

WE DON'T SUPPORT THE TROOPS  
(OUR REASONING)





I'LL START WITH AN ANECDOTE:

In the fall of 2002, I took a greyhound bus from the east coast of the USA to the west. After Chicago, the bus was mostly empty and the few of us who remained became acquainted with one another. One, a bright-eyed new recruit of the US Army, sticks strongly in my memory.

“Isn’t that cool?” he asked as we passed an Air Force recruitment billboard that featured a stealth jet.

“No, not really,” I replied, not unkindly.

He knew a bit of guitar and strummed on my acoustic. I asked him what he thought about the impending war with Iraq.

“I don’t know,” he answered, “I don’t know if I support it. I don’t want to come back labeled as a baby killer.”

I advised him not to kill any babies.

THAT YOUNG MAN MIGHT HAVE DIED OVER THERE, FOR ALL I KNOW. And the hard truth of it is: if he died, he died at best for nothing. More likely, his hypothetical death served the interests of economic imperialism. Certainly, his efforts did not help the whole of the Iraqi or American people in any way.

I can only hope that his reservations about the war led him to go AWOL before being shipped out. And if his reservations were based on his perceived lack of support from the people of the US, the people he ostensibly signed up to serve, then so be it. US soldiers ought to be ashamed of being US soldiers at a time when the US government is something to be ashamed of. And, to be honest, when has this not been the case?

Who are these troops that we could be supporting or not supporting? They come from a broad spectrum of society, but primarily from lower-income rural and urban areas. They serve because they

are from military families, because they need help paying for their education, or because the thought of going into the droll American workforce is so unappealing that they would rather face death on foreign soil.

Many of them have been fed lies by recruiters. Many have been fed tales of glory and honor, spoken to of their Grandfather's noble service in the Second World War, et cetera et cetera ad nauseam.

Most of us know soldiers personally, and many of us have loved ones and family members enlisted in the armed forces. The people who march in the streets under a "Fuck The Troops" banner may be antagonizing their brother, sister, or cousin. When we burn effigies of soldiers, we are not ignorant of the pain we may cause to our own families.

But a soldier is trained to follow orders rather than her own guiding ethics; she has given up control of herself—placed herself in the hands of the state—for good or ill. The good soldier is part marionette, and what little initiative she is encouraged to have is funneled into activities

that further only the agenda of her superiors.

She is not the cousin that I love, when her arms are guided by another.

There is no draft in the US at the moment, and although many are railroaded into the service by lies or economic hardship, it is still a choice and there are still options. To claim otherwise is to disenfranchise the poor. If you're hung up about supporting someone, then support the would-be troops; show them options to enlistment and reveal the lies of recruiters. Support the ex-soldiers who refuse to serve.

But the troops? We will not support the troops as long as they remain troops. We will not support those who occupy foreign land by force of arms, and we will not deny them the responsibility of their actions. A person is responsible for the things that they do willingly, whether directed by another or of their own initiative.

Fuck the troops.



just a friendly word from some anarchists

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