

Peace and War in the Heartland

Objectives

- To foster a timely public dialogue concerning the perennial issue of Peace and War in light of America's response to terroristic warfare through its first-ever, historically unprecedented preemptive strike against another country
- To initiate a broad public conversation about the individual's moral responsibility to governmental actions in a world of global economics, global communications and global citizenship
- To present the history of the mid-western Heartland's response to this issue through a range of educational events using a broad range of multi-media and telecommunication channels, drawing upon events and lessons learned since the Vietnam War era
- To create an original record and documentation of Minnesota's peace and war history, using the Minnesota *History Theatre's* play focused on the "Minnesota 8" theme as publicity catalyst

Background

Statistically, the mid-western Heartland States have provided a higher per-capita percentage of draftable and enlisted soldiers as well as a higher percentage of draft resisters, draft trials and anti-war prisoners during and since the Vietnam Era.

Since the Vietnam Era returning war veterans have played a highly visible role in forming public opinion about war related issues of fact and morality. These returning veterans also played a critical role in energizing the anti-Vietnam war protests, nationally and in Minnesota. One Minnesota anti-war event so catalyzed by local veterans was the Selective Service draft board raids of the "*Minnesota 8*" in July of 1970.

Minnesota's *History Theatre* www.historytheatre.org has commissioned a playwright to develop a script around the *Minnesota 8* event and trials. See, Doris Baizley at <http://www.shapesifterproductions.com/pages/pages1/doris.html> The working premise for the script is that everyone from the Sixties has a Vietnam story. It was a total war not only in terms of field actions but in its impact on American society and culture. While historical, the play is written to address current peace and war events and issues.

Public dialogue about issues of Peace and War have always been difficult in America. Politically, America lacks a history of a "loyal opposition." Third parties have been formed often, but few have had sustaining power. During times of war America's intolerance for Constitutionally grounded dissent becomes so intense that even mild criticism and moral self-reflection is branded as anti-American and/or traitorous.

During the Vietnam War era, the *Minnesota 8* acted upon their belief that “Patriotism Means Resistance.” They brought into the federal courts the argument that it is necessary for the individual to defy governmental and sovereign authority when it is clearly evident that such authority is violating that country’s own legal and moral principles. In respect to these principles, the Vietnam War was never declared. It was initiated by the Bay of Tonkin Resolution but never declared by Congress. Additionally, the Supreme Court has never ruled on the constitutionality of the Selective Service System, which many hold violates the 13th Amendment’s protection against involuntary servitude. What has become known as the “peace time draft” was authorized by President Truman and subsequent presidents, though, historically, drafts ceased when a war ended.

The members of the *Minnesota 8* spoke from humanistic and religious moral traditions. In one trial, the Roman Catholic moral theology tradition was the basis for supporting the applicability of the legal defense termed a “Defense of Necessity.” The defendant was a lay Catholic theologian who called Vietnam Veterans, scientists, historians, but most notably, theologians, former seminarians, and priests to the witness stand. The “Documents of Vatican II” and the encyclical of Pope John XXIII, “Pacem In Terris,” were submitted as legal evidence. Only when the judge explicitly instructed the jurors that such Catholic documents and testimonies were “irrelevant and immaterial” were the defendants convicted. Prior to that point, the jurors were reading the moral documents and were split 6-6.

On appeal, the final decision consumed six months of deliberation as the appellate court wrestled with the point that the jury should have been allowed to rule on the Defense of Necessity. As fitted the tumultuous times, the chief appellate judge later visited his own nephew who was serving time for draft resistance in the same prison where most of the *Minnesota 8* were incarcerated.

Public discussion needs an organizing theme and focus which attracts the broadest representation of points of views and moral traditions. An “historical event” allows participants to approach the issues with an ecumenical degree of civility because “no one owns history.” “Discussing history” is an invitation to groups from every sector of public and moral opinion to engage in a reasonable dialogue.

As with the “Pentagon Papers,” history often discloses patterns of decision-making which were not apparent to those who participated in the actions of previous eras. It is the working premise of this Project that a public dialogue about the history of Peace and War in the Heartland will present to the present generation consciousness-raising insights about the history of American warfare and the necessity for patriotic moral resistance.

Events

The Project centers around a two year cycle with an annual six week event. The first event is tentatively set for the fall of 2006. This coincides with the *History Theatre’s* “Raw Stages” event. At this performance, the public participates in critiquing the first draft of the play. The second six week event will be launched when the play is finally

produced. The theatrical curtain is anticipated to rise during the fall of 2007.

The trial of the *Minnesota 8* included witnesses whose profiles provide a template for developing the educational events. Historians, theologians, Vietnam veterans, a university biochemist and geneticist, a former top government official (Daniel Ellsberg), local community activists, and others were witnesses. In total, these witnesses represented a broad range of personal and professional backgrounds and attitudes towards peace and war. Outside the trials, the “Committee to Defend the Eight” and other supporters included men and women from every sector of society.

Women played a large role in the Draft Resistance Movement. Unknown to many, two women participated in the July 1970 draft raids but they were at a draft board which the FBI missed. The educational event will present a broad range of opinions both from an historical perspective and through the presentations of representatives of contemporary organizations from academia, government, social justice agencies, seminaries and theological institutes, community associations and other relevant people and organizations.

Anticipated educational events will have one or all three key foci, namely, either a broad historical view, and/or a local historical view, and/or a and contemporary perspective. In collaboration with the *Minnesota Historical Society*, through a oral history project, participants and the public will be able to contribute relevant historical materials. In like manner, through a film documentary project others participants will contribute facts and insights of memory and current interpretations. The oral history and documentary projects will deposit their collections and products in the *Minnesota Historical Society* archive.

Each group which participates in the Project will determine its own agenda and schedule. However, Project coordinators will facilitate organizing meetings to keep all participants informed of what others are doing, their schedules, etc. A website www.minnesota8.org has already been secured to serve as an online scheduling and information clearinghouse.

Event Topics

Conveners will be sought from a wide range of thematic areas including art, history, political science, theology, education, journalism, ethnic-refugee of war groups, veterans associations, the healthcare industry, and women’s organizations, among others.

While there are numerous thematic areas, the hosting of an event, its operations and costs, will be born by each separate sponsoring organization. For example, the a Public Affairs institute may decide to sponsor a talk or debate or roundtable with Daniel Ellsberg. Topic themes and event operations are the full and complete responsibility of the sponsoring Institute. Likewise, local Churches or associations may develop a series of theological discussions targeted for broadcast distribution via Cable TV. The Project coordinators would assist in facilitating contact with telecommunication providers but in no other way influence content.

Event Headliners

The *Minnesota 8* trial involved several people who have attained national and

international stature. It is anticipated that these will endorse the Project and make presentations. Daniel Ellsberg www.ellsberg.net was a trial witness who eventually released the “Pentagon Papers.” Molly Ivins <http://www.alternet.org/columnists/1406/> was a Minneapolis newspaper cub-reporter whose byline is now national. Among others to be considered are: Garrison Keillor hosted several of the *Minnesota* 8 on his radio show and visited them in prison. David Harris, internationally known draft resister whose recent book, “Our War: What we did in Vietnam and what it did to us,” is a best seller. The noted Quaker, Staughton Lynd, a trial witness and still leading historian of nonviolence in America. Sewanee Hunt, international peace activist. Tim O’Brien, noted novelist, and veteran, of the Vietnam War.

As of this draft, no formal commitments have been made by any individuals or associations mentioned in this document.

Event Thematic Areas Leadership Candidates - Working Suggestions As to Content

In each thematic area, the focus will revolve around making public presentations in reference to “Peace and War in ...” e.g., “The Arts.” Where applicable, contests will be held to solicit new productions from professionals and from students.

The Project coordinators will develop a general presentation template for each thematic area. This will include, but not be limited to:

- Public presentations – free or ticketed
- Interactive forums which solicit public input
- Publication of presentation materials in print and multi-media formats, especially through the Project’s website and those of each sponsoring organization
- Contests soliciting entries from professionals and students
- Honorary and financial awards given to contestants

For example in the thematic area of “Peace and War in the **Arts.**” Local, statewide and regional arts associations would present a “Peace and War in the Arts” event. A contest, with awards and a stipend, would be conducted among art professionals and art students. All entries would be accessible through the Project website. Categories would cover all major artistic disciplines and performance/delivery formats, from humor to video to performance art presentations.

Among the other thematic areas include:

History
Political Science
Theology
Journalism
Ethnic-Refugee of Wars groups
Veterans Groups of every camp
Healthcare

Women's Organizations

Others: TBD

Project Organizing Leadership

-partial listing of initial membership-

Convener, Frank Kroncke, *Minnesota 8* member

Ken Tilsen, lead attorney for the *Minnesota 8*

Joe Selvaggio, founder, *Project for Pride in Living*

Karen Clark, Minnesota State Representative

Connie Goldman, writer and oral historian

Fr. Harry Bury, professor and former director of the U of MN Newman Center

Bill Hunt, Ph.D., former *peritus* at the Council of Vatican II and trial witness

Project Leadership

Three individuals will be engaged as project staff. Their primary focus is on networking with and developing presentations by thematic area organizations. They function as general coordinators of the event, clearinghouse managers, and support providers to participating organizations.

Funding

Project expenses are estimated to be just under \$170,000.00. Initial seed funding will be sought for the Project Director at \$60,000. Among his tasks is the raising of the remaining \$110,000.00

For Project expenses, see attached spreadsheet.

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