SUPPORT THE TROOPS? NEWSLETTER #1, October 15, 2013. Compiled by Dick Bennett for Culture of Peace and Justice.

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The editors and contributors to this volume believe that the practice of nonviolence is at the center of what it means to follow Jesus [exemplar of pacifism—Dick]. They do not present an argument for Christian nonviolence so much as answer questions and objections which have long been put to Christian pacifists, such as: Isn’t pacifism passive? What about the protection of third-party innocents? What would you do if someone were attacking a loved one? What about Hitler? Must Christian pacifists reject police force? What about war and violence in the Old Testament? The contributors to the book come from Methodist, Wesleyan, nondenominational, Church of Christ, Catholic and Episcopal traditions as well as the peace churches. The authors stand upon the shoulders of John Howard Yoder, Walter Wink and Stanley Hauerwas.

Chapter Six, “What about Those Men and Women Who Gave Up Their Lives so that You and I Could Be Free? On Killing for Freedom” by Justin Barringer. Examines and rejects the “freedom” gained through violence and supports “true freedom”: Christian freedom that is possible only through God as epitomized in Jesus and illustrated by Martin Luther King, Jr., and that rejects killing. –Dick

EDWARD HERMAN, SUPPORT TROOPS, SUPPORT WAR
Support Our Troops, Our War, and Our War Criminals by Edward S. Herman / April 1st, 2013

The call to “support our troops,” or “our boys,” is really an appeal to support the war in which the troops are engaged. Critics of the war would say that if the war is unjustified, possibly even a criminal enterprise in violation of international law at several levels, as was so clearly true of the Iraq war, supporting the troops and war is to support international criminality. The proper support of our troops and boys therefore is to oppose the war and fight to get our boys (and girls) out before they can kill or be killed while participating in such a criminal enterprise.

Naturally, this critical view of supporting our troops gets little play in the propaganda system, and the propaganda design of the formula “support our troops” is probably effective in the environment of patriotic fervor that wars engender. But the hypocrisy here runs deep. Many of the threads of hypocrisy woven into this propaganda fabric stem from the fact that the political and military establishments care very little about the welfare of our boys. The really bad thing about their deaths, injuries and suffering is the resultant negative publicity and possible increased financial costs of greater attention to their needs that might limit military budget size and flexibility. There has been a notorious struggle over the damage our boys have suffered in Iraq and
Afghanistan from economies in the protective equipment provided to them; from the damaging psychological effects of multiple tours of duty; from the reluctance to recognize the symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and the seriousness of traumatic brain injury (TBI); and the scandals reflecting lagged and poor care of personnel back home and in need of medical care.

In earlier years, also, it was a long struggle to get recognition of the damage suffered by U.S. troops in Vietnam from the massive chemical warfare used there, where, of course, the damage to U.S. personnel was only a small fraction of that suffered by the Vietnamese people, still unacknowledged and unrectified by the responsible criminal state. The ironical usage of “MIA” to mean “missing in America,” referring to war veterans in a sad state of indigence and homelessness at home, also goes back at least to the Vietnam and post-Vietnam war days. There are many MIAs in the United States today, and a dramatic figure that did get some publicity was that more military personnel committed suicide than were killed in combat in Afghanistan in 2012 (349 versus 295).

It is enlightening also that there is an inverse correlation between aggressively supporting U.S. wars and supporting our troops with generous funding of their medical care and post-service education and general welfare. This is plausible. The bulk of service personnel are drawn from that 47 percent of the population that Mitt Romney derided as government-dependent and not “job creators.” (The heads of Lockheed Martin, General Dynamics, Ratheon and Textron are job creators.) Romney, Paul Ryan, George Bush, John Boehner (etc.) and their monied base are fighting a major battle to diminish or terminate the welfare state, and many Democrats as well as Republicans are with them, so that containing what amounts to welfare state benefits to our boys with PTSD and otherwise in distress is entirely logical.

Of course, along with “support our troops” there is an implicit “support our torturers and higher level war criminals.” This flows from the overwhelming and increasingly centralized power in the hands of the dominant elite, including the military-industrial complex (MIC) and leading politicians, and an associated remarkable level of self-righteousness. Anything we do is tolerable because we are not only strong and the global policeman, but also good and always well-intentioned, and are therefore not to be questioned when we do abroad precisely what we condemn in target states. We can support Saddam Hussein and even provide him with “weapons of mass destruction”, when he is doing us a service in attacking Iran, even when he is using chemical weapons there; and with no seeming sense of shame or guilt we can quickly turn him into “another Hitler” when he disobeys orders. We can help the Shah of Iran build a nuclear capability, but threaten war when his successor regime tries to do what was encouraged with the Shah; and again, with utter self-righteousness. It testifies to the greatness of the Western propaganda system that these shifts and mind-boggling double standards can occur without the slightest pause or recognition or any need for explanation or apology.

The really high level war criminals like Bush, Blair, and Obama can get away with anything, not only because they are at the pinnacle of power and can set their own rules, but also because they
dominate the external institutions that supposedly make the rule of law international, but fail to do so. One of the prettiest cases is, of course, the invasion of Iraq in March 2003, an act matching Hitler’s 1939 invasion of Poland, and resulting in a million or more Iraqi deaths. Although this was a blatant violation of the most fundamental principle of the UN Charter, while UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan did point out that the invasion was “illegal” he didn’t express great anger or suggest that the invaders be expelled or even reprimanded. He got on board the aggression ship, as did the Western great powers (with the Russians and Chinese essentially just sitting there watching).

But the sick comedy of “international law” rode on, with the UN, International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and International Criminal Court (ICC) playing their assigned role by applying it whenever the Big Aggressor or one of his leading allies felt the application of legal principles to be useful. The Big A and his Little Aggressor client Israel wanted a legal input for Darfur, but not for the Democratic Republic of the Congo, invaded by Rwanda and Uganda, whose leaders were Big Aggressor clients, and so it was—Sudan’s al-Bashir was indicted by the ICC, Rwandan and Ugandan leaders were exempt. Big A and allies wanted legal authority for attacking Libya, but not Bahrain, so the ICC and United Nations Security Council (UNSC) obliged with indictments for Gaddafi and sons, silence on Bahrain. The Big Aggressor wants international law applied to Syria, so Navi Pillay, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, who along with her predecessor Louise Arbour didn’t lift a finger in the case of the Iraq invasion-occupation, which produced a million dead and 4 million refugees, now repeatedly urges the UNSC to call on the ICC to investigate Bashir al-Assad’s war crimes in Syria. Pillay played the same role in the case of Libya, in collaboration with the ICC, greasing the skids for a NATO military attack on Libya and the ouster and murder of Gaddafi.

The role of the “international community” (in the sense of the leadership of the Western great powers and their clients, not the underlying populations) was dramatically exhibited in giving the newly elected U.S. President Barack Obama the Nobel Peace prize in 2009. He hadn’t done anything whatsoever for peace at that time, but gave the appearance of a leader more moderate than Bush and Cheney. A silly award, but once again a giveaway on the supportive-groveling qualities of Western political/cultural institutions. (Can you imagine the Nobel Committee giving the award to Amira Hass, Malalai Joya, Kathy Kelly, or Richard Falk, people actually making genuine personal sacrifices in the interest of peace?) Honest analysis and morality would have recognized that Obama was going to be a major war criminal by structural necessity, embedded as he was in a permanent war political economy where political survival, let alone success, required the commission of war crimes. Obama soon found that political success demanded killing foreigners; that budget enlargement for killing was easy, but spending for progressive civilian needs was difficult and would anger powerful people. He quickly adapted to being a warrior president, his seemingly most proud accomplishment being the killing of bin-Laden.

Obama has played all the war cards. He has lauded the Vietnam War as a noble enterprise and is
pleased to participate in and laud a memorial that celebrates it. Like Bush he loves to speak to
military cadres where he can draw resounding applause with patriotic and war rhetoric, although
increasing numbers of liberal Democrats have gotten on board his war-oriented ship of state and
also find his warrior image and actions agreeable. He has gone somewhat beyond Bush in
institutionalizing government rights to invade privacy, closing down information access, and
criminalizing whistle-blowing. His drone war policy and claimed right to assassinate even U.S.
citizens based on executive decision alone breaks new ground in criminality and in enlarging the
scope of acceptable war crimes. He has also refused to prosecute U.S. torturers and high level war
criminals, violating earlier promises but, more importantly, violating international law and
effectively ending the rule of law. We need change we can believe in, but Obama is giving us
compromise and literal regression that we must vigorously oppose.

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regulatory issues as well as political economy and the media. Read other articles by Edward.
This article was posted on Monday, April 1st, 2013 at 8:01am and is filed under Crimes against
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Nam, War Crimes.

SUPPORT THE TROOPS?
From Veterans for Peace. Posted by: "david sladky" spotshere@hotmail.com
Fri Jan 27, 2012 10:59 am (PST)
http://blackagendareport.com/content/us-military-global-force-not-good

Wed, 01/25/2012 - 02:04 — Bruce A. Dixon

A Black Agenda Radio commentary by BAR managing editor Bruce A. Dixon

In official folklore, the US armed forces are the virtuous repositories of honor, probity and moral
virtue. But the real history and culture of the US military, from invading Spanish Florida to
prevent its being a refuge for escaped slaves, to Wounded Knee, to massacres in Haiti and
Central America, to Fallujah and marines pissing on Afghan corpses, are something else
altogether.

The US Military: A Global Force, But Not For Good
A Black Agenda Radio commentary by BAR managing editor Bruce A. Dixon
“On November 19, 2005 a squad of US Marines murdered 24 unarmed Iraqi civilians including 9 children...”

No State of the Union address is complete without multiple standing-ovation references to the steadfast courage, self-sacrifice and honor of the men and women serving in the uniform of these United States. But while some or all of these characteristics can doubtless be found among active duty members of the US military, they are notably absent among its military and civilian leaders, and consistently contradicted by the military's own longstanding traditions.

[Haditha Massacre-D] On November 19, 2005 a squad of US Marines murdered 24 unarmed Iraqi civilians including 9 children, in cold blood, not with shrapnel or random crossfire, but mostly with well-aimed rifle shots to the head and chest indoors and at close range. Three officers received written reprimands for actions after the incident, and charges were filed, then dropped against seven of eight marines. On January 24 staff sergeant Frank Wuteridge, the only remaining marine charged in the case accepted a plea deal that lets him off with a reduction in rank to private.

At the same time that killers are released with perfunctory wrist slaps, US army private Bradley Manning, a genuine hero, endures persecution and solitary confinement for releasing documentary evidence of numerous diplomatic and military atrocities, including actual film of a US helicopter gunship mowing down unarmed Iraqi civilians including two Reuters cameramen and the children of a man who stopped his family car to help the people he saw bleeding in the street.

“That's what he gets,” oinks a self-righteous American military voice on the tape, “for bringing his kids...” to a firefight.”

“The navy currently runs an ad campaign branding itself “a global force for good.” Few claims could be more deceitful.”

Lying, justifying and covering up, not honor and self-sacrifice, seem to be guiding principles of US military and political leadership, the sure and certain paths to a successful career. When up-and-coming army Major Colin Powell was detailed to look into reports of atrocities committed by the Americal Division, he knew what was expected of him. Powell minimized and dismissed the reports, overlooking among other things the massacre of hundreds of Vietnamese civilians at a place called My Lai. Twenty years later, as chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff during the US invasion of Panama, Powell ordered the bombing from the air of an undefended, largely black civilian neighborhood of Panama City in which hundreds were killed, in order to prevent them from coming into the streets to support Panamanian president Noriega.

Since Wounded Knee, since the slave and Indian-hunting expeditions of Andrew Jackson, these have been the real traditions of the US military. The navy currently runs an ad campaign branding itself “a global force for good.” Few claims could be more deceitful. The military has plenty of doctors, engineers and even chaplains. But its main jobs aren't building things, healing people or telling the truth. The core job descriptions of the US military and their civilian leaders are breaking things, killing people, and lying about it. They are indeed a global force. But not an honorable one. And not for good.


Bruce A. Dixon is managing editor at Black Agenda Report, and lives and works in Marietta GA, where he's on the state committee of the Georgia Green Party.
Those Who Say "I Support the Troops" Should Just Stop, Out of Respect for the Troops  By Michael Moore

I don't support the troops, America, and neither do you. I am tired of the ruse we are playing on these brave citizens in our armed forces. And guess what -- a lot of these soldiers and sailors and airmen and Marines see right through the bull**** of those words, "I support the troops!," spoken by Americans with such false sincerity -- false because our actions don't match our words. These young men and women sign up to risk their very lives to protect us -- and this is what they get in return:

1. They get sent off to wars that have NOTHING to do with defending America or saving our lives. They are used as pawns so that the military-industrial complex can make billions of dollars and the rich here can expand their empire. By "supporting the troops," that means I'm supposed to shut up, don't ask questions, do nothing to stop the madness, and sit by and watch thousands of them die? Well, I've done an awful lot to try and end this. But the only way you can honestly say you support the troops is to work night and day to get them out of these hell holes they've been sent to. And what have I done this week to bring the troops home? Nothing. So if I say "I support the troops," don't believe me -- I clearly don't support the troops because I've got more important things to do today, like return an iPhone that doesn't work and take my car in for a tune up.

2. While the troops we claim to "support" are serving their country, bankers who say they too "support the troops," *foreclose on the actual homes of these soldiers and evict their families while they are overseas!* Have I gone and stood in front of the sheriff's deputy as he is throwing a military family out of their home? No. And there's your proof that I
don't "support the troops," because if I did, I would organize mass sit-ins to block the doors of these homes. Instead, I'm having Chilean sea bass tonight.

3. How many of you who say you "support the troops" have visited a VA hospital to bring aid and comfort to the sick and wounded? I haven't. How many of you have any clue what it's like to deal with the VA? I don't. Therefore, you would be safe to say that I don't "support the troops," and neither do you.

4. Who amongst you big enthusiastic "supporters of the troops" can tell me the approximate number of service women who have been raped while in the military? Answer: 19,000 (mostly) female troops are raped or sexually assaulted every year by fellow American troops. What have you or I done to bring these criminals to justice? What's that you say -- out of sight, out of mind? These women have suffered, and I've done nothing. So don't ever let me get away with telling you I "support the troops" because, sadly, I don't. And neither do you.

5. Help a homeless vet today? How 'bout yesterday? Last week? Last year? Ever? But I thought you "support the troops"? The number of homeless veterans is staggering -- on any given night, at least 60,000 veterans are sleeping on the streets of the country that proudly "supports the troops." This is disgraceful and shameful, isn't it? And it exposes all those "troop supporters" who always vote against social programs that would help these veterans. Tonight there are at least 12,700 Iraq/Afghanistan veterans homeless and sleeping on the street. I've never lent a helping hand to one of the many vets I've seen sleeping on the street. I can't bear to look, and I walk past them very quickly. That's called not "supporting the troops," which, I guess, I don't -- and neither do you.

6. And you know, the beautiful thing about all this "support" you and I have been giving the troops -- they feel this love and support so much, a record number of them are killing themselves every single week. In fact, there are now more soldiers killing themselves than soldiers being killed in combat (323 suicides in 2012 through November vs. about 210 combat deaths). Yes, you are more likely to die by your own hand in the United States military than by al Qaeda or the Taliban. And an estimated eighteen veterans kill themselves each day, or one in five of all U.S. suicides -- though no one really knows because we don't bother to keep track. Now, that's what I call support! These troops are really feeling the love, people! Lemme hear you say it again: "I support the troops!" Louder! "I SUPPORT THE TROOPS!!" There, that's better. I'm sure they heard us. Don't forget to fly our
flag, wear your flag lapel pin, and never, ever let a service member pass you by without saying, "Thank you for your service!" I'm sure that's all they need to keep from putting a bullet in their heads. Do your best to keep your "support" up for the troops because, God knows, I certainly can't any longer.

I don't "support the troops" or any of those other hollow and hypocritical platitudes uttered by Republicans and frightened Democrats. Here's what I do support: I support them coming home. I support them being treated well. I support peace, and I beg any young person reading this who's thinking of joining the armed forces to please reconsider. Our war department has done little to show you they won't recklessly put your young life in harm's way for a cause that has nothing to do with what you signed up for. They will not help you once they've used you and spit you back into society. If you're a woman, they will not protect you from rapists in their ranks. And because you have a conscience and you know right from wrong, you do not want yourself being used to kill civilians in other countries who never did anything to hurt us. We are currently involved in at least a half-dozen military actions around the world. Don't become the next statistic so that General Electric can post another record profit -- while paying no taxes -- taxes that otherwise would be paying for the artificial leg that they've kept you waiting for months to receive.

I support you, and will try to do more to be there for you. And the best way you can support me -- and the ideals our country says it believes in -- is to get out of the military as soon as you can and never look back.

And please, next time some "supporter of the troops" says to you with that concerned look on their face, "I thank you for your service," you have my permission to punch their lights out (figuratively speaking, of course).

(There is something I've done to support the troops -- other than help lead the effort to stop these senseless wars. At the movie theater I run in Michigan, I became the first person in town to institute an affirmative action plan for hiring returning Iraq/Afghanistan vets. I am working to get more businesses in town to join with me in this effort to find jobs for these returning soldiers. I also let all service members in to the movies for free, everyday.)
No, thanks: Stop saying “support the troops”

Compulsory patriotism does nothing for soldiers who risk their lives -- but props up those who profit from war

BY STEVEN SALAITA  www.salon.com/2013/08/25/

TOPICS: SUPPORT THE TROOPS, WAR, MILITARY-INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX, EDITOR'S PICKS, SOCIAL NEWS, BUSINESS NEWS, LIFE NEWS, NEWS

My 16-month-old son was having a bad day. When he doesn’t sleep in the car, he usually points and babbles his approval of all the wonderful things babies notice that completely escape adult attention. On this afternoon, though, he was teething and hungry, a lethal scenario for an energetic youngster strapped into a high-tech seating apparatus (approved and installed, of course, by the state).

When it became clear he couldn’t, or wouldn’t, sleep it out, my wife and I stopped at a nondescript exit, the kind one finds every six miles in the South, with two gas stations and three abandoned buildings (if
you’re lucky, you also get a Hampton Inn and Cracker Barrel). While she tended to the baby, I entered a convenience store — one of those squat, glass and plastic rectangles that looks like a Sears & Roebuck erector set — praying it would have something other than beer, cigarettes and beef jerky.

I settled on two Kraft mozzarella sticks, resisting the urge to purchase for myself a shiny red can of Four Loko.

“That’ll be $1.82,” the lady at the counter cheerily informed me. After I handed her her two ones, she asked, “Would you like to donate your change to the troops?” I noticed a jar with “support our troops” taped to it in handwritten ink.

“No, thank you,” I answered firmly.

“Well … OK, then, sir,” she responded in subtle reproach, her smile not quite so ascendant anymore. “You have a good day now.”

She had good reason to be disappointed. The vast majority of customers, I imagine, spare a few dimes and pennies for so important a cause. Her response evinced more shock than anger. She wasn’t expecting a refusal of 18 cents, even from a guy who looks very much like those responsible for the danger to our troops.

Besides, nobody likes to have their altruism invalidated by a recalcitrant or ungrateful audience.

I could have asked how the donations would be used, but no matter the answer I would have kept my 18 cents. I don’t consider patriotism a beneficent force, for it asks us to exhibit loyalty to nation-states that never fully accommodate their entire populations. In recent years I’ve grown fatigued of appeals on behalf of the troops, which intensify in proportion to the belligerence or potential unpopularity of the imperial adventure du jour.

SERVICE

Dick Bennett

Members of the military are called “service members.” What “service” are you in, people are asked — Navy? Army? Air Force? How did such exclusive use for such an extraordinarily important concept come about? For the “service” the “troops” provide is drastically flawed. First, basic training is designed to strip traditional religious and community morality from the soldiers, sailors, and flyers. Their purpose becomes foremost to kill. Yes, they are told, to kill to protect their loved ones and freedom back home, but still to kill. How did the immensely valuable word “service” become an
underpinning of slaughter? Let us stand against this usage, and speak and work for its proper application.

Why are not firemen invested in such a concept? They do truly serve communities: their purpose is good, and their lives are sometimes at risk. Teachers also serve our society well. They assist our children to gain knowledge and to grow mentally and emotionally in preparation for the storms ahead for them. Both firefighters and teachers are among the vanguard of protectors against the consequences of climate change rushing toward us. Let us celebrate the service of firefighters, teachers, public health workers, artists, and all others whose actions affirm and expand life, not killing.

FINDING REST by Dick Bennett

The *Arkansas Democrat-Gazette* (July 10, 2012) shows a photo of a flag-draped coffin at Arlington National Cemetery carried by eight members of an Air force team and accompanied by a flag-bearer. The photo carried the caption: “To Their Rest at Last.” The coffin contained the remains of three officers and three sergeants whose plane “went down in Laos in 1965.”

But these officers and airmen found their rest in death in 1965. That’s not the purpose of this burial. We might expect some mention of the families of the dead airmen. Sometimes relatives of killed loved-ones speak of the need for closure, especially under such circumstances. But none is given. So the report seems entirely national and patriotic. The photo report seems intended for the public at large, offering reassurance that our loved ones killed in wars of somebody else’s choosing did not die for nothing, and the government honors them.

But there’s another problem in this report--an omission, perhaps a conscious suppression. The bombing of Laos during the Vietnam War was illegal: Laos was a neutral country. In the UN Charter and the Nuremberg Trials, the most heinous crime is the invasion of one country by another as an act of aggression, as did Hitler against all his conquests. And the bombings of Laos’ Plain of Jars were horrendous. Tens of thousands of innocent people were killed and an estimated 80 million unexploded bombs still endanger the countryside. Responding compassionately to these realities is the “rest” we and our government should desire. Helping the families of those innocent victims find rest, helping their families find closure, rest at last, for such injustice, is the closure we should seek.

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Dick Bennett

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National/International Days

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