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Debating the College Board AP[®] Program

For this issue of *Social Science Docket*, we asked social studies teachers familiar with high school Advanced Placement (AP[®]) programs to discuss their views on AP social studies and history courses based on their own experiences. More than half of the high schools in the United States offer at least one Advanced Placement course. Students take 2.6 million Advanced Placement exams in 37 subjects each year. In the social studies, there are tests in macroeconomics, microeconomics, comparative governments and politics, U.S. government and politics, Human Geography, European history, United States History, and World History. “AP” and “Advanced Placement Programs” are registered trademarks of the College Board and they restrict their use to approved programs. In part, this is done to prevent dual enrollment programs where high school classes are accredited by local colleges from describing themselves as advanced placement.

Introducing the AP[®] Debate

by Alan Singer, editor, *Social Science Docket*

During the past few years AP courses have been criticized from a number of different perspectives. A 2009 report issued by the conservative Thomas B. Fordham Institute expressed concern that “a generally good program” was being “weakened by making it too accessible.” The report was based on a survey of more than 1,000 teachers of Advanced Placement courses. More than half of the respondents claimed that the effectiveness of AP programs was threatened because school districts were loosening restrictions on who could take the courses, parents pushed their children to take AP classes even when they were not qualified, and students were enrolling in them to add credentials to their college applications rather than out of interest in the subject (*New York Times*, April 29, 2009, p. 16).

Alfie Kohn, a widely published educator, charges that AP courses “often represent an accelerated version of the worst sort of teaching: lecture-based, textbook-oriented, focused more on covering (a prefabricated curriculum) than on discovering, and above all, driven not by a desire to help students think deeply and become excited by ideas but by the imperative of preparing them for a test” (*New York Times*, May 6, 2009: A28).

Scarsdale High School in Westchester, New York has phased out College Board’s Advanced Placement courses and replaced them with Advanced Topics classes that allow teachers and students greater flexibility and better mirror college seminar classes. Students still have the option of taking AP tests. A number of elite private schools, including Ethical Culture Fieldston, Dalton, and Calhoun in New York City have withdrawn from the AP program. In a *New*

York Times article, Bruce Hammond, executive director of a network of private schools that do not teach to standardized tests said that “many private and public schools chafed under the limitations of Advanced Placement courses, and would drop them if not for opposition from parents.” (*New York Times*, December 6, 2008, A45). Hammond is a former AP history and macroeconomics teacher. John Love, principal of the high school division of Ethical Culture Fieldston, who was interviewed for the same article, said abolishing AP courses had a “liberating effect on the curriculum.” Ethical Culture Fieldston now offers Advanced Topics history classes such as “Inventing Gotham: New York City and the American Dream.”

Trevor Packer, a vice president of College Board, the organization that creates the AP tests and registers accredited AP programs, rejected the idea that the Advanced Topics courses better prepared students for college. He argued that Scarsdale’s Advanced Topics classes “don’t look any different from high-quality AP courses.”

As a high school social studies teacher, I taught an “AP” United States history course that would now be described as a dual enrollment class because instead of taking the AP exam students received credit from a local college. We made this decision because we doubted if many of our students would be able to pass the AP test. Although in retrospect, this decision also gave me greater flexibility in planning the curriculum. At the time I was a strong supporter of the program. I taught in a largely minority school with many underachieving students. Most did not go to college or even graduate from high school. This course gave a select few inner city youth the opportunity to experience a more rigorous college preparation program available in suburban school districts.

Since that time I have had increasing reservations about AP and dual enrollment programs. I have seen to many cases where these classes contributed to racial and ethnic segregation in schools. White and Asian students who probably do not belong in the classes opt in largely for social reasons and because of parental pressure. Black and Latino students who have the academic credentials often choose not to take the classes because they fear social isolation.

As a university-based teacher educator, I now evaluate student applications for our New York State certified programs. Too often I review transcripts where students took advanced placement history in high school and then never took another history class in college. In conversations with applicants I learned that they used the introductory AP credits to avoid taking more demanding college courses that would have better exposed them to history and the process of historical investigation.

One suggestion I have banded about, but as of yet have received no takers on, is to organize high school social studies classes as heterogeneously grouped recitation sections with focused homogeneously grouped laboratories. In this approach, students would be mixed together for three days a week while they follow the standard social studies curriculum. On the other two days they would meet in labs they would focus on different things, including labs that would help prepare students for AP tests. Essentially every student would have resource room although the focus of the support sessions would differ based on the needs of the students. This might preserve the best of the claimed benefits of AP programs while addressing some of the criticisms.

Dual Enrollment Programs

by Jayne O'Neill, former President, NJCSS

The Advanced Placement U.S. History class at Passaic County Technical Institute in Wayne, New Jersey is a dual enrollment program. Not only are the students enrolled required to take the AP exam, but also for a nominal fee they can earn six college credits from the Seton Hall University Project Acceleration program. Our students cover the United States history content over a two-year period. The AP exam is taken in May of their senior year. It does not affect acceptance by colleges, but it does give them an idea of what will be expected of them on the college level.

Many of students struggle in the course, complain about the amount of work, its intensity, as well as the deadlines. But what I have noticed over the last few years is that although my students do not test well on the AP exam, only about 25% score high enough to earn college credit, they start their freshman year of college a bit more prepared and able to perform the tasks asked of them. More students make it to sophomore year and many more graduate.

Students who get accepted to the dual enrollment program are weak in comparison to students on the national level in terms of academic skills and levels of knowledge. But during the two years their academic and personal growth are tremendous and their confidence and self-worth improve. This greatly increases their success rate in college.

In a school such as ours parental involvement is low; many students come from families where no one ever attended college. Students rely heavily the school's guidance department for direction. We support them in making positive decisions that are important for their futures as well as support society by helping to create an informed and productive workforce.

We find that maintaining a high admission standard for the class and having a reputation for discipline and high expectations attracts students to the program. Exposure to materials in this class is much broader and more interesting. This keeps students engaged and as they work to broaden their knowledge base their self-interest in history develops. Even students who decide not to attend to college find the experience worthwhile because the skills they develop help them get better jobs, or enter some type of trade school. Our dual enrollment program in conjunction with the AP is a win-win situation.

A Program with Many Benefits

by Andrew Manzo

One of the trends in secondary education during the 21st century is the explosion of students taking Advanced Placement courses. According to the College Board, there has been a greater than 25% increase in participation by New York State students and 40% increase by New Jersey students. The use of these exams as a measure to rank high schools has only exacerbated the pressure to increase student participation. As a teacher of four different AP courses

during my career and a supervisor in a department offering a variety of AP courses, I have had to confront many of these issues being debated about the AP program. For me, the three main questions are at the heart of the discussion: “Has the increase in student participation hurt the quality of the AP programs offered by schools?”; “Should there be self-selection or admission requirements?”; and, “Are teachers forced to ‘teach to the test’ at the expense of more creative teaching and deeper understandings by students?”

The belief that greater student participation is hurting the level of rigor in AP courses is a common concern. This can manifest itself in selection of texts, the amount of instruction time lost to review, and the decrease in quality of classroom discussion. Yet, I believe that if instructors clearly explain in advance to students, parents, and administrators that they are bound by a national curriculum and an external assessment, the level of rigor can be maintained. Students and parents have to understand that students who customarily receive 90s in a regents-level class may only earn 75 in an AP course. Administrators have to be comfortable with the possibility that these students may only score twos and threes on the AP exam. If these conversations are held in advance, then instructors can concentrate on developing challenging courses rather than having to modify instruction to maintain student grades or force out weaker students to maintain a higher percentage of students earning fours and fives. These conversations are necessary regardless of whether a school chooses to allow self-selection or has an admissions process.

If there are weaker students in AP programs, teachers may feel more pressure to focus on “drill and kill” type lessons that boil the course down to the information most frequently tested. While some teachers may emphasize “you need to know this for the test,” most of my colleagues and the teachers I supervise try to present the best possible course as the most effective way to prepare students to do well on the exam. They generally only focus on test preparation when teaching about “the DBQ” or “change over time” essay formats. Almost universally, teachers who complain about problems related to test preparation are primarily concerned because schools in the Northeast are at a disadvantage because we start much later than schools in other parts of the country and have additional days off during the school year. This, more than anything, puts pressure on teachers to

rush through the curriculum rather than exploring topics in greater depth.

How much greater depth do college survey courses actually deliver? Last year I found myself in a unique position that allowed me to compare a high school AP course and its college counterpart. I was an adjunct at a state college teaching an introductory world history course. Simultaneously my daughter was taking AP World History. The workload and course difficulty seemed comparable. Most AP teachers have not been undergraduates for a number of years and may not be sure how their course measures up to what students see at the university level. One excellent way to get this information is through feedback from former students. Students in AP courses are exposed to a rich content that challenges them to think at the highest levels and develop academic discipline that will serve them well in college. On a practical level, students have the opportunity to earn college credit and potentially save money, no small factor in today’s difficult economic times. Students also benefit in the admissions process from being judged by a standardized measure, rather than having universities estimate the rigor of alternative courses. I believe the growth in student participation in Advanced Placement coursework is a positive thing. As a teacher, I always received the greatest satisfaction from assisting a weaker student achieve a passing level. My primary goal was always to help students develop a love of history (or politics or economics) that they did not already have. That is the true measure of success.

Best Preparation is a Sound Course of Study

by Timothy Cullen

To argue that Advanced Placement programs are driven by the examination is to state the obvious. Any time hard data is generated in any realm, there is the danger that these numbers will be misinterpreted. Such is the case here. It is assumed that test scores are a reliable indicator of future success. Perhaps that is true for the short-term. Students who test well increase their chance of acceptance at our best universities. And they will probably achieve better results at the graduate level as well. This shouldn’t be a surprise. The means of assessment is constant.

What happens when they enter the global marketplace? The post-industrial economy is increasingly based upon human capital. The traditional benchmarks of economies of scale and patent protection are giving way to a new paradigm. The ability to think on your feet, challenge prevailing assumptions, and anticipate change, shall define success. Not a test score. College Board isn't the culprit. It is our willingness to accept a flawed definition of good teaching. And the very people who could affect change are the same ones driving the dynamic.

Listen to veteran A.P. teachers in conversation. Within minutes, each will reference their latest scores. It is no different with administrators. Results are posted, community newsletters soon report the tally, and subtle pressure is brought to bear on those who failed to measure up. The fundamental message is clear. A good A.P. program is about test results. Those teachers who hope to survive adjust or die.

Colleges follow suit by demanding multiple A.P. courses as a prerequisite for admission. Add to this the ubiquitous host of extracurricular activities and we have critical mass. Students are overwhelmed. No one has time to keep up. Yet there is no other option. We are left with a Darwinian struggle to maintain class rank on four hours of sleep per night, balanced by binge drinking on the weekends.

Alas, to conclude that this will change by opting out of the A.P. program is a fallacy. Whether we call it Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, or the Podunk School System Honors Program, it is necessary to rank student performance. How best do we accomplish this?

The world is changing with blinding speed. To survive in such a volatile environment, students need a demanding educational experience. Without this, they will find themselves at a competitive disadvantage with the millions of Chinese and Indian students flooding into the global marketplace. At the same time, we must find ways to create wealth while addressing that elusive question of economic 'fairness' in a shrinking world. Even the most ardent capitalist understands that America's economic hegemony is under assault.

The best preparation is a sound course of study and a dedicated cadre of enthusiastic and demanding teachers. Don't forget that our students are adolescents struggling with a myriad of problems, not the least of which is being sixteen years of age in an i-pod culture. To argue that these youngsters are somehow immune

to those same pressures every one of us faced is disingenuous. To imply that we are "college professors" is equally dishonest. We are high school teachers. And in truth, there is nobility in this calling.

Think back to your own experience. What set your best courses apart from others? Was it test scores or the impact of the teacher? How long did it take before you truly understood those lessons being conveyed? Education, like art, is the result of years of work.

Responsibility for change lies with veteran teachers and administrators. The generation that helped end an illegal war, eradicate institutional racism, and open the doors to a generation of women, must launch one final crusade. We need to make a coherent, rational argument for excellence in education, devoid of reliance upon numerical data alone. We must fight not simply for the students in our classes but also for the young teachers struggling to find dignity and worth in the profession. It is time to recapture education from the technocrats and politicians who have usurped power and left "No Child Left Behind" as their legacy. Or we can sit back and rest on our laurels, lazy, contented, and ultimately, irrelevant.

Josh Billings, a nineteenth-century humorist once noted, "It ain't so much the things we don't know that get us into trouble. It's the things we know that just ain't so." To equate A.P. test results with good classroom teaching, "just ain't so."

Who Advances by Advanced Placement?

by Michael Pezone

I taught an Advanced Placement (AP) United States History and Government course in my New York City high school. While I thoroughly enjoyed teaching and discussing history with my school's highest achieving students, the AP program troubled me deeply.

Critics of the AP program focus on its deleterious effects on learning, a concern that I share. Test pressure and superficial coverage of material are antithetical to the creation of a student-centered learning environment in which students and teachers have more control of the learning process and enjoy the passion, interest, and challenges that characterize genuine study of history. I also believe that the AP program reinforces the institutional racism and classism that lies at the heart of our nation's educational systems.

Advanced Placement courses attempt to cover a huge body of facts and concepts in a relatively short time in order to prepare students for tests. In this regard, the AP program is out of step with the trend in many colleges and universities to encourage more in-depth, investigative, or research-based learning. Ret Talbot, in a 2007 article in *Education Week*, argued, “the essential tenets of a liberal education depreciate to the point of nonexistence in AP courses. Content becomes king, and the test is an end in itself rather than a tool to bridge the worlds of secondary and higher education.” AP history courses demand student memorization of long series of dead and meaningless facts, and allow precious little time for meaningful interpretation and analysis.

The pedagogical effects of AP history courses were described by longtime University of California professor Paul Von Blum in a 2008 article in *Education Week*. According to Von Blum, “Advanced Placement preparation is overrated and may, ironically, diminish rather than advance the deeper objectives of a liberal arts education.” Among undergraduate students who took AP courses and exams, he notes a “disconcerting lack of historical knowledge.” Some students acknowledged to him that they viewed their AP participation as “primarily an exercise in memorization and exam-passing” and as “merely another tedious hurdle to be overcome in gaining admission to selective colleges and universities.” Von Blum (2008) discovered a “subtle and insidious mindset” that develops among AP students, in which “‘results’ trump the actual educational process . . . Resume padding substitutes for durable knowledge and lifelong intellectual curiosity.”

Even more troublingly from Von Blum’s perspective, he noted “serious historical and cultural deficiencies” among students with extensive AP credit, including “a vast lack of knowledge about the events and people associated with labor, civil rights, feminist, anti-war, gay and lesbian, environmental, and other resistance movements” He concludes that “AP efforts reflect a conventional bias that neglects large populations and discourages more comprehensive treatment of dissenting political and cultural forces.” This should not be surprising, given that many AP history teachers closely rely on textbooks such as *The American Pageant* (1994), a book ably criticized along with other textbooks in James Loewen’s *Lies My Teacher Told Me: Everything Your American History*

Textbook Got Wrong (1995) for precisely the type of bias Von Blum derides.

When my school decided to create AP courses as part of a New York City program to expand the number of city students taking AP tests, I was asked to teach the history course. At an initial workshop designed to orient teachers who were new to the AP program, a city official who happened to be Black explained that no one expected students in schools like mine to pass the AP history exam, and that the purpose of the expanded AP program was to give such students a taste of college level work. Her statement initially struck me as demeaning to my students, the large majority of whom are also Black. As I previewed the course material, however, and noted the literacy level, memorization and other skills demanded by the course, as well as the enormous amount of information to be covered, I recognized that her statement was sober and realistic. I deeply respect the intelligence of all my students, but the overwhelming majority does not possess the skills and background required to succeed with AP coursework. It is necessary at times to explain this point quite carefully, particularly with those who might misinterpret it in negative ways, just as I first interpreted the official’s statement. The key point here is that we should not abstract from real social conditions and their effects in order to pretend that everyone is equally prepared to perform particular tasks within particular time frames. Except with relatively rare exceptions, inner city students who live in poor neighborhoods, who attend failing schools, and who are exposed to a host of personal and social issues simply do not develop the skills to compete with students from more advantaged backgrounds. The pretence that everyone has an equal chance to succeed undermines the important work needed to address and eliminate the unequal social conditions that give rise to differential educational outcomes.

School Profile

A brief description of my school and my AP students will help bring home the point I am making. Our school has approximately two hundred incoming freshmen every September. Four years later, between forty-five and seventy students graduate from the program. This represents a real graduation rate of about twenty-five to thirty-five per cent. My AP class generally consists of about thirty students, who represent about one-quarter of the juniors in the school.

For a recent group, I reviewed their results on the previous year's Global History Regents examination. The highest score was 86, only six students scored 80 or higher, three failed, and the average score was 73. In comparison, a colleague at another, more successful high school teaches a junior AP United States History and Government class that consists of twelve students whose average score on the Global History Regents was 93. Again, my students are bright, and some are very hard-working, but almost all have particular challenges, primarily literacy issues and a limited knowledge base, that make it difficult for them to handle college level work at this point in their lives.

Teaching the AP United States History and Government course placed me in a curious position. I am committed to student-centered, project-based pedagogy and to engaging students in critical examination of conventional accounts of history. I had to ask myself the following questions: should I modify my approach in order to engage in what I consider inferior teaching, to drill students to pass the AP exam, all the while knowing that at best only a few students would have a realistic chance to pass? Should I inundate students with massive amounts of information, much of which I myself consider trivial and far less important than pressing issues of current social importance? Should I do what some teachers do: use the power of the grade book and other disciplinary tactics to drive students to complete so much work that it detracts from their work in other subject classes? Should I in effect punish students for having been assigned to AP courses for reasons that have nothing to do with their interest or ability level?

These were not difficult questions for me to answer. I simply am incapable of drilling students with meaningless facts, teaching to a test, or tormenting students. I decided to teach as I always have taught, by engaging students in active, project-based learning designed to help them analyze important issues and hopefully to instill in them a love of knowledge and of history. Most importantly, out of respect to my students, I openly explained to them my thinking about the AP course.

Some students were disturbed by my remarks, and viewed them as a slight on their intelligence. After all, they are the top students in the school and are used to achieving. Most significantly, they have imbibed the meritocratic assumptions that guide most thinking about educational success, and resent what they view

as any implication that students elsewhere are better prepared than they are. In response, I offered every student the opportunity to do extra work in order to prepare for the AP exam. More importantly, I recognized that my discussion with them represented a golden opportunity to educate students about important social issues, so we spent a week conducting research on the origin of the AP program and the demographics of student performance on AP and SAT tests.

Advanced Placement scores are broken down by ethnicity and show a smaller percentage of Black students taking the exams and lower average scores. Students found this information disturbing. Such data, disaggregated by ethnicity alone, tended to reinforce racist beliefs and assumptions. Fortunately, while The College Board does not disaggregate AP data by family income level, it does disaggregate national SAT data both by ethnicity and family income. Students were most struck by the way in which SAT scores climb with each increase in family income. This led one student to exclaim: "All they're testing is how rich you are!" This led to a discussion of poverty rates among different ethnic groups, to a re-consideration of other factors that might explain differential educational outcomes, to a discussion about affirmative action and other policy options, and other related issues.

I conclude with a plea to colleges and universities to discontinue the preferential admission treatment given to Advanced Placement students. As a society, we should no longer provide additional rewards and benefits to those who already benefit by virtue of their social position. If the premises and promises of a democratic education mean anything, we need to offer equal and challenging educational opportunities to all our students, and prepare all of them to succeed in college and beyond. The AP test is not the answer.

"Retired" from AP Classes

by Henry Dircks

Congratulations are in order to *New York Teacher* for its glad-handing, feel-good article entitled, "New York tops Advanced Placement exam ranks" by Sylvia Saunders (February 28, 2008 issue). The article, which touted the "head-of-the-class" results by New York students on AP tests, smacks of the same political justification that districts across the state use in pursuit of a higher position on *Newsweek's* annual Top 100 High Schools list. Interestingly enough, the article was

devoid of teacher input and lacked any critical perspective of what “AP inclusion” has meant to any NYSUT members.

I began teaching Advanced Placement U.S. History in 1996, my fifth year of teaching. This was not unusual as my school’s faculty was shifting from a majority of veteran to a majority of novice teachers.

What was unusual was that my “rookie” colleagues and I entered an Advanced Placement program that was undergoing changes itself. Gone were the classes of 20 students maximum, each recommended by the previous year’s teacher and having achieved grades commensurate with placement in the AP program. Students were no longer limited in the number of AP classes they took by their own fears of not keeping up with the material, by their guidance counselors who insisted that depth of study was important in college-level work, or by their parents who were unconcerned about defraying college costs. “They’ll be enriched by the experience,” our administrators said to justify the shift to open enrollment and the push to raise the percentage of our student population in AP classes.

Twelve years after initiating this “inclusion” policy, the Advanced Placement program may boast exceptional passing rates, but there are equally exceptional negative consequences. Students focus on taking as many AP courses as possible during their high school years, with little regard for mastering the coursework in any one class. Coursework suffers as students can only devote so much time and effort to

any one course; for instance, my homework assignments are structured to pass on needed information in as little time as possible, a far cry from AP teachers of the past who expected chapters read by the week’s end. Curving test grades or quarterly averages is the norm to satisfy students who worry only about college applications, and parents who question why their student who scored so well in 7th grade is not receiving similar grades in 11th. Classes of between 25 and 30 students crowd out individual attention, whether during instruction or in offering advice on graded tests. Minimum standards and grades to continue in the AP program are non-existent. Where once deserving students needed a recommendation to enroll in AP courses, now AP teachers request that under-performing or failing students be removed from class; these requests are denied for the sake of keeping up AP percentages.

At the end of the *New York Teacher* article, the College Board is cited for warning that 39 percent of AP teachers were due for retirement in the next five years. I guess that I was ahead of the curve. After 12 years of attaining the exceptional results celebrated in NYSUT’s article, I decided to request all Regents-level classes the next year (my own “retirement” from AP). In my opinion, NYSUT should concern itself with recognizing the stresses and challenges faced by AP teachers, instead of simply promoting their hard-won results.

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War and Military History in the Curriculum

by Alan Singer, editor, Social Science Docket

When I was a middle school and high school student, the chronology of war – the French and Indian War, the American Revolution, the War of 1812, the Mexican-American War, the Civil War, the Spanish-American War, World War I, World War II, Korea, and Vietnam – defined the social studies curriculum. As a younger teacher and an anti-war activist from the Vietnam era, I wanted to break with this. I took to heart the lyrics of the traditional Black spiritual “Down by the Riverside,” I wasn’t “gonna study war no more.” What I soon realized, however, is that United States history and foreign policy does not make sense if we leave out the wars. We would also be leaving out the rich history of anti-war protest discussed by Charles Howlett in his article “Anti-War Demonstrations are Part of America’s Past.” In addition, war interested students and was a great way to get them to analyze documents, look at multiple perspectives and causality, and read maps. Over the years, the way I looked at war and included it in the curriculum began to change. I am still an anti-war activist, but war, and opposition to war, have a much more prominent place in my lesson calendar. One thing I want students to understand is that real warriors are not always pro-war. The four quotes that follow, by three generals, make that point very well.

“WAR is a racket. It always has been. It is possibly the oldest, easily the most profitable, surely the most vicious. It is the only one international in scope. It is the only one in which the profits are reckoned in dollars and the losses in lives.” Major General Smedley D. Butler, 1933

“The world has achieved brilliance without wisdom, power without conscience. Ours is a world of nuclear giants and ethical infants. We know more about war than we know about peace, more about killing than we know about living.” General Omar Bradley, 1948

“Every gun that is made, every warship launched, every rocket fired, signifies in the final sense a theft from those who hunger and are not fed, those who are cold and are not clothed.” Pres. Dwight Eisenhower, 1953

“In the councils of government, we must guard against the acquisition of unwarranted influence, whether sought or unsought, by the military-industrial complex . . . Only an alert and knowledgeable citizenry can compel the proper meshing of the huge industrial and military machinery of defense with our peaceful methods and goals, so that security and liberty may prosper together.” President Dwight Eisenhower, 1961

For this thematic issue of *Social Science Docket*, articles discuss the concept of “just war” and use that concept to examine the nuclear attack on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. A play about *Sadako and the Thousand Paper Cranes* and reviews of children’s literature suggest ways for younger children to join this discussion. We begin discussion of 20th century wars a little early with the Spanish-American War of 1898. Articles discuss the U.S. occupation of the Philippines, trench warfare during World War I, the Harlem Hellfighters, Nanking, and different aspects of World War II. Interviews with veterans present their perspectives on the Korean, Vietnam, and Persian Gulf wars. Don Gilson and Kerri O’Brien write about *The Plight of the Veteran: Vietnam and Post-Vietnam Eras* and include activity sheets for classroom use. There are also a series of articles that discuss using poems, books, and movies to teach about war.

In addition, for this thematic issue, we asked teachers to respond to three questions: Are anti-war protests legitimate during a time of war? Is there such a thing as a “just war”? What does it mean to support the troops?

Anti-War Movements are Part of America's Past

by Charles Howlett

While the current war in Iraq is unpopular and citizens have demonstrated their opposition through large scale street protests as well as e-mails and blogging, most Americans know very little about the long tradition of anti-war dissent in our nation's past. According to the late Pulitzer Prize-winning historian Merle Curti, the first modern organized efforts to eliminate war from society began in the United States at the conclusion of the War of 1812.

Earlier pacifist beliefs were religious in nature, usually rooted in the Quaker and Mennonite faiths. This movement, while bolstered by the spreading spirit of evangelical Christianity and romantic faith in human perfectibility, was non-sectarian. In 1828, the American Peace Society was created for the purpose of publicizing the benefits of peace. It was one of the first national peace organizations in history and represented the views of the various local peace societies, which sprung up after the War of 1812. The membership of this group and the local branches was composed primarily of preachers, lawyers, merchants, and public servants. During the pre-Civil War period supporters of world peace established periodicals and published tracts designed to convince humankind that war was unchristian, wasteful of life and wealth, and ineffective as a method of solving disputes between nations. Many of these early peace advocates were staunchly patriotic and proud Americans.

After the Civil War, in response to industrialization, the movement for world peace moved away from socially concerned pacifism and non-resistance and became a more cosmopolitan endeavor dominated by an elite of lawyers, business leaders, and politicians. This group valued arbitration, Anglo-American cooperation, and an industrial world of Great Power interdependence. Over 130 new international, non-governmental organizations, such as the International Arbitration League (1880) and the National Arbitration League (1882), were created in the last quarter of the Nineteenth Century. This new movement gave birth to the term *international organization*.

Prior to the First World War, the movement to abolish war was considered a prestigious calling. It was devoted to the legal settlement of disputes, the maintenance of government contacts, the development of an "international mind," and the encouragement of the "scientific" study of war and its alternatives. Between 1901 and 1914, forty-five new peace organizations appeared, including the American Society of International Law, the World Peace Foundation, and the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. These groups had a distinctly elitist approach to solving international problems. Proponents of world peace assumed that the literate gentlemen of the upper and professional classes would better understand and identify with the "civilized" quality of their movement than the "unenlightened" industrialized masses. Many internationalists were prominent citizens and highly patriotic. Yet in spite of all this intellectual and economic firepower, the movement failed to prevent the greatest war in history up to that time.

The Great War (World War I) led to the modern American Peace Movement, a movement insisting that peace required social reform as well as social order. Anti-war dissidents included radical groups and socialists who viewed the war as a capitalist conspiracy—one that would lead to further repression of the working classes and other dispossessed peoples. It became fashionable for government officials to label anti-war protesters as "unpatriotic" even though they were interested in making America a better place to live. Inspired by organizations such as the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, War Resisters League, and the religious Fellowship of Reconciliation, the new movement understood justice as the amelioration of social wrongs and not simply the adjudication of courts. It rejected Anglo-Saxon exclusivity and supported cultural diversity. War was seen as a by-product of militarism, nationalism, and imperialism, not merely as an irrational outburst of mass ignorance. The new peace activists sought a reformed and democratized international system by which responsible policymakers would manage peace through world agencies by promoting social justice. Peace became something more than the absence of war. The "modern" American peace movement and its various manifestations characterized anti-war activists until the mid-1950s, when a new coalition of pacifists and internationalists turned their attention to threats posed by nuclear destruction.

The most visible and widespread anti-war demonstrations in American history took place during the Vietnam War. Acts of civil disobedience and direct action highlighted antiwar dissent. The war in Vietnam produced a wide

variety of resistance activities, including teach-ins on college campuses, the largest peace march in American history in Washington on November 15, 1969, and a mass, non-violent attempt to shut down the machinery of government in Washington in May 1971. The demonstrations of this era were no longer limited to handfuls of peace workers, but grew from hundreds, to thousands, and then to tens of thousands of people. The shockwave of opposition covered the political spectrum from respectable conservative leaders to New Left radicals as well as returning veterans who formed the Vietnam Veterans Against the War. One of the most noted aspects of these anti-war protests was the marked departure from the respectability of passive non-resistance characterized by the likes of A.J. Muste, who was labeled America's Number One Pacifist by *Time* magazine in 1939. Anti-war protest evolved from the quiet testimony of those opposed to atmospheric nuclear testing in the 1950s to theater of counter-culture protests against the war in Vietnam and the calls for violent revolution by groups such as the Weather Underground. Ironically, as Kenneth Heineman (1993) noted in *Campus Wars*, antiwar protests did not convince the government to bring the troops home. Instead, "the U.S. withdrew from Indochina because the war would not be won militarily."

The notion of peace did become a respectable endeavor as a result of the anti-Vietnam War protests. In the somber post-Vietnam War years the peace movement turned its attention to the demand for nuclear and conventional disarmament, environmental awareness, and efforts to expose and eliminate the institutionalized sexism and racism in American society. But the current wars in Iraq and Afghanistan have once more energized the anti-war movement. This time their energies are aided in large measure by the global Internet.

In times of danger and stress, before a country is caught up in a war that concentrates all its energies, peace activism exerts its greatest attraction and peace advocates their best efforts. Anti-war demonstrations have followed an age-old pattern of enthusiasm and growth, impassivity and apathy, and a general decline into political ineffectiveness. The metaphor used by Lawrence Wittner (1983) in *Rebels Against War* is particularly appropriate. Over the course of American history the peace movement has resembled an onion, with the absolutists at the center and the less committed forming the outside layers. At times of popular enthusiasm for war the less committed outside layers peel off, leaving the pacifist core; in times of strong aversion to militarism new layers appear, and the onion grows in size.

If American history provides social studies teachers with any valuable lessons regarding peace and war it is that the vast majority of peace activists are patriotic. Individuals such as Eugene V. Debs who spent World War I in an Atlanta federal prison because of his antiwar and pro-labor positions, Martin Luther King, Jr. who gave his life for racial equality and nonviolence, or Dorothy Day who devoted her life to the Catholic Worker Movement to help the poor stand tall, are patriots who exemplify love of country. So does Cindy Sheehan, who began one of the most daring and visible protests against the Iraq War after her son was killed in combat.

Another important topic for social studies classes, which was offered in the form of a question by Merle Curti, is whether organized peace/antiwar movements can maintain their credibility when confronting "the perpetual dilemma of what to do when the values of peace are in apparent conflict with decency, humanity, and justice?"

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Teachers respond: Is protest legitimate during a time of war?

Mary Ann Savino, Central School, East Brunswick, NJ: Political protest is one of the basic rights we exercise as a citizen of the U.S. If someone feels strongly about an issue, they have the right to voice their opinion whether it is a time of war or not. I hope that public protest will inspire people in power to take another look at the issue and propel them to seek a solution at the bargaining table rather than through force of arms. I look at social protest with my fifth grade students when we study issues such as education, healthcare, and the war in Iraq. In 2008, I asked students to reflect on what each presidential candidate said about the issues and how they would feel, for example, if they were in the military or had a family member in the armed forces. I currently have a couple of children whose parents, both male and female, are stationed in Iraq. Some are on their third tour of duty. One of our parents does a column in the local newspaper and he talks about what life is like in Iraq for the people and for the military soldiers. In response, my students created goodie bags as part of the Gifts for the Troops program.

Eric Holgerson, The Windsor School, West Milford, NJ: Is it unpatriotic to protest during a time of war? My personal opinion is no. In fact, it is very patriotic to protest during wartime. In a democratic society, people have a right to get their message out about why they view a war as wrong. That does not mean you do not treat issues with sensitivity. Recently, one of my students had a brother serving with the U.S. forces in Iraq and another brother who is part of the Israeli military. They were serving in dangerous places and he was worried. When I teach about social movements, I try to focus on individuals who made change and what they did. Usually I emphasize what the person did rather than the social issue. A great example would be John Brown prior to the civil war. A lot of people portray him as an extremist. I focus on who he was as a person, his background, and what drove him to do the things he did. I want students to consider whether these factors influence their decisions about whether what he did was right or wrong.

John McNamara, West Windsor-Plainsboro RSD, NJ: I try to maintain an even balance between political, economic, social, and foreign policy when I

teach United States history. In my district, the approach to teaching history is pretty much chronological, at least up until World War II. I encourage teachers to integrate the study of social movements throughout American history into the lessons. For example, during the "Age of Andrew Jackson" we integrate in the second Greater Awakening and a little bit later we discuss temperance, abolition, the transcendentalist, and other reformers from this period. During the late 19th and early 20th centuries we study progressivism, not just the politics of the president, but the social aspect of the progressive movement, and woman's suffrage. If teachers narrow what they teach about too much, either by focusing on social movements or leaving them out, students learn about the trees but not the entire historical forest.

Carron Mastan, Ballston Spa Middle School, Ballston Spa NY: Protest during a time of war is not unpatriotic. My husband is in the military so I am part of a military family. Part of what my husband does is protect the rights of American citizens that are guaranteed in Constitution. An important part of those rights are freedom of speech and the right to protest. These rights are what make this country a democracy. Personally, I do not get upset when people protest against the Iraqi war. I get upset with people who are disrespectful to soldiers who are following orders from their commanders and do not have a say in what they are expected to do. The United States has a volunteer army and I think we should be very grateful for the people that put their lives on the line to protect our freedoms. Without the people who did this in the past, we would not have the right to protest today. So I get upset if people blame the soldiers and not the policy.

Charlie Gifford, Farnsworth Middle School, Guilderland, NY: This is definitely an issue that comes up in the middle school classroom when we discuss current events. I think our nation has smartened up since the war in Vietnam and Americans realize they can support the troops without supporting the war or the ideology behind the war. In our school students have participated in book drives and mailing care packages to the troops. When you talk to Vietnam veterans, many are still upset at the way they were treated when they returned home from war. Today's

anti-war protesters, including the most passionate ones, are willing to support the soldiers that are representing the U.S. and trying to make the world free for democracy, even as they protest against government policies they believe are wrong. American soldiers put their lives in danger for their country. Their sacrifices make it possible for someone to stand in front of the White House and exercise their freedom of speech and right to protest. Personally, I have never participated in an anti-war protest, but I would consider it if I felt strongly. As a social studies teacher, I am very conscious of not going to extremes with my own political views. In class, I try to present different sides of issues and then step back a little without giving students my opinions. I find many middle school students select their views of part affiliations because people they respect identify with a view or a political party. I know in some high schools, teachers feel freer to express their views in class on political issues, but this is not appropriate in middle school. In my district, parents and administrators are very cautious about influencing student opinions and we will probably not have a mock Presidential election in the fall.

Deborah Hubbs Unatego Central School, Unatego, NY: I was a political protester as a high school student during the war in Vietnam. I do not think there is any harm to protesting. As a matter of fact, I really think we should. If you do not protest against government actions that you disagree with, how do let people know that there are groups that do not agree and open up dialogue about foreign policy. Today, people who are against the war are not against the soldiers. That does not seem to be the issue it was during the Vietnam War. We are challenging government policies, not the soldiers.

Amanda Kelaher, MS 104, New York, NY: No. Political protest is not be legitimate during a time of war. If people are not happy with the decisions that are made by the government they have a right to their opinion, but during wartime protest just weakens national unity. Political protest also creates animosity toward soldiers that are doing the “dirty work” of war. During the 1960s, war protests by the American people

created uncertainty about the President and weakened the nation when it needed to be strong.

Kailey Stolte, Samoset MS, Sachem, NY: Yes, but. I am not someone who supports the Iraq war. I believe the American people were lied to by the president and invaded a country under false pretenses. There are many people who share the same opinions that I have and many citizens who have actively protested against the war. At times protestors demean and insult the troops in Iraq. While I believe American’s are free to express their opinions and protest when they do not agree with a government policy, I think attacking the troops is out of line. Citizens of this country often forget why people join the military. They do not join the military in hopes of going to war; they join often because they have no other choice available to them. The military provides hope of a future for many boys and girls who would likely be working minimum wage job for the rest of their lives.

Matthew Criethon, Turtle Hook Middle School, Uniondale, NY: Yes! Political protest is always legitimate. It is a lack of protest that has lead this country into the nightmare it is seemingly unable to awake from. Though political protest is often only associated with war, I think that protest should be occurring to change the political culture of Washington and the distaste for the current two political parties. I think its time we start protesting for more general change in this nation, instead of protesting a war the army really doesn’t intend to stop, ever.

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Famous Anti-War Statements in United States History

Activity: Read the anti-war statements by each of these Americans. In your opinion, should they be considered patriotic Americans or traitors? Write an essay of approximately 250-500 words responding to their ideas.

Theodore Parker, Mexican War (1848) – “In regard to this present war, we can refuse to take any part in it; we can encourage others to do the same; we can aid men, if need be who suffer because they refuse. Men will call us traitors; what then? That hurt nobody in '76!”

Mark Twain, U.S. Occupation of the Philippines (1900) – “A righteous war is so rare that it is almost unknown in history.”

Eugene Debs, World War I (1914) – “Capitalist wars for capitalist conquest and capitalist plunder must be fought by the capitalists themselves as far as I am concerned . . . No worker has any business to enlist in capitalist class war or fight a capitalist class battle. It is our duty to enlist in our own war and fight our own battle . . . I have no country to fight for; my country is the earth, and I am a citizen of the world.”

Helen Keller, World War I, (1916) – “The future of the world rests in the hands of America. The future of America rests on the backs of 80,000,000 working men and women and their children. We are facing a grave crisis in our national life. The few who profit from the labor of the masses want to organize the workers into an army which will protect the interests of the capitalists . . . Strike against war, for without you no battles can be fought. Strike against manufacturing shrapnel and gas bombs and all other tools of murder. Strike against preparedness that means death and misery to millions of human being. Be not dumb, obedient slaves in an army of destruction. Be heroes in an army of construction.

Albert Einstein, Nuclear Weapons (1945) – “The secret of the bomb should be committed to a world government . . . Do I fear the tyranny of a world government? Of course I do. But I fear still more the coming of another war or wars. Any government is certain to be evil to some extent. But a world government is preferable to the far greater evil of wars.”

Martin Luther King, Jr. Vietnam (1967) – “A time comes when silence is betrayal. That time has come for us in relation to Vietnam . . . Now, it should be incandescently clear that no one who has any concern for the integrity and life of America today can ignore the present war. If America’s soul becomes totally poisoned, part of the autopsy must read Vietnam. It can never be saved so long as it destroys the deepest hopes of men the world over . . . Our only hope today lies in our ability to recapture the revolutionary spirit and go out into a sometimes hostile world declaring eternal hostility to poverty, racism, and militarism . . . We can no longer afford to worship the god of hate or bow before the altar of retaliation. The oceans of history are made turbulent by the ever-rising tides of hate. History is cluttered with the wreckage of nations and individuals that pursued this self-defeating path of hate . . . Now let us begin. Now let us re-dedicate ourselves to the long and bitter - but beautiful - struggle for a new world.”

Senator Robert Byrd, Invasion of Iraq (2003) – “Today I weep for my country. I have watched the events of recent months with a heavy, heavy heart. No more is the image of America one of strong, yet benevolent peacekeeper. The image of America has changed. Around the globe, our friends mistrust us, our word is disputed, our intentions are questioned. Instead of reasoning with those with whom we disagree, we demand obedience or threaten recrimination.”

Howard Zinn on Just and Just War

Review of Howard Zinn, "Just and Unjust War," in *Passionate Declarations* (NY: HarperCollins, 2003) by Alan Singer, editor, *Social Science Docket*.

People familiar with Howard Zinn as a political activist who opposed both the war in Vietnam and the invasion of Iraq, or as a historian and author of *A People's History of the United States* (1980), would not be surprised that he has challenged the idea of a "just war." But what adds power to Zinn's opposition to the concept of "just war" is that he enlisted in the Army Air Corps during World War II to fight against fascism and served in Europe as a second lieutenant and bombardier. In an air attack on German troops in the French town of Royan three weeks before the end of the war in Europe, Zinn participated in one of the earliest military uses of napalm.

In "Just and Unjust Wars" (originally published in 1990 as part of the book *Declarations of Intentions*), Zinn wrote that although as a teenager and young adult he opposed war, in early 1943 he enlisted because he felt that World War II was different. At the time he believed "It was not for profit or empire, it was a people's war, a war against the unspeakable brutality of fascism" (78). "Fascism," Zinn was convinced, "had to be resisted and defeated" (79).

To help in this battle of good versus evil, Zinn was part of a nine-man crew that flew B-17 bombers from England, across the channel, to attack German targets on the continent. It was not until many years after the end of the war that Zinn began "consciously to question the motives, the conduct, and the consequences of that crusade against fascism" (80). His opinion of fascism did not change. What changed was his belief in the "clear certainty of moral rightness" that made him a willing participant in the slaughter of other human beings. Today, while he actively speaks out against warfare and what he considers to be U.S. imperialist ventures, Zinn still considers World War II the "supreme test" of his opposition to the idea of "just war".

Throughout the centuries, highly esteemed people and organizations have defended warfare. Judaism, Islam, and Christianity, especially the Roman Catholic Church, each approves of warfare under specified circumstances. During the twentieth century, and in the anti-terrorist crusades being fought by the west today, proponents of war argue that the higher morality of their side justifies their military actions. Presidents

Polk, Lincoln, McKinley, Theodore Roosevelt, Wilson, Franklin Roosevelt, Truman, Kennedy, Reagan, and both Bushs, cited the superior nature of American democratic institutions to justify military actions against aggressors and potential aggressors. Zinn makes the case that these same political leaders were willing to sacrifice the very principles they proudly cited as justified wartime emergency measures.

Can War be Humanized?

Some philosophers have sought to humanize war by establishing rules for conducting them. Treaties signed in The Hague and Geneva between 1864 and 1975 defined legal and illegal military actions, especially the treatment of wounded and captured soldiers and civilian populations. Zinn argues that these reasoned approaches and the supposed moral superiority of participants have had little effect on the actual conduct of war. In the 20th century, science was used to kill human beings, including non-combatants, efficiently and in previously inconceivable numbers. Albert Einstein, who attended a Geneva peace conference in 1932, became so frustrated with efforts to "humanize" war that he held a press conference where he declared "One does not make wars less likely by formulating rules of warfare . . . War cannot be humanized. It can only be abolished" (70).

Zinn introduces, and responds to, a series of arguments that have been used to justify U.S. involvement in World War II and other recent wars. Zinn cites evidence suggesting that it was not a war fought for the highest moral principles. The history of U.S. expansionism, racism, anti-Semitism, class conflict, and the suppression of dissent (which continued during the war), and its total warfare against civilians, with the saturation and fire bombings of Dresden in Germany and Tokyo in Japan, and the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, raise serious doubts about its motives. Japan had been victimizing China for a decade, but it was "only when Japan threatened potential U.S. markets, . . . especially as it moved toward the tin, rubber, and oil of Southeast Asia, that the United States became alarmed and took those measures that led to the Japanese attack: a total

embargo on scrap iron and a total embargo on oil in the summer of 1941" (82). Hitler's mistreatment of the Jews began in 1934, but it was not until Germany declared war on the U.S. after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor that the U.S. began to oppose German actions. During the war, the Roosevelt administration refused to take military actions to stop Nazi efforts to exterminate Jews.

Precision Bombing is "Impossible"

As a former bombardier, Zinn refutes American claims that it flew precision bombing routes to protect civilian populations as "impossible." During practice runs, bombs were dropped from "4,000 feet and landed within twenty feet of the target. But at 11,000 feet, we were more likely to be 200 feet away. And when we flew combat missions, we did it from 30,000 feet, and might miss by a quarter of a mile" (93). Zinn believes that in wartime "technology crowded out moral considerations. Once the planes existed, targets had to be found" (93) and potential civilian casualties ranked low on the priority list. In one raid on Tokyo, an estimated 100,000 people died and a million people were left homeless. Zinn, along with the rest of the United States, celebrated when Hiroshima and Nagasaki were decimated by nuclear attacks.

Zinn wonders whether the world that emerged at the end of the war, dominated by two super powers with nuclear arsenals and networks of dictatorial supporters, was an achievement that justified tens of millions of deaths. He estimates that in the forty years following 1945, there were 150 wars, with twenty million casualties. In many ways, Zinn echoes the concerns expressed by Albert Camus in *The Rebel* (NY: Knopf, 1956). Ends do not justify means because we can never know the ends. The means, our actions, must be held up to careful scrutiny no matter what our anticipated goals.

This brings us to the toughest question addressed by Zinn. He asks what alternative did the United States, the other western powers, and the Soviet Union have to battling against German, Italian, and Japanese fascism?

Zinn believes the west had plenty of opportunity and alternative means to combat fascism and weaken its impact prior to the outbreak of genocidal warfare. He also claims, in an argument I find hopeful, but not completely convincing, that during the war in occupied

countries such as the Netherlands, Norway, and Denmark, "patriots resisted their Nazi overlords and internal puppets by such weapons as underground newspapers, labor slowdowns, general strikes, refusal of collaboration, special boycotts of German troops and quislings, and non-cooperation with fascist controls and efforts to restructure their societies' institutions" (102).

Zinn also advocates guerrilla warfare, which was practiced effectively by the anti-Nazi resistance forces in France, Yugoslavia, and Greece, as more selective, with "violence more limited and more discriminate, than conventional war" (102). In addition, he feels guerrilla warfare is "less centralized and more democratic by nature, requiring the commitment, the initiative, and the cooperation of ordinary people who do not need to be conscripted, but who are motivated by their desire for freedom and justice" (102). "History," according to Zinn, "is full of instances of successful resistance . . . without violence and against tyranny, by people using strikes, boycotts, propaganda, and a dozen different ingenious forms of struggle" (102). He concludes, "Violence is not the only form of power. Sometimes it is the least effective. Always it is the most vicious, for the perpetrator as well as for the victim. And it is corrupting" (103).

The Great Challenge of Our Time

For Zinn, "the worst consequence of World War II is that it kept alive the idea that war could be just." He feels it is time to "to bury for all time the idea of just war" (104) and concludes, "It remains to be seen how many people in our time will make that journey from war to nonviolent action against war. It is the great challenge of our time: How to achieve justice, with struggle, but without war" (105).

Zinn's challenge to citizens committed to a better and more peaceful world is a difficult one. He eschews preemptive military strikes, devastating vengeful responses, and mutually assured annihilation. He is not a pacifist, but a progressive activist, willing to fight and die if necessary, but struggling to find non-violent, democratic alternatives. He proposes goals, but recognizes they can only be achieved through collective action that is in itself moral and principled. To do other than this is to pervert the goals and destroy the possibility of building a new world.

Is War Ever Justified?

Sources: Zinn, Howard "Just and Unjust War" from *Passionate Declarations* NY: HarperCollins 2003.
<http://co.quaker.org/Writings/JustAndUnjustWar.htm>

Instructions: Read the quotes discussing war. What is the main idea of each speaker? Which speaker's ideas come closest to your own? Explain.

1. Pericles, Athens, justified war (c. 450 B.C.). "Before I praise the dead, I should like to point out by what principles of action we rose to power, and under what institutions and through what manner of life our empire became great. Our form of government does not enter into rivalry with the institutions of others . . . It is true that we are called a democracy, for the administration is in the hands of the many and not of the few . . . The law secures equal justice to all alike . . . Neither is poverty a bar . . . There is no exclusiveness in our public life . . . At home the style of our life is refined . . . Because of the greatness of our city the fruits of the whole earth flow in upon us . . . And although our opponents are fighting for their homes and we on foreign soil, we seldom have any difficulty in overcoming them . . . I have dwelt upon the greatness of Athens because I want to show you that we are contending for a higher prize than those who enjoy none of these privileges."

2. Desiderius Erasmus, The Netherlands, questioned war in the early sixteenth century: "Tell me, what had you to do with Mars, the stupidest of all the poet's gods, you who were consecrated to the Muses, nay to Christ? Your youth, your beauty, your gentle nature, your honest mind--what had they to do with the flourishing of trumpets, the bombards, the swords? . . . There is nothing more wicked, more disastrous, more widely destructive, more deeply tenacious, more loathsome . . . Whoever heard of a hundred thousand animals rushing together to butcher each other, as men do everywhere? . . . Once war has been declared, then all the affairs of the State are at the mercy of the appetites of a few."

3. Mark Twain (Samuel Clemens) observed how war was justified in the United States, 1890-1916 (published posthumously): "The loud little handful will shout for war. The pulpit will warily and cautiously protest at first . . . The great mass of the nation will rub its sleepy eyes, and will try to make out why there should be a war, and they will say earnestly and indignantly: 'It is unjust and dishonorable and there is no need for war.' Then the few will shout even louder . . . Before long you will see a curious thing: anti-war speakers will be stoned from the platform, and free speech will be strangled by hordes of furious men who still agree with the speakers but dare not admit it . . . Next, the statesmen will invent cheap lies . . . and each man will be glad of these lies and will study them because they soothe his conscience; and thus he will by and by convince himself that the war is just and he will thank God for a better sleep he enjoys by his self-deception."

4. Helen Keller, blind, deaf, and a committed Socialist, denounced war, United States, 1916: "Strike against war, for without you no battles can be fought! Strike against manufacturing shrapnel and gas bombs and all other tools of murder! Strike against preparedness that means death and misery to millions of human beings! Be not dumb, obedient slaves in an army of destruction! Be heroes in an army of construction!"

Atomic Attack on Japan – Is Total War Justified?

by Thomas O'Connor

World War II introduced the world to the concept of total war – entire societies pitted against each other with all targets, including civilians, considered fair game. While Germany and Japan initiated it during the Spanish Civil War (Guernica) and the invasion of China (Nanking), the definitive examples of total war were the nuclear attacks on Hiroshima and Nagasaki by the United States. In the history of warfare, nuclear weapons have been used only twice. On the morning of August 6, 1945, the United States dropped a uranium gun-type device code-named “Little Boy” on the Japanese city of Hiroshima. Three days later a plutonium implosion-type device code-named “Fat Man” was dropped on the city of Nagasaki. More than sixty years later, historians, social scientists, journalists, World War II veterans, and ordinary citizens continue to debate the legitimacy of the atomic bombings and the morality of total war.

The decision to drop atomic bombs on Japan was one of the most controversial issues of the 20th century. Historians have criticized the commonly held perceptions that they shortened the war, saved American lives, and prevented USSR from sharing in the post-war administration of Japan. Important questions remain: Did it have to happen? In the future, will something like it happen in an even more catastrophic way? What do the first human experiences with nuclear power say about humanity's ability to control its most dangerous creation? The documents in this package should make it possible for high school students to participate in this debate. There are generally two schools of thought. One is the idea that the use of the bombs was justified in an effort to win the war with the fewest casualties. The other is the idea that the bombs were not needed to secure victory or minimize casualties and there were ulterior motives behind their use. For more material visit <http://www.doug-long.com/index.htm>.

The Nuclear Attacks on Japan were Justified

1. Japanese soldiers were known for their vicious fighting style and were a very dangerous enemy willing to trade their lives for their Emperor and country. They fought almost the last man on many of the Pacific islands, and unleashed kamikaze attacks throughout the war.
2. Many in the U.S. government were convinced that only the atomic bomb could jolt Japan's leadership into surrender.
3. Only two bombs were made and ready to use. Using one as a demonstration in an unpopulated area was risky. If the Japanese did not surrender, an invasion would still have been necessary.
4. The invasion of Japan would have led to American casualties in the hundreds of thousands or maybe even the millions.
5. The use of the bomb convinced the world of its horror and this has helped prevent other uses of this weapon.
6. By using the bomb before the Soviet Union entered the war in the Pacific, it halted the fighting before the USSR could demand joint occupation of Japan.
7. The U.S. spent almost 2 billion dollars developing the bombs and these costs needed to be justified.

Why Use of Nuclear Weapons was Not Justified

1. The U.S. government exaggerated estimates of casualties from an invasion. President Truman initially claimed that thousands of lives were saved.
2. Conditions in Japan were steadily deteriorating and would have continued to worsen if the war dragged on. Japan was out of fuel and its people faced mass starvation. It would have surrendered long before the planned November invasion.
3. The Japanese began sending out peace feelers in August 1944. Their only condition was that they be allowed to keep their Emperor, a condition the U.S. eventually accepted.
4. The bombs were actually dropped to justify the 2 billion dollars spent on its development.
5. Hiroshima and Nagasaki had limited military value. Civilians outnumbered troops in Hiroshima over five to one. The bombs were dropped in the middle of the cities and military factories were undamaged.
6. Truman chose to use the atomic bomb as a signal to the Soviet Union, which was emerging as a potent potential enemy at the end of the war.
7. The U.S. is unwilling to examine the nuclear attacks on Japan because it does not want its claim to moral superiority questioned.

Documents: Atomic Attack on Japan – Is Total War Justified?

A. No – The Atomic Attack Was Not Justified

General Dwight D. Eisenhower: “In [July] 1945 . . . Secretary of War Stimson, visiting my headquarters in Germany, informed me that our government was preparing to drop an atomic bomb on Japan. I was one of those who felt that there were a number of cogent reasons to question the wisdom of such an act . . . the Secretary, upon giving me the news of the successful bomb test in New Mexico, and of the plan for using it, asked for my reaction, apparently expecting a vigorous assent. During his recitation of the relevant facts, I had been conscious of a feeling of depression and so I voiced to him my grave misgivings, first on the basis of my belief that Japan was already defeated and that dropping the bomb was completely unnecessary, and secondly because I thought that our country should avoid shocking world opinion by the use of a weapon whose employment was, I thought, no longer mandatory as a measure to save American lives. It was my belief that Japan was, at that very moment, seeking some way to surrender with a minimum loss of ‘face’.” Source: *Mandate for Change*, p. 380.

Admiral Ernest King, Commander in Chief, United States Fleet: “In the final 36 days of the war the forces under Admiral Halsey’s command had destroyed or damaged 2,804 enemy planes, sunk or damaged 148 Japanese combat ships, sunk or damaged 1,598 enemy merchant ships, and destroyed 195 locomotives. This impressive record speaks for itself and helps to explain the sudden collapse of Japan’s will to resist.” Source: http://www.fpp.co.uk/History/General/atombomb/strange_myth/article.html

Admiral William Leahy, Military Chief of Staff: “The use of this barbarous weapon at Hiroshima and Nagasaki was of no material assistance in our war against Japan. The Japanese were already defeated and ready to surrender . . . In being the first to use it, we . . . adopted an ethical standard common to the barbarians of the Dark Ages. I was not taught to make war in that fashion, and wars cannot be won by destroying women and children.” Source: *I Was There*, p. 441

Petition to the President of the United States signed by 67 atomic scientists, July 1945: “This war has to be brought speedily to a successful conclusion and attacks by atomic bombs may very well be an effective method of warfare. We feel, however, that such attacks on Japan could not be justified. The development of atomic power will provide the nations with new means of destruction. Thus a nation which sets the precedent of using these newly liberated forces of nature for purpose of destruction may have to bear the responsibility of opening the door to an era of devastation on an unimaginable scale.” Source: <http://www.dannen.com/decision/45-07-17.html>

Editorial in the *Nippon Times*, August 10, 1945: “How can a human being with any claim to a sense of moral responsibility deliberately let loose an instrument of destruction which can at one stroke annihilate an appalling segment of mankind? This is not war; this is not even murder; this is pure nihilism. This is a crime against God and humanity which strikes at the very basis of moral existence.”

Albert Einstein to Franklin Roosevelt: “The terms of secrecy under which Dr. Szilard is working at present do not permit him to give me information about his work; however, I understand that he now is greatly concerned about the lack of adequate contact between scientists who are doing this work and those members of your Cabinet who are responsible for formulating policy.”

Leo Szilard to Franklin Roosevelt: “Our ‘demonstration’ of atomic bombs will precipitate a race in the production of these devices between the United States and Russia and that if we continue to pursue the present course, our initial advantage may be lost very quickly in such a race.”

B. Yes – The Atomic Attack Was Justified

President Truman's speech to the nation, August 9, 1945: "The world will note that the first atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima, a military base. That was because we wished in this first attack to avoid, insofar as possible, the killing of civilians. But that attack is only a warning of things to come. If Japan does not surrender, bombs will have to be dropped on her war industries and, unfortunately, thousands of civilian lives will be lost. I urge Japanese civilians to leave industrial cities immediately, and save themselves from destruction. We shall continue to use it until we completely destroy Japan's power to make war. Only a Japanese surrender will stop us.

Source: <http://www.dannen.com/decision/hst-ag09.html>

Leaflet dropped on cities in Japan warning civilians about the atomic bomb, August 6, 1945. "America asks that you take immediate heed of what we say on this leaflet. We are in possession of the most destructive explosive ever devised by man. A single one of our newly developed atomic bombs is actually the equivalent in explosive power to what 2000 of our giant B-29s can carry on a single mission. This awful fact is for you to ponder and we solemnly assure you it is grimly accurate. We have just begun to use this weapon against your homeland. If you still have any doubt, make inquiry as to what happened to Hiroshima when just one atomic bomb fell on that city. Before using this bomb to destroy every resource of the military by which they are prolonging this useless war, we ask that you now petition the Emperor to end the war. Our president has outlined for you the thirteen consequences of an honorable surrender. We urge that you accept these consequences and begin the work of building a new, better and peace-loving Japan. You should take steps now to cease military resistance. Otherwise, we shall resolutely employ this bomb and all our other superior weapons to promptly and forcefully end the war." Source: http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/truman/psources/ps_leaflets.html

President Truman to Senator Richard Russell, August 9, 1945: "I know that Japan is a terribly cruel and uncivilized nation in warfare but I can't bring myself to believe that, because they are beasts, we should ourselves act in the same manner. For myself, I certainly regret the necessity of wiping out whole populations because of the "pigheadedness" of the leaders of a nation and, for your information, I am not going to do it unless it is absolutely necessary. It is my opinion that after the Russians enter into war the Japanese will very shortly fold up. My object is to save as many American lives as possible but I also have a humane feeling for the women and children in Japan." Source: http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/bomb/large/opinions_responses/bmd2-1.htm

Secretary of War Henry Stimson: "The face of war is the face of death; death is an inevitable part of every order that a wartime leader gives. The decision to use the atomic bomb was a decision that brought death to over a hundred thousand Japanese . . . But this deliberate, premeditated destruction was our least abhorrent alternative. The destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki put an end to the Japanese war. It stopped the fire raids, and the strangling blockade; it ended the ghastly specter of a clash of great land armies. In this last great action of the Second World War we were given final proof that war is death." Source: *The Decision to Use the Atomic Bomb* (1947).

President Harry Truman: "I had then set up a committee of top men and had asked them to study with great care the implications the new weapons might have for us. It was their recommendation that the bomb be used against the enemy as soon as it could be done. They recommended further that it should be used without specific warning . . . I had realized, of course, that an atomic bomb explosion would inflict damage and casualties beyond imagination. On the other hand, the scientific advisors of the committee reported . . . that no technical demonstration they might propose, such as over a deserted island, would be likely to bring the war to an end. It had to be used against an enemy target. The final decision of where and when to use the atomic bomb was up to me. Let there be no mistake about it. I regarded the bomb as a military weapon and never doubted it should be used." Source: *1945, Year of Decisions* (1955).

Teachers Respond: Is there such a thing as a just war?

Jillian Saccone, Valley Stream (NY) South: In retrospect, the justifications for the war with Iraq and the War on Terror remind me of a sales pitch by a shady used-car salesman. The salesman knows the car is a “lemon” but says whatever he has to say to sell it to some unsuspecting customer. I feel President Bush and his administration sold these wars to the American people the same way. They told people whatever they wanted to hear. Are you worried about nuclear weapons? There may be nuclear weapons in Iraq. Do you worry about terrorists? Saddam Hussein may be friendly with terrorists. I agree with Albert Einstein, “One does not make wars less likely by formulating rules . . . Wars cannot be humanized. It can only be abolished.” War in its essence is dehumanizing.

Jennifer Dassaro, Peabody (MA) Veterans Memorial HS: The idea that some wars are “good” while others are “bad” is troubling. Each side has its own reasons for fighting and believes they are on the right side. Where is the line that delineates a “good” war from a “bad” war? All wars destroy life, property, and stability. They dehumanize people allowing atrocities to take place. War suspends the rules of humanity and civilization; killing another human becomes accepted and even necessary. Responding with violence when violence is exacted upon your nation is the stereotypical “good” war. Your country does not take responsibility because your nation did not start it. But how do you wage a retaliatory war? What will victory

look like? Do you fight until the other side surrenders? Is there a timetable for the war? Will the response to an attack be proportional to the initial attack? These seem like silly questions when discussing war, because they rarely are considered, but this speaks to the root of considering war just. No war is fair. One side always suffers more than the other and there is usually a “loser.” I compare war to a fight between two individuals. If you were attacked and fought back it would be considered self-defense, but if you used a weapon that gave you an advantage, you would most likely be charged with a crime. In everyday life we punish those who resort to violence, but in war violence is accepted and even encouraged. This contradiction proves to me that there is no such thing as a just war.

John Mannebach, East Meadow, NY: A just war is like a dry lake. It is an oxymoron. It cannot be a legitimate concept because it cannot happen. The objectives of war are unjust, the actions during war are unjust, and the outcomes of war are unjust. Wars are fought for selfish reasons. Wars are fought for power and greed. I have not seen wars fought to help others. Even when wars are fought for seemingly good purposes such as honorable revolutions, innocent people are killed as ends come to justify means. There are things that are worth fighting for. But we should not pretend that any war, even revolutions against tyranny or hatred, is fought by ethical means.

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The Plight of the Veteran: Vietnam and Post-Vietnam Eras

by Don Gilson and Kerri O'Brien

Almost 200,000 American men and women soldiers will eventually return home from Iraq and Afghanistan. What will happen to them when they arrive? "Support the Troops," even if you oppose the war, has been a mantra of both anti-war and pro-war advocates who remember the bitter aftermath of America's Vietnam experience. But what does it mean to "Support the Troops" besides sending care packages while they are overseas and holding a parade after hostilities cease? It is a difficult question to answer, especially given current economic conditions. This article grew out of a social studies teachers' forum on "How to Support the Troops When they Return Home" at Hofstra University by Don Gilson. Gilson is a veteran, activist, former teacher in Jersey City schools, and a student in the Hofstra Master's program. Participants included Dan Costello and Cheryl Hansen, mental health professionals in the Suffolk County (NY) offices of the Veterans Administration, Brian Joyner, an Iraqi war veteran who teaches social studies at Calhoun High School in Bellmore, N.Y., and Terry Devaney, a Vietnam-era veteran.

While war has played a central role in United States history, veterans have often been neglected. Many veterans of the American Civil War returned home to discover that their homes had been destroyed during the war. Today, veterans returning from Iraq and Afghanistan may find their homes in foreclosure because their families were unable to keep up mortgage payments while they were serving their country. Has the United States learned from successful programs and mistakes that were made when earlier generations of veterans came home? Will the Iraq and Afghanistan veterans receive the welcome and benefits accorded veterans after World War II or will they be shunted aside and forgotten in the way veterans were after Korea and Vietnam?

After World War II, Americans saw returning veterans as heroes. There was a ticker-tape parade in Times Square, the GI-Bill, and great care and attention paid to them. Vietnam and post-Vietnam veterans generally had a very different experience (see the interviews with Stephen Marlow, p. 24, and Blaney McEneney, p. 24). A disproportionate number of these soldiers came from poverty, had received substandard educations, were drafted into the military or enlisted under duress, and were confused about the reasons they had fought.

Over twenty-six million American men came of draft age during the Vietnam War, but only 2.15 million were sent to Vietnam, and 1.6 million were in combat. A high school dropout who enlisted in the military had a 70 percent chance of being sent to Vietnam while a college graduate only had a 42 percent chance. Between 1966 and 1968, 41 percent of the young men recruited into the military were Black and 40 percent could read less than a sixth grade level.

Over 60 percent of those who died in Vietnam were between the ages of sixteen and twenty-one, with the average age of a soldier being nineteen. Eighty thousand of these men left the military without the skills promised them by military recruiters and needed to survive in the modern economic world.

Impact of Trauma

Negative public opinion about the Vietnam War and other U.S. recent overseas policing actions added to the anguish and confusion experienced by former soldiers. Many suffered from either diagnosed or undiagnosed post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Vietnam-era veterans have higher rates of homelessness and drug and alcohol abuse than the general population. The Department of Veterans Affairs, caught by surprise and inadequately funded, failed to address their needs. As PTSD undermined their lives, large numbers of these veterans began showing up at homeless shelters.

Veterans from the Iraq and Afghanistan wars hope to come home to a very different America from the one that greeted Vietnam veterans. While the Iraq war remains controversial, there is almost unanimous support for soldiers stationed overseas. However, in too many cases America's returning veterans are given an honorable discharge for their service, a handshake, and a debriefing that ill-equips them for the challenges that they will face. Veterans, hardened by war, have difficulty reaching out and seeking the help they need – even when the help is available.

In the years since American involvement in Vietnam, more than 250 nonprofit veterans' service organizations have sprouted up, many of them created by veterans who are determined that what happened to

them will not happen again. However, these private organizations and the Veterans Administration are already overstretched. While an estimated 500,000 veterans were homeless at some time during 2004, the VA had the resources to tend to only 100,000 of them. After cutting way back in the 1990s as the population of veterans declined, the Veterans Health Administration says it is expanding its alcohol- and drug-abuse services. But advocacy groups and independent experts, including members of a Pentagon mental-health task force, are concerned that much more needs to be done. In May 2008, the House and Senate passed bills requiring the Veteran's agency to expand substance-abuse screening and treatment for all veterans (*The New York Times*, July 8, 2008).

According to Linda Boone, executive director of The National Coalition for Homeless Veterans, "You can have all of the yellow ribbons on cars that say 'Support Our Troops' that you want, but it's when they take off the uniform and transition back to civilian life that they need support the most." A study published by the New England Journal of Medicine found that over 15% of Iraq war veterans met the "criteria for major depression, generalized anxiety, or PTSD." However, only a quarter of those eligible were seeking help, many because they feared the stigma attached to mental illness (*Christian Science Monitor*, February 8, 2005).

Fort Drum, just outside Watertown in the North Country of New York, is home to the Second Brigade of the 10th Mountain Division, the Army's most-deployed brigade. In 2007, several thousand soldiers returned after 15 months in Iraq and they quickly overwhelmed the base's mental health system. A study by an advocacy group, Veterans for America, found the demand for psychological help was so great, and the system so overburdened, that soldiers often waited a month to be seen. Many salved their wounds in local bars. According to the base's commander, misconduct related to substance abuse reached "unacceptable" levels despite a toughened regimen of education, designated-driver programs and penalties (*The New York Times*, July 8, 2008).

A Vietnam Veteran's Experience

At the Hofstra forum, Terry Devaney, a Vietnam veteran, gave a personal account of his experience enlisting in, fighting in, and coming home from the Vietnam War. His story illustrates the plight of the

Vietnam-era veteran and is a signal about what needs to be done to prepare for the new wave of returning veterans.

Devaney was not doing well in high school and decided to join the Marine Corps in 1970 when he was just seventeen years old. He figured he would get drafted anyway and wanted to beat the government to the punch. Devaney was trained as a radio operator and was sent to Da Nang, Vietnam where the U.S. base was consistently under rocket attack. He was later assigned to the Golden Triangle, the area where Burma, Laos, and Thailand meet, and a region of extensive production of heroin. While there, he became addicted to drugs.

When Terry Devaney arrived home in Bay Ridge, Brooklyn, after his last tour of duty he was twenty-one years old. His father recommended that he not talk about the war and try to disguise himself because with his military haircut he did not fit the times. Devaney floated from job to job. He was lost and feared that life had passed him by. He was eligible for four years of college because he completed his GED while in the Marine Corps, but he did not know what to do. He had spent four years in Vietnam, and he wondered, "What was I fighting for?"

Devaney explained that he soon longed to return to Vietnam, a common phenomenon experienced by many Vietnam veterans who could not adapt to civilian life. This is not unlike the feeling a man or woman who had been incarcerated might experience, the inability to reintegrate into society and a desire to go prison. The important lesson from Terry Devaney's story, and the stories of many like him, is that thirty-five to forty years after their Vietnam experience, they still suffer from the trauma of war.

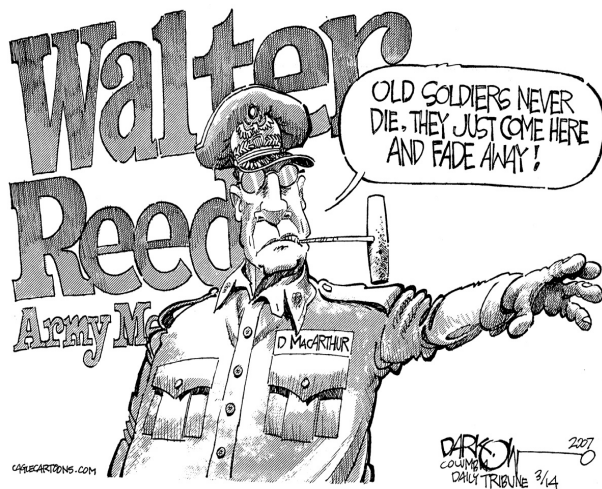
Brian Joyce, another Forum participant, and a veteran of the invasion of Iraq, spoke of having similar experiences on his return home (see page 24). A routine ride in a car became a potentially terrifying experience. He recalled grabbing the wheel of his father's car because he imagined there were roadside bombs and snipers above the underpasses. Brian abused alcohol for six months to assuage the demons of war but was eventually able to stop and get on with his life.

Government's Response

Dan Costello and Cheryl Hansen, mental health professionals who work for the Veterans Administration spoke of how the VA has learned from

its Vietnam problems and is treating the new wave of returning veteran with the care and concern. However, this is not always the case. In 2007, Walter Reed, the military hospital in Washington, D.C. was a bureaucratic nightmare that provided inadequate services for men and women who were injured while fighting for America. According to an article in the *The Washington Post* (February 17, 2007), reporters found a wounded Iraqi veteran assigned to a room where “part of the wall is torn and hangs in the air, weighted down with black mold,” there are holes in the ceilings, and the entire facility smells like “greasy carry-out.” They also saw mouse droppings, belly-up cockroaches, stained carpets, and cheap mattresses.

There are 200,000 soldiers overseas who will be coming home at some point. It is incredibly important for the United States to be better prepared for their arrival. With a weakened economy, the rate of unemployment climbing, and opportunities for individuals decreasing, the prospects for returning veterans do not look good. When a soldier deploys for a year or two the world does not stand still. Those who have already returned are having trouble in the housing market and in finding work.



Exploring the plight of the American veterans touches upon a number of National Council for the Social Studies thematic strands. Looking at American history (time, continuity, and change) through the country’s treatment of its veterans gives students a perspective on cultural values and social, political, and economic conditions. Veterans of both World War I and World War II were celebrated and treated as heroes. However, Vietnam War veterans were treated by both the American public and the government as

undeserving of the same praise bestowed on their predecessors.

Institutions being explored and examined to see if they have changed over time are the office of Veterans Affairs, the United States government as a whole and the United States military.

Citizens were drafted in the Vietnam War, taught to become unfeeling killing machines, and then sent back to become a civilian again. The appearance of psychological disorders such as PTSD, homelessness, alcohol and drug abuse among veterans is integral in studying the affects war has upon an individual and how individuals attempt to reintegrate back into civilian life after seeing combat (Individual development and identity).

Vietnam War veterans came home to protests. Understanding the cultural climate of the United States during this period helps students understand the point of view of anti-war activists who participated in these protests and helps them explore the meaning of civic participation. Civic ideals and practices are also addressed in discussions of what it means to fight for your country in a war you may not believe in whether you have the right to refuse service.

New Jersey Veterans Helpline

1-866-VETS-NJ-4 (1-866-838-7654)

From its founding in 2005 through November 2008, the New Jersey Veterans Helpline received more than 5,400 calls and 1,500 requests for ongoing treatment. The is staffed 24 hours a day, 7 days a week by counselors, veterans and members of military families. Calls to the hotline started to spike in the summer of 2008 when nearly 2,800 members of the New Jersey Army National Guard left for a yearlong assignment in Iraq. The massive deployment was the largest from New Jersey since World War II. The hotline is operated by the state Department of Military and Veterans Affairs and University Behavioral HealthCare, part of the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey. In the beginning, the majority of calls came from World War II and Vietnam War veterans looking for help with ongoing mental health issues. But calls related to the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan steadily increased and now make up 60 percent to 80 percent of the requests to the hotline.

Source:

http://www.nj.com/news/index.ssf/2008/11/veterans_helpline_assists_stre.html