces the historical task of global dominance. Thus, Niall Ferguson, Max Boot, and Michael Ignatieff among others openly challenge both their conservative counterparts and liberal opponents by claiming the US is and has always been an imperialist nation. To be sure, the Council on Foreign Relations in its journal, *Foreign Affairs* tends not to utilize the words ‘empire’ or ‘imperialism,’ instead relying on standard euphemisms e.g. national security, critical interests, secured economic relationships and the like.

However, where does that leave those of us who oppose the current wars? Informative commentators like Chalmers Johnson do a masterful job of clarifying the US global military hegemony, its hundreds of bases globally, and declares we are not longer a republic. However, Johnson would seemingly never concede that the US has been an imperialist nation from its inception. Shouldn’t we consider the claims of the ‘new’ imperialist voices (Ferguson, Boot, Ignatieff and their kind) to assess our own strategies in the months and

years ahead. Can we afford not to examine the issue of imperialism as the fundamental cause of the current wars in Iraq and Afghanistan? Certainly, we need a broad coalition of anti-war forces; therefore, we also need a theoretically meaningful understanding of the root causes of these current wars.

### **Part One: Definitions and starting points: Empire and Imperialism**

Many will ask, "Hasn't humanity been plagued by ruthless empires and exploitative imperialist powers for thousands of years?" The short answer is 'yes...and no.' Babylonian and Assyrian empires dominated the area we now call the Middle East. Certainly the Roman Empire, the world's largest up to its time, held major power over vast regions and hundreds of thousands of people for centuries. In more primitive western Europe, early military assaults were simple plunder and pillage, to seize by force whatever could be loaded on boats or pack animals; the victimized population was often slaughtered, but the attackers made little or no attempt to settle and enslave the local population. Scandinavian assaults on Britain tended to follow these lines.

**State dominated empires:** With the rise of agriculture came increased surplus and a developed leisure (owner) class who often formed large professional militaries to expand their empires. Ancient Greece (approximately 800-1000 BCE) celebrated Homeric warrior kings whose exploits paved the way for Plato's philosopher king, a ruler who supposedly governed by wisdom and dispassionate benevolence. Plato lived just after the Greeks had defeated the Persians to become dominant imperialists in the region. The recent film *300* makes a less than subtle neo-fascist attempt to link our own history with that of the Greeks. However, Plato's home city, Athens, itself an imperialist city-state, lost to Sparta in the Peloponnesian War (431-404 BCE)—an early example of imperialist rivalry. Generally speaking these were state dominated empires. Similarly, ancient Chinese (3<sup>rd</sup> century) and the Incas (western hemisphere) tended to tax local populations and thus much power resided in the hands of government officials rather than land holders per se.

**Empires of property**, a term coined by Ellen Meiksins Wood, included Rome. Rome perfected its empire through massive military expansion of property and enslavement of many of its victims. Some parallels between our own circumstances and Rome are revealing. First, Rome's military was staffed by peasants, whose quality of life was generally miserable, yet they were *encouraged to believe* they could improve their lot through war. However, as the empire and slavery expanded, the peasant's economic position actually suffered. Wood quotes a Roman official as saying "one of the main functions of slavery was that it allowed the elite to increase the discrepancy between rich and poor without alienating the free citizen peasantry from their willingness to fight in wars for the further expansion of the empire" (Wood 31). As the poor peasants fought wars to expand the coffers of the slave owning elites, peasants themselves saw their economic status decline. Certainly in the last 25 years, the gap in the US between rich and poor has widened to something like 500 to one; in 1980, the gap might have been closer to 60 to one.

Second, Rome attempted to recruit local elites to help run its empire (a practice quite different from the more racist Greeks who labeled non-Greeks as Barbarian). Thus Rome practiced diversity of a sort in an attempt to develop its overall control of land. Still, a huge military was required to control and occupy the massive amounts of colonized peoples and their land. The twentieth century version saw the US back scores of quite frankly fascist dictators who played their role in securing US imperial interests whether it be ensuring oil as in the Shah's Iran or Hussein's Iraq or 'containing' communism as in Marcos' Philippines or Somoza's Nicaragua.

There's yet another version of diversity practices in recent US social history. A bitterly ironic truth regarding the American military is that it is an equal opportunity--color-blind employer featuring a rich diversity of working class people of color. Clearly genuine opportunities in civilian life are not available to these same individuals because of racism and class oppression.

A third related strategy practiced by Rome was to recruit from local populations to fight its expansionist wars of empire. Today, US military stretched to its limit, now favors recruitment of immigrants to sustain war requirements. On the 4<sup>th</sup> of July, 2007, the *Los Angeles Times* ran a major photo of current immigrant soldiers being sworn in as US citizens. Conservative commentator, Max Boot, has argued for recruitment of young men in Mexico City for the US imperialist missions. The current Dream Act tantalizes young immigrants with citizenship if they complete a hitch in the military.

After the 1<sup>st</sup> century, Rome conquered little new land and the decline was on. Military style empires like Rome require a 'feed the beast' style expansion in which new plunder is constantly required. When there are no new military conquests, imperial overstretch occurs, and the economy fails to sustain the costs of a large military power. This theory of military overreach in which the costs of the military exceed the wealth acquired has been clarified by Paul Kennedy in *The Rise and Fall of Great Powers*.

Thus the current US war in Iraq has not yielded economic gains, and leaves a massive debt; in Rome's case, at least, similar circumstances contributed to its demise. However, it must be emphasized that Rome's early successes actually led to an increased gap between rich and poor even as the poor were encouraged to view their interests as being enhanced by military fighting. Those unfortunate Americans who argue we need to have war to sustain our lifestyles, our humvees and our petroleum based economy only echo a painful fallacy that goes back to ancient Rome.

**Part Two--1492--Europe's conquest of the Americas begins:** The Spanish conquest and subsequent empire in the Americas, begun by Christopher Columbus, became the largest overseas empire the world had ever seen. After 1492, the development of an immense naval power to transport commodities, slaves, and soldiers gave huge advantages to Spain, Portugal, England, and France, the era's rival imperialists. Ultimately, the ravaged indigenous peoples of the Western Hemisphere lost approximately 90% of their original population due to genocidal practices and disease. In Iraq the number of dead due directly to war and ravaged infrastructure has risen to over 650,000 and counting. The 515-year old conquest since Columbus constituted the beginnings of modern imperialism from several perspectives.

First, the Spanish and Portuguese practiced outright plunder and enslavement of the local population for the lucrative profits in gold and silver mining, similar to what the Romans had done. Thus, for example the Aztecs had more gold than the country of Spain but lost to Spain because of in Jared Diamond's words, 'guns, germs, and steel.'

Second, we must keep in mind that Spain's aristocracy (2% of its population) controlled 95% of the land. Thus Columbus was employed by a tiny fraction of elites who became much wealthier from plunder of gold. However, the inflation that ensued destroyed the Spanish economy and further impoverished the lives of peasants. Because the rich got fabulously richer, the poorer were made much poorer. We must dismiss all illusions that rising tides lift all boats. We must generally acknowledge that especially under capitalism, increased wealth in an economy tends to also mean *greater inequality*. Whether it be imperial Spain, the modern US, or current China, greater wealth overall has meant worsening gaps between rich and poor.

Third, massive *inter-imperialist rivalries* intensified *because so much wealth was to be taken*. Thus major wars were ensured, including the British imperial naval victory over the Spanish Armada as early as 1588—perhaps the greatest naval battle up until that time. The Spanish skirmished with Portugal and France constantly up until the establishment of the United States (in 1776) which then asserted itself as an imperial player. That is, rival imperialists fought incessantly to procure the enormous wealth. Inter-imperialist rivalry certainly was responsible for World War I, and the Cold War which I believe was essentially a war between two major imperialist powers, the US and Soviet Union, saw dozens of so-called proxy wars fought. More on that below.

### **Part Three: Britain's Colonization of North America**

An early justification of English imperialism emerged in its dominance of Ireland and was transferred to North American colonization. The principle of occupying 'unused' or underutilized land that could be profitably cultivated by English settlers was philosophically defended by John Locke's secular arguments in his *Second Treatise on Government* and the Puritan "errand into the wilderness" that required a replacing of 'savage heathens' with 'godly' English settlers.

A key to understanding early US imperialist strategy lies in Ellen Meiksins Wood's observation that the British utilized settler colonization much more than the Spanish, French or Portuguese (89-101) The French, for example, had developed the fur trade, and North American Indians became economic partners at least to an extent. The English in contrast had a much smaller country and after the enclosure acts, which effectively pushed many English peasants off the land, England had *surplus laborers* in numbers far beyond the other three imperialist powers. Thus, settler colonization constituted a social safety valve, a punitive gesture, and an investment in cheap labor. Convicted persons could be given the choice of prison or hanging; or they could sell themselves into indentured servitude to colonial investors.

The Founding Fathers of the US who were largely of English ancestry, developed very profitable plantations through slavery, and they ultimately accumulated sufficient wealth to challenge their imperialist forebears. Despite its rhetoric of "all men are created equal" and its partial democracy (for men of property) the upstart United States was hardly a free society. Gary Nash claims in *Red, White and Black*, that at the signing of the Declaration of Independence, *more than half* of the people living in the 13 colonies were either slaves or indentured servants.

However, one critical difference between western hemispheric imperialism and that of Rome was that a new dynamic world market had developed, becoming the foundation of modern capitalism. Thus, millions of slaves were *brought from Africa to the Western Hemisphere*, and slave trading became a ghastly but immensely profitable business. Massive numbers of slaves had never before been moved so far. Further, the cultivation of cash crop/slave labor economies producing cotton, sugar (rum), and tobacco primarily became extremely profitable for the slave plantation system. Thus James Madison, who would become a US president, claimed he could make \$257 per year on a slave who required only \$12-\$13 for food, housing etc.... That is a 2000% profit! However, the enormous profit required the brutalities of chattel slavery and an institutional racism that would make the ancient Greek's 'barbarism' seem a tame afterthought. The staggering accumulation of wealth based on slavery has been well documented by Eric Williams' *Capitalism and Slavery* by W.E.B. De Bois and many others. Furthermore, after 1776, the model of English settler imperialism would be taken up with a vengeance by the leaders of the new country. It involved Native American removal and genocide coupled with African American slave labor; it was imperialistically expansionist from the start.

### **Part Four: United States as Imperial Power...from the outset**

George Washington, known for his leadership of the continental army against the British, established himself as the richest man in America, essentially through land speculation. In 1784, five years before he became the first president, he reportedly believed New York would become the "seat of empire," and subsequently New York became the "Empire State." Despite the sentimental mythological claim that the US is an exceptional superpower promoting freedom and democracy, in fact the imperialist agenda was evident from the beginning.

Consider that in 1962, Dean Rusk, Secretary of State under Democratic President John Kennedy, declared that the US had conducted armed interventions in other countries *103 times between 1798 and 1895* (Zinn 298). That is, on average a little over one per year. Rusk was attempting to establish precedent for the 1962 invasion of Cuba. The 97-year period cited by Rusk is significant because it covered a time *before most mainstream commentators acknowledge any imperialist agenda*.

The second president, Thomas Jefferson, both a primary author of the Declaration of Independence and an astute student of history, quickly declared the US an “empire of liberty” (Ferguson 23). He established a functioning imperial tradition both by land and by sea.

“From the Halls of Montezuma to the shores of Tripoli,” so goes the Marine Corps hymn, but actually the shores of Tripoli were invaded first. Indeed a simple history of US imperialism could be found by tracing Marine invasions. Almost immediately upon Jefferson’s inauguration US shipping and trade encountered hostility from Barbary Coast forces--North African countries, (often called Pirates in American History books). President Jefferson authorized a naval assault which included the Marines attacking Tripoli just after Jefferson became president in 1801. The halls of Montezuma would be assaulted over 40 yrs later when the US attacked Chapultepec Castle outside Mexico City (1847). More on that shortly.

While Jefferson was not hesitant to send troops half way round the world, his ‘purchase’ of the Louisiana territories (1803) must also be viewed as an imperialist gesture of extraordinarily lasting significance. What is so remarkable is that despite the US often being viewed as a gutsy upstart, fighting for its freedom from colonial Britain, its founding fathers were wealthy slave owners who understood the need to expand their territory to cultivate new land and develop greater production.

Statistics on cotton production tell reveal why the US elites sought imperialist expansion based on productivity potential. Just as corporate petroleum elites tend to drive the imperialist agenda today, the corporate slave elites directed the imperialist policy of expansion at least until the Civil War. Thus, in 1790, cotton production stood at 1000 tons per year, but by 1860, production reached 1,000,000 tons per annum, a thousand fold increase. Due to the invention of the cotton gin and the development of the textile industry in Britain, raw cotton production via slave labor could now be processed in almost unlimited amounts.

With Jefferson’s purchase the Louisiana territory from the French after the French had chosen to withdraw from Haiti subsequent to the greatest slave rebellion in modern times, the US could then replace the French. Now, consider that ‘Louisiana’ included the present-day states of Arkansas, Missouri, Iowa, Oklahoma, Kansas, Nebraska, Minnesota, much of North Dakota, northeastern New Mexico, northern Texas, portions of Montana, Wyoming, and Colorado—or 23% of the present day US. Of the indigenous people living in that vast expanse, none were consulted or even informed of the purchase by either buyer or seller. Jefferson fully understood that a strategy of Indian removal was to be implemented. Howard Zinn succinctly notes, “Indian removal was necessary for the opening of the vast American lands to agriculture, to commerce, to markets, to money, to the development of the modern capitalist economy” (126). Indeed, from 1803 onward the lives of Native Americans would be devastated by an insistent imperialist expansionism until the “Frontier” would be officially closed in 1890.

After the War of 1812, a new player would emerge to carry the tradition of land speculation promoted earlier by George Washington, Patrick Henry and other ‘patriots.’ That unique combination of Indian removal via genocide or forced evacuation, slavery, and land seizure would be championed by Andrew Jackson. Jackson had been a hero of the War of 1812, which was not only a final ‘revolutionary war against the British but a war to expand into Florida, Canada, and Indian Territory (Zinn 127). Jackson pitted Cherokees against Creeks and defeated the Creeks at the Battle of Horseshoe Bend (1814). Jackson earned a reputation for ruthlessness and rapacious greed that eliminated anyone who stood in his way: “We bleed our enemies in such cases to give them their senses” (qtd. in Zinn 128). Jackson is thus in the long line of genocidal imperialists whose rhetoric culminated in General Philip Sheridan’s statement in 1869 “The only good Indians I ever saw were dead.” Sheridan’s statement became US military policy for over decades to come in the form of “The only good Indian is a dead Indian.” ([Indian@everything2.com](mailto:Indian@everything2.com)).

The history of this genocidal slogan is so important is because it links to none other than Teddy Roosevelt who championed open imperialism as an official foreign policy. Roosevelt’s racism against all persons of

color became infamous. There is a straight ideological line from Andrew Jackson to Teddy Roosevelt. Roosevelt's comments in a 1886 speech in New York are worth noting: "I suppose I should be ashamed to say that I take the Western view of the Indian. I don't go so far as to think that the only good Indians are dead Indians, but I believe nine out of every ten are, and I shouldn't like to inquire too closely into the case of the tenth." (quoted in [Indian@everything2.com](http://Indian@everything2.com)). More on Teddy Roosevelt below.

Andrew Jackson had his sights set on Florida which was controlled by Spain but inhabited by the Seminole nation which often provided refuge for runaway slaves. Jackson led the Seminole War of 1818 and after the burning and pillaging of Seminole villages and Spanish forts, the 'purchase' of Florida (1819) was negotiated. Jackson became the Governor of Florida and an extraordinarily rich slave owner. Resistance to Jackson military carnage emerged within the enlisted ranks of poor whites who deserted in large numbers; Jackson's standard tactic was whippings for the first two offenses and execution for the third (Zinn 129). He became president in 1828 and led the slave owning class interests to expand into Indian Territory that would lead to the Mexican American War. But first a look at the Monroe Doctrine.

### **Monroe Doctrine:**

James Monroe had been involved with Jefferson's negotiations of the Louisiana purchase and was fully complicit with an increasingly evident imperialist agenda. Ironically, the Monroe Doctrine of 1823 was authored primarily by John Quincy Adams who viewed it as a moral statement against imperialist expansion. In practice, Jefferson and Madison both encouraged President Monroe to adopt it as *de facto* imperialist alliance with Britain; they viewed such a doctrine as a hedge against the French and Spanish re-establishing lost imperial ground in the Americas. Thus its origins were complex and varied, but the intentions of Adams were certainly undermined by the subsequent practice.

Three points can be made. First, seemingly modest gestures can become imperialist ideology and rationale for subsequent military invasions for economic interests. Second, Adams' position could be linked to modern day "humanitarian intervention" President Clinton's rationale for the bombing of former Yugoslavia; the real reason had to do with oil pipeline interests. Also, recall that one supposed reason Hilary Clinton supported the 2003 invasion of Iraq was to liberate the oppressed women of Iraq. Finally, some well-intentioned but I would argue misguided people today believe the US should remain in Iraq to stabilize the country.

While the Monroe Doc was supposedly defensive and protectionist, that is against colonial interventions, it in fact became an often-used policy for offensive imperial incursions for the most blatant economic interests. Thus, in 1836, it was used to prevent the British from allying with Mexico's portion of Texas. Recall the mythological power of the Alamo. By 1845, James Polk used it as an excuse to wage war with Mexico. It was invoked by President Ulysses S. Grant in the 1870s against European transferring of colonies and in 1895 against European collection of debt. In the most significant application until that time, President Theodore (Teddy) Roosevelt added the 'Roosevelt Corollary' which asserted the right of the US to intervene in Latin America. In 1954, Sec of State John Foster Dulles cited it as a rationale to oppose supposed Soviet organizing anti-American resistance in Guatemala. Finally, John F. Kennedy evoked it in 1962 as he threatened Cuba with invasion during what became called the Cuban missile crisis: "The Monroe Doctrine means what it has meant since President Monroe and John Quincy Adams enunciated it, and that is that we would oppose a foreign power (Soviet Union) extending its power to the Western Hemisphere, and that is why we oppose what is happening in Cuba today."

### **Mexican American War and Manifest Destiny**

The theory of 'continentalism' essentially fulfilled the imperialist expansionist agenda; it argued for the US comprising the entire continent of North America. British Canada and Spanish Mexico both resisted but ultimately gave up huge portions of their land. The mythology that rationalized continentalism was 'Manifest Destiny' coined by journalist, John O'Sullivan in 1845 who advocated taking Oregon and Texas. O'Sullivan postulated, "And that claim is by the right of our manifest destiny to overspread and to possess the whole of

the continent which Providence has given us for the development of the great experiment of liberty and federated self-government entrusted to us.” O’Sullivan’s ponderous, heavy handed rhetorical style notwithstanding, Manifest Destiny would take its place along side Social Darwinism and White Man’s Burden as preeminent imperialist ideologies for decades to come.

So much of modern imperialism’s ideological rationalizations are embedded in Manifest Destiny. First, it was couched in the benevolent and benign virtues of an American mission as articulated in the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution. Second, it advocated a kind of evangelical mission that the US spread democracy that was lacking in other countries. One of my students recently wrote in his essay that the US is the only country that is so benevolent that it seeks to share its democratic values. Third, its religious links unmistakably tied it to a godly mission; as destiny it echoed the old Puritan notion of being destined by God. Thus when George Bush called the US effort after 9-11, a crusade, he was not only calling upon the 800 year old example of Europe’s major military assaults on the Middle East (assaults that largely failed by the way), but he also was calling upon religious nationalism of US history.

As early as 1811, John Quincy Adams had articulated the link between religion and imperial expansion: “The whole continent of North America appears to be destined by Divine Providence to be peopled by one *nation*, speaking one language, professing one general system of religious and political principles, and accustomed to one general tenor of social usages and customs. For the common happiness of the all, their peace and prosperity, I believe it is indispensable that they should be associated in federal union” qtd in McDougall). It was to be a uniformity of religion, politics, and of course, racism.

To be sure, there were valiant expressions of opposition, one of the most important being Henry David Thoreau’s “Civil Disobedience” which launched a blistering critique of US imperialism. Thoreau, a man of privilege yet one of conscience, went to prison in protest of the US assault on Mexico. Significantly, he linked the plights of three groups suffering from US imperialist practice: “Under a government which imprisons unjustly, the true place for a just man is also a prison. . . .It is there that the fugitive slave and the Mexican prisoner on parole and the Indian come to plead the wrongs [waged against them].” Thoreau’s linking of genocidal assaults against Native Americans, enslavement of Blacks, and foreign aggression against Mexico is remarkable for its time. It offers for us a model of local/global analysis today that connects the oppression at home—the abusive prison system, the nativist hostility to immigrants, the dismal state of healthcare and education—with the imperialist agenda abroad.

### **The Spanish American War—US declares its Imperialist Mission: Manifest Destiny Merges with White Man’s Burden...**

The Spanish American War (1898-1902) was essentially two wars, one against the Spanish and one against the Filipino resistance, is the only war in American history that even mainstream historians agree was an imperialist war. Indeed, William McKinley and Teddy Roosevelt said so, and even bragged about. A full theoretical discussion of modern imperialism will be developed below.

However, a distinguishing feature of modern imperialism is **surplus** which led to the conquering of foreign populations in order to expand markets. Before he became president, William McKinley summed up US corporate need: “We want a foreign market for our surplus products” (qtd. in Zinn 299). One of imperialism’s most important proponents, Senator Albert Beveridge declared, “American factories are making more than the American people can use; American soil is producing more than they can consume. Fate has written our policy for us; the trade of the world must and shall be ours” (qtd in Zinn 299). Further an 1898 State Department document explained, “It seems. . . that every year we shall be confronted with an increasing surplus of manufactured goods for sale in foreign markets if American operatives and artisans are to be kept employed the year around.” The surplus argument predicts what 90 years later would be the neo-liberal and free trade mantra—what some have called ‘Soft imperialism.’ The preeminent theoretician of modern US imperialism is Charles A. Conant whose 1898 essay, “The Economic Basis of Imperialism” argued the US

needed to “assert [its] right to free markets in all the old countries which are being opened up to the surplus resources of capitalist countries” (qtd in Foster 70).

Author Mark Twain, Harvard philosopher William James, and others formed the Anti-Imperialist League. Twain’s wrote scathing criticism of US imperialist excursions worldwide: “I bring you the stately matron named Christendom, returning bedraggled, besmirched, and dishonored from pirate raids in Kiao-Chou, Manchuria, South Africa, and the Philippines, with her soul full of meanness, her pocket for of boodle, and her mouth full of pious hypocrisies” (qtd in Zinn 321).

Again Twain’s moral outrage on the US genocide of Filipinos is worth noting: “We have pacified some thousands of the islanders and buried them; destroyed their fields’ burned their villages; and turned their widows and orphans out-of-doors...[and] subjugated the remaining ten millions by Benevolent Assimilation, which is the pious new name of the musket...” (qtd in Zinn 316).

### **Insert poem—“White Man’s Burden”**

The use of racism for justification of imperialist genocide has been a consistent pattern from this era to our own. Sadly in today’s war in Iraq, some US soldiers will use racist anti-Arab slurs. In the US assault, against the Philippines, one Washington state soldier: “Our fighting blood was up, and we all wanted to kill ‘niggers’....This beats shooting human beings beats rabbit hunting all to pieces.” (qtd. in Zinn 315). Two points need to be made. First, the equating the darker skinned in the same racially derogatory manner as American Blacks shows a uniform racist ideology. At the time of the war, 1889-1903 the US averaged two lynchings per week. Racism at home thus coupled with racism abroad. Another Captain said that his regiment through an area called Caloocan: “ Caloocan was supposed to contain 17,000 inhabitants. The Twentieth Kansas swept through it and now Caloocan contains not one living native.” And another private said that he had personally committed what would later be called a war crime “with my own hand set fire to over fifty houses of Filipinos....Women and children were wounded by our fire” (in Zinn 325). The genocide of Native Americans and later the Vietnamese in cases like the My Lai massacre and others is thus demonstrated in the US imperialist genocide in the Philippines in which approximately 200,000 died (Foster 123-129 ). It isn’t difficult to link these atrocities with civilian deaths perpetrated by US soldiers in Fallujah, Haditha and elsewhere in Iraq. In early August, 2007, charges were dropped against two marines for their part in the massacre of 24 Iraqi civilians in Haditha. It must be said that just as in the Philippines a century ago, the US government today in Iraq overtly seeks a military willing to commit atrocities for the imperial mission.

Twain and Harvard philosopher William James formed the Anti-Imperialist League which published letters from Black American troops fighting in the Philippines. According to Willard Gatewood, Black US soldiers in the Philippines deserted in significant numbers from their segregated army units (four Black American regiments were deployed in the war), and some joined the Filipino resistance. Most notable was David Fagan of the 24<sup>th</sup> infantry who accepted a commission in the Filipino rebel force and heroically led struggles *against* US forces for two years. According to the New York Museum and Veteran Center, twenty other American soldiers, *both black and white also defected and joined his resistance against US imperialist forces*. Another Black soldier, William Fullbright wrote, “ This struggle on the [Philippines] has been naught but a gigantic scheme of robbery and oppression” (qtd in Gatewood). William Simms wrote, “a little Filipino boy asked me...’Why does the American Negro come...to fight us where we are much a friend to him and have not done anything to him. He is all the same as me and me all the same as you. Why don’t you (Black soldiers) fight those people in America who burn Negroes, that make the beast of you” (qtd in Gatewood).

The resistance of these soldiers was repeated sixty-five years later when world champion boxer, Mohammad Ali refused to join the US Army because he claimed that no Vietnamese had ever called him the n-word. Also, Black soldiers in the Philippines foreshadowed the massive refusals and outright rebellion so well documented in David Cortwright’s *Soldiers in Revolt* during Vietnam.

One senator would combine the anti-Asian racism that had legislated the Chinese Exclusion Act (1882) and would link to anti-Vietnamese comments by General Westmoreland who claimed the Vietnamese valued life less than Americans. Senator Albert Beveridge “My own belief is that there are not 100 [Filipinos] who comprehend what Anglo-Saxon self-government even means, and there are over 5,000,000 people to be governed. It has been charged that our conduct of the war has been cruel. Senators, it has been the reverse...Senators must remember that we are not dealing with Americans or Europeans. We are dealing with Orientals” (Qtd in Zinn 314). Seven decades later, Westmoreland referred to the Vietcong resistance forces as “termites” as he admitted “I occasionally likened the political subversives and guerrillas to termites persistently eating away at the structural members of a building...the structure of the Vietnamese government” (qtd in Gibson 226).

A *Washington Post* editorial claimed quite falsely, “A new consciousness seems to have come upon us—the consciousness of strength—and with it a new appetite, the yearning to show our strength...Ambition, interest land hunger, pride, the mere joy of fighting, whatever it may be, we are animated by a new sensation. We are face to face with a strange destiny. The taste of Empire is in the mouth of the people even as the taste of blood in the jungle” (qtd. Zinn 299). What was the real reason? In a word the intensely efficient production of goods combined with an impoverishment of the worker/consumer led corporate interests to push for war, and declare it was the peoples’ will.

### **Modern Theories of Imperialism**

Classical theories of imperialism developed as a formal academic inquiry in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. British scholar, J. A. Hobson, Austrian economist Rudolf Hilferding, and Russian revolutionary V. I Lenin established the major parameters for a modern definition of imperialism. Hobson’s contribution emphasized for the first time that modern imperialism was based on the need of developed capitalist economies to rid themselves of surplus products. While echoing the analysis of Karl Marx’s theory of overproduction, Hobson’s liberal worldview compelled him to separate imperialism from capitalism. Hilferding traced monopoly capitalism’s particular functions, and finally, Lenin synthesized their thinking to clarify modern imperialist theory.

Often vilified in mainstream thinking, Lenin connected several critical phenomena of corporate economics that remain fundamentally reliable today. First, monopolization essentially ended ‘free enterprise’ except in marginal areas of production; for all practical purposes, monopolies controlled production and distribution. One fundamental feature was that with the ever increasing need for technology, only mega corporations could develop and/or purchase new technologies. The robber baron era in US history (1870-1914) leaves little doubt that American economy is monopolized. Imperialism is essentially the global expression of monopolized corporate economies.

Second, large financial investors now superseded industrial capital, and asserted economic and thus political power. The World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) fit within this paradigm.

Third, not only would surplus goods be exported to markets, but *even more importantly, exporting of capital itself* became a primary investment strategy. In the 1990s this would be associated with ‘globalization,’ runaway shops or outsourcing which was the euphemistic term associated with the mad dash to find the world’s cheapest labor.

Fourth, increasingly the entire globe could be dominated by a few multinational cartels. By the late 20<sup>th</sup> century the World Trade Organization, the General Agreement of Tariffs and Trade (GATT) sought to hammer out agreements between global economic elites.

Fifth, political division of the world meant intensified colonization and exploitation of labor in the developing world. Further, major elites could also extract and appropriate critical raw materials, globally and thus control spheres of influence. Obviously, petroleum, 65% of which is in the Middle East, became the ‘prize’ commodity, and the Middle East became a major ‘sphere of influence.’ Finally, the prediction that inter-

imperialist competition to control the world would likely lead to major military conflict was always a cornerstone of Lenin's claims.

### **Twentieth Century—Peace and Progress or Imperialist War and the slaughter of innocents?**

So much has been written about **World War I**, called the 'Great War' and 'The War to End all Wars' because of its horrendous carnage (10 million in 4 years), by far the most massive slaughter the world had seen until that time. Despite it being fought in a relatively small area of western and central Europe, the war exemplified history's most destructive inter-imperialist rivalry as it involved major European powers literally fighting over who would control much of the world. However, within a quarter century, **World War Two** led to the deaths of over sixty million and effectively was the final blow to Western European imperialist control of Africa and large sections of Asia, including the Middle East. The US emerged the dominant imperialist power with some competition from the Soviets, but Cold War anti-communism provided the ideological rationale for US global strategy.

The **Truman Doctrine** and the **Marshall Plan** of the post war era sought to establish "soft imperialist" control of Western Europe as a base for the US's massive production surpluses. Soft imperialism is essentially the control of foreign markets and economic development. Thus, Europe was rebuilt to use oil, not coal which it had in abundance, to suit the needs of US petroleum interests who controlled the Middle East after the war. The **Korean War** engaged imperialist forces and the revolutionary forces of China directly and revealed the limits of US military power. Still, the height of US imperial power, its 'golden era,' was 1945 to 1975, or the dates ending the Second World War and the Vietnam War, respectively.

The US debacle in **Vietnam** was actually one of many imperialist endeavors to 'contain' communism and thereby sustain markets, support fascist dictators aka friendly neo-colonial 'allies' (e.g. Marcos in the Philippines, Suharto in Indonesia, the Shah in Iran etc.), and protect prize raw materials. David Cortright has documented the most massive anti-imperialist resistance *inside* the US military. His concluding remarks from *Soldiers in Revolt* give us much to ponder: "The Vietnam experience taught that resistance in the ranks is a potent force for restraining imperial ambitions and ending illegitimate war. Whether history repeats itself in Iraq remains to be seen" (279).

After the rise of OPEC in the early 1970s and the critical Islamic Revolution in Iran (1979), US imperialism had effectively lost hegemony. Its response was articulated by outgoing President Jimmie Carter who would subsequently be awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. The **Carter Doctrine**, written largely by Zbigniew Brzezinski, stated, "An attempt by any outside force to gain control of the Persian Gulf region will be regarded as an assault on the vital interests of the United States of America, and such an assault will be repelled by any means necessary, including military force." By October, 1981, President Reagan would add a 'corollary' which asserted the US would maintain *internal* security of Persian Gulf countries. Thus, these political documents provided the rationale for Operation Desert Storm (1991) and Operation Iraqi Freedom (2003). Symbolically, a bipartisan consensus had been firmly established as both political parties, Republicans and Democrats, were openly committed to the imperialist agenda.

### **New Imperialists: Richard Haas, Michael Ignatieff, Max Boot, Niall Ferguson** **"We are all, it seems, imperialists now"**

Just before the 9/11 terrorist attacks, Thomas Donnelly, deputy executive director of the Project for the New American Century, told the Washington Post (August, 2001), "There's not all that many people who will talk about it [empire] openly. It's discomfoting to a lot of Americans. So they use code phrases like 'American is the sole superpower'" (qtd in Ferguson 4). However, after 9/11, ruling elites became strikingly more honest in an attempt to win our hearts and minds to supporting the imperialist agenda. Despite the denials we have seen earlier, utilization of the term 'imperialism' has become fashionable. In *Naked Imperialism*, John Bellamy Foster has documented a consensus usage.

In July 2003, Allan Murray, Washington Bureau Chief of CNBC acknowledged, “We are all, it seems, imperialists now.” In the Council on Foreign Relations’ official and very prestigious journal, *Foreign Affairs*, G. John Ikenberry, professor of Geopolitics and Global Justice (!) at Georgetown Univ. assures us “America’s imperial goals and modus operandi are much more limited and benign than were those of age-old emperors.” That’s a relief! Michael Ignatieff in the *New York Times Magazine* assures us “Imperialism used to be the white man’s burden. This gave it a bad reputation. But imperialism doesn’t stop being necessary because it is politically incorrect.” Isn’t it odd that being politically *incorrect* became so trendy a few years back? Ignatieff compared the current Iraq war with the US war in the Philippines: “Both were wars of conquest, both were urged by an ideological elite on a divided country and both cost much more than anyone had bargained for. . . . It will remain to be seen whether Iraq will cost thousands of American lives—and whether the American public will accept such a heavy toll as the price of success in Iraq.” Indeed, will we accept the price? Also in *Foreign Affairs*, *Washington Post* reporter, Sebastian Mallaby conceded he is a “reluctant imperialist” and that “the logic of neo-imperialism is too compelling for the Bush administration to resist.” Stephen Peter Rosen, head of the Olin Institute for Strategic Studies at Harvard clarified in the *Harvard Review* (May-June 2002), “Our [military] goal is not combating a rival, but maintaining our imperial position, and maintaining imperial order.” National Security Advisor under Democratic President Carter, Zbigniew Brzezinski stated the imperialist case more graphically and with his trademark confident swagger. Imperial strategy must be designed “to prevent collusion and maintain dependence among the vassals, keep tributaries pliant and protected, and to keep the barbarians from coming together.” Those feisty ‘barbarians’ just keep getting in the way. . . . The dean of infamously genocidal yet amazingly inept US strategy in Vietnam, Henry Kissinger, claimed the “US is enjoying a preeminence unrivaled by even the greatest empires in the past.” (all citations in Foster)

In a special “Empire” issue of *National Interest*, James Kurth placed the US in the British imperialist heritage. He asserted, “Today, there is only one empire, the global empire of the United States. The US military. . . are the true heirs of the legendary civil officials, and not just the dedicated military officers, of the British Empire.” In April 2003, during those early days of Operation Iraqi Freedom, embedded journalists were singing their praises of ‘shock and awe;’ victory was imminent. William Kristol, editor of the *Weekly Standard*, speaking on Fox News, insisted, “We need to err on the side of being strong. And if people want to say we’re an imperial power, fine.” (all citations in Ferguson)

In their book, *The Imperial Temptation*, noted historians Robert Tucker and David C. Hendrickson took a slightly more cautious stand. Still, they claimed the US as greater than all previous imperialist powers: “In the reach and effectiveness of its military forces, American compares favorably with some of the greatest empires known to history. Rome reached barely beyond the compass of the Mediterranean, whereas Napoleon could not break out into the Atlantic and went to defeat in the vast Russian spaces. During the height of the so-called *Pax Britannica*, when the Royal Navy ruled the seas, Bismark remarked that if the British army landed on Prussian coast he would have it arrested by the local police.” Tucker and Hendrickson hope that the US won’t be ‘tempted’ to abuse this power. We might add that imperialism follows the old adage of Oscar Wilde who declared he could resist anything except temptation. Bandwagon ‘liberal’ imperialists like Tucker and Hendrickson play the disingenuous card that imperialism must somehow remain benevolent.

More interesting than hedge betters like Tucker and Hendrickson, are the major advocates of imperialism—Richard Haass, Max Boot, and Niall Ferguson.

Almost a year *before* the 9/11 attacks, Richard Haass, a member of the National Security Council, wrote a paper entitled, *Imperial America*. Haass argued for American elites to “re-conceive their role from a traditional nation-state to an imperial power.” The US “would resemble 19<sup>th</sup> century Britain” in which coercion would be used but as a last resort. Instead he advocated following the British model which utilized both coercion and “extending control informally.” Haass couched his arguments in terms of surplus but not quite in the terms of traditional imperialist theory which emphasizes surplus production, and even surplus workers (i.e. cheap labor) or even David Harvey’s concept of surplus capital. Haass argued the fundamental question of American foreign policy was “what to do with surplus of power” and its many advantages. In the final section of his

paper, "Imperialism begins at Home," (a charming title) Haass reversed a theory of military overstretch in which military excursions without significant victories bankrupt their economies (a theory articulated by Paul Kennedy). Haass argued "the greater risk facing the United States...is that it will squander the opportunity...by doing to little. Imperial understretch, not overstretch, appears the greater danger of the two." Haass actually called for genocidal removal of opposition that recalls Jefferson, Jackson, and their kind. In Iraq and elsewhere, what was needed were "intrusive forms of intervention, such as nation-building, which involves first eliminating all opposition and then engaging in an occupation that allows for substantial engineering of another society." Be careful that you get what you wish for as indeed that policy has led to 650,000 Iraqi deaths and a failed occupation of massive proportions. (All citations from Foster).

Haass' arguments paralled the more famous Project for a New American Century document, *Rebuilding America's Defenses* (November 2000), drawn up by the well known usual suspects, Dick Cheney, Donald Rumsfeld, Paul Wolfowitz, Jeb Bush (of 2000 Florida election fame) and Lewis Libby (who is currently trying to stay out of prison for leaking information about CIA operatives). Now, it would seem that the unilateral neo-con model of imperialism has had its day. Still, figures like Max Boot continue to promote a racialized mauling of international populations with his conscious allusion to old style plunder and genocide.

Max Boot is one of those writers that if you made him up no one would believe you. Boot's book is *The Savage Wars of Peace*, the oxymoronic title taken directly from Kipling's "White Man's Burden." Today, many imperialists distance themselves from Kipling's racism, but Boot embraces the opportunity to revive the lost grandeur of the old imperialist assumptions. In a brazen *Weekly Standard* article, "The Case for an American Empire," Boot pitched the full message: "Afghanistan and other troubled lands today, cry out for the sort of enlightened foreign administration once provided by self-confident Englishmen in jodhpurs and pith helmets." (qtd in Ferguson 4).

Finally, Niall Ferguson may be the principle advocate of the US as imperialist power but worries that the American people won't be up to it. Translation, he fears we will refuse to carry out the imperialist agenda...Indeed, Ferguson's apprehensions may be realized.

## **Conclusion**

In the July 2007 issue of Veterans for Peace Newsletter, Michael Uhl editorializes "...we must begin to turn our attention more sharply to the causes of war. We must, for example, name, analyze, demonstrate the nature of, and oppose the global economic system that thrives on violence and human exploitation." I think this is a positive starting point.

We have much to learn from a study of imperialism as the fundamental expression of corporate power and thus as the critical root cause of almost all major modern wars. Certainly, the current US wars are imperialistic. However, so have been most of the US's wars from the country's inception. Still, there is much denial of this basic fact especially from the ranks of so-called liberals within the anti-war movement.

In *Sorrows of Empire*, Chalmers Johnson articulates the intellectual contradiction in two quotes. First, while arguing the American empire is 'new' he concedes it "has been a long time in the making. Its roots go back to the nineteenth century when the United States declared all of Latin America its sphere of influence busily enlarged its own territory at the expense of the indigenous people of North America, as well British, French, and Spanish colonists, and neighboring Mexico" (Johnson 2). Despite his reluctance to go back to the founding fathers and placement of American imperialism in the long tradition of English, French, and Spanish imperialism, he does get close to the truth. However, two pages later, he claims the US has only recently become imperialist: "since 9/11 our country has undergone a transformation from republic to empire that may well prove irreversible" (Johnson 4). Johnson's particular interests and biases are secondary; he was after all a major ideologue for the US Empire during the Vietnam era and has now turned his attention to exposing its abuses.

Still, Johnson represents a version of current wishful thinking, a 'say it isn't so' brand of patriotism that clings to denial of the US imperialist heritage. For a more accurate position, shouldn't we resist the temptation of espousing mythical platitudes that provoke a well-intentioned yet misguided patriotism? Aren't we undermining our own efficacy by seeking a nostalgic and speciously benevolent nationalism that asserts US foreign policy must somehow be for the common good? Can we learn from Henry David Thoreau, Mark Twain, David Fagan, and countless other heroic figures who denounced imperialism of their day? Shouldn't we be denouncing the racism and genocidal slaughter of hundreds of thousands human beings? Shouldn't we feel not just responsibility to the Iraqi people but solidarity with them? How can we build a movement based on humanitarian internationalism and not "humanitarian intervention?" The latter serves as euphemistic rationale for imperialism while the former opposes corporate power and its exploitation, racism, genocide, and horrendous wars.

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## RESTORING TRUTH AND JUSTICE

### A Roundtable Discussion on Torture and What We as Veterans Can Do to End It

**Presenter, Ian Thompson.** One of the most shameful facts to emerge from the so-called "War on Terror" has been the US government's use of torture. Images from Abu Ghraib to stories of innocent people being shipped off to countries like Syria and Egypt have shocked the consciences of many.

This roundtable discussion will highlight the unique and very important role members of the veterans' community, especially one such as Veterans for Peace, can play in efforts to end the government's practice of torture. It is an issue that is sadly one that many veterans are intimately familiar with. Additionally, it is a direct assault on the ideals and principles that so many brave men and woman have fought and died defending.

This roundtable discussion will feature a staff member from the ACLU who can provide some substantive background on the issue of torture and how we have come to the point that we; a veteran (ideally a member of Veterans Defending the Bill of Rights) who can speak to the unique position that veterans are in to have influence, both with elected officials and amongst the general American public, on this issue and the pressing need for involvement; and finally, an organizer (perhaps with the ACLU's Field Department or an organization such as United for Peace and Justice) who can highlight potential activities for veteran involvement.

It would be ideal from our perspective to include a member of Veterans Defending the Bill of Rights in this discussion because of the central role that organization played in the ultimately successful effort to defeat the proposed Flag Desecration Amendment. But for the efforts of veterans working against that amendment, it would absolutely have succeeded in passing. We believe, similar to efforts against the Flag Amendment, that veterans are the key to ending the government's practices of torture and rendition, especially with respect to bringing pressure to bear on elected officials.

While this is certainly not an issue directly related to efforts to end the war in Iraq, it is one that represents an open wound on America and the ideals that have inspired people across the world for more than 200 years. This discussion can be seen as a jumping off point to really making veterans one of the leading voices opposing the government's policies on torture. It will conclude with a "call to action".

### PEACEFUL PREVENTION OF DEADLY CONFLICT: CHANGING A "CULTURE OF REACTION" TO A "CULTURE OF PREVENTION"

**Presenters, Amelie Scheltema, Rudolf Scheltema.** A "culture of reaction" is the current way of thinking in our nation. It leads almost inevitably to war and the support by citizens for war. Even in much of our peacework we feel forced to react to, rather than prevent, gross injustices. Can we change national, local, and personal ways of thinking to consider a "culture of prevention"?

The language of "peaceful prevention of deadly conflict" is new, based on Carnegie and United Nations reports of the mid-to-late 1990s and the pamphlet by the Friends Committee on National Legislation. The new language can change our perceptions of what our actions are doing. This workshop addresses Resistance and Education; its sister workshop is "Peace is Possible—Here's How," that trains for successful lobbying.

### REPLACING JROTC WITH PEACE ACADEMY

**Presenter, Babatunde Folayemi.** Chapter 54 put forth a resolution at the Dallas convention that was passed by the membership recommending that VFP provide positive alternatives to JROTC in high schools.

In the past year Chapter 54 has worked with the Nuclear Age Peace Foundation to initiate Peace Academy in Santa Barbara High School as JROTC was terminated. Peace Academy is taught through the Physical Education Department (like JROTC). VFP does not wish to claim responsibility for ending JROTC in Santa Barbara, credit for that goes to George W. Bush for starting an unnecessary and unpopular war and mismanaging it. Having the Peace Academy in place in Santa Barbara makes it unlikely that JROTC will ever return given that it teaches the same skills that JROTC professes to teach, leadership, service and citizenship, while having a fitness component.

Peace Academy was accomplished due to the dedication, effort and experience of VFP member Babatunde Folayemi, who since his return from service with the 173rd Airborne in Vietnam, has devoted much of his time to assisting disadvantaged youth.

Mr. Folayemi has not written a book, but is an excellent story teller and will tell the story of Peace Academy through oral presentation.

Following Babatunde's presentation, a roundtable of activists involved will share their experience with Peace Academy including: Will Parrish, Nuclear Age Peace Foundation Youth Coordinator, Michael Cervantes, an army veteran of 199th LIB Vietnam and President of Chapter 112 and Lane Anderson, navy veteran, Vietnam.

## **ISRAEL IN IRAQ**

**Presenter, Dahlia Wasfi, M.D.** Since the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, Western powers have coveted the rich resources of the Middle East. U.S. support of Israel in the face of international, domestic, and human rights law violations, stems from our desire to steal control of the region's oil. Now, as an extension of this collaboration, American troops are illegally occupying Iraq.  
Building the Peace and Justice Movement

## **BUILDING THE PEACE AND JUSTICE MOVEMENT**

**(Facing the challenge of connecting struggles and spreading the sentiment of peace.)**

**Presenters, Michael McPhearson & Patrick McCann.**

To have a vibrant peace and justice movement it is crucial to have wide participation by various communities, especially those most affected by the waste of resources and human capital in war. There appears to be a gap between many grassroots struggles and activist in the peace/anti-war movements. Is this a perceived disconnect or a real gap? What connections need to be made to strengthen the drive for peace and justice? What can we do to build bridges? How do we connect struggles?

## **NUCLEAR WEAPONS**

**Presenter, Lincoln Grahls,** past president of the National Association of Radiation Survivors and a Director of the National Association of Atomic Veterans. Lincoln will relate his own experience with radiation exposure in the tests performed in the Pacific shortly after WWII, followed by some observations from his book on the subject and will conclude with a consideration of the situation today (the matter of "depleted uranium" and the failure of the US Government to recognize fully the imperative need for nuclear disarmament).

## MEDIA WORKSHOP – DEALING WITH JOURNALISTS

**Presenter, Sarah Olson Journalist.** As the war drags on, many veterans are being thrown into the national spotlight. As veterans do interviews with journalists, there are a number of useful tips and practices that can help them most effectively communicate the story they want to tell. The workshop will cover, how to control and influence the messages you send. And how to Deal with journalists and cultivate relationships with the press.

## RECOVERING FROM PTSD & ADDICTIVE DISORDERS

**Presenter, Thomas Brinson.** The objective of this Roundtable Discussion is to raise consciousness about the strong correlation between Addictive Disorders and PTSD among Combat Veterans. An outcome of the discussion will be to initiate development of a policy for VFP regarding our responsibility to promote healing and recovery for combat veterans who are at high risk to develop addictive disorders as a means to self-medicate symptoms of PTSD.

## THE WATCHING HEART

**Presenters, Alice Bloch & Fatemeh Keshavarz.** *The Watching Heart: A Journey in Peace*, an hour of dance and poetry performed by Alice Bloch and Fatemah Keshavarz traces the mystic journey in peace through dance and the lyric poetry of Rumi, Gerard Manley Hopkins, and words of their own.

## GI COFFEEHOUSES: THE STRUGGLE FOR SOLDIERS' RIGHTS CONTINUES

Exploring the differences and similarities between GI movements of the Vietnam war and that of the Iraq/Afghan wars. and the implications for organizing. **Panelists: Tod Ensign**, Esq., Director of Citizen Soldier, and sponsor of the recently opened "Different Drummer" GI internet cafe at Ft. Drum, NY. **Cindi Mercante**, coordinator for "The Different Drummer", 8 year Army veteran. **Frank Thies**, "Drummer" volunteer and retired Navy NCO. **Jonathan Hutto**, active duty Navy and co-organizer of the "Redress of Grievance" petition campaign.

## ACHIEVING CHAPTER EFFECTIVENESS

**Presenter, Andy Anderson.** Chapter 80, Duluth MN has pursued effectiveness in every activity it has been involved with since it's inception. Growth and exposure are important goals but are of modest value if they do not contribute to the group's effectiveness. The availability of scarce resources means that effectiveness must be the driving force behind decisions concerning project planning.

## THE SALVADOR OPTION: DEATH SQUADS IN IRAQ

**Presenter, Dahlia Wasfi, M.D.**

Format: Roundtable (1 hour discussion format)

Oral presentation using PowerPoint slides

Presenter: Dahlia Wasfi, M.D.

Thesis: Sectarian strife in Iraq is driven by the occupation.

The corporate media tells us that Shia and Sunni have been fighting each other for hundreds of years. But these are the same media who made us fear Iraqi weapons of mass destruction and ties to Al-Qaeda that didn't exist before our invasion. In truth, since the establishment of the sects of Islam 1400 years ago, there has never been a war based on these sectarian differences in the region of modern-day Iraq. The Americans, like the British before them, are trying to use the age-old tactic of "divide and conquer" to incorporate Iraq

into their empire. By maneuvering sectarian militias around the country and training death squads—invoking “The Salvador Option”—the occupiers are orchestrating civil strife. The first step in ending the violence and chaos in Iraq is to end our illegal occupation.

## **THE WHOLE FAMILY GOES TO WAR - TRAUMA & COMPLICATED GRIEF**

**Presenters, Melida Arredondo, Sarah Rich – Gold Star Mothers.**

### **Learning Objectives:**

Primary Presenter: Mélida Arredondo, MPH

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Tentative - Sarah Rich & Suzanne Swift Email - [formydaughtersuzanne@yahoo.com](mailto:formydaughtersuzanne@yahoo.com), Tentative - Pat Scanlon

- Cell 978-590-4248

Outline and/or Paper Summary of Presentation: Married troops leave husbands and wives often with children who experience single parenthood for the first time. Youngsters worry and wrestle with the image of having a parent at war. Due to many of the troops being fresh out of high school, mostly parents and siblings are the ones left to mull over the empty void left by their kin.

It is vital to identify and communicate the familial involvement in war due to the conflicts impact on anxiety, economy and security. The nature of politics in relationship to military combat as well as societal expressions and expectations further complicate feelings of isolation, panic and fear.

During a time of unprecedented methods to maintain communication with kin who are in combat situations, technological advances combined with media coverage can leave family members distressed if there is a lack of contact. The media's penchant for a body count impacts and often cripples both Blue and Gold Star family members. Those families and Veterans who have survived past conflicts also experience anxiety related the ongoing war. Recognizing how ongoing military engagement relates to post traumatic stress disorder, social anxiety, panic disorders and complicated grief aides in being able to stem adverse psychological outcomes in returning GIs, their families and survivors of previous conflicts.

### **Learning Objectives:**

- ?? Recognizing the societal expectations of military families.
- ?? Recognizing how the media's coverage of military operations impacts the health of family members.
- ?? Recognizing how increasing military casualties impact both Blue and Gold Star families.
- ?? Recognizing that military escalation impacts Veterans but also individuals who have both lost or experienced the anxiety related with having kin fight in war.
- ?? Recognizing how ongoing military conflicts are related to post traumatic stress disorder, social anxiety, panic disorders and complicated grief.

## **KOREA PEACE CAMPAIGN**

### **roundtable**

**Presenter, John Kim, VFP-Korea Peace Campaign Coordinator with the Korea Veterans For Peace delegation.** A discussion of the hidden history of the Korean War, new findings on the US war crimes in the Korean War, imposition of U.S. military bases in South Korea, and US-Korea relations – with a view toward reconciliation and, finally, a peace treaty with the North.

## WOMEN IN THE MILITARY

**Presenter, Sara Rich.** Some fascinating, and some infuriating, stories of the experiences of women in the military. Sara Rich, the mother of Iraq soldier Suzanne Swift who was sexually coerced (command raped) by sergeants in her company, will detail Suzanne's going AWOL rather than return to Iraq with the same NCO's who assaulted her, being tried and sentenced.

Viet Nam Army vet and environmental activist **Diane Wilson** will tell her tale of service as an Army medic, becoming a resister and flight to Canada, and later activism to clean up Texas shrimping grounds.

Col, formerly General, Janis Karpinski, will discuss her evidence of the deaths of women soldiers in Iraq from dehydration from not drinking in the evening out of fear of rape by fellow soldiers in latrines at night, and her experiences as the commander at Abu Ghraib prison, the notorious torture site.

## HEALTH CONSEQUENCES OF ASYMMETRIC TRANSNATIONAL CONFLICT

**Author/presenter, Sarah G. Wilton, (retired commander, USNR), doctoral student, Government/International Relations, University of Maryland, with Bud Deraps, WWII veteran activist.**

Statement of thesis/findings: through examination of conflicts in vietnam, the war(s) in the balkans, and the first gulf war, the paper evaluates three types of casualties: primary, or deaths directly resulting from conflict; secondary casualties, those victims occurring since cessation of hostilities (mental-physical disabilities, violence against women); and tertiary casualties (physical consequences extending through generations).

The conclusions of the research are the following:

Late 20<sup>th</sup> century political dynamics resulted in different types of warfare requiring more advanced technology.

Technological advances were disproportionate resulting in guerilla tactics to match the technology, and the blurring of distinctions between combatant and non-combatant populations.

Technological and tactical innovations have resulted in greater proportions of civilian casualties and have also rendered the perpetrator populations vulnerable to their own weapons.

These dynamics raise questions of the viability of warfare as a tool to achieve political objectives.

I will make hard copies and an audio recording of the presentation so that it is available and accessible to all individuals with disabilities.

Sarah G. Wilton

## AFFLUENZA AND THE AMERICAN WAY OF LIFE - AWOL

**Presenter, Lane Anderson.** How the American Way Of Life (AWOL) addicts US to wars to secure resources outside our country but needed to sustain AWOL.

**WHAT STRATEGY, WHAT TACTIC, WHAT NOW?  
(Impeachment, Civil Disobedience, Outreach, Organizing, Elections, IVAW...)**

**Presenter, Michael McPhearson.** After over four years of struggle to end the War and Occupation, what now? The anti-war/ peace movements have been very successful in keeping the war in front of the public. We have helped educate the nation on the cost of war and the failures of the Bush Administrations polices. Our activism was instrumental in bringing the Democrats to power on the belief that they would change course and possibly end the war. The discourse in Congress has changed, but the war in Iraq continues. This workshop will provide space to talk about various ideas of strategy and tactics to Bring the Troops Home Now! What do we need to do to make this happen in the next period?

## VOICES IN WARTIME

**Presenters, Andy Himes & Tom Brookhart.** This workshop is designed to introduce VFP members nationally to the Voices in Wartime Education Project and to lay out the ways that members can promote and participate in this peace-developing program.

Concrete actions that local chapters of Vets for Peace can undertake to support our common goals:

1. Screen the film Voices in Wartime for your local chapter, or through public forums, to help members understand the power of poetry and story-telling in education. Include voices of veterans and civilian refugees at the screening.
2. Raise money for the Education Project with public events with poetry and story-telling from vets back from Iraq and a panel discussion of vets and refugees from various wars contributing their own work and addressing the ripple effect of war across generations.
3. Create a partnership with local schools. Bring the Voices in Wartime education team to your school for teacher and student workshops. Join the VIW team by making veterans available for oral history interviews conducted by students.
4. Purchase the Voices in Wartime Curricula, DVD, and copies of the Anthology for public libraries and the libraries of all the schools in your community.
5. Reach out to build and support the network of teachers who are actually using the Voices in Wartime Education Project materials in their classrooms, along with vets, their families and friends.
6. Use the Voices in Wartime website to publish veteran stories and poetry, making them available as resources for teachers and students across the country and world.
7. Use the Voices in Wartime web site as an online Memorial to casualties from wars (available for any war). All the casualties in Iraq and Afghanistan are listed in the Memorial, which is continually updated in real time with the most recent casualties. Visitors to the site can add their own Remembrances for specific soldiers who have been killed. Vets for Peace can help publicize the Memorial as an online version of Arlington West. Address is: <http://voicesinwartime.org/Home/SubPages/Memorials/Memorials.aspx>
8. Engage with other Vets for Peace to create an education page on your chapter's web site, highlighting the Voices in Wartime Education Project, and linking to the Memorial and our other educational resources.

Samples of the curricula to download and print:

<http://voicesinwartime.org/Home/Education/CurriculumPoetryInWartime.aspx>

Download 2006 Voices in Wartime Annual Report:

<http://voicesinwartime.org/Home/Common/VoicesAnnualReport3-07.pdf>

