Militarism Makes Racism OK

A Young, Queer Muslim Woman Speaks Out

"Fatima" is the pseudonym for a young woman, 21, who attends college in Philadelphia, self-identifies as Afghan, Muslim, queer, and a New Yorker. Joseph Truong of the National Youth Advocacy Coalition interviewed her.

How does militarism affect you personally?

After September 11, I was very confused. I was the only Afghan in my entire school (and one of two South Asians), and I was forced to take a stance in classes and [other places]. Wherever I went, I faced bigotry and hate. So I had to do a lot of self-education about it. I had to defend my country, I had to defend myself and I had to defend any male relatives I had.

People were torn between feeling sorry for Afghan women, but also feeling contempt for all Muslims in general. It became increasingly difficult.

One thing that I did notice from the non-Muslim activist circle I moved in was a change in how I was treated. People suddenly felt sorry for me. My mother and I were organizing against the Taliban since 1996, but no one seemed to take on that struggle because it wasn’t so popular. But after September 11, now all of a sudden it was trendy, but it wasn’t done in a way that was helpful. It distanced me from the circle and angered me a lot.

I’m very angry that Bush has stated that we have liberated Afghan women.

Globalization and Western attitudes toward the East play into their oppression, [along with] the juxtaposition of Western and Muslim cultures and standards, mixed with centuries of sexism. Muslim culture extends beyond just religious regimens and practices. This culture alone did not fund the Taliban.*

[In U.S. society], we’re failing to see our own role in other people’s oppressions.

(*Ed. Note: From the late 1970s, into the 1980s, the U.S. government provided some of the fundamentalist insurgents in Afghanistan with training, technical assistance, weaponry, and other military aid. Some of these insurgents, including Osama bin Laden, have been central figures in the Taliban.)

The contributors hope to make those connections real by sharing their stories. We can only start to scratch the surface on the complicated ways in which the racism, repression, sexism, heterosexism and violence of militarism touch our lives, but we hope we’ll spark your interest to learn more by talking with friends and checking out the groups and resources you’ll find here.

So what’s the big deal about queer youth & militarism, anyway?

So why are we so concerned about queer youth and militarism? And why do we want to write a big thing about it? Well, for one thing, it’s not clear in some people’s minds that queer youth are affected by the militarism in any way, much less in ways that are different from anyone else. And if you are wondering the same thing... keep reading. Those of us who put this publication together either work with queer youth or are queer youth. We see a lot of connections among queer youth concerns and broader issues of peace and justice. That’s why...
**Editorial: Militarism: Definitely a Queer Issue**

Queer youth, like many other marginalized folks in our society, are familiar with the lack of peace...in homes, school hallways, classrooms, communities, and within many other parts of society. Youth know what hate violence is, and discrimination, and the ways homophobia and heterosexism mess up people by pitting them against each other. Youth know it doesn’t take militaristic attitudes to justify oppression and hatred. But it’s also true that in times of war and fear of terrorism, all kinds of violence intensifies: violence against queers, people of color (including immigrants), women, and poor people. It’s not only hate violence and battering that intensifies; it’s also state violence, such as the increased use of racial profiling, roundups, and secret detentions of immigrants. Even within the queer community, some people are trying to convince us that we should hate and fear Muslims.

Queer youth deal with military recruiters at school. Queer male youth are required to register for the Selective Service or face stiff penalties, whether they support the military or not—even though the military doesn’t want them. Those considering joining the military (and there are a lot) have to face living a double life and risk being discharged from the military because of homophobia. Transgender youth have it even tougher.

Think about facing all the rigid stereotypes about gender and gender identity. Think about the hyper-masculinity of the military, and what message that sends to youth, including butch girls and effeminate guys, who don’t adhere to traditional gender roles.

In the United States, militarism affects the economy as billions of dollars are shifted from human needs to “Homeland Security” and militarization, and queer youth are getting hit hard. Especially queer youth of color, low-income, and homeless youth. A lot of HIV/AIDS programs and queer youth programs are getting shut down or “downsized” due to the government’s war-oriented priorities and tax cuts favoring the wealthy. And it’s going to get worse.

There are queer youth in occupied territories, too. That means places where the U.S military has an overwhelming and dominating influence, such as Hawai‘i, the Philippines, Puerto Rico, Korea, Turkey, and lots of other places. Queer youth there have to deal with the economic, environmental, and political impacts of that presence. And, of course, some young queer people come from military families or are in the military.

When military service is a meaningful part of your own family life, it’s especially hard to come face to face with the ways in which militarism harms people and places, and to consider making different choices for yourself. There are many good people in the military who wish to harm no one. We don’t challenge individuals who serve, but the overall impact of the system of militarism.

So, it can’t be denied. Queer youth are affected by militarism. Think about it. Are you invested in helping ourselves and others lead peaceful, happy, safe, healthy lives? Do you want an end to violence? Do you want justice for all, and the kind of safety that doesn’t trade off one group’s rights for another’s?

**DON’T MAKE DECISIONS ABOUT MILITARY SERVICE**

**Without Considering the Risks!**

Check out these groups and websites that offer information, other kinds of assistance, and links regarding the “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” policy and other issues for LGBT people in the military. (Please don’t assume that all of these groups share the viewpoints expressed in this publication.)

- Servicemembers Legal Defense Network
  - http://www.sldn.org
- Transgender American Veterans Association
  - Contact: Janice Josephine Carney at jcarney@davnt.org
- Laura Ballard at lbhallard@earthlink.net
- Monica F. Heims at minnicaheims@prodigy.net
- GRT Rights Network & Toll-Free Hotline
  - http://www.girlsrights.objector.org
- Citizen Soldier

**Inside, but Wanting Out:**

**Young Sailor Reconsiders the Military**

Jordan, 26, is white. She serves in the U.S. Navy, and was interviewed by Robin Nussbaum, Program Director for AFSC’s Hawaii Gay Liberation Program. Here are her own words, unedited.

Imagine, if you can, realizing that your life is a lie. Well, it happened to me.

I have been in the United States Navy for over six years. I loved it and got extreme joy and pleasure out of doing my job as an electrician and as a sailor. What happened? Let’s just say that the blinders have been taken off, and I really know what the Navy is about. It’s about deceiving, lying, and killing the innocent. [It’s about] putting its own men’s and women’s lives in danger without concern for their well-being or safety. These sailors...give their all day in and out to get the job done. We are treated like numbers, not the human beings that we are. I used to feel so proud to tell people that I’m in the Navy. My heart beat just a bit faster and harder. My eyes lit up with the utmost pride. Now I’m embarrassed and even ashamed to let anyone know that I’m in the Navy. There are so many things that are kept from all military personnel that if most people knew about them they wouldn’t enlist. If I knew the things that I do now, I would have never signed my contract.

They only tell you about the good things...They don’t say anything about all the pollution they cause, all the discrimination that happens, or even how “real life” in the Navy is.

As far as being a young lesbian sailor, I have been blessed in that aspect. The majority of the people that I work with know that I’m gay. They don’t seem to have a problem with it. In fact, the ones that know that it’s really cool. The reason is, in my view, [that] I work my butt off, am always on time, and do what I’m told in a timely manner with no questions asked. I’m looked up to and respected by many.

Now, I’m trying to deal with being in the military, and being a part of something that I’m totally against. It hasn’t been easy in the least. I don’t have the option to...
In the Army: Now... All That You Can’t Be!

Military Targets Poor Youth of Color; Reinforces Racism and Homophobia

by Jaye Sablan, MultiQueer Coordinator/Love Makes A Family, Inc., with Pam Phan, Co-Director Latin American/Asian Pacific Youth Program of the Americans Friends Service Committee, Pacific Northwest Region.

Jaye, 25, self-identifies as a queer, multiracial Pacific Islander. Pam, 26, self-identifies as straight and Vietnamese-American.

Our nation’s government has a deep history of recruiting disenfranchised youth into the military. Many people of color live at the poverty level. Recruiters intentionally target poor youth, advertising college tuition, career opportunities, the chance to travel abroad, and the stability in life that they may not be getting at home.

They do not, however, discuss the realities of military life, such as killing others and being killed, or the potential for youth of color and immigrants to fight against their former countries of origin. Instead, the military glamorizes itself with hip commercials and giving young people easy, sometimes free, access to violent war simulation video games on GIs and through the Internet.

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer, and questioning youth of color, like their straight peers, feel all the pressures of military recruiters and, in fact, are more likely to be the often dishonest promises those recruiters make. After all, queer youth of color are more likely to be low-income and do not have equitable access to education.

After all, queer young adults of color are more likely to be low income and do not have equitable access to education.

Many gay men and lesbians serve in silence with the fear that they will be physically and/or verbally harassed or dishonorably discharged. The military often has an informal code of silence where sexism, including rape and sexual harassment committed by their soldiers and officers, is not widely published, and often simply ignored. Enlistment means staying in the closet and not having the basic human right to a positive sense of identity. Queer youth of color may be more likely to be closeted than their Caucasian counterparts due to the oppressions of racism and homophobia. Both racism and homophobia exist in the military, and it is alarming that the effects of both are felt systemically. The Navy tells you that it will help you “be all that you can be.” But do they mean it? Just look at the term “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell.”

FALSE PROMISES:
Beware Deceptive Recruiting Tactics

You’ve seen the slick brochures, the cool MTV ads, the slick glamour videos on CDs and simulation video games on CDs and through the Internet. These are the social service government’s weapons—enticing with hip commercials, sexing up their pitched messages with slick marketing and aspirational promises—enticing the queer youth of color to serve in silence with the fear that they will be physically and/or verbally harassed or dishonorably discharged.

Many times queer youth of color are asked to choose either a racial identity or a queer identity. This helps to reinforce the oppressions of racism and homophobia. Both racism and homophobia are based in prejudice and stereotyping. Racism and homophobia exist in the military, and it is alarming that the effects of both are felt systemically. The Navy tells you that it will help you “be all that you can be.” But do they mean it? Just look at the term “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell.”

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The impacts of militarism and the U.S. government’s “war on terrorism” directly affect queer youth of color in other negative ways. For example, the events of 9/11 led to a surge of hate violence directed against communities of color and immigrants. Domestic violence increased in these, as well as other, communities. Racial profiling has been more strongly institutionalized. Queer youth of color face multiple issues combining race and sexual and gender identities. Many times queer youth of color are asked to choose either a racial identity or a queer identity. This helps to reinforce the oppressions of racism and homophobia. Both racism and homophobia are based in prejudice and stereotyping. Racism and homophobia exist in the military, and it is alarming that the effects of both are felt systemically. The Navy tells you that it will help you “be all that you can be.” But do they mean it? Just look at the term “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell.”

be open about how I feel towards the Navy. Serious punishment would come from this.
I found a paper that I had written when I was debating enlisting in the Navy. It’s quite interesting how much my views on the military have changed since then. Then I was only 17 years of age, right out of high school. I didn’t have a clue about what I wanted to do with my life.
One day a friend and I went to his recruiting office. I told him that I had no interest to talk to anyone about enlisting. Suddenly, before I had time to say anything, a thund-ering shout came from the back of the room: “Young lady, come back here, sit down, I want to talk to you!” I turned around and before me was the biggest, toughest looking man I had ever seen in my life. His shoulders must have spanned the Grand Canyon and his arms were the size of wine barrels, it seemed. This man would change my life.
He asked me about my hobbies, health, school and gen-
eral interests. We joked and talked for quite some time. When he was all done, I felt like I had spent two hours of the day with Alex Trebek auditioning for Jeopardy! He asked me if I thought if the Navy had what it takes to give me a career. With all the excitement I could gather that day with Alex Trebek auditioning for Jeopardy! He asked me if I thought if the Navy had what it takes to give me a career.
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No Child Left Behind?

Students Leave Military Recruiters Behind

Emma Schatz Fort interviewed Josh Sonnenfeld, a student organizer in Santa Cruz, California, for this story. Josh, is white and self-identifies as straight.

The "No Child Left Behind" law says that schools have to notify parents and students of their right to "opt-out" if having a student's information turned over to the military. It's not surprising that a lot of schools aren't complying with this requirement, or are burying the notice in large info packets handed out at the start of school so that few people will even see it.

But in 2003, Josh Sonnenfeld, a high school student in Santa Cruz, California, successfully organized resistance to the "opt-out" policy in his school district.

Josh recently talked with us about his organizing experiences.

"Most people don't know about the opt-out clause, nor do they take advantage of it," he said. "So in Santa Cruz, we tried to change it to an opt-in process as opposed to opt-out, meaning that the information wouldn't be released to recruiters unless parents said they wanted the information.

According to Josh, the school district agreed to prepare an "opt-in" letter that would be sent to the parents or guardians of the students.

Josh organizes an "opt-out" campaign released to recruiters unless parents said they wanted the information (about their sons or daughters) released. We went to the [Santa Cruz] school board and proposed a resolution, and they voted on it, and it was passed unanimously. This includes three high schools.

According to Josh, the school administration sent out a letter that was sent to the parents or guardians of the students.

"The letter that the district administration sent out was translated into Spanish, but it's still confusing, so we're gonna work on it. We're developing a packet of information that the parents can look at. We have to develop that and give it to the district, and hopefully they'll put something about that in the letter, on the website or something like that"

Josh points out that successful organizing takes a lot of follow-up.

"It's not the kind of campaign that you start up and stop once you achieve a victory. You gotta keep on goin' or you don't get too far. It’s just the follow-up aspects. Informing people is the main concern right now, since we already have the 'opt-in' policy. 'Opt-in' isn't really all that useful unless you have groups that are continually trying to inform the students about what it means to join the military, and give them...important facts, such as only 12% of people who come out of the military can use their job training in their career. Most people join the military because of jobs, or college, or money."

One of the most important things he learned, Josh says, is that student activism can make a difference.

"A lot of the time, students don't really go to the school board meetings. But when they actually do show up, the school board members are really surprised. One of the major things I learned is that students really can have a positive impact on things going on in the district.

Josh, who graduated from high school in 2003, plans to continue his activism at the University of California at Santa Cruz, where he will do "counter-recruitment" organizing and work on a campaign to demilitarize universities by getting the board of regents to not renew Department of Defense research contracts.

For more information, check out these websites:

www.sldn.org (Information about the homophobic "Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell" policy of the U.S. armed forces)

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What a Surprise!

School Anti-Bullying Policies Don’t Cover the Pentagon!

The military uses serious bullying tactics and coercion to force high schools and colleges to go along with what the Pentagon wants, and to punish them if they don’t.

■ High schools can lose federal funding if they don’t give military recruiters open access to student names and contact information.

■ Young guys who don’t register for the Selective Service can be fined, imprisoned, and lose the opportunity to get federal financial assistance for schooling or get a federal job. Same states may also restrict access to state funding for schools or the right to obtain a state job.

■ Federal law (the Solomon Amendment) denies Department of Defense funds (grants and contracts) to colleges and universities that don’t allow military recruiters on campus.

■ Congress expanded the Solomon Amendment to also deny funding from the Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Transportation to schools that don’t allow military recruiters.

■ Schools and universities are threatened with loss of federal funding if they don’t allow military recruiters or ROTC on campus because of the military’s anti-LGBT policies.

■ Student activists are challenging all of these forms of military bullying.

For more information, check out these websites:

www.sldn.org (Information about the homophobic "Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell" policy of the U.S. armed forces)

www.sldn.org (Information about the homophobic "Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell" policy of the U.S. armed forces)
School Daze: High School Students Oppose War

Jimmy Quinn, 16, Caucasian, attends Northport High School in Long Island, NY, and has served as a Day of Silence assistant/Student Organizing Intern with the Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network (GLSEN). He is an anti-war organizer and was suspended from school because of his stance against war on Iraq. He was subsequently featured in a cover story for Newsday, a major New York newspaper. Jimmy was interviewed by Joseph Truong of the National Youth Advocacy Coalition.

Activism is extremely important to me, not only with LGBT and safe schools, but also in anti-war movement. Iraq was the first time I’ve been educating myself [about war], through national media reports as well as independent and European media. I went to teachings, watched videos, and read books. That’s when I met up with other students at our school and started talking and organizing.

I was suspended after the March 5th march. My friends and I created a flyer asking students to walk out [to protest the war]. I was placed in suspension because I was a key organizer. There were ten [anti-war] youth overall who were suspended. But also there were kids who threw balloons and hot coffee on us who were never suspended. The administration said they were being taken care of, but I know for a fact they weren’t.

Military Recruitment in the Schools

I’ve always felt leery about the military, because in the military you don’t have many rights, like “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell.” There’s been a lot more military recruitment at my school. A couple of times I’ve tried to stand near the military recruiters, because I think they’re giving false images and information to people, such as info about college money. I wasn’t allowed to stand in front of them, because the military recruiters were a “guest of the high school”, and the administration gave them a warm welcome.

Response from Other Queer Youth

Mostly, it’s been “Oh, yeah, you do that too? When’s the next rally?” A lot of people are starting to question what our government is hiding under [the guise of the “widening war on terrorism”], such as the Patriot Act. LGBT youth are starting to realize that what our government is doing is not all about anti-terrorism.

Challenges and Lessons

[The] biggest challenge is folks not educating themselves and listening only to the media. The media can make anything sound good for their side. With the media primarily sculpting in the government’s favor, most people are pro-war without first being educated. Their attitude is, “I don’t care, it doesn’t affect me.”

Another challenge is that, within any movement, there are people with different views. Sometimes it’s hard to organize a rally and have everyone’s view being expressed. Within the anti-war movement, it’s hard to incorporate all of the views without other people feeling they’re being told how to feel.

I’ve been learning as an individual how to be a better organizer, how to organize events which represent various people...You never want to just preach to the choir. You want to reach the neutral folks. You need to reach people on the gray part of the scale.

DO YOU REALLY HAVE TO GIVE UP YOUR RIGHTS

just because the principal says you don’t have any?
The U.S. Supreme Court first acknowledged that students have the right of free speech in 1965. The case centered on the right to protest a war in a public school setting.

WHO: Mary Beth Tinker, 13 years old, junior high school student in Des Moines, Iowa, her brother, John Tinker, 15, both Quakers, and Christopher Eckhardt, 16.
THE ISSUE: Students wore black armbands to school to protest the U.S. war in Vietnam. School officials ordered them to remove the armbands. The students refused, and were suspended.
WHAT HAPPENED: The U.S. Supreme Court overturned the suspensions, ruling that the armbands did not disrupt school functioning, were “symbolic speech,” and therefore, the wearing of armbands was protected under the First Amendment.

SIGNIFICANCE FOR ALL STUDENTS: The majority court opinion said, “Schools may not be enclaves of totalitarianism. Students and teachers do not shed their constitutional rights to free speech at the schoolhouse gate.”

For more information about the case, check out these websites, or just google “Tinker v. Des Moines”: http://www.firstamendmentcenter.org http://www.landmarkcases.org

Know your rights.

“Don’t let school officials say you can’t do it, because you probably can. Know who you can be in contact with, such as your local ACLU chapter. In the United States, students are being silenced way too much. At my school, they’ve tried to silence me, but I actually read the policies and know when what they’re doing is unconstitutional.”

Know more about student rights and organizing, check out these websites:

STUDENT PRESS LAW CENTER http://www.splc.org
AMERICAN FRIENDS SERVICE COMMITTEE YOUTH & MILITARISM PROGRAM http://www.afsc.org/youthmil/studrts.htm
NATIONAL YOUTH ADVOCACY COALITION http://www.nyac.org
AMERICAN CIVIL LIBERTIES UNION http://www.aclu.org/StudentsRights/StudentsRightsMain.cfm
NATIONAL LAWYERS GUILD http://www.nlg.org

BE PREPARED!

Know Your Rights!

http://www.splc.org

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STUDENT PRESS LAW CENTER http://www.splc.org
AMERICAN FRIENDS SERVICE COMMITTEE YOUTH & MILITARISM PROGRAM http://www.afsc.org/youthmil/studrts.htm
NATIONAL YOUTH ADVOCACY COALITION http://www.nyac.org
AMERICAN CIVIL LIBERTIES UNION http://www.aclu.org/StudentsRights/StudentsRightsMain.cfm
NATIONAL LAWYERS GUILD http://www.nlg.org

http://www.aclu.org/StudentsRights/StudentsRightsMain.cfm
Queer & Considering Military Service

Tae said, “I identify as a queer youth of color. She is 20 years old. Tae grew up in this environment, that structure. Also, the travel part, [and the chance to] gain independence.”

What kind of information did you have?

I actually went to the recruitment office and talked to them. They gave me several different options I could choose from, and I am still in touch with them. It is just that I wasn’t ready and I had other issues going on I had to take care of first, so I basically just put it aside for a moment. (M) [Margarethe Cammemeyer] I talked to her a few times … [At one political event, she told me] “By the way, I put a card at your table, where you’re sitting, with my phone number.”

What did you and Grethe talk about? What kind of stuff did she tell you?

How to be safe inside the military, me being out here, and then going there, how I can actually be comfortable with the military, but also be safe with my personal life. She gave me a lot of good advice. She was basically telling me how to be careful, especially about discussing my private life with people. That is something she told me that I wasn’t aware of, having a separate military life and a personal life and family life. If I had a partner, [I should] just be completely aware of all the things that can happen and might happen.

Was there any other specific information or were there tactics that the recruitment office used in trying to appeal to you?

My big thing is school, so they are basically saying I can go to school and get all these benefits, and that is all really cool. I am still trying to figure out if I can actually keep my personal life and military life separate. I’m not sure if I could actually do that. I still don’t know. I mean, everyday I change my mind. I am really indecisive. What do I want to be when I grow up? I’m almost there.

A house, use them for the benefits, because when you are in the military your money stacks up because you are not spending it. They are giving you your food and all that. Basically, taking care of my family, that is my number one thing. …[They are also] basically saying I can go to school and get all these benefits, and that is all really cool.

Why did you decide not to go in?

Because my mother got in sort of a bind, basically her and my stepdad decided to get a divorce and my mom needed a job, and I’m the only one with a job, and that is still the situation right now. So I am paying rent there and helping her with the bills and stuff. Because I also have a younger sibling, and I don’t want that sibling not having any support. … I got a discharge like a week before I was supposed to leave.

What did your family and friends think about you joining?

When I first came home, [B] was like, “Guess what I just did!” [Members of my family] weren’t too thrilled. I had a talk with my family, telling them I really want to do this, and either you guys are going to support me or you guys don’t. Either way I am going to do what I want to do … when I decid ed not to go, oh my God, they were extremely happy, instead of a goodbye party, they threw a [staying home] party.

[My friends said] “You are insane! You’re crazy!” I mean maybe I am, so be quiet! I know all the pros and cons, my god, I took the oath … they have like two pages right before you take the oath to sign saying like how homosexuality is totally prohibited. I was reading it and I was like laughing because I know so many gay people in the military. Like if you are caught, like just holding hands with a person of the same sex, you could be like holding their hand, looking at their hand, but they will totally do an investigation on you. It was weird

Because I was under investigation for three months, because they talk to everybody. I was a little paranoid, because I had a girlfriend.

When you were telling friends, they freaked out because, of course, you could get killed. What else do you think they were freaked out about?

Because of … well, you might be living a lie. They were worried because sometimes some of the guys take advantage of the women. … They really worried about a lot of things, and I was like reassuring them, you know, it’s OK, it’s me, I can take care of myself …

Do you know what the laws are right now?

Before they sent [a friend of mine] to Iraq, he told them he was gay. They told him, it’s the new millennium, who gives a sh--? But when he comes back, since he stated that he was gay, and it’s in the contract that he signed, that you can actually go to prison for being gay … But they are saying it’s OK.

Because they wanted a body to fight?

Yes, exactly … It’s your body, you’re a soldier; and you’re out there, you’re going to sacrifice your life. That’s all they see. When you come back … you gotta be totally prepared for everything. They can just start doing an investigation on you. You gotta be cautious 24/7.

So how are you feeling about it all now? Do you know what you’re gonna do?

I am still trying to figure out if it can actually [keep] my personal life and military life separate. I’m not sure if I could actually do that. I still don’t know. I mean, everyday I change my mind. I am really indecisive. What do I want to be when I grow up? I’m almost there.

Altenatives to Military Service

The military isn’t the only game in town. Although the military may tell you they have the resources you need to accomplish your goals in life, the truth is, there are a lot of other ways you can get the resources you need to move forward. And these options don’t require that you be willing to kill, destroy, and colonize others.

Want a job?

Contact your local Job Corps office, a federal program to help youth, ages 16-24, learn really good job skills that will help you settle into a successful career. To find the location nearest you, contact:

U.S. Department of Labor 200 Constitution Ave, NW Washington, DC 20210 1-866-4-JOBAOL http://www.jobcorps.org/ There are also some specific places to look for LGBTQ-youth friendly jobs:

• Online Job Forum of the National Youth Advocacy Coalition
  http://www.nyacforum.org/ (click on “NYAC OnlineForums”) This free Job Forum is a running bulletin board updated frequently of LGBTQ and other progressive job opportunities.

• HIV/AIDS Job Bank of the National Minority AIDS Coalition
  http://www.nmac.org/ (click on “Resources,” then on HIV/AIDS Job Bank)

Check out job, employment, volunteer, and activism opportunities in organizations doing socially conscious work in different locales and arenas

• Action Without Borders http://www.360ealist.org/ Check out the site’s Career Center.

• Moving Ideas http://www.movingideas.org/jobs/ Primarily jobs at policy, research, and advocacy organizations.
We’re failing to see our own role in other people’s oppressions.

Muslim woman wearing hijab

We haven’t liberated them, we’ve thrown [women in Afghanistan] into a deeper economic [crisis]. I think the feeling now is that [if] you’re wearing hijaab, it’s one thing to go in and say ‘if you’re wearing hijaab, you’re weak’. What falls into the category of weak is anything remotely feminine, such as crying, questioning orders, being unsure, and being unsure of wanting to kill someone. I have friends in the military. One of my best friends in high school went into the military ‘cause of lack of money. As you know, people of color are heavily recruited with the promise of college education. He’s 27 and he’s more in debt than when he went in. The wage they get isn’t enough to do what they want in life, and he’s supporting a family and kids now. One of the things that I noticed that’s put a strain in my friendship is [that I’m] constantly correcting him, like him using the word “bitch” all the time or thinking of women in sexual ways. This has constantly in the defensive/education mode. I’ve heard very stupid questions, such as “Do you speak Muslim?” and I have to explain that, [People here are] using anger to justify being reprimanded, and that’s bull----. [When they were said, the people said-] ‘You’re a Muslim? You have to do this, you have to do that.’ I think the main target audience for [military] talks to each other this way. Militarism, and the notion that “we have to have patriotism”, have been very closely tied, especially in my experience. I think the main target audience for [military] talks to each other this way.

In your view, how has militarism affected queer youth??

I think the main target audience for [military] recruitment is people of color, and there are LGBT people of color. And if you’re LGBT/Iwo Spirit in the Army, you have it extra tough. You probably have more self-hatred piled on you than [other] people. One girl I know wasn’t accepted by her family and needed to go to college and was recruited by the military. She decided she could go through boot camp, if she lied, she could go to college and wouldn’t have to work a [lousy] job. She was approached by a recruiter, and she actually bought into it, and it broke my heart. She was specifically going to the military because of the homophobia she experienced, and went into a situation with even worse homophobia. She got herself discharged. It was too much to bear, and she is sort of at the point where she doubts herself in a lot of ways.

How does militarism affect your Muslim and Afghan communities?

Militarism has made racism in this day and age OK. It’s gotten to a point where people can say on TV that they want to kill, they want to bomb someone of this ethnic group. It affects the younger generations. They’re not very happy with the ethnic group they were born in. We’ve also noted an increase in violence in our own community. We had to send one young person off to private school ‘cause he was so angry. When asked why he was so angry, he said, “People make fun of me.” They weren’t necessarily making fun of him, but they were making fun of his family, his ethnic group, his country. He’s 15, and didn’t know how to express any of this, and internalized the hatred. I fight that constantly, this feeling that all Muslim men are my enemy, or that Islam is bad, because it’s hard to fight the same message 24 hours a day.

How do you respond to folks who say being anti-militarism is anti-patriotic? My most common response is that I’m not anti-American. I think we have to be pro-human. I don’t believe in human suffering, and I don’t believe I can get ahead or fix my problems by putting other people down. My religious belief is that there’s no justification for social advancement by screwing others. I think America as an institution I don’t agree with, and my sympathy with people hurt on 9/11 won’t cloud my dislike of foreign policies, certain economic policies. NAFTA [Ed. Note: NAFTA is the North American Free Trade Agreement] didn’t lose any momentum after September 11th. It was strengthened, and free trade became almost synonymous with anti-democracy. I am distressed with Western attitudes toward Iraq, Afghanistan, and all Third World countries. I am distressed with the fact that the West benefits so greatly from and consumes so much of the natural resources produced by the rest of the world. I’m distressed that [people in] these parts of the world are still starving despite the reliance of the West on products they produce. I’m very angry about the way the West introduces dictatorships to countries and backs regimes that are harmful to people. We didn’t like militarism before Sept 11, and it’s still not OK. And it’s OK to say you don’t agree with foreign policy. Militarism, and the notion that “we have to have patriotism”, have been very closely tied, especially in this regime. The whole notion of patriotism has screwed LGBT [organizations] up in many ways. We used to stand for the little guy. What can local and national queer organizations do to support you and other young queer activists like you? I think the main thing is giving up leadership positions. It’s one thing to go in and say “I want to help you,” but another to go in and have people say “I want to show you how to do it my way.” If LGBT organizations want to work to dispel Muslim or South Asian stereotypes or want to [do internal work], work directly with Al-Fatiha [LGBTQ Muslim] and other South Asian and Muslim organizations.
Stephen Funk, 21 at the time of this interview, self-identifies as gay and “mixed race... I’m Filipino and Chinese; my dad’s Irish and Native American.”

Stephen refused to deploy when his Marine Reserve Corps unit was mobilized for active duty in Iraq. Instead, he engaged in anti-war work. After 47 days, he turned himself in. The Marine Corps promised it would quickly process his claim as a conscientious objector, instead, the Corps court-martialed Stephen, convicted of unauthorized absence (a higher charge of desertion didn’t stick), and sentenced him to six months in prison and a bad-conduct discharge.

As this publication goes to press, Stephen has completed a six-month sentence in military prison at Camp Lejeune in North Carolina, and is back home.

What affect did military recruiters have on your decisions, what tactics did they use to appeal to you?

I was in a really low, vulnerable time in my life, and I think recruiters know how to target people like that because they are more susceptible to joining. My recruiter encouraged me to come in and talk about what type of things I can learn from being in the military, and it still wasn’t working. He invited me to go along on these trips that they had and because I was feeling a sense like I didn’t belong, didn’t have a direction, there was the things that he talked about the most. You get a sense of belonging, you’re part of the team. I went to these places and they were trying to make me feel part of the team. Also, the recruiter tells people what [others] will say when you tell them you’ve joined the military. I didn’t talk to my family about it because I was depressed, and I didn’t tell them until two weeks before. But in a way my recruiter really encouraged me not to talk about it very much with people...they are gonna discourage you from doing it, they’ll say, well that’s not really you, that’s not what you’re really like.”

He was trying to make it seem like it was my decision to begin with, that I made a good decision, and that I should stay with that feeling.

What was it like, being gay in the military?

When people asked me in boot camp if I was gay, I didn’t say “no,” you know. I was just like, “well, I’m not gonna say”...Even if I didn’t say it everybody thought I was gay, and I didn’t try to act straight or anything. And even though [they’re] really not supposed to, drill sergeants referenced it. One time there was a guy, the platoon leader, who was a recruit like everybody else. He was supposed to get everybody out of the chow hall—that’s like the cafeteria—and I had gotten there last, so I was still hungry. I wasn’t gonna leave, I was being defiant. So the drill sergeant says to this guy, “oh look, [you] can’t even scare the limp-wristed recruit from San Francisco into getting out.”

There was other stuff, there was stuff against Asians. And the two Asian recruits in our platoon, were the “laundry recruits”...you know like the Chinese laundry [stereotype]. So first [the drill sergeant] like, “let me see where my Chinese recruits are at, let me try to figure out who is gonna be laundry recruits.” No one raised their hands, and then he said, “OK, Asian.” There were two of us, so we were the laundry recruits. And it was weird, there’s so much of that stuff that you start forgetting it, because it just seems so normal [that you forget that it hurts].

Boot camp is a normalization of violence and hate. Everyone goes through a process of dehumanization, where they hate themselves and they hate everybody, so [the soldiers] won’t feel so bad when they have to kill [others], or they won’t feel so bad when they have to hate “the enemy.”

Did you feel like you went through that process of dehumanization?

Did I learn self-hatred? No. Actually, it had the reverse effect on me, because when I went into boot camp, I was still in the closet to a lot of people, just because I didn’t want to tell some people in my life. So then I went into boot camp and it made me realize how idiotic that was. At first I was really afraid, apprehensive, like, what if they think I’m gay, so I tried to be not obvious or anything. Then I was like, “This is stupid.” By the end of boot camp I was more myself, and then I was more resolved to be honest about everything, because I was able to see the stupidity of [the lies].

How did the other recruits react to you?

The more hard-core recruits really hated me. I never really went along with the program, mainly because I thought what we were doing was immoral, having to yell “Kill” all the time, having to be totally aggressive, and robotic in what we do, and [having] no individuality. That’s what was praised, things that I am really against. I was being challenged so much about holding onto my values, holding onto what I believe is right and wrong. I had to defend that so much that my defenses and my convictions grew stronger.

At what point in boot camp did you realize that you didn’t have to be there, that you started thinking about doing something about it?

One time, when we were shooting rifles, I shot “expert” and I’d never shot a gun before. And the person scoring me said on my card that I had an attitude. And I don’t know what he means... so I asked him. That was weird in itself because you never challenge authority, but I asked him, I said, ‘What do you mean, I have an attitude? I shot well, didn’t I?’ And he goes, ’In a real life situation you wouldn’t score as well.’ I say, ‘You’re right, I think killing is wrong, I don’t want to kill. I don’t want to be a part of that, I would not shot.” It was like I had actually vocalized what I had been thinking. And at that point, it’s sort of like a “coming out of the closet” moment. It’s a realization [that] you just said it, you can’t take it back.

After that I was like “Wow” it was a relief, but it was also hard because I had to actually deal with the fact that I was a hypocrite. I’ll just admit it.

Would you comment on “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell”?

I think [“Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell”] is an awful policy. Because it perpetuates anti-gay sentiment, it helps people hate gay people. [But] I don’t really advocate gay people serving in the military. Because I don’t believe in the military mission as it is now. I think that if they just lifted [“Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell”] right now, the way things are, I think it would [still] be really bad for gay people in the military. Unless they unteach homophobia, and unteach the hatred toward gay people that they do teach in boot camp, unless they have something like that implemented as well, I don’t think it’s safe.

I got attacked by some gay newspapers... They were saying that not addressing “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” was a sin of omission. But, like I said, that wasn’t my focus. My focus was to get the information out that you can be a conscientious objector.

And so I got out that message, and lots of people wrote newspapers saying, “How do I get that information to my son or daughter?” And people in the service themselves wanted to know more about it, and I was able to get that information out and bring attention to conscientious objection. I think more stories started coming out about it afterwards. And then I was glad there was a voice of dissent, finally, because everything else by our own media had been downplayed and censored. Lots of people abroad wrote me,
because it got international coverage, and they felt it was great that an American was standing up to this. But, I was glad to do that, that's the part in history that I think is the coolest, people standing up for what they believe in, in the face of ... you know, standing up to the powers that be, saying something is wrong, and they won't stand for it. People don’t really do much of that anymore.

Did you want your sexual orientation to be known when you first went public about your conscientious objection?

It is in my conscientious objector application, that being gay is a part of what my beliefs are ... it’s obviously a part of who I am, as somebody that is misunderstood by many people, who has experiences with hate. You can learn that that's wrong or you can react and do it back [to those who hate you], and I learned that it was wrong. I experienced that as a minority, I experienced that as a poor person.

What advice would you give to other young folks, especially queer youth, who might be interested in joining the military or are currently serving? As far as queer people, especially, this is what I would say.

**Boot camp is a normalization of violence and hate.**

Izzy, Sonia, and Emma, three queer youth from Seattle, show their queer pride at the Showdown, a peace rally in Austin Texas, May 3, 2003 (left)

Sonia, shows her support for peace at the Showdown (below)

The American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) is a Quaker organization that includes people of various faiths who are committed to social justice, peace, and humanitarian service. Its work is based on the Religious Society of Friends (Quaker) belief in the worth of every person and **advocates to improve the lives of LGBTQ youth through advocacy, education, and information.**

Be Informed about Military Service Options!

If you want to consider your options with regard to military service, or want information about conscientious objection, check out these sites...

- **AFSC Youth & Militarism Program**
  - [http://www.afsc.org/youthmil/](http://www.afsc.org/youthmil/)
- **Central Committee for Conscientious Objectors**
  - [http://www.objector.org](http://www.objector.org)
- **Center on Conscience and War**
  - [http://www.nisbco.org](http://www.nisbco.org)
- **G.I. Rights Hotline**
  - 1-800-394-9544 (toll free)
- **Citizen Soldier**

- **NATIONAL YOUTH & STUDENT PEACE COALITION**

**Youth Organize to End State Violence, Fight Racism, Protect Democratic Principles & Support Human Needs**

Want to know more about getting involved in the rapidly growing student movement for peace, demilitarization, and social and economic justice? Check out the National Youth and Student Peace Coalition (NYSPC). Composed of 15 national student and youth organizations (including those serving LGBTQ youth), NYSPC was formed in response to the events of September 11, 2001, and has worked to build strategic, long-term student and youth opposition to war that is waged abroad, with bombs and bullets, and at home, with racism, cuts to education, and freedom-limiting “anti-terrorism” policies. Check it out at [http://www.nyspc.net/](http://www.nyspc.net/)
WHAT YA GONNA DO ABOUT SELECTIVE SERVICE?

Thought about Selective Service registration lately? Maybe you should...

Here's the deal: U.S. law currently requires all men who are citizens or permanent residents of this country, and between 18–26 years of age, to register for the Selective Service. Yeah, queer guys have to register, too, even though the military doesn't want any queers, and sometimes goes on anti-gay witch-hunts. It's hypocritical, but it's the law.

The Selective Service is part of the government machinery used to register guys and select guys for involuntary service in the armed forces. If the government decides that there aren't enough voluntary enlistments for military needs, then the government sets up a military draft. The draft is whatever process the government decides on to actually choose who's going to be called up for service. The government could also decide to include young women in Selective Service registration and a military draft.

Right now, there's no formal military draft, and although it's not very likely one will be put into place soon, you never know. Depending upon circumstances, political winds can shift really fast.

Some guys refuse to register with the Selective Service because they're opposed to war in general. If they were drafted into the military, they would consider themselves conscientious objectors, or people who are not willing to kill or otherwise harm others.

Unfortunately, you can't say on your Selective Service registration form that you're a conscientious objector, or that you object to registration for other reasons. What happens if you don't register? You can be put in prison or fined up to $250,000. You can lose federal benefits (including federal loans for education) that would help you go to college or get vocational education. You wouldn't qualify for financial aid that would help you go to college.

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Do Trans Youth Have to Register with the Selective Service?

Good question. Even the Selective Service is confused.

Here's some guidance and good advice from the people at the National Center for Lesbian Rights. But a word of caution is in order. Because the Selective Service System doesn't have any written policy on any of this, administrators may be confused, and you may encounter problems. If you do, get legal help as quickly as possible.

If designated female at birth

If you were designated female at birth and have had sex reassignment surgery, you do not need to register with the Selective Service. However, if you are applying for federal benefits (including federal loans for education) that require proof of Selective Service registration, you will need to show that you were never required to register.

People designated female at birth are never required to register at least for now. You can prove this by requesting a "Status Information" letter from the Selective Service System ("Request for Status Information Letter" form, which can be downloaded from www.sss.gov). You must explain in detail why you believe you were not required to register for the selective service (you were designated female at birth, were diagnosed with Gender Identity Disorder or an intersexed condition and have completed sex reassignment).

You should also include supporting documentation, such as a letter of affidavit from your treating physician and a copy of your original birth certificate (with female gender marker).

Complete the "Request for Status Information Letter" form and submit it, along with all supporting documentation, to:

Selective Service System
Attn: SIL
P.O. Box 94638
Palatine, IL 60094-4638

If designated male at birth

If you were designated male at birth, even if you had sex reassignment surgery, you must register with the Selective Service. However, in the event the draft is resumed, you can file a claim for exemption from military service if you receive an order for an examination or induction. Additional information can be obtained at the Selective Service System's website at: http://www.sss.gov.

TRANS YOUTH COLLIDES WITH SELECTIVE SERVICE SYSTEM

Jasper, 22 years old, identifies as queer, FtM (female to male), and mixed race. We asked him to share some of his experiences.

I received a letter a few years ago from the Selective Service stating that if I didn't register I would be fined $250,000 and sent to jail. I didn't know what to do with [this letter], so I tossed it.

Later on that same year, I decided that it was time for me to go back to school, so I wanted to find out about financial aid. I was told that I couldn't apply because I wasn't registered with the Selective Service.

I started to realize that, as a young man, I now had responsibilities to the world that I hadn't had as a young woman. I found out that I could send in proof that I was a transsexual and they couldn't push me for service. They just had to register.

They sent another letter giving me ten days to register or I would be sent to jail. Out of fear I registered. I wonder sometimes what will happen if I'm called to duty, but at least now I can go to school.

It totally is different for trans folks. If I had been a bis[osexual] guy, I would have been recruited when I was 18. But because I was trans, it didn't happen until I was 21. I got recruited when I changed my sex on my driver's license. But if I lived, like, in Ohio, I wouldn't have been recruited because I couldn't even change my sex on my driver's license. It's really different depending on what state you are in. If you live in a state where you can legally change your gender, then you wouldn't be identified as FM. But if you were MTF, you probably would be asked to register.

Also, once in the military, it would probably be different for trans folks because they wouldn't know where to put you. Like which buses would they put you in, or which bathrooms would you use?

BE PREPARED FOR THE SELECTIVE SERVICE!

Know Your Rights & Consider the Risks

If you don't want to register with the Selective Service and know that military service is not for you, you have the right to consider all your legal options. There are groups that can help you. But you should also know that there are serious risks and possible penalties for failing to register with the Selective Service. Be prepared with accurate information before making any decisions.

For more information, check out these websites:

AFSC Youth & Militarism Program http://www.afsc.org/youthml/resources
Central Committee for Conscientious Objectors http://www.objector.org
Center on Conscience and War http://www.niscwc.org
Committee Opposed to Militarism and the Draft http://www.comdsd.org
Rainbow Revolutionary Challenge Role of Military in Hawai‘i

Notes from an Occupied Territory

Rainbow Revolutionary Challenge Role of Military in Hawai‘i

Robin Nashbaum of AFSIC’s Hawai‘i Gay Liberation Program spoke with three members of the Rainbow Revolutionary (LGBT) youth group about the impact of the military on Hawai‘i. The three students are 15 years old. Two are juniors at Kamehameha High School and one is a junior at Kalaloa High School. Two are male, one is female. Two identify as gay, the other as “heterosexual until further notice.” One is Filipino, two are Kanaka Maoli (Native Hawaiians). Two have been in the Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps (JROTC). Because their schools are near military bases, and many of their friends come from military families, it’s tricky to speak out about the military in a critical way. They are identified by pseudonyms: EvilestEvilBunny (EEB), PerpetualBubble (PB), and Rainbow Fairy (RF).

On the Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps (JROTC):

EvilestEvilBunny (EEB) The way that I think about it is that ROTC taught me to shut up and just follow orders. Because whenever I would question anything or whenever I went out of line, it was just, like, bad. PerpetualBubble (PB): In our school, it seems, like, just kind of a tradition thing, because, like, all the boys had to do it. So it seemed like a sexist thing.

On Gay in the Military:

Rainbow Fairy (RF): They suppress homosexuality in the military. But you know, there are gay people in the military and they can’t be open about it, ‘cause the military thinks gay people will kind of...um...upset the order of the military and it won’t be able to function as well as... I live near a gay couple and one of them, he was in the Marines, and knew people who were beaten or killed just for being gay in the military. I wanted to be in the military when I was a freshman, but sophomore year I changed my views on the military.

On Impacts to Hawaiian Culture:

EEB: Exactly! They have had a huge impact on us, though, especially the land and stuff. I remember my grandmother was telling me that Pearl Harbor used to actually be clean. Surprise! Now it is like one of the most of the polluted bodies of water in the United States, and it is all due to the dumping of the industry and the military coming in. I’m not saying it’s just the military polluting... but it’s like they’re not giving the land the respect that it deserves. And it deserves a lot of respect... And like back in the day... it was so much more quiet and peaceful and then military and the industry came in and kinda screwed up Pearl Harbor. God, they used to call [it] Pearl Harbor because it was so much more quiet and peaceful and then military and the industry came in and kinda screwed up Pearl Harbor. God, they used to call [it] Pearl Harbor because they actually used to have pearls there, like the oyster things. But I really doubt there’s oysters living there now, and if they are, they probably have irradiated oysters!

RF: To find an example of how the military affected the Hawaiian people... look back to the downfall of the Hawaiian monarchy. In 1893, Queen Lili‘uokalani was overthrown and left the island... The military went in, and left... I think the military should learn more about the traditional Hawaiian culture not the stereotype of Hawaiians.

PB: I think the military helps to spread the ideas of the stereotype of Hawaiians because they are always coming and leaving... I think the military should learn more about the real Hawaiian culture.

On Impact to Hawaiian Culture:

RF: It’s kinda taking away our Hawaiian culture, ‘cause it’s disappear little by little. And more of the Western culture is coming here. You can see how Honolulu is. It’s so urbanized, there’s so many people here. Hardly any of the Hawaiian culture is left, like any of the rituals that they used to have. They only have some fish ponds and heiaus (traditional places of worship) left and all that’s going away cause people are destroying it and stuff and leaving all their garbage and stuff. We’re not gonna have it anymore. Other cultures have their own areas... but this is all we have, Hawai‘i is all we have.

PB: I think the military helps to spread the ideas of the stereotype of Hawaiians because they are always coming and leaving... I think the military should learn more about the real Hawaiian culture not the stereotype of Hawaiians.

RF: Yeah, like we walk around in grass skirts and live in grass huts and that’s how we dance. (Demonstrates.)

[Ed. Note: The traditional Hawaiian hula is a sacred dance, not a stereotyped sexy dance for tourists.]

On Whose Security?

EEB: They have had a huge impact on us, though, especially the land and stuff. I remember my grandmother was telling me that Pearl Harbor used to actually be clean. Surprise! Now it is like one of the most of the polluted bodies of water in the United States, and it is all due to the dumping of the industry and the military coming in. I’m not saying it’s just the military polluting... but it’s like they’re not giving the land the respect that it deserves. And it deserves a lot of respect... And like back in the day... it was so much more quiet and peaceful and then military and the industry came in and kinda screwed up Pearl Harbor. God, they used to call [it] Pearl Harbor because they actually used to have pearls there, like the oyster things. But I really doubt there’s oysters living there now, and if they are, they probably have irradiated oysters!

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PB: I think that since it has been a long time that the military has been here and doing what they do and affecting us, that a lot of Hawaiians have this kinda modest, “no make a big deal” about anything. But then, there’s those certain Hawaiians who are really outspoken. Which is good for the rest of the Hawaiians that have been affected by the military and been kinda having that “don’t make a big deal about it” attitude for a long time. The outspoken ones are kinda speaking up for all of the ones that don’t know how to use their voice.

EEB: But if you look at it, a lot of the outspoken ones are like the older ones. The kupuna (elders). “Cause they know what’s happened.

Military Presence in Hawai‘i

Whose Safety? Whose Security?

Many people believe that the presence of the U.S. military creates safety and security, and in “our” interest. But who really benefits and who is harmed by U.S. military domination in Hawai‘i, Puerto Rico, Okinawa, American Samoa, Guam, and other places in the United States and around the world? The Rainbow Revolutionaries describe many impacts of U.S. military presence in Hawai‘i.

In addition, the military:

occupied Hawai‘i in 1898, in violation of international laws and treaties, when the United States annexed the Hawaiian islands. This move sped up the domination of the islands’ economy by five large, interconnected companies that controlled production of sugar and pineapples;

controls 200,000 acres of land, and says it needs much more for live fire training. Much of this land consists of stolen Hawaiian national lands, family holdings that are condemned, and sacred Kanaka Maoli (indigenous Hawaiian) sites;

leaves unexploded bombs, toxic chemicals, erosion, and destroyed habitat and cultural areas in its wake;

doesn’t keep its promises. When residents of Makua were evicted during World War II, the Army promised to return the land six months after the war. But the Army still bombs and contaminates Makua.

For more information, check out http://www.ofschawaii.org.
For the military the priority is war, not human beings.

If you’re considering military service because you’ve heard the military “takes care of its own,” look at what’s really happening to promised support and benefits for soldiers, veterans, and their families. When you hear “budget cuts,” remember that phrase means funding cuts for human needs: education, health care, and affordable housing. While human needs funding is cut, billions of dollars are being shifted to pay for increased policing and war. That’s the thing in a militarized society: human beings aren’t priorities, even those who are soldiers and veterans. Check out what’s happening to some of the promised benefits of military service.

Cuts for Active Duty GI’s

The same government that’s waging an ongoing “war on terrorism,” has pushed through huge, permanent tax cuts that mostly benefit the wealthiest Americans, requested an additional $87 billion in war-related funds in mid-2003, and supports:

- cancellation of a plan to pay families of U.S. soldiers killed in the war $12,000 instead of $6,000;
- cutting combat pay for troops from $225 to $150 a month;
- dropping the family separation allowance from $250 to $100.

The administration also supports:

- cutting $200 million, or 30% of the total, for the program that funds schools near military bases attended by the children of soldiers, and
- cutting $1.5 billion for military family housing, a cut that affects military housing, barracks, child care centers, and other facilities.

Vanishing Benefits for Vets

The Veterans Administration says about 28 million vets are currently using VA benefits and millions more might be eligible to use them. (But, in order to save money, the government has not been publicizing the availability of these benefits and in January, 2003, suspended enrollment for some benefits. This affects thousands of vets.)

For 2004, the administration is proposing even bigger cuts that will hit those who are disabled, low-income, and homeless the most. The administration is proposing changes totaling $15 billion over the next ten years that would:

- Cut $844 million in health care benefits and raising prescription drug fees for Veterans
- Cut an additional $463 million in other veterans’ benefits, including disability pensions

Trans Veterans

Don’t count on support for health services related to gender transitioning and pre- and post-op care for transsexual vets. The Veterans Administration is prohibited from providing treatments or surgeries intended to accomplish what is termed “Gender Alteration,” “Gender Reorientation,” or “Genital Identity Revision.”

How have schools, services, and organizations been affected by a shift of so much government money to the military?

Our school has no money, we’re broke. Half way through the year, we ran out of paper for classes. That’s how bad it is. Funding is being cut all over the community, local youth programs are being cut, salaries all over the place are being cut, from people who work for the city, and that affects everyone. I know teachers aren’t paid as much as they should be, I mean they are educating the future, and more. Funding is being cut all over the community, local youth programs are being cut, salaries all over the place are being cut, from people who work for the city, and that affects everyone. I know teachers aren’t paid as much as they should be, I mean they are educating the future, and yet we find it more important to bomb other countries than educate our own.

More About Militarism

Check Out These Resources

Colonies In Question: Supporting Indigenous Movements in U.S. Jurisdictions, a Funding Exchange Report by Surina Khan (former Executive Director of the International Lesbian and Gay Human Rights Commission)

This report documents ways in which the United States has deliberately undermined its territories (Guam, American Samoa, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, and Puerto Rico) and other independent island nations who have signed compacts with the U.S. government, and forced an economic dependency that has allowed the Pentagon to use many of the islands as testing grounds for nuclear weapons, delivery systems, and space warfare technologies. It documents the devastating effects of colonialism and militarization on the health, well-being, and economies of local populations.

http://www.fex.org/coloniesinquestion.html