

Full Disclosure: Toward An Honest Commemoration of the American War in Vietnam

On May 25, 2012, President Obama announced a 13 year long commemoration of the war in Vietnam funded by Congress at \$65,000,000.

As veterans we can only wonder why this would be happening now, fifty years after our invasion of that country.

We suspect that most of us are not aware of this commemoration but because of it we must once again look back at Viet Nam.



America adopted the war in Indochina for two related reasons: to stop the spread of communism, and to prevent communist North Vietnam from conquering South Vietnam. There were two Vietnams because the U.S. and South Vietnam rejected the Geneva Accords that allowed national elections in 1956. President Eisenhower said, "I have never talked or corresponded with a person knowledgeable in Indochinese Affairs who did not agree that had elections been held as of the time of the fighting, a possible 80 percent of the population would have voted for the communist Ho Chi Minh as their leader." The U.S. could not stand to see Vietnam united under a communist government, so we intervened militarily. After a decade of war, Vietnam was united under a communist government.

Looking at Vietnam today as a source of cheap labor, a major trading partner and tourist destination, we see that war was unwinnable, and the reasons for it were unreal and misguided. Ask people on the street if they know Vietnam is communist, now, or if they can explain the Domino Theory. That might bring a chuckle until we recall that 58,000 of us were killed, over 300,000 wounded, and over 34,000 were permanently disabled in that undeclared war. We agonize also, for the 150,000 of our personnel who committed suicide and the thousands who still suffer from PTSD and other moral wounds. We also mourn for 3 million Vietnamese dead, most of them civilians. And we are ashamed that half a million Vietnamese died prematurely or suffer birth defects from Agent Orange which also continues to cause great suffering among Americans. Tons of unexploded ordinance dot the Viet Nam landscape, maiming farmers in their fields, and children at play. Do our fellow citizens know our country has spent and still spends over a trillion dollars to pay for that war and its effects on our military families?

Thousands of Vietnam veterans want recognition for service in what they consider a noble cause. We understand, and it's possible that is one purpose of the commemoration we mentioned. Others of us, however, ache with hope that *America can learn from that terrible war and know that failure to do so condemns us to repeat epic mistakes*. We must learn that when one country invades or bombs another, it accelerates fear and hostility, creating more enemies than it eliminates, just as our military drone program in the Middle East today contributes to endless war. We'll never achieve peace by drone-bombing weddings (at least eight) and killing civilians (over a thousand, including 200 children).

By failing to recognize how much international affinity and goodwill we've lost by choosing violent responses to global problems, we condemn generations of Americans to perpetual war. With over 800 military bases in more than 120 countries, we ensure the same resentment we would feel if another country based its troops and weapons in the U.S. We've dropped bombs on 29 countries since World War II, and our wars in Vietnam and Iraq were declared illegal by the United Nations.

When we learn to care about the hopes and aspirations of other peoples, "support our troops" will no longer mean sending our loved ones to kill and die in unnecessary and illegal wars fought for greedy corporations by military leaders on automatic pilot.

Mark the words of President Kennedy, spoken at the University of Washington in 1961, "...we must face the fact that we cannot impose our will on the other 94 percent, that we cannot right every wrong or reverse every adversity, and that therefore there cannot be an American solution to every world problem." We must learn, at the very least, that *war must always be the last resort, and that those who use deception and lies to promote war should be held responsible for crimes against humanity*.

Ghosts of War

Posted on April 24, 2014 by Leslie Dwyer

"Every war is fought long after the last physical battle. It is the sustained battle for a dominating, ruling story about that war. Why did we go to war? How did we fight? Who were the righteous and glorious? The evil and devious? Who were the victors? What were the costs? War after war, a repeating pattern. In this United States, it is a lethal pattern propelling us into acceptance of the next war — and the next. In a period consigned to "commemorating" the American War in Vietnam, we must grab hold of, shake out, and retell that story. We must face the ghosts of war, hear the true memories, and create a new pattern."

Find out what **Veterans For Peace** are doing at their site,

[Full Disclosure: Toward An Honest Commemoration of the American War in Vietnam.](#)

Veterans have a special obligation to bear witness to what we know about war.

Our silence makes us complicit in our country's present policy

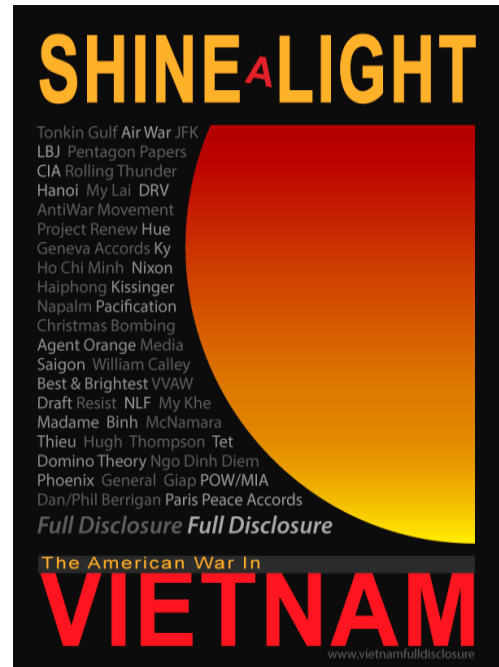
which we know is destroying our own country,

as surely as it destroys the countries of those we call our enemies.

We watch with horror while terrorism expands exponentially as the only effective violent response to our overwhelming military superiority. The U.S. responds with even more of our Humanity and treasure poured into plans and instruments of mass destruction. Both sides reap hatred, danger and misery. Better ideas are kept off the table to placate the corporations which own the Pentagon. *We invite all who love our country to join our refusal to support this morbid model.* Help us persuade our leaders to pursue our supreme Peace, and reclaim our birthright of hope, freedom, justice and prosperity for ALL BEINGS, our children, and our children's children, into the Seventh Generation.



Design4Peace – Social Justice Poster Art by Leslie Dwyer



President Obama called for a commemoration of the American War in Vietnam lasting from 2012–2025. During this period we are being regaled with all the mythology of that war. Vets for Peace and Vietnam Full Disclosure are attempting to counter that mythology. *Leslie Dwyer*

Check out www.vietnamfulldisclosure.org to learn more.

Veterans For Peace, Chapter #35, Spokane, Washington
www.spokaneveteransforpeace.org

[signatures of supporting individuals and organizations:]