Introduction

As the Iraqi man lay in front of me cold and lifeless, the veil of ignorance was removed from my eyes. The actions of my deeds swarmed through my head like a beehive disturbed on a hot summer day. Was this man a father? Was he fighting to free his country? Was he fighting so that he could put food on the table for his family? I would never know. It was there on that hot, hectic, and deadly day that I had resolved the conflict that kept me up at night: that we should not be in Iraq. As I lay in my bunk after the heated battle, I discovered my passion to seek social justice for all, to fight for those too weak to fight for themselves, to give voice to those without a voice, and to show those with power and privilege how their actions affect those they don't see.

Every day in Iraq I felt like a hypocrite, and it tore me apart inside to fight in a war I didn't believe in. I wanted to throw down my weapon and refuse to promote the injustices I executed. My integrity to fulfill my oath and the compassion for my comrades kept me at my post. The battle within raged, but the light at the end of the tunnel was near. I swore to myself that I would one day make a difference in this world. On May 31, 2005, I was honorably discharged from the United States Army, though in my heart and mind I felt I had been part of a dishonorable action. I would spend the next nine years going to school, learning to understand my experience, and the reasons I feel the way I do. I would also spend that time as an activist, fighting to make the world a better place, as well as seeking penance for the things I felt I had done wrong. I knew I was not alone in this quest, as the other veterans I worked with to create change had stories similar to mine. Therefore, I am writing and sharing some of those stories, to show the battles we face, how they relate to the wars we fought, and how our current fight seeks to heal the nation, our communities, and ourselves.

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This personal experience—of being soldier, having fought in war, and then becoming an activist directly combating the very war I fought in—gives me special insights not only into the struggles faced by returning veterans but also allows me a certain level of understanding and intimacy with the veterans I interview. I have been interviewed by journalists and academics many times, and there was always a tension between the interviewer and me as I would have to constantly stop and explain little things, or I would hold back this detail or that sentiment, because I knew they just would not understand. Many of the people that I interviewed relayed similar stories and told me how much easier it was to talk with me, because I had been there. Therefore, there is a different layer of thinking I bring beyond what many other amazing academics can—with my own story, my more contemporary view, and the subsequent way I am able to analyze these issues.

Since I began working on this project, there have been a great number of events that have directly impacted veterans, making it hard to focus on it. Events such as the release of the documentary *The Invisible War*, which subsequently brought to light the high levels of sexual assault in the military, prompting government officials to take action; the reporting of the high rates of suicide and homelessness among veterans; whistleblowers Chelsea Manning and Edward Snowden releasing classified military documents; the release of POW Bowe Bergdahl; the Veterans Administration (VA) health care scandal; the shift to drone warfare; and last but not least, the recent return to Iraq as the US continues this seemingly endless "war on terror," and even the election of Donald Trump as president. Many of these issues have been highly publicized since I began writing this book, only to be forgotten months after their occurrence. I do bring some of these topics into the fold as they relate to veteran activism; however, I am not able to cover all areas of veterans' issues and activism, as it is a dynamic and ever-changing field of study that is rarely examined.

While there has been some work on contemporary veterans' issues, most scholars have focused on issues around post-traumatic stress (PTS), like Erin Finley's *Fields of Combat: Understanding PTSD Among Veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan*.[1] Many of the veterans I interviewed were dealing with PTS, but they often sought alternative forms of dealing with it, as opposed to seeking help from the Veterans Administration. Many of the current engagements with veterans and PTS have been framed either medically/psychologically or administratively (i.e., whether or not the VA is sufficiently meeting needs).[2] However, these works have failed to recognize that veterans are engaged in other agency-driven modes of being, which are political. Many

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examinations of veterans fail to fully recognize the ways in which veterans are *subjects* (political agents fighting to reshape the lives of themselves and others) rather than *objects* (waiting for medical/administrative attention). While this sort of veteran advocacy is done with the best of intentions, it unwittingly renders veterans as objects/dependents (helpless and in need), robbing them of agency. It is ironic because the veterans themselves are contesting their militarism through an active de-objectification, through re-humanization, connection/relationship-building, and agency. Therefore, this project discursively examines a series of interviews that I conducted with veterans who identify as activists and seek to create this agency.

There have been two books that specifically examine veteran activism, Dahr Jamail's *The Will to Resist: Soldiers Who Refuse to Fight in Iraq and Afghanistan*, and Lisa Leitz's *Fighting for Peace: Veterans and Military Families in the Anti-Iraq War Movement*.[3] Both books primarily focus upon the organization Iraq Veterans Against the War (IVAW), which I was and still am a member of. While I utilize both their works, and am inspired by their writings, neither author seems to reach a critical/theoretical analysis that is needed to understand contemporary veterans' issues. Jamail's book is more of a brilliant piece of journalism chronicling the events of IVAW, while Leitz's book is an in-depth ethnography aimed at understanding the dynamics of social movements, specifically the peace movement. What I seek to do is different.

I take a critical, analytical lens in order to examine post-9/11 US veterans who are now social justice activists. As soldiers, these veterans were trained and formed in specific ways, for specific purposes, primarily to perpetuate violence. While this training affects every individual differently, there are similar themes and ideals that come to light, which tell us much about the military, the US government, Western liberal democracy, the affects and effects of war, and subjectivity. Furthermore, veterans are able to articulate these concepts and ideals differently than civilians because their lived experiences exemplify the ramifications of war and American policy. Often, veterans feel the effects of US policy before society does, thus acting as the miner's canary, and yet they are rarely the locus of enunciation. As Victoria Basham points out, soldiers act as "geocorporeal actors that are necessary for waging wars that harm some populations while preserving the life of others."[4] The veterans that I interviewed have been these "geocorporeal actors" in times of war and continue to be so, though in different ways, as they interact and often resist the very institutions that, as soldiers, they were a part of.

The contextual shift from "soldier" to "activist veteran" highlights the aims of my project. With veterans being separated from the military, this

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time often gives them the space for critical reflection that is often difficult to achieve when in the thick of military service. These veterans are able to find ways to heal through different forms of resistance within these veteran activist communities, as their reflection and their activism work hand in hand to help them understand their experiences.[5] This not only works to heal the traumas of war within the veteran, but also pushes the veteran to try and alter the war dispositif, thus attempting to heal the impacts of war on society.

The aim of this book is both to try and disentangle the messiness of war and politics at times, and also to make it more complicated and messy at others, as I seek to break with the normative analytic constructions by examining veterans' narratives. I also want to understand how these veterans came to become activists. Embedded within this *how* is a narrative that falls outside the empirical normative expectations for war veterans, in which we can see a resignification of patriotism take place. This resignification of patriotism is the pushback against militarism, which many within the general public might normally see as problematic; however, since it is war veterans who are doing the pushing it blurs the boundaries of *who* and *what* signifies as patriotic. My ultimate goal is to locate when resistance takes place and to understand what it looks like.

Critical Military Studies

My work falls within the field of critical military studies (CMS). This fairly new field is an interdisciplinary approach to interrogate "conceptions of military power, militarism, and militarization," both inside the military and outside of it.[6] Therefore, CMS is often drawing from a wide range of theoretical backgrounds from modern schools of thought such as postcolonial feminism to classic fields of study such as Marxism. This work has consistently tried to extend beyond the fields of military and security studies that is often "atheoretical, apolitical, and largely quantitative," in order to problematize systems of militarism and show how they pertain to everyday social and political realities.[7] Furthermore, this approach of study "warrants complex and messy interpersonal qualitative encounters with those who articulate and are themselves articulations of military power, including the researchers themselves."[8] I feel this statement perfectly conveys the approach to this book, especially within a CMS framework. There are multiple layers of militarism that are examined, from the personal to societal, as I look

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not only at other veterans' stories but also at my own embodiment in the military, as well as my interactions with the veterans I interviewed.

As many within CMS have explained, embodied experiences should be central to our understanding of war and militarism as it shows the ways in which the security dispositif has "generative effects."[9] As Synne Dyvik points out, the embodied experiences of soldiers and veterans "offer narratives of war and combat that should be listened to—not necessarily because they provide 'the truth' about war, but because of how they frame 'their truth' through the body and numerous potent, prevailing and powerful discursive frames."[10] Thus, when we hear the stories and narratives of soldiers and veterans, we connect the unknowns of war and combat with the feelings we know and have experienced, and we can begin to empathize. While most veteran and soldier narratives that are portrayed are primarily gendered and militarized stories of combat meant to highlight heroism, the narratives here often push against these stories that become normalized by the security dispositif.[11] These veterans are attempting to have a reciprocal relationship with the security dispositif; because it has shaped them into the bodies and soldiers they are, and it also put them in situations that had them face-to-face with the traumas of war, they now hope that their narratives can be used as tools to transform the security dispositif through activism.

In using the term "security dispositif," I draw from a Foucauldian concept in which a dispositif is a "thoroughly heterogeneous set consisting of discourses, institutions, architectural forms, regulatory decisions, laws, administrative measures, scientific statements, philosophical, moral and philanthropic propositions—in short, the said as much as the unsaid."[12] Foucault goes on to explain that it is the strategic interaction between these mechanisms of power and different types of knowledge that he was interested in.[13] Therefore, the security dispositif consists not only of structures like the military and governmental policies tied to military actions but also to more abstract ideas such as military masculinities, which are examined in chapter 5, or war imaginaries, examined in chapter 6. Thus, this book is a collection of the ways in which the security dispositif has affected and still is affecting the embodied experience of the veterans I interviewed. It navigates how they understand the dispositif, how they relate to it, and how they are trying to change it based on their embodied experiences.

The concept of militarism, which is examined throughout, can also be seen as a part of the security dispositif mentioned above, as it is the "normalization and legitimation" of the security dispositif.[14] Militarism can also be seen as what Chris Cuomo calls a *presence*.[15] This presence is a force that

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can be felt and seen at all times because it is inherent within the military structure. Cuomo's aim is not an examination of war in and of itself, but rather a critique of militarism in general and the military institutions whose goal is ultimately to make war. In this critique, she shows how the military propagates violence not only in times of war but also in times of peace, specifically along gender and environmental lines. This is better explained by Laura Sjoberg and Sandra Via, who sum up Cuomo's argument by stating, ". . . war is best seen as a process or continuum rather than a discrete event. Where an event has a starting point and an ending point, militarism pervades societies (sometimes with more intensity and sometimes with less) before, during, and after the discrete event that the word 'war' is usually used to describe."[16]

Cuomo's use of the military as a presence not only shows the violence perpetrated on women's bodies by men, but also shows that there is a similar effect as the violence and harm of militarism is perpetrated upon the environment—which is examined in chapter 4. Cuomo explains that the military is one of the most harmful institutions against the environment.[17] She illustrates that the military is inflicting violence on both human and nonhuman entities, not only in times of war but also in times of peace—or in other words, the everyday.[18]

Similarly, in Michael Shapiro examines "the presence of war" through an intervention of theory and aesthetic montages. Shapiro shows that there is a "spatio-temporality of war" that cyclically connects war and the homefront.[19] In this analysis he states:

> Both texts disclose not only the way the homefront delivers bodies to the war front but also the degree to which war takes place on the home front. They evince an equivalence that frames "war" within a critical politics of aesthetics inasmuch as they repartition the sense of war as they challenge the boundary between war and domesticity.[20]

In other words, there is not only an intimate link between the battlefield and those at home, but there is an effectual relationship between the two. Those at home are driven to war for a variety of reasons; similarly, those at war come home to fight for a number of different causes, and often there are links to their time in the military. My project examines these frames of war as these veterans are coming home and fighting these new wars through their activism. Their activism "challenge the boundaries between war and domesticity."[21]

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Besides the physical and mental traumas that can come with military service, a veteran's whole being has become militarized, from the ways they navigate space to their social interactions.[22] As Zoë Wool explains, the affect of the "soldiers' experience of movement as suffused with the experiences of war zones, the way their experience of being and moving in one place has changed their experience of being and moving anyplace, including when they are not soldiers anymore."[23] Therefore, the affect of war and militarization is continually carried in the body and mind long after they have left the war zone.

Cynthia Enloe's construction of militarization is useful here. While Enloe is examining militarism as more of a cultural phenomenon, in which the militarization of the soldier seems to be a given, it helps lay out the effect of militarization on soldiers. Enloe describes militarization as a:

> step-by-step process by which a person or a thing gradually comes to be controlled by the military or comes to depend for its well-being on militaristic ideas. The more militarization transforms an individual or a society, the more that individual or society comes to imagine military needs and militaristic presumptions to be not only valuable but also normal. Militarization, that is, involves cultural as well as institutional, ideological, and economic transformations.[24]

Enloe goes on to state that the road to demilitarization is partially tied up with an unraveling of masculinity. A number of issues come about in the militarization processes, from dealing with PTS to issues of masculinity.[25] The military does a poor job dealing with these issues once a soldier comes home from combat, as there is little time to heal and no real attempt to deprogram a soldier from the training meant to dehumanize and kill the perceived enemies of the state. However, throughout this book we will see veterans begin to demilitarize as they critique the security dispositif and become less dependent upon militaristic ideals and beliefs.

One important critique of this project, coming from the critical military studies literature, is of the privileging of soldiers' and veterans' voices in activist movements, since the privileging of masculine militarized identities can be problematic.[26] Joanna Tidy shows that this becomes especially problematic in activism such as antiwar movements, where militarized masculinities such as combat soldier stories become seen as authentic in comparison to other stories that are often pushed aside but are just as

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important to understanding the implications of war and militarism. This focus on militarized masculinities in turn can have the ability to militarize the very groups that are attempting to dismantle militarism. I do not refute this criticism, as I think that there is the intent of many of these veterans to fight militarism, especially militarized masculinities, yet the intent can often have the opposite impact. This speaks directly to the messiness of war and politics. One of my close friends, Jeff, would often leave IVAW meetings angry, telling me, "Sometimes I hate IVAW. Many of those guys in the meeting are the same hypermasculine assholes that I hated in the army pushing the same army bullshit." I have no doubt that this occurs in many of the movements that veterans are a part of, and due to the hierarchy of military masculinities (discussed in chapter 5) it is easy to imagine that while these veterans may believe that they have become demilitarized, they still have much work to do.

While these veterans still have personal work to do (as we all do), one thing that they are cognizant of is how they are treated throughout the US. Since 9/11, there has been a "heroization" of soldier and veteran identities, from the media attention to cultural events such as sporting events.[27] Within this heroization is a discourse of patriotism in which those who have served are understood to be patriots who love their country and uphold "American values."[28] Oftentimes this idea of patriotism is framed within politically conservative and nationalistic ideals, whereas liberal ideologies—including social justice issues—are not often seen as patriotic.[29] Therefore, the soldiers and veterans who fight for social justice causes are often seen as having oppositional identities. Being cognizant of this they often work to leverage their identities in order to try to reframe the work they are doing, which would often be viewed as not patriotic, into something that is patriotic.[30] As can be seen throughout the book, this leveraging of their identities and reinscription of patriotism extend beyond issues directly pertaining to war, as many veterans can see the presence of militarism throughout society and they are able to make the connections of their service to these issues and attempt to create positive social and political change.

The activism that these veterans are engaged in is wide ranging, from environmental activism to participating in the Occupy Wall Street movement; it sometimes involves participating in protests, as well as taking paid community organizing positions with nonprofit organizations. While all these veterans began and ended up in different places, the one common point I am starting from is their military service; so, while I hope that my work can be helpful to social movements literature, the work itself is not

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necessarily about social movements. While the work of authors like Sydney Tarrow, Charles Tilly, Kevin McDonald, Donatella della Porta, and many others is very important not only to social movements but also to understanding the collective identity formation process, they are not particularly interested in the singularity of particular experiences because they are trying to build "theories" of social movements. Furthermore, I am not so much interested in the process or how contentious politics becomes formalized into movements; rather, I am turning it inside out as I seek to understand the affective relationship between these veterans' activism in relation to war and trauma. So, while normative social movements literature is conceptually helpful to define what has been done, it is not useful for understanding the micro politics of veterans, who already share a collective identity that bonds them. Hopefully my work can be seen as an alternative way to examine social movements, as a micro-political analysis is very useful to examining the meso and macro levels of social movements. Furthermore, these veterans often see their activism not necessarily as a product of the social movements, but rather a function of their subject position within the Social Contract, which I am labeling as the "Soldiers' Contract." Throughout this book, the terms "Social Contract" and "Soldiers' Contract" are capitalized, as they are transcendent concepts related to Enlightenment thinkers and the construction of the Social Contract.

This concept of the Soldiers' Contract can help to expand the current critical military studies literature, as it shows the ways that these veterans and their activism enact a similar approach in their critique of the state, militarism, and systems of power. Their embodied experiences before, during, and after war, as well as their relationship to the security dispositif, are what constitute the Soldiers' Contract as well as the Social Contract, which, as I will explain, have a reciprocal relationship.

The Soldiers' Contract

One of the foundations of modern society rests on the idea of the Social Contract, as there are important developmental relationships between the concepts of the nation and subjectivity within the Social Contract. This theoretical construction highlights the legitimacy of authority the state has over individuals. While many have written and theorized about the proper relationship between the state and individuals within this contract, and there is a range of viewpoints on where the limits of freedom, care, and

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security begin and end, the one clear point that comes through is that in exchange for legitimacy and sovereignty it is the duty of the state to protect and care for its citizens. One of the first theorists to develop the idea of the Social Contract, Thomas Hobbes, states, ". . . covenants, without the sword, are but words and of no strength to secure man at all."[31] It is within this line that we find the basis of the Soldiers' Contract, because it is the sword that defends, upholds, and enforces the relationship between the state and individuals in the Social Contract. But a sovereign is not a lone actor wielding the sword; it is through police and military force that the sovereign exercises the ability to maintain sovereignty. Thus, this concept navigates the relationship between the liberal state and people who are a part of military institutions.[32]

Two classical thinkers dominate current political thought when it comes to war and society, Niccolò Machiavelli and Thomas Hobbes. While Machiavelli predates the Social Contract, his ideas around the use of force are dominant in political thought. Machiavelli preferred a Roman-style standing military comprised of citizens, whereas Hobbes preferred mercenary soldiers.[33] The difference between these two is important, as one relies on the patriotism of the people to defend the state (Machiavelli), whereas the other works to protect citizens from the violence of war (Hobbes).[34] While Hobbes would help form the Social Contract, it would seem that most Enlightenment thinkers would follow Machiavelli's ideas on who should be defenders of that contract, as Rousseau, Kant, Hamilton, and many others would all advocate for citizen militias as forms of national defense; even Napoleon would use citizen patriotism as a way to create an "imperial military juggernaut."[35] However, while the use of citizen soldiers has been important to defending and forming the Social Contract, there has always been an element of a professional army within the formation of the nation.

Carl von Clausewitz believed there was no escaping the value of a professional army. This becomes especially clear with modernized weapons, as the technological complexity of weapons requires a professionalized component.[36] Because of this, there is a balance that has formed between a citizen/militia-style military and a professional/mercenary-style military in most nations. In the US there was a draft through the Vietnam War, but due to the unpopularity of the war and the draft, there was a shift to an "all-volunteer army," thus shifting the "political economy from post-war welfare statism to neoliberalism."[37] So in many ways the US is a mix of the two forms of thought. In some countries such as Israel, Iran, and many others, there is a forced conscription. So, what does the composition of one's

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military say about a country's system? The composition question must go beyond volunteer versus non-volunteer, as political aims of a nation easily become entangled within the formation of the soldier identity, thus shifting the Soldiers' Contract.

As Charles Mills points out, the Social Contract is not only political and moral but also racial.[38] Looking at the US military historically, we see that it has not only been used to "protect" the nation from foreign invaders, but that it has primarily been used to maintain the Social Contract internally—from employing the military to put down slave revolts to the use of the National Guard to stop black children from entering white schools in the 1950s. Carl Bogus goes as far as showing how the Second Amendment of the US Constitution was meant to protect and arm militias that were used as slave patrols, thus showing how the founding rights were meant to uphold white supremacy.[39] Or we could easily see the ways in which the US military was used to exterminate and/or control Native American and Hawaiian cultures, or as Mills puts it, anyone seen as "Savage."[40] This brings into question another aspect that Mills examines, that of beneficiaries versus signatories of the contract, because while not all white folks are signatories of the racial contract, all are beneficiaries of it. So, what does this say about those who enforce the racial contract, soldiers? While they are usually beneficiaries of the contract as well, are they all signatories since they are enforcing it? Again, we see this shifting throughout time dependent upon space, place, and current political climate. For example, the Soldiers' Contract in relation to the Social Contract looks extremely messy and different depending upon which side of the Civil War one was on; or the differences between a segregated US military force during World War II versus military forces today; beyond race, the contemporary debates over women serving in combat roles, as well as folks who identify as transgender serving at all. The aspect of women being excluded from military service for so long shows how the Soldiers' Contract upholds Pateman's Sexual Contract in the maintenance of a patriarchal society. So, the composition of the military is an important reflection of the relationship between the Soldiers' Contract and the Social Contract.

Introducing Racial and Sexual Contracts into the Soldiers' Contract—as Pateman and Mills do for the Social Contract—suggests that it will vary dependent upon space and time. So, at the height of the Enlightenment, the Soldiers' Contract can arguably be seen as crucial to the formation of the United States. The contract between the varied states and soldiers at this time was primarily what Pateman refers to as the "settlers contract,"

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wherein the goal of soldiers was to occupy and establish authority beholden to the soldiers' state authority.[41] In return, soldiers received land rights—often called military bounty lands—which, in the case of the United States government, partially established a basis of being a citizen protected by the Constitution.[42] This practice continued through the middle of the nineteenth century.

Ideologically speaking, the American Civil War marked a dividing point for the Soldiers' Contract, as the Union worked to maintain the nation, which was heading toward the abolition of slavery, and the Confederacy fought to uphold states' rights in order to maintain the institution of slavery. The Emancipation Proclamation would be the tipping point, as it not only pushed slavery to an end, but it also opened the door for black Americans to fight for Union forces.[43] The vast majority of those who fought in the war were the poor, who were drafted to fight for either the North or the South, depending upon where they lived or arrived in the country. The Union had an easier time drafting folks as they had a wider pool of people to draft from, especially considering that New York City was a major port city where large numbers of European immigrants arrived. Citizenship was often offered in exchange for service in the military.[44] With the Union victory, slavery ended, and while black Americans would partially be brought into the fold of the Social Contract, equality remained elusive, as there was still mass discrimination and Jim Crow laws that kept half of the country segregated, including a segregated military force.

While the Soldiers' Contract may have shifted to be a bit more inclusive, it still worked to maintain colonial white supremacy within the US, as it used the ideology of Manifest Destiny to expand westward and decimate many different indigenous cultures.[45] Once "sea to shining sea" was accomplished, the US began empire building and its gaze shifted outward. It is in empire building that the Soldiers' Contract really begins to shift and become not only more complex but also more noticeable. When war is on your doorstep it is much easier to justify, from tactics such as fear and control of an "other," to the opportunity of land and riches to be gained through bounty land warrants, you are constantly face-to-face with why you should fight.[46] But the farther away from war one gets, the reasons become more rhetorical, and the wealth and resources fall into fewer hands. Nothing drives this point home more than Maj. Gen. Smedley Butler's short 1935 book, *War Is a Racket*.[47] Butler is one of the most decorated US Marines of all time, a two-time Medal of Honor recipient who served tours of duty all over the world. In this antiwar political manifesto, he highlights

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the ways that the military is used in order for US businesses to profit, at the expense of soldiers' lives. This critique would be echoed years later by President Eisenhower, once a military general himself, in his famous warning about the military-industrial complex. So, what kept soldiers fighting and risking their lives so far from home for the profits of a few? While some were conscripted, many joined due to the economic hardships of the times; military service did not pay much, but it was guaranteed food and shelter for many. Furthermore, as will be highlighted in chapter 6, the US military has a long history of enlisting foreign-born citizens with the promise of citizenship. While natural-born citizens are born into the Social Contract within the US, foreign-born citizens are not, and thus they are agreeing to two contracts when they sign up. First is the US Social Contract, second is the Soldiers' Contract, which is meant to defend the first. Thus, empire building also relies on foreign-born labor, with the promise of inclusion in the US Social Contract.

Empire building requires many allies, so when war broke out in Europe during World War I, the US eventually answered the call, although in both World War I and World War II it did so reluctantly, as faraway war for other people's land is hard to justify, especially with the onset of the Great Depression. Bonuses were promised to soldiers, but when the US government and the US upper class pushed to not uphold the promised bonuses, the veterans organized into the Bonus Army, which turned into a series of protests in Washington, DC, that had the participation of more than 40,000 veterans.[48] While the Bonus Army would be violently removed, the seeds of dissent were sown, and the rights of the soldier began to shift. It is my contention that *it is in the protest of soldiers and veterans that we can best see the state of the Social Contract that the people have with the state*. Since soldiers are the sword and the strength of the Social Contract, their dissent acts as the miner's canary and shows that there is something amiss in the Social Contract. Soldiers and veterans have led the way for progress not only in the military but across the nation, as the reciprocal relationship between the state and soldiers has been important for either to succeed.

One example to see the relationship between the Soldiers' Contract and the Social Contract is to examine the imbrications of the military and the civil rights movement. The Bonus Army was not racially segregated, as the military at the time still was. Veterans both black and white stood side by side and came together to advocate for what the state owed them. The push by the Bonus Army would eventually lead to better care and benefits, such as the GI Bill, for veterans.[49] This unity could also be a sign

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of a shift within the military as the civil rights movement taking place in the 1940s sought to desegregate the US military. The fight to desegregate the military was long and arduous, and lasted from World War II to well into the Korean War. The "Double V for Victory, at home and abroad" sent the message that black soldiers were just as courageous and patriotic as their white counterparts—though in the "Banana Wars," World War I, and World War II, most black soldiers were relegated to noncombat service and hard labor positions, despite the fact that there were some very prominent black fighting units, such as the Buffalo Soldiers and the Tuskegee Airmen.[50] In 1948, President Harry Truman would issue Executive Order No. 9981, which ordered the desegregation of the military. However, due to the cost and difficulty of maintaining a segregated military, it would not be until the Korean War that it would become fully integrated.[51] That this took place during the Korean War means that these gains happened a decade before the civil rights movement would be at its peak; however, it was soldier and veteran activism that pushed Truman to pass the executive order.[52]

One cannot talk about the civil rights movement without understanding the connections to the 1960s antiwar movement; and one cannot understand the antiwar movement without knowing about the veterans' peace movement that led the way within the antiwar movement. But veterans were not only a part of the antiwar movement; with the creation of organizations such as Vietnam Veterans Against the War, veterans came home and were also prominent members of civil rights groups such as the Black Panthers and Brown Berets.[53] The draft, and the soldiers who came home opposed to the war, brought about a critical engagement concerning the war, civil rights, class warfare, racism, and imperialism. It would be this critical engagement that would end the draft, as the US would shift to an "all-volunteer force." Thus, these soldiers saw a flaw in both the Social Contract and the Soldiers' Contract, and their protest worked to renegotiate the terms of the contract as it ended the draft and forced the government to shift not only its strategy for enlisting soldiers but also the rhetoric used to uphold both contracts. As others have shown, however, the shift in the security dispositif to more privatized and neoliberal systems of securitization does not come without its own sets of problems, some of which the activist veterans discussed in this book are now addressing.[54]

While the shift away from the draft would make internal dissent more difficult, as would a rhetorical shift by people who worked to shame dissent such as President Reagan when he stated that "the country has turned its back on veterans, and we'll never do that again," the legacy of dissent by

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soldiers and veterans has lived on.[55] In the wake of the Iraq War, veterans would start the organization Iraq Veterans Against the War, who again worked to bring a critical engagement to America's military engagements. But many of the veterans who are critically engaging in protest are not only covering issues about war. The activism they are engaged with is a critique of the state, and it is heavily involved with identity politics as they are rooted in issues of race, class, gender, and sexuality.[56] So reframing this within a contractual framework, veterans' and soldiers' protests seen throughout this book are not only a critique of the state, but also a critique of both the Soldiers' Contract and the Social Contract.

Mills highlights that there are de jure and de facto elements within the Social Contract. Similarly, there are de jure and de facto elements within the Soldiers' Contract. First and foremost, soldiers sign a legally binding contract and swear an oath when joining the military. Once they have signed their contract, they are under constant threat from their superiors about maintaining their contract. This threat comes from the recruiters, drill sergeants, and their chain of command. Threats range from imprisonment to death—though the latter is usually a more idle threat, usually in war zones to comply with orders. The threat of breaking the de jure contract plays into the formation of the de facto contract as it is a set of informal practices, ideals, and beliefs that create the subject of the soldier. The contract is used as a consequence during the indoctrination process, as soldiers in boot camp are constantly reminded of what will happen if they do not meet their "obligation," that is, their "duty" to fulfill the oath they swore and the contract they signed. Therefore, the process of militarization becomes a part of the contract, and while this point probably seems obvious, the implications are not as obvious. The terms of the de facto contract then are to be militarized and to follow the directives of the chain of command. This is done and maintained not only through the threat of the contract but also through indoctrination. As I describe in chapter 1, the indoctrination process happens in boot camp and is a mental, emotional, and somatic process meant to break down the individual so that he or she becomes part of a militarized group. The aims of the de facto contract are clear: the weaponization of the body and the ability to create weapons of and for the state. The de facto contract can be seen throughout military culture, from the cadences that are sung to the hypermasculinity and racism that is often promoted. The de facto contract contributes to the Soldiers' Contract; however, it does not constitute it, as the Soldiers' Contract also has a relationship with society and the Social Contract.

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To be clear, the Soldiers' Contract stands between the state and the Social Contract. Thus, when soldiers protest, it shows that they feel there is something wrong with the Social Contract. Soldiers are the defenders of the Social Contract as well as participants in it. When the state violates the Social Contract, soldiers and veterans are in a prime position to critique the state, as well as to work to repair the contract, as they could still be seen as upholding the Social Contract by being a part of the Soldiers' Contract. As the US enlistment oath holds, soldiers are sworn to defend the country from enemies both foreign and domestic. The domestic can include the state if the politics of the time is incongruent with the will of the people. One recent example of this is the organization Vets Vs. Hate, which has worked to counter the divisive rhetoric of President Donald Trump, both before and after his election. This indictment of the state by these veterans shows the violation of the Social Contract that President Trump enables through his rhetoric and policies. While there are soldiers and veterans who work to uphold the ideals and policies of Donald Trump, they too are enabling their understanding of Soldiers' Contract in favor of their political view of the Social Contract. Therefore, individuals' political outlooks can shift their views of both contracts, and thus it is not as much about their actual politics but rather their collective positionality as veterans and soldiers as opposed to subjects of the Social Contract, because no matter their politics they are drawing from similar discourses.[57]

Methods

It is not necessarily the norm for veterans to become activists, especially social justice advocates.[58] However, it is important to hear these voices because they represent a different view from the average veteran precisely because their activism is an articulation of an as-of-yet unmarked phenomenon: the embodiment of political agency to contest the objectification by the military (during service) and the VA (through treatment).

To conduct this research, I started compiling a list of veterans who I considered activists. These were mostly veterans who were part of Iraq Veterans Against the War (IVAW). I then used a snowball method, having them reach out to contact their networks or other veterans that they knew who considered themselves activists on any issue. This led to a large list of veterans who were interested in participating in in-depth interviews, with open-ended questions, that discussed their personal history, their time in

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the military, and their current activism. The interviews typically lasted two hours, and at times I spent the day with the participants observing them in action, which allowed for extensive field notes. I would ask each participant if there was someone else they knew that could be interviewed, which led to more interviews. From August to December 2013, I drove from coast to coast across North America (the United States, Mexico, and Canada) to conduct interviews with twenty-two self-identified veteran activists. I then transcribed all of the interviews and conducted thematic discursive analysis, which I coded and compiled, primarily into six different categories of activism that I had found among the participants: antiwar, class, environmental, gender, citizenship, and veteran healing.[59]

As I recruited and interviewed participants, my personal identity as a combat veteran helped on numerous levels. First and foremost, many of these veterans were excited to be helping a fellow veteran with a project that was strengthening the community for veterans. Second, the veterans expressed that they were more at ease in relating their experiences with me compared to other interviewers (academic or media), because they knew I had experienced similar things and that I therefore not only understood them better but also would not judge them for their past actions. This is partly due to my opening the interviews by relating my own experiences and explaining how I came to formulate my project. There was also a lot of interaction within the interviews, as we would often echo similar experiences and stories to one another about our time in service. Third, there was no real language barrier, as many of the acronyms, duties, and structures did not have to be explained to me.[60] Throughout the book, all names are the participants' actual names, as veterans wanted their work and activism to be exposed so that others may know of it and hopefully be inspired to do the same. However, pseudonyms are used for any third-party nonpublic figures discussed.

I began the interviews by telling my story and explaining my initial theoretical framework of the overall project. This led to a number of open-ended questions about their time prior to joining the military, in the military, and after the military. This allowed me to ask a range of questions about their subject formation from civilian to soldier to activist. While most of the interviews began the same, they all took on a life of their own, exploring many different paths. Some interviews were held in coffee shops, some at the veterans' places of business, and others just after an activist action or event. Whenever possible, I would observe their activism in action, taking field notes of the event, watching the reactions of others, and analyzing the literature used to promote or explain the event.

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My collection of narratives from veteran activists works to make discursive arguments meant to shift the ways in which we understand and view issues around the security dispositif. The initial narratives led into questions that would highlight their current activism, how it tied to their experiences as a soldier, how the issue that they are fighting is tied to the military, and the ways in which their activism has affected them since their exit from the military. I utilized grounded theory; as I traveled and interviewed, I would find common themes to build upon, as well as new questions to ask based upon past interviews. I came into the project solely wanting to interview activist veterans, with no other parameters, but as I traveled themes around identity began to form. While I started with antiwar activists, I found that many of these veterans' activism bled into other forms of activism. One example is the veterans I interviewed who were a part of the Truman Foundation. This group consists of a wide array of veterans, from those who were in no way antiwar but were very environmentally conscious, to those whose activism took them back to Afghanistan to meet with local peace groups there. While I often drew from my own war experiences to relate to those I interviewed, I also used stories I heard from other vets to relate to those I was currently interviewing. This allowed for a further development of the themes that became the chapters of this book.

While there are thousands more veterans who are activists with different stories and experiences that could have contributed to this project, it was obviously not feasible to interview them all. And while I could have done a survey to get a wider representation, the in-depth interviews provide a more intimate account of the everyday violences that these veterans face. Furthermore, a part of what many of these veterans are trying to do is to speak their truths to power, and the details of those truths can easily get lost in surveys and quantitative studies. My project displays these intimate stories and then cuts them open, showing how they relate to theoretical concepts and, most importantly, what we can learn from these veterans. Most of the interviews were very helpful for me personally in understanding how their activism is directly connected to their time in the military.

All of my interviews and field notes were transcribed, tying together those common themes with the different interviews and to various literatures and concepts. My project shows how the veterans' embodiments are not only self-reflexive but also transformative. Many of the veteran activists I interviewed understand the subject-formation processes and the ways that they interact with ideals of masculinity, racialization, and liberal democratic

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governance, but what they seek is to change those interactions, as they find them deeply problematic and the source of much trauma. The veterans I interviewed seek to resist regular embodiments of militarization, even if they were once a part of and reinforced those same identities.

Furthermore, I am staging encounters with theory and these narratives—which are genealogies—as I seek to create histories of the present. As Foucault explains about genealogies:

> We have both a meticulous rediscovery of struggles and the raw memory of fights. These genealogies are a combination of erudite knowledge and what people know . . . we can give the name "genealogy" to this coupling together of scholarly erudition and local memories, which allows us to constitute a historical knowledge of struggles and to make use of that knowledge in contemporary tactics.[61]

Similarly, my use of the narratives of these veterans and their activism highlights "the discursive construction of social subjects and knowledge and the functioning of discourse in social change."[62] These veterans hope to construct new ways of knowing with their activism and narratives, which is counter to the hierarchical knowledges or systems of thought. These systems often use empirical data, which more often than not works to dehumanize the issues that these veterans are passionate about. These are not just flat stories; they are dynamic narratives inviting us to think about the concepts discussed throughout in different ways. Furthermore, similar to how Michael Shapiro describes the creation of an encounter between data or events and theory, I seek to show how these narratives interact with theory, and vice versa, throughout the book.

Finally, an important aspect to these narratives is the way I engage them with my own experiences. I feel that this can provide a new way of not only understanding the stories and theories I weave in and out of, but also could be seen as a more intimate way to conduct research. In many ways it is a blend of ethnographic and autoethnographic approaches that is engaging with theory. Just as the field of critical military studies works to understand the relationships between the researchers and forms of militarism, this book constantly interacts on multiple levels as we look at my embodied experience, the people I interviewed and their embodiment, as well as the theories and events that are taking place locally, nationally, and internationally.

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Road Map

In the first chapter I locate myself within my work through an autoarcheological account of my time in the military. This chapter explores my own subject formation in boot camp, then goes on to show the effects of war. By relating my own experiences, I am able to problematize the ways in which masculinity and racism are used within military training, and how individuality is stripped in order to form the soldier subject. Upon leaving boot camp, an examination of my time in Kosovo and Iraq shows that the soldier subject is not completely stable, as it becomes fractured in war, which then leads to the subsequent struggles to heal and to understand my experience through academia and activism.

Chapter 2 examines the organization that got me interested in activism, Iraq Veterans Against the War (IVAW), as well as my own experience with the group. It not only explores the history of IVAW and their tactics but also focuses upon how their primary tactic, parrhesia—speaking truth to power—represents a perceived threat to Western liberal governance. This form of nonviolent action works to expose the lies as well as the truths that have been hidden from civil society, while also healing by releasing the burden of their truths. Finally, the chapter illustrates the similarities between the dangers these veterans represent with their words to the threat that Chelsea Manning posed by releasing top-secret documents.

Chapter 3 shifts more to others' narratives, as it engages with IVAW members Scott Olsen and Shamar Thomas, and their work with and beyond the Occupy Wall Street movement. This chapter considers the effects of neoliberalism, particularly its effect on communities of color, and the ways in which neoliberalism is maintained by the police state. Occupy Wall Street reflects these problems as it seeks to confront these systems of power through nonviolence, even in the face of heightened state violence. These veterans' activism was produced by neoliberal policies as social programs are stripped and communities become impoverished. In response, they seek to better their situation through resistance, and they are able to relate these functions of neoliberalism to their experiences in the military.

Chapter 4 moves to the *presence* of neoliberalism and war in environmental activism. Many veterans have left the military disgusted with the resource wars that have violently claimed the lives of their brothers and sisters in arms. This in turn has pushed them into becoming advocates for alternative energies and a nonviolent geopolitical stance. This advocacy for the environment has had multiple effects, from shifting the debate from global warming to a position of national security, to veterans finding new

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