



“Challenging People to Shape a Better Future Now”

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Why Veterans Kill Themselves

Recent figures indicate that for every soldier killed in Afghanistan and Iraq, 25 veterans commit suicide upon their return to the U.S. That is an astonishing statistic! How can this be?

In 1971, Stanford University conducted a prison experiment to determine what the effects of imprisonment were on a selected group of students. One half of the students were chosen to act as prison guards while the other half were to be criminals convicted of serious crimes. The University had to bring the experiment to an abrupt end when it was discovered that the “prison guards” were becoming sadistic, violent oppressors, and the “criminals” were responding to the conditions of imprisonment in dangerously rebellious ways.

The experiment underscored what happens to average, educated people, when they are treated without respect, and without protections. More importantly, it demonstrated the catastrophic effect that unrestrained authority, violence and corruption had on those entrusted with the roles of caretakers and guards.

We are witnessing a similar breakdown of morality and judgment among U.S. troops presently carrying out our imperialist wars in Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya, and elsewhere throughout the Middle East. “The Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology” recently issued the report that for every soldier who was killed in Iraq, Afghanistan and the Middle East over the last 10 years, 25 more veterans have committed

PROGRESSIVE AVENUES

Luke Hiken & Marti Hiken

suicide. Whether or not these suicide attempts are a result of PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder), mental health breakdowns, or the natural consequences of having good “soldiers” turn into murdering monsters because of the conditions they are placed under (i.e. the Stanford experiment), is debatable. Yet, what is more at issue here is the fact that over a half million soldiers and merce-

provided a clue as to the disastrous results that unjustified wars have on the men and women asked to fight in them. But no, our Pentagon and “misleaders,” have learned nothing from Vietnam, the Russian and French failures in Afghanistan, or our deceitful and shameful attack on Iraq. These “misleaders” are unaffected by the cruelty and viciousness of their overseas forays, while many engaged in these wars will spend their days contemplating killing themselves.

Recent studies conducted by NYU and Stanford have docu-

imagined, for setting up a clown like Brennan to rubber stamp the illegal use of drones?

A nation that murders civilians indiscriminately, wages wars of aggression against defenseless nations, and lies to its own people about our reasons for destroying governments around the world is not only subjecting its soldiers to resulting suicidal behavior, but destroying the moral integrity of the entire nation as well. At every sporting event where we see jet planes and U.S. flags displayed for purposes of propagandizing the American people to put up with our international war crimes, most of the people watching hang their heads in shame over the decline of what was once a great nation.

The Stanford prison experiment was a microcosm of what is happening to the U.S. worldwide. It demonstrates what happens to citizens who become international killers and to the nation that pays them to do so.

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For every soldier who was killed in Iraq, Afghanistan and the Middle East over the last 10 years, 25 more veterans have committed suicide

naries (i.e. “civilian contractors”) have returned home to our communities from the Middle East, and the Pentagon opines that approximately one third of them suffer from some form of PTSD.

What these statistics highlight, is the moral depravity resulting from all aspects of our involvement in the Middle East, and the impact our colonial assaults have, not only on the defenseless populations we have chosen to destroy, but also on the perpetrators of those assaults as well. It is impossible for soldiers to participate in unjustified mass murder, and not be scarred by it. One would have thought that our experiences in Vietnam would have

mented the fact that hundreds more civilians have been killed by the U.S. drone attacks than the Pentagon acknowledges.[3] Yet some bull-headed bureaucrat in the Defense Department, named John Brennan, has the audacity to explain to Obama that these studies are inaccurate, and that our “pinpoint” accuracy with drones is only killing terrorists, and any unwarranted deaths are “extremely rare.” Are these pathologically absurd comments by Brennan designed to insulate Obama from his slaughter of hundreds of innocent women and children identified in the studies, or do we assume that Obama is even more of a scoundrel than we

Families Struggle: Child Poverty Remains

The U.S. Census Bureau’s new poverty data for the states show millions of families struggling mightily to keep their heads above water in the wake of the Great Recession. Fourteen states saw statistically significant increases in their child poverty rates, 26 states saw small increases, and nine states and the District of Columbia saw small declines in child poverty rates last year. But the morally scandalous bottom line is clear: 16.1 million children are poor in our rich nation with more than seven million living in extreme poverty, too often scared, hungry, and homeless.

Although there are more poor White than Black or Hispanic children, Black and Hispanic children suffer most. In 25 states and the District of Columbia, at least 40 percent of Black children were poor; in four states, Iowa, Maine, Michigan, and Ohio, 50 percent or more of Black children were poor. Thirty-three percent or more of Hispanic children were poor in 32 states.

In 2011, more than one in five children were poor in over half the states and the District of Columbia. In half of these states more than one in four children were poor. Children are the poorest age group in America, and the younger they are the poorer they are. More than one in four children under six were poor in 21 states and the Dis-



CHILD WATCH

Marian Wright Edelman

trict of Columbia during their years of greatest brain development. In 30 states and the District of Columbia, 10 percent or more of infants, toddlers, and kindergartners lived in extreme poverty which means an annual family income of less than \$11,511 for a family of four.

- Alabama 27.6
- Kentucky 27.4
- Arizona 27.2
- Texas 26.6
- Georgia 26.3
- Tennessee 26.3
- West Virginia 25.8
- North Carolina 25.6

These shameful child poverty levels call for urgent and persistent action. Citizens must demand that every political leader state what they will do now to invest in and protect vulnerable children from hunger, homelessness, and poor education and to prepare them to be competent future workers. It’s way past time to eliminate epidemic child poverty and the

ence in July:

“Economically speaking, early childhood programs are a good investment with inflation-adjusted annual rates of return on the funds dedicated to these programs estimated to reach 10 percent or higher. Very few alternative investments can promise that kind of return. Notably, a portion of these economic returns accrues to the children themselves and their families, but studies show that the rest of society enjoys the majority of the benefits, reflecting the many contributions that skills and productive workers make to the economy.”

Do most Americans really want our children to get poorer while the rich get richer and to allow our budget to be balanced on the backs of poor babies while millionaires and billionaires receive hundreds of billions in more huge tax cuts they do not need? If you do not, speak up and vote for a more just America for every child.

Marian Wright Edelman is president of the Children’s Defense Fund. For more information go to www.childrensdefense.org.

Children are the poorest age group in America, and the younger they are the poorer they are

The 13 states and the nation’s capital with child poverty rates 25 percent or higher are:

- Mississippi 31.8
- New Mexico 30.7
- District of Columbia 30.3
- Louisiana 28.8
- Arkansas 28.1
- South Carolina 27.8

child suffering, stress, homelessness, and miseducation it spawns.

A number of leading economists and researchers agree that investing in children today is the best way to prepare and create a strong America tomorrow. As Federal Reserve Chairman Ben Bernanke told participants at the Children’s Defense Fund’s national confer-