

Obama's Campaign to Glorify the War on Vietnam

By [David Swanson](#)

Theme: [History](#), [Media Disinformation](#)

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[War Is A Crime](#)

Wars exist because lies are told about past wars.

When President Obama escalated the war on Afghanistan, he [revived virtually every known lie](#) about the war on Iraq, from the initial WMD BS to the “surge.” While Americans remain unfathomably ignorant about the [destruction of Iraq](#), a majority says the war shouldn't have been fought. A majority says the same about the war on Afghanistan. This is, pretty wonderfully, impeding efforts toward a U.S. war on Syria or Iran.

The new wars were supposed to cure the Vietnam Syndrome — that public reluctance to support mass murder for no good reason. The Pentagon is now turning to the source of the disease. The war in most need of beautification for Americans, the military has decided, is the war the Vietnamese call the American War.

Most people in the United States have no idea that this was, like all other recent U.S. wars, a one-sided slaughter — in this case, of 3.8 million Vietnamese men, women, and children. But most Americans know the war was awful, even on the side of the aggressor. The Vietnam Syndrome (popular opposition to wars) still frightens war makers.

Obama is usually opposed to any “looking backwards,” as doing so might involve prosecuting criminals for their crimes. But, making a big exception, he is dumping 65 million of our dollars into prettying up the war on Vietnam.

Please read the following statement, put together by some U.S. veterans of that war, and [sign onto it here](#).

An Open letter to the American People about a Project to Accurately Commemorate the American War in Viet Nam

We are coming up on the 50th anniversary of key moments in the American war in Viet Nam. As peace and justice activists, we believe it is crucial that the realities of the war be faced squarely. President Obama has announced his plan for a 13-year-long commemoration funded by Congress at \$65 million, featuring a full panoply of Orwellian forgetfulness and faux-patriotism. On May 25, 2012, President Obama [proclaimed](#): “As we observe the 50th anniversary of the Vietnam War, we reflect with solemn reverence upon the valor of a generation that served with honor. We pay tribute to the more than 3 million servicemen and women who left their families to serve bravely, a world away from everything they knew and everyone they loved ... fighting heroically to protect the ideals we hold dear as Americans. Through more than a decade of combat, over air, land, and sea, these proud Americans upheld the highest traditions of our Armed Forces.”. The purpose of the official proclamation — rather than honestly looking backward so as to glean and educate about important lessons — will be to promote an ex post facto justification of the war,

lay lingering doubts to rest, and provide a stamp of approval without attending to or contending with the horrors of the war that many of us opposed.

The whole idea is a bit staggering, that this project was put into the hands of the Department of Defense (DoD) so that they can attempt – a half century later – to rewrite a tragic history which already has been distorted and manipulated by those in power in the US. The DoD is recruiting “partner” organizations from across the country to help them distort and silence much of the real history. Numerous events are scheduled over the next 12 years to “honor” our soldiers and extol the selfless sacrifices of Americans during an ugly period of our history. There will likely be little mention of the Vietnamese, and what the nation and the society of Viet Nam suffered as a result of U.S. intervention, nor of the resistance to the war by courageous and committed Americans. Almost certainly, the DoD project will not pay tribute to the voices and postwar reconciliation activities of many antiwar veterans.

Those years many of us remember, with painful acuity, as other than glorious. We feel compelled to make sure that the history of US involvement in Viet Nam is told truthfully.

Rather than let this Madison Avenue PR campaign just roll over us, we are viewing this as an opportunity to truly examine what happened during those tragic and tumultuous Viet Nam years, and use those lessons to turn American policy and shape a better future for ourselves and other nations. The US seems as committed as ever to military interventions heedless of the consequences for the invaded and occupied people or even for those called upon to invade and occupy.

We believe that an honest remembrance of what actually went on in Viet Nam is essential – to face the realities for the millions of Vietnamese civilians killed, maimed, poisoned, and traumatized; our soldiers propagandized, thrown into a ‘war of choice’; and subsequently largely abandoned to cope with postwar stress, our citizenry lied to and manipulated who came to recognize the war’s futility, if not its immorality.

It is incumbent on us not to cede the war’s memory to those who have little interest in an honest accounting and who want to justify further acts of military adventurism. The experience of the war ought to be cautionary against the fantasy of world dominance that besots many of our political and military leaders. What are the consequences of trying to control the fate of a people from afar with little understanding or interest — except for the purposes of counterinsurgency — in their history and culture, or their human desires? What are the consequences of dehumanized ideologies used to justify wars of aggression? To honor the Viet Nam generation and to inform current and future generations, we should make every effort to pass on a critical and honest history of the war.

As part of our counter-commemoration, we also will also pay tribute to the broad-based resistance to the war. Taking inspiration from the civil rights movement, an unprecedented opposition movement arose not just on campuses, but in the streets, in the military, and around family dinner tables. Millions of Americans resisted the war spontaneously, as well as in organizations ranging from the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee to the Chicano Moratorium, Women’s Strike for Peace, the War Resisters League, the Fellowship of Reconciliation, American Friend Service Committee, Students for a Democratic Society, Labor for Peace, Business Executives Move for Viet Nam Peace, and Vietnam Veterans Against the War, not to mention countless community groups. The movement made the morality of the war an issue for Americans, moving beyond the cost-benefit analysis favored by the punditocracy. The war was wrong, not just too costly; as Martin Luther King warned in his “Beyond Vietnam” speech: “the US was on the wrong side of the

world revolution.”

In tandem with the civil rights, Black liberation, and women’s movements, the anti-war movement fostered a cultural and intellectual revolution which undermined Euro-centrism and traditional hierarchies while honoring the previously marginalized. Our grasp of history, culture, and human capacity was qualitatively expanded. We learned and demonstrated that history could be made by ordinary people; by people of color, by women, by the ignored and excluded.

The work around the quincentennial of Columbus’s voyages is a useful precedent. Originally designed as a celebration of Eurocentrism and empire, widespread grassroots action instead turned the quincentennial into a critique of the conquest and destruction of native peoples.

We therefore are inviting you to join us in developing a strategy for an antiwar commemoration with direct relevance for today. Here are some beginning, suggestive ideas to expose the truths of war and pose alternatives to its normalization by developing:

1. A central storehouse of information, a web site, and digitized archives;
2. Curriculum for schools and colleges;
3. A speaker’s bureau;
4. A program on the model of the Viet Nam era’s teach-ins and Winter Soldier investigations;
5. Our own commemorations of significant war and antiwar events.

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