

GI SPECIAL 6C20:



**Thoughts On Hypocrisy
And The Antiwar
Community:**

**“In Terms Of Supporting Or
Opposing The War, What
Thoughts, Words, Or Actions
Prove You’re Standing On This
Or That Side Of The Line?”**

**“How Badly Do You Want The War
To End?”**

“Are You Truly Challenging The War Effectively? ...Threatening Government?”

02/11/2008 By Daniel Joseph Black [Iraq Veterans Against The War: www.ivaw.org/]

Branch of service: United States Marine Corps (USMC)
Home: South Orange, New Jersey
Served in: Camp Fox, Kuwait; KNB, Kuwait; Fallujah, Iraq; TQ, Iraq

Joined the Marines straight out of high school in the summer of 2000, a time when few armed conflicts were underway that would necessitate a serviceman leaving the states. Before being discharged 5 years later, though, he deployed to Kuwait for 8 months in 2003 and to Iraq for 7 months in 2004. Dan currently attends Marist College in upstate New York where he studies Psychology/Special Education.

For purposes of expediency and fluidity, I speak of many accomplishments within this piece as though they were solely my own; the whole truth is that I am deeply indebted to Roy Pradhan and many others for the success that was Project Albany.

It's fitting to write today, especially on this subject.

It is, after all, 5 years to the day after I first shipped to the Middle East (02/11/2003). Now a milestone has been reached in the lifelong process of looking back, watching large chunks of time gradually accrue between my present life and those awful past experiences I know will haunt me until I die.

There really is so little to be said for my past, my choices, my life-endangering stupidity. It was only 7 days ago that both my father and my sister pointed out, correctly, that I am not as psycho-emotionally “moved on” from that period of my life as I would like to believe.

What a fucking downer, man; you think I want to dwell and marinate in this rancid sauce forever?

Not on your life, but here I am dwelling and marinating nevertheless.

5 years from now it will be 10 years, and we'll see how I feel then. If, at that time, remnants of 2003 smolder still, we'll just see what 5 more years will do, so on and so forth until death. Eventually these embers must burn out. Or I will.

Well, I've recently had the delightful misfortune of reliving that shameful period of personal history, you know, the personal history that everyone says I should be so fucking proud of and everything?

I drugged up painful memories for the benefit of Troy-based peace activists the other weekend. I have no regrets; I rather like what I did. And then, literally just hours later, I was Jersey-bound to pay final respects to my maternal grandfather, the WWII vet that believed we had a deep personal bond the truth behind which I could never comprehend until now.

We are not the same person, him and I, but indeed we are not so dissimilar either. You know how things that are total opposites always have so much in common—in some weird paradoxical way? I now carry the family legacy of isolation and estrangement; of course, I'd never admit that to you face-to-face, but you should just know that it is there because right now I am being straightforward and honest, and furthermore that nastiness I have in my soul is always just itching to come out and play. Something to watch out for: my little Edward Hyde.

This identity crisis of mine that I could scarcely acknowledge until now is surely not lost on that handful of random strangers at the Sanctuary for Independent Media that I verbally thrashed and battered/trashed and scattered the other weekend. They saw precisely what I denied even exists until now: my capacity to hate and judge. No regrets; they deserved it (bizarre direction for a confession, eh?), but I can't deny that perhaps they got a bit more than their fair share.

This is the story of screening “Redacted” and my unorthodox commentary that followed:

Redacted is war porn.

I love that I began this paragraph with such a simple, concise, but powerful sentence.

Redacted, when boiled down to its core elements, really is nothing more than war porn, and I told all those who attended the second screening precisely that.

I also told them they were in attendance because they wanted a little glance inside the horrors we all denounce and so adamantly protest.

I called it voyeurism and said that, oddly, and in accordance with this phenomenon that I've discovered pervades the human condition, they were there because they wanted to see what the movie had to show them, that it was something on the order of sexual excitement that brought everyone from their homes to pay money and see what they already knew was true and wrong but in colors and sounds they'd never before seen (if you read the reports and sort the facts out for yourself, you will understand the war ought to be rallied against and resisted; I don't believe that anyone came out those nights because they were unsure of how they felt about the rightness or politics behind the fight).

I said these things because they are true.

Perhaps you think I am wrong; I don't care. The past eight years of my life have taught me more about the human experience than I thought possible in an entire lifespan, and one of the things they taught me is that the vast majority of people have convinced themselves of numerous ideas and self-perceptions that are just flatly wrong.

These nearly always lean toward the baseless presumption of human goodness, and getting sexually excited about the prospect of watching war porn is surely nothing to be proud of.

Prosecution rests.

I told them many other things, asked many provocative questions, and my comments were scathing.

One difficult philosophical principle that I truly lived those nights was the idea that we never spare anyone's feelings or gold-plate shit for etiquette's sake at the expense of authenticity and truth.

The Iraq war will soon turn five, and everyone is to blame; everyone shoulders some amount of weight as the overburdened national conscience must look over what our people have allowed to happen and admit culpability honestly and appropriately. The peace activists of the anti-war left have failed just as the self-styled "gathering of eagles" have failed.

And if you think I get off, that I don't encounter a mirror on a more-than-daily basis and see the same ugly, you should know that I heap scrutiny upon myself the hardest. This war continues and I have not used my skills, talents, and resources as effectively as I possibly could have. People are dead as a consequence; they continue to die and what I so busy doing?

Busy talking. I couldn't seem to focus my thinking those last three paragraphs but I feel apt to do so now. Thank you if you're still with me. I talked. I talked and talked and talked and talked and talked and talked. If those boys down in Washington don't bring those boys home and do the right thing by our victims, I'm going to talk again.

So, herewith, an outline of my strategy for speaking to crowds already antiwar:

Until we have achieved what we have set out to accomplish — restore justice to the Iraqi people and withdraw all Americans that have no business in their backyard — pats on the back should be used sparingly, and unfortunately there is no shortage of them in activist circles.

What I had intended to express at those antiwar events, in as pragmatic language as possible, is that we still have much to do and there are many points on which we can improve. A little constructive criticism is in order when issues such as these need to be addressed, and that is precisely what I delivered. A lot of negative things can be said about what I did, and I'm sure a lot have, but dammit if I wasn't justified.

In a simple, seemingly nonthreatening inquiry, I persistently asked, what does the antiwar community accomplish in a day's work?

What, specifically, are our action strategies and do we believe they might actually work?

And more importantly, what is being left unsaid? What are our unstated premises/objectives/priorities?

These are important questions, and they don't necessarily always evoke the civil reflective self-criticism they are intended to, but who are we, after all, if we cannot scrutinize ourselves?

The Iraq war is notable in history because of its attendant widespread international protest before it actually began.

That means many of these people have been protesting since 2002. It also means that a soldier killed in the conflict today might have been twelve years old — TWELVE YEARS OLD — when the conflict started.

Holy shit.

"Collateral Damage", as we like to call it (that's innocent civilians dying violent deaths on account of our negligence, for those who don't know), might have been pre-birth at the conflict's start only to die in early childhood (perhaps this is digressing toward written war porn); perhaps even her parents hadn't yet met one another by the time the tanks rolled through Baghdad (mission accomplished, right?). Who can say for sure? Not us; we don't even track how many Iraqis we kill.

Don't despair over my dragging you through the mud though; it does serve a purpose.

All this is to say that the antiwar movement, everyone within it, needs to take an honest look at what is going on and give some honest answers to some tough questions: In terms of supporting or opposing the war, what thoughts, words, or actions prove you're standing on this or that side of the line?

You're here, or you're still reading; you're antiwar?

Let me ask you then, how much does the war really bother you?

How badly do you want the war to end?

How far are you willing to go to see the atrocity, the war crime (we all agree by now that it may be characterized as such, yes? We simply have to by this late stage of the game) ground to a halt?

What actions will you stop short of doing and why? Is it not worth going farther? In light of this impromptu introspection, what are your plans for this evening? ...for any given evening?

Are you truly challenging the war effectively? ...threatening government? ...forcibly attempting to bring to justice those individuals and institutions who have murdered, by now, far in excess of a million innocent and defenseless foreign people to say nothing of the 3960 (as of 02/11/2008) of our own communities' youth?

What are you doing instead?

This stream of questions actually continues in my journal for quite a while, but I'll spare you the rest because I think the brief excerpt above shall be sufficient.

The short version, the version you should always keep in mind though, boils down to a single question in that battery of self-criticism: How badly do you want the war to end?

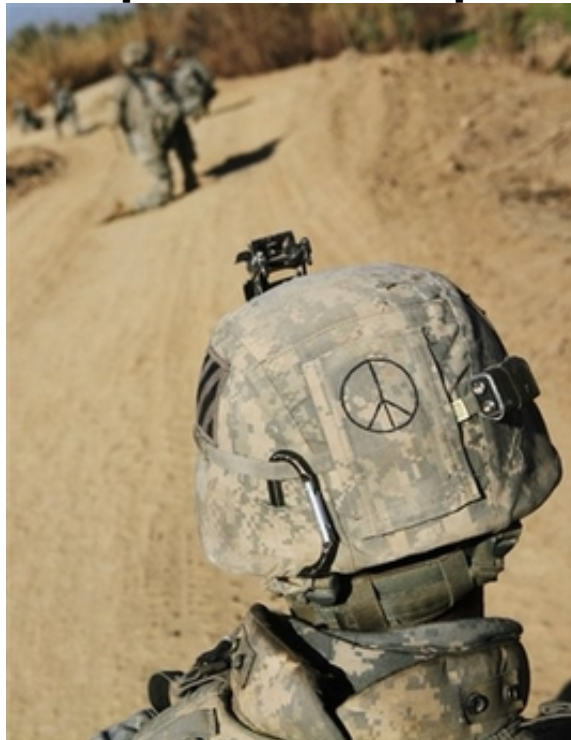
MORE:

BRIDGING THE GAP: MAKING IT HAPPEN

An Organizers Conference

April 5, 2008: 10 AM

**Middle Collegiate Church
50 East 7th St., New York, New York
[Just east of 2nd Avenue]**



U.S. Army soldier patrols Beijja village, Iraq Feb. 4, 2008. (AP Photo/Maya Alleruzzo)

POLITICIANS CAN'T BE COUNTED ON TO HALT THE BLOODSHED

THE TROOPS HAVE THE POWER TO STOP THE WAR

**THIS IS AN ORGANIZERS CONFERENCE FOR PEOPLE WHO
WISH TO ACT TOGETHER TO BRIDGE THE GAP BETWEEN
CIVILIANS AND MEMBERS OF THE ARMED FORCES BY DIRECT
CONTACT.**

Program:

**10AM: FIRST HAND REPORTS ON SENTIMENT AGAINST THE WARS IN THE
ARMED FORCES; Organizers**

**NOON: RESISTANCE THROUGH EVOCATION: PHOTOGRAPHS, POEMS; Mike
Hastie & Dennis Serdel, Vietnam Veterans; Al Jaccoma, Vietnam Veterans Against
The War**

12:45: Lunch break.

**1:45 PM: TROOPS RESIST WAR; VIETNAM AND IRAQ: EYEWITNESSES: Richard
Boyle, Vietnam War Reporter; Garett Reppenhagen & J.D. Englehart, Iraq Veterans
Against The War; Al Jaccoma, Vietnam Veterans Against The War**

**3 PM: OUTREACH TO THE TROOPS [Organizing Tactics In The Real World]
Fabian Bouthillette, Iraq Veterans Against The War & The Military Project**

**4:20 PM: ON GUARD: "WE NEVER SWORE TO OBEY; WE SWORE TO DEFEND"
Daniel Joseph Black, Iraq Veterans Against The War**

**5:15 PM: IRAQ VETERANS + UNION WORKERS = HISTORY IN MOTION: Michael
Letwin & Clarence Thomas, Local 10, The International Longshore and Warehouse
Union, San Francisco**

ORGANIZED BY:

**The Military Project: contact@militaryproject.org
917.677.8057**

[With the assistance of Traveling Soldier & GI Special]



Tactical Painting
From Soldier X, Iraq to GI Special 4.25.05

GI Special www.militaryproject.org
*This is how Bush brings the troops home,
BRING THEM ALL HOME NOW, ALIVE.*



*GI Special is a near-daily news bulletin for service members
www.militaryproject.org*

A photograph showing several soldiers in camouflage gear carrying a stretcher with a person lying on it. The scene is outdoors, possibly in a military camp or hospital setting. The image is framed with a white border.

**“What country can preserve its liberties if its rulers are not warned from time to time that their people preserve the spirit of resistance? Let them take arms.”
Thomas Jefferson to William Stephens Smith, 1787.**

**DO YOU HAVE A FRIEND OR RELATIVE IN THE
SERVICE?**

Forward GI Special along, or send us the address if you wish and we'll send it regularly. Whether in Iraq or stuck on a base in the USA, this is extra important for your service friend, too often cut off from access to encouraging news of growing resistance to the war, inside the armed services and at home. Send email requests to address up top or write to: The Military Project, Box 126, 2576 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10025-5657

NEED SOME TRUTH? CHECK OUT THE NEW TRAVELING SOLDIER

Telling the truth - about the occupation or the criminals running the government in Washington - is the first reason for Traveling Soldier. But we want to do more than tell the truth; we want to report on the resistance - whether it's in the streets of Baghdad, New York, or inside the armed forces.

Our goal is for Traveling Soldier to become the thread that ties working-class people inside the armed services together. We want this newsletter to be a weapon to help you organize resistance within the armed forces.

If you like what you've read, we hope that you'll join with us in building a network of active duty organizers. <http://www.traveling-soldier.org/>

And join with Iraq War vets in the call to end the occupation and bring our troops home now! (www.ivaw.org/)

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