OMNI

VIETNAM WAR NEWSLETTER #7, March 24, 2015.

http://jamesrichardbennett.blogspot.com/2015/03/vietnam-war-newsletter-7.html

Compiled by Dick Bennett for a Culture of Peace, Justice, and Ecology.

(#1 July 24, 2011; #2 June 9, 2012; #3 Sept. 25, 2012; #4 April 13, 2013; #5, April 9, 2014; #6, Feb. 18, 2015). Thanks to Marc.

2015, the 50th anniversary of the start of US direct combat operations in Vietnam.

What’s at stake: To the Pentagon and Obama: don’t whitewash this war.

We must not forget this atrocious war, the destruction and suffering it caused for no good purpose. The Pentagon, President Obama, and others are trying to turn it into part of US patriotic history. Let us instead seek the truth about the war—and all the other US wars of aggression since WWII.

My blog: War Department and Peace Department

http://jamesrichardbennett.blogspot.com/

Newsletters:

http://www.omnicenter.org/newsletter-archive/

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http://www.omnicenter.org/omni-newsletter-general-index/

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Telling the Truth About the War vs. Pentagon/Pres. Obama Official History

Editorial, “Commemorating the American War in Vietnam.” Peace in Our Times (Winter 2015). Argues for full disclosure, “an honest commemoration” of the war, instead of the one initiated by the Pentagon, supported by President Obama, and funded by Congress at $65 million. The official commemoration avoids many realities of the war, including the “moral injury” many returning soldiers experience as PTSD. Veterans for Peace offers a Vietnam Full Disclosure campaign in rejection of the Pentagon’s efforts to “sanitize and mythologize the Vietnam war and to thereby legitimize further unnecessary and destructive wars.” See Vietnamfulldisclosure.org for more information. –Dick
Veterans for Peace Editorial, “A CALL TO THE WALL.” PEACE IN OUR TIMES (Winter 2015). Announces a demonstration at The Wall in Washington, D.C. on Memorial Day, May 25, on the 50th anniversary of the beginning of the American War in Vietnam, in opposition to the Pentagon’s initiative to convince young people the war was a noble enterprise. For more on the Vietnam War Full Disclosure movement go to vietnamfulldisclosure.org. VforP calls us to send a letter addressing the Vietnam War Memorial (i.e. US soldiers who died) and the millions of killed Vietnamese, who deserve their own memorial, to share our memories of the war from any perspective. Email your letter to vncom50@gmail.com, with subject line Memorial Day 2015, or mail it to Full Disclosure, Veterans for Peace, 409 Ferguson Rd, Chapel Hill, NC 27516, by May 1. –Dick.

VETERANS FOR PEACE
VIETNAM: THE POWER OF PORTEST

March 19, 2015

Dear Dick Bennett,

Fifty years ago, millions of Americans -- including the most important voices of conscience of the time -- joined in what became the largest peace movement in American history. To be in the Vietnam peace movement required moral and physical courage, commitment, and a willingness to sacrifice our own liberty, careers, friends and family relationships.

On May 1-2, 2015, we are gathering again in Washington to talk about how we helped end the Vietnam War, what it was like to be part of the movement, how it changed us, and what lessons we can learn from the experience.

Draft agenda here

Register here
This effort began last Fall in reaction to Pentagon plans for a Vietnam War Commemoration, ostensibly with a mandate to honor Vietnam-era veterans. We were astonished to see that they had created a website with a one-sided version of the war's history and that they were planning on developing curriculum that would be taught in thousands of schools.

In response we formed the Vietnam Peace Commemoration Committee to push back. We wrote a letter to the Pentagon objecting to its one-sided time line of the war’s history and its goal to distribute similar classroom materials. The letter struck a chord, quickly gaining 560 co-signers - by now there are 1,470 co-signers and counting. They are a civilian and military cross section of a tumultuous era of US history.

The New York Times gave the story front-page coverage, and all references to classroom materials were quickly removed from the website. We met with key Pentagon Commemoration officials in January and made progress. They confirmed they were no longer pursuing the curriculum project and intended to revise the time line and seek independent assessment of its content by recognized scholars.

Clearly, the power of Vietnam protest still works. But, we have to remain vigilant. The time line so far has been modified in only limited ways. The official commemoration goes on for a decade and aspires to tens of thousand of local activities in every part of the US -- including in middle and high schools and on college campuses.

Draft agenda here

Register here

The momentum from this fight motivated us to plan a major conference on May 1-2 and to broaden our goals. Not only do we want to continuing fighting to make sure that the truth is told about what happened during the war and about its enduring human consequences; but we also want to insist that, given the world situation today, the lessons of unnecessary and unmerited military intervention must finally be learned. Most importantly, we want to remind America about the transformative role of the movement against the war for our country and for its victims in Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia.

Hundreds of us of us will be gathering at the New York Presbyterian Church in DC -- a church which played a memorable role as a meeting place and staging area for the huge anti-war mobilizations of the late 60s and early 70s. Leaders and activists from the struggle to end the war will join with young justice-fighters to reflect on and raise up the mass movement of 50 years ago and to deepen the links and lessons for the challenges we face.
today.

Highlights of our conference will include: honoring the Elders of our movement on Friday evening; a commemorative walk past the Vietnam Veterans Memorial to the Martin Luther King Memorial on Saturday afternoon; plenaries, mini-plenaries, workshops and breakout groups for sharing analyses, remembrances and dreams; and songs, poetry, artwork and celebration. Let's transform the experiences of yesterday into a call to action for today.

Join Tom Hayden, Ron Dellums, Cora Weiss, Rosalio Munoz, Holly Near, Dan Ellsberg, Julian Bond, Marge Tabankin, Pat Schroeder and many, many others on May 1-2. You will want to be at this historic and challenging gathering.

Please review the draft agenda here. Additional speakers are being confirmed, but the strength and value of the event lie in those like yourself who choose to come together in Washington May 1-2.

Register here and help spread the word to current and former friends, comrades and colleagues.

Sincerely,

May 1-2 Washington commemoration, April Vietnam Trip, Kicklighter letter update,
Telling the Truth. Learning the Lessons
March 6, 2015

Dear Dick Bennett,

We are writing to everyone who signed the letter to General Kicklighter to challenge a Pentagon commemoration of the Vietnam War thatpropagandized rather than educated Americans. Our collective protest appears to have led to serious correction, although the revised historical timeline has yet to be posted or vetted by independent scholars.

The apparent roll back took place when then Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel brought to bear the passion of his Vietnam combat experience.

"The Wall reminds us to be honest in our telling of history. There is nothing to be gained by glossing over the darker portions of a war, the Vietnam War, that bitterly divided America. We must openly acknowledge past mistakes, and we must learn from past mistakes, that is how we avoid repeating past mistakes."

-Minister of Defense Chuck Hagel on Veterans Day, November 11, 2015

Institutional self-interest and pro-interventionist political agendas are surely pushing back, aspiring to morph from honoring the veteran to honoring the war, mission creep redux. While the most obvious distortions of history will be removed, we doubt that recognition will be given to how broad-based and determined protest inside and outside the military ended an unjust and misguided war.

May 1 - 2 at New York Avenue Presbyterian Church in Washington we will assert and document the power of a peace movement that helped stop the war, bring down two presidents, and change many American lives forever.

Later this week you will receive the agenda, speaker highlights and a registration form for the peace commemoration. The event is designed to recall, and learn from, a history that is in danger of being forgotten, despite the resonance of its message for current and future conflicts. Regular mailings will keep you informed about our plans and you may receive a phone call encouraging your participation and support.*

The agenda will include topical mini-plenaries and break-out groups / workshops formed around the many ways we opposed the war. They offer an opportunity to reflect on what was accomplished and what was learned as well as implications for opposing current and future wars (and perhaps to reconnect with old friends). The current draft list of discussion groups can be previewed here. If you see something missing or misstated, or feel you could make a special contribution to one of the sessions, please let us know as soon as possible.
There will be a lot of sharing of memories, analysis of lessons for present challenges, some great music and a moving walk by the Vietnam Memorial to the Martin Luther King memorial. We not only want you to join us in Washington but also ask your assistance to assure the diversity and younger generation involvement that is not guaranteed, even from the extraordinary list of letter signers.

For planning purposes, could you let us know whether or not we'll see you in Washington by spending two minutes on a survey, available here? Your answers also help us decide how to assign rooms for mini-plenaries and break out groups / workshops.

If you live in the Washington area and can volunteer time or housing for out-of-towners or can provide outreach to your own organizations and networks, please contact Terry Provance <terryprovance@gmail.com>.

If you can help with calling people in your state or region, contact Barbara Helmick <helmick.b.a@gmail.com>.

If you have leads to major donors or foundations, contact David Cortright <David.B.Cortright.1@nd.edu>.

Planning Committee

Ira Arlook et al.

News of the Pentagon Commemoration

Terry Provance attended on February 20 a public meeting of the official Commemoration Advisory Committee. His report can be found here.

Staff seem committed to revision of the controversial time line. They have a very ambitious national outreach campaign.
college football game half times and a strong emphasis on reaching middle and high school students.

Many middle schools and some high schools require their students to do service projects and he has proposed and some have adopted the idea for students to identify a local Vietnam veteran, interview the veteran, take a photo, write up a report and make a video with music included."

Terry concludes, "In the next 3 years they will have sponsored over 40,000 events to honor veterans and promote their version of the The Letter to General Kicklighter

We have grown to 1470 signers, twice the initially publicized list. Please continue to share the link. Many of your friends, family and coworkers will be equally surprised and disturbed about this potential misuse of public funds. http://www.ipetitions.com/petition/vpcc

Complete annotated list of signers of the letter as of February 20th is here thanks to the volunteer effort of Susan Wind Early. (If you still can't check if you were alphabetized by first or middle name or initial. Still no luck, let us know. If you signed after the 20th, look again.

Associated Projects

Visit Vietnam for the 40th Anniversary of Peace: April 19 - 30
Registration has reopened due to three last minute withdrawals. This is a unique opportunity to discover or rediscover the countries and peoples whose lives so affected ours four decades after the war ended, including participation in the April 30 celebration in Ho Chi Minh City. The draft itinerary for the program and costs can be seen here. For further information, please contact quickly director@ffrd.org.

Pre-Vietnam programs are available for Cambodia and Laos April 14 - 19 or for a sightseeing visit to Ha Long Bay April 17 - 19.

Participants are welcome to remain in the region for additional personal travels, but the schedule allows return to Washington by May 1 to share the trip's experiences at the Washington commemoration. Extended deadline for registration March 12

"Vietnam War Then and Now: Assessing the Critical Lessons": April 29 - May 1

NYU-D.C. Global Academic Center, 1307 L Street NW, Washington, D.C.

This pre-Peace Commemoration academic conference is sponsored by the Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies, University of Notre Dame; Provost's Global Research Initiatives, New York University; and the Department of History, New York University. Preliminary program and registration can be found here. (Registration is separate for the academic conference and for the commemoration.)

Related Links

Related Links

Newsletter to General Kicklighter

List of signers
Times page one story on the letter

Pentagon Commemoration site

New signers http://www.ipetitions.com/petition/vpcc

Full Disclosure Veterans for Peace (alternative chronology, related issues) website

War Legacy Project (Agent Orange, land mines, UXO) website

Articles

"The Lethal Legacy of the Vietnam War"

After the first US troops came ashore at Da Nang, the Vietnamese are still coping with unexploded bombs and Agent Orange.

George Black in The Nation

"The Endless Tragedy of Vietnam"

MacPherson in Consortium News
Spat-upon Veterans,

Abandoned POWS,

and ‘Hanoi Jane’:

VIETNAM and the
Making of America’s ‘Great Betrayal’ Narrative


Sponsored by the University of Tulsa Social Science Interest Group (SSIG). For further information, call 918-631-2797. Lembcke’s scholarship is important today because the Pentagon and the Obama admin. have organized and funded a decade-long campaign to whitewash that war.

Jerry Lembcke, Emeritus Prof. of History at Holy Cross University, is the author of numerous books on the Vietnam War including *The Spitting Image: Myth Memory and the Legacy of Vietnam*, and *Hanoi Jane: War, Sex, and Fantasies of Betrayal*.

KEVIN KEATING, “GI RESISTANCE TO THE VIETNAM WAR: The Collapse of the Armed Forces.” VETERANS FOR PEACE, PEACE IN OUR
TIMES (Winter 2015, successor to War Crimes Times). About the
demoralization of US troops. High desertion rate: “By 1970, the U.S. Army had
65, 643 deserters”; plus widespread insubordination, sedition, and even
fragging. The rebellion caused leaders to turn more to air war and US Navy, but
the rebellion occurred in the Navy also, with refusals to report and sabotage.
—Dick.

PEACE MOVEMENT

commemorative events in DC, April 29 - May 2

Jim O'Brien via uark.edu 2:11 PM (1 hour ago)

March 24, 2015

Two major events regarding the Vietnam War will take place in
Washington, DC between Wednesday, April 29 and Saturday,
May 2, marking the 50th anniversary of the war's end. At both
events, many of the speakers and panelists will be well familiar to readers of these mailings. The websites that are linked from the following paragraphs give full information.

"The Vietnam War Then and Now: Assessing the Critical Lessons." Wednesday evening April 29 to Friday afternoon May 1 at the NYU-DC Global Academic Center, 1307 L St., NW. Sponsored by the Kroc Institute for International Peace at the University of Notre Dame and the Provost's Global Research Initiatives and History Department at New York University. The registration deadline is April 1.

"Vietnam: The Power of Protest." Friday evening May 1 and Saturday May 2 at the New York Avenue Presbyterian Church, 1313 New York Avenue. This program of panels and workshops is sponsored by the Vietnam Commemoration Committee, including many well-known leaders of the Vietnam-era antiwar movement, and is co-sponsored by a number of groups including the Institute for Policy Studies and MoveOn.org. At 4pm Saturday there will be a commemorative walk to the Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial via the Vietnam Veterans Memorial and the Vietnam Women's Memorial.

CONSEQUENCES OF THE WAR

Literature and The Wall: Bobbie Ann Mason’s *In Country*

Inquiry and empathy toward those who have suffered war—both combatants and non-combatants—thankfully continue through stories about fictional characters and their responses to the monuments of wars. The literature of the Vietnam War and its monuments has perhaps equaled that of World Wars I and II. *In Country*, by Bobbie Ann Mason, gives an account of a journey to the memorial by a Vietnam veteran, Emmett, his niece Sam (Samantha), and her grandmother Mrs. Hughes (Mamaw, the mother of Sam’s father killed in Vietnam). The three characters are revealed by their different perceptions of The Wall. Emmett seeks to come to terms with his grief by saying goodbye to his dead comrades whose names are in “a V in the
ground, like the wings of an abstract bird, huge and headless; the niece/daughter seeks to
learn more about her uncle and father by confronting the “black gash in a hillside,” the “black
boomerang, whizzing toward her head”; the mother/grandmother seeks reunion with her son,
bringing him a pot of geraniums for his “hole in the ground.” Sam sees the Washington
Monument in one direction and the American flag in another; both “seem like arrogant
gestures, like the country giving the finger to the dead boys.” She and her grandmother climb
a borrowed ladder to touch the name of father and son, Dwayne E. Hughes. Mamaw strokes
the name “affectionately, like feeling a cat’s back.” Sam, up on the ladder, “feels so tall, like a
spindly weed that is sprouting up out of this diamond-bright seam of hard earth.” Emmett
finds the names of his dead friends and sits in front of the wall until “slowly his face bursts into
a smile like flames.”

Although some who come to the memorial feel the patriotic nationalism and imperial
majesty that the Monuments for past wars explicitly sought to inspire—from Greece and
Rome to Great Britain and the United States—, while others value it for its warning against
war, so people won’t forget, and we won’t have war again, Mason’s characters visit for its
healing power. The title of the replica of the memorial that traveled around the country
reflects this latter response: “The Wall That Heals.” It is a place where people grieve as
individuals. Ordinary people seek the names of their loved ones lost in a possibly, seemingly
(could it be?) meaningless war. In trying to represent the human pain and sorrow of war
instead of the valor and glory of warriors and nations (the American flag, the inscription “God
Bless America,” and the heroic statue of three soldiers, all later compelled additions), Mason
represented The Wall as it was originally designed by Maya Lin and has been perceived
perhaps by most of the visitors—the names in chronological order.

For more see “From Patriotism to Peace: The Humanization of War Memorials” by James R.

Recent Newsletters
UN World Water DAY #4
Nuclear Weapons Abolition #21
Women’s History Month 2015
Vegetarian Action #17

Contact President Obama
CONTACT PRESIDENT OBAMA

Write or Call the White House
President Obama is committed to creating the most open and accessible administration in American history. That begins with taking comments and questions from you, the public, through our website.

Call the President

PHONE NUMBERS
Comments: 202-456-1111
Switchboard: 202-456-1414

TTY/TTD
Comments: 202-456-6213
Visitor's Office: 202-456-2121

Write a letter to the President
Here are a few simple things you can do to make sure your message gets to the White House as quickly as possible.

1. If possible, email us! This is the fastest way to get your message to President Obama.

2. If you write a letter, please consider typing it on an 8 1/2 by 11 inch sheet of paper. If you hand-write your letter, please consider using pen and writing as neatly as possible.

3. Please include your return address on your letter as well as your envelope. If you have an email address, please consider including that as well.

4. And finally, be sure to include the full address of the White House to make sure your message gets to us as quickly and directly as possible:

   The White House
   1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
   Washington, DC 20500

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http://jamesrichardbennett.blogspot.com/2015/02/uswestward-imperialism-pacific-asia.html

Telling the Truth about the War vs. Pentagon/Pres. Obama’s “Rehabilitation”
Veterans for Peace project, "Full Disclosure"
Sally Kohn, Pentagon Whitewash
Schell, Rev. of Turse’s *Kill Everything That Moves*
Christian Appy’s Books
  *Working Class War*
  *Patriots*
  *American Reckoning*
  TomGram: Christian Appy, “Honor” the Vietnam War, Forget the War
Books Reviewed or Cited in OMNI’s Vietnam War Newsletters Nos. 1-6

**Struggle at Home**
Lemisch, Historians, *American Historical Profession*

**Peacemaking During the War**
Celebration of Peacemakers in May
Judy Wu, *Radicals on the Road*

**Consequences of the War: To US and Vietnamese Troops and Nations**
What It Did To Our Troops: Film *We Went to War* by Michael Grigsby
Suffering of Vietnamese Civilians, Google Search, Feb. 18, 2015.

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**END VIETNAM WAR NEWSLETTER #7, 2015**

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Dick Bennett
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