



DISPATCHES

A Publication of Iraq Veterans Against the War

THIS ISSUE:

Veterans' Role in
Countering Militarism
Kelly Dougherty.....2

The Wars are Winding
Down—But the Fight is
Just Beginning
Matt Howard.....4

The Path Ahead
Jason Hurd.....6

Queer Identity
in Military Culture
Ryan Holleran.....10

Hoops We Jump Through
Anna Simons.....13

Collective Liberation
Graham Clumpner.....17

Welcome Aboard
Luke Daniel.....18

Civil Disobedience
and Simplicity
Kevin Basl.....20

Solidarity and
Intentionality
**Siri Margerin and
Sergio Espana**.....22

Under the Hood and
Chapter 38 Updates
Malachi Muncy.....26

Warrior Writers Page
War Journal Excerpt
Emily Yates.....27

Dear Friends:

We're excited to present the debut issue of *Dispatches*, an official release of Iraq Veterans Against the War. This is a work in progress; we can only make this publication into something great with your help. We're asking for you, members of IVAW, CivSol and other allies, to submit materials about what you and your chapters have been doing to help promote IVAW's cause, to provide readers with a more comprehensive overview of the organization and what we stand for. We're looking for essays, articles, photos and updates on topics relevant to our work. Our aim is both to educate and to keep people current. We've also included a column for creative writing.

We want to reach the largest readership possible. Forward the PDF version to fellow veterans and family members, print copies to place in coffee shops and libraries. While our primary concern is unifying members of IVAW and CivSol, these pages are also intended for a general audience. As militarism increasingly pervades American culture, our work is more relevant than ever.

In solidarity,
Kevin Basl
IVAW



Fort Hood, Chapter 38. Photo by Malachi Muncy.

Veterans' Role in Countering Militarism and the Current Work of IVAW

Kelly Dougherty
 IVAW

As long as there have been militaries and wars, soldiers around the world have resisted, deserted, and refused combat duty for both moral and political reasons, and civilians have supported them. From the formation of the St. Patrick's Battalion made up of soldiers who deserted the U.S. Army to join forces with the Mexicans during the Mexican-American War, to the Bonus Army in the 1930s where thousands of U.S. veterans marched and occupied Washington DC to demand back-pay for their service in World War I, to the huge GI resistance movement during the Vietnam war, the United States has a rich and varied legacy of military members refusing to be used by their government to further political and economic agendas. GIs are the work force that make war and occupation possible and, as such, have a critical role to play as leaders in the struggle to end war and militarism.

Veterans and military service members bring unique perspectives and important experiences and knowledge to organizing work aimed at countering war and militarism. They have an inside perspective on the military mindset and culture as well as first-hand experience with the day-to-day realities of war and occupation. In countries that are waging foreign wars, such as the current U.S. war in Afghanistan, military members and their families are the population most clearly and immediately impacted by those wars. Being the most affected population and having the first-hand experience that they do, many GIs become disillusioned with the military and

DISPATCHES VETERAN STAFF

Kevin Basl
 kevin.basl@gmail.com

Luke Daniel
 luke.daniel86@gmail.com

IVAW BOARD

- Geoff Millard: Chair
- Bryan Reinholdt: Co-Chair
- Todd Dennis: Treasurer
- Sara Beining: Secretary
- Sabrina Waller: Director
- Vince Emanuele: Director
- Hart Viges: Director

IVAW STAFF

- Amadee Braxton: Development Director
- Maggie Martin: Organizing Director
- Selena Coppa: Membership Coordinator
- Matt Howard: Communications Coordinator
- Elly Berke: Program Assistant



Iraq Veterans Against the War is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization open to all post-9/11 veterans, regardless of whether you deployed. Civilian Soldier Alliance is open to all civilian allies. Visit IVAW.org or civsol.org for more information.

IVAW National Office
 P.O. Box 3565 New York, NY
 10008-3565
 Tel: 646.723.0989
 Fax: 646.723.0996

political rhetoric and are radicalized by their experience. These men and women are perfectly suited to challenge the stereotypes of war, the myth that war is heroic, and the wide-held belief that a sense of duty and patriotism should override any personal, moral or political considerations. Often times, people who haven't served in the military are reluctant to criticize the military for fear of appearing to be "against the troops." When a veteran who has taken part in war tells their story and calls war out for the violent, corrupt, dehumanizing sham that it is, it inspires and encourages both civilians and other veterans to voice their similar beliefs and lets them know that they are not alone. Service members and veterans are also well suited to challenge civilians to confront their own responsibility and complicity in the wars that their nation is waging. The soldier may be the bullet, so to speak, but the nation's population is the force aiming the gun. When men and women in the military withdraw their support for war and militarism, they have the potential to destabilize the entire system and shift the balance of power.

Having a network of non-military allies to support, work and learn with is essential for veterans and service members who are organizing around issues of militarism. Many times, however, this is difficult. Civilians often don't know how to approach military people, and veterans often find it difficult to relate to people who are detached from the realities of war and military service. Many veterans want to move on and put their military experience behind them. For a huge number of veterans, they are themselves dealing with the often debilitating effects of military trauma, including Post Traumatic Stress

Disorder, traumatic brain injury, military sexual trauma, and other mental and physical wounds. They may struggle just to survive from one day to the next and are not healthy enough to participate in any additional activities, especially those that will force them to confront the traumatic experiences that they are trying to heal from.

Most veterans who want to become involved in anti-militarism activism have never been involved in organizing and activism before and may bring a lot of enthusiasm, but little experience and familiarity with the culture of social justice activism. This can cause the veteran to feel like an outsider since they are unfamiliar with the norms, language and history of this specific sub-culture. Also, veterans often feel stereotyped, marginalized and tokenized by civilian activists. For example, in the early years of Iraq Veterans Against the War, our members were often asked to speak about their experiences in Iraq, but not asked to participate in the planning and organizing of actions. This made many veterans feel like people in the anti-war movement were using them to validate their own legitimacy instead of considering them as equal participants. Experiences like these serve to further enforce an idea perpetuated in the military that civilians aren't to be trusted and that they will never understand or care about the sacrifices and experiences of soldiers. Conversely, civilian activists may be mistrustful of veterans and service members and angry with them because of their willing participation in war and occupation. For someone with ex-

perience organizing in anti-oppression and anti-militarization circles, they may be shocked and offended by the often sexist, bigoted, and disrespectful attitudes that veterans may bring with them as they try to transition from soldier to activist. Civilian activists may be unsure of how to confront a veteran about offensive, unhealthy behavior, behavior that is commonplace and normalized in military culture and, many times, in society at large.

In order to confront and overcome these obstacles to working together, civilians and veterans must approach one another with openness and the ability and willingness to listen to each other. This helps to build strong relationships where people can better learn from each other and build strong alliances and campaigns. Iraq Veterans Against the War works closely with veteran and non-military organizations and groups alike, including the Civilian Soldier Alliance,

Veterans For Peace, Military Families Speak Out, Afghans United for Justice, the Occupy Movement, and various labor and human rights groups. Just as the veteran or service member brings crucial experience and perspective to organizing work, the civilian often has a wealth of experience and their own unique connection to issues of war. People who have been involved in anti-militarism work have experience organizing around social justice issues, building campaigns, offer perspective and analysis of larger systems of oppression, and have historical knowledge of popular movements that have confronted systems of injustice. They may also have their own very personal connections to the devastating consequences of war and can share this perspective with the veteran.

Continued on page 11

The Wars are Winding Down—But the Fight is Just Beginning

Matt Howard
IVAW

It's been almost a year since the Center for Constitutional Rights (CCR) approached some of us working on Operation Recovery wanting to know more about our outreach effort to Active Duty soldiers. Whether suing the US government for Guantanamo, winning a huge settlement from a military contractor for torturing Iraqis, or holding the Catholic church to task for covering up the child abuse scandal, CCR has a long history of supporting grassroots organizations by helping them

use the law to strengthen their struggles and hold those in power accountable. They have become a valued ally in our fight.

When we first spoke with CCR, the campaign at Fort Hood was in full swing and our veteran and civilian-ally organizers had heard many stories from service members about violations of their inherent right to heal. These stories ranged from being stigmatized when attempting to receive help for PTSD, to commanders'

outright dismissals of doctors' recommendations not to deploy a soldier. We knew that these stories needed to be documented. Graduate student members of Civilian-Soldier Alliance teamed up with active duty IVAW members from Fort Hood and began an intensive testimony-collection process over the spring and summer of 2012.

Folks at the CCR met us as this collection process was beginning and saw the potential to put the dozens of testimonies to serious use. In the year that followed, we discussed exactly what that effort could look like. We are excited about the partnership that has grown today.


These initial conversations evolved into a joint campaign between Iraqis and veterans focused on holding the United States accountable for the collective violations of our communities' rights to heal. Specifically, that means that IVAW, the Organization for Women's Freedom in Iraq, and other Iraqi groups are requesting an international human rights hearing with the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR). If our request is honored, US government

agencies will be required to send representatives to account for their actions. Although the commission's recommendations are non-binding, they can give our movement the legal and political leverage to push for further recognition and accountability. Assisted by the Center for


for Constitutional Rights, the International Human Rights Clinic at Harvard Law School, and the War Resisters League, our coalition is building steam. We are building a compelling media campaign armed with the testimony and stories we already have, and are finding ways for supporters to help at the local level.

On March 19, ten years after the invasion of Iraq, we will submit our request to the IACHR and launch our joint campaign. We will officially let the United

States know that the war is not over for those affected by its senseless violence. This is an opportunity to work with people from a country that many of us know intimately, and start a process of reconciliation by demanding accountability from the source of our collective trauma. But, we can't do this without your help! A call to action has




REDUCE (D)






**"YOU GO TO WAR WITH THE ARMY
YOU HAVE...NOT THE ARMY YOU
MIGHT WANT OR WISH TO HAVE
AT A LATER TIME."**


- DONALD RUMSFELD DEC. '04



REUSE (D)

RECYCLE (D)



Go	No Go	US MILITARY SUMMARY
	✓	CARE FOR VETERANS
	✓	CARE FOR MILITARY FAMILIES
	✓	CARE FOR SOLDIERS WITH MST
	✓	1 IN 3 SERVICEWOMEN ARE RAPED
	✓	CARE FOR VETERANS WITH TBI
	✓	CARE FOR VETERANS WITH PTSD
	✓	# OF SUICIDES OUTNUMBER CASUALTIES
	✓	OPERATIONAL READINESS

Artwork by Brian Reinholdt, IVAW.

already been distributed asking for members of IVAW, supporters, and veterans to symbolically mark this dark day, the ten year anniversary of the invasion of Iraq. Some of us are coordinating large city-wide actions. Others will have a small, intimate gathering between veterans and refugees. All of these events are significant.

We don't want this occupation and its effects to fade from our national memory. Help us take a stand and declare that the trauma and violence of the past 10 years shall be remembered and accounted for.



The Path Ahead: Implementing Praxis and Achieving IVAW's New Vision

Jason Hurd
IVAW

My partner Rushelle and I spent much of 2011 hiking the Appalachian Trail (AT). For seven months, we hiked all but 200 miles of the AT's 2,181-mile length. We spent many months planning that hike. We ensured we had the right equipment, read the right books, planned properly, etc. By the time we started our hike in April 2011, we thought ourselves ready to take on the AT... and for the most part, we were. Our AT hike changed both Rushelle and me in fundamental ways; we couldn't help but learn deep lessons about life. We often discussed our experiences – and contemplated our own thoughts quietly – while hiking 10 to 20 miles nearly every day for months. Rushelle says hiking the AT allowed her to explore her "entire mental library," contemplating things from the past and making deep connections among ideas she'd never had time to explore. I too explored my own mental library. Among many things,

I thought about my post-deployment life and the last five years of organizing with IVAW – seeking to mature, grow and learn from my experiences.

Two questions kept recurring in my head: 1. what is our long-term vision for the future, and 2. how do we achieve that vision? I returned from my AT hike pleased to find that IVAW had begun a strategic planning process in my absence – a process that would help fully articulate IVAW's plan for social change. In years past, I had volunteered on our Field Organizing Team (FOT) helping develop leaders in the Southeast. But now I found myself eager to dive in helping create a roadmap for IVAW's work based on members' thoughts, experiences and feedback.

I learned a lot in 2012 working with IVAW's Strategy Committee, the joint team of volunteer members, board and staff

tasked with conducting IVAW's ongoing 10-step strategic planning process. Over that year we collected member feedback from all across the country and drafted new organizational values, vision and mission statements which passed both a member consensus-minus-two process at our Baltimore convention and an online member-wide vote following convention. These newly passed statements represent a forward-thinking membership focused clearly on identifying the problem and creating a plan to change society. Our new values statement says things like:

Leadership development forms the basis of our organizing model. We build our own personal power through transformation and growth as competent leaders, thereby building the power of our organization and movement. [...] We understand militarism as a value system that prioritizes aggression, violence, and regimentation throughout many sectors of our society. We know that our own transformation is tied to the transformation of those we impact through war. Compassion guides us as we seek transformative justice and build solidarity with those affected by U.S. military intervention.

Our vision statement now declares:

We strive for a world free of unjust war – a world without the political and economic conditions allowing militarism to exist, and without structural forces pushing our youth, our poor and those facing incarceration into the military; [...] We strive for a

political and military culture that embraces full human rights for service-members, veterans and all people; [...] [W]e endeavor for our movement to be an ally to the oppressed – a community connected in solidarity with war-torn peoples, working across differences for reconciliation, mutual healing and collective liberation.

The full mission statement of IVAW now reads in one concise sentence, "We work to build a service-member and veteran led movement that ends militarism by transforming ourselves, military culture and American society."

These statements echo far reaching ideas from America's black freedom struggle – ideas from organizers like Ella Baker, visionaries like Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., groups like the Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and the Black Panthers – revealing much about how lasting social change occurs. Ella Baker helped grow or create many powerful organizations – NAACP, Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), SNCC to name only a few – because she focused on developing skilled leaders who work across difference to move our society's consciousness. With organizing experience spanning nearly 60 years, Ella Baker inspired people because she met them on their own terms – wherever they were politically and ideologically – and sought to stretch their consciousness by involving them in a transformative movement to win black freedom. While organizing the

famous Montgomery bus boycott, Baker worked with and influenced Martin Luther King, Jr. Over a decade later, King and others had developed an analysis that united poor people across color lines, spoke about the "evil triplet of racism, militarism and economic exploitation," and how that triplet results from a society with the wrong values. Both Baker and King understood that the most lasting change happens through "a revolution of values" – a revolution that changes people fundamentally and collectively. King spoke of how U.S. wars are an enemy to poor people across the globe – sending our own poor working-class citizens to kill the poor in other countries. King said during his life that America transitioned from a civil rights era to a human rights era, when society must recognize social, economic and cultural rights too. King understood how the American psyche centered on notions of "human rights;" and he knew how to shift those notions. Our government helped assassinate King because he and SCLC organized a Poor People's Campaign to win those social, economic and cultural rights. Years later, the Black Panther Party took a militant stance seeking "All power to all people" because they understood that American structures institutionalize oppression. Our prisons, our military, our schools – all these institutions fundamentally work against poor people internationally across color lines. The FBI targeted the Black Panthers less because of guns and more because the Panthers organized to feed people and revolutionize American education.

IVAW's improved focus also considers lessons learned from our own movement and successful, multi-racial

poor-peoples' movements across our country. From the Coalition of Immokalee Workers (CIW) in Florida to the United Workers in Baltimore, organizations create real social change by cultivating leadership among society's most oppressed segments – migrant farm-workers, homeless dock-workers, sanitation workers, and so on. Projects like the Poverty Initiative help those leaders build broad coalitions throughout society and work toward an achievable, transformative vision for the future. Broadly speaking, IVAW has learned from our study of movement history that far-reaching social change – i.e. transformation – *occurs mainly through learning*. We transform when we study effective organizing. We transform when we learn our own sense of power. We transform every time we act, reflect and act again – a process known as *praxis*. Because our problems are fundamentally about learning, people acting collectively use praxis and teach themselves how to win; this is why our members make a commitment for "the long haul" – we understand the long-term nature of our fight and the complexity of transforming a militarist values system.

IVAW has taken two important steps recently to implement our own praxis. As already mentioned, we've first begun institutionalizing ongoing strategic planning for our organization. Now we must ensure that a new strategic planning cycle begins every three to five years; this means the IVAW Strategy Committee convenes to review previous years and revise our plan according to a membership-driven process; this allows us to learn how to achieve our vision

organizationally. Secondly IVAW has expanded our Field Organizing Team's (FOT) volunteer component, revolutionizing how the FOT develops leaders and executes IVAW's mission. Our new Volunteer Organizing Team (VOT) functions as a school and invests resources that support local members doing great work across our nation. Participation on the VOT is not something extra that you do on top of your other work. Volunteer Organizers donate 5-20 hours per week to IVAW's work and use this team to enhance what they're already doing through praxis and education.

Truth-In-Recruiting work can create a webinar or workshop series to share knowledge with other members. The IVAW Board of Directors recently passed a new budget that prioritizes phone reimbursement and travel stipends to fund 10 new Volunteer Organizers this year. Each stipend is worth \$2100; seeded with those funds, organizers will create annual fundraising goals to extend stipends to more members. If funded organizers can commit to raise back that \$2,100 annually, the program can be sustainable and grow by 10 newly funded organizers every year with only a small annual investment from IVAW. These stipend positions help integrate sustainable fundraising and accountability into our work. Being a funded organizer is a privilege and requires a certain level of commitment and follow-through. Funded organizers take seriously their own responsibility to help at least one other member become funded. We're literally reimbursing organizers to learn how militarism can end, creating a "revolution of values" in this country.



Jason Hurd returning his GWOT medals at the 2012 NATO Summit, Chicago. Photo by Siri Margerin.

The new Volunteer Organizers are already planning their first trainings at two locations this spring: April 19-21 at Future Farm in Tennessee and May 3-5 in the Bay Area. Please contact Maggie Martin at maggiemartin@ivaw.org or Jason Hurd at jasonhurd@ivaw.org if you'd like to join the Volunteer Organizing Team or attend a training.



The VOT provides space for our members to reflect (the same kind of space the AT provided Rushelle and me). Volunteer Organizers can take lessons learned – through webinars, conference calls, trainings, etc. – and act on them. Members who want more training on local campaign development can add that to our curriculum and get better at it. Volunteer Organizers interested in

Queer Identity in Military Culture

Ryan Holleran
IVAW

When I joined the Army, I hoped that being submerged in a sea of masculinity would somehow validate my role in society and queer culture. This hope was drowned when I nearly died in a torrential rain of ignorance and oppression – a tsunami of testosterone. Many soldiers in the same position feel they have no choice but to submit to the social conditioning of the military; it is important to highlight the fact that by helping queers challenge the prominent paradigm, we are helping them resist the military. I have learned to see my struggle to fit in with military culture not as an inability to adapt, but as a sign of strength and courage – of loyalty to the integrity of my soul.

At this point, the reader might be slightly confused wondering what place "radical" queer ideologies have in the anti-war movement. I will spare another commentary on the repeal of "Don't ask Don't Tell," but with the recent declaration by the Pentagon to allow women in combat roles, I hear a similar conversation being raised again: Why do we fight for the right to participate in an oppressive system whose nature is to kill? While I celebrate any progress in social justice for historically marginalized groups, I do not find any comfort in the countless time, resources, and lives devoted to pro-military causes.

The depth of self-deception and self-hate a gay man must embrace to conform entirely to society and

military life are tremendous. I would argue that is the general direction of American life to conform and assimilate – to follow the path of least resistance. The laundry list of cultural "norms" that convince my young queer comrades that they must adjust some aspect of themselves are endless: Religion, mainstream culture, Hollywood – even their friends on the left are often mis-informed about gender identity and sexual ambiguity. Some of the most well-funded mainstream queer organizations focus on permitting queers to join heterosexual society rather than solidifying whatever counter-culture still exists. Instead of defending our identity, they are aggressively prioritizing its assimilation. There is still an idea that as long as a queer can "pass" (by men not acting too feminine or women acting too masculine) then they can be permitted to engage in a provisional participation in society. The less threatening I was to my peers, and the more I rejected any association with being gay, the more I was accepted. I was forced to become somebody else for acceptance, to paradoxically attempt to find self-acceptance by denying myself.

Is it not understandable to find queer youth attracted to camaraderie, allowing instant access to a world previously forbidden to them, provided they are willing to kill or die for it? The typical ostracized teen's quest for acceptance can easily lead to the United States Army. The above issues

are not unique to queer culture, but I believe they disproportionately affect us because of the constant struggle to identify with one of two genders and compensate for a discontent with our place in culture. The preference for a fluid sexuality and ambiguous gender are often too far off the beaten path for a mature adult to follow, let alone a teen.

The effects of an internally homophobic soldier are great and potentially lethal. When I deployed to Iraq, I encountered censorship of gay networks; however, I was fortunate enough to find a site for "hook-ups." Really, this site became more of place for finding social support. These same sites, when used for sex, can be a racket of internalized homophobia, with each man fighting against the next to find his validation in straight culture. These same paradigms bleed into garrison life. When compounded with combat trauma, they can lead to a reckless and risky sex culture which has contributed to record rates of HIV here at Fort Hood. I imagine we are not

unique in this. Also, if the suicide rate for queer youth is already three times the national average, what does that number look like when compounded with military rates that are also higher than the national average?

I was not fortunate enough to have these insights before scribbling my insecure signature across that black line – that regretful moment remembered by so many of us. It was only after my involvement with IVAW and Under the Hood Cafe, that the ideas of true social justice and liberation became clear to me. My story is a perfect example of transformational organizing as I learned to heal and grow personally, given the proper environment. I will be eternally grateful to those who patiently let me arrive at my own understanding of my identity in the world, and I hope to return the favor by ensuring that people of all genders, identities, and preferences continue to have a place in this movement.



Dougherty, continued from page 4

These men and women can help to integrate the warrior back into society and encourage and facilitate positive and meaningful actions that can be very healing, empowering and reconciling for a veteran. As we narrow the divide between civilians and soldiers, it becomes easier to narrow the divide between anti-militarism issues and other issues dealing with exploitation and injustice, from environmental degradation to economic inequality. For example, the U.S. occupation of Iraq has everything to do with melting polar

ice caps, economic austerity in Greece and sweatshop working conditions in Bangladesh. When we begin to see the commonalities linking our experiences and issues to those of other groups, we become better equipped to engage in the sort of transformative organizing that can dismantle systemic oppression.

The work of Iraq Veterans Against the War, in particular, has focused on withdrawing military support from the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. IVAW was founded in 2004

by a group of Iraq veterans who returned from Iraq angry and disillusioned by their experiences and wanted to work with others to end the occupation. From its founding, IVAW has called for three things: the immediate withdrawal of all occupying forces from Iraq, full benefits for returning veterans, and reparations for the Iraqi people. IVAW has since included withdrawal from Afghanistan and reparations for the Afghan people in our points of unity. Our organization has undergone much change and growth during the past eight years and we are currently undergoing an internal strategy process to assess how best to structure our organizing work moving forward.

Over the past two years, IVAW, working closely with the Civilian Soldier Alliance, has focused on the Operation Recovery campaign. Op Rec is a campaign focused on the right of service members and veterans to heal from military trauma. This campaign is structured on the transformative organizing model, which seeks to not only win a specific gain, but to transform individuals and society through empowerment, an understanding of our humanity and common human rights-based values. By focusing on an issue that many people can support, namely that service members who've been injured mentally or physically due to their military service should not be forced to redeploy to combat zones or otherwise engage in activities that further injure and traumatize them, we have the opportunity to address larger issues of militarism. Asserting your right to heal from trauma is often a revolutionary act for a service member to take. The military enforces the idea

that your individual needs and concerns are irrelevant. What matters is following orders and doing what needs to be done to accomplish the mission, whatever your commanders or political figures decide that mission to be. You are a GI, a piece of government property to be used and abused as the military sees fit.

If you're on your fifth combat tour and you have to ingest a handful of psychotropic drugs just to get out of bed and go on your patrol in Afghanistan, you're expected to do it for the sake of "mission accomplishment" and "the good of the nation." If you've been raped by a man in your unit, you're expected to shut up about it and continue working as though nothing happened so you don't damage "unit cohesion." If you go to sick call to see a doctor because you're in physical or emotional pain, you're labeled as "weak" and accused of faking illness in order to get out of doing your duty. As the military dehumanizes its soldiers it creates an environment and mentality that makes it easier for the soldiers to dehumanize the people in the countries they are occupying and bombing. Asserting our right to heal is a way to assert our humanity and reject the violence of military culture. It allows us to talk about how being denied the right to heal is a human rights violation, how it is a symptom of a patriarchal, militaristic capitalist system that values the consolidation of wealth and power over all else and is, by its nature, destructive, oppressive, and maintained by systemic violence. We are working to not only gain changes in military policy, but to

build a service-member and veteran led movement that ends militarism by transforming ourselves, military culture and American society.

The militarism and violence that IVAW is organizing to dismantle is not just an American phenomenon or U.S. problem. The hegemonic system that uses military force for economic and political gain is exploiting, oppressing, and killing people and ecosystems worldwide. People in communities across the world continue to resist this violence and destruction in whatever ways they can. For those of us focusing our energy on issues of militarism, it is essential to engage and involve the soldiers and veterans who have been an integral part of that

system as they grow from being a cog in the machine to being a wrench in the machine, so to speak. When you realize that you've pointed a rifle in the face of a child or old woman so a corporation could make a profit, that you've hated and dehumanized a whole group of people and that the experience has made you hate yourself, that you've compromised your own morals and values in order to be a good soldier and follow orders, you have an opportunity to use those experiences to expose the horrors of war and work with others to make positive changes.



The Hoops We Jump Through: Obstacles to Veterans' and Civilians' Right to Heal

Anna Simons
CivSol

In financial terms, the VA and commercial insurance companies are totally different. The VA, a government-funded institution, cares for all recently returned and disabled veterans, a market-based approach, offers only the services patients can afford. Nevertheless, patients in both systems are angry. They aren't getting the services they need. I spoke with veterans and civilians about their experiences in these bureaucracies and discovered strikingly similar barriers to health care. These unnecessary obstructions have inflamed members of both groups into taking action.

On March 23, 2010, President Obama signed the Affordable Care Act into law. The ACA promised to reform our healthcare system, extending coverage to 33 million uninsured Americans. It also requires most individuals to purchase insurance from commercial companies starting in 2014. But frustrated civilians are calling for another solution. Last December in Maryland, three human rights organizations launched the Healthcare is a Human Right campaign. Echoing a successful struggle in Vermont, United Workers, Health Care Now and Physicians for a National Health

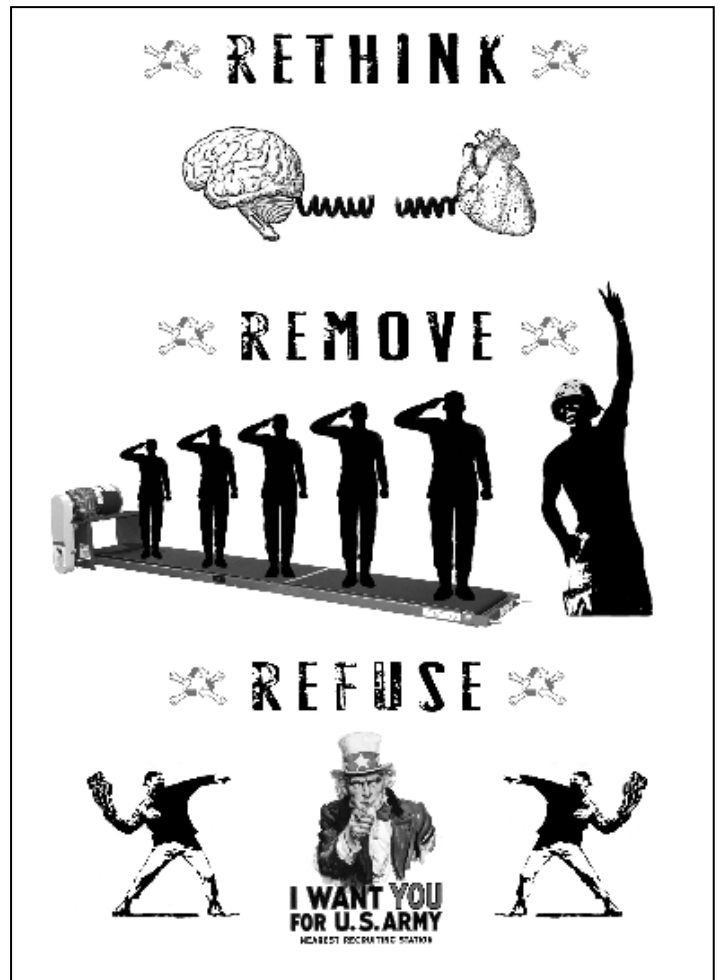
Program demand a taxpayer-funded universal health care system to cover everyone in the state.

On October 7, 2010, IVAW launched Operation Recovery, a campaign to stop the deployment of traumatized troops. Servicemembers and veterans demanded the right to heal from posttraumatic stress disorder, military sexual trauma, and traumatic brain injury. Two years later, Operation Recovery has continued to grow due to successful outreach drives at Fort Hood and Joint Base Lewis-McChord. Under the campaign's auspices, local chapters have begun addressing the deficits in the Veterans' Administration healthcare system.

The near simultaneous development of the two campaigns is not surprising. Both reflect the American people's outrage at being continuously ignored. They imply that healthcare is a basic human need – a need that we are as capable of meeting as any other industrialized nation. And both blame the government for failing to meet it.

Graham Clumpner feels lucky – he received a TBI diagnosis two years after his discharge from the Army, three and a half years after the wreck that damaged his brain. The diagnosis was critical. The VA funds veterans' treatment for five years after discharge. After that, the services cost money, unless the vet can prove a service-related injury and get a disability rating to determine the government's financial responsibility. This means they need documentation of the injury and their health prior to serving. Unfortunately, the military does not perform MRIs on new recruits. The VA would be unable to see a change in brain function without the careful notes of combat medics who recorded Graham's accident and loss of

consciousness. His eyesight and hearing are another story. The government lost the results of their routine tests on his eyes and ears before service. Rather than give him the benefit of the doubt, they deny his problems have any military connection. "I'm still fighting with them," says Graham. "It's been five years now, and I'm still not covered for my eyes or my ears." For other vets, psychological conditions like posttraumatic stress and military sexual trauma are difficult to diagnose. PTSD shares symptoms with other ailments, and MST sufferers must prove they were sexually assaulted in the military. When



Artwork by Brian Reinholdt, IVAW.

institutions employ such restrictive and inflexible policies, they hinder patients' access to care.

Commercial insurance companies also maintain strict rules, sometimes with deadly consequences. Rebecca, an administrative worker at a doctor's office, encountered this tragic situation when her mother was diagnosed with leukemia years ago. A cutting-edge cancer treatment program at Johns Hopkins accepted her, but her provider wouldn't cover the out-of-state service. An intelligent and determined woman, she managed to force a change after a few weeks of pushing and writing to legislators. The treatment didn't work; she eventually passed. Still, Rebecca says, "that's a few weeks earlier that she could have been treated with a really aggressive cancer. Things like this are specifically designed to wait people out to let them die, so that they don't pay for it." Sergio España, who also lost his mother to leukemia, remembers that his parents chose not to try an experimental treatment over concerns about insurance coverage. Like Rebecca, he wonders how her chances might have changed if his family's options hadn't been limited by costs.

Even when institutions approve coverage, baffling structures and protocols can overwhelm all but the most intrepid clients. The VA employs case officers to assist clients navigating its departments, but each officer may have up to 40 clients at a time, and not everyone gets an officer. Patients often have trouble locating services, and staff have trouble responding. Former Army sergeant Jacob George recalls his first attempt to access VA mental health assistance. After three tours in Afghanistan, he went to the mental

health clinic looking for someone to talk to about his experience. One week later, he sat down with a man he discovered was a pharmacist, who asked several questions and then started writing prescriptions. When Jacob clarified that he wanted therapy, not drugs, the pharmacist replied that he would need another appointment; they typically offer medication first.

Jacob now understands the language he needs to use to get appropriate services, but only after a great deal of self-education about his conditions and the system itself. While he emphatically encourages everyone to take ownership of their own health, he also points out that we can't expect returning soldiers to have that capacity. "If you have severe posttraumatic stress," as does nearly everyone who has been in war, "you're very reactionary. It's extremely hard to focus, and to think about things in the long term, then that system is a complete nightmare."

Civilians seeking help also find themselves experiencing terrifying confusion. Many managed-care policies require referrals, notes from primary care physicians recommending certain treatments. Patients may need appointments with their regular doctors before every visit with a specialist, even for routine maintenance or urgent care. Waiting to get insurance approval for tests, treatments, or durable medical equipment can delay services that medical professionals are otherwise ready to provide. Rebecca has to stagger her doctors' visits

because her co-pays, \$20 for her primary care doctor and \$30 for specialists, drive up the cost of care. On top of this, insurance companies sometimes commit paperwork errors, such as losing a doctor's name or address, that can result in denials. Rebecca is glad her professional knowledge enables her to advocate for herself. Even with her help, many of her patients have difficulty comprehending their insurance plans.

Despite complaints about the VA system, Jake and Graham offered glowing praise for most of the healthcare staff, who frequently go above and beyond their job duties with limited resources and support. Johanna Buwalda, a therapist who serves veterans, says nurses and doctors eagerly cooperate with her, though she is unaffiliated with the VA. She once saw a nurse tech stay hours past her shift to comfort an anxious patient. Because the staff at Chicago's Jesse Brown Medical Center receive no training on trauma, their nurses' union asked Johanna to offer voluntary training during staff lunch hours. The same union attempted to hold meetings with patients on how to improve care, but the directors forbade them to meet at the hospital, fearing that the conversation would reflect badly on them. Organized people, however, can change the system's problems. Last year, IVAW and the National Nurses' Union partnered to demand improvements, and together convinced Jesse Brown's administration to hire 13 new nurses.

While civilian groups seek to replace their healthcare system with a new one, veteran organizers focus on improving the VA, not dismantling it. "It's a functioning free health care model," says Jacob. "I think that

should be available and accessible to everyone in this country. I think we should all have federally-funded, free health care." Anyone who's lived without health insurance probably agrees. Sergio's family owns a small restaurant that has not yet been able to afford insurance for the staff or owners. His father avoided seeking help for a stomach infection until worsening symptoms forced him to the ER. By then, his bill was enormous. Tim Meysenburg, uninsured until he had children and got state medical assistance, has sometimes asked for doctors' visits instead of birthday presents. He has accrued thousands of dollars in debt, entirely from visits to the emergency room.

The changes the two campaigns are fighting for can't come soon enough. A record 349 military service-members committed suicide last year, their mental health needs unmet. Thousands of Americans die each year without proper health coverage. Surely, the men and women who have served our country deserve the highest quality treatment. But we shouldn't stop there. The United States has world-class health institutions and no excuse not to provide each person in it with world-class care. Our society's failure to care for our troops is emblematic of our decision to prioritize war and profit over human need. When we demand a different set of values, we will find the resources to cover everyone.



Collective Liberation

Graham Clumpner

IVAW

Last May, during a visit to San Francisco on the second annual *Right to Heal Tour*, I sat down for breakfast with Clare Bayard of Catalyst Project. Clare has been a dedicated ally for years and I was looking for an outside perspective on a problem I'd been wrestling with: being a white male. Since I began working on the left of the Democratic Party, I had encountered phrases such as "White Privilege", Patriarchy and Oppression. These terms were usually couched in some form of intellectual arrogance, as if they didn't require some explanation.

Wasn't I oppressed by the military? Didn't we have a black president? And what the hell is Patriarchy? I wrestled with the balance of involving new members in the movement and expecting them to immediately understand the history of Oppression and their complicity in it. It's tough enough for a veteran to accept and embrace the fact that his or her entire identity is based on a military experience filled with lies. We have to evolve out of that role and find a new identity while staying alive in the process. Adding on Patriarchy, Racism and Oppression, I felt, was mission-creep. Can't we fix these things after the Revolution?

That is when I first heard the phrase "Collective Liberation." Clare turned me on to Bell Hooks and the idea of "organizing from a place of Love." Love is crucial to a practice of collective liberation because it involves extending ourselves for

someone else's growth. This pushes us past traditional forms of "solidarity" based on rational calculus of interest between groups of people. Love opens the possibility of mutual transformation. Collective liberation is a vision to move toward and a practice to help us get there. The core of this, which hit me like a ton of bricks, is that "no one is free when others are oppressed," that my liberation and freedom are tied to everyone else's.

I left the bay and continued the tour but put these thoughts more front and center in my actions. One morning over the summer Clare called me and asked me to apply to a course being put on in the bay: The Anne Braden Anti-racist Organizer training. She explained we would delve deeper into Collective Liberation and I would have a chance to confront my own upbringing and cultural/military training that taught me to dehumanize entire populations. I immediately agreed, honestly trusting her more than understanding what I was getting into.

Now, I find myself living in Oakland for the next five months, immersed in the course and continuing to organize the west coast IVAW members. Each weekend includes classes ranging from speakers to workshops to team building exercises. During the week each of the 25 participants works with an assigned organization. I am working with the Arab Resource and Organizing Center; they are one of the largest left organizations working

through an Arab lens. They prioritize leadership development, campaigns and political education.

I will be writing about my experience over the next couple months and hope to bring this experience back to our movement to make it healthier, happier and more just. More than anything this work is teaching me it's not about how oppressive we are but how liberated we can be. That our future's are inextricably linked with each other and only through a process of love and collective liberation can we hope to be the change we desire in the world.



Graham Clumpner at NATO protest, Chicago 2012. Photo by Siri Margerin.

Welcome Aboard: My Experience in the Corporate World following Service

Luke Daniel
IVAW

Every person is different in their experiences and knowledge; however, service-members and veterans alike share a common bond that most civilians may have trouble understanding. Transitioning from one life to another is difficult no matter the situation, but when you've been taught to do as you're told (without much personal thought), returning home can be complicated. Joining the corporate world as soon as possible may help to ease the transition. But is it the best option? For some it may be. For me it was an eye-opening experience.

Joining the military is something that is often undertaken as

a youth – a decision made without much contemplation. Having talked with high school students and Truth in Recruiting, I've found that most stories are very similar. Joining the military is a life-changing decision. The shared experience of boot camp and reporting to the first command (or duty station) creates a culture of close-knit camaraderie that extends well beyond time served. Regardless of experiences gained through service, one thing is for certain: we need more training programs to teach service-members how to be civilians again.

It usually goes like this: Upon your final days in service, feelings

go aflutter thinking and planning your return to a life similar to what you had before joining. You return your gear, party harder than ever before. Then the final day comes and the last signature goes on the service record (if you were lucky enough not to have been stop-lossed). You're given a DD214 and told to have a good day. Thoughts of freedom set in and the thought that you no longer have to shave twice a day to stay in regulation dawns. Life seems pretty good.

Returning home is a great pleasure. People around town thank you for your service (not truly understanding what your job was or what you did in the name of patriotism). They thank you anyway. If you're lucky, a job will fall into your lap which pays better than the military. And just like leaving your parents' house for the first time, freedom sets in again and the crazy nights follow. Slowly, you come to realize that you have little in common with the civilians you've been spending time with. They don't understand that sticking together as a team and taking care of one another is all you've come to know.

Speaking from my experience, leaving the military and turning to the corporate world was easy...for a while. Taking advantage of the "tools and skills" that I learned while in the service (they look better on paper) I found myself working for one of the largest service providers in the world of oil and gas: Halliburton Energy Services. I was like many - still quite brainwashed into believing that the means were justified by the ends. I felt at home in the hierarchy. I understood how the system worked, listened and did whatever my managers

asked of me, strove to make a higher wage and reach the next milestone of status within the organization.

Working hard and showing that I was not just any Joe Schmuckatelli, that the military had taught me how to work, I quickly found myself paying more attention to the managers' actions. Knowing the job of the person above and below should be a goal of any employee. But when one realizes that his manager is not necessary for the operations of the company, that his manager may actually be a hindrance, it certainly puts a damper on morale. Finding little things wrong with paperwork and having more experience than the manager are not bad things in themselves, but voicing them can be detrimental.

Open door policies and handling issues at the lowest level are guidelines preached in the corporate world as well as aboard a Navy ship - but they are rarely followed. A lack of communication and trust always creates a loose workforce. Without a feeling of shared military experience, many veterans feel isolation in the workplace. This isolation is reinforced whenever they receive the token "thank you for your service." Unless other veterans or active reserve members are also working there, no amount of explaining can make civilians understand just what we were a part of. Attention to detail will most likely be the trait that sets veterans apart in the corporate workplace. In my experience, the ability to understand and follow procedures (and write them, if necessary) proved to be one of the

few useful skills that transferred over to the corporate world. Those same traits were the reason why I now find myself unemployed and looking for work again.

Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 states that no person should be subject to discrimination in hiring, promotion, or pay due to race, color, religion, sex, or national origin. These laws have been in place for almost 50 years. One area that is not covered is discrimination due to military service. Having the manager call you into a meeting with HR to tell you that "your military background is influencing your thinking and performance too much" is not addressed from the standpoint of the EEOC. Although this treatment can be seen as discriminatory, abusive, unethical, and immoral there is no protection under the current law that protects the veteran in the workplace. When an action or comment like that is made by

someone lacking an understanding of military operations, it may cause the veteran to question what they actually know – or think they know.

Thinking about one's military experience in light of American militarism has the potential to take a veteran by surprise over and over again. Reflection should be a slow process. Finding a reason to break out of one's comfort zone is difficult. But what we share in the Iraq Veterans Against the War community is what we often miss in the civilian world: camaraderie. IVAW is the community I now call home. The work we are currently undertaking is getting results, demonstrated through the true resolve and character of each and every one of us: veteran, active duty, civilian, and supporters alike.



On the Connection between Civil Disobedience and Simplicity

Kevin Basl
IVAW

Reading "Civil Disobedience" and *Walden*, I was surprised to find that Henry David Thoreau only briefly touches on the link between simple living and political dissent. The two, of course, go hand in hand.

I've recently come to embrace a minimalistic lifestyle, donating or discarding all possessions that I rarely used, digitizing my media and important documents, choosing public

transportation and my two feet over driving. I now have more time for personal reflection, for reading and writing, for IVAW. In our ever-connected, fast-paced society, free time has become a valuable commodity. It is usually during moments of idleness – often while walking alone – that I'm able to draw meaningful connections between disparate topics. The mind is most clear and present

during these times. We notice details that may otherwise slip by: a natural sculpture made by rainwater, smells that remind us of youth, an abandoned city lot that could serve as a community garden—things with value that can't be easily measured. Consider the anxiety and stress that is taken as a given in the modern world. Technology that is supposed to make our lives easier often does the exact opposite, burdening us at all hours. While cell phones and computers allow us to make instant global connections, these devices, if kept unchecked, also ensure that our minds remain elsewhere, keep us disconnected from the immediate world.

Presence of mind is a necessary ingredient for any successful nonviolent direct action, for any act of civil disobedience. Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr. understood the importance of mindfulness. Both activists established training programs (much like IVAW's Volunteer Organizing Team) to help participants prepare for marches, sit-ins, and other protests. Gandhi even encouraged activists to make their own clothes, grow their own food, and live in intentional communities (ashrams) in order to break free from the oppression of British colonialism.

Jail-going, Thoreau's most celebrated act of civil disobedience, seems especially well-suited for the simple life. When Thoreau refused to pay a poll tax in protest of both the Mexican-American War and slavery, he knew jail time was inevitable. He was able to face this proposition confidently because he was unencumbered. When I question students and friends about the prospect of incarceration in demonstration of their strongest-held beliefs, I'm usually met with the response: how can I go to

jail when I have a credit card payment, rent, an auto loan, a cat to feed? What about the prospect of a criminal record and the resulting career suicide? They make my point for me.

Thoreau writes, "the rich man [...] is always sold to the institution which makes him rich." The more material possessions we keep, the more a standing military becomes necessary to protect us, the more we rely on a government. Consider it from another angle. The more we desire material things, the more likely we are to take a job that drains the life from us, that may go against our values. It's no wonder why our growing culture of militarism is inversely related to our economic downturn: Americans are (unconsciously) so fearful of losing property and privilege that many have come to accept perpetual war and our symptomatic culture of violence as a norm. When backed into a corner, the animal lashes out.

We're now in the unique (some may argue unfortunate) position where simplicity itself has become an act of civil disobedience, non-cooperation specifically. In our culture of consumerism, we are pressured to buy products if not for the supposed happiness they will bring, but because we need to stimulate our economy. Yet how many of our problems are caused by consumerism? Would the U.S. have invaded Iraq if we had been living within our means? Our politicians cite economic woes as the greatest problem facing us as a nation, distracting us from more pressing issues. Consumerism — which is

linked to our environmental troubles, energy dependence and national debt – is the more likely culprit.

How might we follow Thoreau's example today? Sustainable agriculture is one way. Community gardens and farms that focus on connecting people directly to their food source will not only help educate people on self-sufficiency, but may also help prevent many diseases that ail our society, on top of building community identity. Check out Growing Veterans (growingveterans.org), a non-profit organization near Seattle that is teaching vets both the practical and therapeutic value of growing food. Small housing movements are gaining attention, demonstrating that 130 square feet of living space is all one really

needs for comfort (yes, even for a family). The minimalism movement is going strong. Take the 100 item challenge: what possessions are essential to your happiness – what do you *want* versus truly *need*? These movements – all of which espouse simple living – should be embraced by an organization founded on nonviolent principles and political dissent. As Thoreau reminds us: “[...] they who assert the purest right, and consequently are most dangerous to a corrupt State, commonly have not spent much time in accumulating property.”



On Solidarity and Intentionality: Civilian Solider Alliance and IVAW are Building a New Model for Antiwar Activism

Siri Margerin and Sergio Espana
CivSol

Originally published in RESIST!

We all stood, asked to form a line. We curved from side to side across the room. We organized ourselves chronologically, in order of how long each of us had been involved with Iraq Veterans Against the War. From the founding days in 2004, to just a minute ago; from Kelly, a founding member of IVAW and former executive director, to Becca, a lawyer with Swords to Plowshares who joined Civilian Soldier Alliance (CivSol) barely a week ago – our curved line was eight years long. Threaded throughout the IVAW members stood members of Civilian Soldier Alliance.

All of the founding members were present and a crop of brand new members. This is what solidarity looks like to us.

Squeezed in between super storm Sandy and the election madness, the 2012 joint convention of IVAW and CivSol was a brief oasis of intentionality and solidarity. We gathered in Baltimore just a day after the storm. People traveled from across the country. From waterlogged NYC to sunny San Francisco. From Texas to Toronto, Afghan activists, active duty service-members and civilian allies gathered not only to continue the

struggle against militarism but also to celebrate our community.

As it goes with national grass-roots organizations without a wealth of free time and money, we have relatively few opportunities to actually meet face to face which is what makes our shared time at convention so precious.

Healing the Wounds

This year's convention was titled "Healing the Wounds." Eight years after the founding of IVAW, it has become clear that our work has to be about two things which are constant and simultaneous: resistance and healing.

IVAW was formed by folks returning from the first wave of Iraq deployments. They came back changed by their experiences, eyes open, angry, outraged, and wounded. They were met at home by an antiwar movement ferociously hungry for their voices. But just as the 15 million strong worldwide antiwar movement that blossomed in the months before the war withered in the face of the movement's inability to prevent the war from happening, so too did IVAW members find that telling their stories, their own life-shattering, world-changing, soul-stripping stories, over and over in the service of other people's events and agendas, was neither stopping the war in its tracks nor building an organization able to sustain its members for the long haul. Additionally, their relationship with the civilian community was beginning to strain as non-veteran activists would simply invite them to be at the front of a march or poster without asking for their full participation in the organizing work or incorporating their insights to support the issues that mattered most to them.

With time, IVAW began turning away from functioning solely as a speaker's bureau and CivSol members began stepping up to support their leadership and organize shoulder to shoulder. The founders of CivSol carried the same analysis that our newest members carry: the understanding that it will only be through joining the struggles and concerns of both the civilian and military communities that we can develop a framework for challenging militarism and healing our communities. We believe that organizing resistance within the military is a strategy that can directly end war and occupation. When service members withdraw their labor from a war that depends on their consent, they become a powerful force for change. When civilians understand their intimate relationship with war and its consequences at home, as well as abroad, we stand strong.

Building a Civilian-Soldier Alliance

CivSol began as a loose network of people, organizing within the circles of GI resistance and support of antiwar active duty service members and veterans. Our aim is to support the leadership of people most affected by war and occupation and to build movements where healing and personal growth are central components of organizing. It was quickly apparent that IVAW was a nexus for this work as they were yearning for this level of analysis, commitment, and perhaps most importantly, mutual trust.

We have been through a lot since we began our relationship with IVAW.

CivSol members were there when the first chapters were started in 2006. We supported Operation First Casualty in 2007, where members went out "on patrol" in an American city "arresting" civilians, bagging them and marching them off, giving bystanders a tiny taste of what occupation may be like. We were there for Winter Soldier Iraq and Afghanistan, modeled on the Vietnam-era hearings, bringing eyewitness testimony home to the US from Iraq and Afghanistan, revealing what was actually being done in our names. We were there for The March on the Democratic National Convention in Denver in 2008, where IVAW members lead a march to the doors of the DNC where they presented a letter to staff for the freshly-nominated Barack Obama.

In 2010 IVAW and CivSol came together for five days in Chicago to hold a leadership training and campaign-organizing retreat and also plan our first strategic campaign, Operation Recovery: Stop the Deployment of Traumatized Troops. The Operation Recovery Organizing drive worked out of Under the Hood: The GI Coffeehouse at Fort Hood, Texas throughout 2011 & 2012. In May 2012 we supported IVAW's march on the NATO Summit, where 46 IVAW members returned their hard-earned OEF and OIF medals to the NATO generals in protest...

Hundreds of other events and actions large and small have been organized nationally, regionally or in chapters. People have come and gone, returned or remain, but our vision remains shared and constant.

We practice a transformational form of organizing. Winning short term victories to improve lives in the immediate, but keeping our eye on a long term transformation to a just society

based on human rights, equality, and cooperation. These last four years in this community are a testament to the idea. Through our work, with a firm commitment to developing universal leadership and healing within our ranks, the changes are profound and deeply hopeful. Military culture is notoriously misogynistic, homophobic, hierarchical and emotionally closed. With the additional physical, psychological, and moral trauma that comes with military service, the challenge becomes even greater.

At the national convention, transformation was manifest. Leadership by women and by LGBTQ-identified people is the new normal, fully embraced and absorbed not just by new members but by all the members. We all have transformed along with our organizations. No one would say it has been easy, or that we are anywhere close to being done. But what has been accomplished is remarkable.

Solidarity without Borders

Suraia came from Toronto to attend the Convention. She is a founding member of Afghans United for Justice. The war in Afghanistan is not over. We are organizing with veterans and Afghans impacted by the war together. This work is also developing with Iraqis in spots across the country. This is delicate work but truly remarkable. In Chicago, Illinois there was a dinner prepared for IVAW and CivSol members by an Iraqi woman, a refugee from the war, and some friends of hers from Somalia. The next day a young service member spoke about how he had been so moved by a recruiting film he was

shown on his first night at boot camp, because he was going to be part of something greater than himself. "But," he said, "Last night I knew that finally I am now really part of something bigger than myself."

The War in Iraq is "over." The War in Afghanistan is "drawing down." Whatever those terms aim to imply, it certainly doesn't mean that people have stopped dying from war. The wars may be less hot, but they are not over for the 2.3 million service members who cycled through those wars, often repeatedly and often while carrying previous trauma with them. Certainly Suraia and our other Afghan and Iraqi allies will tell us that it is not over for the millions of civilians who have endured a decade of war and occupation, and it never will be. They are not over for rest of the US either, who will be paying for this war for generations, sacrificing health, education and employment benefits to do so. It is difficult to keep the issues of the wars on the table when everyone is struggling so hard for work and a home.

Solidarity across Issues

To build a strong movement, we also need to build solidarity across those working on different issue areas. For example, during the convention, there were workshops building solidarity campaigns with health care workers from National Nurses United, centered around staffing ratios and quality of care at VA hospitals. There was a workshop by the Center for Constitutional Rights on preparing a request for a hearing before the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights calling for an international human Right to Heal based on evidence of the health impacts of

the war in Iraq to both Iraqi civil society and to US service-members who participated in the war. There was a workshop to build our latest outreach and organizing tool for Operation Recovery, an Appeal for Redress for service members who have not been able to access the kind of care they need to recover from their service.

The weekend concluded with a panel of inspirational allies, focusing on the theme of "Learning from other People's Movements." We are building solidarity outward with National Nurses United, the Center for Constitutional Rights, United Workers, Student Farmworker Alliance, Poverty Initiative, and Afghans United for Justice. The closing conversation made it clear that our understanding of solidarity, and our shared work and hardships over the past years have allowed us to come to a place now where we realize that our work is a part of a whole. Essential, as each other piece is, we are a part of a movement towards a genuine international solidarity of people who recognize that we rise and fall together. We are joining in solidarity with the "all of us" who have been fragmented by oppression, coming together to heal as a whole.

Who would want to be anywhere else?



Under the Hood and Chapter 38 Updates

Malachi Muncy
IVAW

Under the Hood

Under the Hood Cafe and GI Outreach Center in Killeen/Ft. Hood will be launching a video-based fund drive on Indy Gogo. As part of the video (and to help generate interest in advance of the drive Under the Hood is calling for) short video submissions from service members, family members, veterans, community members and community organizers whose lives have been touched by Under the Hood in some way will be collected. We want to represent as many stories as we can in a short video so try to boil down your experience to as few words as possible and include: Your name, relationship to our work, and what UTH means to you.

The standard method of submission – and this may not be the best but it is what we are equipped to do – is to load the video to a Youtube account (anyone with a Google account has one). These do not have to be fancy. You can take the video on your phone, as in my examples, or with your webcam. Make sure the video is unlisted or public, but not private. Send links to: Malachimuncy@gmail.com. If you have any problems with this method, feel free to email at the same address.

It is OK if you have to send the video in short pieces. It is good to pause for a breath between sentences so, if necessary, the video can be cut. By submitting you are acknowledging that the video may be cut by UTH compiled with other short testimonies

and used to represent, for the purposes of fundraising, the work that is done at Under the Hood.

Chapter 38

Chapter 38 is in a unique position to outreach to soldiers still in the military because of its proximity to Fort Hood. The nature of our work here is susceptible to fluctuations caused by PCSs, ETSS and all the other acronyms that affect the lives of service-members. It's difficult work but it's worth it when we see what great work members of the Fort Hood chapter have gone on to do.

The chapter is alive and thriving. We've been organizing with members from the San Antonio and Austin areas to participate in events in Killeen on Armistice Day, and Austin on Martin Luther King, Jr. Day. We've partnered with Under the Hood to provide coffee to soldiers at the gate on a biweekly schedule.

There are a lot of things coming in the next few months, with March and April as the centerpiece. We are attempting to organize events in Austin on March 19 and Dallas on April 25. If anyone has direct contact with active members in Dallas, please let them know, as the dates are quickly approaching.

Also, those interested in two to four-week resident volunteering this summer should contact Malachi Muncy (though at the moment all we can provide is a place to stay).



Fort Hood Right to Heal demonstration. Photo by Malachi Muncy.



WARRIORWriters

From the War Journal of Emily Yates

IVAW

8/12/07 - Camp Victory, Iraq

As you can see, I am not dead at the moment. No, my lack of entries has been due almost solely to the fact that my brain dies a little bit more every day. I'm blaming it on the Army - because, you know, there's dumb ... and then there's Army Dumb.

Anyway, I've been kind of preoccupied with Life, such as it may be. Drama abounds on any deployment (seriously - it's like high school, except, with a higher divorce rate), and this one is no different. I doubt I can sum up any of my own accurately,

but I'll give it a shot, since it's 3 a.m. and I won't be falling asleep any time soon.

A couple months ago, Husband and I decided to call it quits for good. That, incredibly, was not due to any particular event, but more of a mutual feeling of "Ummmm yeeeah ... I think we're done." Somehow the magic that was nearly three years of passion, adultery and periodic bouts of domestic violence was just, well, gone. We both recognized and acknowledged it, and now we are

carrying on a successful relationship called Just Good Friends. Who knew? So there's that.

In the wake of my pending divorcee status (which is going to wait until after I'm out of the Army, because did you know they pay you more when you're married? I'll give you a moment to let the pieces of that statistical puzzle fall into place), I've coped by developing some unattractive habits, such as smoking more, eating less, exercising none, drinking anything alcoholic that I can get my hands on (which, in case The Man is reading this, is ABSOLUTELY NONE AT ALL, haha!) and forming unhealthy opinions on the world in general. Now let's just throw in a dash of homesickness and a pinch of hair-melting weather, and there you have it - a recipe for Suck-Asserole. It's the perfect contribution to any Pity Party, and might I also suggest some cheese to go with that vintage whine?

[Having carried the analogy far enough, she pauses to consider the fact that there are many people far worse off than she is - most of whom don't have access to an online journal in which to complain - and so calms the hell down.]

Another good distraction came recently in the form of me getting to kind of be a reporter. I ventured out

with a civil affairs team to one of the patrol bases here - a place where infantrymen go to acquire their trademark scent of Outdoor-Latrines-in-the-Summer-for-Men. They're doing a fantastic job out there helping the locals to not completely lose their minds, so I thought I'd give them a bit of well-earned positive attention and maybe even their picture in the paper. I was only there for a day, but I returned with my body fully coated with dust and sweat, so I can only imagine that when they fall asleep under nothing but a camouflage net and the stars in triple-digit temperatures, they dream of a giant bathtub filled with ice water, beer and high-speed wireless. It made me that much more grateful for my comfy, air-conditioned, floor-having tent, that's for sure. Not to mention, a bed - as opposed to a cheap and only mildly bearable cot. Which is why I really ought to bitch and moan just a little bit less.

Soooo, now I believe I have proven my Not-Dead-ness, and also gotten a few things off of my chest. Now it is time for me to go to sleep, lulled into a peaceful slumber by the knowledge that those Blackhawks flying overhead all damn night are just doing their job. As, apparently, am I.



Dispatches is a quarterly publication of Iraq Veterans Against the War. Please send all submission queries to our editors: kevin.basl@gmail.com or luke.daniel86@gmail.com. All other questions should be directed to the appropriate IVAW staff or board members (see page 2).