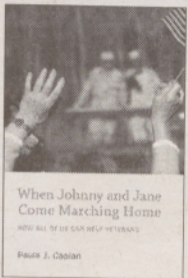


Healing wounds that we all played a part in creating

BY JAY THIEMEYER
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

When "Anatomy of an Epidemic" by Robert Whitaker came out, I interviewed the author for KBOO. The book spelled out the exploitive collusion between members of the mental health establishment and the pharmaceutical industry to expand the definition of mental illness. Less normal, more meds. A very profitable partnership, especially when focused on children, who as we know are all nuts to begin with (god bless their little hearts).

As we were concluding, I asked if he was doing work in anticipation of returning Iraq and Afghanistan war vets. Surely they would be a prime target for the collusion he'd just identified. He said he was not, but a friend, Paula Caplan, was writing a book on the subject.



"When Johnny and Jane Come Marching Home: How All of Us can Help Veterans" by Paula J. Caplan, MIT Press, 2011.

"When Johnny and Jane Come Marching Home" is Caplan's book, and it is excellent.

The author has been a clinical and research psychologist for 35 years in Cambridge Mass which is where she knows Robert Whitaker. She is an affiliate, as well, of Harvard's DuBois

Institute and a Fellow at the Women and Public Policy Program at Harvard's Kennedy Sch of Govt. She's written other well-received books, notably "The Myth of Women's Masochism" and "They Say You're Crazy: How the World's Most Powerful Psychiatrists Decide Who's Normal," a wonderful expose of the politics behind the DSM, which is currently undergoing revision. Caplan speaks as an insider who's been a frustrated advisor fending off the corporate shills cozening the big PhRMA.

What distinguishes this book is not the experience Caplan brings to her subject but the heart she brings to it. She responds to the pathology we as a nation project onto veterans, and the irresponsibility of leaving

their care to the underfunded and increasingly overwhelmed Veterans Administration. She admits early on: "I make no secret of my opposition to every war the United States has fought since the one in Vietnam, but I have never blamed the soldiers who fought in them. Rather, I've been shocked by the degree to which many truths were kept from them when they were asked to risk their lives and their peace of mind and I have been troubled by what I knew some of them would face when they

group, the American Psychological Association, has encouraged the American people to look away from the exhausting wars in the Middle East "in order to cope." APA has recommended measures needed for the public to develop resilience and has explicitly urged Americans to limit their exposure to war related media coverage.

Caplan disagrees with this dry observation: "It is hard for most people to question what the powerful and interlocking institutions do to mask the effects of war.

Imagine.

Her book is not a polemic, though the writing is forceful and convincing. It verges at times on manifesto. In fact, one wonders how such a critical human issue as respecting the care of our vets (regardless of stance on war) can be, in these days, anything but sharp and outraged. Given those circumstances, her compassion for the peculiar hardships vets face on their return is understandable. Her ambition is to outline a solution, to avoid further rupture of these vets' lives, to ease their pain so they can get on with it.

It's not surprising that her stand against the war machine has drawn harsh criticism, particularly from her fellow practitioners, invested as they are in the CIA and the Dept. of Defense. She expects the response, has seen it before many times, and makes it clear from the beginning, that "it would be a mistake to conclude from anything I've said in this book that I am opposed to psychotherapy, that I think it never does anyone any good, or that I am opposed across the board to psychiatric medication, for vets or anyone else." Nor has she said that all the vets' mental problems derived directly from their war experience. We're a neurotic society after all. What she does say is "I have always taken a middle ground position - that all people who suffer have a right to all available information about possible causes, the entire array of potentially helpful approaches, and the pros and cons of each."

What stands out about that simple bit of common sense, which presides over the book, is that these days, it sounds almost outlandish, and in fact she starts and ends from a defensive position. She is, she says at one point, defending the children.

Caplan's writing is fluid and nontechnical. Her information is considerable. It is very simply an exciting highly involving book about a problem we as a society must confront.

Caplan's commitment does not end at the door of her office or the completion of a book. Her inspiration she shares with us is the story her father kept with him about the horrific experiences during WWII. This book, it slowly emerges, is a catharsis for her. Her own drawdown from the trauma of what she's seen and heard with the vets she knows. Including the vet she didn't know, her father at war.



U.S. Marines board a transport ship earlier this year.

returned home. Nevertheless, I was unprepared, in working with vets professionally and then in interviewing more for this book and in meeting still more in my theater work (War and Therapy) for the extent to which I would be shaken by up-close unadorned views of veterans' pain. Whatever one believes about whether a war is right or wrong, any war has a profound impact on a soldier's personal, emotional and spiritual life and that is what this book is about."

Her unequivocal moral stance is in clear contradiction to that of many of her peers. In fact, she notes that her own professional

(p15)."

Consider recent reports of fraud and waste, corruption in the trillions by unregulated war contractors, to get a true sense of how enormous her observation is. This is after all, just another facet of the military industrial complex, the industry this time a collusion between the pharmaceuticals and the psychiatric practitioners, feeding on the distress of our latest crop of vets.

Caplan adheres to the Seville Statement On Violence published by UNESCO in 1991 which states that because there is no evidence to prove that war is a biological necessity, peace is not an impossibility.



Natural Kitchen & Home

2106 SE Division
503-231-5175

miradorcommunitystore.com
Mon-Sat 10-6 • Sun 11-5

Canning jars & equipment, cookware, kitchen tools & appliances

Organic cotton sheets, towels, & blankets

Food dryers

Juicers

Books on meat-free cooking, gardening & sustainability

people's FOOD CO-OP
good food. free classes. real community.

3029 SE 21st Ave
open 8a-10p daily
EBT accepted
(503) ORGANIC
www.peoples.coop



This man works.

So does Street Roots.

LOOKING FOR AN AFFORDABLE PLACE TO RENT?
Your online housing search just got easier.
HOUSINGCONNECTIONS.ORG