

Toward a Just Memory: Resistance, Violence, Art and the American War in Vietnam

Sponsored by
Catherine Gould Chism Fund for the Humanities
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In his magisterial work on the memory of the war in Vietnam, writer Viet Thanh Nguyen suggests that a “dominant logic of remembering one’s own and forgetting others” has proven profoundly powerful, rejoining that “the stories of those that lost in this war show that in the conflict over remembrance, no one is innocent of forgetting.” Nguyen urges his readers to resist the pull of the nationalistic (and capitalistic) purposes of such a practice, and to seek, instead, what he terms “just memory,” complex work that remembers the history both of “one’s own” and the “other,” and does so with the kind of nuance that recognizes both the humanity, and the inhumanity, of all. This series of Chism events engages in that effort, bringing members of the University of Puget Sound community into active and critical memory work around the history of the American war in Vietnam. It focuses on Americans who took active roles in the war—fighting it and/or resisting it from within and without the military—and also explores the process of remembering, and forgetting, Nguyen introduces.

Exhibit: *Dissent and Resistance within the Military*
East Reading Room, Collins Memorial Library
September 28-October 28

(from the website at: <https://wagingpeaceinvietnam.com/exhibits>)

During America’s war in Vietnam, the antiwar movement among active-duty soldiers and veterans was central to the success of the larger U.S. protest movement—and had a profound impact on the course of the war. In the mid-Sixties, as the U.S. escalated troop numbers, tens of thousands of soldiers, sailors and pilots refused to fight, sail and fly bombing missions. As scholar David Cortright notes: “It is arguable that by 1970 U.S. ground troops in Vietnam had ceased to function as an effective fighting force. The disintegration of military morale was a factor in the Nixon administration’s decision to accelerate troop withdrawals.”

This exhibit recounts the experiences of ten soldiers and veterans who risked so much, from the total alienation of their families to personal harm and imprisonment, as they openly protested the war. May their stories spark discussion and teaching about patriotism and the power of individual and collective dissent to make societal change.

Panel Discussion: *Dissent and Resistance within the Military*

East Reading Room, Collins Memorial Library

October 5, 2022 2:00-3:20

Related to the exhibit, and coordinated with local members of Veterans for Peace, this panel discussion will feature activists who will talk together about their engagements with dissent and resistance at Fort Lewis and in its surrounding community, activities ranging from work with the Shelter Half Coffeehouse and the *Fed UP* newspaper to antiwar organizing within the Army, including in the Presidio Stockade following arrest. The panel discussion will engage issues related to the ethical and moral implications of opposing the war from within the military, as well as the differential motivations, tactics, impact and experiences of these actions.

Dr. Thomas M. Grace, *Dissent, Violence, Memory and the War at Kent State*

Trimble Forum

November 2, 2022 2:00-3:20

Thomas M. Grace is adjunct professor of history at Erie Community College. A 1972 graduate of Kent State University, he earned a PhD in history from SUNY Buffalo after many years as a social worker and union representative. One of the students shot by National Guardsmen on May 4, 1970 during an antiwar protest at Kent State, Professor Grace has written the most significant book on the history of activism on that campus, *Kent State: Death and Dissent in the Long Sixties* (University of Massachusetts Press, 2016). Media at the time frequently painted Kent State as a middle-American campus isolated from the turmoil of antiwar, Black Power, and student activism. Grace's work offers a crucial corrective to this misrepresentation, documenting the roots of campus activism in the labor and civil rights movements, and providing a detailed and insightful exploration of its evolution leading up to, and after, the tragic shootings of May 1970. As a review in the *American Historical Review* suggested, the book is "invigorating and revelatory. . . . It is unlikely that we will see another book about Kent State's protest culture that is as well conceived and thoroughgoing as this one."

Professor Grace's lecture will focus on the development of activism on the Kent State campus, providing students with a case study of its emergence over the course of the 1960s. Grace will illustrate the roots many students had, through their families, in labor activism, as well as the important role played by Black campus activists in building a culture of dissent at Kent State. He will also provide students with a comprehensive understanding of the events culminating in the shooting of May 4, 1970, offering a corrective to earlier accounts that explained the violence as the result of young, untrained, and exhausted Guardsmen.

***Student Protests and the War in Vietnam:
A Conversation with Professors Thomas M. Grace and Joseph A. Fry***
Murray Boardroom, Wheelock Student Center
November 3 5:00-6:00 pm

Joseph A. (Andy) Fry is a distinguished professor of history emeritus at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. He is the nation's leading scholar of U.S. foreign policy and the American South. Dr. Fry has published seven books, including *Dixie Looks Abroad: The South and U.S. Foreign Relations, 1789-1973* and *The American South and the Vietnam War: Belligerence, Protest, and Agony in Dixie*. His most recent book is *Letters from the Southern Home Front: The American South Responds to the Vietnam War* (LSU Press, 2022).

Professors Grace and Fry will have a conversation with Professors Jeffrey Mathews and Nancy Bristow, *and the audience*, regarding student protest during the war in Vietnam. B

Processing the Unimaginable: Art and Memory
University Archives, Collins Memorial Library – 2nd Floor
November 30, 2022 2:00-3:20

Vietnam Nam veteran and book artist Peter Newland will share his work with students in an interactive session in the Archives & Special Collections. Newland served in the Republic of Vietnam with the 4th Headquarters Transportation Command in 1970. He was stationed first at Camp Davies in Saigon, and later at Long Binh. He received his basic training at Fort Lewis and advanced training at Fort Eustice, Virginia. He is a recipient of the Army's Bronze Star Medal and was honorably discharged as a Specialist Fight Class in 1971.

Now retired, Newland runs the Pied Typer Press which produces unique books, some of which reflect his experiences in Vietnam. Students will have the chance to study postcards and images from Newland's experience and consider how memory of experiences can be shared in a creative format to reflect personal narratives. Students will be challenged to consider how they may reflect their own work in zine or book format. Newland will share his own personal experiences from over fifty years ago and how those experiences impact his world view.