

# PROUD VIETNAM WAR RESISTER



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## CALL TO ACTION!

### SIR! NO SIR!: RENEWING 50 YEARS OF GI RESISTANCE, IN AND OUT OF UNIFORM

*"I was a coward, not for leaving the war, but for having been a part of it in the first place. I failed to fulfill my moral duty as a human being, and instead I chose to fulfill my duty as a soldier . . . I am confined to a prison, but I feel, today more than ever, connected to all humanity. Behind these bars I sit a free man because I listened to a higher power, the voice of my conscience." —Camilo Mejia*

We in Veterans For Peace are declaring 2019 as the year we will acknowledge and honor the courage, the sacrifice, and the moral strength of those GIs who resisted their government's call to go to war. We want to tell their stories, to give them a forum to share their lives with us. Not just as a history lesson, but as a primer for young women and men in uniform today who are listening to their own moral consciences and are looking for guidance.

#### LISTEN TO GI STORIES OF RESISTANCE

Fifty or so years ago, a tsunami of rebellion was roaring through the ranks of the U.S. military. The American War in Viet Nam was finally being seen for what it really was — an immoral, unjust, and cruel explosion of military might leveled against a people thousands of miles away who posed no threat to us. But this history has been buried by the powers that be. The film *Sir! No Sir!* captures inspiring stories of some of the GIs who resisted that war, but there are many more. We owe a debt to these people; we need to listen carefully to them and honor them with our own resistance.

We are gathering personal narratives of resisters, documentaries of resisters, their poetry, their novels — you name it — describing their experiences. And since GI resistance did not begin or end with the American war in Viet Nam, we are also collecting stories of GIs who have stood up during the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq to carry on Thoreau's admonition to put our bodies on the line, to stop the war machine. Their stories of courage and sacrifice will be included as well.

Will you join us? Will you share your own story of resistance? Will you host these narratives in your communities? Together we can make a difference.

#### LONG TIME COMING

One hundred and seventy years ago, Henry David Thoreau implored his fellow citizens to resist the Mexican War, because he saw soldiers being sent to the war as "...small movable forts and magazines, at the service of some unscrupulous man in power" (Thoreau, "Civil Disobedience," 1849). Are we not in similar straits today? Are we not seeing soldiers being sent to the Mexican border and around the globe to enforce the dictates of an unscrupulous elite? Who will resist? And how? Thankfully, precedents have been set here in these United States by men and women in uniform who resisted orders to fight in war, and many, many more veterans who became war resisters after leaving the military.

'What are soldiers?'

'They are for war. They fight and each tries to kill as many of the other side as he can.' The girl held still and studied.

'Do you know ... I know something?'

'Yes, what is it you know?'

'Sometime they'll give a war and nobody will come.'

—excerpted from Carl Sandburg's poem, "The People, Yes" (1936)

If more people heard the narratives of GI resisters, and heeded their voices, the next "declared" war could be the first in history that no one shows up to. Let's work passionately and persistently towards that goal. We've created an Organizing Tool Kit and a Resource List to help inspire and guide anyone who wants to help make 2019 the Year of the Resister. Contacts: [beyers.4peace@gmail.com](mailto:beyers.4peace@gmail.com) & [rawlings@maine.edu](mailto:rawlings@maine.edu)