



Vietnam:

THE POWER OF PROTEST

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STOP THE WAR NOW!

**Telling the truth.
Learning the lessons.**

MAY 1-2 | WASHINGTON DC

www.lessonsofvietnam.org

New York Avenue Presbyterian Church

Conference Program

A Call for Remembrance and Renewal

Welcome to “Vietnam: The Power of Protest. Telling the Truth. Learning the Lessons.” We gather on the 50th anniversaries of the U.S. escalation of the war and first major antiwar protests and the 40th anniversary of the war’s end.

Our purpose is to acknowledge the power and legitimacy of antiwar protest. As Howard Zinn wrote: “In the course of that war, there developed in the United States the greatest antiwar movement the nation had ever experienced, a movement that played a critical part in bringing the war to an end.” We also recall the lies and distortions that led to Vietnam, underscore the war’s continuing human and environmental costs, and address the critical lessons of the war for the future of American policy.



Our program began in opposition to attempts to sanitize the war. More than 1400 of us signed an open letter to the Pentagon’s Vietnam War Commemoration Commission demanding an accurate rendering of history and urging the inclusion of antiwar perspectives in taxpayer-funded activities.

Members of our Committee met with the staff of the Pentagon commission and made some progress. The Pentagon initially planned to produce curriculum materials for high school teaching, but they have now decided not to do this. They are revising their much criticized timeline of the war and have accepted our offer to review the new timeline before it is posted later this year. These are small improvements, but we must remain vigilant in demanding full disclosure of the truth and opposing a Vietnam whitewash.

The necessity of critical reflection on the war was articulated by Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel in his remarks at the Vietnam Memorial this past Veterans Day:

The Wall reminds us to be honest in our telling of history. There is nothing to be gained by glossing over the darker portions of a war ... that bitterly divided America. We must openly acknowledge past mistakes, and we must learn from past mistakes, because that is how we avoid repeating past mistakes.

The war was more than a mistake. It was an unjust, unnecessary and illegal act of military aggression against Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia. The war cost millions of lives and caused incalculable human suffering among the people of Southeast Asia and for American soldiers and their families. Its harmful consequences continue in the effects of Agent Orange and unexploded ordnance.

The tragedy of Vietnam should have taught us to demilitarize American foreign policy and avoid unwinnable wars of military intervention. Those lessons were forgotten in the invasion of Iraq and are being ignored again today as the United States widens its military involvement in the Middle East and beyond.

The lessons of Vietnam are a warning against the arrogance of power. They call us to support diplomacy and peacebuilding alternatives to war. They challenge us to continue and deepen the antiwar cause—to resist the unnecessary wars of today, and stop the larger war on the planet that threatens our future.

The Vietnam Peace Commemoration Committee

PROGRAM AGENDA

Please note that there may be last minute adjustments to this agenda.

The biographies and photos of the presenters can be found on our website: www.lessonsofvietnam.org.

Friday Evening, May 1

6:30p - 7:30p

DESSERT & COFFEE

7:30p - 9:45p

PROGRAM

▪ HONORING OUR ELDERS

The evening will be one of music, poetry, celebration and reflection to honor those 80 years or older who showed major leadership, courage and commitment to advance the Peace Movement and who worked to end the war in Vietnam.

Dan Ellsberg
Dick Fernandez
Judith Lerner
Staughton Lynd
Dave McReynolds

Marcus Raskin
George Regas
Arthur Waskow
Cora Weiss

▪ WELCOME

Emcee: Phil Donahue

▪ POETRY READING

Bill Ehrhart

▪ REMARKS

Congresswoman Barbara Lee

▪ MUSICAL PERFORMANCE

Peter Yarrow, Bethany Yarrow
& Rufus Cappadocia

▪ TRIBUTES

Young activists reading tribute statements about the work of each of these elders.

Becky Bond Stephen Miles
Jo Comerford Austin Thompson
Jonathan Hutto Felipe Sousa-Rodriguez
Raed Jarrar Alexandra Flores-Quilty
Beth Huang

▪ CONVERSATION AMONG THE ELDERS

Moderator: Phil Donahue

▪ CLOSING & MUSIC

Phil Donahue, Peter Yarrow
and all participants on stage

Saturday, May 2

7:45a - 8:45a

REGISTRATION

9:00a - 9:20a

OPENING SESSION

Invocation - Monsignor Ray East

Song - Holly Near

Welcome - Heather Booth
and Marge Tabankin

9:20a - 10:10a

MAJOR PANEL DISCUSSION that frames the war and anti-war movement from various perspectives

▪ WHAT WE DID, WHY, AND WHO WE WERE

Moderator: Juan Gonzalez

Panel:

Anti-War Activist, Tom Hayden

Veteran, Wayne Smith

Civil Rights to Vietnam, Ron Dellums

View from Inside the System, Pat Schroeder

10:10a - 11:00a

AUDIENCE Q&A

50 minutes floor response

11:15a - 12:15p

SIMULTANEOUS BREAK OUT SESSIONS

Small Groups (Full list at end of agenda)

12:15p - 1:15p

LUNCH: Time to see friends old and new

PROGRAM AGENDA

Saturday, May 2 (con't)

1:30p - 2:45p

8 SIMULTANEOUS MINI-PLENARIES

Each plenary includes 40-45 minute panel discussion and 30-35 minute audience Q&A

1. AMERICAN FOREIGN POLICY: FROM THEN TO NOW

Moderator: **Michael Klare**

Panel: **Phyllis Bennis**
Daniel Ellsberg
Larry Korb
Marilyn Young

2. OPPOSING OUR COUNTRY'S AGENDA: ACTIVISM IN SOCIAL CHANGE

Moderator: **Taylor Branch**

Panel: **Todd Gitlin**
David Hawk
Judith LeBlanc
Rosalio Munoz

3. THE PERSONAL IMPACT OF OUR ACTIONS: REFLECTIONS

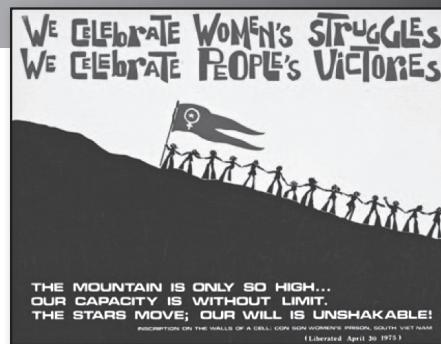
Moderator: **Thomas Hartmann**

Panel: **Alan Canfora**
David Harris
Mark Rudd
Susan Schnall

4. VIETNAM TO 9/11: GOVERNMENT IN OUR MEETINGS & IN OUR LIVES

Moderator: **David Cortright**

Panel: **Liz Holtzman**
Bernadine Dohrn
Rep. John Conyers



5. THE MEDIA AND WAR - LESSONS FROM THE VIETNAM WAR: WHAT WE GOT WRONG, WHAT WE GOT RIGHT, HOW TO COVER THE NOW

Moderator: **Amy Goodman**

Panel: **Frances Fitzgerald**
Don North
Margaret Prescod
Elizabeth Becker

6. LEGACIES AND OPPORTUNITIES: THE US AND INDOCHINA TODAY

Moderator: **John McAuliff**

Panel: **Rick Weidman**
Susan Hammond
Channapha Khamvongsa
Nguyen Nguyet
Andre Sauvageot

7. CREATING A COALITION

Moderator: **Ron Young**

Panel: **Dick Fernandez**
Gerald Horne
Vivian Rothstein
Bob Muehlenkamp

8. OPPOSING CURRENT WARS

Moderator: **Stephen Miles**

Panel: **Leslie Cagan**
Jo Comerford
Jodie Evans
Raed Jarrar
Michael McPhearson

PROGRAM AGENDA

3:00p - 3:30p

CLOSING PLENARY

Full conference to convene for:

- **SYNTHESIS OF THE DAY AND LESSONS LEARNED**

Tom Hayden

- **SPECIAL APPEAL**

David Cortright

- **MUSICAL PERFORMANCE**

Barbara Williams

3:30p - 3:45p

GATHER FOR DEPARTURE FROM CHURCH

3:45p - 4:00p

DEPART CHURCH

4:00p - 5:15p

COMMEMORATIVE WALK TO MLK MEMORIAL followed by personal visits to The Vietnam Veterans Memorial Wall and The Vietnam Women's Memorial

Led by Members of Congress, Clergy, and Veterans

5:15p - 6:00p

BRIEF PROGRAM AT MEMORIAL

- Opening Remarks and Emcee:

Danny Glover

Prayer: **Rev. Dr. George Regas**

Reading: **Julian Bond**

Remarks: **Congresswoman Barbara Lee**

Remarks: **Dolores Huerta**

Remarks: **Margaret Prescod**

Closing Music: **Holly Near**

6:30p - 9:15p

GROUP DINNER & CULTURAL EVENT

- 6:30p **RECEPTION**

- 7:00p **OPENING REMARKS**

John McAuliff

Toasts by representatives from the Cambodian, Laotian and Vietnamese Embassies

- 7:15p **Dinner featuring cuisine from Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam**

8:00p - 9:30

PROGRAM

Emcee: **Amy Goodman**

- **READINGS**

Luis Rodriguez

Judy Gumbo and Randy Ross reading from "Mme. Binh"

- **MUSICAL PERFORMANCES**

David & Jack Morris

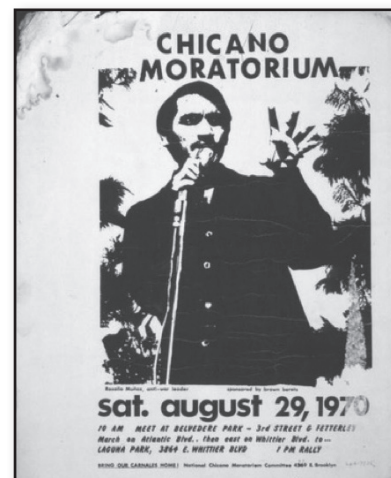
Holly Near

Emma's Revolution

Barbara Williams

- **CLOSING REMARKS**

Heather Booth and Marge Tabankin



BREAKOUT SESSIONS

An opportunity for people with similar experiences and self-identifications to reflect on what was accomplished and what was learned: strengths and weaknesses, implications for current and future wars. Moderators or co-moderators will help bring key activists to their session and facilitate the flow of conversation.

Public Outreach and Political Action: vigils, letter writing, Vietnam Summer, the Moratorium, legislation, peace candidates, Indochina Peace Campaign, Coalition to Stop Funding the War – **Brewster Rhoads, Carol Kurtz**

Dealing with the Draft: counseling, COs, resistance, the prison experience, exile, amnesty – **Bob Musil**

Students and Universities: SDS, teach-ins, strikes, Kent State, Jackson State – **Jeff Blum**

Religious Communities: CALC, NCC, Bishops, Berrigan-inspired direct action – **Arthur Waskow, Dick Fernandez**

Organizing and Participating in Mass Actions: SDS march, Pentagon, National Mobilizations (East and West Coast), Chicago Convention, May Day, March Against Death, Oakland – **David McReynolds, Barbara Webster**

Active Duty Military and Veterans and Their Relation with the Civilian Movement: coffee houses, newspapers, ASU, FTA, VVAW, Winter Soldier, GI Press Project – **David Cortright**

Organizing People of Color: Jorge Mariscal, Frank Smith, Martha Noonan

Vietnamese, Laotians and Cambodians Living in the US (during and after the war): **Channapha Khamvongsa, Nguyen Nguyet**

Direct Engagement in Indochina: volunteers in South Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia; meetings in Europe and Canada; trips and humanitarian aid to North Vietnam; Medical Aid to Indochina – **Doug Hostetter**

The War and the Women's Movement: **Heather Booth**

Research and education (Indochina Resource Center, NARMIC, IMEP, Viet Report, Liberation, "underground" papers): **Sophie Quinn-Judge**

Teaching about the Vietnam War and the Anti-War Movement in K-12 Classrooms: **Jim Loewen, Julian Hipkins**

Vietnam Era Authors and Poets: **Jan Barry, Bill Ehrhart**

Full Disclosure Project: Veterans For Peace

TBD – RESERVED FOR ATTENDEE SUGGESTIONS

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Follow Up & Follow Through



We are creating a space for conference participants to come together on Sunday morning to continue conversations from Saturday or launch new ones. We have available from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. the Lindner Family Commons at the Elliott School of George Washington University, 1957 E Street, Room 602.

The Commons accommodates 130 and can be set up in clusters or chairs around tables. There is also a lounge area outside with additional large round tables. A Starbucks is a few yards away on the corner and a 7/11 is just around the corner so bring your own coffee, etc. Planned clusters will be posted and announced Saturday evening.

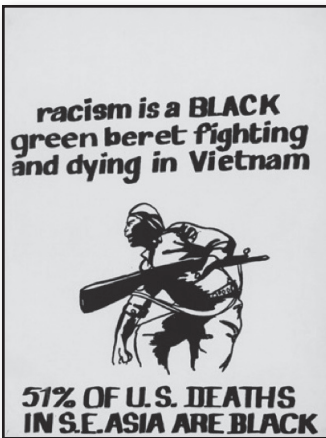
We also have a small conference room that will be used for two structured discussions at the same time as the more informal gatherings:

10:00a - 11:00a Ideas for lifting up our history of protest and of the war locally and nationally, and for challenging/supplementing the Pentagon's version

11:30a - 12:30p Lessons from the Vietnam experience for more effective opposition to today's wars

Both discussions flow from Saturday and are only a beginning, a chance to identify people with common interests and sources of ongoing energy.

Volunteers are needed for set up and clean up.



April 17, 1965 The 50th Anniversary of the first national mobilization against the Vietnam War

Photos courtesy of Ted Reich



Conference Co-Sponsors:



Peace Action 

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Vietnam Peace Commemoration Committee

**Ira Arlook • Sally Benson • Julian Bond • Heather Booth • David Cortright
Susan Hammond • Tom Hayden • John McAuliff • Sophie Quinn-Judge
Paul Ryder • Chuck Searcy • Marge Tabankin**