

Veterans Day Thoughts November 11, 2017

East Bay Citizens for Peace was formed in March 2003 in opposition to going to war in Iraq. Since then we have continued to hold monthly peace vigils and sponsor forums. At our most recent forum, we heard foreign war correspondent, David Wood, speak on the topic of his book "What Have We Done? - The Moral Injury of our Longest Wars". The program – held at the First Congregational Church in Barrington - drew an audience of 75 – 100 people including several veterans and was compelling and stimulated a lot of discussion. Wood talked about moral injury – a deep wound to the psyche from violating one's own moral code – and shared the stories of the men and women he has come to know through his experiences embedded with our troops in Afghanistan and Iraq. Now we carry those stories with us... the story of the young soldier who lives with the agony of having killed a young boy who was shooting at him and his company... the story of the soldier who was so haunted by what he had seen and done that he committed suicide and stories of their families' pain.

In our discussion we talked about the challenges of getting treatment, improvements the VA has made and support groups that are available. We learned about the shame soldiers bear and how hard it is to reveal their stories – stories that most people would not want to hear. There is no easy, quick fix and "Thank you for your service" does not cut it... in fact, only makes it worse. We learned how important it is to listen without judgment and platitudes. Maybe if instead of looking the other way, we really faced what these wars are doing to civilians caught in the crossfire and to our soldiers, we would take the decision to go to war more seriously. We agree with Wood who writes "*...when there is casual talk in Washington about putting "boots on the ground," I want to bellow a furious correction: Americans on the ground! Let's name it – humans! Our kids. I want us to be more careful with them. While we're figuring out whether and how to end war, I want us to be more skeptical of lofty claims of what military force can achieve and more mindful of the costs that will be borne by the people we send to fight.*" (David Wood – What Have We Done? The Moral Injury of Our Longest Wars) We highly recommend reading this important book.

Our hearts go out to our soldiers and veterans who are bearing wounds to body, mind and soul. We support you as we seek and support peaceful solutions to conflict. We call upon our representatives in congress to repeal the Authorization for Use of Military Force Act and reclaim their responsibility to seriously debate any act of war before putting our men and women in harm's way.

East Bay Citizens for Peace is a grassroots organization committed to peaceful solutions to conflict, and social and economic justice through open, respectful dialogue. For more information contact 401-247-9738, info@eastbaycitizens4peace.org or www.eastbaycitizens4peace.org