

# THE TRUTH BEHIND THE CAMOUFLAGE:

A YOUTH INVESTIGATION  
INTO THE MYTHS & TRUTHS  
OF MILITARY RECRUITMENT  
& MILITARY SERVICE



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An image by Dennis Johnson, Youth Activist Committee Member (Sacramento High School)





august 5-12, 2007

We are 23 high school students from Northern California. This summer, we spent eight days investigating a civil liberties topic of our choice: the myths and truths of military recruitment and military service.

Our purpose was to educate ourselves so we can educate others and make a difference. We visited more than 20 organizations and individuals including women of color veterans, formerly homeless veterans, military families, conscientious objectors, former and current military recruiters, a Marine Corps base, boot camp, and more. We traveled from San Francisco to Berkeley and Richmond, down to San Diego and through La Jolla and Temecula.

We are now facilitating educational workshops in classrooms and communities throughout Northern California to pass on what we learned. Following is a collection of our reflections and impressions about our investigation.

#### WHO WE ARE

(top, L-R) Delvon Meredith (Tennyson HS, Hayward), Shamar Theus (Bethel HS, Vallejo/San Francisco State University), Eddie Rueda (Casa Grande HS, Petaluma), Aleksis Bertoni (Berkeley HS).

(row 2, L-R) Alysha Aziz (Castro Valley HS), Moti Phillips (Castro Valley HS/UC Santa Cruz), Eliza Arnold (Lick Wilmerding HS, San Francisco), Simone Crew (Lick Wilmerding HS, San Francisco), Samantha Johnson (Sacramento HS), Tania Flores (Chico HS), Iris Yee (Washington HS, San Francisco), Antonio Ayala (Gateway HS, San Francisco), Raja Sutherland (Holden HS, Orinda), Jacquięta Beverly (Tennyson HS, Hayward/San Francisco City College)

(row 3, L-R) Cally Wong (Lowell HS, San Francisco), Sarah Leadem (San Rafael HS), Jenny Situ (Galileo HS, San Francisco)

(bottom, L-R) Alberto Gomez (East Bay Arts HS, San Leandro), Perla Pasayes (Bethel HS, Vallejo), Aurora Castellanos (MetWest HS, Oakland), Jillian Liu (Palo Alto HS), Alięsha Kumba Baldę (Vallejo HS), Doris Le (Vallejo HS).

#### STAFF FACILITATORS

Eveline Chang (Director, ACLU-NC Friedman Education Project)

Jordan Green (Former Friedman Youth Advocate Chaperone)

Sarah Jo (Friedman Youth Advocate)

Danielle Silk (Friedman Youth Advocate)

Pablo Paredes (Friedman Project Chaperone, Navy Veteran)

Student Editors: Eddie Rueda, Eliza Arnold, Cally Wong, Delvon Meredith, Antonio Ayala, Jillian Liu, Alięsha Kumba Baldę.

Staff Editors: Eveline Chang, Rene Ciriacruz, Sarah Jo

Photographers: Eliza Arnold, Eveline Chang, Perla Pasayes, Shamar Theus, Cally Wong

Publication Production Manager: Gigi Pandian

Concept, Design & Production: Tumis Design

Decision MAKING → 3685  
HERE. GRIEF & PAIN  
BLUE STARS & gold ones  
FAMILIES / FACES PUPPET  
young folk in the mil.  
CATASTROPHIC OF CIVILIAN  
GUNS Berdo TEARS POPULATION  
ASSIMILATION MENTAL SURVIVAL  
AFTER MATH HIPODARYC. DESPERATE

## poetry

### 3,685

(The number of American soldiers killed in Iraq as of August 12, 2007, the last day of our trip)

By Alysha Aziz

3,685.

It's just a number really.

Just a cold, abstract number that I can file away with all the other numbers I learned in history, algebra, and statistics.

And yet, as she shows us the picture of her smiling son, killed in Iraq, suddenly, that number begins to pulse, and breathe, and laugh, and smile, and dream.

The surprise of seeing a real, tangible face so soon after hearing about his death was like a sudden bitterness in my mouth.

And right at that moment, I want everyone in the country to feel that number.

I want it so bad that it hurts in the pit of my stomach.

I want people to realize what just one combat death looks like, feels like, tastes like.

Because maybe then we will stop unjustly blowing apart countries, Blowing apart families, Blowing apart people.

Maybe we will stop marching with cold metal guns in our hands for a warm dream that is snatched out of those hands.

Maybe we will stop idealizing the big explosions and adrenaline-filled "adventure" and stop being seduced by the sweet sugary lies that slide off the tongues of the sleek-suited recruiters.

Maybe once we feel the pain, we will stop the hurting.

## I'm Sorry!!!!

By Jacquieta Beverly

A woman stood in front of me today crying through a story about the life and death of her only child who was killed in this not only unjust but unnecessary war. Her tears were like daggers to my heart! I felt her pain. My heart began to ache because I know what it feels like to lose someone close to you—so tragic and unexpected. Her only child had been killed and her world had crumbled. I sat with tears flowing like an uncontrollable rain storm. I had nothing to offer her. I had nothing to say but I am sorry.

But then once I thought about it, that didn't seem to be enough because I started to question what I was sorry for. Am I sorry for the fact that our country is so messed up? That money and power are more important than people's lives? That the people in power have no compassion for anyone but themselves? Am I sorry for the fact that our country promotes violence and makes it okay to invade another country and kill so many innocent people? Am I sorry that our government would rather spend money on prisons than schools? Am I sorry that this war has not ended? Am I sorry that there are not better options for youth today? Am I sorry for the fact that she is not the only mother suffering from the loss of a child, not only due to this war but the violence that stains the streets of our communities? That we live in a society that hides the fact that this is wrong and it's destroying the lives of people that are in the military and their families that pray they don't get that sad life-changing knock on the door?

As I sat there listening to her story, I was sorry for all of it. I am sorry Bush is president! I am sorry this war has not ended! I am sorry that our schools are under-funded and less important to the people in power! I am sorry that military recruiters lie and paint this fictional picture of a life that obscures all morals or understanding of what is true and false! I am sorry youth don't have better options to get to college or be successful in life! I am truly sorry for it all!

But in my heart, I feel sorry isn't good enough. It's not enough just to say sorry! We need to stand together and make a change. I know what I'm going to do; the question is what are you going to do!?

## Bobby

Sarah Leadem

I watch you drive away Bobby.  
My hand slides down the glass window.  
Where are you going Bobby?  
You're probably going to the doctor, to some appointment with Mommy. I hope you come home soon so we can play with my GI Joes. Please come home Bobby. It's been a few days Bobby and you still aren't home. Mommy says you are going away for a little while. She sits in your room crying. She and Daddy keep fighting. Where are you Bobby? Please come home Bobby. Mommy needs you. Daddy says you are on an adventure—traveling the world, trying to protect me and Mommy and Daddy. But if he is so happy for you, why does he look so sad? Please come home Bobby. Daddy needs you. I don't understand Bobby. Mommy and Daddy never smile anymore. Daddy sits in front of the TV watching the news, Mommy sleeps next to the phone. I miss playing together with my GI Joes. I don't understand what is happening Bobby. Bobby, where are you? School started, Bobby. The other kids in class keep talking about you. They whisper when I walk by, and stare at me during recess. Johnny Walters says you are killing people, Bobby. You aren't killing people, are you Bobby? You could never kill anyone. Right Bobby? Please Bobby. I need you to come home.

Please Bobby, just come home.





## Truth or Dare

By Eddie Rueda

Lies, lies, lies  
I don't want to hear them  
They told me it was a good life,  
But we knew the truth  
"What is it like in training?"  
"I had a good time"  
"You try not to think about it, you can wait in line for a 30 minute call"  
"What's life like on the base?"  
"We have three beaches, everything you need"  
"What about rape, I hear there's a lot of rape here?"  
"I have never heard of one girl being raped"  
"But what about the women being scared to walk at night?"  
"That's not true, I have walked at night all the time"  
"I can't answer that, enough of the questions let's go look at the beach"  
The beach was nice  
But the sad faces of the Marines were not  
"Do you kids want to join the military?"  
They don't see lives, people  
They see money in their pockets  
"There's racism in the military, have you seen any?"  
"No, we all are like a family"

It's time for us to leave  
As we walk to the bus  
The military tour guides are walking behind us  
"How are you?" one asks  
"I've been good," answers the other  
"These kids are smart, what if they knew the truth?" says the first  
"I know, remember what happened to that guy who told the truth, I wouldn't want to be him" says the other  
Lies, lies, lies  
That's all we heard  
That's all they told



day one: sunday, august 5, 2007

### **Service Women's Action Network; Women of Color Resource Center, Oakland**

Tina Garnanez, Maricela Guzman, Tina McCauley, Eli PaintedCrow, Maryam Roberts ([www.coloredgirls.org](http://www.coloredgirls.org))

The **Service Women's Action Network** (SWAN) supports and develops the leadership of veterans, mentors young women considering military service, solves problems facing women in uniform, and heals women after their military experience. SWAN establishes a worldwide network of military women, veterans and allies to provide lasting support, community and resources. As a leading voice for military women and veterans, Service Women's Action Network promotes personal and social transformation for a peaceful world.



## Women of Color Veterans

By Alysha Aziz

Boom... Boom... Boom... slowly, with each steady drumbeat, I let myself relax and be carried away by Eli Painted Crow's voice as she tapped her drum softly, her clear voice rising over the vibrations, bringing us together to focus on what we had come to learn. We were having dinner with four amazing women of color veterans, who were giving us their time so that we could hear their stories, and begin our journey uncovering the truth about the military.

When they first walked in, I had so many questions. What would they be like? What would they tell us? I was even a little worried. What would they think about what we were doing? Would they support us? I felt ignorant compared to them, because they had experienced so much and I was only beginning to learn. However, as Eli quietly beat her drum, all those questions melted away, replaced only with the desire to be educated by these women.

Slowly, their stories began to unfold for us, and with each story my mind began its frantic whirling again. First, there was Maricela Guzman, who was raped while in the service, only to have the military deny her claim! Hearing that this experience led to depression, and eventually tore her marriage apart, I wondered how she had the strength to go on. Her story filled me with outrage at the

military. How could they let this happen to someone? It seemed absurd and cruel! However, I soon learned that her story was not uncommon. *Thousands* of women in the military are raped or sexually harassed each year, and almost nothing is done about it! Instead, the women are often shamed or ignored.

Tina Garnanez, a former army medic who served in Iraq, spoke about the PTSD that still haunts her. PTSD stands for Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, an anxiety disorder that can leave the victims of traumatic experiences debilitated, edgy, irritable, detached, and forced to mentally “re-live” the horrible experiences over and over. For Tina, even a “normal” event like the 4th of July could trigger memories of the war, and turn that day into a nightmare. Almost every little thing she did, such as preferring to sit facing the door, had been shaped by her experience in Iraq. Kristina McCauley talked about trying to “cleanse” herself of her military experience—she actually turned full circle and lived like a “hippie,” traveling around the US in a Volkswagen bus for almost a year. As they spoke, it began to dawn on me that the horrors of war do not just end in the battlefield; more often than not, they follow you, move in with you, and stay with you as long as you live.

Finally, Eli Painted Crow herself spoke, telling us what it was like to be a Native American woman in the military. From hearing about the enemy territory being called (no joke!) “Indian country,” to losing her uterus because there was no female gynecologist around to treat her, her stories again filled me with outrage and

**As the women shared their stories, our hearts began to beat with theirs in unison, which could only come from the healing space that we occupied.**



Thousands of women in the military are raped or sexually harassed each year, and almost nothing is done about it.



disbelief. She talked about feeling a kind of kinship with the Iraqi people because of their warmth and cultural similarities with Native Americans. She realized that she could not justly continue to fight against these people, in what she believes to be “genocide,” and after 22 years of serving in the military, she began to fight against it.

As a former drill sergeant, Eli Painted Crow also offered us insight on the training recruits must go through in order to prepare them to kill. Before, I had no idea what military training was about, or what it could do to you, but on this trip I got a taste of it. You come into the military a soft, impressionable block of clay, and they sculpt you into a hardened, polished person trained to do things no human being should have to do, and then you are left with the task of blending back into a society where you don’t fit the mold!

And yet these veterans had somehow done it. After they were done speaking, I was filled with a rush of admiration for these amazing women. They were so beautiful, so strong, that I felt honored just to be with them. I was grateful for the fact that they had trusted us enough to tell their stories, and in doing so filled us with awareness. Before we left, Eli gathered us into a circle and once more spoke to us over the beat of her drum, telling us to keep what we had learned with us always and forever. These four women turned their painful experiences into something powerful and educational, bringing us one little step closer to ending militarism. Now, it was our turn to take their stories and do the same.

## Stories That Became Ours

By Moti Phillips

Eli Painted Crow opens up our forum with a prayer and a resonating reminder that despite the differences of our age, sex, race, ethnicity, political views or life experiences; we are all connected by the rhythm of our heartbeats. As she slowly taps her drum, we all begin to sense the unity and communion in our meeting.

The women spoke of the unrecognized injustice experienced by countless females in the military. In the military, rape is the equivalent of the embarrassing family member. Excuses are made to cover up flaws and lies are told in order maintain a pristine clean appearance to society. Women are strongly pressured to keep silent about issues such as rape or assault, often times by their higher-ups. Nearly every woman on our panel informed us that many times the rapes and assaults are in fact committed by these higher-ups, who sometimes “order” women to take part in degrading sexual acts. Additionally, it is incredibly difficult for anyone in the military to report abuse by a higher ranking official due to the hierarchical mentality of the armed forces. The first step of any complaint is to directly approach the commanding officer. It is extremely difficult to find accurate statistics on the abuse of women in the service because abuses are so rarely reported or acknowledged.

Our meeting was incredible. As the women shared their stories, our hearts began to beat with theirs in unison, which could only come from the healing space that we occupied. As their stories became ours, we pledged to give a voice to the silenced women who have suffered in the military.



## Military 101

Pablo Paredes

**Pablo Paredes** is a conscientious objector. A **conscientious objector** is one who is opposed to serving in the armed forces and/or bearing arms on the grounds of moral or religious principles ( US Selective Service System, [www.sss.gov/FSconsobj.htm](http://www.sss.gov/FSconsobj.htm)). After five years of distinguished service in the U.S. Navy, Paredes made headlines in 2004 by refusing to board a naval vessel whose mission was to ferry 1,000+ Marines to Iraq. Paredes was court-martialed and eventually discharged after serving a sentence of three months hard labor, two months restriction, and reduction in rank to the Navy's lowest pay grade. Since obtaining his freedom from the armed forces, Pablo has dedicated himself to countering the military's targeted recruitment campaigns in working class areas of the country. The 26-year-old has spoken at hundreds of high schools in several states as well as in Puerto Rico.

day two : monday, august 6, 2007



## Values Clarification Workshop

Jacquieta Beverly, Aurora Castellanos, Pablo Paredes

Aurora Castellanos and Jacquieta Beverly, Friedman Education Project youth members, facilitated a Values Clarification Workshop borrowed from their experience in Bay Peace (formerly Alternatives to War through Education), an organization of high school students working on issues of militarism and counter-recruitment.

## Swords to Plowshares, San Francisco

Veterans Academy in the Presidio

Joel Abrevaya, Katherine Conley, Charles Garrett, Roosevelt Hayes, Jennifer Heyneman, Richard Hollingsworth, Dawn Sitka  
([www.swords-to-plowshares.org](http://www.swords-to-plowshares.org))

**Swords to Plowshares** was started in 1974 by veterans who were concerned that the needs of soldiers returning from Vietnam were not being addressed. The organization's guiding principle

is that veterans must never again be treated as second-class citizens, and that war in general causes wounds that last beyond the battlefield.

**Swords to Plowshares** Transitional Housing Program;  
Treasure Island

Tim Chapman, Earnest Dard, Wanda Heffernon, Glenn Johnson, Scott Kehler  
([www.swords-to-plowshares.org](http://www.swords-to-plowshares.org))

Swords to Plowshares' residential programs provide homeless veterans the stability and support they need to rebuild their lives, offering transitional and permanent housing, regular meals, as well as intensive group and individual counseling. Among the 50 once-homeless veterans who completed the Transitional Supportive Housing Program at Treasure Island last year, 96 percent increased their income and 100 percent moved into housing (a condition for completing the program). The average stay was 11 months.



## On the Spot, Ethically

By Sarah Leadem

On the second day of our trip, we participated in the Values and Morals Workshop led by two of our colleagues, Jacquieta and Aurora. Both student activists are involved in Bay Peace, a counter-military recruitment group based in Oakland. We were presented a series of scenarios in which we had to make moral and ethical decisions. We explored situations and questions such as: Would you ever take another human life? What if it was to protect your family or someone you loved? Would you ever fight for a cause that you did not understand? These challenged our reasoning and perception of right and wrong, and we were forced to examine and struggle with our own morality.

In the core of my soul, I felt my conscience telling me that violence and killing were fundamentally immoral and wrong. But what if my family's lives were in danger? What if the only way to spare their lives was to take life from another? Could I go through with it? Could I pull that trigger and be able to live with myself for the rest of my life knowing that I robbed someone somewhere of a brother, father, best friend, or spouse?

Here I was, standing in a quiet conference room, while there were men and women in Iraq facing these same moral dilemmas, but

with one central difference: their situations were real. While I was taking my time contemplating, these men and women were making monumental decisions in a single moment, decisions that would forever change the course of their lives. And I realized that if I were in that real-life situation ordered to open fire on a house full of women and children because there were allegedly terrorists inside, perhaps preparing to harm us any second, would I shoot? Could I shoot?

I can theorize all day about what I might do in a hypothetical situation, but if I were in that position, at that crucial moment, I wouldn't know what to do. But, in truth, no human being should have to make these types of decisions.

But this is war: War is killing. War is the compromising of morals. War is confusion. War is being told to blindly prioritize the needs of one's country over the value of human life. War is destruction: of people, life, and free will.

Could I pull that trigger  
and be able to live with  
myself for the rest of my life?





## Untitled

By Tania Flores

Soft-edged metal  
leaned quietly against eggshell walls.

Swift thumbs pressed the  
whiteblack yes-no-maybe signs into corners,  
leaving no middle room  
for indecision.  
and suddenly, "it's just me now,"  
as the directions settle  
somewhereinhere,  
coming to rest  
in my mouth  
and in the squareness of this room.  
abdomens sense the narrowness of doorways,  
and this is a prison,  
and there is no room to escape easily broken principles.  
I find that there is no other way around your hypothetical words  
like weights  
(that should be light)  
and my feet know where to go.  
I am startled to look down and see  
that they are the only ones.  
With darting eyes,  
I spot a multitude of feet under YES in the opposite corner,  
and suddenly I think of the fly in the elevator,  
and I am as far as I can be from all of you  
without flying.  
blooming panic  
obscures rational thought  
and I am surprised when my tongue  
gets around the obstacles at all,  
and immediately,  
I wish I could explain myself better  
to you, or to me,  
but all I can do is stare incredulously at my solitary feet,  
and see myself in this corner,  
and wonder if that fly  
had morals.

## Love Songs

By Simone Crew

Like a boyfriend they never got over, abusive  
relationships leave sweet smelling scars.  
Their time was precious  
"The military was my life, I loved it"  
says he.  
But left him lonely, he thought the  
adrenaline could heal the wounds; at least  
help him forget. Wasted years that he would  
never take back...  
Veterans sing love songs in the dark.  
Hearing the echoes of a past they were told  
to despise, it's a dirty secret. You thought he  
loved you  
but you're just another body,  
disposable,  
not worth fixing.  
and these scars became routine. As young  
girls learn they don't deserve more, with  
fathers who pound it into their foreheads  
like drill sergeants.  
Singing love songs in the dark,  
melodies minor and familiar and addictive.  
They say you never forget him. They say that  
no matter how many healthy men you try to  
love every girl will marry her father. The  
future isn't bright for soldiers and  
daughters; Abusive relationships leave  
sweet smelling scars in circular patterns.  
We spiral downwards.

## Swords to Plowshares

By Eliza Arnold

We all piled onto the already crowded bus to take the short ride across the Bay Bridge to Treasure Island, a former military base. As the bus peeled off and we drove through Treasure Island, it was like driving into a different world. We were no longer in crowded, busy, professional downtown San Francisco, but an old run-down and abandoned town that almost everyone had long since moved out of, and few went to visit anymore. A forgotten place used mostly for passing through. The occasional driver might look out their window, wonder what kind of people live here, what they do, and then seconds later push it to the back of their mind and think about what seems to them as more pressing matters like how the presentation at work will go today, or when I need to pick up the kids from soccer practice.

We wandered the empty and desolate streets to find the Swords to Plowshares building. We passed by crumbling buildings and streets signs that were no longer legible. It felt like we were on a movie set for an old western, and some dark, mysterious cowboy was about to emerge from the shadows of a building to have a showdown.

We entered the building quietly, as the meeting had already begun. There were about 30 people seated, with a panel of five council members running the meeting. The check-in was very formal and structured. Many of the members were suffering from PTSD, so that was the topic of the meeting. Someone would stand up and tell the group about their stress levels: "Stress and anger manageable." "Stress manageable, anger mostly manageable."

The whole meeting felt very militarized, and it would remind me of our visit to the Marine Corps Recruitment Depot in San Diego later on in the week. Most Marine recruits from states west of the Mississippi River are sent to San Diego for boot camp, whose sole purpose is to break the souls and hearts of all the new recruits, train them to take orders, and make them a number, irrelevant to everything in the world but the military's needs. They would then be considered little more than a piece of American government property.

Swords to Plowshares runs many programs that offer struggling veterans a way to get back into society through something familiar to them. One man mentioned that he felt he fit in there, because it reminded him of the Army.

After the meeting, a few of the veterans stayed to talk with us and to tell us their stories. The residents of Swords to Plowshares were able to look back on their time in the service and reflect on what happened, but there was always a sense of them holding back. They had been through a lot, more than most of us would ever be able to imagine, and coming to terms with all the horrors they lived through seemed almost too unbearable for them to handle. They were still trying to figure themselves out; as one member stated, in the military they "break you down and put you back together their way so fast you didn't even realize you changed." Now they have to figure out how they had been changed, and how to relate to society once again as a different person. Swords to Plowshares tries to help these veterans start life over again.

As one member stated, in the military they break you down and put you back together their way so fast you didn't even realize you changed.





day three: tuesday, august 7, 2007

## Race & Bias in Media Coverage of War Over the Years

Eduardo Cohen  
([www.veteransforpeace.org](http://www.veteransforpeace.org))

**Eduardo Cohen** is a media consultant who lectures on U.S. media coverage of war and U.S. foreign policy, racism in news coverage of the Middle East, government propaganda disguised as news, and critical failures of American journalism. This event was co-sponsored by **Veterans for Peace**, Chapter 69.

## San Francisco Unified School District School Board

Eric Mar, Stephen McNeil representing American Friends Service Committee  
([www.afsc.org](http://www.afsc.org))

The **San Francisco Board of Education** voted on Nov. 14, 2007 to phase out its JROTC (Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps) program over a two-year period. It is believed to be the first time any school district has eliminated an existing JROTC program. Eric Mar is a parent, teacher, and progressive educational leader elected to his first term on the Board in 2000.

## Military Recruitment Centers

**Marine Recruiting Center** — The United States Marine Corps serves as an amphibious force-in-readiness. Today, it has three primary areas of responsibility: the seizure or defense of advanced naval bases and other land operations to support naval campaigns; the development of tactics, techniques and equipment used by amphibious landing forces; and such other duties as the president may direct.

**Army Recruiting Center** — The Army is a key component of the U.S. Armed Forces, providing expeditionary land forces wherever and whenever they are required. Working in conjunction with the U.S. Department of Defense, the Army trains and equips soldiers and creates leaders among them to rapidly respond when they are called upon to serve the nation.

**Navy Recruiting Center** — The U.S. Navy must be prepared to conduct prompt and sustained combat operations in support of the national interest. This means the Navy must ensure the maritime superiority of the United States. The Navy must be able to totally defeat any threats to the continued free use of the high seas by the United States.

**Air Force Recruiting Center** — The mission of the U.S. Air Force is to deliver sovereign options for the defense of the United States and its global interests, to fly and fight in the air, space and cyberspace.

## Conscientious Objectors

Stephen Funk, Pablo Paredes

**Stephen Funk** — At 19 years old, Lance Corporal Stephen Funk enlisted in the United States Marine Corps in search of direction and a sense of belonging. What he found was a deep and personal aversion to war, an understanding that he is a conscientious objector. Living in San Francisco during the escalation to the Iraq War in late 2002, Stephen participated in antiwar protests and began speaking out anonymously as a Marine to various publications and media outlets. When Iraq was invaded, Stephen realized he was in a position to spread a message of peace. In April 2003, Stephen organized a press conference in front of his military base and became the first public conscientious objector to the Iraq War.

## The Gap

By Aliesha Kumba Baldé

The gap between the truth and the lies  
The gap between who lives and who dies  
Don't expect to see on TV  
What is happening in reality  
We've got journalists in the middle of the action  
Wondering why America has no reaction  
but do you wonder why?  
Do you really wanna know?  
Or would you rather watch the flavor of love show?  
The BIG U S of A !  
United States of Amnesia  
If you won't remember, then they don't need to please ya  
Government owned and government run  
They dictate what is on television  
They lie to us so we think that we know  
But all that we know is what they choose to show.  
They say Britney is bald, Katie Holmes is with Tom  
And occasionally mention a suicide bomb.  
Go to Japan, they'll tell you what we're doing  
Not following leads that they said we're pursuing  
There is a gap between who we are and who we want to be.  
But we will never know ourselves, until it is us that we see.

The  
media  
don't ask  
enough  
questions.

## The Meek Media

By Antonio Ayala

If there's one thing you can learn from media consultant Eduardo Cohen it's that the media don't ask enough questions. For years, the U.S. government has seen the press as an obstacle, because if negative images get out, then people will oppose whatever the government is doing. Their two solutions are 1) keep the media from reporting the truth, and 2) feed the media lies. Since our media don't question the government enough, it's hard for people to separate the truth from the distorted reality. In order to truly find out what's going on, Americans must turn to independent media or other countries' media outlets. I think it's ludicrous that we have to find out what's going on in our country from other countries; it just doesn't make any sense. In Iraq, our reporters traveled with units of American soldiers, and their loyalty to our soldiers influenced what they reported. This is called "embedded reporting." I think our media need to be taught to ask the right questions so people aren't left with confusion. As Eduardo Cohen said, "It's not the press' job to agree with the government, it's their job to question the government."

## SF JROTC and Its Discontents

By Cally Wong

Eric Mar, a member of the San Francisco School Board, talked about their decision to phase out the JROTC (Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps) program from San Francisco's public schools. Their main reason is that the school board does not support the military's discriminatory stance on gay people. The military refuses to allow openly gay service members, which goes against the San Francisco School District's anti-discrimination policy. The Don't Ask, Don't Tell policy is supposed to help protect gay people in the military, but in practice, the policy doesn't work. Gay service members are often harassed and discriminated against and then forced to leave the military, sometimes against their will.

Many supporters of the JROTC phase-out also believe that the armed forces should have no place in schools because it promotes violence and war, and that it is a way to recruit youth into the military. Eric Mar also mentioned that many students are forced into taking JROTC because it counts as physical education credit. When there isn't enough room in a physical education class, students are placed into the JROTC. JROTC supporters argue that it provides discipline and it helps them stay focused. The San Francisco Board of Education plans to phase out its JROTC, but the bigger problem remains. What are they going to replace it with?



## Navy Recruiter

By Alberto Gomez

When we headed to the recruitment offices I felt excited. It was interesting. We had heard in the news about recruiters telling lies to get people to sign up, so I thought that maybe we were going to be told lies too. I was wondering why they would put recruitment centers at the mall, but then I saw that the mall was full of young people and that's the main group they want to reach. Seeing all of the teens and young adults in that mall made me kind of sad knowing that they were steps away from a recruitment office.

When we got to the office we saw a young woman, and we told her we were there for information on the Navy. She said, "There's pamphlets outside the door or you can take the seat and the recruiter will be right out."

We took a seat, and I saw this big, fit man who was about my size. As soon as I saw him my nervous feeling turned into straight bone-chilling fear. Then he said "Hi" and shook my hand. I noticed when we were introducing ourselves that he was actually a very nice guy. Then he asked me the question that later turned into bait: "What are you interested in?" I told him I wanted to be an electrical engineer, and that turned into the main point of our discussion. Everything tied back to how joining the Navy could help me reach my career goal; but, really, all he wanted me to do was join. He was really good at making things sound great. As we started to ask questions, his answers sounded too good to be true; like when we asked about college he promised me about half a million dollars. What if I smoked weed? The recruiter answered, "Don't worry about that; everyone smokes weed, we'll just keep that here in the office."

I reflected on that experience the whole ride back from the recruitment center. The more I thought of it the more emotional I got, so I started to engage in a conversation with the group. What really made me think was how much the recruiter really knew what to say to get me to join. Even if I knew that he might be telling lies, it still sounded so good — money for college, job training, traveling. What made me scared was if I had been in that office alone with the recruiter, I swear I would have joined. He really just made it sound so good, like a guarantee for success. And that's what a lot of us dream about.

## A Lie?

By Samantha Johnson

Are they really lying?

I mean I know that 90% of them will go to the war...but is it really that bad?

I wanted to be part of "The few, the proud, the Marines" just for that second, that minute, that hour, that week.

I wanted to be part of the best and brightest

I was so shocked at how easily I was lured into this fantasy world

Could all that support I want in life really be just a contract and 13 weeks of training away?

Is this what we as youth of the future have to resist?

I don't know how we're going to do it...fuck it's hard

I am so happy I "know better"...right?

So this is what brain washing feels like...

The answer is in alternatives and knowing the facts

Because without those, I'd surely be signing up to be part of the few and the proud

Then I'd have to find out the hard the answer to the question...

Are they really lying?

When we asked about college he promised me about half a million dollars.

## Untitled

By Eddie Rueda

Sitting at a desk  
Reading the paper  
It's time for lunch  
Walking up to the second floor  
They see some teenagers  
But in their mind  
We are just stacks of money  
Not people money  
Not kids  
No future  
As two go in  
We see the truth  
We hear their lies  
They mess with our head  
Because in their mind  
We are just money in their pockets  
As two go in we see the truth

## Against Bearing Arms

By Perla Pasayes

He was 19 when he enlisted in the Marine Corps. He was looking for direction in his life, a sense of belonging. What he found was the truth—that war has many purposes that are not morally correct. For example, he noticed how the distance between soldier and family becomes obvious. He noticed that in the service very few people have rights like freedom of speech—if you speak freely, you often can be punished. In boot camp his experience was terrible, being ordered over and over to shout, “Kill! Kill! Kill!” while stabbing fake bodies.

I am so glad there are people like him, who are standing up for the message of peace. He became a conscientious objector and he wants to spread the word that peace is what we should support, not war. More people should do what he and Pablo Paredes, another inspiring conscientious objector, are doing. Stephen is out there marching in anti-war rallies while Pablo goes around speaking to youth about the truth of military service. Pablo served in the U.S. Navy for five years, decided he was against the U.S. war in Iraq, and had the courage to not board his ship, which was on its way to the Persian Gulf on the “Iraqi Freedom” mission. He is one more person we can look up to when it comes to being able to speak the truth.

- Act to  
your disadvantages

- Persuasive

- Make promises



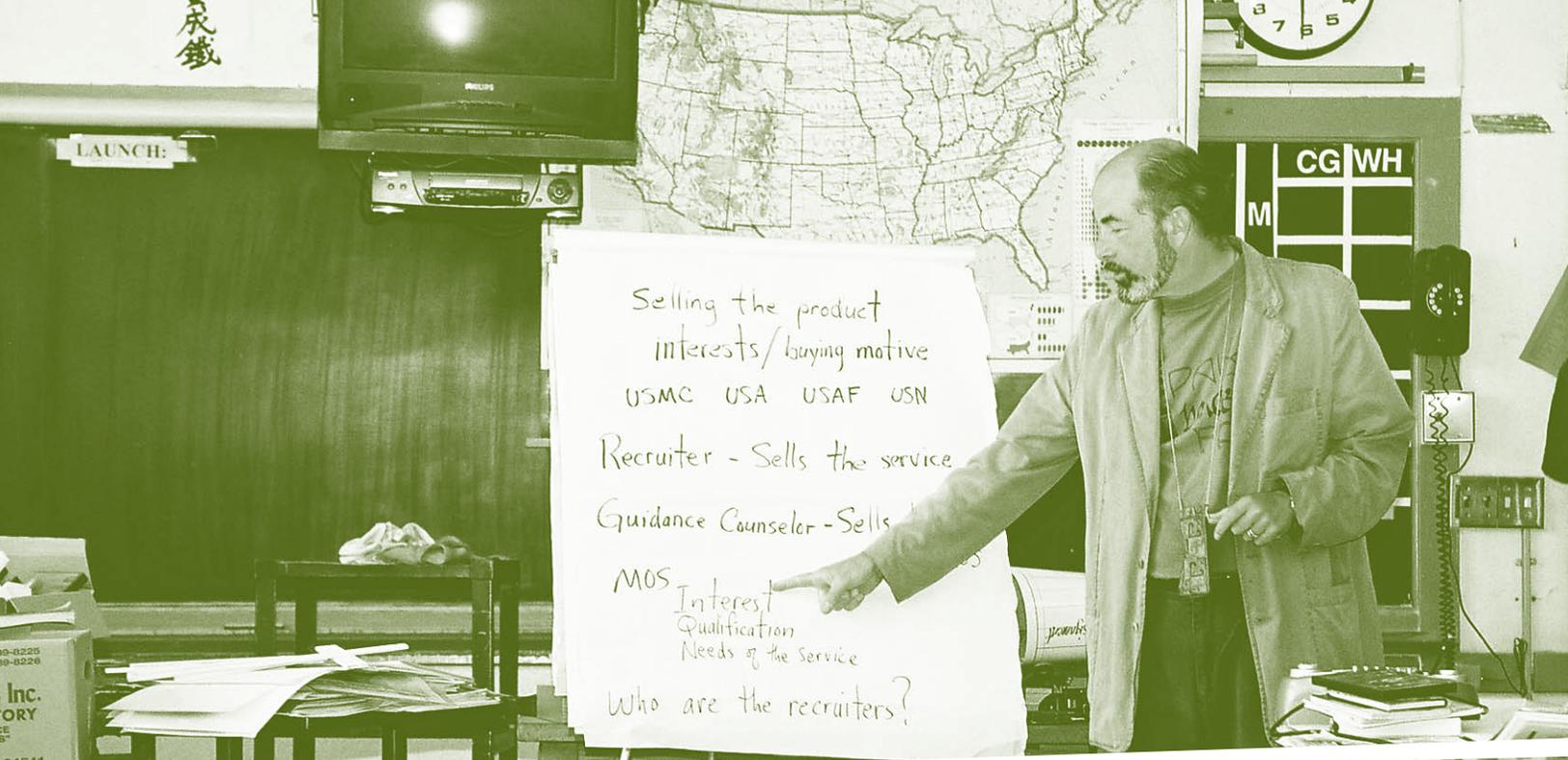
An image by Delvon Meredith

- Talk to you  
like they know  
you

- Recruit  
younger  
people

- Show up  
at your schools

In boot camp  
his experience  
was terrible,  
being ordered  
over and over  
to shout, Kill!  
Kill! Kill! while  
stabbing fake  
bodies.



## day four: wednesday, august 8, 2007

### START Fitness, San Francisco

Sgt. Ken  
([www.startfitness.com](http://www.startfitness.com))

Since 1998, Sgt. Ken of START Fitness has led more than 5,000 civilians through military-inspired fitness boot camp. The philosophy of Sgt. Ken's Boot Camp is "Strength, Stamina and Flexibility." The program combines cardiovascular and strength training exercises in a regimented, five-days-a-week program.

### Former Military Recruiter, Richmond

Byrne Sherwood

**Byrne Sherwood** was born in the Philippines but raised in El Cerrito. He graduated from LSU, Baton Rouge, LA in 1970 and was simultaneously commissioned as an officer in the U.S. Army. He served in the Army for the next 23 years with postings all around the U.S. and around the world. Upon retirement in 1993, he became the executive director of a mentorship program in New Orleans called Each One Save One. He returned to California in 1995, working as an outreach worker at an elementary school in San Pablo while he got his teaching credential. He has been teaching at Richmond High School since 1997.

### Military Industrial Complex

Antonia Juhasz  
([www.thebushagenda.net](http://www.thebushagenda.net))

**Antonia Juhasz** recently wrote "The Bush Agenda: Invading the World, One Economy at a Time." The book exposes the Bush administration's use of trade as a weapon of war, through the U.S.-Middle East Free Trade Area, as it builds a Pax Americana. It reveals the history and key role of U.S. corporations in the creation of the Bush Agenda, focusing on Bechtel, Lockheed Martin, Chevron, and Halliburton. It concludes with specific and achievable alternatives for a more peaceful and sustainable course.



## Oh, My Aching Body

By Raja Sutherland

The Mock Boot Camp fitness program was physically the most vigorous experience I have had since I took Shaolin Kempo nine years ago. Before we got started on the workout, we watched a video about the National Guard to get us interested in it. To me it looked similar to the other military recruiting videos I had seen. The instructor told us about how he was a football player who suffered a severe back injury and how the National Guard helped him regain his strength. We later found out that the National Guard members are offered a few thousand-dollar recruitment bonus for signing up new recruits. Afterwards we began the exercises that took place in a series of stations.

Exercises consisted of running, push-ups, pull-ups, arm exercises, and back stretches. We repeated these stations at least twice during the session. Though the instructor said we could take a break if we wanted to, I tried taking as few breaks as possible, determined to give my best. I felt as though my body would break at any time as it was not used to this kind of exercise. I dared to think what I would have gone through had this been real boot camp.

At the end of the session we were dismissed military-style and then given some freebies such as a National Guard recruitment video game and T-shirt, and a book about how the National Guard funds money for college. My body was sore days after, especially my arms, which I couldn't raise above my head without pain shooting through them. I was glad that I had the experience, but I don't wish to repeat it anytime soon. It has only made me more thankful that I don't have to join the military, because I know actual boot camp would literally break my body.

## Not to Question Why

By Perla Pasayes

Sergeant Ken made it a fun boot camp, maybe too lenient, compared with the real thing. He made some of us feel worthless; he challenged us and our bodies, but mostly our minds. Sergeant Ken yelled a couple of times, and instructed us to yell “HOOAH” with him. He squeezed us for our last drop of sweat. I felt my muscles tremble. I felt my body weak and tired. Now, imagine how a *real* boot camp must be—an adventure that does not contain fun but lack of sleep and energy instead. You must have *non-stop* determination, because as Sgt. Ken said, “90 percent of success is attitude and 10 percent is talent.” In real boot camp they want to shape you as you have never been shaped in your life. They must work you hard. They break you down to build someone tougher — someone so tough that they forget to think like the human being they used to be. Some people might also forget the reason why we are at war in the first place, but that is okay with the military, because they built you to fight, not to question, and that is the reason they want you. It is so hard to accept the truth. But when it's time to accept it, you realize that you shouldn't waste time. Instead, spread the word, spread your knowledge, spread your realization, and maybe others can learn for the better and maybe you will be their next inspiration.

They break you down  
to build someone  
tougher—someone so  
tough that they forget  
to think like the human  
being they used to be.



# Recruiters are under so much pressure to meet their quota.

## The Art of Recruiting

By Aurora Castellanos

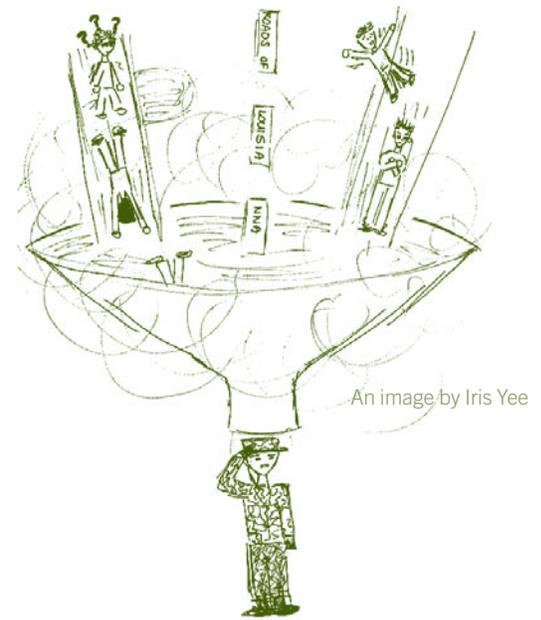
Byrne Sherwood, a former military recruiter, talked to us about his experience. The art of recruiting requires skills similar to the job of salespeople. Recruiting is about painting a nice picture that people would want to buy. Sherwood was able to humanize recruiters; his presentations made it seem less of a white-and-black issue.

Recruiters are under so much pressure to meet their quota—two recruits per month in Sherwood’s time. They have different bases set up in every state, and depending on the population, there are a certain number of recruiters assigned to that area. Sherwood explained why more poor people are recruited. It is easier to recruit poor people because they are looking for better opportunities that they think the military offers. Rich kids have their lives set up and poor kids need more options.

Some of the ways recruiters find students are by getting yearbooks, lists of high school students, and by high schools administering ASVAB (Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery). The ASVAB is a test that schools encourage students to take. Students think this is like any other test and that it could be practice for other standardized tests. The ASVAB is also presented as a career-tracking test, but most people don’t realize that ASVAB only tests for military careers.

Recruiters get the list of student contact information because recent laws like No Child Left Behind require high schools to provide the military the contact information of students 17 and older upon request, unless students sign an opt-out form saying they don’t want their information going to military recruiters. For many schools that refuse to obey this law, the federal government has threatened to take away funding. Even though schools are required to inform students about opting out, many students never receive the information, so the majority never fills it out. There are many other ways that the military can get youth contact information.

Thanks to Byrne sharing his experience, we were able to get an inside look at how military recruiting works.



## Options

By Iris Yee

In Richmond, Byrne Sherwood, a former army recruiter, explained that recruiting is equal to sales, and also showed us a drawing of a funnel where many people go in and not many come out. He said people have roads to their dreams. He says the roads in Louisiana, where he worked as a recruiter, have ditches along the sides. The people who walk along these roads have dreams: getting into a good college, landing a good job, owning a car, and much more; but while walking along the roads, they can trip and fall into the ditches. How? A lack of opportunity. So, as a military recruiter, he would ask youth what they wanted out of life, and how they planned to get there. Many youth didn’t really know how they were going to pay for college or get a good job. “So where does that leave you?” Sherwood would ask. “In the ditch. The military can offer you a path to your dreams.” And then he would tell them about the benefits the military offers, leaving out that most people didn’t get those benefits.

These are the roads of Louisiana. People are walking on the roads. They slip, trip and fall into the ditches along the sides. The people slide from the ditches into the vast opening of the funnel. Many go in with high hopes and dreams. Only a few come out from the tiny opening at the end of the funnel.

## The War-Profit Connection

By Shamar Theus

Before journeying to San Diego to experience the war machine firsthand, we met with Antonia Juhasz, an expert on the “military-industrial complex” and author of the book “The Bush Agenda: Invading the World, One Economy at a Time,” which documents the Bush administration members’ hidden monetary interests in Iraq and the Middle East.

Juhasz explained that the “military-industrial complex” is the strong affiliation between the nation’s armed forces, private industry, political figures and commercial interests. Juhasz told us the rather surprising origin of the term. In President Dwight D. Eisenhower’s 1961 farewell address, he used the term to refer to the known conspiracy among defense contractors and government officials, who used war to improve their own corporate and monetary interests.

President Eisenhower tried to warn the public of the problems created when government officials profit from war, but his caution went unnoticed. As Juhasz explained, this problem continues to this day. Juhasz pointed out that nearly every member of the current Bush administration has ties to some contractor and is getting richer because of the war. Juhasz then told us how Vice President Dick Cheney, for example, once ran oil industry giant Halliburton. One of Halliburton’s subsidiaries, Kellogg Brown & Root, has won lucrative contracts in post-Saddam Iraq. The Defense Department gave Kellogg Brown & Root a \$90-million no-bid (automatically rewarded with no competition) contract to cater for the Americans who are working on rebuilding Iraq. Kellogg Brown & Root also got a very lucrative contract to repair Iraq’s oilfields. Juhasz explained how access to Middle Eastern oil, and not an actual national threat, sparked the war that we continue to fight in the Middle East. She illustrated, in great detail, the steps that led to the current war in Iraq and how monetary interests still play a key role.

## A Complex About Oil

By Aleksis Bertoni

At this point in time the U.S. Military is the world’s strongest fighting force by far; this is a fact, not an opinion. The United States has steadily risen to power since the end of the Second World War. When all the super powers in Europe were in shambles, we kept militarizing when all the other dominant countries in the world had to stop and rebuild their infrastructure. From that point on we have not stopped in our conquest to have the most powerful and most technologically advanced military in the world. This mission has not come without drawbacks or sacrifices on the part of the U.S. government and the U.S. public as a whole.

When we met with Antonia Juhasz on the topic of the Military Industrial Complex (M.I.C.) we all learned a lot about how far back the ties to what is happening all over the world, but specifically in the Middle East, have to do with the M.I.C. The war in

Iraq has been the most profitable venture in a very long time for a lot of American companies, with the help of the United States government. Around the 1950’s, the United States started getting involved in major conflicts in the Middle East in order to protect its access to the region’s oil reserves. Since World War One, the United States along with a few other countries such as Britain and France, owned the oil under countries in the Middle East such as Iraq, Iran and Saudi Arabia. In the early 1950’s, Iran’s newly elected Prime Minister Mossadegh decided that Iran should control and profit from its own oil, so they kicked out all foreign companies.

## President Eisenhower tried to warn the public of the problems created when government officials profit from war.

When Iran took back its oil, the United States and Britain were outraged, so in turn they overthrew Mossadegh’s democratically elected government through a number of covert political campaigns, leaving the U.S.-backed Shah in power. The Shah was happy to let the United States keep taking Iran’s oil. After a few years of the Shah’s rule the Iranian public was outraged so they overthrew the Shah and instated their own choice in 1979. The new ruler took back the oil. The United States, obviously displeased about this, went looking for another oil-rich friend in the Middle East, this time in Iraq, where it helped Saddam Hussein to power. Hussein kept control of Iraq’s oil, but still allowed U.S. companies to make their profits there. One of Saddam’s first actions was to wage war on Iran to gain more power in the region. The United States wanted Iran’s government overthrown and wanted to keep its own access to Iraq’s oil, so they supplied Iraq with billions of dollars in weapons and whatever else they needed. After the war ended, the United States feared Saddam’s growing power in the Middle East, so when Iraq invaded Kuwait for even more power, we were right there to fight them off. Today, more than 10-years after this conflict we are back in Iraq, reclaiming what the government seems to think we are entitled to: Iraq’s oil.

## Camp Pendleton, San Diego Area

([www.pendleton.usmc.mil](http://www.pendleton.usmc.mil))

Marine Corps Base **Camp Pendleton** is the largest West Coast expeditionary training facility in the Marine Corps. The base is home to the First Marine Expeditionary Force, 1st Marine Division, 1st Force Service Support Group, elements of the 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing, Marine Corps Recruit Depot Weapons & Field Training Battalion, School of Infantry, Marine Corps and Army Reserve Forces, Marine Corps Tactical Systems Support Activity, the Navy's Assault Craft Unit 5, and a Naval Hospital.

day five: thursday, august 9, 2007



## In a Single Instant

By Sarah Leadem

On the beach of Camp Pendleton, a young boy clumsily stumbles upon a spot in the sand and, with great determination, begins digging a hole with a yellow plastic shovel. Two young girls chase each other around a big blue umbrella, chuckling wildly as one quickly escapes the other. Young boys and girls stand excitedly on the shore, jumping up and down, giggling playfully. Suddenly, a wave leaps out of the still waters and rushes toward the group of children. With knowing smiles, they begin to scream and run toward the safety of the sandy beach, each light footstep initiating a new burst of laughter.

I see life. I see happiness. I see simplicity. I see joy. But then, I am overcome by a feeling in the pit of my stomach—a feeling of sadness—as I see this beautiful scene begin to crumble before my eyes. This is not just a typical public beach and these are not typical children. These are the children of military families, who have mothers or fathers serving in the Marines, possibly on deployment in Iraq or awaiting news of a deployment.

And all of a sudden, the vibrant colors surrounding me turn to dull shades of grey. The smile on my face seems to melt away; my soul seems to sink deeper into my skin. I realize that in a single instant, this light-heartedness, this joviality, this sense of peace, could all be destroyed by that one, dreaded knock on the door. In an instant, the life of this child before me could be forever changed.

How is a child supposed to understand, to comprehend a force as destructive, as cold, as unfeeling, as final as death? How will that child cope with waking up in the morning to see that the smiling face of his mother or father is not waiting for him at the kitchen table? How will that child be able to understand why the person who brought him or her into this world has suddenly been taken out of it? How will the child's remaining parent be able to answer the inevitable question of why? How do you explain the act of war, the idea of killing another human being, to a child who has not even learned to tie his or her own shoes?

## The Perfect Marine

By Tania Flores

In the military, truth comes in layers, and to find the true nature of things we had to use a particular process of comprehension. First,

we had to take the reality we were given by the system, that is, how things are portrayed, and look in it for the accidental openings, the inadvertent flaws. These mistakes surfaced in the differences among the silky words we heard individually and as a group and during the unsupervised moments when we were slipped admonitions and warnings.

In the days before Camp Pendleton, we had studiously scribbled abstract notes on lined paper, listening attentively in meetings, asking questions. For the most part, we got our information secondhand, from individuals who broke it down for us. Entering Camp Pendleton required a subtle shift back into the critical mode of thinking we needed when we met with the military recruiters. Still, the transition was unexpectedly jolting. A Marine in uniform suddenly joined us on the bus as we drove through the base, past Wal-Mart and formations of Marines in training and everything that we do and do not see every single day. Eventually, we stopped at the rifle training range, which was on our schedule. However, our tour guide explained that superiors had not been notified through the correct channels and that it sounded like we weren't going to be able to stay to observe the training exercises. So, while waiting to hear back from "the superiors," we stood around and asked questions, feeling acutely aware of our surroundings and the uniformed Marines with rifles looking on, amused.

After receiving a definite "no" from the higher-ups, we boarded the bus and visited a museum chronicling the various methods of transportation and protection used throughout American war history.

On the entire tour, our guide was cordially detached and completely unemotional. Not surprisingly for someone in the military with a job in public relations, he was the real-life version of the Marines from the magazines in the recruiting office, right down to the chiseled jaw and Ken doll-like features. Indifferent and level,

**How is a child  
supposed to  
understand, to  
comprehend a force  
as destructive, as  
cold, as unfeeling,  
as final as death?**



he mostly parried our questions with concrete, uncontroversial explanations. Nothing he said sounded rehearsed, yet nothing sounded natural or original and certainly nothing hinted that he might have personal feelings. He sat alone at lunch, filling his table with several full plates of food and downing them calmly. When something seemed not headed in the right direction according to standard procedure—for example, when another Marine sat down at one of our tables and appeared to be taking an interest in us and in sharing his personal perspectives—our guide came around to station himself in the situation, and quickly became an intimidating presence to the other Marine. He allowed an African-American Marine to lead us around the barracks (which involved almost no talking whatsoever), but expertly got two white Marines for the question-and-answer session that followed our tour of the barracks.

## One of the students on the trip was given a warning in the lunchroom to not join the Marine Corps and to go to college instead.

Our guide was the epitome of the reality we were being shown, the first layer of truth, how they want things to appear. All that we could see of him was the part that had been stripped down and built back up into a machine that rarely laughed or smiled. We found other layers that day—Berto, one of the students on the trip, was given a warning in the lunchroom to “not join the Marine Corps” and to “go to college instead.” Yet, we found nothing that told us there was still a free-thinking person inside their idea of the perfect Marine.

### ***The Ground Truth*** (A Film)

By Alysha Aziz

“Bomb the village, kill the people, throw some napalm in the square. Do it on a Sunday morning, do it on their way to prayer. Ring the bell inside the schoolhouse, watch those kiddies gather round. Lock and load with your 240, mow them little motherf--- down.”

When I first heard Charlie Anderson, a former Petty Officer in the U.S. Navy, sing those words in the movie “The Ground Truth,” I could not believe my ears. He was explaining that it was a common jogging cadence that he and his fellow recruits sang, in unison, during his basic training, but I was trying not to listen. This has got to be some twisted joke, I thought to myself. Recruits cannot be trained to think like this... or can they?

I soon found out that not only can they be trained to think like this; they must, if they are expected to survive and function in a war zone. This powerful movie crystallized many points that had slowly been solidifying in my mind throughout the trip, such as the dehumanization of the self and the opponents that is necessary to keep one’s sanity in a state of war.

It all begins in basic training. As a soldier, your job is to kill, and that killing becomes a lot easier once you can see your “enemies” as less than human. As a result, recruits are often trained to use derogatory words, such as “Raghead” or “Hajji” (which didn’t always have a negative connotation) to describe the Iraqi civilians, or sing cadences like the one written above. “Taking someone’s life is not something that is abnormal,” says Sean Huze (a former Marine Corps corporal). “It’s taking it when you are not in a state of rage—that’s abnormal. Being able to have a sustained desire is what requires training.” And that is exactly what the military trains you do to.

However, no amount of training, or yelling the word “kill,” or using derogatory terms can prepare anybody for the moment when they have to take a life. Sometimes, because of the intense situation and their conditioning, soldiers are able to kill without any immediate psychological results. Hearing stories in the movie about soldiers and Marines intentionally running over children or laughing after blowing somebody up horrified me, until I realized that it might just be another coping mechanism. And, for the most part, people who have had to take a life do not walk away unscathed or laughing. Take the story of Marine Sgt. Rob Sarra. He vividly remembers the woman approaching his tank one day wearing a black *burqa* (a long, traditional veil worn by some Muslim women). He didn’t know if she was coming to surrender or harm them. Faced with a split-second decision, “I pulled up my rifle, took two shots at her.” Then, he said, “As soon as that second shot went off, the guys in the other vehicle opened up, and they cut her down. She fell in the dirt, and as she fell, she had a white flag in her hand, that she had pulled out of her purse.” He went on to describe how he had a breakdown, and still has to face the fact that no matter what he does, he will never be able to bring her back.



Coming back home is often just as challenging as going to war.

Because of incidents like this, coming back home is often just as challenging as going to war. Some of the veterans in the movie had lost their legs or arms; others, their identities. Even the ones that looked “fine” on the outside suffered from ghosts and memories of war that would always haunt and torment them, and the majority had some form of PTSD. As I was hearing their stories, I realized that I had absolutely no idea what it was like to experience hell and then be expected to resume life on earth like nothing had happened. What it was like to come back to family and friends that you no longer connect with and live with those burning memories. What it was like to resume a life so drastically different from the one you have been trained to live.

Yet, I was surprised at the hope so many of the veterans in the movie had despite all they had been through. They used their painful emotions and guilt as fuel to propel themselves forward and spread the truth about the war, or just rebuild their lives. While their memories are painful, they also gave their assertions about the war weight and credibility. While what Rob Sarra said was true, that their actions would never bring back the people they killed, they could still do something to prevent others from making the mistake they made. In the words of Camilo Mejia, an Army sergeant-turned-conscientious-objector and anti-war activist, “There is no higher freedom that can be achieved than the freedom we achieve when we follow our conscience.”





day six: friday, august 10, 2007

### **Marine Corps Recruit Depot**

([www.mcrdsd.usmc.mil](http://www.mcrdsd.usmc.mil))

**Marine Corps Recruit Depot (MCRD)** San Diego is one of the places where many American youth are transformed into Marines. Marines are forged in a furnace of shared hardship and tough training. This shared, intense experience creates bonds of comradeship and standards of conduct so strong that Marines will let nothing stand in their way. This belief is the basis upon which MCRD makes Marines.

### **Project on Youth and Non-Military Opportunities (YANO)**

Rick Jahnkow, Jorge Mariscal  
([www.projectyano.org](http://www.projectyano.org))

Jorge Mariscal is a Vietnam veteran and the director of the Chicano-Latino Arts and Humanities Program at the University of California, San Diego. He is a member of Project YANO (San Diego). Rick Jahnkow is Project Coordinator at PY, a nonprofit community organization that provides young people with an alternative point of view about military enlistment. Many of its members are armed forces veterans who believe that high school students are get-

ting a distorted picture of the military and war from recruiting ads and marketing. They are concerned that many low-income students and students of color are being diverted away from higher education and into the military, where they are found in disproportionate numbers.

### **San Diego Military Counseling Project**

Hal Brody, Larry Christian, Lynn Gonzalez  
([www.sdmcp.org](http://www.sdmcp.org))

The **San Diego Military Counseling Project (SDMCP)**, an organization of vets and other people, works with active-duty people and their families who are having problems within the military. SDMCP can provide information, experience, and support that let service members know what civil rights they still have, even while in the military. They also help people apply for discharges based on conscientious objection, hardship, dependency, etc. SDMCP can refer soldiers to attorneys, doctors or clergy that are not affiliated with the military. It is not in any way connected with the armed forces.

## I Look

By Jenny Situ

I look and see little marching specks.  
As young as 18, 90% will be off to Iraq.  
I look and I see pain.  
I weep, as I picture their life as “government issued”  
I look and I stumble upon confusion.  
Why? I ask myself.  
I look and I see inequality.  
Is this really the only way out.  
I look and I scream.  
To know what our government values,  
I look and I wonder.  
How many of these men are coming back?  
Will the VA system still be as corrupt?  
If one would rather commit suicide than suffer PTSD.  
Where the young men/women will go when they return?  
I look and I wonder:  
What their names would be, when and if they return...  
But most of all...  
I look and I can see life.  
The life and love that all these men carry with them.





## The “Poverty Draft”

By Doris Le

The title is misleading because it assumes that military recruiters target the poorest members of our society. According to Jorge Mariscal, professor at University of California, San Diego, that is not true. In order to enlist, a person must have a high school diploma or GED. Many people of the poorest classes do not have the opportunity or resources to gain that diploma or GED. But the recruiters also don't target the upper middle class or the upper class, people who have the money and support needed to go to college or to pursue whatever they desire.

Military recruiters, therefore, target members of the lower-middle class and the middle class. Members of these social classes may have their diplomas or equivalents, but they may not have the resources to pursue their other goals, including going to college. Recruiters, therefore, are able to promise economic resources and a purpose in life, both tempting offers. It is easy to see why people would jump at the seemingly flawless plan recruiters lay out for them.

There is the widespread belief that military recruiters target people of color, and there have been recent programs aimed specifically at recruiting in Latino and African-American communities. In reality, though, the majority of the soldiers serving in Iraq are rural, lower-middle class whites. However, people of color are disproportionately represented, meaning that there are significantly larger percentages of them in the military than in society. In general, it is the people who feel they have few options that recruiters target. And many people believe joining the military will save them from dead-end jobs, or living an unexciting life without purpose. But community college and other options are out there, and any dead-end job can be quit. But you can't quit the military without severe consequences, or fight in a war without risk. And sometimes your life just isn't really worth that kind of risk.

## Government Issued

By Jacquieta Beverly

Meeting with the San Diego Military Counseling Project (SDMCP), an organization that helps people in the military who may want to get out, was a real eye opener. It made me feel like there is hope after all. It seemed that as soon as you signed the contract with the military that was it! Your life as you knew it was over; the military was not going to let you out for nothing. Hearing all the stories about people in the military not having any rights was frustrating.

Trying to get out of the military is very hard. There will be many, many obstacles to face because the military has very strong rules and will find ways to make you stay. For many people, organizations like the SDMCP and the GI Rights Hotline are like a life saver! (The GI Rights Hotline is another group that gives free counseling to people on military active duty who are considering ways to get out.) “G.I.” means “Government Issued,” and is another term for active-duty military folks. It's that guardian angel you pray will come help you when you need them. Anyone in any branch of the military can contact these organizations, and there are counselors there to help with anything you may have a question about, like the options available in your situation and what different discharges mean.

The volunteer counselors all seemed to have a lot of compassion and love for what they do. Some of their stories were really touching, especially when they started to talk about some of the calls they get from women in the service about getting raped or sexually assaulted by their fellow servicemen. That is so sad! Or people calling because the recruiter told them things that weren't true – like many recruiters tell people they won't go to war and never tell you that any military contract can be changed at any time by the military. Any of the promises recruiters make, even if they're in the contract, don't have to be honored—a lot of people only find this out too late. I think that the Military Counseling Project and the GI Rights Hotline are amazing. No matter how dark your tunnel may seem in the military, these programs can often show you the light at the end!

**In general, it is the people who feel they have few options that recruiters target.**



Our Son has been in  
combat OVER 24 months

day seven: saturday, august 11, 2007

## Military Families Speak Out

Vickie Castro, Tim Kahlor  
([www.mfso.org](http://www.mfso.org))

Military Families Speak Out (Temecula) is an organization of people opposed to the war in Iraq, who have relatives or loved ones currently in the military or have served in the military since the buildup to the Iraq war in fall of 2002. It has more than 3,400 military families as members, with new families joining daily. Tim Kahlor's son, Ryan, has been deployed in Iraq since September 2003. Ryan is currently serving his second tour of duty. Vickie Castro's son Spc. Jonathan Castro, 21, was one of 22 people, including 14 U.S. soldiers killed in the December 21, 2004, explosion at the mess hall tent at Camp Marez, Mosul, Iraq.

They put faces, hearts, souls,  
and lives to the people we  
hear about on the news or  
read about in the papers.

## Just Like You and Me

By Jacquieta Beverly

Meeting with Military Families Speak Out was one of the most profound moments on the trip. On the news all they say is, "Today three soldiers were killed in combat," and to you, for a second, you're like, aw that's sad; I feel for the family! And you go about your day. Or you think the military is bad and this war is wrong. That's it. You can come up with a million reasons why it's wrong or bad and why you don't agree with it! But the thing is, the people fighting it may feel the same way! But what about once you look past the war, once you look past the evil things our government has used our military for? Once you look past the ongoing violence, once you look inside your heart and start to have a little compassion, you will see that people in uniform, the shiny boots, clean pressed clothing, fresh haircuts,

quick lines and smooth style are just people like you and me! Hard to believe, right?! Listening to the stories of the two families we met with made me see that. They put faces, hearts, souls, and lives to the people we hear about on the news or read about in the papers. They are people and they have families. And some of their families are fighting for them to come home!

Military Families Speak Out is an incredible organization of people fighting for their family members to come home and for them to be cared for when they return. I really want to thank the two speakers for sharing their stories. They were really touching and really made me rethink a lot of my own options and views.



day eight: sunday, august 12, 2007

## Precita Eyes Mural Arts & Visitors Center, San Francisco

Fred Alvarado  
([www.precitaeyes.org](http://www.precitaeyes.org))

**Precita Eyes**, established in 1977 and located in San Francisco's Mission District, is a nonprofit community arts organization, one of only three community mural centers in the United States. It sponsors and implements ongoing mural projects throughout the Bay Area and internationally. It also offers mural and art classes for children and youth, and other classes for adults.

### The Painting on the Wall

By Aliessa Kumba Baldé

We knew we were going to make a mural, but we had no idea we would create a masterpiece. We walked into the small storefront studio and gathered around the tables. Raw from the experiences of the week, we came up with the list of topics and ideas that had affected us the most. From corporate influence to the voices of the vets, we drew images we thought best represented how we felt about the issues.

After passing around our art work for others to see, we decided what we wanted to be in the mural. The favorite was Jillian's soldier. Not only was it a spectacular drawing, but it conveyed the struggles and hardships that soldiers go through. We chose this image as our centerpiece and decided on the images that would surround it.

We wanted to represent ourselves and every other youth or adult who might have thought or think that the military is the only definite way to succeed in life, especially when there are so many barriers to college and good jobs. After talking to military recruiters and realizing that the promises they offer are so persuasive, even if we know many are not true, we know a lot of people join the military because they are offered answers to their hopes and dreams. We wanted to show how much more there is to achieve in life and, therefore, we drew hands; hands that are reaching into

a sky labeled "hopes and dreams." This is to remind us that our success doesn't depend on how much money we make or what we own, but how we live our lives and how hard we strive to achieve those hopes and dreams.

### Iraqi Woman

By Simone Crew

We were inspired to include the Iraqi woman by an extremely touching moment of the documentary, *The Ground Truth*. A U.S. veteran of the current war in Iraq told the poignant story about hard choices in the military. He and his unit were approached by a woman, and never knowing the potential threat of seemingly innocent women and children who sometimes carried bombs, they shot at her as she reached into her robes. As she fell, they saw that she had been reaching for a white flag of surrender, vainly trying to tell them that she had come in peace, hence the dove painted on the flag. Her tears are inscribed with some of the emotions that her story brought out in us and the strife and loss her death and the deaths of over a million Iraqis represent. The tears are streaming into puddles of oil and of blood.

## Oil and Blood

By Raja Sutherland

The oil and blood symbolize the cost of human lives for the war we are fighting for access to oil in Iraq and surrounding countries, and now we are trading one for the other. The Iraqi woman's tears are flowing into the oil and blood, representing the destruction and the loss of lives and homes.

## Camouflage and the American flag

By Sarah Leadem

In the background of the mural there is camouflage print that is slowly encroaching upon and beginning to conceal the American flag. This is symbolic of the way in which our current political system has become dominated by militarism. Additionally, this image symbolizes the way in which our American values and ideals such as democracy, liberty, justice and equality, contrary to what the government tells us, are actually being diminished at the hands of the destructive forces of war, militarism, and violence.

## Blue and Gold Star

By Delvon Meredith

A "blue star" in a family's window means they have a loved one in the military on active duty, so they put it up in honor of them. When you see a "gold star" over the blue star, it means that their loved one has died. In any type of military death, in battle or not, the family receives a "gold star."

## Death's Counter

By Perla Pasayes

One component which completes the painting on a realistic note is the US military deathcount in Iraq on that day, "3684, 3685, and counting." There are two additional meanings to this symbol. One is that the counter reminds us of rising gas prices, which seem to rise as the deaths are rising. Are US soldiers dying for oil and for corporations to profit? Another meaning is that of a slot machine—the President seems to be playing a game—gambling away people's lives and tax dollars no matter at what cost. He keeps pulling down the lever and the numbers keep rising up, but it's just a game to him.

## Soldier's Heart

By Jillian Liu

Broken soldiers still have hearts, despite the black-and-white pain they may feel inside and the cold, hardened faces they carry outside. The soldier has a blank face because it could be anyone. The soldier's hand is out as a gesture of compassion, recognizing the immorality of his actions and the anguish he may have brought upon others. The picture is an attempt to convey a sense of grief mingled with hope.

As she fell, they saw that she had been reaching for a white flag of surrender, vainly trying to tell them that she had come in peace, hence the dove painted on the flag.





## Roads and Gravestones

By Eliza Arnold

The two roads, one man-made and sullen, the other natural and vibrant earth, converge behind the soldier, forcing a choice between the warpath and humanity. Not all decisions are obvious and there are many hidden consequences lying at the end of the journey.

## Dollar Signs

By Doris Le

Money keeps this war alive. Most people join the military to earn money for college or to fulfill other financial needs. Instead of providing citizens with a means to pay for college, the government spends an unlimited sum on the war in Iraq. The only benefactors of this twisted economy are the corporations that profit from the rebuilding efforts, the access to oil, or the manufacture of the weapons for war.

## Hopes and Dreams

By Iris Yee

The purple cloud represents the hopes and dreams that we all have. Some are easier to reach and some are really hard to reach—but not impossible. Military recruiters say that these hopes and dreams will be granted when you join the military. The hopes and dreams are difficult to reach and the hands are trying so hard to grasp them, but the raindrops are falling fast from the clouds and beating down onto the hands, making the goals slippery and even more difficult to reach. The rain also represents tears for the minds and lives lost to false hopes and denied opportunities.





## the friedman project

The Howard A. Friedman First Amendment Education Project is the youth activism and education program of the ACLU of Northern California. Established in 1991, the Project works with high school students and teachers to improve student understanding of the core principles underlying the Bill of Rights and to make the connection between these rights and the issues they face in their lives.

The Project's Youth Activist Committee, which meets year-round, plans an annual Youth Rights Conference and other activities in addition to the Summer Field Investigation. Topics of past trips include immigration, juvenile justice, sexism, tribal sovereignty, homelessness, and the drug war.

Members of the 2007 Friedman Education Project Summer Field Investigation wish to thank all those who made the time to meet with us before, during, and after the trip to help us understand the myths and truths of military recruitment and service. This publication serves as a forum for our ideas on an issue that has touched our lives and our communities.

We students are free to draw our own conclusions from the trip. This publication is an independent expression of our views, and does not necessarily reflect ACLU policy. All contributions are ©2007 by their respective creators.

Funders: This program was made possible by generous support from the Friedman Family Fund (in memory of Howard A. Friedman), the Evelyn and Walter Haas Jr. Fund, the Cross Ridge Foundation, and the many contributors to the ACLU Foundation of Northern California.

For more information about this publication or the Friedman Education Project, contact Project Director Eveline Chang at (415) 621-2493 x337, or [echang@aclunc.org](mailto:echang@aclunc.org).

What made me scared was if I had been in that office alone with the recruiter, I swear I would have joined.

I was so shocked at how easily I was lured into this fantasy world.

Rich kids have their lives set up and poor kids need more options.

He was looking for direction in his life, a sense of belonging. What he found was the truth.

It began to dawn on me that the horrors of war do not just end in the battlefield; more often than not, they follow you, move in with you, and stay with you as long as you live.

The Don't Ask, Don't Tell policy is supposed to help protect gay people in the military, but in practice, the policy doesn't work.

As a soldier, your job is to kill, and that killing becomes a lot easier once you can see your enemies as less than human.

Many recruiters tell people they won't go to war and never tell you that any military contract can be changed at any time by the military.



American Civil Liberties Union  
Foundation of Northern California  
The Friedman Education Project  
39 Drumm Street  
San Francisco, CA 94111  
(415) 621-2493

