



MotherSpeak

UPDATE

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Did you know there is no commonly accepted legal definition for “terrorism”? Yet the current United States administration uses this highly charged word regularly and, by doing so, creates the illusion that “everyone” agrees with them. The common understanding in the U.S. assumes that “terrorism” is *always* something “they” do to “us.” But what if “they” – people living beyond our borders – perceive “us” – Americans – as perpetrators of terrorism? Surfacing the unconscious assumptions inherent in these commonly used terms would go a long way to surfacing just who benefits from war and why.

Let us know your opinion and let’s start a discussion on terror and terrorism.

Winter Soldier: Iraq & Afghanistan

Held in Maryland, Winter Soldier presented testimony from active duty and discharged military personnel seeking to educate The American People on the realities of war.

This was history’s largest gathering of U.S. veterans who served in Iraq and Afghanistan, as well as Iraqi and Afghan survivors. Eyewitnesses shared their experiences in a public investigation and invited civilians to learn what really is happening day in and day out on the ground in these countries. Testimony was accompanied by video and photographic evidence. Panels of scholars, veterans, journalists, and other specialists gave context to the testimony. Panelists covered everything from the history of the GI resistance movement to the fight for veterans’ health benefits and support.

Listen to selected interviews on Raising Sand Radio (www.raisingsandradio.org).

Iraq Veterans Against the War (IVAW) was founded by Iraq war veterans in July 2004 at the annual convention of Veterans for Peace (VFP) in Boston to give a voice to the large number of active duty service people and veterans who are against this war, but are under various pressures to remain silent.

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From its inception, IVAW has called for:

- Immediate withdrawal of all occupying forces in Iraq;
- Reparations for the human and structural damages Iraq has suffered, and stopping the corporate pillaging of Iraq so that their people can control their own lives and future; and
- Full benefits, adequate healthcare (including mental health), and other supports for returning servicemen and women.

Learn more about Iraq Veterans against War at www.ivaw.org.

Prevailing attitudes on the military

Military families have a unique perspective on how war and terror and how the fallout from these affect their families. Yet the vast majority of Americans show very little interest in how the troops are faring or how they adjust – or do not adjust – when they return from the combat zones.

MotheSpeak does not advocate a draft. Nevertheless, since the end of the military draft in 1973, most Americans have priorities other than military service: fewer than 2 million active military serve more than 300 million Americans.

In an article, “The Failure of an All-Volunteer Military” published in *The Boston*

Globe, January 21, 2007 Dr. Andrew J. Bacevich writes:

...cheering the troops on did not imply any interest in joining their ranks. Especially among the affluent and well-educated, the notion took hold that national defense was something “they” did, just as “they” bused tables, collected trash, and mowed lawns.

The stalemated war in Iraq has revealed two problems with this arrangement. The first is that “we” have forfeited any say in where “they” get sent to fight.... [T]he will of the commander-in-chief prevails.

The second problem stems from the first. If “they”...get in trouble, “we” feel little or no obligation to bail them out. All Americans support the troops, yet support does not imply sacrifice. Yellow-ribbon decals displayed on the back of gas-guzzlers will suffice, thank you.

Indeed, the president of the United States advocates citizens distract themselves from the reality of his botched foreign policy and grasping capitalism that took advantage of the tragedy of 9/11 to initiate The Global War on Terror. He suggests citizens “go shopping” instead of paying attention to the suffering his administration has caused. But is there better solution, one worthy of a democratic republic? Are the country’s choices limited to returning to a draft, continuing to stop-loss troops who have already served in the combat zones, or endless war?

Let us know what you think.

Update

AFGHANISTAN

Iraq has taken front and center stage in the so-called Global War on Terror yet Afghanistan was the first country the U.S. invaded. The mainstream news barely reports from this region and whatever it does report does not present a holistic picture of events there.

Did you know, for example, that there are over 70,000 widows in Kabul alone? And that some estimates report almost 2 million widows throughout the country? The vast majority of these women, some as young as 16, have very few resources with which to make a living for their families. Afghans around the world are committed to reclaiming their country after three decades of war: with the Russians, a civil war, the rise of the Taliban, and the U.S. invasion following 9/11.

Asma Eschen has lived in the U.S. for thirty years. In 2003 she returned to Afghanistan to plant trees and replace those destroyed during the wars. As co-founder of Bare Roots, the agricultural arm of Afghans4Tomorrow, Asma

and her groups of volunteers have planted thousands of trees, for shade, for food, and simply to reforest the country.

Learn more about Bare Roots and the situation in Afghanistan by listening to an interview with Asma Eschen and Rahima Haya on Raising Sand Radio, www.raising sandradio.org. Learn what you can do for Afghanistan at Afghans for Tomorrow – www.afghans4tomorrow.org.

RAISING SAND RADIO

Raising Sand Radio airs every Monday from 2 - 3 p.m. (Pacific) at FM 90.1 on KZSU Stanford University Radio. All shows are streamed live as well as archived on www.raising sandradio.org.

Recent shows include:

- Military moms speak about war
- Perspectives on Afghanistan
- Dr. Phil Zimbardo on Rumsfeld as a leader

Upcoming shows:

- Voices of women affected by war
- Interview with film makers Molly Bingham and Steve Connors on their film “Meeting Resistance.”
- Interview with Joyce and Kevin Lucey on events leading up to their son’s Jeffrey’s suicide and what military families need to know about PTSD.

Visit the website for more information, to view a list of all shows, or to search for and download specific shows: (<http://www.raising sandradio.org>)

Get Involved

THE IRAQI STUDENT PROJECT

During the early Islamic centuries Iraq was a center of learning. In modern times Iraqis built a thriving system of higher education and sent thousands of students to study all over the world, returning to teach and work in Iraq. Western institutions of higher learning benefited from these contributions to scholarship and human development. But now Iraq’s educational system is in ruins. Students in Iraq are without teachers, without books and computers, even without university structures.

The Iraqi Student Project (ISP) invites American education institutions to accept qualified Iraqi students, giving these students tuition waivers for undergraduate study. ISP works with community leadership (in churches, mosques and other local organizations) to provide the support of every kind that these

students will need during their college years. ISP finds, without favoritism, qualified Iraqi students who would not otherwise be able to attend university. ISP then recommends such students for study and sees them through the processes of university admission and application for a student visa to the United States. ISP support groups serve as communities of friends for each Iraqi student throughout their years of study in the US. Support this program. Learn more at The Iraqi Student Project, <http://www.iraqistudentproject.org/>

THE INTERNATIONAL VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN ACT (S. 2279)

Violence against women and girls represents a global health, economic development, and human rights problem of epidemic proportions and cuts across all countries, social groups, ethnicities, religions, and socioeconomic classes. Now, for the first time, the United States has an historic opportunity to raise this issue in its diplomatic work and have an impact on the suffering of millions of women and girls.

The International Violence Against Women Act (S. 2279) is a piece of legislation now pending before the U.S. Congress that represents an unprecedented commitment by the U.S. government to address and ultimately end violence against women and girls globally. It would for the first time create a comprehensive approach by the United States to fight violence against women and girls internationally and commit serious financial resources to the effort.

Specifically, I-VAWA directs the U.S. government to create a comprehensive, 5-year strategy to reduce violence in 10-20 diverse countries that have severe levels of violence against women and girls. To achieve this goal, the Act allocates more than \$1 billion in U.S. assistance over 5 years and makes ending violence against women and girls a U.S. diplomatic priority. Importantly, the bill also expands U.S. support and capacity for overseas nongovernmental organizations - particularly women's nongovernmental organizations -

Submissions to MotherSpeak Update, Issue 5

MotherSpeak seeks news about families and military personnel. We are also interested in news and stories that present views from beyond U.S. borders that inform Americans about diverse cultures and lands. Articles can be up to 500 words.

eMail Update@motherspeak.org, subject line: MS Update.

working to end violence against women and girls in their own countries.

Excerpted from Amnesty International's Violence against Women data. Learn more at <http://www.amnestyusa.org/index.html>.

Long Time Passing Mothers Speak about War and Terror



After four years of gathering mothers' stories about war and the terror that accompanies it, the book *Long Time Passing: Mothers Speak about War and Terror* will soon be available.

Author Susan Galleymore, "military mom," radio host, and founder of MotherSpeak, traveled to Iraq, Israel, West Bank, Lebanon, and Syria to gather stories. She also interviewed mothers in the United States and Afghanistan.

Each mother's story is presented verbatim, edited only for length and clarity, and describes the effects of war on her and on her family, community, and country.

Long Time Passing: Mothers Speak about War and Terror examines war from the perspective of history and war's effects on family, community, and country and on the leadership traits that bring nations to war. It also examines common assumptions civilians hold about war and why troops themselves are hesitant to share their own stories or discuss the psychological breakdown that occurs in their ranks.

Here is a brief excerpt of an interview that took place in Damascus between the author and "Wissam" (not her real name due to security concerns) in 2007. At first Wissam was reluctant to speak, insisting that her English wasn't good enough, and she relied on the translator. Her passion to express her own thoughts, however, quickly took over, and she flew along in perfectly good English.

"I am a biologist and I started working in the Ministry of Trade as a quality control specialist about one month before the invasion. I continued

working there until we left for Damascus. I received a salary for the last three years, although I went to the office for a total of only four months because of shutdowns, lack of electricity, lack of work, and so on.

The living standards here in Syria are not as good for us as they were in Iraq. I cannot find work here. My brother and his friends—highly qualified medical doctors—cannot find work here either. Even Syrians face difficulties finding work with livable salaries, so Iraqis don't stand a chance. I might find a job selling in a store, but anything that actually used my education and skills would require papers to prove I'm not taking a Syrian's job.

My ex-husband is here too, and he works as mobile telephone communications engineer. The problem in our marriage was that he was a Shi'a and I am a Sunni. This is becoming more of a problem among Iraqis now, although it was never the case before when people intermarried. Now we are beginning to see this as big trouble.

My family and I left everything when we left Baghdad. I'm afraid that we will lose it forever—even if we are lucky enough to return to our original home. We spent our whole lives there, so we are losing not only material wealth but our memories, our history, our community, everything.

Syrians, Jordanians, and so on have their own countries and nations. We Iraqis are frightened now because we may lose our country. When television shows Egyptians, for example, honoring their country and raising their flag, I cry. The Kurds have a flag, too. But the Iraqi flag has been changed and it doesn't unify us anymore. Now we're frightened Iraq will be partitioned into four countries, and that that will divide us even more...."

Modified excerpts of sample stories can be previewed on the MotherSpeak website or (<http://www.motherspeak.org/img/booklet-prodready.pdf>)

Long Time Passing: Mothers Speak about War and Terror, published by Pluto Press, will be available late in 2008. Order your copy now by emailing info@mothersspeakaboutwarandterror.org.

A website about the book will soon be available at <http://www.mothersspeakaboutwarandterror.org> where you can also view photographs of the countries the author visited to gather stories.

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From directors Molly Bingham and Steve Connors, the film: *Meeting Resistance*



Steve Connors, from Sheffield, England, began taking photographs while serving as a British soldier in Northern Ireland in the early 1980s. **Molly Bingham**, from Kentucky, began as a photojournalist who traveled to Rwanda in the wake of the genocide.

They met in Afghanistan and then again in Iraq. It was during their time in Iraq that they conceptualized the film.

What would you do if America was invaded?

Meeting Resistance raises the veil of anonymity surrounding the Iraqi insurgency by meeting face to face with individuals who are passionately engaged in the struggle, and documenting for the very first time, the sentiments experienced and actions taken by a nation's citizens when their homeland is occupied. Voices that have previously not been heard, male and female, speak candidly about their motivations, hopes and goals, revealing a kaleidoscope of human perspectives.

Featuring reflective, yet fervent conversations with active insurgents, *Meeting Resistance* is the missing puzzle piece in understanding the Iraq war. Director Steve Connors and Molly Bingham have created a daring, eye-opening film that provides unique insight into the personal narratives of people involved in the resistance exploding myth after myth about the war in Iraq and the Iraqis who participate.

Through its unprecedented access to these clandestine groups, *Meeting Resistance* focuses the spotlight on the "other side", clarifying why the violence in Iraq continues to this day and providing a deeper understanding of both the toll of occupation and the human condition of resistance.

Visit the website to learn more: <http://www.meetingresistance.com/>