

JOHN F. KERRY, VIETNAM VETERANS AGAINST THE WAR,
SPEECH BEFORE THE U.S. SENATE COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS
(22 April 1971)

Shawn J. Parry-Giles
University of Maryland

Abstract: John Kerry's 1971 speech before the U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations and the Nixon administration's response reveal the heated debate over the appropriateness of veterans protesting a war in which they served. Kerry and the Vietnam Veterans Against the War sought personal and community redemption in calling for an end to the war in Vietnam. The Nixon administration ultimately challenged their patriotic commitments, foreshadowing the more contemporary debate over anti-war protests.

Key Words: John Kerry, Political Authenticity, Vietnam War, Vietnam Veterans Against the War, Nixon administration

When the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth aired their political attacks against Senator John F. Kerry (D-MA) in the summer of 2004, they not only challenged the veracity of the presidential candidate's war record and his allegations of U.S. atrocities during the Vietnam War, but they did so as eyewitnesses to history. During the group's 527 advertisement entitled, "Any Questions?," Vietnam veterans Al French and Bob Elder both exclaimed, "I served with John Kerry," while Lewis Letson charged, "I know John Kerry is lying about his first Purple Heart because I treated him for that injury."¹ The testimony's force relies on claims of first-hand knowledge regarding Kerry's Vietnam experiences, exhibiting the contested eyewitness accounts of those with boots on the ground in one of the most controversial wars in U.S. history.²

Of course, the contestations over the memories of the Vietnam War merely reflect its turbulence in real time. Veterans returning from the war embodied the discord over the U.S. involvement in the Southeast Asian conflict, as evidenced by the formation of one prominent anti-war group in the late 1960s—Vietnam Veterans Against the War (VVAW)—an "organization [that] would put Richard Nixon into a panic, provoke FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover into breaking the law in order to destroy it . . . and bring to prominence at least one leader of national stature, John Kerry."³ For many returning soldiers, the decision to denounce the war represented a "search for redemption"—"a struggle to find meaning...in the human experience" and to "narrow the gap between the ideals and the reality of American society."⁴ Yet for the Nixon administration, VVAW's actions challenged the veterans' loyalty to the nation, which raised questions about the veterans' patriotism as U.S. citizens. According to a planning document from the White House Special Files, the VVAW "urged everybody" at a UCLA

rally on April 3, 1971, to "sign the 'People's Peace Treaty,' which is the Hanoi version of a peace settlement for Vietnam." The unknown author of the Nixon administration document concluded, "It's not too difficult to figure whose side this group is on."⁵ Such evaluations of the veterans' war experiences and anti-war views were ultimately framed as concerns over their authenticity. As Charles W. Colson, Special Council to the President (Nixon) suggested, there are "a number of articles published which question the authenticity of the [VVAW] veterans."⁶

The issue of Kerry's authenticity and the authenticity of the anti-war veterans loomed large not only in 2004 but also in the early 1970s, reflecting the cultural preoccupation with questions of authenticity by countercultural groups like the New Left. As Doug Rossinow explains, the New Left's "quest for authenticity" meant "[o]vercoming alienation," necessitating the discovery of a "common human identity... [and] joining in collective action." Many anti-war protesters were inspired by the notion that citizens had to take "personal, individual responsibility for one's government's actions."⁷ Such sentiments revealed the tensions surrounding notions of authenticity in the 1960s, which was at once centered in notions of individualism and "self-fulfillment," yet simultaneously concerned with collectivism and the "duties of citizenship" in support of the nation's goals.⁸ The preoccupation over image-politics and the genuineness of that image also attracted considerable attention during the rise of television, which further complicated perceptions of authenticity.⁹

It is within the cultural struggle over questions of *political authenticity* that John F. Kerry's anti-Vietnam War speech and the Nixon administration's response to the VVAW is situated. As eyewitnesses to history, the veteran soldiers of the VVAW, including its most visible spokesman, John F. Kerry, garnered increased levels of credibility that attracted presidential, congressional, and public praise and scrutiny. VVAW's arguments, as expressed by Kerry, exhibited tenets of authenticity that empowered the individual as an agent of change; veteran soldiers, thus, worked to expose the "truth" about Vietnam in order to save fellow soldiers from harm and to recapture the morality of the nation. In response to the VVAW's and Kerry's calls to end the Vietnam War, the Nixon administration worked to infiltrate the organization, disrupt its political power, and ultimately, to challenge the authenticity of the protesters' public image. Exhibiting an authenticity that privileged the ideals of the country over the individual grievances of the disgruntled soldiers, the Nixon administration questioned the soldiers' war records, their veterans' status, and Kerry's political motives in addition to challenging their patriotism. In the end, the case study demonstrates that within this wartime context, a rhetoric of political authenticity exhibited commitments to a moral search for personal and community redemption in response to individual and cultural trauma of those veterans who fought in Vietnam War and returned to protest it. Yet, ultimately, the patriotic expectations of the Nixon administration overwhelmed notions of personal and national "truths," leading to a focus on the *inauthenticity* of those questioning the morality and legality of the nation. This historical debate, then, helps to explain why, even some thirty years later, concerns over John Kerry's authenticity as a loyal American and trusted leader still haunted him during the 2004 presidential campaign. Before turning to the examination of Kerry's 1971 speech to the U.S. Senate

Committee on Foreign Relations and the Nixon administration's response to the VVAW protests, the essay will explore the historical and contemporary debate over matters of authenticity.

Defining Authenticity

Conceptions of authenticity are often grounded in questions of morality, truth, individualism, and culture. Although Plato exhibited concerns over discerning the "genuine" from the "fake,"¹⁰ Charles Taylor situates authenticity's "starting point in the eighteenth-century notion that human beings are endowed with a moral sense, an intuitive feeling for what is right and wrong."¹¹ Many of the earliest theories of authenticity were linked to the individual, yet, changes in the concept began to emerge during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century in the post-Industrial Age. As Hanno Hardt maintains, anxieties about authenticity derived from the psychological and social problems associated with nineteenth-century industrialization.¹² Miles Orvell references the gradual and overlapping shift between a nineteenth century "culture of imitation" and a twentieth century "culture of authenticity."¹³ Within the twentieth-century, many theorists moved toward a more psychological-social understanding of authenticity. Marshall Berman, for example, discusses Rousseau's philosophical assumptions that "the personal needs and the aspirations of the individual man could not be fulfilled except through political activity and involvement."¹⁴

The interplay between the cultural and individual understanding of authenticity is reflected in the social and political turbulence of the 1950s and 1960s. Berman calls "the problem of authenticity" one of "the most politically explosive of human impulses" in contemporary U.S. culture. The mission, as defined by the New Left of this period, involved an "intense concern with *being oneself*."¹⁵ Rossinow locates the contemporary search for authenticity in the "heart of the new left."¹⁶ Anxieties about authenticity are vividly expressed in one of the more notable manifestos of the New Left—"The Port Huron Statement," penned by the Students for Democratic Society (SDS) in 1962. According to the SDS:

The goal of man and society should be human independence: a concern not with image of popularity but with finding a meaning in life that is personally authentic....This kind of independence does not mean egotistic individualism.... *Human relationships* should involve fraternity and honesty....human brotherhood must be willed...as a condition of future survival and as the most appropriate form of social relations.¹⁷

Of course, inherent in the SDS philosophy was the notion that personal authenticity is integrally connected to civic participation. Debates over authenticity in politically contentious contexts like the 1960s, often divided those seeking political change (e.g., New Left) against those promoting more traditional conceptions of U.S. nationalism.¹⁸ As Corey Alton contends, "the search for authenticity is commonly pitted against

traditional moral orders."¹⁹ Viewing questions of authenticity in political terms, Taylor concludes that "the knockers of authenticity are frequently on the right."²⁰

The intensifying power of television in the 1950s and 1960s exacerbated questions over the genuine, raising uncertainties over what constituted "the real," particularly in U.S. politics. In his famed 1961 book, *The Image*, Daniel J. Boorstin identified what he viewed as the "most important question in our lives: namely, what we believe to be real."²¹ David Greenberg claimed that many saw the "rise of the image" as a threat to "democratic politics," which represented a "crisis of authenticity: a fear that society would lose touch with real feelings, the honest pursuit of needs and wants, genuine connections with others...that made human experience authentic."²² An individual and cultural search for "truth" became a preoccupation for the New Left; as Greenberg contends, the "radical search for truth became the vehicle for rediscovering the authentic."²³ Such controversies over authenticity circulated throughout the Vietnam War.

Within this essay, three different yet overlapping conceptions of political authenticity are evident. To begin with, *political authenticity* represents a "symbolic, mediated, interactional, and highly contested process" involving political actors, their opponents, and at times, the news media in assessing public policy positions, the role of U.S. citizens within the nation-state, and the veracity of a political leader's public image as entangled in political debates "on the grounds of truth and realism."²⁴

The first conception of political authenticity attends to the *authenticity of the individual*. It is vested in the will of the individual and his or her relationship to the nation as (s)he searches for personal truth, individual redemption, and moral rejuvenation due to perceptions of individual and cultural alienation. Political participation becomes the means by which individuals transcend such personal alienation, working collectively with others to help produce a more authentic nation.

The second notion concerns the *authenticity of the nation*. Such arguments position the nation instead of the individual as the locus of power in matters of authenticity. For the authentic nation, the ideologies (e.g., patriotism) that define the nation frame the individual's role as citizen. National myths dominate at the expense, arguably, of notions of competing "truths," which are often politicized as thwarting the political and moral mission of the country. Patriotism, thus, represents a higher order value than individualism, especially when involving acts of protest, which are often viewed as self-serving, wayward, and even traitorous, potentially jeopardizing national interests.²⁵

The final notion of political authenticity takes the "image turn" in U.S. politics and attends to the *authenticity of the image*, which likewise can involve concerns over individual and national authenticity. These issues center on the veracity of the political actor's public image (e.g., John Kerry) and the issues that they espouse (anti-war sentiments). In response, political opponents seek to destabilize such political images, often as a means to discredit their rivals and their political positions. The news media often enter the authenticity debate by interrogating these competing images of authenticity on the grounds of truth and realism.

All three types of political authenticity are exhibited within the debate over the VVAW, John Kerry's 1971 speech, and the Nixon administration's response. Because returning veterans were not typical anti-war protesters, they complicated the public deliberations over the war, their perceived level of patriotism, and their status as authentic citizens. Donald A. Ritchie explains the complications: "commentators often tend to portray those who fought in Vietnam as proponents of the war, and those who eluded the draft and military service as demonstrators against the war. Yet some of the most outspoken hawks never served in uniform, while some of the most passionate doves were Vietnam veterans."²⁶ The veterans of the VVAW, thus, entered the political fray with an "authority of experience,"²⁷ exploring a sense of individual redemption and catharsis while aiding, in their minds, the ailing nation in its recovery of idealism by calling for an end to the contentious war. Ultimately, though, the Nixon administration challenged the image authenticity of the heroic veterans-turned-protesters and instead questioned their patriotic commitments to the nation during wartime.

Veterans as War Protesters

Authenticity issues, New Left philosophies, the Vietnam policies of the Johnson and Nixon administrations, and anti-war protests all collided in the late 1960s. The VVAW emerged out of a political climate that pitted New Left ideologies concerned with the authenticity of the individual against more conservative values attuned to the authenticity of the nation. Individuals were at once encouraged to become civically engaged as part of their private journey toward self-awareness. They also, though, were expected to exhibit a loyalty to the nation that transcended notions of selfishness, even if that meant going to war on behalf of a country that many knew little about or a cause that few fully understood. As Jan Barry, one of the founders of the VVAW, explained, "Most GIs I was with could not have found the place [Vietnam] on a map or, furthermore, could have cared less. They go where they're sent. They had no idea how we had come to have a relationship with this country."²⁸

The genesis of the VVAW is rooted in the interactions of six returning Vietnam veterans in the spring of 1967, approximating the New Left's more visible transition from a civil rights focus to one challenging the legitimacy of the war. Even though the ideals of the New Left are visible in the rhetoric of the veteran protesters, the VVAW's membership was unique, not only because its members served in the Vietnam War, but also because many of its members came out of working-class backgrounds and not from the nation's college campuses, as was the case with many new leftists.²⁹

From the outset, the organization had to address the image obstacles associated with the more common "baby killer" label attached to returning vets, which derived from allegations of U.S. war atrocities committed against civilians in Southeast Asia. Many of the organization's activities were designed to raise awareness over what the VVAW considered U.S. war crimes. Operation RAW (Rapid American Withdraw)—the organization's first major protest—involved guerilla theater (an enactment of warlike theatrics designed to raise awareness). The protest involved a four day walk from Morristown, New Jersey to Valley Forge, Pennsylvania in September of 1970 as a re-

enactment of a march that George Washington made between the two battlefields during the Revolutionary War. Over 150 veterans participated in the mock search and destroy missions along the way. At the conclusion of the march, veterans and veteran supporters rose to speak, including Donald Sutherland, Jane Fonda, and John F. Kerry.³⁰ Operation RAW represented Kerry's initial public association with the VVAW. Reflecting on the march, Kerry accentuated the authenticity of the activities: "I thought there was an authenticity and a level of pain and hurt and anger that was powerful."³¹ In the end, Kerry thought the VVAW's message, though, needed to reach a broader audience, which he helped accomplish with his leadership of the anti-war group.

By the time that Kerry became involved with VVAW, he had served in the Navy for almost four years (February 1966-January 1970). Once he completed naval officer training in Newport, Rhode Island, and his Naval Schools Command and Combat Information Center training as a Watch Officer in San Francisco, he reported to the *USS Gridley* in Long Beach, California, where he served as an Ensign. The *USS Gridley* left for the Gulf of Tonkin in Vietnam and Subic Bay in the Philippines in February of 1968 and returned to Long Beach in June of that same year. Thereafter, Kerry was promoted to the rank of Lieutenant Junior Grade and entered the swift boat commander training school in Coronado, California. By December 1968, he was commanding a swift boat in the Mekong Delta. Because Kerry was wounded three times in combat, though, he earned the right to go home in April 1969. For his service in Vietnam, Kerry was awarded three Purple Hearts, a Bronze Star, and a Silver Star—some of which were questioned during the 2004 presidential election.³²

Kerry's profile did not match those of the other VVAW members, which helps explain his rise to prominence within the VVAW as well as the controversy surrounding the authenticity of his image. Born on December 11, 1943, to a foreign service agent, Kerry's family traveled a lot in his younger years, living in such places as St. Briac, Berlin, and Oslo. Kerry also attended boarding school in Switzerland before entering Yale University and graduating in June of 1966 with a B.A. in political science.³³ As an officer, Hunt writes that Kerry's "rugged, handsome features and strong communication skills made him an ideal spokesman" for the VVAW.³⁴ Yet, Kerry's own political ambitions raised doubt about the authenticity of his image as a VVAW leader. This critique was not lost on his critics and some other VVAW members who expressed "resentments" over featuring officers as the public face of the VVAW instead of "enlisted people."³⁵ Kerry also preferred high profile events to day-to-day campaign organizing, which fueled the bitterness of some peers.³⁶ Resentment over his leadership and his own concerns that the VVAW was moving closer to strategies of violence ultimately precipitated Kerry's departure from the VVAW by the end of 1971.³⁷

Even though he volunteered for active duty, Kerry's propensity to challenge the war was foreshadowed early on as he expressed ambivalence over the war's mission. In a letter home to his wife (Judy) after learning of a close friend's death in Vietnam (Jack Pershing), Kerry's feelings of alienation, bitterness, as well as his commitment to public service are quite apparent:

everything is so hollow and ridiculous....I feel so bitter and angry and everywhere around me there is nothing but violence and war....if I do nothing else in my life I will never stop trying to bring to people the conviction of how wasteful and asinine is a human expenditure of this kind....my own effort must be entire and thorough and that it must do what it can to help make this a better world to live in.³⁸

Such sentiments epitomized the notions of authenticity expressed by the New Left. As Rossinow explains, "To the extent that they still felt they suffered from alienation, they located the affliction's cause in the surrounding culture," moving forward during the Vietnam War in a "joint search for an authentic and democratic society, the fused quests for personal and social transformation."³⁹

Following Operation RAW, Kerry and the VVAW continued the focus on U.S. war atrocities, co-sponsoring the Winter Soldier Investigation with the Citizens' Commission of Inquiry on U.S. War Crimes in Vietnam (CCI). Exhibiting the logic of an individually-centered authenticity designed to enhance the morality of an errant nation, Hunt suggests that "[t]he Winter Soldier Investigation would be but a beginning in rousing America's conscience and healing its veterans."⁴⁰ The name, Winter Soldiers, represented an inversion of Thomas Paine's concept of the sunshine patriot or the summer soldiers who shrank from duty. As Richard Stacewicz explains, the VVAW like Paine sought to "protect their...independence and their democratic ideals" and expose the "deep seated problems afflicting the republic." In the process, the investigations functioned as a "therapeutic event for many veterans."⁴¹

The CCI launched the investigation into the U.S. war atrocities in Washington, D.C. on December 1, 1970; the investigations continued in Detroit, Michigan from January 31 through February 2, 1971. In Detroit, more than 100 veterans met in the Howard Johnson's New Center Motor Lodge to testify to their own involvement with war crimes as well as to provide eyewitness accounts of other such acts of illegal violence.⁴² In total, investigations were held in 13 cities across the country, offering more opportunities for veterans to recount their eyewitness testimonies. VVAW member, Joe Urgo, explained the mission of the investigation, focusing on larger national rather than individual motives: "we had to prove that what was done in Vietnam—in terms of the torture, murder, massacres, rape—was not individual decisions by individual GIs but in fact policy that had been worked out by the centers of the United States government, through its think tanks, war colleges, Pentagon...."⁴³ Kerry helped organize the investigations and took part in interviewing veterans—the results of which were integrated into his 1971 testimony before the U.S. Senate's Committee on Foreign Relations.

The Winter Soldier Investigations were inspired, in part, by the controversy surrounding My Lai (also known as Son My) and the court marshaling and subsequent conviction of Army 1st Lt. William L. Calley, Jr. for such war crimes. Although not made public until the fall of 1969 by journalist Seymour Hersh,⁴⁴ the events at the village in Vietnam took place on March 16, 1968, where a routine "search and destroy mission" by the Charlie Company led to the killing of anywhere between 200-500 Vietnamese

civilians with limited evidence that the village residents were engaged in significant combat against U.S. troops.⁴⁵ Of the My Lai "massacre," Michal R. Belknap contends: "Houses were blown apart by grenades. Cows, water buffalo, pigs, chickens, and ducks were slaughtered. So were hundreds of human beings." Villagers were reportedly gunned down as they sought cover or hovered for safety in groups, and women were reportedly sexually assaulted.⁴⁶ A subsequent investigation by General William Peers and the Peers Commission also evidenced a large-scale cover-up of the events in My Lai.⁴⁷ Even though 30 individuals were investigated for their complicity and involvement in the acts of illegal violence, in the end, many were not charged. Charges against 12 were dismissed before a trial commenced and three others were brought to trial and acquitted. Ultimately, Lt. Calley was charged with the murder of "not less than" 109 Vietnamese for his command of the troops in My Lai and was ultimately the only one convicted of murdering 22 Vietnamese.⁴⁸ Calley was initially sentenced to life in prison on March 31, 1971; his sentence was subsequently reduced from 20 to 10 years in April of 1974. In November of that year, Calley was released on parole.⁴⁹ For the VVAW, the Winter Soldier Investigations were designed not to excuse his alleged acts but to show solidarity with Calley and to also hold politically and legally accountable the country's military and political leaders, particularly the Nixon administration.

In order to build on the successes of the Winter Soldier Investigations, the VVAW immediately planned their next event—Dewey Canyon III⁵⁰—which involved a five-day protest in Washington, D.C. by Vietnam veterans. The events included among other activities the VVAW's lobbying of Congress (including Kerry's April 22, 1971 speech), marches, an encampment on the national mall, guerilla theater performances, and the symbolic return of war medals. Dewey Canyon III not only "triggered a nationwide organizing drive," but it attracted the full scale attention of the Nixon administration.⁵¹

The Nixon Administration's Preparations for Anti-War Veterans

While the Winter Soldier investigations did raise some public awareness of wartime atrocities, they attracted even more scrutiny from the Nixon administration. Prior to the rise of the VVAW, both the Johnson and Nixon administrations portrayed war protesters as unpatriotic rich kids from college campuses who were merely acting out against authority and lacking in genuine conviction.⁵² Yet the status of Vietnam veterans as war protesters significantly disrupted such pejorative images of the anti-war movement. The Nixon administration's internal polling on the My Lai case also revealed a sense of outrage over the U.S. government's treatment of Lt. Calley, who many believed was a "scapegoat" for questionable military practices.⁵³ Even veteran organizations that were typically supportive of the Nixon administration were outraged. Colson, who led the administration's efforts against the VVAW, reported to H. R. Haldeman, Assistant to the President, that the "Veteran Heads report that the feeling in the South is near revolt," especially among "so many rank and file" veterans, which convinced Colson that they "should stop fighting" with the veterans on the matter "immediately."⁵⁴ All of these factors helped propel the administration to institute a surveillance program targeting the VVAW and to develop strategies that either undermined the authenticity of the group's image or countered their political positions, hoping, in Stacewicz words, to "topple the organization."⁵⁵

To begin with, the VVAW came under surveillance by the Nixon administration as the FBI infiltrated the group. In the early days of the Vietnam War, the FBI and the CIA engaged in domestic surveillance of anti-war groups under the code name CHAOS, violating the restriction on the CIA's authority to international affairs only. The FBI allegedly kept files on the VVAW and used its Counter Intelligence Program (COINTELPRO) to track anti-war activities and to infiltrate organizations, particularly those groups suspected of ties to the Community Party. The U.S. government reportedly used paid informants and undercover plants to infiltrate the VVAW and to encourage more violent acts by its members. The U.S. government also was accused of wiretapping the VVAW's telephones and trying to revoke its tax-exempt status.⁵⁶ VVAW leaders were well aware of these infiltrations and provocations. As Jan Barry relayed: "We knew we were going to be infiltrated." Michael McCain also explains, "It didn't take long to figure out. They kept asking us, 'Where's the guns? Where's the grenades?' We said, 'What the f--- are you talking about?'"⁵⁷ Through the Attorney General's office, the Nixon administration kept daily tabs on Dewey Canyon III.⁵⁸

In response to the threat that the administration felt the VVAW posed, numerous counter measures were considered and developed to lessen the impact of the April 1971 protests.⁵⁹ Although this plan was rejected, the Nixon administration worked to undercut the protests by announcing a troop withdrawal in April, 1971, to coincide with the protests and in anticipation of the 1972 presidential campaign.⁶⁰ As the week of the protests neared, the Nixon administration also worked to pressure Republicans in Congress to withhold any support for the anti-war veterans. Colson, for example, wrote of a conversation with Senator Edward Brooke, III (R-MA) in which he urged Republican members of Congress to "hold off for 30 days from any further criticism of the war" and to "quiet some of the 'dovish' colleagues."⁶¹

Many within the Nixon administration and other Republicans expressed scorn for the veteran protesters. More tepidly, a staffer of Patrick J. Buchanan (Special Assistant to the President) talked of Nixon portraying the protesters publicly as "strident critics" who "lost the sense of perspective and proportion," inviting "pity" more than "indignation."⁶² More stridently, the Republican National Committee wrote of the "depth and insidiousness of the enemy plot" in a memo to Colson, suggesting that President Nixon offer to meet with the "bleeding hearts"—the veteran protesters.⁶³ Challenging the authenticity of the veteran protesters, Colson also expressed to Haldeman the need to portray the VVAW as a "front for a lot of Peacenik kids."⁶⁴ The Nixon administration believed, Hunt alleges, "that the most effective method of discrediting the organization was to raise questions about the credibility of its members."⁶⁵ John Kerry—the leader who took center stage during the events of April 18-April 23, 1971—was a primary target of the administration's attempts to inauthenticate the VVAW.

Veterans as Eyewitnesses to History

Vietnam veteran protesters began arriving in Washington, D.C. on Sunday, the 18th of April, amidst controversy and opposition from the outset. By Monday, some

1,200 veterans were pitching tents in Potomac Park with the intent of staging a "simulated campsite on the mall." The Interior Department, however, turned down the camping request, allowing activities to take place on the mall yet barring overnight sleeping in Potomac Park. The U.S. Supreme Court became involved because of First Amendment questions and ruled in favor of the Interior Department's policies. The veterans defied the orders and D.C. police ultimately kept watch but seemingly ignored the violations of the camping ban.⁶⁶ President Nixon then issued an order not to arrest the protesters, which represented a huge victory in the minds of the VVAW members. Controversy erupted on the first day anyway, though, when 1,100 veterans marched across the Lincoln Memorial Bridge to the Arlington National Cemetery. The veterans were blocked from entering the cemetery on the grounds that officials did not want the hallowed space to be used as a protest site. Later in the week, though, the ban was lifted and veterans were allowed to enter the cemetery in mass.⁶⁷

The veterans continued with protests and guerilla theater performances throughout the area, including a protest in which toy rifles were smashed on the steps of the Capitol. Although VVAW members met with congressional leaders, some meetings were disrupted by VVAW representatives yelling at members of Congress. Some members of Congress left town to avoid further confrontation. A few Senators, including Ted Kennedy (D-MA) and Jacob Javits (R-NY), a liberal Republican and member of the U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, visited the campgrounds and talked directly with protesting veterans. Some of the veterans were eventually arrested, including 108 who were taken into custody at the U.S. Supreme Court for acting out prisoner of war scenarios. The events came to a close on Friday with the somber return of the veterans' war medals at the steps of the Capitol—an event that raised questions about Kerry's authenticity because he returned his ribbons but not the medals themselves. Of the symbolic event, Nicosia notes that it constituted "the personal catharsis many of them needed to regain their own sanity."⁶⁸ Before leaving the nation's capital, the veterans also planted a tree at the encampment site, representing a "symbol of rebirth....[t]he soldiers had become peacemakers."⁶⁹

Although John F. Kerry's Thursday, April 22, 1971, appearance before the U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations was not confirmed until the final hours, some 150 veterans accompanied him to the Capitol. J. William Fulbright (D-AR), chair of the committee, expressed sympathy for the anti-war protesters and elevated their status as authorities on the war: "I personally don't know of any group which would have both a greater justification" for voicing "views about the war," and "also a more accurate view of the effect of the war."⁷⁰ Kerry and the veterans who accompanied him wore their army fatigues, which symbolized combat—and Kerry brandished his medals to committee members and the television cameras. Of Kerry's appearance before the committee, Hunt writes that his "persuasiveness and eloquence put a human face on the week's events."⁷¹ For many, Kerry's speech represented the highlight of the week's activities.⁷²

Kerry's address revealed the integral connection between the veterans' private search for redemption and the need to become involved politically in changing U.S. foreign policy. The veterans' eyewitness accounts of atrocities and their first-hand

knowledge of the war's effect on the Vietnamese worked to justify their outspoken opposition to the war. Reflecting the ideological views of the New Left, Kerry's protest reveals the fusion of the personal and the civic in the authenticity of the individual. The acts of individualized and collective protest are privileged in the authenticity quest, representing the key ingredient in seeking personal vindication as the necessary prerequisite for national redemption. Once Kerry accentuated the authenticity of the veterans as eyewitnesses to history, he turned a critical eye toward the immorality of the war and prevalence of war crimes. He also challenged the authenticity of the images promulgated by the nation's leaders and pointed out the violation of American principles in the Vietnam War.

Before beginning his formal remarks to the U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, Kerry aligned himself with his veteran peers. In demonstrating the camaraderie of wartime, Kerry prefaced: "... my sitting here is really symbolic. I am not here as John Kerry. I am here as one member of the group of 1,000, which is a small representation of a very much larger group of veterans in this country." He reduced himself, thus, to the status of messenger in "representing all those veterans."⁷³

After establishing his credentials as the VVAW's voice, Kerry immediately turned to the Winter Soldier Investigations. Recalling that eyewitness testimony, Kerry did not portray the veterans as heroes for their military service but instead boldly testified to the war crimes they reportedly committed. In one of the most memorable lines from the speech, Kerry recalled the testimony in Detroit:

They told the stories at times they had personally raped, cut off ears, cut off heads, taped wires from portable telephones to human genitals and turned up the power, cut off limbs, blown up bodies, randomly shot at civilians, razed villages in fashion reminiscent of Genghis Khan, shot cattle and dogs for fun, poisoned food stocks, and generally ravaged the countryside of South Vietnam in addition to the normal ravage of war. (3)

As Kerry relayed the eyewitness accounts from the Winter Soldier Investigation, the catharsis and pain were clearly evident: "It's impossible to describe to you exactly what did happen in Detroit, the emotions in the room, the feelings of the men who were reliving their experiences in Vietnam, but they did" (2). As Taylor explains, authenticity is in part linked to assuming responsibility for one's actions,⁷⁴ which aides in the identity recovery process—the process of overcoming feelings of inauthenticity and one's perception of alienation and detachment from reality.⁷⁵

The public responsibility to speak out against the war, Kerry suggested, was also predicated on a sense of selflessness exhibited by the valiant veterans and other anti-war protesters. Their heroism derived not from their military service but from their acts of protest. He asserted: "We could come back to this country; and we could be quiet; we could hold our silence." Yet the crimes that they had committed, Kerry continued, necessitated that they "speak out" (5). Finding their voices in order to confront the immorality of the war seemingly represented the path to authenticity after participating in a corrupt war. Kerry also valorized the student protesters because they were standing

up to the U. S. government as a means to end the war. Kerry angrily responded to Vice President Spiro T. Agnew's reference to the student protesters as "'misfits'" and the U.S. soldiers as "'our best men'" (8), arguing: "we cannot consider ourselves America's best men when we were ashamed of and hated what we were called to do in Southeast Asia." Valorizing the protesters, Kerry elaborated that "those he calls misfits were standing up for us in a way that nobody else in this country dared to" (9). Such reasoning reflected the ideological commitments of the New Left's conception of participatory democracy as an avenue toward personal authenticity and national redemption, which involved voicing truths in the face of significant opposition.

The veterans' heroism, thus, derived from their protests even though their military service legitimated their credibility to challenge the nation's war policies. And although they admitted to crimes of war, the ultimate responsibility for their actions, Kerry suggested, rested with the political officials who sent them to war. Detailing the atrocities of war, Kerry asserted that the crimes were committed "with the full awareness of officers at all levels of command" (1). Shifting the responsibility for such actions, Kerry depicted the veterans as victims who "relived the absolute horror" of Vietnam during the Winter Soldier Investigation, recalling actions that "this country, in a sense, made them do" (2).

Throughout much of the speech, Kerry continued to shift the burden of responsibility for the immorality of the war to U.S. political and military leaders. Kerry sought to undermine the image façade of the military and political leaders who championed the war as a benevolent act to liberate those oppressed by communism. The depth of the nation's immorality is first expressed through a "monster" metaphor where no particular leader is blamed. Kerry proclaimed: "The country...[has] created a monster, a monster in the form of millions of men who have been taught to deal and to trade in violence" (6). Yet, Kerry ultimately located responsibility for the war with the Nixon and Johnson administrations. In one passage, Kerry charged that "Someone has to die so that President Nixon won't be, and these are his words, 'the first President to lose a war'" (21). Toward the end of the speech, Kerry accused cabinet officials of abandoning the war effort even though U.S. soldiers were continuing to "die for a mistake" in Vietnam (22). Accentuating a sense of the leaders' inauthenticity, Kerry asked: "where are McNamara, Rostow, Bundy, Gilpatric and so many others. Where are they now that we, the men whom they sent off to war, have returned? These are commanders who have deserted their troops" (38). Extending the critique, Kerry exposed what he suggested was the real "truth" of the administrations' actions in Vietnam, which included falsifying "body counts" (17), "destroying villages in order to save them" (15), "disown[ing]" veterans and their "sacrifices" (40), allowing racism to run "rampant in the military" (36), and "Vietnamizing the Vietnamese" (18). For Kerry, such administrative actions epitomized the ultimate in "hypocrisy" (10), violating national myths and revealing the inauthenticity of the nation's political leaders.⁷⁶ The veterans, it seems, positioned themselves as the ones who could help salvage the idealism of the nation, given their first-hand testimonies of the war's corruptness and immorality.

Kerry extended the morality focus by suggesting that the war was antithetical to U.S. democratic principles because the Vietnamese people did not want an American presence in their country. Accentuating the veterans' eyewitness experiences once again, Kerry argued: "we found that the Vietnamese whom we had enthusiastically molded after our own image were hard put to take up the fight against the threat we were supposedly saving them from (12)...They wanted everything to do with the war, particularly with this foreign presence of the United States of America, to leave them alone in peace" (13). Such conditions furthered the animosity toward U.S. troops, Kerry alleged, resulting in "American men...dying in those rice paddies for want of support from their allies" (14). While the South Vietnamese government invited U.S. intervention, Kerry implied that liberal democratic theory was violated by U.S. actions in Vietnam, charging that allied leaders constituted a "corrupt dictatorial regime" (14) unresponsive to the will of the people.⁷⁷

For Kerry and the VVAW, their mission in part was to confront the immorality of the war, but also to then encourage congressional leaders to right the moral wrongs, end the war immediately, and regain a sense of national idealism. Kerry spoke of the "very sickening situation in this country" that erupted from a lack of "moral indignation" over the number of people dying in Vietnam (29). While Kerry called on Congress "for some action," (34), he also exhibited a commitment to liberal precepts by constituting the American people as the agents of control. Calling on Congress to "be responsive to the will of the people," Kerry suggested that most Americans believed "we should be out of Vietnam now" (35). Yet the American people were not blameless either, Kerry charged: "Americans seem to have accepted the idea that the war is winding down, at least for Americans" (31) even though "the helicopter crews fill the same body bags and they wreak the same kind of damage on the Vietnamese and Laotian countryside" (33). All Americans, Kerry implied, were complicit in this moral lapse, necessitating that they follow the lead of the anti-war veterans and demand an immediate end to the war.

The VVAW's foreign policy commitments, thus, reflected the tenets of "humanitarianists," who Jon Western characterizes as "staunch believers that American foreign policy should be guided chiefly by the promotion of the right to self-determination, individual liberties, and human rights."⁷⁸ Given their belief that U.S. actions in Vietnam violated such humanitarian commitments, the veterans, as moral agents, worked to transform such remorse and guilt⁷⁹ into positive self-renewal and national regeneration through acts of protest. In his conclusion, Kerry expressed such moral regenerative efforts when referring to the VVAW's "determination to undertake one last mission" (41):

[to] search out and destroy the last vestige of this barbaric war, to pacify our own hearts, to conquer the hate and the fear that have driven this country these last 10 years...so when, in 30 years from now, our brothers go down the street without a leg, without an arm, or a face, and small boys ask why, we will be able to say 'Vietnam' and not mean a desert, not a filthy obscene memory but mean instead the place where America finally turned and where soldiers like us helped in the turning. (41)

The Inauthentic Veterans

Kerry received considerable praise for his speech from members of the U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations. Senator Claiborne Pell (D-RI) exhibited great foresight when told his colleagues: "I have a very high personal regard for him [John Kerry] and hope before his life ends he will be a colleague of ours in this body." Concerning VVAW's positions on the war, Pell noted: "This war was really just as wrong, immoral, and unrelated to our national interests 5 years ago as it is today, and I must say I agree with you." Senator Javits also reinforced the importance of the veteran's eyewitness accounts, concluding: "Your testimony about what you know and what you see, how you feel and how your colleagues feel, is entitled to the highest standing and priority," particularly in relation to the "impact ... on the conscience of a country." Speaking about Kerry in particular, Senator Fulbright proclaimed: "You certainly [have] done a remarkable job....I can't imagine their [VVAW] having selected a better representative or spokesman."⁸⁰

Years later, Kerry's speech continued to receive considerable acclaim. Adam Walinsky, former speech writer for Robert and Ted Kennedy, recalled: "The moment he finished talking, there wasn't the slightest doubt about it. It was a real star turn.... [Kerry] grab[ed] the attention of virtually the entire country."⁸¹ Todd S. Purdum of the *New York Times* also suggests that Kerry "electrified" the Senate with "his passionate testimony against the war,"⁸² launching Kerry's public career.

Yet others were not so positive. Some in the news media challenged the authenticity of Kerry's image as a protest leader more than they engaged his arguments against the war. The *Detroit News*, for example, compared Kerry to Melville L. Stephens, a returning vet who also testified before the U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations with considerably less fanfare. The *Detroit News* noted that not only was Kerry "wealthy," he "slept in a clean bed at one of Georgetown's most fashionable addresses" during Dewey Canyon III. Stephens, meanwhile, the article elaborated, valiantly "spent every night on the damp ground of the Mall, risking arrest." Grappling with questions of authenticity, the article's author, J. F. terHorst, also charged that Adam Walinsky, the Kennedy speech writer, admitted "he had helped Kerry put together his eloquent presentation," while Stephens "wrote his own statement" for the Senate committee.⁸³ *Newsday* also accentuated Kerry's wealth as well as his political motivations, as if to suggest both functioned as markers of inauthenticity: "Kerry comes from a rich, privileged background, has excellent social and political connections and is frankly ambitious."⁸⁴ The *Boston Evening Globe* charged that Kerry intentionally modeled his political career, including his naval service, after John F. Kennedy; the two even shared the same initials. Paraphrasing one of Kerry's classmates, the reporter wrote: "Kerry even as far back as his pre-college days was recognized by his classmates as modeling himself on JFK, and harboring unconcealed ambitions to become President."⁸⁵

Of course, raising doubts about the image authenticity of the anti-war protesters was a key strategy for the Nixon administration. As part of this counter-strategy, the Nixon administration created a media team to target news outlets with competing

portraits of Kerry and the VVAW. There was ample evidence that Colson worked directly with journalists. He knew about the impending publication of terHorst's article, which negatively compared Kerry to Stephens, noting that "the terHorst piece" was being "done about Kerry this weekend."⁸⁶ Demonstrating the further collusion between the White House and Stephens, the latter is identified as a "White House Staff" member in a memo from the President's Office Files that summarizes a meeting which took place with Nixon, Henry Kissinger, Stephens, and John O'Neill, another Vietnam veteran supportive of President Nixon's foreign policies.⁸⁷ In a separate memo, Colson talked about the White House's involvement in setting up an interview between O'Neill and terHorst in June of 1971. Colson indicated that "we want to build him [O'Neill] up" given that he "is a very charismatic guy."⁸⁸ The mission, Colson, determined, was "to move through as many sources [journalists] as possible" because he believed the administration had "Kerry on the run, he is beginning to take a tremendous beating in the press, but let's not let him up, let's destroy this young demagogue before he becomes another Ralph Nader."⁸⁹ As Colson disclosed in a memo from May 14, 1971, "the more effectively we discredit him [Kerry] the better."⁹⁰

Even more so than Stephens, John O'Neill played a major role in the Nixon administration's plan to counter Kerry's image as a heroic veteran. O'Neill headed a pro-Vietnam veterans group—Vietnam Veterans for a Just Peace. O'Neill's involvement with the administration was apparent from a summary of the same meeting between President Nixon and O'Neill where Colson wrote to Haldeman: "O'Neill went out charging like a tiger, has agreed that he will appear anytime, anywhere that we program him and was last seen walking up West Executive Avenue mumbling to himself that he had just been with the most magnificent man he had ever met in his life."⁹¹ In public appearances, O'Neill often championed Nixon's Vietnamization plan, yet his connections with the White House were not always transparent, especially at first. On June 30, 1971, O'Neill championed administration policies in a debate with Kerry on the *Dick Cavett Show*. By the time of the 1972 presidential campaign, however, O'Neill's alliance with the Nixon administration had become clearer; he became a public face of the group called Concerned Veterans for Nixon, which actively campaigned against Nixon's Democratic rival, George McGovern.⁹² More recently, O'Neill re-emerged as a member of the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth, which challenged Kerry's war record during the 2004 presidential campaign. In a book that O'Neill co-authored in 2004, *Unfit for Command*, O'Neill challenged the authenticity of Kerry's image directly, charging that "the real John Kerry of Vietnam was a man who filed false operating reports, who faked Purple Hearts, and who took a fast pass through the combat zones."⁹³

The Nixon administration also raised questions about the image authenticity of VVAW members. In a story published by the *UPI* on April 21, 1971, the author cited an anonymous White House official who charged that "fewer than 30 per cent of protesters were veterans and not all of them had served in Vietnam." In response, the *UPI* approached veterans during Dewey Canyon III and asked to see their paperwork. While some were prepared for the request and displayed their discharge papers, others were not able to offer such evidence, resulting in VVAW leaders stepping in to offer papers of their own to cover for those who did not have them. The VVAW reported that 95

percent of those camping were veterans but they could only say with certainty that a "large majority" were Vietnam veterans. In response to the story, Colson told Haldeman of their effort to "expose the non-veterans demonstration." Colson wanted to ensure that the President knew that they were "continuing the effort." Addressing such efforts, DeVan L. Shumway of the Republican National Committee boasted: "I await the medal which you said the President would pin on my chest personally" for convincing the news media to question the veterans' authenticity.⁹⁴

To further denigrate the VVAW, the Nixon administration worked with other veteran organizations to cultivate widespread support for the war. As early as February of 1971, the White House created a preliminary blueprint for counter strategies in the aftermath of the Winter Soldier Investigation, entitled "Mobilization of Vietnam Veterans." The goal was to obtain "highly visible support for the President's Indochina policy from Vietnam Veterans." Specifically, administration officials planned to work with the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) and the American Legion to show support for the war among returning veterans.⁹⁵ Furthering the media team's work to showcase pro-war sentiment, Colson indicated that syndicated columnist Nick Thimmesch "will be doing some pieces about Kerry running away from the debate" with Tony MacDonald of the VFW, who Colson called "superb" and someone "We are going to get...on some of the talk shows."⁹⁶ In the aftermath of Dewey Canyon III, other veterans groups organized counter protests in support of Nixon's Vietnamization policies: Vietnam Veterans for a Just Peace. In addition, the president of the Fleet Reserve Association (RFA), Robert L. Bastian, noted in a recruitment letter to veterans that while 1,000 veterans protested the war in April of 1971, "Two and a half million other Veterans did not" and they were "damn mad at being called War Criminals by that thousand."⁹⁷

The theme of patriotism was prominent in the anti-VVAW discourse, upholding the image of an "authentic nation" where veterans endorsed the ends of U.S. nationalism. Members of the VVAW, of course, represented the inauthentic and thus unpatriotic veterans. In a confidential memo in Colson's papers, "Plan to Counteract Viet Nam Veterans Against the War," the unidentified author indicated that the Veterans' groups recruited by the administration would "issue statements disavowing the VVAW as not being representative of veterans and stating that they are offended by their actions and allegations."⁹⁸ Exhibiting a rhetoric of patriotism more explicitly, Bastian of the RFA talked of giving "the South Vietnamese the opportunity to be free of outside or Communist domination.—DON'T WASTE OUR BLOOD." The salutation of his letter read, "I remain in Loyalty, Protection, and Service."⁹⁹ Bruce N. Kessler, a member of the Vietnam Veterans for a Just Peace, wrote in a *New York Times* column that "We are proud of our nation and its exertions in defense of freedom in the world."¹⁰⁰ Branding the VVAW "un-American" represented a key strategy of the Nixon administration. During a taped telephone conversation between Larry Higby (Haldeman's administrative assistant) and Tom Benham (Opinion Research Corporation), Benham noted: "You know the public doesn't like the demonstrations and somehow they can be made to symbolize the sort of UnAmerican—Unpatriotic approach to this damn thing." Higby then reported to Colson that Haldeman "strongly agrees" with Benham and called for Colson's "planning group to formulate some activity, posture or ideas of what we can be doing to

turn the upcoming demonstrations into an opportunity."¹⁰¹ The reach of the strategy to undermine the veterans' patriotism extended into the 1972 presidential election, becoming part of the motive for the break-in at the Democratic Party headquarters in the Watergate building. Among other things, the Committee to Re-Elect the President (CREEP) hoped to link George McGovern and the Democratic National Committee with the VVAW and what it believed were un-American activities.¹⁰² For the New Left, acts of protest represented efforts to re-authenticate the individual and the nation. For the Nixon administration, the "silent majority" represented the authentic voice of the American people, while the vocal veteran protesters were portrayed as "trying to compensate for some guilt feeling or psychological defect by participation in this organization."¹⁰³

The Legacy of Vietnam Veteran Protests and John Kerry's 1971 Speech

The legacy of the debate surrounding the VVAW, John Kerry and the Nixon administration's response was most visible in the presidential campaign of 2004. To differing degrees, the debate over John Kerry and his Vietnam War service and protest reveals the confluences of the three notions of political authenticity apparent in the 1971 debate—authenticity of the individual, authenticity of the nation, and the authenticity of the image. Just as in 1971, Kerry's individualized war experience enhanced his credibility as a presidential candidate in 2004, given his eyewitness accounts to history and his acts of military service and bravery. Yet, in the end, opponents challenged the authenticity of his war hero image by raising doubt about his war service and suggesting that his allegations of war crimes revealed a lack of loyalty to the very nation he aspired to lead.

Early in the 2004 campaign, Kerry tried to gain credibility by championing his war experiences and his protest actions in what many believed was a mistaken war, featuring the testimony of Vietnam veterans as witnesses to his character and heroism. His campaign noted in a February 21, 2004, story in the *Washington Post* that Kerry "served his country twice" by fighting in the war, then protesting it back home.¹⁰⁴ Enhancing the image of valor, Kerry campaigned with his "Band of Brothers"—former Vietnam veterans who provided eyewitness accounts of Kerry's bravery. One of those "brothers," Del Sandusky, served with Kerry on the swift boats. He testified: "We know John Kerry the warrior. We know the spirit inside of him, the compassion, the loyalty and the honor."¹⁰⁵ Such endorsements may well have helped Kerry secure the Democratic nomination for the presidency, suggesting the power of experience and the "ideology of eyewitness authenticity."¹⁰⁶

Yet Kerry's service in the war, combined with his anti-war opposition to fuel allegations of his inconsistency, which in the world of image-making politics resulted in a perception that he was an inauthentic "flip-flopper" on matters of U.S. foreign policy. As key players in the politics of authenticity, journalists often debated Kerry's authenticity in 2004. David Brooks, a syndicated columnist for the *New York Times*, suggests that in the 1960s, "'Authenticity' was such a big concept," making it unsurprising that the 2004 Democratic Convention "dwelt obsessively on the period in his life when Kerry was

authentic, so it could evade the last 20 years of [his] rising inauthenticity."¹⁰⁷ Recognizing the importance of authenticity to image-politics, Kerry tried to portray himself as the authentic candidate in response to questions about his candid *Rolling Stone* interview and his kite surfing activities during the campaign. Responding to queries from separate reporters on different days, Kerry offered the following pledge: "I'm going to be who I am. I think people care about authenticity."¹⁰⁸ Despite Kerry's pronouncements, the impression stuck that he represented a "perpetual equivocator, who voted for the resolution authorizing the war with Iraq but against the money to pay for rebuilding,"¹⁰⁹ just as he volunteered for service in Vietnam only to protest the war upon his return.

While perceptions of Kerry's inauthentic political image rested in part on perceptions of his policy equivocations, his military service itself was questioned by political opponents who disputed his military heroism and called his allegations of war atrocities traitorous. Offering a different view than the Band of Brothers, Vietnam veterans aligned with the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth maligned Kerry's political image as a war hero, raising questions about "the authenticity of his status as a highly decorated 'Nam veteran."¹¹⁰ Others explicitly raised doubts about Kerry's loyalty. Larry Thurlow, another swift boat commander, called Kerry a "liar and a phony" who he considered a "traitor" because of the impact that Kerry's 1971 speech "had on people still on the field in Vietnam."¹¹¹ Some American prisoners of war claimed that Kerry's 1971 speech "prolonged the war and made worse the abuses they suffered at the hands of the North Vietnamese." Summarizing the words of "several Vietnam veterans," one reporter expressed that "Kerry's [1971] statement was a 'blood libel."¹¹² Even some of the Vietnam veterans who supported Kerry in 2004 noted that they had felt "betrayed" by his 1971 testimony.¹¹³ While the depths of the George W. Bush campaign's involvement in challenging Kerry's patriotism is not clear, the *New York Times* reports that Kerry's "postwar activism...is as much a political vulnerability as an advantage, and the Bush campaign and its allies have repeatedly tried to make an issue of it in this election." Bush campaign staffer, Karen Hughes, raised doubts about Kerry's anti-war protests in ways reminiscent of the Nixon blueprint: "I remember watching Senator Kerry, back when he was against the war...and I was very troubled by the kind of allegations that he hurled against his fellow veterans, saying that they were guilty of all kinds of atrocities."¹¹⁴

On the one hand, Kerry benefited from the authenticity debates over his own individualized military heroism. His war service credentialed him as the next commander-in-chief in a wartime election. On the other hand, the legacy of the inauthenticity charges dogged him throughout the general election. Most visibly, this study demonstrates that political authenticity in the service of U.S. nationalism commands a loyalty to the nation above all else. Acts of individual and collective protest, even those motivated to save American lives and expose what were viewed as eyewitness accounts of atrocity, suggest a sense of betrayal that a presidential candidate at the turn of the twenty-first century can ill-afford to project. This may help to explain the cautiousness of so many in Congress in discussing the U.S. wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. Kerry himself even seemed to acknowledge the error of his ways

when he confessed to a reporter in 2004 that his language in 1971 "reflected a young man angry with the government and may have been over the top."¹¹⁵ At least in presidential elections during war-time, allegiance to the nation may be the ultimate test of political authenticity. Even the loyalty of those who served the country admirably is challenged when they raise questions about the morality or wisdom of the nation's decision to go to war.

Shawn J. Parry-Giles is an Professor of Communication and the Director of the Center for Political Communication and Civic Leadership at the University of Maryland. She would like to thank Dr. Richard Jensen who directed her M.A. thesis at the University of New Mexico on the VVAW and John Kerry's 1971 speech before the U.S. Committee on Foreign Relations. She would also like to thank Mr. John Powers and Mr. Sahr Conway-Lanz for their significant guidance with the archival materials from the Nixon Presidential Materials Project of the National Archives of College Park. Finally, she would like to thank Carolyn Mech and Rachael Brown for their research assistance with authenticating the copy-text for Kerry's 1971 speech before the U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations.

Notes

1 Swift Boat Veterans For Truth, "Any Questions?," Political Advertising Resource Center, Center for Political Communication and Civic Leadership, University of Maryland, <http://www.umdparc.org/AdAnalysisAnyQuestions.htm>.

2 Gary Gerstle, *American Crucible: Race and Nation in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001), 10.

3 Gerald Nicosia, *Home to War: A History of the Vietnam Veterans' Movement* (New York: Crown Publishers, 2001), 5.

4 Andrew E. Hunt, *A History of Vietnam Veterans Against the War* (New York: New York University Press, 1999), 4.

5 Vietnam Veterans Against the War, n.d., Nixon Presidential Materials Project (hereafter cited NPMP), White House Special Files (hereafter cited WHSF), Staff Member and Office Files (hereafter cited SMOF), H.R. Haldeman, Alpha Name Files (April-May 1971), Chuck Colson April, 1971-Don Rumsfeld April, 1971, Box 77, National Archives and Records Administration—College Park, Maryland (hereafter cited as NARA—CP), 1. W. Richard Howard served as Staff Assistant to Charles W. Colson in the Nixon White House. Howard communicated directly with media and public opinion outlets to bolster positive public images of the president and his policies. See "Special Files: W. Richard Howard," NPMP, NARA—CP, <http://nixon.archives.gov/find/textual/presidential/special/staff/howard.html>.

6 Charles Colson to Dick Howard, May 3, 1971, NPMP, WHSF, SMOF, Charles W. Colson, Vietnam—Various Groups, Vietnam Veterans Against the War (VVAW), Box 123, NARA—CP, 1. Charles Colson often worked as a liaison between the Nixon

administration and various special interest groups (veterans, labor, farmers) in an attempt to gain their support on presidential policies. He also targeted media outlets to garner additional public support for Nixon administration policies. See "Special Files: Charles W. Colson," NPMP, NARA—CP, <http://nixon.archives.gov/find/textual/presidential/special/staff/colson.html#note>.

7 Doug Rossinow, *The Politics of Authenticity: Liberalism, Christianity, and the New Left in America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 7, 217. The New Left is the label applied to the leftist activities of the 1960s that involved the civil rights movement for some, the Students for Democratic Society (SDS), and other leftist activists of the 1960s "who shared some commitment to the realization of civil rights, peace, and some sort of radically democratic political-economic and cultural transformation, and who believed in undertaking some sort of direct action toward those ends." The term "New Left" was first used by the SDS leaders in 1963, which distinguished its activism from the Social-Democrats or Communists of the "old left" from the 1930s. The New Left comprised those "committed to social equality, opposed to militarism and racism, and loosely socialist." See Todd Gitlin, *The Whole World is Watching: Mass Media in the Making and Unmaking of the New Left* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), 293.

8 Charles Taylor, *The Ethics of Authenticity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992), 43-44, 40.

9 Elsewhere I've argued that within authenticity-centered debates, political actors attempt to "articulate a 'real' or genuine political image" of self while their "political opponents attempt to inauthenticate that image" as a means of challenging the viability of contentious policies. The news media often enter the political fray as the self-appointed "arbiter[s] of political authenticity." See Shawn J. Parry-Giles, "Political Authenticity, Television News, and Hillary Rodham Clinton," in *Politics, Discourse, and American Society: New Agendas*, eds. Roderick P. Hart and Bartholomew H. Sparrow (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2001), 214.

10 Alexander Nehamas, *Virtues of Authenticity: Essays on Plato and Socrates* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999), xxxii.

11 Taylor, *The Ethics of Authenticity*, 25-26, 28, 64.

12 Hanno Hardt, "Authenticity, Communication, and Critical Theory," *Critical Studies in Mass Communication* 10 (1993): 52.

13 Miles Orvell, *The Real Thing: Imitation and Authenticity in American Culture, 1880-1940* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989), xvi, xv.

14 Marshall Berman, *The Politics of Authenticity: Radical Individualism and the Emergence of Modern Society* (New York: Atheneum, 1970), 216.

15 Berman, *The Politics of Authenticity*, xv, xix. (emphasis in original).

16 Rossinow, *The Politics of Authenticity*, 4.

17 Students for a Democratic Society, "The Port Huron Statement," June 15, 1962, The Sixties Project, University of Virginia, http://www3.iath.virginia.edu/sixties/HTML_docs/Resources/Primary/Manifestos/SDS_Port_Huron.html. (emphasis in original)

18 For the purposes of this study, my views of nationalism reflect those of Linden Lewis, who argues that nationalism "serves as the ideological vehicle through which the nation attempts to homogenize dissimilar social elements into the nationalist project. Indeed, there is no singular conception of the nation." Yet, the actions exhibited by the leaders of a nation often work to "reproduce the many and diverse human groups as a common community of individuals. Nationalism is also a phenomenon which manifests itself, at both the political and cultural levels, as a movement for the creation of the autonomous, sovereign space and unique identity." Linden Lewis, "Nationalism and Caribbean Masculinity," in *Gender Ironies of Nationalism: Sexing the Nation*, ed. Tamar Mayer (London: Routledge, 2000), 261.

19 Corey Anton, *Selfhood and Authenticity* (New York: State University of New York, 2001), 6.

20 Taylor, *The Ethics of Authenticity*, 95.

21 Daniel J. Boorstin, *The Image: A Guide to Pseudo-Events in America* (New York: Random House, 1987 [1961]), 265.

22 David Greenberg, *Nixon's Shadow: The History of an Image* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2003), xx.

23 Greenberg, *Nixon's Shadow*, 108.

24 Parry-Giles, "Political Authenticity," 214.

25 Parry-Giles, "Political Authenticity," 214.

26 Donald A. Ritchie, "Foreward," in Richard Stacewicz, ed., *Winter Soldiers: An Oral History of the Vietnam Veterans Against the War* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1997), ix.

27 Richard Stacewicz, *Winter Soldiers: An Oral History of the Vietnam Veterans Against the War* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1997), 316.

28 Jan Barry, "'We're Backing the Wrong Side,'" in *Winter Soldiers*, 89.

29 See Hunt, *The Turning*, 2; and Milton Viorst, *Fire in the Streets* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1979), 187.

30 For more on Operation RAW, see Hunt, *The Turning*, 44-54; and Nicosia, *Home to War*, 58-67.

31 David Halbfinger, "Kerry Role in Antiwar Veterans is Delicate Issues in His Campaign," *New York Times*, April 24, 2004, 4, online at Lexis Nexus Academic, May 24, 2006.

32 For more on Kerry's war background, see Douglas Brinkley, *Tour of Duty: John Kerry and the Vietnam War* (New York: William Morrow, 2004), 459-463.

33 Brinkley, *Tour of Duty*, 27-34, 459.

34 Hunt, *The Turning*, 48.

35 Barry, "Dewey Canyon III: 'A Limited Incursion into the Country of Congress,'" in *Winter Soldiers*, 242-243.

36 Hunt, *The Turning*, 89.

37 Nicosia, *Home to War*, 211-212.

38 See Kerry's letter reprinted in Brinkley, *Tour of Duty*, 82-83.

39 Rossinow, *The Politics of Authenticity*, 206-207.

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- 40 Hunt, *The Turning*, 55.
- 41 Stacewicz, *Winter Soldiers*, 73, 5.
- 42 See Hunt, *The Turning*, 55-76; and Stacewicz, *Winter Soldiers*, 5.
- 43 Joe Urgo, "The Winter Soldier Hearings," in *Winter Soldiers*, 235.
- 44 To read more about Seymour M. Hersh's exposé on My Lai, see *My Lai 4: A Report on the Massacre and Its Aftermath* (New York: Random House, 1970).
- 45 Joseph Goldstein, Burke Marshall, and Jack Schwartz, eds., "The Limits of Law: On Establishing Civilian Responsibility for the Enforcement of Laws Against War Crimes," in *The My Lai Massacre and Its Cover-up: Beyond the Reach of Law?* (New York: The Free Press, 1976), 1-11.
- 46 Michal R. Belknap, *The Vietnam War on Trial: The My Lai Massacre and the Court-Martial of Lieutenant Calley* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2002), 64-67.
- 47 Marvin E. Gettleman, Jane Franklin, Marilyn B. Young, and H. Bruce Franklin, *Vietnam and America: A Documented History*, 2d ed. (New York: Grove Press, 1995), 411-412.
- 48 Gary D. Solis, *Son Thang: An American War Crime* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1997), 4-5.
- 49 Goldstein, Marshall, and Schwartz, *The My Lai Massacre*, ix-xi.
- 50 The name Dewey Canyon III was inspired by the code name of a military excursion into Laos in 1971. See Richard R. Moser, *The New Winter Soldiers: GI and Veteran Dissent During the Vietnam Era* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1996), 112.
- 51 Hunt, *The Turning*, 77-84. The name Dewey Canyon III was inspired by the code name of a military excursion into Laos in 1971. See Richard R. Moser, *The New Winter Soldiers: GI and Veteran Dissent During the Vietnam Era* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1996), 112.
- 52 Hunt, *The Turning*, 57.
- 53 See Becker Research Corporation Public Opinion Poll, April 6, 1971, NPMP, WHSF, SMOF, H.R. Haldeman, Alpha Name Files (April-May 1971), Chuck Colson April, 1971-Don Rumsfeld April, 1971, Box 77, NARA—CP, 1-2. Even though the Becker Research Corporation represented a private polling firm, it is clear they were working on behalf of the Nixon administration. The president of the company (John F. Becker), concluded his letter in the following way: "I am sure you will let me know of any new developments regarding our proposed work."
- 54 See Chuck Colson to H.R. Haldeman, April 1, 1971, NPMP, WHSF, SMOF, H.R. Haldeman, Alpha Name Files (April-May 1971), Chuck Colson April, 1971-Don Rumsfeld April, 1971, Box 77, NARA—CP, 1. H.R. (Harry Robbins) Haldeman was President Nixon's chief assistant and chief of staff from January 21, 1969 through May 19, 1973. His official title was Assistant to the President. For more information on Haldeman, see "Special Files: Harry R. Haldeman," NPMP, NARA—CP, <http://nixon.archives.gov/find/textual/presidential/special/staff/haldeman.html>.
- 55 Stacewicz, *Winter Soldiers*, 316.

56 See Hunt, *The Turning*, 5, 84, 167; Nicosia, *Home to War*, 251; and Stacewicz, *Winter Soldiers*, 314-315, 318, 331.

57 See Barry, "'We're Watching You,'" *Winter Soldiers*, 319; and Mike McCain, "'We're Watching You,'" *Winter Soldiers*, 325.

58 See Ronald H. Walker to W. Dewey Clower, April 6, 1971, NPMP, WHSF, SMOF, H.R. Haldeman, Alpha Name Files, Coverage of Presidential Activities—Decorating/Construction, Box 121, NARA—CP, 1-2; and "Veterans' Actions Against the War," April 8, 1971, NPMP, WHSF, SMOF, H.R. Haldeman, Alpha Name Files, Coverage of Presidential Activities—Decorating/Construction, Box 121, NARA—CP, 1-2. For more information on John D. Ehrlichman, see "Special Files: John D. Ehrlichman," NPMP, NARA—
<http://nixon.archives.gov/find/textual/presidential/special/staff/ehrllichman.html>.

59 In early April, a memo to Colson suggested the possibility of having Nixon embrace the protests, demonstrating support for the peace movement and seeking a dialogue with the leaders as a means "trap them into the one situation they do not want and cannot control." The plan was ultimately rejected. See F. Leonard to C. Colson, April 1, 1971, NPMP, WHSF, SMOF, H.R. Haldeman, Alpha Name Files, April-May 1971, Dick Howard April, 1971, Box 77, NARA—CP, 1-4.

60 See Charles W. Colson to H.R. Haldeman, "Vietnam Veterans," April 2, 1971, NPMP, WHSF, SMOF, H.R. Haldeman, Alpha Name Files (April-May 1971), Chuck Colson April, 1971 [Part 2 of 2], Box 77, NARA—CP, 1-3; and Ken Khachigian to Patrick J. Buchanan, March 29, 1971, NPMP, WHSF, President's Office Files (hereafter cited POF), March 16, 1971-May 10, 1971, President's Handwriting [File], April 16-April 30, 1971, Box 10, NARA—CP, 1.

61 Charles W. Colson to President Nixon, April 15, 1971, NPMP, WHSF, POF, March 16, 1971-May 10, 1971, President's Handwriting [File], April 1-April 15, 1971, Box 10, NARA—CP, 1-2. Senator Brooke was the first African American senator elected to office by popular vote. See a biography of Senator Brooke at "Edward William Brooke, III," Biographical Directory of the United States Congress,
<http://bioguide.congress.gov/scripts/biodisplay.pl?index=B000871>.

62 Ken Khachigian to Patrick J. Buchanan, March 29, 1971, 1-2. For more information on Patrick J. Buchanan, see "Special Files: Patrick J. Buchanan," NPMP, NARA—CP,
<http://nixon.archives.gov/find/textual/presidential/special/staff/buchanan.html>.

63 F. Leonard to C. Colson, April 1, 1971, 1-4.

64 Charles W. Colson to H. R. Haldeman, April 14, 1971, NPMP, WHSF, SMOF, Charles W. Colson, Memoranda File, HRH Memos—January-June, 1971, Box 2, 1-2.

65 Hunt, *The Turning*, 84.

66 See M. Well, "Viet Veterans to Protest Today," *Washington Post*, April 16, 1971, A1.

67 Hunt, *The Turning*, 96-108.

68 See Hunt, *The Turning*, 98-102; and Nicosia, *Home to War*, 140-143.

69 Moser, *The New Winter Soldiers*, 116.

70 J. William Fulbright, "Opening Statement," in *Legislative Proposals Relating to the War in Southeast Asia*, U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, 92nd Cong., 1st sess., 1971, 179-180.

71 Hunt, *The Turning*, 109.

72 Nancy L. Zaroulis, and Gerald Sullivan, *Who Spoke Up?: American Protest Against the War in Vietnam, 1963-1975* (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1984), 357.

73 John Kerry, "Statement of John Kerry, Vietnam Veteran Against the War," *Legislative Proposals Relating to the War in Southeast Asia*, U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, 92nd Cong., 1st sess., 1971, 180. All of the remaining passages from Kerry's April 22, 1971, speech before the U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations are cited with reference to paragraph numbers in the text of the speech that accompanies this essay.

74 Taylor, *The Ethics of Authenticity*, 77.

75 Amitai Etzioni, *The Active Society: A Theory of Social and Political Processes* (New York: The Free Press, 1968), 633-634.

76 See Benedict Anderson's definition of "nation" as "an imagined political community." See *Imagined Communities* (London: Verso, 1983), 6.

77 Jon Western explains that "the hallmark of liberal democracies is that state action is the product of a dynamic and complex interaction between elite groups and the public." Kerry suggested that the actions taken by Soviet Vietnam leaders violated the will of the people, thus, exhibiting an abuse of power, which the U.S. government ignored for the sake of its own Cold War policies. See *Selling Intervention and War: The Presidency, the Media, and the American Public* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005), 6.

78 Western, *Selling Intervention and War*, 13.

79 See George P. Fletcher, *Romantics at War: Glory and Guilt in the Age of Terrorism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002), 196.

80 See Claiborne Pell, "Growth of Opposition to War," *Legislative Proposals Relating to the War in Southeast Asia*, 191; Jacob Javits, "Witness Credentials," *Legislative Proposals Relating to the War in Southeast Asia*, 210; and Fulbright, "Closing Statement," *Legislative Proposals Relating to the War in Southeast Asia*, 210.

81 Todd S. Purdum, "Stories Past, Golden Resume, but Mixed Reviews for Kerry," *New York Times*, November 30, 2003, 4, online at Lexis Nexus Academic, November 30, 2003.

82 Todd S. Purdum, "In '71 Antiwar Words, a Complex View of Kerry," *New York Times*, February 28, 2004, 1, online at Lexis Nexus Academic, February 28, 2004.

83 J. F. Ter Horst, "2 Vets with Medals, 1 with Silver Spoon," *Detroit News*, May 1, 1971, n.p. The article was found in the file, NPMP, WHSF, SMOF, Charles W. Colson, Larry Higby to Steve Karalekas, Box 8, NARA—CP, 2. J. F. Ter Horst later became President Gerald R. Ford's press secretary.

84 Nick Thimmesch, "Playing Fair: Another Side," *Newsday*, June 3, 1971, n.p. The article was found in the file, NPMP, WHSF, SMOF, Charles W. Colson, Memorandum

File, HRH Memos 1969-1970 to HRH Memos—1971, January-June 1971, Box 2, NARA—CP, 1.

85 George Frazier, "Blend of Calm and Crusader," *Boston Evening Globe*, June 9, 1971, n.p. The article was found in the file, NPMP, WHSF, SMOF, Charles W. Colson, Memorandum File, Van Shumway [1972] to Ron Ziegler [1971], Van Shumway [2 of 3] [1971], Box 12, NARA—CP, 2.

86 See Charles W. Colson to Dick Howard, May 3, 1971, NPMP, WHSF, SMOF, Charles W. Colson, Vietnam—Various Groups, Vietnam Veterans Against the War (VVAW), Box 123, NARA—CP, 1. (emphasis added)

87 See Memo for the President's File, June 16, 1971, NPMP, WHSF, PO, Memoranda for the President, May 2, 1971-August 15, 1971, Box 85, NARA—CP, 1.

88 Charles Colson to Van Shumway, June 8, 1971, NPMP, WHSF, SMOF, Charles W. Colson, Memoranda File, Van Shumway [1972] to Ron Ziegler [1971], Box 12, NARA—CP, 1.

89 Charles Colson to Van Shumway, June 15, 1971, NPMP, WHSF, SMOF, Charles W. Colson, Memoranda File, Van Shumway [1972] to Ron Ziegler [1971], Box 12, NARA—CP, 1.

90 Charles Colson to DeVan Shumway, May 14, 1971, NPMP, WHSF, SMOF, Charles W. Colson, Memoranda File, Van Shumway [1972] to Ron Ziegler [1971], Box 12, NARA—CP, 1.

91 See Memo for the President's File, June 16, 1971, 1; and Charles Colson to H.R. Haldeman, June 17, 1971, A-Z June-July 1971, Lyndon K. Allin June, 1971-Bruce Kehrli June, 1971, Charles Colson, June 1971, Box 80, NARA—CP, 1.

92 See summary of a UPI story: DeVan L. Shumway to Herbert G. Klein, June 28, 1971, in press coverage of O'Neill speech, NPMP, WHSF, SMOF, Charles W. Colson, Memoranda File, Van Shumway [1972] to Ron Ziegler [1971], Box 12, NARA—CP, 2. See also "Vets," *UPI*, June 28, 1971, n.p. The article was found in the file, NPMP, WHSF, SMOF, Charles W. Colson, Memorandum File, Van Shumway [1972] to Ron Ziegler [1971], Van Shumway [2 of 3] [1971], Box 12, NARA—CP, 2. The *UPI* reports that "O'Neill...said his organization is not tied to President Nixon or the Republican Party." Finally, see "Press Release—Concerned Vietnam Veterans for Nixon," July 26, 1972, NPMP, WHSF, SMOF, Charles W. Colson, Larry Higby to Steve Karalekas, Dick Howard, Box 8, NARA—CP, 1.

93 John E. O'Neill and Jerome R. Corsi, *Unfit for Command: Swift Boat Veterans Speak Out Against John Kerry* (Washington, D.C.: Regnery Publishing, 2004), 12.

94 DeVan L. Shumway to Mr. Colson, April 22, 1971, NPMP, WHSF, SMOF, H.R. Haldeman, Alpha Name Files, A-Z March-April 1971, Jonathan Rose March, 1971-Chuck Colson April 1971, Chuck Colson April 1971 [Part 1 of 2], Box 76, NARA—CP, 1-3. The *Washington Post* reported on October 10, 1972, that Shumway was a spokesperson for the Committee to Re-Election of the President (CREEP). See Carl Bernstein and Bob Woodward, "FBI Finds Nixon Aides Sabotaged Democrats," *Washington Post*, October 10, 1972, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/national/longterm/watergate/articles/101072-1.htm>.

95 See "Tentative Plan—Vietnam Veterans," n.d., NPMP, WHSF, SMOF, Charles W. Colson, Memoranda File, HRH Memos 1969-1970 to HRH Memos—1971, January-June 1971, Box 2, NARA—CP, 1; and Colson to Haldeman, February 23, 1971, NPMP, WHSF, SMOF, Charles W. Colson, Memoranda File, HRH Memos 1969-1970 to HRH Memos—1971, January-June 1971, Box 2, NARA—CP, 1-2.

96 Charles Colson to H. R. Haldeman, May 28, 1971, NPMP, WHSF, SMOF, Charles W. Colson, Memoranda File, HRH Memos 1969-1970 to HRH Memos—1971, January-June 1971, Box 2, NARA—CP, 1.

97 National President to National Mailing List, F.R.A., May 27, 1971, NPMP, WHSF, SMOF, Charles W. Colson, Memoranda File, HRH Memos 1969-1970 to HRH Memos—1971, January-June 1971, Box 2, NARA—CP, 1-3. (emphasis in original)

98 "Plan to Counteract Viet Nam Veterans Against the War," n.d., NPMP, WHSF, SMOF, Charles W. Colson, Vietnam—Various Groups, Vietnam Veterans Against the War (VVAW), Box 123, NARA—CP, 1.

99 National President to National Mailing List, F.R.A., 1-3. (emphasis in original)

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101 Larry Higby to Chuck Colson, April 13, 1971, NPMP, WHSF, SMOF, H.R. Haldeman, Alpha Name Files, A-Z April-May 1971, Chuck Colson April, 1971-Don Rumsfeld April, 1971, Chuck Colson April 1971 [Part 2 of 2], Box 77, NARA—CP, 1-6.

102 Hunt, *The Turning*, 164-166; and Nicosia, *Home to War*, 263-264.

103 "Vietnam Veterans Against the War," n.d., NPMP, WHSF, SMOF, H.R. Haldeman, Alpha Name Files, A-Z April-May 1971, Chuck Colson April, 1971-Don Rumsfeld April, 1971, Dick Howard April 1971, Box 77, NARA—CP, 1.

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