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and Militarism Since 1985

VETERANS FOR PEACE

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VFP National Newsletter

veteransforpeace.org

Spring 2023

VFP member Diane Wilson awarded The Goldman Environmental Prize for her heroic activism!

CONGRATULATIONS TO DIANE WILSON, one of the 2023 winners of [The Goldman Environmental Prize](#), which honors the achievements and leadership of grassroots environmental activists from around the world, “inspiring all of us to take action to protect our planet.” Drawing roughly from the world’s six inhabited continental regions, the prestigious award recognizes six grassroots heroes annually for sustained and significant efforts to protect and enhance the natural environment, often at great personal risk.

This year’s prize celebrates Wilson’s hard won victory amid ongoing efforts to protect and restore the waterways of the Gulf Coast in Texas where she has been a lifelong shrimper and fisherwoman. [Read Diane’s story here.](#)

The Goldman Environmental Prize 2023 winners were announced Monday, April 24, and awards ceremonies were held the same day in San Francisco and on Wednesday, April 26 at the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C. Find more info at goldmanprize.org.



“In December 2019, Diane Wilson won a landmark case against Formosa Plastics, one of the world’s largest petrochemical companies, for the illegal dumping of toxic plastic waste on Texas’ Gulf Coast. The \$50 million settlement is the largest award in a citizen suit against an industrial polluter in the history of the U.S. Clean Water Act. As a part of the settlement, Formosa Plastics agreed to reach ‘zero-discharge’ of plastic waste from its Point Comfort factory, pay penalties until discharges cease, and fund remediation of affected local wetlands, beaches, and waterways.” —The Goldman Environmental Prize

VFP’s Golden Rule Project recognized with Excellence in Advocacy and Education Award from ANA

On Tuesday, April 25, Gerry Condon accepted an award from the [Alliance for Nuclear Accountability](#) (ANA) on behalf of VFP’s Golden Rule Project: “For the singular achievement of restoring the original Golden Rule peace ship and embarking on an enduring voyage to show that nuclear abolition is possible and that bravery and tenacity can overcome militarism.” Gerry spoke about the VFP Nuclear Posture Review and VFP’s mission to abolish nuclear weapons.

The ANA was formed in 1987 by organizations from communities in the shadows of nuclear weapons facilities. It now includes more than 30 local, regional, and national organizations concerned about consequences of U.S. nuclear weapons and waste policies. ANA’s spring lobbying is in support of cleanup, safe waste-handling, and disarmament, not the U.S. multi-trillion-dollar plan for new weapons capabilities.

—Ellen Barfield



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DEADLINE FOR FALL 2023 ISSUE TO BE ANNOUNCED

Chapter Report Guidelines

Keep to ≤ 200 words and
include chapter number,
name/location, and your
chapter reporter's name.

Wanted: high-res photos!

1200+ pixels wide is ideal.
Please include a photo credit
and a caption, and please
identify people in group
shots. Thank you!

Email submissions to:

editor@veteransforpeace.org

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PHOTO: CHRISTOPHER MICHEL

Daniel Ellsberg is a VFP member and advisor.

Feeling gratitude for Daniel Ellsberg

On March 1, Daniel Ellsberg wrote a letter to friends and supporters informing them of his diagnosis of terminal cancer with doctors predicting he had three to six months to live. He had chosen not to do chemotherapy. Dan reported feeling great and maintaining a high energy level, and continued to conduct interviews and webinars on Ukraine, nuclear weapons, and First Amendment issues, despite the diagnosis. He wrote, in part:

I feel lucky and grateful that I've had a wonderful life far beyond the proverbial three-score years and ten. (I'll be ninety-two on April 7th.) I feel the very same way about having a few months more to enjoy life with my wife and family, and in which to continue to pursue the urgent goal of working with others to avert nuclear war in Ukraine or Taiwan (or anywhere else).

When I copied the Pentagon Papers in 1969, I had every reason to think I would be spending the rest of my life behind bars. It was a fate I would gladly have accepted if it meant hastening the end of the Vietnam War, unlikely as that seemed (and was). Yet in the end, that action—in ways I could not have foreseen, due to Nixon's illegal responses—did have an impact on shortening the war. In addition, thanks to Nixon's crimes, I was spared the imprisonment I expected, and I was able to spend the last fifty years with Patricia and my family, and with you, my friends.

What's more, I was able to devote those years to doing everything I could think of to alert the world to the perils of nuclear war and wrongful interventions: lobbying, lecturing, writing and joining with others in acts of protest and non-violent resistance.

... [[Dan's full letter is online. here](#)] ...

continued on page 38...

A Word from VFP President Susan Schnall

Dear VFP friends, colleagues, comrades,

We live in the most unsettling, disturbing, destructive times, and yet, despite all obstacles, our organization Veterans For Peace continues to move along dynamically because of the dedication and determination of our members. We have so many proud veterans' and allies' voices speaking up for peace in our country and in our world, in all different ways. Through national projects you are: exposing the deleterious impacts of U.S. militarism and the war industrial complex on climate; courageously expressing the values of VFP by working for peace in Ukraine; providing assistance for U.S. military veterans who have been deported to find their way home; supporting the *Golden Rule* as it travels the Great Loop spreading the message of nuclear disarmament and solidarity with all peoples (including Cubans!); and endeavoring to save the VA for veterans care by fighting its privatization by corporate interests. Many of you are bringing your peace activism to the streets, engaging in acts of creative nonviolence, and in some cases being arrested for peace. Thank you.

As you are aware, the national VFP board and office are also going through tumultuous times. Mike Ferner was selected by the VFP board to be the interim director and work with us as we reorganize staff roles and responsibilities to ensure our ability to continue to build a strong and vibrant veteran voice for peace. Along with Mike Ferner, we formed a Transition Committee composed of executive committee (ExComm) and other board and VFP members that will first bring in funds so that we have some time to analyze the current structure, organization, and finances, and identify past issues and problems. We have reorganized the national office, defining staff roles and responsibilities. We continue to hold open and public monthly board meetings and we encourage members to attend. We want to hear your concerns, and strive to maintain transparency of our proceedings. We track finances almost daily and are deeply thankful to you, our members, for your ongoing enthusiastic support.

Requests from other organizations for endorsement go through Mike and, when necessary, through the ExComm and full board. As you know, we spent many hours last year



transitioning to a new database system—EveryAction—that was supposed to simplify our work by combining two record-keeping systems into one. The transition unfortunately has experienced some hiccups. Members of the board are working with national staff to identify and resolve glitches that remain.

National staff will be working closely with the board to keep everyone updated as we move through this transition period. Watch for weekly eNews messages from Mike Ferner with updates on chapters, projects, and national transition progress.

On a positive note, I am pleased to be able to share a few of our organization's accomplishments in 2022:

- We changed VFP bylaws to include one associate member seat on the board.
- We had a successful end-of-year appeal, though it was not enough to maintain spending levels.
- We also had a successful national convention, highlighted by the keynote of Bishop William Barber.
- VFP board meetings improved as we instituted a practice of encouraging mutual respect between members.
- VFP National and *Golden Rule* Committee signed a two-years renewal of our MOU (Memo of Understanding), continuing our very successful collaboration.
- Members and friends distributed copies of *Peace & Planet News* to thousands at 13 Roger Waters' concerts.
- We managed to end 2022 with \$20,000 in savings after depleting the savings account the prior year by \$100,000.

Thank you for all you do to create a peaceful, just, and caring world where all living beings can thrive.

Susan Schnall, Board President
VETERANS FOR PEACE

Introducing VFP Poet Laureate Jenny Pacanowski

poet/combat veteran/
facilitator/public speaker/
playwright/curator

MY NAME IS JENNY PACANOWSKI. I am the new Veterans For Peace Poet Laureate. I was so happy and grateful to receive this accolade from VFP, and in this issue—my first since the passing of that torch last summer—I would like to acknowledge and thank previous VFP Poet Laureate Jan Barry for nominating and guiding me as a mentor and a friend. It is important for veteran-artists and writers to have the guidance of past generations. I learned how to be peaceful from Jan Barry and he helped me sculpt “Heart of the Enemy,” which became not just a piece of poetry, but a [TEDx Talk](#)—an arc of how I found my way from war to peace. Learning how to deal with the past using poetry as an outlet for my disillusionment, rage, and disappointment has enabled me to move into the future. I now facilitate empowerment workshops for other veterans in need of thriving, serving as a guide to light the way, just as Jan did for me.

[Jenny Pacanowski](#) is the founder and director of [Women Veterans Empowered & Thriving](#); a reintegration program that utilizes writing and performance to empower veterans to thrive in their daily life.



DEATH BECOMES...
by Jenny Pacanowski, March 2023

I get the question all the time...
Do you regret joining the military?
Well, no, I don't believe in regrets. ...
There was definitely a sadness that drowned my soul,
Or resentment or maybe some shame at times at my behavior,
Oh and the guilt
Guilt loves me, loves to attach to me,
Maybe it was that Catholic, catechism, first holy communion shit,
I still can't vomit out of my childhood cells.
But regrets, no,
Well, I got some cool stories, bruh...
Life experiences many people don't have,
My memories so heated,
Casting reflections
Of someone I don't recognize yet
Branded by the sands of Iraq
It burnt my snow-white skin
Along with my innocence
And for a time my idealism
The thing is, I could have died, many of us died,
Not of combat death
But a death of our own doing
You see ... Acceptance of Death is the contract
I signed
A grave I already dug with my own hands
By our own hands
22 a day
Suicide
So much more than combat deaths in Iraq and Afghanistan
The Uncounted
Drunks in crashes
Drug abusers choke on it
Suffocate in it
Pass out into that dark abyss

poem continued top of page 5...



Jan Barry passes the VFP Poet Laureate torch to Jenny Pacanowski virtually during the 2022 VFP National Convention's Friday night Poetry & Song Soirée.

At right are two poems penned by [Jan Barry](#).

MY LIFE

by Jan Barry

I found myself at West Point—
A soul-smudged vet at 21,
Not the teenager I'd have been
If I hadn't taken a detour
To Vietnam.
I found I wasn't the person
I'd planned to be,
A boy-genius general.
I'd experienced a different world
In Indochina
That I needed to explore.

MINDFULNESS

by Jan Barry

Thich Nhat Hanh died the other day.
Got an email message about it
Just as I finished a mindfulness
Session online, provided by the VA—
My first lesson in mindfulness
Was meeting this tiny Vietnamese
Buddhist monk
In the middle of a gathering
Of Vietnam veterans doing an anti-war
Encampment in Washington, DC.
He stunned us with quiet eloquence,
His voice straight from the farming
Villages we'd destroyed in the war—
He stood there in the midst of
Combat-uniformed war makers
And shamed us to do more
With our war memories—
To tell the terrible truth
Mindfully

That I held the hand of as it coaxed me, talked
sweet to me,
Sung songs of the promise of peace
Peace of death
Quiet, Still, Inevitable
What becomes apparent to me after years of chasing death,
Taunting it to take me,
I discovered that looking to external forces especially with a motto
"Become part of something bigger than yourself"
Left me ... empty, searching into my internal landscape for an answer
of why to
Live
Suffer
Struggle
Because I meant something ...
That my absence in this world would be felt

I had other dreams
Those sweet lies death told me
As we held hands,
With the mission of militarism
The purpose of my death
Funding a capitalistic cause
Not a humanitarian one
This indoctrination of acceptance of death
That check!
That check I supposedly signed to give up my life for this country?
It was signed by a child, by a girl who believed
she had no other options.
When militance is spoken to children in songs
and pledges,
The words of indoctrination weave a contract
With death as a promise for the future.

HEART OF THE ENEMY

by Jenny Pacanowski

The day you waved at me
For the first time
The convoy was
Transformed
Into a parade
I lowered my weapon
Waved back like a beauty queen
In desert camo ...
A parade of freedom
Of winning hearts and minds
Of this liberated country
My mission was clear
I was present
We had arrived
To help
To save
To heal
To love

We convoyed into your village
With our green ambulance
The leaders
Presented you and the other
children
For US
To poke and prod with our
instruments
Of medicine

I taught you about cough drops
How not to swallow it
Whole
To take in the medicine first
You nodded
And I smiled
I listened to your hearts
The bounding and the slushing
As blood pulsed through your
veins

My heart burst with purpose
We lived another day
Together
Immersed in war
I left
You stayed
I was assigned
To the road
To convoys
You went to begging
Then to rock throwing
We laughed when we saw you
Flicking US
The bird

Until ...
The explosion silenced us
Your screams were deafening
Or was it mine?

I scrambled around the crater
The dust was blinding
Until I saw the blood

Desert sucks up blood
Quicker than water

I saw you!
Running away
With that cell phone
That detonator
In your little brown hand

Die You Little Motherfucker
You were no longer a child
With a beating heart
Sucking on cough drops
YOU ARE A THREAT
Running across your desert

Of Sand that rakes my skin
Much like your existence
Rapes my idealism

Die you Little Motherfucker
You have come into a world
That hates you
Wants to kill you
You little terrorist
We can't tell the difference
between insurgents and
civilians
You all look the same to us
Different than US
You are the enemy
Die you little motherfucker

I see 2004 like a movie
Reeling backward in my mind
Drawing forth the
Moving targets
I mean ...
Civilians
I mean ...
Children
I mean ... The Detonators

You are THE blurry in my pictures
You are as indistinct as the
shambles of concrete
You call "home"
How do I return home?

What if I said I didn't know?
I didn't know how to stop the
machine
Not the convoy
Not the war
Not even myself

I reached out ...
But my weapon
Separated us
I wanted to pull you in
Close
But,
All you could feel was
Cold hard steel

What if I said
I was sorry
We ever occupied
You
I want to hold you
Redefining
Love unconditionally
Giving you my blood
After we had gutted
You
Your country
Please help me
Put away
My gun
My armor
My hate
And redefine my love
For humanity
Including you
Please
Let me come home
Please
Let us all come home
From the war
Inside
US ALL



Korea Peace Campaign



Join VFP–KPC in Washington, D.C., this July 26–28

This year we commemorate the 70th anniversary of the Korean Armistice Agreement signed on July 27, 1953. The time has come for a real peace agreement.

PLEASE MAKE PLANS to join the Veterans For Peace contingent in Washington, D.C., July 26–28, 2023, for events commemorating the 70th anniversary of the signing of the Korean Armistice Agreement on July 27, 1953.

The armistice halted, but did not end, the Korean War.

The United States, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (North Korea), and China signed the armistice, but not the Republic of South Korea. The failure to replace the armistice in the succeeding 70 years with a permanent peace agreement has kept the Korean Peninsula locked in a perpetual state of war, kept the Korean people divided, and is the root cause of continued tensions and militarism in Korea. Without a peace agreement, renewed fighting could break out at any time.

This July 26–28, a coalition of organizations working for peace in Korea, including Veterans For Peace, will mobilize in Washington, D.C., and across the country to call on the U.S. government to formally end the Korean War with a peace agreement.

Actions will consist of a large grassroots gathering and rally in Washington, D.C., July 26–28. Seventieth anniversary events held simultaneously in locales across the U.S. will energize the movement for peace in Korea.

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS:

Wednesday, July 26

- Check-in and dinner

Thursday, July 27

- Press conference on Capitol Hill with sponsors of the Peace on the Korean Peninsula Act
- Rally at Lafayette Park in front of the White House
- Screening of *Crossings*, the 2021 documentary about the 2015 Women Cross DMZ mission

Friday, July 28

- Conference at George Washington University: *Human Costs of the Unending War and Nuclear Disarmament*

SPONSORING ORGANIZATIONS INCLUDE:

Women Cross DMZ, Veterans For Peace, Korea Peace Now Grassroots Network, Korean American Peace Fund, Mennonite Central Committee (MCC), American Friends Service Committee (AFSC), Korean American Public Action Committee (KAPAC), National Association of Korean Americans (NAKA)

Read the article by Alice Slater, "It's High Time the U.S. Signed a Peace Treaty with North Korea," in [Peace & Planet News](#).

Join us for Korea Peace Advocacy Week, June 5–9

The 70th anniversary is an especially important time to remind members of Congress about the human costs of this unresolved war.

THIS YEAR MARKS the 70th anniversary of the armistice that halted but did not officially end the Korean War. This is an especially important time to remind members of Congress about the human costs of this unresolved war and the urgent need to avoid a nuclear conflict on the Korean Peninsula.

During past Advocacy Weeks, hundreds of participants around the country met with congressional representatives and their staff, securing support for Korea peace legislation, including the Peace on the Korean Peninsula Act, the Enhancing North Korea Humanitarian Assistance Act, and the Korean War Divided Families Reunification Act.

Your participation is crucial for building support to officially end the Korean War. We must continue telling our stories and making our voices heard by our representatives.

Can we count on your participation? Please register by May 12! Register by filling out the form at:

actionnetwork.org/forms/2023-korea-peace-advocacy-week

Participating in Advocacy Week involves attending an optional training session and two or three half-hour meetings with your congressional representatives and their staff, held online via Zoom. We will provide more information in the coming weeks to those who register.

This event is supported by many peace groups, including VFP's Korea Peace Campaign. If you register for this advocacy event, please let our campaign know too by emailing us at kpc@veteransforpeace.org.

Attend or host a screening of *Crossings* this year

- *Crossings* to be featured at CAAMFest in San Francisco on May 13, 2023
- Can't make it to Washington in July? Organize a *Crossings* film screening or watch party.



AWARD-WINNING DOCUMENTARIAN Deann Borshay Liem (*Geographies of Kinship*) screened her film, [Crossings](#), on the last day of the 2022 Veterans For Peace virtual convention. The eye-opening film documents Women Cross DMZ's historic mission to cross the demilitarized zone between North and South Korea to call for an end to the unresolved 70-year war. Their story is punctuated by newsreels and historic accounts of the treacherous roller-coaster ride of U.S.-North Korean relations. The impressive group of peacemakers includes activists Christine Ahn, Ann Wright, and others who may be familiar to VFP members. The women tackle political hurdles,

bureaucracy and widespread controversy with a fierce rigor to forge a path towards solidarity and peace. This film is for all the activists and organizers building movements in seemingly impossible conditions, but also everyday folks who are inspired to make a monumental change despite the odds.

>> Watch *Crossings* in person at CAAMFest

Saturday, May 13, at 5:30 p.m., The Great Star Theater, San Francisco, California. Filmmaker Deann Borshay Liem and Christine Ahn will be present for a post-screening Q&A.

Community partners for this special event include Veterans For Peace San Francisco Chapter 69, Ploughshares Fund, Women Cross DMZ, Korea Policy Institute, Eclipse Rising, Association of Korean Adoptees–San Francisco, and Center for Korean Studies at UC Berkeley.

>> Watch the public broadcast of *Crossings*

Crossings will have its public television broadcast premiere on the WORLD Channel this July! The premiere is timed to commemorate the 70th anniversary of the Korean War armistice (signed on July 27, 1953), and the director has set a goal of 70 watch parties to help boost this special broadcast. [Sign up here](#) to host a watch party in July or email Crossings@mufilms.org for more information.



Golden Rule “Great Loop” tour update

The boat has traveled through the Southeast U.S. ... visited Cuba ... continued up the Atlantic Coast ... and is now halfway to Chicago

As reported in the last issue of the *Veterans For Peace Newsletter*, by Fall 2022, the *Golden Rule* had sailed down the Mississippi River on its “Great Loop” tour and visited 20 cities, including Dubuque, Iowa, where crew members were welcomed by a large community of Marshall Islanders.

Drought conditions on the Mississippi River forced the crew to abandon plans to sail the lower Mississippi, and instead traveled the Ohio, Tennessee, and Tombigbee Rivers to Mobile, Alabama (the usual “Great Loop” route). From there, the boat followed the western coast of Florida and went on to Cuba!

Our six crew members were joined by six other folks who flew in to participate in an Arts and Cultural program in Cuba. We learned that Cuba is not a state sponsor of terrorism, nor does it restrict religious freedom. In fact, a group of Quakers visited the *Golden Rule*, and crew members visited Catholic and Buddhist places of worship. We organized press conferences and both local and international press covered the story.



Golden Rule crew and members of Nuke Watch South staged protests at the dock and on the street near the Trident Submarine Base entrance in St. Marys, Georgia. Photo: Helen Jaccard

Thanks to many VFP chapters, volunteers, and crew, the first part of the *Golden Rule*’s “Great Loop” voyage has been amazing! By the numbers—for the entire Great Loop through March 31:

- 48 cities and towns visited
- 41 events in 20 cities along the Mississippi River
- 3,200+ people interacted with directly
- 103 Events
- 4,000 miles
- 40+ articles in newspapers, magazines, radio or TV
- 20 groundings (in sand or mud, nothing serious)
- 1 haul-out/repair (where propeller shaft exits the boat)
- \$28,000 raised along the route (not counting base donations from regular donors)

Keep up with the *Golden Rule* at vfpgoldenruleproject.org and on Facebook at facebook.com/goldenrulepeaceboat.



VFP Board Member Enya Anderson guides the Golden Rule into the Hemingway Marina upon arrival in Cuba. Photo: Gerry Condon

Most significant during the Cuba stop was our visit to Pinar del Rio, where 10,000 homes had been destroyed by Hurricane Ian. Veterans For Peace brought personal hygiene items for the refugees housed in temporary shelters, and donated \$2,500 toward reconstruction of their homes.

Of many stops along the Atlantic Coast made by the *Golden Rule* after the crew sailed back to Miami January 10–12, one of the most significant was St. Marys, Georgia, where we were joined by members of Nuke Watch South as we sailed right past the Kings Bay Trident Submarine Base.

RIGHT: Mayor Shannon Glover of Portsmouth, Virginia, reads Proclamation of Welcome to Helen Jaccard.

At least 10 cities have sent proclamations of welcome to the Golden Rule on this tour.



Courage to Resist

Proud to support the troops who refuse to fight



What have we been up to at Courage to Resist (CTR) this winter quarter? We're continuing to support the troops who refuse to fight, of course! Saddened by the year-long war that continues in Ukraine, we have been looking for ways to actively support resistance to it among would-be troops.

We celebrated the recognition of conscientious objectors, Kyle Toon and Emily Oneschuk (picture below), two individuals who successfully navigated the formal procedure for recognition as COs. Kyle and Emily regularly contribute to CTR as speakers and participants in our monthly online meetings.



Emily served as a Navy explosive ordnance disposal officer and is a fourth-generation veteran. After several frustrating and disorienting years on active duty, she eventually realized the root of her unhappiness—she was a conscientious objector! Fourteen months of legal proceedings and limbo later, she was ultimately released from the Navy in April 2022.

Kyle was a chief warrant officer in the Army for 13 years, with four deployments to Afghanistan. Through extensive reading, meditation, and reflections on both military violence and the murder of George Floyd, Kyle's growing awareness of himself as a conscientious objector was evident. We're happy to announce that Kyle was successfully separated from the

Army this past month two years after starting his application for conscientious objector.

Kyle shares, "I just wanted to express my gratitude for assistance with my legal fees. You could have used that money for anything else, but you allocated it for me to achieve justice—spotlighting the systemic issues and command injustices that have caught me in the crosshairs.... I truly appreciate CTR's care and concern for me and my family."

Military recruitment is the lowest it's been in years, and we couldn't be happier! However, recruiters are more desperate than ever for human resources. In response, we're now partnering with "[Before You Enlist](#)" to train and help fund post-9/11 veterans to get into school classrooms, career fairs, and other events to counter the military recruiter narratives.

We're in the process of investigating how to assist veterans with less-than-honorable discharges in preparing discharge upgrade appeals. The degrees of discharge—Honorable, General, Other-than-Honorable, Bad Conduct, and Dishonorable—unfairly affect people's lives. Even after years of service and the promises made by recruiters, many veterans are denied the very benefits they earned while in service. For some, the denial of VA healthcare and home loans can affect their ability to survive or thrive after their contracts end.

In response to a shocking report in mid-March that the Biden administration had quietly resumed deportations to Russia, Courage to Resist joined the Center on Conscience and War and World Beyond War in sponsoring, and encouraging organizations and faith communities, as well as individuals, to sign on to a petition to President Biden to "Stop Deporting Russian War Resisters." Though the petition deadline has past, it's still available online—find the link via our [March 31 blog entry](#).

Lastly, our friend Joy Damiani just published her memoir, *If You Ain't Cheatin', You Ain't Tryin'*—one woman's experience in the Army from boot camp to Iraq. Joy is a veteran, activist, author, and musician.



Below: Gerry Condon displays certificate of celebration awarded to VFP's Golden Rule Project by the Alliance of Nuclear Accountability. (See story on page 1.)





Deported Veterans Advocacy Project

"Leave No One Behind"



Unified U.S. Deported Veterans Resource Center/VFP Sgt. Barrios Memorial Chapter 182 continues to advocate the repatriation of deported veterans. On April 16, 2023, Laura Meza, a former U.S. Army combat medic who suffers from PTSD/MST, was finally able to come home to Maryland after being separated from her family for 14 years. We are very thankful to Lindsay Toczylowski, executive director at Immigrant Defenders Law Center, for taking a special interest in Laura's complicated case. It was Lindsay's expertise, in conjunction with the ImmVets team's collaboration, that made Laura's homecoming possible.

Veteran Meza's arrival coincided with ImmVets Director Debbie Rogers' retirement ceremony after 38 years of service with U.S. Citizen and Immigration Services, giving Laura the opportunity to personally thank Mrs. Rogers for helping her return home to her family (pictured above, with Robert Vivar).

Today we celebrate, but tomorrow is business as usual as we continue our efforts for advocacy and repatriation of our deported veterans and military families.

God Bless!

Robert Vivar, co-director, Unified U.S. Deported Veterans/VFP Deported Veterans Advocacy Project: www.uusdepvets.org



Save Our VA

Set aside October 15–19, 2023, and join SOVA in Washington, D.C.

SOVA's second Legislative Conference in Washington, D.C., is scheduled for October 15–19, 2023. We expect to surpass our February 2020 conference when we met with 33 congressional representatives or their staff, including all members of the House Veterans Affairs Committee. We anticipate forming lasting relationships with each other as we share days and evenings during this conference to advocate full funding of the VA and push back on privatization. Conference details and registration will be posted on our website in June. Join SOVA in advocating a strong VA that veterans can continue to count on for their health care.

Find SOVA online at veteransforpeace.org/sova.



Taken during SOVA's 2020 conference. L to R: Jackson Shepard, Jeff Roy, Ilhan Omar's staff, Bruce Carruthers, Arlys Herem.

Climate Crisis & Militarism Project



No MAS!

No Military Air Shows!

Earth Day has become a big deal since its founding in 1970. Every year, people focus on things they can do to save our planet—things like using less plastic and fewer paper towels, changing to better light bulbs, switching to electric cars or giving up cars altogether, and even lessening reliance on animal proteins and going vegan. Saving the planet these days means doing everything we can to address climate change.

But any response to the existential threat of climate change also needs to address the existential threat of militarism. Many people aren't aware of the major role militarism plays in fueling the climate crisis. Our role is to make that connection for climate activists, to get other social justice folks see the military's outsized contribution to the climate crisis, and to work together for change.

Our NoMAS project is designed to engage climate/environmental groups and others in the campaign to end all military air shows on the basis of the pollution emitted by these entertainment performances.

Picketing or passing out literature at the airshows is one way to further the discussion of the military's contribution to the climate crisis and spotlight the fact the U.S. military is the world's single largest institutional consumer of fossil fuels and the world's single largest institutional emitter of greenhouse gases.

The Navy's Blue Angels and the Air Force's Thunderbirds are scheduled to perform in 63 major air shows in 2023. Can you help us get the word out and organize community support to end these demonstrations of gratuitous pollution? Connect with CCMP and find out how you can amplify your community's voices and network with other activists to help clear the air!



We can no longer afford "business as usual."

How to get involved

THE VFP CLIMATE CRISIS & MILITARISM PROJECT has produced a 20-minute slideshow that contains many unadvertised facts about the military's role in the worsening climate crisis. By building an audience, we hope to build a movement that will bring an end to military air shows.

WE NEED YOUR HELP identifying 2023 presentation opportunities. To request a CCMP presentation for your VFP chapter or other community group, [please click here](#).

FOR THOSE INTERESTED in taking action around military air shows: [Our NoMAS page is here](#).

TO LEARN MORE, please check out the video, book, and article links on [our robust webpage on the VFP website](#). Reach us by email at climate@veteransforpeace.org.

VFP Chapter Reports

#014 – GAINESVILLE, FLORIDA



VFP Chapter 14 members in Gainesville's Martin Luther King Jr. march on January 16. Left to right: Paul Ortiz (right side of banner), Scott Camil (middle) and Burks Hunt (left side of banner).

The Gainesville chapter of Veterans For Peace joined in the Martin Luther King Jr. Day March held on January 16, 2023. Our members gathered at City Hall and marched the parade route from East University Avenue to Waldo Road, then north to Citizens Field, carrying banners.

VFP Chapter 14 is hosting its 13th Annual Peace Poetry Contest this year. We collected poems from students up until the April 3 deadline. Winners will be asked to read their poems at a public event in May and the poems will also be published in our 2023 Peace Poetry Book. The annual contest was created to stimulate discussion and critical thinking on tough subjects like war, racism, injustice, hate, environmental harm, and inequality.

In our 9th annual Peace Scholarship program, VFP Chapter 14 will award three \$1,500 college scholarships this year to high school seniors, college students, or adults learning trades who demonstrate a commitment and leadership in activities involving community organizing, peace and social justice, and/or nonviolence. Peace Scholarship recipients will be announced at the Gainesville VFP Peace Poetry Awards Ceremony in May. Veterans For Peace created these scholarships to provide financial support to students in Alachua County, Florida, who are planning careers in pursuit of a world of social justice and equality.

VFP Chapter 14 organizes a weekly demonstration every Tuesday from 4:30 to 5:30 p.m. at the corner of 16th Avenue NW and 43rd Street in Gainesville's Fresh Market Plaza. The "peace and justice picket" has been going on since the U.S. invaded Iraq in March 2003.

Jack Eisenfeld

#023 – ROCHESTER, NEW YORK

VFP Chapter 23 has had an active start to the new year. In January, many of our members participated in the Poor People's Campaign State of the State address, hosted by the Immanuel Baptist Church in Rochester. A crowd of approximately 100 people turned out for this wonderful event.

At our January chapter meeting we hosted a presentation/discussion about the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW). Chapter members subsequently participated in a rally outside the local office of Congressman Joe Morelle (D-NY 25).

continued on next page...



The Gainesville chapter's 2023 peace poetry contestants. Visible in the back are chapter members Paul Ortiz (left) and Scott Camil (center).



Above is an image of the banner Rochester chapter members brought to their January 2023 rally calling for the U.S. to join the TPNW (left).

As we move forward into the new year, VFP Chapter 23 is looking forward to hosting the *Golden Rule* in August. We are diligently preparing and partnering with local organizations on an event to welcome the peace boat.

Jeremiah Knowles

#034 – NEW YORK CITY

The New York City chapter continues hosting online monthly meetings with great speakers, as well as in-person events.

Meeting Topics/Speakers: Hideko Otake and Akiko Nishijima about their trip to Okinawa and Kagoshima; Anthony Donovan re his visit to Iran; Four Arrows on restoring the Indigenous worldview; Kathy Kelly and William Neuheisel discussing plans for the [2023 Merchants of Death War Crimes Tribunal](#) and support for [drone whistleblower Daniel Hale](#); and Pat Elder re U.S. military environmental poisoning.

Chapter Projects: [Move the Money](#); Stop Sanctions/Save Yemen; Agent Orange; [Peace & Planet News](#); Ban Killer Drones; and VFP Japan–U.S. Peace Speaking Tour.

In-person Events: Numerous events concerning peace in Ukraine, MLK observance, shut down Guantánamo, ending U.S./Saudi support for war in Yemen, Julian Assange, Korea reunification, human rights, demilitarizing Okinawa, nuclear weapons abolition, climate crisis & militarism, Merchants of Death, Ban Killer Drones, radiation of our waterways, Black Lives Matter, anti-militarism, Move the Money, Iraq war anniversary, and Tax Day.

Upcoming Events: Human

Chain connecting the two Korean missions in New York City; multiple events planned for the visit of the *Golden Rule* to NYC, coordinated by Anthony Donovan, including at UN, Amalgamated Bank, Quaker Meeting House, City Hall, South Street Seaport, Maryhouse; benefit performance of John McDonagh's *Off the Meter, On the Record* at the Principles BK G.I. Coffeehouse in Brooklyn.

Visit [VFP Chapter 34's Facebook page here](#).

Bob Keilbach

#035 – SPOKANE, WASHINGTON

Greetings All!

VFP Chapter 35 keeps busy, along with coalition partners, working locally and nationally to raise public awareness and

Chapter Reports continued on page 14 ...



St. Pat blesses the VFP Chapter 34 contingent while driving out the Snakes of War during the St. Pat's For All Parade in Sunnyside, Queens. Photo: Ellen Davidson

VFP Chapter Reports

Spokane, Washington, Chapter 35 continued:

effect concrete changes for a better world. Participation in VFP's national working groups and regional Zoom calls has been instrumental for staying connected to our VFP roots.

Currently we're circulating petitions with the [Washington Against Nuclear Weapons Coalition](#) calling for the immediate transition away from nuclear weapons, a project of Washington Physicians for Social Responsibility.

Several VFP35 members met with Spokane Public School administrators and board of directors at a Coffee & Conversation session at Rogers High School, home of the local Junior ROTC program. One board member invited us to speak to the young cadets in the future.

We're still working in coalition to stop the expansion of

TC Energy's GTN Xpress gas pipeline, coming from Canada, through Idaho, Washington, Oregon and California, especially after their blowout in Kansas.

Medea Benjamin stopped in Spokane on March 15, 2023, on tour with her new book, *War In Ukraine: Making Sense of a Senseless War*. Our chapter organized an "Activist Roundtable" and other activities to leverage her visit, in addition to a book reading at Auntie's Bookstore.

VFP Chapter 35 hosted our 3rd Annual My Lai Memorial Remembrance at the Inland Northwest Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Spokane on March 16. Featured guests included CODEPINK founder Medea Benjamin and Portland VFP member and antiwar photographer Mike Hastie, who supported the 2018 My Lai 50-year remembrance in Viet Nam by raising funds in the U.S. to spruce up the massacre site.

Hollis Higgins



#042 – CONNECTICUT

VFP Chapter 42 members are fully involved with planning for events in anticipation of the *Golden Rule's* arrival in Connecticut on Memorial Day, May 29, 2023.

In January, our newest and youngest member, Joshua Houze, along with a few other members, attended an MLK Birthday Celebration organized by the Glastonbury MLK Community Initiative. To raise attendees' awareness of King's "Beyond Vietnam: Breaking the Silence" speech, we gave a quiz to the presenters, Dr. David Williams, professor of Public Health at Harvard, and Dr. Tekisha Dwan Everette, executive vice president at Trust for America's Health, and to the dozen kids of the Glastonbury High School Concert Choir.

Last November, Connecticut VFP members Fred Louis, Dave Ionno, and Guy Blais shared their combat experiences and reflections on the true costs of war at the West Hartford Noah Webster Public Library. Titled "Veterans Question the Militarization of Society, Maybe You Should Too?," the event was well attended. Fred's observation that "there are no good wars" rings so true now, as we witness the suffering of both Ukrainians and Russians.

In February we tabled at the Unitarian Society of Hartford, where member Fred Louis, as featured speaker, described his spiritual growth from the hills of Chu Lai, Viet Nam, to the close to a dozen retreats given by Vietnamese Buddhist Monk Thich Nhat Hanh. View his presentation, "Peace Is Every Step," [here](#).

In March, we attended Lyle Jeremy Rubin's presentation of his book, *Pain Is Weakness Leaving the Body: A Marine's Unbecoming*, at Wesleyan and Yale University. Lyle served as a signal intelligence officer who led foot patrols in Afghanistan. He now has many important and thoughtful things to say about the true costs of war. Rubin's website is at [lylejeremyrubin.com](#).

Later in March we rallied in Middletown, to "Stop the Ukrainian war NOW, Stop the killing NOW, and Start negotiations NOW!"

continued on page 16 ...



VFP Chapter 35 was graced with good weather for its 3rd Annual My Lai Remembrance ceremony at the Viet Nam Memorial in Spokane, Washington. Clockwise from top: Mike Hastie talks about the significance of the ditch at the My Lai massacre site; Tom Charles pays homage to "My Hero of My Lai, Ron Ridenhour"; Todd Milne plays bamboo flute during moment of remembrance; Medea Benjamin (not pictured) also spoke. Photos: Hollis Higgins

#056 – HUMBOLDT BAY, CALIFORNIA

On March 2, 2023, members of Humboldt Bay Veterans For Peace Chapter 56 got a brief respite from the rain, sleet, hail, and snow—yes, snow!—that had been pelting California, to commemorate 20 years of holding a Peace Vigil. The weekly vigil began, almost to the day, in front of the Humboldt County Courthouse in Eureka, California—designated the busiest intersection in the county—in response to George Bush the Lesser’s unprovoked and indiscriminate bombing of Iraq. During the 20-year period there have been only a handful of times the vigil was not kept, most of them immediately following the onset of the COVID pandemic. Our anniversary vigil was joined by the mayor of Eureka, a former Arcata City Council member, members of the community, and a brass trio. On occasion, we have been asked: “Why do you vigil?” Our commingled response is below (each line the expression of one individual).

Nate Lomba



Why do we vigil?

Our banner reads, “Truth Is the First Casualty of War!” The slogan is self-explanatory. In order to garner support to make war the government must disguise the true reasons for war from its citizens and conceal the consequences.

We vigil in solidarity with all victims of war, foreign and domestic.

We vigil to put a face on the TRUE costs of war.

We vigil to remind people of the sacrifices created by war.

We vigil to point out the rapacious nature of a war economy.

We vigil for the cathartic benefit of healing the wounds of our military experience.

We vigil for the camaraderie of shared experience with good friends.

We vigil to remind all the hypocrites that claim to have protected ‘merica from the advancing enemy hordes that they are full of s**t! Some of us know the truth and are not afraid to speak up.

We vigil to STAND FOR PEACE, shed light on the TRUTH about war, and help expose that WAR IS A RACKET ... it’s about commerce and global dominance, never the stated “freedom” and “human rights violations.”

We vigil to hopefully keep others from making the same mistake we did.

We vigil because we can; not everyone is able.

Golden Rule port call presents an organizing opportunity for VFP

I had been anticipating—and dreading—the *Golden Rule*’s arrival since becoming aware of the project’s Great Loop plans in the Spring of 2022. As a newcomer to Charleston in October 2019, locked down from COVID since March 2020, I had few contacts to draw on as potential hosts for *Golden Rule* events. With tourism being a vital industry for Charleston, the Chamber of Commerce had spared no effort to downplay its history as the historic epicenter of the transatlantic and domestic slave trades, and I had difficulty turning up any existing peace or anti-nuke organizations.

Emails and follow-up phone calls to progressive places of worship, the College of Charleston, League of Women Voters, etc., all failed to gain any allies. I knew Jim Wohlgemuth was organizing for the Memphis visit and had involved the Democratic Socialists. I asked him to find a contact for Charleston DSA, which he did. I met with Nick Rubin in September and he was able to get approval for DSA to co-sponsor the welcome. He immediately set up a *Golden Rule* team and my anxiety faded once I met the team members. They were young, upbeat, and ready for action.

By the time the *Golden Rule* arrived, we were ready to welcome Helen Jaccard and the crew. [We had lined up] a mayor’s welcome at the boat and venues for events ... including the Tin Roof (an iconic dive bar) for Saturday evening, the Circular Congregational Church for Sunday morning, and a park for a Sunday afternoon peace picnic.

On Monday morning we hosted boat tours and a dockside class for over 30 students from nearby Burke High School, an historic school serving mostly low-income Black students. Another class was held in the high school library. Helen and the crew did a great job, as usual. Monday evening, a town meeting featured the *Making Waves* documentary and a panel that included the Charleston Black Lives Matter president, a historian, the South Carolina Poor People’s campaign co-chair, and the Charleston Climate Coalition co-director. The discussion centered on the interdependence of all humans and the need to realign and dismantle the warfare economy in order to address social needs.

Crew members of the *Golden Rule* remarked that the spirit and energy felt in Charleston made for an extremely gratifying experience. As a result of our efforts, I have been approached by several veteran attendees expressing interest in joining Veterans For Peace, giving me hope of starting a VFP chapter here. Another bonus was the appearance of Greg Payton, a local Vietnam veteran whose activism began in the GI uprising at Long Binh prison in Vietnam and has continued as a VFP member and a globe-trotting representative for the War Resisters League.

—Harvey Bennett

Connecticut Chapter 42 continued:



Connecticut Chapter 42’s Bill Potvin with flag

Steve Fournier and Dave have started their “Voices of Veterans” videos again. Watch their [March 16 episode here](#).

Connecticut chapter members Bill Potvin, Greg Laxer, and Jim Brasile can be heard on [WECS radio with John Murphy](#) one Wednesday a month at 1:00 pm.

Jim Brasile

#063 – ALBUQUERQUE, NEW MEXICO

Albuquerque’s Don and Sally-Alice Thompson VFP chapter 63 is humming right along. Our VFP chapter puts out some very important information and news that the corporate media doesn’t cover or covers in a biased manner. We also are in league with the irrepressible Raging Grannies! We have several irons in the fire that not only enjoy wider success such as our work opposing the DOE’s Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP) and the Holtec storage facility, which could also indirectly hobble plutonium production, as well as our work to prohibit and limit nuclear weapons development. Our next step, promoted by Sally-Alice, is to bring the issue to Bernalillo County



Veterans For Peace Chapter 63 members table on Albuquerque’s Civic Plaza after the annual Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. march on Saturday, January 14. Seated, left to right: Sally-Alice Thompson, World War II Navy veteran and key chapter founder; Charles Powell, Air Force veteran and former longtime chapter president; and Mandy Pino, associate member. Associate members Barbara Tiwald (in orange scarf and beret), Ravi Wadhwani, Em Ward, and Penelope Mainz also turned out.

Commissioners and beyond, with street actions plugging in to national and international efforts. Other successful efforts we are involved with include:

- promoting dues to be paid to national VFP;
- planning the first anti-drone action at Holloman AFB;
- celebrating our first Earth Day since the pandemic;
- taking action on behalf of victims of radiation and the “downwinders”;
- forming alliances with Stop the War Machine, ANSWER Coalition, Party for Socialism and Liberation, and others;
- Second Monday presentations;
- our Charles Powell Writing Contest for high school students;
- staging many actions and demonstrations to Save Our VA;
- taking actions, witnessing, and putting pressure on military to address environmental concerns;
- supporting Veterans For Peace by having a small but visible presence in many many places;
- building relationships with other veterans and other veteran organizations;
- utilizing the gifts of at least two musicians and five writers who belong to our chapter; and
- last but not least—being inspired (by Sally-Alice and each other) to support and care for one another.

The needs are great, so we will continue to work on getting more hands on deck. Peace,

Bill Tiwald

#069 – SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA



George Johnson Presente!

A joyous hybrid celebration of the life of larger-than-life Navy vet George Johnson rocked the San Francisco Veterans Building in February. George was on the destroyer *USS Enterprise* when it steamed out of the Gulf of Tonkin just days before the U.S. falsely claimed that the *USS Maddox* and *USS Turner*

Joy had been attacked in

August, 1964, starting the American war against Viet Nam. George was a very moral person. Post-military he devoted his life to peace and justice—and had a roaring good time along the way! For several years before his death in November, George lived in Tijuana, Mexico, serving as a pillar of the Deported Vets Advocacy Project. He was also a key member of Chapter 162 in California’s East Bay.

VFP Chapter 69 is busy coordinating the 2023 annual VFP Tour to Viet Nam, October 14 to 29, 2023! Resuming after a three-year hiatus, *Hoa Binh* [Peace] Viet Nam VFP Chapter 160

is gearing up to host another “Insider Peace Tour” in October, on which delegates will be treated to a nice mix of culture, natural beauty, and friendly people—as well as the legacies of war. [Find tour details on the VFP 160 website.](#)

Nadya Williams

#074 – DETROIT, MICHIGAN

In the first quarter of 2023, members of the Michael Gramlich–Steve Saelzler–Metro Detroit Chapter of Veterans For Peace participated in local, statewide, and national outreach events. On MLK Day, at the historic St. Matthew’s and St. Joseph’s Episcopal Church in downtown Detroit, Jim Rine reminded attendees of MLK’s “Beyond Viet Nam” speech and passed out copies of the speech printed in *Peace & Planet News*. In February, members tabled at the Michigan State Democratic Party Spring Convention to criticize the wasteful funding for wars while inadequately addressing the true national security threat of the climate crisis. VFP74 also joined with other chapters and many other peace organizations in Washington, D.C., for the *Say No to Endless U.S. Wars!* protest and rally on March 18. [See photo on back page.]

Jim Rine



Chapters 74 and 93 are collaborating on the Arlington Michigan display at a Detroit park this spring and summer.

#075 – PHOENIX, ARIZONA

The Mark Von Hagen–George Mizo Phoenix Chapter of Veterans For Peace ended 2022 by making a donation to the [Vietnam Friendship Village Project](#) and by amending our name to honor Silver Star recipient and Friendship Village founder George Mizo. [George was honored with an award at the 1998 VFP national convention for his reconciliation work in Viet Nam.]

Beginning on March 23, 2021, and continuing each month thereafter, VFP Chapter 75 spokesperson Richard A. Smith, JD

Chapter Reports continued on page 18 ...

VFP Chapter Reports

Phoenix, Arizona, Chapter 75 continued:

(USN 1965–69), initiated a one-sided correspondence with U.S. Senator Mark Kelly requesting that the senator introduce legislation to provide funding to remediate the damage inflicted on the people of Laos [and subsequently for Cambodia and Vietnam through HR 35-18] through our indiscriminate use of Agent Orange in Southeast Asia.

However, it was not until February 17, 2023, that Smith spoke with one of Senator Kelly's staff members from his Washington office. The upshot of the conversation was that the senator was supportive of our request and said that he would keep us informed of the process for introducing and passing the legislation.

Richard A. Smith

#089 – NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE

Several members of the Hector Black Chapter of Veterans For Peace showed up for a photo op to publicize the anniversary of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW).

Jim Wohlgemuth and Harvey Bennett continue their *Veterans For Peace Radio Hour*, hosting many notable guests. Ronda Shelton organized the screening of *Facing North: Jefferson Street, Nashville*, a film about the destruction of a thriving Black community in Nashville with the construction of Route 40.

The *Golden Rule* sailboat enjoyed a wonderful welcome when it arrived in Charleston, South Carolina, on February 24—a port of call on its Great Loop tour which began in September 2022 in Minnesota. [See Harvey's report on p. 16.]

Harvey Bennett

#090 – BROOME COUNTY, NEW YORK

Members of Broome County Veterans For Peace Chapter 90 in Binghamton, New York, celebrated Arbor Day (Friday, April 28) by planting trees with 60 third graders from Theodore Roosevelt Elementary School at Otsiningo Park, located along the Chenango River. Chapter members supplied hardy red oak seedlings, dug the holes, provided the mulch and the water, and assisted as needed, along with the teachers. Kids got into the dirt, put mulch and water in the holes, stomped down the mulch and dirt, and tied a pink ribbon on each little tree to alert the county grass-

mowing crew. We all had a fun morning! We told the kids to come by in 20 years with their own children and in 50 years with their grandchildren. One little girl showed off her arithmetic and said, wow, I'll be 58 years old when these trees are this big—as she circled her arms to show the projected red oak girth in 2073. After the tree planting was over, the children headed over to the slides and swings at the other end of the park near our VFP–Peace Action Children's Peace Garden.

Jack Gilroy



The Children's Peace Garden at Otsiningo Park was established by VFP Chapter 90 in collaboration with Peace Action, and is dedicated to all children who are victims of violence. Photo: John Patterson



ARBOR DAY 2023

VFP Chapter 90 member John Patterson (kneeling) demonstrates tree-planting technique for a group of third graders at Otsiningo Park, along the Chenango River in Broome County, New York. Cecily O'Neil, another chapter member, stands to John's right. Photo: Jack Gilroy

#091 – SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA

The Hugh Thompson Memorial VFP Chapter had a very busy first quarter. January found us in San Diego's MLK Day Parade with two convertibles and 38 total participants in our contingent. The next day, chapter members attended the All Peoples Breakfast and tabled with chapter brochures. On January 21, we participated in a San Diego 350-led rally connecting climate change and the impact of our military. The next day we rallied downtown at the Federal Building, calling on the U.S. to join the UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. On January 23, a presentation and appeal was made to the City of Carlsbad council to consider placement of a peace pole there. Two chapter members later addressed a class at San Diego State University, having connected with a professor there. The chapter also held a rally outside the gate at Marine Corps Air Station (MCAS) Miramar, calling for peace in Ukraine.

The San Diego VFP chapter has been briefed on ongoing activities by the Deported Veterans VFP chapter in Tijuana, and is apprised of activities planned by the Black deported veterans group being organized here.

Chapter 91 members continue to solicit donations, buy, and carefully distribute sleeping bag sets to our growing homeless population, with 5,300 distributed since the Compassion Campaign began in December 2010. We look forward to many upcoming events this spring, especially those featuring Climate Crisis and U.S. Militarism.

Gil Field

#092 – SEATTLE, WASHINGTON

What? Canceled!? On March 14, activists came out of hibernation to welcome Medea Benjamin, co-founder of CODEPINK, to Seattle. How embarrassing that the University Bookstore canceled Medea's book talk (evidently due to pressure from academics and Ukrainian students), stating that staff wasn't trained to deal with the potential for controversy. Former VFP92 president Dan Gilman remarked, "It's quite obvious that the bookstore caved to political pressure to cancel the talk. Since when is a bookstore unable to deal with a controversial book?" Excellent point, Dan. A bewildered Medea, having already visited over 100 cities in over a dozen states on her present tour, asked, "Does Seattle really want to be a city that censors and cancels, instead of a city that welcomes healthy, respectful dialogue about such a critical issue as war?"

On March 18, a Chapter 92 contingent participated in an anti-war rally at Westlake Park organized by VFP ally Jane Cutter of ANSWER. There were about a hundred activists in attendance and speakers from several organizations.

At a first-ever anti-Boeing protest, co-organized by VFP92 and Resist U.S.-Led War, activists rallied at the Museum of Flight, then marched for one more closing rally nearby at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial.

Kim Loftness



VFP Chapter 92 members Will Alleckson and Steph Atkinson brought CCMP's message to the anti-war demonstration at Westlake Park in Seattle on March 18. Photo: Kim Loftness

#093 – SOUTH CENTRAL MICHIGAN

For the eighth year in a row, the Utah Phillips-J. David Singer Chapter of Veterans For Peace started the new year with a presentation on MLK Day with the theme, "What They Didn't Want Martin To Talk About: War & Militarism," exposing how triple evils of poverty, racism, and war continue to be interrelated today.

In April, VFP Chapter 93 members tabled at the Ann Arbor, Michigan, Earth Day Festival with information highlighting how all-out war can be the ultimate environmental catastrophe and how militarism exacerbates global warming.

This spring and summer, VFP Chapters 93 and 74 (Metro Detroit) will be teaming up for the Memorial Day "Arlington Michigan" display at a downtown Detroit park (one grave marker for every Michigan soldier killed in the Iraq and Afghan wars—230 total—see the photo of a past year's display on page 17). The chapters are also collaborating to host the *Golden Rule* when the ship visits Detroit in August.

Bob Krzewinski

Chapter Reports continued on page 20 ...

VFP Chapter Reports



Larry Miller, Chapter 104 co-founder and creator of Lennon Night, entertains the crowd with a medley of Beatles songs at the 22nd annual event, a fundraiser for the Iraq Water Project.

#102 – MILWAUKEE, WISCONSIN

We have begun preparing for a four-day visit with the historic *Golden Rule* sailboat on Labor Day weekend, in partnership with a growing list of sponsors—over a dozen and growing—including peace and justice organizations, religious groups and churches, and more. We are now turning our attention to scheduling four days of activities while the boat is docked at Lakeshore State Park, on Lake Michigan, in downtown Milwaukee.

We are also planning to have a presence at street festivals and other summer events. We were part of coalitions celebrating International Human Rights Day and International Women's Day. A number of our members presented their works during the 29th annual poetry marathon held by the nonprofit Woodland Pattern Book Center, which fosters independent literature, poetry, and the arts.

VFP Chapter 102 members continue to work on the Save Our VA project, opposition to F-35 jet fighters in Madison, normalization of U.S. relations with Cuba, and prevention of veteran suicides.

Bill Christofferson

#104 – EVANSVILLE, INDIANA

On December 8, 2022, Veterans For Peace Chapter 104 sponsored their 22nd annual Lennon Night in Evansville, Indiana, inviting musicians and poets to lift their voices in the celebration of the ideals of John Lennon as expressed in his

iconic song, "Imagine." Donations from the audience along with a generous contribution from a long-time member allowed us to contribute \$2,000 to VFP's Iraq Water Project, in support of ongoing efforts to supply Iraqi communities with clean water.

Chapter 104 has embarked on a billboard advertising campaign, underwritten by our members, to amplify messages calling for peace, resistance to racism, and the abolition of nuclear weapons. Billboard messages included: "3% of military spending could end starvation on earth" (suggested by our partners at World Beyond War); Martin Luther King Jr.'s quote, "Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that"; and an announcement that Evansville, Indiana, has joined the international anti-nuclear weapons organization, Mayors for Peace.

Our chapter will be working closely with the mayor's office this year to engage the community in numerous projects as part of the city's Mayors for Peace commitment, including a children's art contest, music events, and working with the international organization to acquire and nurture a sapling from one of the trees that survived the 1945 atomic bombing of Hiroshima.

Lynn Kinkade

#106 – DALLAS/NORTH TEXAS

Since last reporting, Veterans For Peace Chapter 106, along with community partners, has held demonstrations against Raytheon, Lockheed Martin, and Comanche Peak Power Plant ... and in support of the free press and whistleblowers Julian Assange and Daniel Hale. Along with a Mennonite church, we co-hosted another presentation by VFP's Climate Crisis and Militarism Project (CCMP)—this time hybrid and embedded in a Sunday sermon! At the MLK parade, our banner implored, "Honor the Anti-War Legacy of MLK." We passed out scores of the latest issue of VFP Chapter 34's *Peace & Planet News*, which includes MLK's entire 1967 speech.



Bill Maxwell and VFP Chapter 106 President Ron Unger at a demonstration calling for diplomacy in Ukraine at the Grassy Knoll in Dallas, Texas.



At the MLK Jr. Day celebration in Ojai, California, on January 16, Chapter 112 members John Jerpe and Lanny Kaufer converse while awaiting the next flow of attendees to be released from the indoor activities. An outdoor amphitheater scenario was pre-planned for the day, but inclement weather forced most of the event activities indoors. On the day of, however, there was sunshine!

Following the Vatican's call for negotiations re Ukraine, we displayed signs and passed out flyers urging diplomacy to people exiting a large cathedral in Dallas on Ash Wednesday. Members attended a screening of the Australian documentary, *Ithaka*, about Julian Assange, and visited with the film's producer, Julian's brother, Gabriel. Ron Unger and Leslie Harris spoke at a March 19 forum about the wars in Iraq and Ukraine and visited the office of U.S. Rep Colin Allread (D-TX 32) with Medea Benjamin.

Our chapter's ongoing and most time-consuming but highly rewarding project is "Team Refuge," in which we lead a handful of organizations in resettling recently-arrived refugees from violence and war.

We facilitated a "Texas Tour" for VFP Advisory Board Member Medea Benjamin, with speaking events in Austin, Waco, Arlington/UT, Denton/UNT and Dallas. Ann Wright met us in Austin to attend a legislative session and rally against anti-trans bills at the state capitol, and to join Austin anti-war activists to oppose the U.S. Army Futures Command.

Leslie Harris

#112 – VENTURA COUNTY, CA

VFP Chapter 112 participated in two community events in January. The Ojai Valley Youth Foundation invited us to the January 16 Martin Luther King Jr. Day event in Ojai. Then, on January 21, we took part in Justice for All Ventura County's annual women's march and rally, "Marching Toward a More Perfect Union That Is #BiggerThanRoe."

In early December 2022, chapter member Cindy Piester was interviewed on VFP Radio Hour (produced by Hector Black VFP Chapter 89 members in Nashville, Tennessee) about her trip to attend COP27 (the UN Climate Change Conference) held in Sharm el-Shiek, Egypt. As an NGO delegate, Cindy called for military emissions to be reported to the UNFCCC (UN Framework Convention on Climate Change).

Chapter 112 Vice President Shane Meserve put in a good mention of Veterans For Peace to the Conejo Democratic Club at one of their regular meetings.

Chapter members also attended in a celebration of life service this spring for recently deceased long-time chapter member and past chapter president, Joseph Asebedo, a U.S. Marine Corps veteran and Yaqui Nation Native American.

We are happily returning to an in-person format for our regular chapter meeting following the long pandemic spell.

Shane Meserve

#113 – HAWAII

Hawaii VFP Chapter 113 continues to be active in shutting down the U.S. Navy's Red Hill jet fuel tank complex, the source of 19,000 gallons of toxic fuel that leaked into the drinking water of 93,000 persons in 17 residential areas around Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. Despite the Secretary of Defense (SecDef) announcing the tanks would be permanently closed as soon as they are defueled (now scheduled for mid-2024), the National Defense Authorization Act requires that SecDef "certify" that the tanks are not needed for national security, an escape clause that we are working to close by demanding the SecDef

Chapter Reports continued on page 22...



VFP members Ann Wright and Pete Doktor were joined by Peter's daughter at a rally to Shut Down Red Hill in Honolulu, Hawaii. (Ann's detailed article about the leaking jet fuel tanks is on p. 24.)

VFP Chapter Reports

Hawaii Chapter 113 continued:

immediately issue his certification. Please help by tweeting @SecDef — “immediately certify permanent closing of Hawaii’s Red Hill Jet Fuel complex.”

On another toxic chemical contamination from the Navy at Red Hill, the leaking of 1300 gallons of PFAS “forever chemicals” and 3000 cubic feet of PFAS-contaminated soil, Chapter 113, with several Hawaii-Okinawa organizations, hosted Okinawa journalist Jon Mitchell with the documentary film screening of *Nuchi nu Miji*, about PFAS contamination in Okinawa and Okinawans’ struggle for justice in one of the worst environmental catastrophes in modern Okinawa history.

Ann Wright

#114 – SHEBOYGAN, WISCONSIN

Greetings from the city of chairs, children, churches, and cheese. This report started out as something of an obituary, relating the demise and disbanding of a once robust member of the VFP community. Due to a number of factors, including COVID, lack of new members, canceled projects, and a general lack of direction, this chapter was getting ready to fold its cards, cash in its chips, and say goodbye to you good people.

In the past 18 years, Sheboygan VFP members marched in many parades, produced 15 peace concerts, staffed a dozen information tables, and brought speakers to town including Kathy Kelly and Joe Ellwanger (a colleague of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr). We helped “occupy” Madison, Wisconsin, and Washington, D.C., participated in a half dozen SOA Watch gatherings at Ft. Benning, helped create a city peace park, and raised money to support more than a dozen worthy groups like Witness for Peace, the *Golden Rule* peace boat, and landmine removal projects in Viet Nam and other locations. We stood on street corners to protest wars, to promote a negotiated peace in Ukraine, and to alert people to the threat of climate change.



Sheboygan VFP Chapter 114 member Bob Fleming created this sign at the Sheboygan Peace Park. The park’s second phase of development was finished recently, thanks to volunteers and grants.



Josh Shurley (with daughter Ruby) and Lee Liddle represent Veterans For Peace alongside activist partners at a “Peace in Ukraine” demonstration in Fresno, California, on March 18, 2023.

Our monthly meetings in the past year or so have been plagued by canceled projects, lack of direction, frustration, and loss of tempers and hope. At our December meeting, we voted on our annual donations, and were getting ready to discuss how to disband our chapter, when someone brought up next summer’s visit of the *Golden Rule*. All of a sudden, we were discussing how to entice them to visit our town between Green Bay and Milwaukee.

We started planning to write letters, do PR, to create a gathering at the Peace Park with music and poetry! Maybe it will never happen, but for the moment, this shared vision has us feeling inspired and hopeful; a bright spot in the winter of our discontent.

Wishing you all a happy, healthy and peaceful 2023!

Tom Contrestan

#180 – FRESNO, CA

VFP Chapter 180 continues to work for peace, both as a chapter and through our individual efforts. On December 2, 2022, we hosted Medea Benjamin from CODEPINK who spoke at the Fresno State campus about “War in Ukraine and the Nuclear Threat.”

This spring, we joined the ANSWER Coalition’s national call to action on the 20th anniversary weekend of the invasion of Iraq. On March 18, VFP Chapter 180 members gathered in North Fresno, along with folks from partner organizations such as Peace Fresno, WILPF Fresno, and the Fresno Center for Nonviolence, under the banner of “Peace in Ukraine: Say NO to Endless U.S. Wars” and “Fund People’s Needs, Not the War Machine.”

In addition to regular demonstrations, we carry on our peace work in other ways. Chapter organizer Josh Shurley hosts a monthly radio broadcast (*Stir It Up* on KFCF FM 88.1,

Fresno) featuring activist voices discussing topics ranging from nuclear destruction to climate justice, from gun violence to the housing crisis. Chapter 180 continues its efforts to expose the true costs of war and militarism and build a culture of Peace At Home, Peace Abroad.

Josh Shurley

#1003 – RYUKYU, OKINAWA

The ROCK chapter participated in a spontaneous action April 5, 2023, while waiting to tour the famous Okinawa battle site, “Hacksaw Ridge.” [Aaron Davis, co-founder of VFP’s Nikko Schoch Chapter 118 in Salt Lake City, was on Okinawa in April to visit battle sites his father fought for 77 years ago as a marine.] Seventeen active-duty marines were assembled there, waiting for their tour guide. Knowing he had a captive audience, Chapter 1003’s Doug Lummis first made the group aware of his Marine Corps officer service in the late 1950s, and then held forth on how history has a way of repeating itself. Doug is a Political Theory Professor at the Okinawa International University. His new book, [*War Is Hell: Studies in the Right of Legitimate Violence*](#), has just been released.



U.S. Marines waiting to tour an Okinawa battle site listen respectfully as former Marine officer Doug Lummis makes a point about history repeating itself. Photo: Aaron Davis

VFP Chapter 1003 continues to work with the coalition of Okinawan organizations—No Heliport Base Association, Protect Henoko/Takae, Henoko Anti-Base Project and others opposing the development of a replacement base for Marine Corps Air Station Futenma and the runway extension planned for Camp Schwab on Okinawa which will ruin Henoko/Oura Bay and damage the surrounding environment. These committed Okinawan activist earth defenders have maintained a presence outside Camp Schwab for over 3,100 days.

Aaron Davis, on behalf of Doug Lummis

#1004 – JAPAN – SPEAKING TOUR

Since 2016, Rachel Clark, contact for VFP Japan Chapter 1004, has organized annual speaking tours for VFP delegations. The tours were only in mainland Japan from 2016–19. After that, they were virtual for a few years. This year, for the first time, the tour will begin in Okinawa before moving to mainland Japan, to call attention to Okinawan struggles. Holding two contradictory laws, U.S.–Japan security pact and the pacifist Article 9, Okinawa has been falling through the cracks, lacking a fair and equal level of basic human rights, environmental protection, and the right to pursue happiness and safety.

Ironically, during the pandemic period, mainland Japan has been experiencing ramifications similar to Okinawa’s. The government is doubling their defense budget, purchasing offensive weapons, and pressing on the possibility of Taiwan contingency without putting efforts into a diplomatic solution to growing tensions, rendering Article 9 dead letters.

This year’s tour kicks off in Okinawa so that we can learn from Okinawans and bring our experiences and knowledge back to the mainland and to the U.S., because they desperately need our solidarity in order to revise the unfair and unjust Status of Forces Agreement. We are not meddling in Japan’s politics. Rather, we are trying to take responsibility for our government’s meddling in their affairs.

So far, our 2023 tour team includes Chuck Searcy, Pat Elder, current VFP Poet-Laurate Jenny Pacanowski in person, and Matt Hoh from the States by zoom. We plan to visit local protesters at Camp Schwab, Henoko, Takae, Ishigaki Jima Island where Japan deployed offensive missiles, as well as sites with environmental issues. After eight days in Okinawa (beginning Sept. 14), we will spend two weeks in Japan (Sept. 24–Oct. 7) speaking at multiple venues in some eleven cities, including Hiroshima, Nagasaki, Tokyo and Kyoto.

Other VFP members are welcome to travel and learn with the Japan tour, joining at any point of their itinerary. For tour details, please email vfpspeakingtour@gmail.com. To help cover tour costs, you may donate through VFP [via this link](#) (enter earmark in the comment section: “Japan/Okinawa Delegation”).



VFP members Rory Fanning and Mike Hanes speak in front of the Hiroshima Peace Memorial on a previous VFP Japan Speaking Tour.

MILITARY POLLUTION IN PARADISE

DOD continues to stonewall requests for information on defueling of Red Hill leaking jet fuel tanks and AFFF spill

by Colonel (Ret) Ann Wright

Hidden deep in the 4,408 pages of the 2023 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) is a caution concerning the closing and defueling of the Red Hill jet fuel tanks, which upon coming to light is giving citizens heartburn ... and a scare.

According to the March 5, 2023 *Honolulu Star Advertiser* article, "Military spending act stirs defueling concerns," the NDAA requires, before defueling of the Red Hill jet fuel tanks, a certification from the U.S. Department of Defense (DOD) that closing Red Hill will not affect Indo-Pacific military operations.

During the four months between passage of the NDAA and the March 5 *Star Advertiser* article, despite intense public interest in the defueling and closing of the Red Hill facilities, neither Senator Hirono, Senator Brian Schatz, nor Representative Case mentioned the certification requirement in their press releases about the \$1 billion for the defueling and closure of Red Hill and \$800 million for other military infrastructure upgrades in Hawaii passed in the NDAA for 2023.

The *Star Advertiser* reported that Hawaii Senator Mazie Hirono said she "didn't advocate for the notification requirement." Rather her office said it was a priority of the Republicans and was agreed to as a compromise to ensure Hirono's other Red Hill provisions made it into the NDAA.

No DOD decision to sign the certification

The military certainly didn't mention the certification requirement either. Now DOD maintains extensive repairs are

necessary to safely defuel the tanks—repairs that were not deemed necessary prior to the November 2021 spill. And DOD's decision to keep the tank and pipe infrastructure in the ground after defueling of the tanks has raised concerns that the fuel facility could be



U.S. Rep. Jill Tokuda walks with officials from Joint Task Force-Red Hill (JTF-RH) during a Congressional Delegation (CODEL) visit to the Red Hill Bulk Fuel Storage Facility (RHBFSF) in Halawa, Hawaii, February 23, 2023. Photo: U.S. Air National Guard/Staff Sgt. Orlando Corpuz. Source: [DIVDS](#)

used again by DOD, despite military officials' stated plan to make the tanks unusable for fuel storage.

With comments about Chinese aggression being issued daily from DOD and State Department officials, and the multiple U.S. and NATO naval armadas in the South China Sea and large military war games on the ground on the Korean peninsula, Secretary of Defense Austin's decision to not yet sign the certification is an indication that DOD will again play its national security card.

Where is the transparency?

Despite protestations from the commander of the Red Hill Joint Task Force and promises to be forthcoming and transparent about the clean-up of the multiple disasters at Red Hill, the

lack of transparency from Admiral Wade and his staff is eroding the trust of the community. In addition to keeping silent on the certification requirement, the Task Force has failed to issue timely press releases on events concerning Red Hill contamination and defueling, or the

recent spill of 1300 gallons of AFFF/PFAS. The last press release on that disastrous spill was issued three months ago on December 27, 2022.

Where is the AFFF spill video?

The Navy still has not made public the video of the AFFF spill and has not completed its investigation of the spill, requiring an extension from DOH. Nor has the Task Force revealed where the 3,000 cubic feet of AFFF-contaminated soil was moved—whether on Oahu or to the mainland. In contrast, the locations of disposal for the contaminated soil removed from the East Palestine, Ohio,

chemical train wreck was publicized immediately and several states objected to disposal in their toxic waste locations.

Our government officials, military and civilian, have a long way to go before they are trusted by the public! VFP members joined a 500-person march on Sunday, April 23, to keep the pressure on. **YOU CAN HELP: Please tweet @SecDef Austin** and demand he immediately certify that Red Hill jet fuel tanks can be defueled.

Ann Wright is a retired U.S. Army Reserve Colonel and a former U.S. diplomat. She resigned from the government post 20 years ago in opposition to the U.S. war on Iraq. She has lived in Honolulu for 20 years. She is a member of Hawaii Peace and Justice, Veterans For Peace, and Oahu Water Protectors.

SHUT DOWN DRONE WARFARE SPRING ACTION



Activists peacefully block the main gate at Holloman Air Force Base leading up to the arrest of five people on April 19, 2023.

3 VFP members among 5 arrested at Holloman AFB in April

Nearly four dozen activists participated in a week-long anti-drone peace convergence April 15–22, 2023, co-sponsored by CODEPINK, Ban Killer Drones, and Veterans For Peace. It was the first action staged at Holloman Air Force Base in southern New Mexico, where over 700 drone pilots and operators graduate every year, building on years of twice-yearly actions at Creech Air Force Base in Nevada.

Highlights of this year's convergence included nonviolence trainings led by VFP member Elliott Adams, which were reported to be "superb." Theme-based daily vigils were designed to educate and raise consciousness about weaponized drones and the out-of-control military industrial complex that wreaks havoc on the environment, exacerbates climate change, and terrorizes global communities.

Over half of the participants were from New Mexico. Among those who came from other states was Minetaka Shimada of Maryland, who covered the story for a Japan-based newspaper. A dozen or so young students from New Mexico State University, Las Cruces, and Albuquerque, joined in the Saturday, April 22, Earth Day rally in Alamogordo, co-sponsored and led by ANSWER/PSL, New Mexico.

An April 20 panel event featured local activist Bernice Gutierrez, a downwinder

victim of the first U.S. atomic weapon test at Trinity, New Mexico (1945), along with Damascio Lopez, victim of depleted uranium testing and a decades-long advocate for a global ban on depleted uranium weapons, and VFP member Nick Mottern, co-founder of BanKillerDrones.org. Emma's Revolution provided music that night and at other times at the group campsite, dubbed "Camp Justice."

The week culminated in a nonviolent direct action to Shut Down Drone Warfare at Holloman, the largest drone training base in the country. Five peaceful and determined activists, accompanied by a handful of supporters with signs and banners, staged a peaceful blockade of the main gate to Holloman AFB, forcing law enforcement to redirect traffic to the alternative west gate. Ultimately, Ken Mayers (NM), Elliott Adams (NY), Michael Kerr (CA), Richard Bishop (MT), and Toby Blomé (CA) were arrested; the first three being U.S. veterans and members of Veterans For Peace.

Overall, the week-long event was a "huge success," with most of the participants saying they would return to do it again. Activists reported making wonderful new connections with local residents, and the convergence received meaningful local coverage in the *Alamogordo Daily News*.



Ken Mayers clearly enjoys being arrested.



Sharat Lin does the Dance of Peace.

This article was drawn from a preliminary report submitted by the [Shut Down Drone Warfare](http://ShutDownDroneWarfare.org) team—Virginia, Ken, Denise, Charles, Toby, Greg and Edwina. The group is planning a fundraiser in the San Francisco Bay Area on Thursday, May 18, to celebrate and support the expanding anti-drone campaign.

Members' Action Reports

POLITICAL THEATER ON EARTH DAY 2023

Messing with the Merchants of Death in Syracuse, New York

by Jack Gilroy

An Earth Day celebration mocking the clever fools of the war machine produced loads of grim fun in Syracuse, New York, on Friday, April 21. A coalition of peace groups including Upstate Drone Action, Broome County Veterans For Peace Chapter 90, Peace Action, UpState PaxChristi, and Ithaca Catholic Worker had already issued subpoenas to six merchants of death and their enablers in the Syracuse community to testify at the [November 2023 Merchants of Death War Crimes Tribunal](#). Now it was time to hear from the war enablers themselves.



After performing in front of the offices of U.S. Senators Schumer and Gillibrand, the signs and skits moved to Chase Bank. Pictured are Pope Francis and Bishop Lucia. Photo: Vera Scroggins

The action began outside the federal building offices of Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand and Sen. Charles Schumer, the majority leader of the U.S. Senate. In our skit, Senator Schumer (played by Jack Gilroy) says: "Just imagine if we followed JFK's call for disarmament and friendly relations with the Russians 60 years ago ...? We wouldn't be the leaders we are now in weapons production and ... [kicking] ass around the world. Sure, we usually get our own asses kicked, but hey! A lot of people get rich in the process—it's a capitalist country, no?" One of our signs illustrated this point: **Chuck Schumer Takes More \$\$ from the Merchants of Death than any other U.S. politician.**

Binghamton actress Judy McMahon, playing Senator Gillibrand, told how lucky she was to marry a Brit whose family pretty much controls BAE (formerly British Aeronautical Engineering), one of the top ten merchants of death. Senator Gillibrand told how she received a half-million dollars from her Brit relatives to help her become a senator who sits on the Armed Services Committee and enjoys not only voting for the military budget each year, but increasing it. "My aides tell me that millions struggle to have food stamps, but I say guns over butter. Let them make cake! We need more tanks and planes. How will we ever be able to blow our enemies to smithereens if we don't spend a trillion dollars to upgrade our nuclear weapons system? Some say we should spend some of those needed nuke dollars to pay for mental health needs. How crazy is that?"

Colonel Glorious Guano (played by Kirsten Whistle), the new commander of the 174th Attack Wing of the N.Y. State National Guard, told the crowd, "We sit on our asses as we decide who lives and dies in faraway places ... We're the U.S. Chair Force! We miss finding targets in Afghanistan, but thankfully we have a president who has given us new opportunities to hone our killing skills with his after-Afghanistan policy, *Beyond the Horizon*, keeping us busy right here in Syracuse doing assassinations without worrying about church leaders or other 'moralists' interfering with our ability to keep our boys' and girls' boots off the ground."

Diane Sare gave a brilliant talk on the messed-up U.S. Intelligence system now desperate to find new draconian ways to arrest and imprison people who speak out in opposition to wars concocted in secret by privileged captains of industry.

Medea Benjamin, our USA Activism for Justice Rock Star, played her usual captivating self, and pantomimed distributing dollars to Schumer and Gillibrand for *real* needs.

Playing "We're In The Money" on her trombone, Diane Sare led the crowd of Fat Cats and sign carriers to nearby Chase Bank, where JP Morgan (played by Todd Sadler in top hat) did a spoof that included reading a subpoena that he ordered taken to the CEO of JP Morgan Chase.



On the way to the Syracuse Diocese headquarters, Diane Sare played "When the Saints Go Marching In." Photo: Michelle Erin

On the chancery steps of Syracuse Diocese headquarters, Pope Francis congratulated Bishop Lucia for his initiative in bringing about an apology from the Vatican for 500 years of domination of aboriginal peoples in the Western Hemisphere via the Doctrine of Discovery. Then the Pope admonished the bishop for his silence about the assassination drone base near his office, and for not speaking up to forcefully condemn environmental damages caused in his own diocese by merchant of death Lockheed Martin.

Veteran sentenced to 60 days in German federal prison

VFP member Dennis DuVall, 81, a U.S. Air Force veteran of the war in Vietnam and veteran anti-nuclear activist, was sentenced to 60 days in a federal prison in Bautzen, Germany, with sentence to begin March 23, 2023, for protest actions demanding that U.S. nuclear weapons be removed from Büchel NATO base, 120 km south of Cologne.

On July 15, 2018, DuVall was one of 18 people who cut through the chain-link fence and entered the base to, as the group said in a statement, “bring an end to the ongoing criminal conspiracy to unleash uncontrollable and indiscriminate heat, blast and radiation with each and every B61 nuclear bomb deployed at Büchel NATO base.”

The U.S. Air Force 702 Munitions Support Squadron stations 10 to 20 free-fall B61 nuclear bombs at the base under a program called “nuclear sharing.”

Charged with trespass and damage to property in Cochem District Court on May 11, 2020, DuVall was the first U.S. citizen to be convicted in Germany for civil resistance against the threatened use of the U.S. nuclear weapons. In trial testimony, DuVall stated, “the threat of nuclear weapons is a clear and present danger to the European community and nuclear war is an existential threat to the web of life on our planet.”

Eight arrested at the Nevada National Security Site

VFP member John Amidon was among eight concerned citizens arrested and cited for trespass at the Nevada National Security Site (NNSS) on Good Friday, April 7, 2023, insisting on nuclear weapons abolition. The Nevada Desert Experience Sacred Peace Walk engaged the Department of Energy and the Nye County Sheriff's Department in dialogue and civil resistance. The eight arrestees—Jacques Linder (Philadelphia), Richard Bishop (VFP associate from Missoula, Montana), Sylvester Pondolfino (Staten Island, New York), Tessa Epstein (Salt Lake City), Mark Babson (Salem, Oregon), George Killingsworth (Berkeley, California), Theo Kayser (St. Louis), and Catherine Hourcade (Stockton, California)—were cited for trespass and released at the NNSS.

Mark Babson said, “I felt the arresting officers were listening to us. It is so vital we continue this work, because we have the ability to make a significant choice that will affect the survival of our species and that of other living beings.”

Brian Terrell and John Amidon appeared in Beatty Justice Court two days later for previous trespass citations at the NNSS from October 2022. Both have pleaded not guilty as both had secured permission and land use permits from the Western Shoshone National Council, the legal owners of the land.



This action shot is Ellen Davidson's favorite of [all the photos](#) she took at the April 29 Korea Reunification rally at Grand Central Station.

Korea reunification rally held at Grand Central Station

Ellen Davidson, associate member of New York City VFP Chapter 34, reports: We attended a Korea Reunification rally [on Saturday, April 29, 2023] organized by New Jersey VFP member Soobok Kim, among others. It was supposed to be outside, with a human chain connecting the North and South Korean Missions to the U.N., but the cold, soaking rain drove us inside to Grand Central. Despite the train announcements drowning out the words of most of our speakers, it was a lively event, and we did get a little march outside at the end.

WIRN website and webinars!

The War Industry Resisters Network (WIRN) recently moved its website hosting from Veterans For Peace to World BEYOND War. The change came with a

[dynamic new site](#) designed by

Greta Zarro. Under leadership of Ken Jones, network members have been busy producing a series of monthly webinars.

Earlier this year, Kathy Kelly and Bill Quigley talked about the upcoming [Merchants of Death War Crimes Tribunal](#). On April 5, Michael Klare and Indigo Olivier spoke on the MIC's invasion of college campuses. On May 3, the topic was Stop Cop City. Find a schedule of upcoming WIRN-hosted webinars as well as links to recordings of past programs online at <https://wirn.worldbeyondwar.org/webinars/>.



A Veteran For Peace takes on bordertown playground project



"This project is about reclaiming one little space at a time and filling it with joy and compassion. I can't solve all the problems in the world, and even thinking about them can be paralyzing, so I picked something I can change. And having something tangible at the end, well, that is just so nice." —MIKE TORK

Sásabe is a very remote, small rural border town in Sonora, Mexico. It's in the middle of nowhere, literally, but a few years ago U.S. Customs and Border Protection agents (CBP) began regularly dropping hundreds of migrants and asylum seekers there. Sásabe townspeople were overwhelmed to say the least.

To help support these vulnerable families, Dora Rodriguez (Salvavision) and Gail Kocourek (Tucson Samaritans) opened a migrant resource center in Sásabe in 2021, and named it Casa de la Esperanza. The next year, Dora Rodriguez and the mayor of Sásabe reached out to VFP member (and current national board treasurer) Mike Tork about building a playground for Sásabe children—those whose families lived there already, as well as those who came by way of CBP.

Tork gladly accepted the challenge and began planning the playground development with the guidance of Dora, Gail, and others in the community. One of his first tasks was securing fiscal sponsorship for fundraising from SOA Watch. "SOAW staff, including Roy Bourgeois, enthusiastically supported the idea from the beginning," said Tork. "[They were] very helpful in setting up the donation page and monitoring all donations. Encouraging, to say the least. SOAW staff rocks!"

Folks responded generously to funding appeals while Tork and team got busy detailing out plans, ordering project supplies, lining up labor and logistics. When the original playground site was determined to be too remote, a generous Sásabe property owner donated a vacant lot for the project. When that site, too, was determined unsuitable, townspeople decided to put the large playground (not to be confused with [a small swing set Tork built at the migrant center](#)) under an existing *ramada* (open-air shelter) on the town plaza—a great idea, since building a shade structure would have been a major undertaking.

The physical installation of the Sásabe playground commenced this March. Tork credits a man named Aaron for taking charge in the construction phase, and another, Leonardo, for his solid assistance. On April 30, 2023, townspeople came together to celebrate its completion along with the second anniversary of Casa de la Esperanza.

Tork says the Sásabe playground was "very much a VFP member project," and acknowledged a handful of members who provided key assistance along the way to getting it done: Crystal Zevon, Ken Ashe, Tarak Kauff, Bob Phillips, and Dan Kelly. But as someone who has done a lot of solidarity work with communities in Mexico and Central America, Tork stressed the importance of the initiative coming from the residents, rather than being centered on them. "We were doing what the community asked, not what we thought would be a good idea." He is also grateful for Dora's guidance, and very inspired by her strength and resilience: "Dora's story is incredible. Her heart could have been hardened with a chain of sorrow hung around her neck, but not so. Just the opposite."

[Click here](#) to read more about the playground, watch a short video featuring Dora Rodriguez, and contribute to ongoing Sásabe projects. [Click here](#) to see photos of the completed playground on Sásabe's town plaza, built with VFP involvement.



A true example of "If you build it, they will come": Kids began testing out the equipment before the playground was finished.



The last phase entailed building a wooden frame around the playset and then loading in 8,000 pounds of rubber bark.



To mark the 20-year anniversary of the U.S. invasion of Iraq, on March 26, Seattle VFP Chapter 92 and Resist U.S.-Led War organized a march on the Seattle Boeing plant. Many University of Washington students were among the crowd of about 150 activists. After rallying at the Museum of Flight, protesters moved to the nearby Vietnam Veterans Memorial for a closing rally. The Pentagon's second-largest war contractor, Boeing produces the F-15, F-18, B-52 bombers; Apache and Chinook helicopters; K-46 mid-air refuelers, and cruise missiles, and is also a major subcontractor on B-1 and B-2 bombers.



VFP Chapter 72 member Mike Hastie sent out this Earth Day postcard from Portland, Oregon, with his photo of the World On Fire Department truck that he and other Extinction Rebellion activists have been parking downtown to help draw attention to the climate emergency.

“HOW WE SAY IT”

A Free Online Poetry Course for National, International and Deported Veterans

Join at

<http://us02web.zoom.us/j/84142725900>

This poetry workshop is for beginning or seasoned poets and is conducted in a container of respect for all cultures, genders, and colors of skin. My poetry teachers have been men and women who have taught me to tell my story in my poem, rhymed or not, and to use poetry to find out who I am and who I'm not.

Our society has many poet warriors including Joe Milosch, June Jordan, Jimmy Santiago Baca, Sharon Olds, Yusef Komunyakaa, and Quincy Troupe. You will hear poems from these diverse poets and others in this class.

You can attend one, some, or all of the poetry workshops. It should fit your budget, it's free.

Jim Moreno, LMFT, is a Veteran of Vietnam and a teaching artist with San Diego Writers, Ink. He also taught poetry at Arts Connection San Diego where he was voted the Residency Teaching Artist of the Year for 2016-2017. Moreno is on the Advisory Board of The Institute for Poetic Medicine in Palo Alto, California

Questions / To Register:

jimpoet@hotmail.com or 760-802-2449



FACILITATED BY JIM MORENO

**Join Jim Thursday, April 27,
for the first of six sessions.**

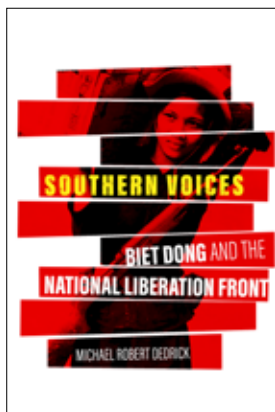
**Meets every other Thursday,
11:00am-1:00pm Pacific or
2:30-4:30pm Pacific:**

- ❖ April 27
- ❖ May 11
- ❖ May 25
- ❖ June 8
- ❖ June 22
- ❖ July 6

**No alcohol or drugs on the day
of the class.**



READING MATERIEL VFP National Newsletter Literary Supplement Spring 2023



SOUTHERN VOICES *BIET DONG AND THE* *NATIONAL LIBERATION FRONT*

Michael Robert Dedrick

([University Press of Kentucky](#), 2022)

Michael Robert Dedrick is vice president of Veterans For Peace Chapter 92 in Seattle, Washington. He served during the Vietnam war as a U.S. Army analyst and interrogator-linguist in Cholon, Saigon, through the Tet and May Offensives of 1968. In that role, he interrogated a member of a secretive group of fighters known as the Ba Den. He returned to Vietnam in 2013 in hopes of finding this man and learning more about him. Although he learned the man had died, Dedrick was able to connect with eight other members of the Ba Den, to sit with them, to listen to their stories, and to learn what the war had been like for them. This collection of stories contains both English and Vietnamese language versions of these fascinating first-person accounts of the Vietnamese resistance.

Reader recommendations:

"This book makes many contributions to our understanding of the war in Vietnam but its greatest value may lie in the voice Dedrick gives to Vietnamese, made obvious in the book's dual-language format. He brought a

degree of humility, curiosity, and respect to his project that is too often missing, even now. Highly recommended."

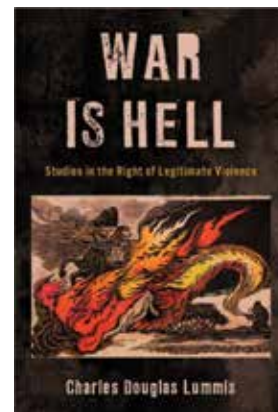
— Susan Dixon

"I picked up this book, expecting a study of NLF tactics as explained by the Viet Cong fighters themselves, but Michael Robert Dedrick's account is unique and nothing like what I had imagined. Instead of focusing on strategy, he, as is implied by the title of his work, gives voice to the South Vietnamese resistance fighters, allowing them to finally tell their personal stories of love, loss, pain, and sacrifice in the name of freedom and independence for their country. The result is a deeply moving collection of stories that show the human face of the enemy, who was completely dehumanized during the Vietnam conflict so that Americans could kill it with "clear" conscience."

—Stefania Dzhanamova

"How often does one get to hear about the war from the perspective of the fighters in the south who the U.S. sacrificed so many lives to defeat? We are indebted to Michael Dedrick for having the compassion to go to the lengths he did to track down these stories. . . . We hear not only of the suffering but the of the strategies, the organization, the discipline, the tactics used in the war. These won out over the massive firepower advantage help by their U.S. military. We can call it one of the great upsets in history. We also hear of Michael's experience in the war and a glimpse at the range of emotions going back to such a time evokes. He has said that his interrogation experience during the war was valuable for these 'interrogations' of a much different sort."

—John Olmstead



WAR IS HELL

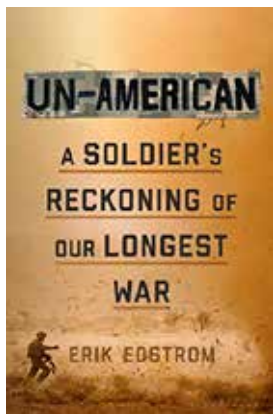
STUDIES IN THE RIGHT OF
LEGITIMATE VIOLENCE

Charles Douglas Lummis

([Rowman & Littlefield](#), 2023)

Unlike the fiends of hell, humans, in order to carry out the work of war effectively, need to be changed, as any military drill instructor knows. *War Is Hell* examines the various ways of enabling essentially peaceful humans to carry out the work of war: invoking the authority of the sacred, dehumanizing the enemy, attempting to limit war by just rules, asserting that there is no other way to establish order. It notes the price soldiers pay when these fictions collapse, forcing them to confront what they have done. PTSD is no recent problem, but dates to Euripides's tale of the madness of Heracles. *War Is Hell* concludes by reviewing the theories of power of Hannah Arendt and Mohandas Gandhi. Indeed, war is hell, [however] those who must carry out war are not fiends, but human beings. The author, ex-Marine and VFP member Doug Lummis, has written extensively on the topic of U.S. foreign relations, and is a vocal critic of U.S. foreign policy.

GET 30% OFF the list price of *War Is Hell* by using the code RLFANDF30 when you order a book at [Rowman.com](#).



UN - AMERICAN

A SOLDIER'S RECKONING
OF OUR LONGEST WAR

Erik Edstrom

(Bloomsbury Publishing, 2020)

Review by Gregory Laxer:

"A West Pointer Tells It Like It Is"

Erik Edstrom grew up in a smallish town in Massachusetts, in a social environment that encouraged and perpetuated what he would later come to recognize as "lobotomized patriotism." In the war-hungry atmosphere in the U.S. in the wake of the 9/11 terrorist attacks, he committed to attending West Point while just 16, arriving there at age 17. This is a very impressionable age for a young man, needless to say.

As a militant opponent of the American War in Viet Nam, this reviewer is not easily shocked by the doings of the U.S. military, but what I found on page 35 (first edition, hardcover) not only shocked me, but turned my stomach. The young men in training to be "officers and gentlemen" in the world's most heavily-armed military were being indoctrinated, trained really, to commit war crimes against civilians in primarily Muslim societies. This could not have happened without the approval/encouragement of the administration at West Point. This attitude would inevitably trickle down to the enlisted personnel serving under the newly minted lieutenants when they arrived in the field to engage in the "Global War on Terror" concocted by

the Cheney administration. (You don't actually believe that George W. Bush was in charge during those eight years, do you?)

Lt. Edstrom had his awakening to the reality of what the U.S. was doing to the people of Afghanistan quite soon after arriving for duty in Afghanistan. I will withhold the details, as I urge you to read this book for yourselves. From page 60: "[West Point] taught us . . . that, a few bad apples aside, throughout its history the United States has always been 'the good guy,' never the perpetrator [of unjust war]. . . . U.S. war crimes and atrocities are denied, euphemistically recategorized, mitigated or otherwise excused."

Edstrom completed his tour of duty (nine years—four at West Point, five on active duty) to honor his commitment without becoming a public whistleblower (though he did convey his concerns about U.S. policy running amok to his superiors in the Army and his hometown Member of Congress). But since exiting the military, he has spoken loudly and clearly, which has earned him a good deal of hostility, he reports, from those who continue to practice that "lobotomized patriotism."

From page 249: *"The truth is that, by participating in the War on Terror, I participated in a crime, not a tragedy. A secondary tragedy is that America lacks the courage and conviction to say so."* That is undeniably true, and the United States will continue to insanely attempt to rule the whole world, wreaking death and destruction while our infrastructure—and the very fabric of our society—crumbles, unless a heck of a lot more citizens wake up to the truth told in this book. *Highest recommendation!*

Gregory Laxer twice refused to participate in the Vietnam War while on active duty in the U.S. Army. He is author of a book about his own experiences, Take This War and Shove It!: A Most Unwilling Soldier 1967-1971 (Unbearable Truth Publications, 2021) [review directly following].



TAKE THIS WAR AND SHOVE IT!

A MOST UNWILLING
SOLDIER 1967-1971

Gregory Laxer

(Unbearable Truth Pubs., 2021)

Review (abridged) by Dee Knight

When Army Spec. 4 Greg Laxer decided to refuse orders to go to Vietnam back in 1968, he did it with a splash. He "took one of the numerous copies I'd received of my Vietnam orders and penned my message over that with red magic marker." Addressed to President Lyndon Johnson at The White House, it said, "I hereby accuse you of waging an illegal war against the people of Vietnam and of committing crimes against humanity. I am returning my orders for Vietnam duty to you and hereby inform you that I quit the U.S. Army, effective immediately."

Laxer's "resignation" wasn't cheerfully accepted either by the President or the chain of command, who placed him in the Fort Devens Post Stockade. From there, Laxer's story unfolds over the next few years as he cycles in and out of a variety of Army holding pens and "special processing" facilities, from Massachusetts to Kansas to California and even Hawaii, each with its own stories of resistance, insubordination, and consistent refusal of orders to fight in combat.

"A soldier going AWOL (Absent Without Official Leave) may be likened

TAKE THIS WAR ... continued:

to a worker going on strike, denying the bosses his or her body on the production floor," Laxer writes. "I was acting individually, but as part of a larger movement. The immediate task was to face whatever my punishment would be, while getting in some good licks at the Establishment."

When his application for "conscientious objector" (CO) status was unfairly dismissed because it wasn't based on an established religion, instead of reuniting with the Army when ordered to report (the Army even offered him a free ride on a military flight to Oakland), Laxer politely, but firmly, refused, and again went AWOL.

This time Laxer was AWOL in New York—home base for the American Servicemen's Union (ASU) and much more. He moved steadily left.

When the ASU was called on to support a "sanctuary" action in Hawaii, Laxer "adjusted" his orders to Oakland to re-route himself to a base in Hawaii, and joined what became "the largest GI sanctuary in U.S. history." It was not exactly the standard Hawaii vacation, rather a GI resistance adventure, and a long round trip. He returned to New York via San Francisco in a matter of weeks, in time for a protest in front of the U.S. Mission to the UN, against President Nixon's appearance there. He was one of eleven demonstrators arrested that day, and soon found himself being transported back to the Fort Dix stockade. Laxer's one consolation was that he could reconnect with his ASU brothers who were still held there whom he had visited previously. Even though they could only meet up on Sundays at the stockade's chapel, comradeship meant a lot in those conditions.

Amazingly, Laxer's next stop after court-martial at Fort Dix was "rehabilitation" at the U.S. Army Correctional Training Facility at Fort Riley, Kansas. There he found, while being rehabilitated with a repeat of basic training, that he could choose to spend

the rest of his enlistment anywhere stateside but not overseas. In a very real sense, he had won his determined refusal to fight in Vietnam.

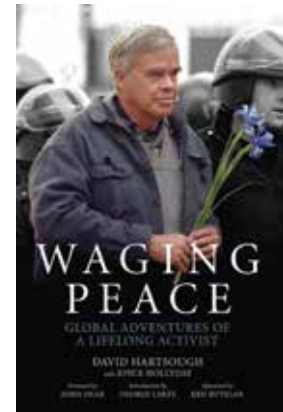
As an Army nurse he was still in demand, and got stationed at Fort Ord, near Monterey, California. There he became a "regular service" anti-war GI—helping in off-duty hours to edit, produce and distribute an anti-war newspaper for soldiers at the base, joining off-base rallies, even marching hand-in-hand with a GI-nurse girlfriend at an anti-war march in San Francisco. He found time to support the struggles of others as well, including the United Farm Workers.

Laxer's book winds down positively: "within two weeks of my discharge from the Army, I had moved from home in Syosset to New York City to continue revolutionary activity. ... I wrote quite a bit for the ASU's publication and learned how to put a newspaper together the old-fashioned way. ...

Getting a regular job was a bit more complicated for a while. His Army discharge was marked "under honorable conditions" instead of simply "honorable." He discovered there was code on the document marking him as a "troublemaker"—the kind of "bad paper" that haunts hundreds of thousands of anti-war veterans after discharge. In Laxer's case, technical experience in the graphic arts transformed his discharge to "honorable," so his employment prospects improved slightly.

Greg Laxer writes: "My active opposition to the criminal war against the peoples of Southeast Asia had placed me in a crucible which forged the person I became as an adult. If I have any regret in that sphere of activity, it is that I did not oppose the war still more vigorously."

In recent decades Greg has worked at noncommercial radio stations, broadcasting jazz and/or working behind the scenes. He helped produce a dozen jazz CDs in the 1990s. After finishing his memoir he has started working on two novels. [[Buy this book on BookBaby.](#)]



WAGING PEACE

GLOBAL ADVENTURES OF
A LIFELONG ACTIVIST

David Hartsough

([PM Press, 2014](#))

Waging Peace is an informative and inspiring read for students or anyone who wants to learn more about the practice of nonviolence in a variety of different contexts. David Hartsough, who has spent a lifetime waging peace, shows us the power of nonviolence by telling his own true stories.

***Waging Peace* is now available as an audio book (free of charge) at:**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ygol-QN1Uwg>

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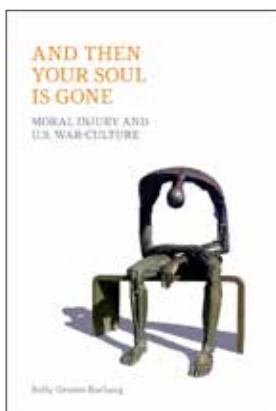
Listen! David Hartsough and friends created a 50-minute audio file with powerful excerpts of **Martin Luther King's sermons and speeches on peace, war, poverty and nonviolence**—now available at Peaceworkers:

<https://peaceworkersus.org/books/martin-luther-king-jr/>

• • • •

"King's message is as relevant for us today as it was over 50 years ago! Hope you will find these excerpts of King's talks as inspirational as I do. Please share widely!"

—David Hartsough
(still active in working to build the "beloved community")



AND THEN YOUR SOUL IS GONE

MORAL INJURY AND U.S. WAR-CULTURE

Kelly Denton-Borhaug
([Equinox Publishing](#), 2021)

Reviewed by Jim Wohlgenuth

This book is important for all of us who knew, when we got out of the military and left war behind, that something was different. Something did not fit. We did not fit. Even if we were not injured or subjected to a traumatic event, we felt different. We *were* different.

Dr. Kelly Denton-Borhaug, Professor in the Global Religions Department at Moravian University in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, has been investigating moral injury, writing about it, listening to veterans, and working with veterans' groups for over seven years.

After learning about her work on moral injury during a session of the 2022 Veterans For Peace convention, I invited Dr. Denton-Borhaug onto the Veterans for Peace Radio Hour podcast [[Sound Cloud](#) and Spotify] to talk about moral injury.

Reading this book made me realize and identify some of the demons I was carrying with me. Though the VA had diagnosed me with PTSD, there was no one incident, event, experience that put me over the edge. Nevertheless, I knew something had happened to me. Why did I break down when the NVA marched into Saigon in '75, bringing home the

reality of the waste? Why would I be hitting the ground at every backfire, even though I had never been in an actual combat situation? How come I had to walk out of *Apocalypse Now* to sit in the lobby of the theater smoking cigarettes while my wife and our friends watched the rest of the movie? Why did I turn my back on the fireworks at our friends' lake house? Why would I wake up in cold sweats fearing my ship, the *Westchester County*, was heading back up the rivers? Why, to this day, do I have spells of crushing sadness?

Dr. Denton-Borhaug uses case studies, tons of research, and her own perspective of the United States to uncover and identify the atrocity of moral injury. Her exploration of war culture revealed to me that not only am I likely suffering from moral injury, but most of the people in this country could very well be suffering.

The book helped me pinpoint the series of experiences I had and link them to the way I feel now, by prompting me to make a list of feelings, attitudes, actions, and reactions that make me different, all of which can be linked back to my experience in the Navy and in Viet Nam. The book also helped me understand that even after 50 years my feelings could be increasing—that time does not heal all wounds.

Dr. Denton-Borhaug explains how the violent nature of the U.S. war culture has sacralized war-making and military service. She shows how the military industrial complex, the media, our churches, our schools, and our sports programs actively participate and contribute to elevating this U.S. war culture. She shows how it seeps into every corner of our society and culture.

And Then Your Soul Is Gone is an easy and understandable read, even while digging into the complexities of our militaristic psyche. Knowing a little better now what is going on with me and why, after 50 years, these feelings have not abated, I was encouraged to find a local VA-sponsored moral injury group.

I really cannot overstate the importance of this book for anyone suffering from PTSD and moral injury. Please read it and share it with those who may not understand your feelings but want to try.

If you are interested in developing a veterans or civilian "discussion group" in your area to learn and talk about moral injury, you can contact Dr. Kelly Denton-Borhaug at denton-Borhaugk@moravian.edu. Read her bio on her university page: www.moravian.edu/religion/faculty/denton-borhaug

Jim Wohlgenuth is a veteran of the U.S. Navy (1968–72, on the USS *Westchester County LST 1167*, and *Pt. Defiance LSD 31*). He is a member of VVAW and Veterans For Peace, and co-host of the *Veterans For Peace Radio Hour* podcast and radio show on Radio Free Nashville.



PAIN IS WEAKNESS LEAVING THE BODY

A MARINE'S UNBECOMING

Lyle Jeremy Rubin
([Bold Type Books](#), 2022)

Recommended by Jim Brasile

I attended this author's book talk and highly recommend his book. [Lyle Jeremy Rubin](#) served as a signal intelligence officer who led foot patrols in Afghanistan. He now has many important and thoughtful things to say about the true costs of war. Rubin's website is lylejeremyrubin.com.



FIGHTING THE BAD WAR (STORIES)

Angelo Presicci

(Night Horn Books, 2021)

From the web: "A native of North Tonawanda, New York, Angelo Presicci arrived in Vietnam in August, 1966 and served as a reconnaissance scout and Armored Personnel commander with the 11th Armored Cavalry. He was awarded a

Combat Infantry Badge and Bronze Star with V for valor, and was honorably discharged in November 1967. Presicci went on to earn his B.A. from UCLA and teaching credential from Long Beach State. He was active in the anti-war and gay rights movements. In 1973, he joined the Peace Corps and spent two years teaching English as a Second Language in a village in Zaire (Congo). He and his husband currently make their homes in San Francisco and Grass Valley, California." Presicci's collection is a literary work of true, intimate war stories related with sensitivity and intelligence. [More info on the VFP website.](#)

Poisoning the troops

Passage of PACT Act spurs recollection of author's 2000 comparison of toxic exposures in Viet Nam and Gulf wars

In August 2022, the PACT Act became law after a long and bitter struggle. ... The new law expands health care and benefits for veterans exposed to burn pits and more than 20 toxic substances. It applies to veterans of the Viet Nam war, Gulf war, and post-9/11 eras. It also provides additional coverage for those exposed to Agent Orange and radiation.

I've been tracking this subject since the 1970s, and in 2000 was prompted to write an article about it. Now, in light of the new law concerning toxic hazards, I thought it only appropriate to bring it to the attention of our VFP members. My research focused on the history of this controversial and deadly problem: its origins and how it evolved over time.

Fred Milano – milanofa@appstate.edu

[Download the PDF of Fred Milano's article, "Gulf War Syndrome: The 'Agent Orange' of the Nineties," originally published in International Social Science Review Vol. 75, Nos. 1 & 2 \(2000\).](#)

RELATED ARTICLE: "The VA is unprepared for a flood of claims from veterans disabled by toxic exposure" write Suzanne Gordon and Steve Early in "[PACT Act Problems](#)" *The Progressive*, April 6, 2023.

Surviving the Long Wars: 2023 Veteran Art Triennial

March 2023 saw the 20th anniversary of the invasion of Iraq, a momentous event that has shaped the world ever since. A group of veteran artists, Iraqi artists, and others directly impacted by legacies of U.S. militarism came together to mark this somber occasion with a summit dedicated to unpacking and examining what "Surviving the Long Wars" has meant to soldiers and civilians oppressed by America's long wars of counterinsurgency:

"As generations of people work to heal from the trauma wrought by adventurism abroad and repression at home, we look to artists, healers, and creative cultural practitioners to set the stage for meaningful discourse and collective healing as we chart a new path forward."

The **Surviving the Long Wars Summit** took place in mid-March, but folks can still visit the three exhibits of the **2023 Veteran Art Triennial**, featuring art by over forty-five veterans and impacted civilians, until July 9, 2023. Find more information [here](#).



Sutured (2019) by Ruth Kaneko (Kanaka Wahine)
[US Army veteran], courtesy of the artist.

In Sutured, Kaneko dismantles the heroic ideals of warfare by deconstructing and re-collaging materials from her old Army uniforms and medic aid bags. Using a sutured technique, the reconstructed pieces visualize the emotional and physical wounds of war and serve as a metaphor for the process of healing through confronting the past. Through the work, Kaneko invites viewers to consider the human cost of conflict and the need for peace and healing.

Kaneko's work is part of the "Unlikely Entanglements" exhibit at Hyde Park Art Center (through July 9, 2023), one of three shows in the 2023 Veteran Art Triennial. For more information, see <https://survivingthelongwars.online/>



AND WHAT WILL WE SING?

(POEMS)

Buff Whitman-Bradley

(Kelsay Books, 2022)

Review by Dee Knight: "Mourning the Present, Celebrating the Future"

Most vets and antiwarriors know Buff Whitman-Bradley for his work as producer of the original *Courage To Resist Audio Project*, or for the oral history book, *About Face: Military Resisters Turn Against War*, a set of incisive interviews he did together with Sarah Lazare and Cynthia Whitman-Bradley. In other words, we know Buff for his powerful listening, and his ability to condense the passions people express, especially about war experience.

Buff and his wife Cynthia also produced the documentary film *Outside In*, about San Quentin's death row; and Buff was a member of the film collective that produced *Por Que Venimos* (Why We Come), in which undocumented immigrants tell their stories.

There's a pattern here. It's notable in his poetry. Buff has razor-sharp hearing and vision. In his poetry it shows up in special words and word mixing, in which he is "desperately hoping to fill the void left behind by the departure of human decency."

In one poem he says, "Beauty keeps showing up for work in this bruised and battered world." Buff shows up to find it. He sees "a small, bent, gray man

dressed in greasy, ragged clothing" who's "dragging a wooden pallet, piled high with overstuffed black trash bags, along the sidewalk ... pulling his load like the ant impossibly towing the elephant."

Buff notices bereft children whose parents have been taken to jail "for the crime of dreaming without the proper papers. The children are drowning in sorrow ... as they reach desperately for the arms that are not there."

As he thinks about "the young soldiers of Guantanamo," he tries "to imagine the moral crises they may have undergone, and the collateral damage to their souls." He tries to "imagine surreptitious rebellions of kindness—a smuggled pencil a friendly word a bit of extra food; a hand reaching out from the wreckage of the self."

He can "imagine the nightmares of cruelty those young men carry with them into their civilian lives." He knows that "for generations we have filled the haunted streets with the discarded veterans of our perverse wars."

Buff can even make poetry of the futility of his own windmill tilting:

*People ask me do I think blocking
doorways can stop a war...
To be honest, ... No I'm not convinced
Imperial America
Is much affected by what a couple of
dozen peace activists do ...*

And then he stubbornly answers:

*And yet if all of us stop lighting even
these tiny signal fires in the fog
We may forever lose the way home.*

Buff's relentless stubbornness leads to a dawn of optimism:

*What will we do when justice wins?
What will we do when empire fails?
What will we do when the jailers are
jailed?
What will we do? Raise a joyous din
And build the world we've hungered for
With neighbors, friends, and kids galore.*

Buff soberly laments that "Walt Whitman's shade wanders lost in

America/ And does not hear America singing." But still he sings, both mournfully and optimistically, that

*"for thousands of years ordinary people
whose identities have evaporated
like dew from early morning grasses
have been committing acts of resistance
that are now unremembered
And we know that those seemingly
ephemeral actions do not vanish
but accumulate in a growing mass
Each fraction of a gram added to the
bulk of all the others
Until the day finally comes when the
weight is great enough
To flip the world
And none of us can say for certain
That tomorrow will not be that day.*

Ephemeral means tiny and hard to notice. But Buff can see that tiny can be large. He knows the grams and cells are joining and merging and growing, so that day we long for will suddenly bring the dawn of a new day.

Dee Knight is author of *My Whirlwind Lives: Navigating Decades of Storms*.



DUST CHILD

(A NOVEL)

Nguyen Phan Que Mai

(Algonquin Books, 2023)

Recommended by Dan Shea:

This incredibly talented writer and social justice warrior from Viet Nam has just released a second novel, *Dust Child*. ... Nguyen Phan Que Mai is an unstoppable force for good in the world.

A suspenseful and moving saga about family secrets, hidden trauma, and the overriding power of forgiveness.

A message from VFP Advisory Board Member John Dear

Dear Friends,

On December 1, 2023, Orbis Books will publish my new book, *The Gospel of Peace: A Commentary on Matthew, Mark and Luke from the Perspective of Nonviolence*, the first ever commentary on the synoptic Gospels from the perspective of active nonviolence, in the tradition of Gandhi and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. . . . [practiced and taught by Jesus].

Next year, I embark on a national book tour, from January–April, 2024, to talk about *The Gospel of Peace*. So I am currently seeking hosting, churches, colleges or community groups sometime in early 2024.

If you are interested in receiving more information about how you can help support my upcoming tour by organizing a book reading event, please email me at john@beatitudescenter.org with your location and all your contact info. Also, please keep this effort to speak and write about Gospel nonviolence in your prayers. May the God of peace bless us all to be peacemakers!

John Dear



FATHER JOHN DEAR has been working for justice and disarmament and teaching peace and nonviolence for over four decades. The author of 40 books and a long time activist, he is the executive director of www.beatitudescenter.org where he hosts and offers zooms on Jesus and Gospel peacemaking. He was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize many times, including by Archbishop Desmond Tutu. (see www.johndear.org) A former Jesuit, he is a priest of the Diocese of Monterey, California, and is a member of the VFP National Advisory Board.



WAR IN UKRAINE

MAKING SENSE OF A
SENSELESS CONFLICT

Medea Benjamin &
Nicolas J. S. Davies

(O/R Books, 2022)

From the publisher's website:

Russia's brutal February 2022 invasion of Ukraine has attracted widespread condemnation across the West. Government and media circles present the conflict as a simple dichotomy between an evil empire and an innocent victim. In this concise, accessible and highly informative primer, the authors insist the picture is more complicated.

WHAT WE'RE READING NOW

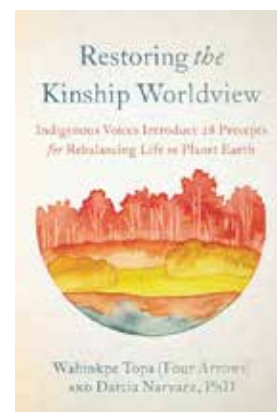
VFP Be the Change book club

RESTORING THE KINSHIP WORLDVIEW

INDIGENOUS VOICES INTRODUCE 28
PRECEPTS FOR REBALANCING LIFE
ON PLANET EARTH

Wahinkpe Topa (Four Arrows) &
Darcia Narvaez, Ph.D.

([North Atlantic Books](http://NorthAtlanticBooks.com), 2022)



We are loving this book. The wisdom is deep; the authors' conversations illuminating and insightful. Organized under 28 interrelated precepts, the two authors take turns reflecting on short passages they have selected from the writings of past and present Indigenous leaders to illustrate a worldview that sees humans as being inseparable from nature. We agree that "the Indigenous worldview and the wisdom it contains is critical for human survival and the well-being of future generations."

LISTEN ONLINE

TO END CONFLICT, WE MUST TRANSFORM IT (TIM PHILLIPS)

BARATUNDE THURSTON, [HOW TO CITIZEN PODCAST](http://HowToCitizenPodcast.com)

Recommended by Greg Corning, a participant in the VFP Be the Change book club

"More than hopeful. A key point for me: To end conflict, opponents do not have to agree with or compromise with each others' beliefs; they *only* have to agree that they want to end the conflict."



Daniel Ellsberg ...cont. from page 2

Dan concluded his letter with these words:

I'm happy to know that millions of people—including all those friends and comrades to whom I address this message!—have the wisdom, the dedication and the moral courage to carry on with these causes, and to work unceasingly for the survival of our planet and its creatures.

I'm enormously grateful to have had the privilege of knowing and working with such people, past and present. That's among the most treasured aspects of my very privileged and very lucky life. I want to thank you all for the love and support you have given me in so many ways. Your dedication, courage, and determination to act have inspired and sustained my own efforts.

My wish for you is that at the end of your days you will feel as much joy and gratitude as I do now.

Love, Dan

Dan Ellsberg's friends and supporters have been showing their love and appreciation for him in many different ways since they got the news, grateful for the opportunity to honor him while he is still alive. Some, including [VFP poet/author W.D. Ehrhart](#), have shared personal reflections on how his life touched theirs.

The Ellsberg Initiative for Peace and Democracy and the RootsAction Education Fund co-sponsored Daniel Ellsberg Week April 24–30—a week of education and action in support of whistleblowers and peacemakers. People called on state and local governments around the country to honor the spirit of difficult truth-telling by declaring Daniel Ellsberg Week.

Though April 24–30 has come and gone, it's never too late to initiate or participate in education and actions to ensure Dan's legacy endures. [This Defuse Nuclear War web page](#) is one place you can go for links to various Ellsberg writings, podcasts, and videos featuring Daniel Ellsberg and about his legacy. Dan's own website is [here](#).

3407 S. Jefferson Ave. #219, St. Louis, MO 63118
Ph: 314-725-6005 • Fax: 314-227-1981 • veteransforpeace.org

Veterans For Peace is a global organization of military veterans and allies whose collective efforts are to build a culture of peace by using our experiences and lifting our voices. We inform the public of the true causes of war and the enormous costs of wars, with an obligation to heal the wounds of wars. Our network is composed of over 140 chapters worldwide whose work includes: educating the public, advocating dismantling the war economy, providing services that assist veterans and victims of war, and most significant, working to end all wars.

Statement of Purpose

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

- To increase public awareness of the causes and costs of war
- To restrain our governments from intervening, overtly and covertly, in the internal affairs of other nations
- To resist racism and repression in our home communities
- To oppose the militarization of law enforcement
- To end the arms race and to reduce and eventually eliminate nuclear weapons
- To seek justice for veterans and victims of war
- To abolish war as an instrument of national policy.

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

Veterans For Peace Code of Conduct

~ a living document, to be updated as we learn ~

1. We will use our anger at injustice as a positive, nonviolent force for change.
2. We will approach every encounter, with fellow members and the public, with positivity and mindfulness, and with the assumption that concerns raised are coming from a positive place and present a learning opportunity.
3. Our attitude, as conveyed through our words, symbols and actions, will be one of openness, friendliness, and respect toward all people we encounter.
4. All members have an important role to play within Veterans For Peace, regardless of previous military rank, branch, or combat experience. We will respect one another as equal parts of a whole.
5. We will not assault, verbally, in person, or online, anyone, to include fellow members and those who oppose or disagree with us, even if they assault us. This does not preclude a member's right to defend him or herself against a physical attack.
6. In keeping with our commitment to achieving our goals through nonviolent means, there is an expectation that members will not carry weapons with them to VFP events or while representing VFP, regardless of the laws in their location.
7. We will follow the directions of the designated coordinators during public actions organized on behalf of VFP.
8. We will use democratic principles within our organization to ensure an open, fair, inclusive, and transparent environment.
9. We will speak as members of VFP but not for VFP, unless designated as a spokesperson for VFP. All members are free to speak for themselves or on behalf of their chapter as appropriate.
10. Sexist, racist, homophobic, ageist, transphobic, gender discriminatory, and all other discriminatory language and actions are common within the military; they are not acceptable within VFP.
11. Our words and actions will maintain the political and financial independence of VFP.
12. To achieve the above goals, we will also engage in "active listening"; that is, fully concentrating on what is being said rather than just passively "hearing" the message of the speaker.



VETERANS FOR PEACE CONVENTION

Please join us for the 2023 VFP Online Convention!

“Choose Peace: Stand Up! Speak Out!”

Friday, August 25–Sunday, August 27

[Registration is now open for the 2023 convention!](#) The convention will be held online again this year, because we have had such great success with virtual conventions allowing both increased attendance and more opportunities to hear from speakers around the globe. We are happy that hundreds of our members and guests will be able to join the gathering without the environmental impacts (and health risks) of traveling. There are many international issues that need our attention and being able to connect globally is advantageous.

We are excited to announce our 2023 theme: *Choose Peace: Stand Up! Speak Out!* Convention planners are in the process of identifying featured speakers and working to ensure a great convention experience overall. In addition to the annual

membership meeting, we promise great plenaries and poetry, along with plenty of opportunities for members to connect in social rooms and discussion groups.

Thank you to all the folks who took the time to fill out the 2022 convention evaluation form. We are taking your comments into consideration as we plan this year's convention.

VFP staff will be updating the website in coming weeks with more information, and we will do our best to make sure that everyone who wants to participate will have the technological support needed to do so. Stay tuned for more details!

Looking forward to seeing you in August,
2023 VFP Convention Committee

Be a “Recurring Donor”

- Easy, automatic
- Won't be missed
- Helps stabilize VFP budget
- Adds up and makes a difference at the end of the year

Suggested donation:

The cost of one cup of coffee a week





Veterans For Peace
3407 S. Jefferson Ave. #219
Saint Louis, MO 63118



Veterans For Peace members hold banner at the SAY NO TO ENDLESS U.S. WARS! protest and rally on March 18, 2023, in Washington, D.C. On the left is Jim Rine of Detroit; on the right, Paul Dordal of Pittsburgh. Photo: Barry Riesch