UC Santa Barbara

Journal of Transnational American Studies

Title

Thinking With and Beyond the Vietnam Antiwar Movement: An Interview with Frank Joyce, Rebel for Peace

Permalink

https://escholarship.org/uc/item/27q9k42n

Journal

Journal of Transnational American Studies, 16(2)

Authors

Aguilar-San Juan, Karín
Joyce, Frank

Publication Date

2025-11-23

DOI

10.5070/T8.54054

Copyright Information

This work is made available under the terms of a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives License, available at https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/

Peer reviewed

eScholarship.org Powered by the California Digital Library
University of California

Thinking With and Beyond the Vietnam Antiwar Movement: An Interview with Frank Joyce, Rebel for Peace

KARÍN AGUILAR-SAN JUAN, Macalester College
and FRANK JOYCE

Abstract

The fiftieth anniversary of the Vietnam War's end provides a valuable occasion to examine the Vietnam antiwar movement and to elevate themes of friendship and peace that connect the mid-1970s to the contemporary moment. Elder Frank Joyce presents a worthwhile example of a white "veteran" of the civil rights and antiwar movements who senses new realities on the horizon and continuously reflects on the past to understand what is possible in the present and future. Having participated firsthand as an invited delegate in the April 30, 2025 commemorative events for "Re-unification and Liberation" in Viet Nam, Joyce offers poignant comparisons between efforts to heal the wounds of war in Viet Nam and a proliferating "culture of peace" in the United States. Joyce's example of firsthand involvement and continuous reflection allows the Vietnam antiwar movement, far from being frozen in a snapshot of protest and defiance, to emerge as a dynamic setting for envisioning a future beyond war.

Introduction

Despite the many complex lessons that still need to be gleaned from the Vietnam antiwar movement, as a moment of countercultural rebellion and political upheaval within the United States it is generally devalued, distorted, or simply overlooked in both popular culture and scholarship. Reduced to caricature through venues such as the 1994 film *Forrest Gump*, Vietnam antiwar activists tend to attract derision rather

than respect as if their choice to protest the Vietnam War could not have originated in anything but the most short-sighted, self-centered, and unsophisticated impulses.

Not only have the motivations of the activists been twisted and misunderstood, but the impact of the antiwar movement essentially has been deleted from public memory. It is as if the Vietnam War ended of its own accord, or because powerful elites simply came to their senses, or for random reasons that no one needs to investigate. Tom Hayden's book-length essay *HELL NO: The Forgotten Power of the Vietnam Peace Movement* strives to "rescue the peace movement from oblivion."[1] He emphasizes the point that activism against the Vietnam War had serious objectives and concrete results, and that attempts to erase these originate in the larger and ongoing establishment project of "permanent escalation" against liberals, Democrats, and the cause of peace itself.[2] Described on the book jacket as a "principle architect" of the Vietnam Peace movement, Hayden was also an influential voice of the New Left. Through his writing and politics, Hayden shaped the public understanding not only of efforts to end the Vietnam War but of the cultural politics of the "Long Sixties" in the United States. The similarities and differences between Tom Hayden and Frank Joyce—the subject of this interview, introduced below—reveal the different ways that identities and upbringing can affect political and ideological development. Growing up only a few years apart in Royal Oak, Michigan, both attended Dondero High School and earned themselves reputations as rebels—or what Joyce humorously terms in the interview "rebels without causes, who later found causes," referring to the 1950s film "Rebel Without a Cause."[3] From the shared position of white, cisgender male, heterosexual teenagers, they each bore witness to the complex and painful legacies of racial segregation and Black struggles for liberation, and that awareness played out in what they chose to do as adults.

Their lives converged and diverged over the next six decades. When Hayden went off to the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor, a predominantly white town, Joyce went to Wayne State University, located in Detroit, a predominantly Black city. Hayden's relatively well-known biography includes founding Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), coauthoring "The Port Huron Statement," marrying the actor Jane Fonda, serving in the California state senate, teaching, and writing dozens of books. He died in 2016.

In contrast, Joyce stayed in the greater Detroit area where he has pursued a steady and less visible path of union organizing (including decades with the United Auto Workers and its many affiliates, including the radio station WDET), antiracist organizing and educating at the grassroots (including founding People Against Racism, PAR), and antiwar activism (including organizing large protests around the country and traveling to Vietnam). Keeping close ties with Black communities (including a multiracial family) and engaging at varying levels with the Boggs Center and *Riverwise* magazine in Detroit, CHANGE IS THE POINTE (a community-based organization in Grosse Pointe, Michigan, that focuses on hyperlocal racial justice issues), and the National Council of Elders (NCOE, a group of self-designated elders who produce live events and

webinars on a range of social justice topics), Joyce in his eighth decade has barely slowed down in his commitment to social change.

Significantly, Hayden and Joyce crossed paths in two major events and places: Chicago and Vietnam. In 1968, they literally had the same friends and occupied the same living spaces during the protest against the Democratic National Convention and the ensuing Trial of the Chicago 8. Hayden was one of the protestors charged with conspiracy, while Joyce was part of the staff supporting them. Hayden was a key organizer of the delegations of US peace activists invited to Hanoi from 1965 to the end of the war, which he and Staughton Lynd wrote about in *The Other Side*.[4] In 1970, Joyce was one of those two hundred travelers whom Hayden connected to leaders in Hanoi.[5] Throughout the 2000s, Joyce continued to visit Vietnam, coediting a book about the Vietnam antiwar movement, working with the Vietnam Peace Commemoration Committee in response to the Pentagon's efforts to banish the antiwar movement, and in April 2025 leading a multiracial, intergenerational delegation to Vietnam's national celebration of "reunification and liberation."

Joyce's analysis of the Vietnam antiwar movement deserves our attention not only because he agrees with Hayden's thesis that the movement was powerful yet forgotten, but because he uniquely insists in the interview and elsewhere that the greater lessons for Vietnam antiwar activists reside in deepening their understanding of what they were doing at the time. For Joyce, "Vietnam" was and is less of a US foreign policy question than it is a pivot point in the evolution of the white, antiracist, anticolonialist mindset. In the interview, Joyce emphasizes the impact of then-young white activists from the US North joining Black-led freedom movements in the US South and learning from their courage, collective orientation, and innovative tactics. Put a different way, what was learned was not so much an ideology or a political stance regarding freedom, but the actual practices and techniques of building people-to-people relationships that allow freedom to manifest and become part of everyday interactions and social life. He also raises the possibility that the absence of a strong, antiwar movement today reveals signs of unresolved and untreated trauma. In the interview, Joyce wonders out loud if some antiwar activists during the Vietnam era are not engendering a new wave of activism because they regret the oppositional stances that they took and resent the label of "traitor" that they were given.

Reframing Vietnam as a site of learning and friendship

Joyce's outside-the-box thought process and approach to Vietnam antiwar activism bring to mind the distinctive intellectual contributions of Jimmy and Grace Lee Boggs, US activist-philosophers known for their relationship to each other and to the histories of Black movements in Detroit, Michigan. Joyce interacted with the Boggses in their day and still connects to the people who keep the Detroit-based Boggs Center going. Although the Boggses did not specifically assess the power of the Vietnam antiwar

movement as far as I know, their efforts to articulate and redefine the meaning of revolution in a United States context involved an analysis of the Vietnamese revolution—among other major world transformations—as an important source of learning for US social movements.[6] A significantly different approach than saying that US activists ended (or helped to end) the war, the Boggses frame Vietnam as a "people's war" of revolution, and place the credit for that revolution with the Vietnamese. For example, in "People's War in Vietnam," they stress that:

> [T]he Vietnamese have been guided by the strategic line that in the course of protracted warfare, their own strength would increase while that of the enemy could only decrease, due to the fundamental contradiction inherent in U.S. technological overdevelopment and political underdevelopment … We have seen how, as the strength of the NLF [National Liberation Front] has grown over the past decade, all the internal contradictions in the U.S. position have multiplied … The Americans fight a mechanical war but the Vietnamese fight a people's war. For the Vietnamese the human element always comes first. There is nothing they can do without the people … The American forces possess a great deal of technical know-how but they have absolutely no sense of political know-why.[7]

The essay, and this quote, help establish that the important question is how to build a revolutionary movement in the United States—not what US activists did to help the Vietnamese. Indeed, Grace Lee Boggs, after Jimmy's death, proceeds in her memoir and other work to push forward the concepts of conversation and relationship-building as essential steps toward resolving the core contradiction between technological overdevelopment and human underdevelopment in the United States.[8]

In the interview, Joyce picks up on the thread of human underdevelopment by treating Vietnam less as a site for the study of political history and more as an opportunity for activists to cultivate peaceful relationships. Joyce's focus on friendship and peace meshes closely with this approach, echoing the belief that when it comes to a solid foundation for peace, directing sincere effort toward recognition and reciprocity between and among individuals and communities, though often flawed, goes much further than perfecting an ideological stance of crosscultural solidarity that merely masks ignorance, fear, and hostility.

Joyce's repeated visits to Vietnam starting in the 1970s and continuing through 2025 indicate that he finds intellectual and spiritual nourishment there, most likely because of Vietnam's "human element" that the Boggses once praised. And while remembering and acknowledging the accomplishments and impact of the US antiwar movement are certainly part of Joyce's agenda, the project of raising the level of cultural and political "know-why" among US activist movements is even higher on that

agenda. Asking white antiwar activists to consider what they have learned from Black freedom struggles is his way of opening their eyes to the collective history and culture of violence and white supremacy. Being witness and partner in small yet tangible ways to Vietnam's ongoing project of decolonization allows Joyce to refresh and reframe his own positionality vis-à-vis the multiplicity of struggles with which he has chosen to align today.

The outlook and on-the-ground cultural work he shares in this interview also resonate strongly with the newer scholarly analysis of Detroit as a "city of dispossession" put forward by Kyle T. Mays.[9] In formulating his approach to Detroit, Mays does the huge favor of connecting Black and Indigenous struggles and anchoring these in Detroit's specific landmark events and territory. According to Mays:

> At its most basic, dispossession is a process of settler capitalists taking land, removing people, developing that land, and creating and reproducing narratives and symbols that serve to explain why certain populations deserve to be removed, who can belong to the metropolis, and who profits off that land. In this way, dispossession helps us to understand the construction of cities … Dispossession is a process that has undergirded the development of urban America.[10]

This framing of Detroit as a geographic and social site of dispossession allows us to understand Detroit in the more universal terms of urban development, not only in the United States as Mays states, but in other global–historical settings: Viet Nam and Palestine, in particular. In the US cultural imaginary, Detroit epitomizes a place of racialized urban crisis; meanwhile, Mays's reinterpretation of Detroit as a place of "dispossession" brings to the surface a set of urgent questions about how Detroit, Viet Nam, and Palestine might be related.[11] The leap to Palestine may seem jarring, and some readers may balk at the parallel drawn between Detroit, or any US city—no matter the degree of dispossession—and the ongoing horrifying and genocidal situation in Palestine. To draw this parallel is certainly not meant to invoke facile equivalencies between situations of great historical suffering, nor is it to ignore or belittle the scale, power or motivation of the United States as a global superpower to fund, to assist, or to justify colonial erasure. It is only to suggest the merit of further inquiry into the continuities and commensurability of erasure through territorial dispossession across Black, Indigenous, Vietnamese, and Palestinean lives.

Put another way, Detroit has global significance though it does not qualify as a "global city" in the sociological sense of disregarding the boundaries of the nation state while constructing strategic transnational networks (as exemplified by New York, London, or Tokyo).[12] Whereas the contemporary struggles of both Detroit and

Palestine could be interpreted as singular, local, or even provincial, their symbolic impact far exceeds their literal scope and size. As John Collins writes,

> The global importance of Palestine seems to be increasing in inverse proportion to the amount of territory controlled by Palestinians … the remarkable global profile of Palestine tells us a great deal about the politics of globalization in general … from the troubling realities of permanent war to the changing face of international solidarity activism.[13]

Indeed, Detroit has a "global profile" because it exemplifies a condition of abandonment and aspiration toward resurrection and liberation that it shares with other oppressed peoples around the globe[14] Without losing sight of all the very unique aspects of those three places—Detroit, Viet Nam, and Palestine—for the purposes of appreciating Joyce's path and approach to peace, it is both useful and necessary to consider them together under dispossession and its hopeful aftermath: decolonization.

Building international networks based in friendship—or citizen diplomacy—comprised an early and intentional strategy of the Vietnamese revolution going back to the days of French colonization. From 1965–75, with the help of Hayden and Lynd, the Provisional Revolutionary Government (PRG) sought to connect to what would today be termed cultural "influencers"—writers, artists, musicians, clergy, academics, and others in roles of authority or leadership—extending to them an invitation to visit wartime Hanoi for a first-hand experience. Having returned home, the travelers would share their impressions with the public, amplifying the voices of Vietnamese people who were cut off from the noncommunist world. Joyce accepted this invitation, risking his safety, passport, and reputation to step onto Vietnamese soil in the midst of US bombing and the PRG's efforts to stop it.[15]

The impact of travel extended beyond changing the mindset of specific individuals. The US antiwar movement made innovative use of the opportunity of face-to-face interaction with Vietnamese and other Southeast Asian people including a regular mail service with prisoners of war (POWs) through the Committee of Liaison that the State Department did not dare to ban.[16] Another innovation of the antiwar movement was the People's Peace Treaty, a student-led act of citizen diplomacy on which a brick-and-mortar antiwar campaign flourished.[17]

In late 2025, technology and the surveillance it allows mediate even the most trivial choices, making the goals of in-person friendship and solidarity challenging at best. Yet Joyce's trip to Ho Chi Minh City (Saigon) in April 2025 was made possible by the foundations for people-to-people relationships that were enthusiastically established more than fifty years earlier. The characterization of antiwar activism as centered on protest and defiance of authority fails to capture the enduring impact of making friends and engaging in people-to-people (or citizen) diplomacy. As much as it was a window into Vietnamese culture for US and other antiwar activists, friendship

was also an effective strategy for Vietnamese diplomacy at the grassroots level, a friendship that today's Viet Nam Union of Friendship Organizations (VUFO) continues to nourish. For example, as this essay was going to press, Joyce headed to Geneva, Switzerland to deliver a three-minute oral statement to the United Nations Human Rights Commission about his impressions of Viet Nam.

The work of protesting the Vietnam War required forming friendships and solidarities with people, groups, causes, and nations that did not support the status quo. Today's DEI professionals often describe this kind of stance as "allyship," but Vietnam antiwar activists were more likely to see themselves as rebels or insurgents wholeheartedly supporting the cause of "internationalism" or "Third World solidarity."[18] Allyship does not capture the deep historical, collective, and social practices of friendship building that energized Black freedom struggles and antiwar movements. Nor does it capture the political, physical or emotional risks involved in doing so. Perhaps it will suffice to gesture toward a study of white antiracist activist involvement in the social movements of the 1980s. In *A Promise and a Way of Life,* sociologist and yoga practitioner Becky Thompson lists "an intimacy between white people and people of color—as friends, colleagues, and comrades" as part of the "living practice of crossing borders" that constitutes antiracist culture.[19] Thompson articulates the critical message that antiracism is not focused exclusively on eradicating white supremacy; it is also about establishing the foundation for alternative relationships to blossom in the future. For that blossoming to occur, white activists need to see the ways they are also harmed by the interlocking structures of racism, colonialism, and war. Robert Jensen declares that white supremacy disfigures the humanity of white people; Emma Dabiri calls on white antiracists "to recognize this shit is killing you, too."[20] More space is required than that which is allotted here to unfold fully the argument against allyship—which is ensconced in white administrative bureaucratic thinking—and for rebel insurgency.

Moving Toward a Culture of Peace

Most people assume that "the peace movement" (Hayden's phrase) and "the antiwar movement" (Joyce's phrase) refer to the same event and the same set of values, but as this interview unfolds, it turns out that there is much more to cultivating a culture of peace than there is to protesting war—and sometimes a chasm of values and vocabulary stands in between them. When Joyce talks about a culture of peace in the interview, it is sometimes disconnected from his activist involvement in protesting the Vietnam War. In truth, a challenge of doing this interview was to figure out how to connect "antiwar" to "peace" during the Vietnam era and to speculate on what that means for contemporary activism.

For example, the years 1973–1975 marked an official period of three-way negotiation often referred to as the Paris Peace Accords. During this period the United States began a process of military withdrawal labeled "Vietnamization," meaning that

the burden of war would shift to South Viet Nam, a plan that in hindsight obviously failed.[21] This shift was clearly intended to be interpreted as moving the US away from war and toward peace. For the antiwar movement, the shift created a new problem: US policy was no longer dedicated to outright war but rather to exerting US control over a divided nation via its client state, the Republic of Vietnam (RVN). The absence of the usual machinery of war that was still far short of peace illustrates what King called, in a very different context, an "obnoxious peace."[22] As Hayden describes it, "[T]he war was becoming political."[23]

Many factors led to the RVN's final moments, and one of them was the revelation that Con Son, the French colonial island-turned-prison, was in fact being repurposed by the South Vietnamese regime to contain and torture dissidents, not communists as one might expect but rather university students and Buddhists.[24] The inhumane use of "tiger cages" (cages built for human captivity, unlike prison cells, with the bars on the top) quickly became a "public relations time bomb" that forced withdrawal of US support for South Vietnam.[25] The Indochina Peace Campaign, a project that Hayden and Fonda created in 1972, helped to expose the tiger cages and push for that withdrawal. When Joyce visited Con Son Island in April 2025, he reflected on that exposé as one of the important tasks that the antiwar movement took on during these last stages of US intervention in Viet Nam.

At the end of the day, it would be a fair question to ask: How did peace and nonviolence impact the Vietnam antiwar movement? Much of the Vietnam antiwar rhetoric and slogans include the word "peace" and in that context, peace was no straightforward matter. Indeed, peace is construed in a variety of overlapping and something contradictory ways: as the opposite of war, as the end of violence, as a practice of nonviolence, or as a condition without conflict. Today, an immense field of peace research delves into and untangles the complex positioning of peace with regard to war, violence, nonviolence, and conflict. Such research is both valuable and frustrating, especially when it reinforces the biases of white Western patriarchy simply by not recognizing its own mindset.[26]

A few important ideas to glean and apply from that vast literature to contemporary contexts include the fact that war and peace are not opposites since one can morph into the other; peace can be intended to cover over violence; and true peace does not require the absence of conflict.[27] A full study of the continuity or discontinuity of peace movements with Vietnam antiwar activism—note the many remarkable efforts led by Quakers and Mennonites—is unfortunately beyond the scope of this essay.[28] For sure, traditional peace activism helped to drive the Vietnam antiwar movement, especially when expressed as conscientious objection or resistance within the military. However, as far as Joyce is concerned, while it contained many strands of peace activism the antiwar movement eventually focused on ending a *particular* war rather than evolving into an enduring peace movement intended to stop all wars.

We can only speculate on the factors that contributed to this narrowing of vision. One important issue to consider in the broader conceptualization of what peace

looks like and who peace is for entails the self-framing by US communities of color as "internally colonized" people determined to liberate themselves from US empire in tandem with the Vietnamese revolution. A huge part of the tendency to ignore, for example, the Black Panthers' call for "Black unity and self-defense" as an aspect of peace-making has to do with an inability and an unwillingness to consider the validity of self-defense or armed struggle in a colonial context. When self-defense is seen as morally reprehensible to peace activists, the actions taken by decolonization movements to defend lives and territory cannot be properly evaluated as essential components of making peace.[29]

This is not to diminish the formidable voice of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King as a spokesperson for nonviolence and brotherly love. As the US pushed to escalate its war in Viet Nam—the bombing of Laos and Cambodia would not be exposed until several years later—King forged a forbidden link between US militarism abroad and the denigration and exploitation of racialized minorities within the US as he delivered the speech "Beyond Vietnam: A Time to Break the Silence" on April 4, 1967. Penned by the Rev. Vincent Harding, a friend of Joyce, "Beyond Vietnam" makes at least twelve references to peace while denouncing the US government as the "greatest purveyor of violence in the world."[30] Linking the war in Viet Nam to the draining of resources for the poorest people in America, King highlighted the "cruel irony of watching Negro and white boys on TV screens as they kill and die together for a nation that has been unable to seat them together in the same schools."[31] King was later excoriated by *The New York Times*, the NAACP, and others for linking the Vietnam antiwar movement to civil rights, a connection that Black people were not allowed to express in public. One year later, exactly to the day of delivering that speech, King was assassinated.

Going from Black Freedom struggles and the Vietnam antiwar movement toward activism oriented around what Joyce terms the "culture of peace" is both subtle and profound, placing him on the fringes of secular and left-sectarian revolutionary thought with its insistence on the economy as the primary site of change together with its refusal to eschew violence. It is this humanistic turn, however, which enables Joyce to critique whiteness and colonization in a manner that connects him back to Viet Nam not through the largely negative stances of antiwar, antiracism or anti-imperialism but through the more positive lens of relationality. The culture-of-peace lens might be interpreted as less political and more philosophical, existential, or even spiritual, as it emphasizes connection over ideological correctness. On the other hand, as early as 1957, King articulated a "vision of total interrelatedness" within the context of a racial segregated society in which Black people were treated as sub-human; such a vision was clearly *both* spiritual *and* political.[32]

As with the Black Freedom struggles from which leaders such as King emerged, compassion and nonviolence were the spiritual tenets that guided Buddhist protests in South Vietnam. Within the study of the Vietnam antiwar movement, the enduring impact of Vietnamese Buddhism is frequently overlooked. Yet the image of a monk on fire is stamped on the public memory of the era. Indeed, Robert Topmiller points out

that the shocking act of self-immolation by the Vietnamese Buddhist monk Thích Quảng Đức in 1963 served as a turning point in US foreign policy in Viet Nam, invigorating a religious political force that had developed roots during French colonialism. Buddhist protests helped to topple the Catholic-oriented and US-backed regime of Ngô Đình Diệm in South Viet Nam.[33]

When the elder monk set himself on fire in South Viet Nam, many people in the West who were unfamiliar with Buddhist traditions of sacrifice received the act as a sign of mental imbalance.[34] The apparent suicide simply did not register as a legitimate undertaking for peace. For that reason, Thích Nhất Hạnh—the Vietnamese Buddhist monk who became widely known in the West for his practice of and writings on peace—takes this specific cultural misunderstanding as a point of departure in launching a scholarly explanation of the roots of Buddhism and nationalism in Viet Nam targeted to US policymakers and other influential leaders.[35] However, what appeared as violent and mysterious for some became a source of connection and commiseration for others. In 1965, an elder named Alice Hertz burned herself to death to protest "a great country trying to wipe out a small one for no reason."[36] That this astonishing deed took place on a street corner in Detroit, Michigan is perhaps coincidental, yet the place-connection to Joyce and the Boggses merits attention as it both localizes and globalizes a specific and daunting moment of opposition to the Vietnam War.

The direct connection between Vietnamese Buddhism and Black Freedom struggles should not come as a surprise as it was neither accidental nor exceptional. In 1966 via the Fellowship of Reconciliation a Black diplomat based in Southeast Asia named Robert Browne helped introduce the Rev. Dr. King to Thích Nhất Hạnh. One year later, King nominated Thích Nhất Hạnh for the Nobel Peace Prize, calling him an "apostle for peace and nonviolence."[37] While *Vietnam: Lotus in a Sea of Fire* should be considered his magnum opus for peace, Thích Nhất Hạnh's influential legacy of peace is more evident in his many subsequent works that have promoted socially engaged Buddhism in the West.[38]

Within the last decade, Joyce has devoted substantial energy to elevating King's "Beyond Vietnam" speech into an anchoring device for a series of antiwar/peace webinars, virtual gatherings, and discussion groups produced by the NCOE. NCOE has provided a public platform for Joyce to think through some of the connections between antiwar and peace in the current context. Through the NCOE, Elder Kathy "Wan Povi" Sanchez from Tewa Women United became a mentor for Joyce. In 2021, Joyce published an online essay "The Slogan No Justice No Peace Gets It Backward. Peace is Key to Justice."[39] In the preamble, Joyce credits Sanchez, Tewa Women United, and Indigenous ways of seeing the world more generally for leading him toward an understanding of violence itself "as a key variable embedded within and required to enforce patriarchy, white supremacy and capitalism."[40]

The overall trajectory of the Vietnam antiwar movement was to end a specific war; it did not set the foundation for, nor did it lead to, a movement to end all wars. In the interview, Joyce is preoccupied by one vestige of the past that he believes has

diverted some antiwar activists from formulating a broader contemporary peace agenda: unresolved trauma. Whereas Joyce expresses sensitivity to the lingering psychosocial impact of the antiwar movement, social movement theorists point to the rise of conservative thought as a determining factor in constraining and diffusing antiwar dissent in the United States. Penny Lewis specifically argues that the failure to activate a solid working-class base for contemporary antiwar movements lies partly in the media creation of the "hardhat hawk" whose vote neoconservatives from the Reagan era onward actively courted.[41] These are not opposing views; antiwar activists can be traumatized in the aftermath of the Vietnam War alongside—or as a result of—the rise of a neoconservative political (and a later, neoliberal economic) narration about both the war and the antiwar movement. No matter how one seeks to explain the inability to conjure up a US antiwar movement that measures up to the mass mobilization of the Long Sixties, the fact remains that without a convincing path from the antiwar past into a world without war, moving toward peace remains more enigmatic than ever.[42]

What does all of this mean today? Indeed, the Free Palestine movement is weakened by the relative unavailability of a prior generation of antiwar activists who can speak to peace now with the same moral force exhibited by the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King. As a result, the question of "whose violence is justified" often emerges as a more immediate and practical discussion than the topic of how to stop killing, forge peace, and make true co-existence possible among all peoples, the land, the sea, the sky, and all forms of life. This is not to overlook the very serious and dedicated ongoing efforts to build peace through nonviolence among Palestineans, Israelis, Arabs, Muslims, and Jews. Nor is it to ignore the intensifying climate of repression that seeks to diminish and silence completely those efforts. In fact, Joyce's voice and perspective is valuable because his orientation toward a culture of peace gives permission to think beyond the Vietnam antiwar movement and outside the culture of violence, and to imagine a peace agenda that is rooted in everyday values and extends toward all nations.

Conclusion

Over the course of six decades, Frank Joyce's rebellion for peace has evolved from frontlines organizing for racial justice and an end to the Vietnam War, toward a more all-encompassing focus on the culture of violence underlying patriarchy, white supremacy, and capitalism. By turning his attention to violence and designating the US as a "warrior society" that prioritizes conflict and competition, Joyce parts ways with those antiwar activists who protested a particular war but who have not taken the added step of analyzing the scope of violence in society or considering the folly of all wars. Staying connected to Viet Nam through frequent visits to the country and through engagement with debates about the impact of Vietnam antiwar activism has allowed Joyce to nourish his own sense of belonging to an international community of peace,

and to reflect critically on the meaning of the antiwar movement, especially its shortcomings and possibly traumatic consequences on the activists themselves.

The trauma of being ostracized as a traitor to one's nation in the context of Vietnam antiwar activism seems both strangely anachronistic and entirely relevant to this particular moment in US history. When Hayden and Staughton Lynd organized the rosters for delegations of people's diplomats to visit wartime Hanoi, travelers feared for their safety and reputations but probably no one imagined returning to the United States only to be kidnapped from their homes by masked government agents and deported to another country without being charged for a crime and without a trial. On the other hand, Joyce makes the point that Black people started the Vietnam antiwar movement by giving permission to young white rebels to take things into their own hands to stop the war. The precursor to masked ICE agents was COINTELPRO, the FBI program that worked with local police to target the Black Panthers, the American Indian Movement, and other dissident groups from 1956–1976. According to Black Past, at least twenty-eight Black Panther Party members were killed and more than seven hundred and fifty were imprisoned through COINTELPRO.[43] The take-home message is that serious risks continue to be involved in working for peace. Today, we know more about the impact of trauma, and becoming aware of the intergenerational trauma caused by violence from all sources is clearly part of the work that needs to be done within antiwar, peace, and social justice movements today.

Referencing Grace Lee Boggs and the Zen master and Hawaiian Indigenous leader Norma Kawelokū Wong, Joyce says, "We have a sense of collapse all around us." He limits the despair to the United States, since he experienced a palpable feeling of connection and shared future in Viet Nam.[44] Understanding connection as an antidote to despair means emphasizing the support provided in relationships: human-to-human as well as human-to-land and to all forms of life. Even while these exchanges can sometimes be strategic and transactional, simultaneously elements of joy and spiritual nourishment can be wrapped up in there as well. In this, Joyce elevates the lessons offered by Tewa and other Indigenous communities.

While this essay-and-interview puts Joyce in the limelight for the purpose of thinking with and beyond the Vietnam antiwar movement, in truth what makes Joyce a model is precisely his refusal to center himself. There is nothing in the interview (even before it was edited) that gives in to a self-aggrandizing white masculinity, with its all too familiar virtue signaling or "virtue hoarding."[45] Joyce speaks clearly and convincingly, and avoids "mansplaining." Also absent from Joyce's self-narration are the claims to being an expert white ally; if there are white anti-racist activists he does not approve of, he did not devote time during the interview to competing with them or putting them down. In his speech and actions, Joyce displays a commitment to collaboration and horizontal relations, refusing to give into the ever present opportunities for reinscribing himself as a dominant elder white male figure in a dialogue with me, and with the readers and constituencies to whom this essay is addressed. What remains if people in Joyce's social position disavow the matrices of violence that

have always supported and undergirded them? That's exactly what he is trying to figure out, and we can learn from this example.

Today's activists have the advantage of being able to glean lessons from the past and integrate them into the present moment, even as they face the deadly and decadent forces of greed, white Christian supremacy, toxic masculinity, and unbridled authoritarianism swirling in every direction. The political climate is hostile to say the least, and yet we must continue to establish alternative values and vocabularies for building peace, friendship, and international solidarity. Uplifting examples of people, like Joyce, who have devoted their lives to peace and justice is a small and tangible step in creating the alternatives we need more than ever. No individual is perfect, and perfection is not the goal. The goal is to follow the lead set by Joyce and others who model the process of self-reflection, relationship-building, and collaboration. By doing so, activists may be able to name, and address, the everyday violence that saturates our lives, moving ever closer to transforming a world of war into a world of peace.

An Interview with Frank Joyce: Rebel for Peace

Note: The following interview condenses three Zoom conversations I had with Frank Joyce following his April 2025 trip to Viet Nam. The conversations are informed by more than a decade of collaboration with him on projects related to Detroit, the antiwar movement, and peace.[46]

Identity

Karín Aguilar-San Juan: I want to ask about your own identity, because it's what comes up when you enter the room as a white, heterosexual, cisgender elder man, father of a multiracial son, grandfather. How is your activism fed by these identities?

Frank Joyce: There is no greater form of being a traitor to the United States, than to be a white, antiracist advocate for peace. Because if the purpose of the United States is violence, territorial conquest, and racialized slavery, then to be against those things is to betray the values of the nation in which I happened to be born. I'm making this distinction between people who had a little burst for a few years in the 1960s of opposing their government but then reverted to being supportive of their government. I didn't do that. You're exactly right to frame it as an identity question. I disagree with many political activists who trivialize and denigrate identity.

What is the United States? It's the first ever apartheid nation-state. It's the first time that a country was created on the basis of the brutal territorial conquest of already occupied land, while simultaneously creating a racialized system of enslavement.

KASJ: So you're disavowing whiteness? Or are you saying there's a different way to be a white person? And how does that link with your actual family relationships?

FJ: Sure. Taking that kind of in reverse order, this connects very directly to my most recent experience in Viet Nam. In a society with perpetual structural inequality and injustice, can a person have a healthy family life? How can a person be a good father, a good grandfather, a good husband, a good partner, when one is immersed twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year in this gendered, racialized, brutal, violent, expansionist colonial system? It's hard to do, and in a certain way, I would maintain it's impossible to do that absent a greater commitment to harmony and peace for the sake of harmony and peace, in a society which prioritizes conflict and competition and binary ways of thinking. This incredible tension shows up in my relationship with my children, for example, who have been very critical of me as a father. [They tell me] "You neglected us, you abandoned us. You thought the movement was more important than we were." It feels, of course, very personal. I do think some people who were lifelong movement activists did a better job of balancing their role as partner, spouse, friend, colleague, and, most importantly, parent, better than I did. But I also think there's only so much you can do because the environment you're in is so hostile.

It's getting harder because we sense that the old system is collapsing all around us in quotidian ways, and there could be a nuclear bomb, you know, headed somewhere right this minute. Grace Boggs and Norma Wong speak to this.[47] We have this sense of collapse that is happening all around us. The Vietnamese do not. The contrast was so much sharper for me being able to experience Viet Nam [recently], and how people relate to one another, [unlike] all of the antagonism and hostility in the United States.

Viet Nam in 2025

KASJ: You were invited to participate in the fiftieth-anniversary events in Viet Nam, and you organized a multiracial delegation of elders and "youngers." What was that like? What impressed you the most this time around?

FJ: In Viet Nam, the slogan of the anniversary was reunification. The notion of the end of the war meaning reunification is in and of itself extremely significant. And then practicing in a ceremonial way with a big parade and billboards, [seeing] the flag of Viet Nam and the flags of the People's Revolutionary Government and the National Liberation Front, two physically distinct flags. [All of it] is compatible with this theme that, over the last fifty years, the divisions that were created during and by the war are actually healing. There is a process of healing and of reunification across generations, across geographic divides.

And it's not just the parade. I'm not seeing one single story in the US media anywhere about the fact that on July 1, 2025, Viet Nam is going through an incredible structural reformation. Viet Nam has consisted of sixty-five provinces, governmental subunits, like states in the United States. It is going to be reduced to thirty-eight and

there's been a long process underway for a few years now to determine what the boundaries of those provinces will be. Among other criteria, wherever geographically possible, each new province in Viet Nam will stretch from the mountains to the sea, allowing for access to the ocean and access to the mountains compatible with just what the topography of Viet Nam happens to be.

It's going to create disruption; there'll be some backlashes, but it's reducing the number of government officials significantly, the number of bureaucrats, the number of bureaucracies. Here we are in the United States. We have DOGE. We have this guy with a chainsaw that comes in and eliminates government agencies and fires thousands of workers and disrupts all sorts of things. [Meanwhile] you have an enormous political change taking place in a country still recovering from years of colonialism and [bombing and Agent Orange]. Viet Nam is reorganizing itself and has very specific goals in 2030 and 2045: how to improve health care, how to improve government services, how to reduce poverty, how to improve education, how to make a better quality of life.

KASJ: Did the 2025 trip give you any new insights into the history of the antiwar movement?

FJ: Our group met with people who were survivors of political imprisonment in a place called Côn Sơn Island, which is off the coast of Ho Chi Minh City (Saigon). It had been a French colonial prison, but during the US war became a prison for South Vietnam. It achieved quite a bit of notoriety. Don Luce and Tom Harkin, then a Congressional staffer, later a US Senator, discovered "tiger cages" in this prison. [These were cages that look like they were built to hold tigers—with the bars on the top—but they were used for human confinement.] There were other more conventional cells as a part of this prison complex also, but the involvement of US peace activists in the exposure of the tiger cages became a significant factor in the antiwar movement. If you were perceived to be a peace activist in southern Viet Nam during the time of the US occupation, you were subject to being arrested and sent to these very brutal prison conditions, whether you were a Buddhist or a student, or mostly, I think, a noncommunist opponent of the war.

The US idea of the Peace Treaty signed in January of 1973 wasn't to end the war, it was to change the nature of how the US was participating in the war. The troops came home, but the money continued to flow to the South Vietnamese military and the South Vietnamese government. The question became: How do we sustain mass opposition to the war when we aren't waging war in the way that we were before? And I hadn't fully realized this until I went to Côn Sơn Island.

KASJ: I'm imagining this trip was a very complicated endeavor on so many levels. Isn't it remarkable that the Vietnamese go to all the trouble to engage in people–to–people diplomacy?

FJ: It was helpful to the Vietnamese to be in communication with the US activists [and vice versa]. Some of it was transactional. It was strategic. You know, the first people that the Vietnamese interacted with, civilians with whom they were at war, was the French. It wasn't Tom Hayden or Rennie Davis. Ho Chi Minh had a long history with the very robust French Communist Party. Even under colonialism, there are relationships between the colonizers and the colonized. Just like relationships between prisoners and guards in prisons. Humans are complicated but the Vietnamese [had experience with] reaching out to US antiwar activists. There's a little inside joke, [concerning the first encounter of Madame Bình with US antiwar activists] in Bratislava. I forget how it got arranged. Basically, she's looking at a bunch of hippies and saying, "Oh my God!" I'm sure when they had interactions with French communists, they were probably wearing suits and ties and fedoras. For one thing, they're French. For another thing, the nature of the times, you know, it's just like when you see early pictures of Martin Luther King, he's always in a suit and tie and a fedora.

[My] language here is imperfect, but there were spiritual, cultural, and relational connections taking place between peace activists and Vietnamese people that weren't the least bit transactional. It was genuine human contact.

I'll tell a little story here. [After] my first trip in 1970, I took thirteen of my photographs from that trip and turned them into a 1971 calendar. It had a cover, and twelve months of the year. The cover was a picture of the Vietnamese flag on a flagpole seen through a bombed-out building (*see Fig. 1*). And then there's a poem by Ho Chi Minh on the cover. I sent the cover photo to Quyen Phan, our handler from the Viet Nam Union of Friendship Organizations (VUFO). She was very moved by it, in a way that surprised me, because she's younger; she wasn't alive at the time. She didn't live during the war [and she saw] that my experience in Vietnam had had such a powerful impact on me.

There's a fascinating side note: The calendar was published by the Black Star Press in Detroit. The Black Star Press was a successor to the League of Revolutionary Black Workers, and part of a plan that Jim Foreman (former executive director of SNCC [the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee]) developed to try to get white Christians to invest in economic development in the Black community.

Antiwar

KASJ: Mentioning SNCC makes a great segue to the Vietnam antiwar movement itself. I've heard you say the movement is misunderstood, even by the participants in it.

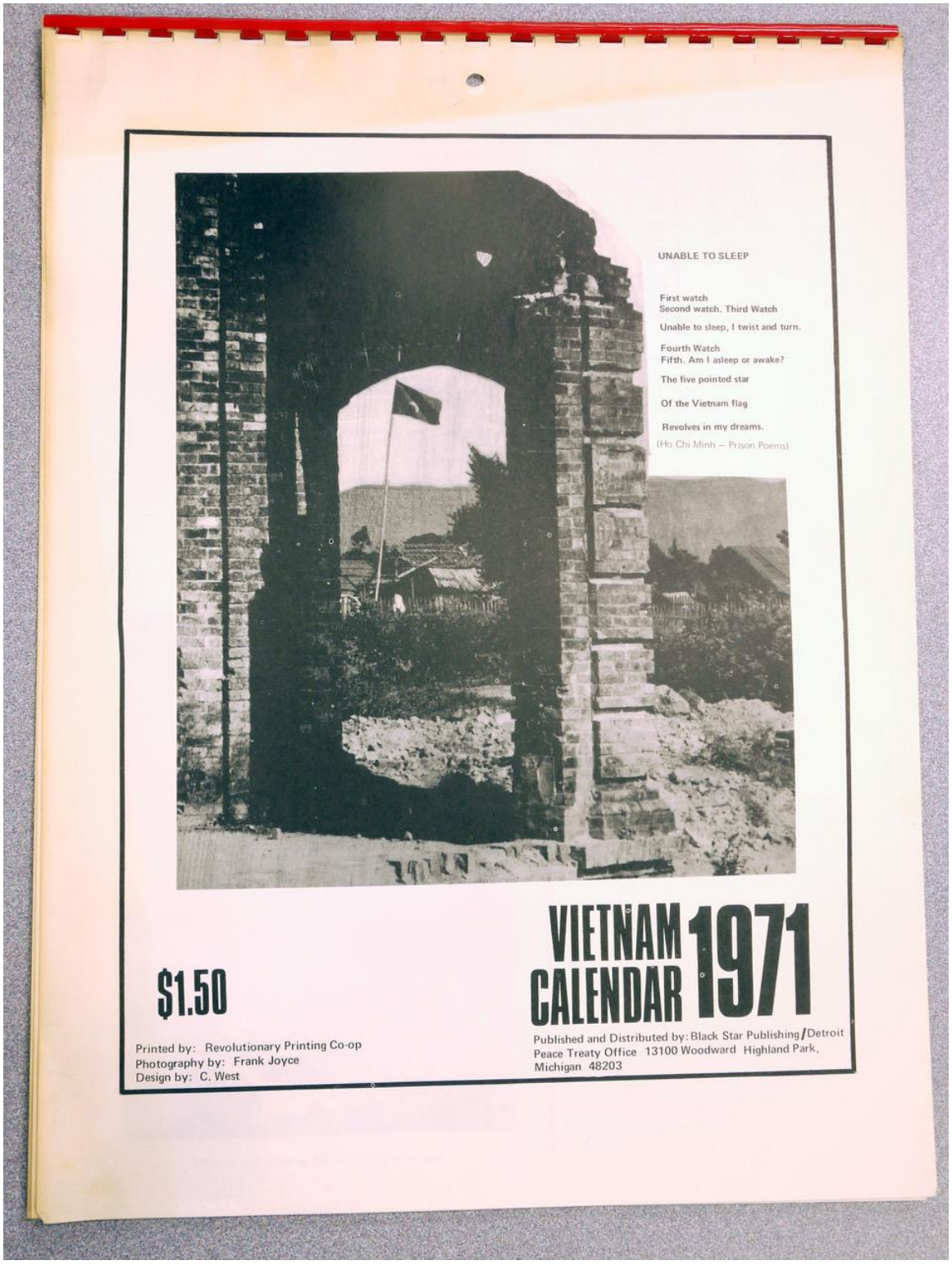


Figure 1. Calendar published by Black Star Press with photograph by Frank Joyce and "Unable to Sleep" poem by Ho Chi Minh.

FJ: It was misunderstood because people, even the participants in the antiwar movement itself, never saw the forest for the trees. It seemed like a kind of a natural thing and organic thing to do at the time it was happening. Among many white participants in the antiwar movement there was little awareness of the conditions that made it either possible or inevitable that people would look at this war differently than citizens had looked at the Korean War or World War Two or other wars that the United States has participated in. That's largely because it was that it was taking place during a time when there was a giant social upheaval already underway.

The Black Freedom Movement began before the involvement of the US military in Vietnam escalated to the point where large numbers of troops were putting their boots on the ground. So by the time there were noticeable and significant numbers of US troops, Navy ships and support, airplanes and all of that, those forces were in motion. In 1955 the Montgomery Bus Boycott had taken place. On February 1, 1960, the lunch counter sit-in happened in Greensboro, North Carolina. These were key points in the evolution of a major social conflict in the United States involving the status of Black people in the Jim Crow South.

The more the antiwar movement grew, the bigger it became, and the longer it went on, fewer and fewer white people understood that connection. They misunderstood the political environment of which they were themselves a product.

KASJ: That's really provocative. What the heck happened? Young, white students went south to join with civil rights struggles. How did they not see this connection?

FJ: Tom Hayden went to Mississippi as a journalist in 1961.That was a life-changing experience for him. He got beat up as a journalist, just like today we're hearing about journalists in Gaza or journalists in Los Angeles who are targets of violence and arrest. Subsequently, Tom joined a Freedom Ride. He transitioned from being an *observer* of a social conflict to being a deliberate, conscious *participant*. In 1962, Tom went on to write the Port Huron Statement.

By 1963, people are starting to notice something is happening in Viet Nam. The Gulf of Tonkin happened in 1964 and was used as a pretense to justify deeper intervention by the US. Slowly but surely the United States was getting more directly involved in trying to determine the future of Viet Nam.

Let's roll the tape back a little bit. Shortly after the first lunch counter sit-in in 1960 was the founding meeting of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee. The word student matters here. Students create two significant organizations, SNCC and SDS. But to me, the timeline matters: SNCC came first.

So anyway, you've got this emerging social upheaval emanating from the South and emanating from struggles initiated by Black people in challenging the southern system of Jim Crow and that is creating a particular social environment that is already in the air, in the zeitgeist.

KASJ: Essentially, you're saying that Black people started the antiwar movement.

FJ: I'm totally saying that the Black people started the antiwar movement [by] creating conditions that made it interesting and permissible for young white people to be rebellious. We were learning through mass media coverage of sit-ins, freedom rides, and voter registration campaigns and struggles that were going on in the South, that this was a thing that could happen.

Very specifically, Black people were being drafted and sent to Viet Nam in disproportionate numbers; [they] were suffering a disproportionate number of deaths and injuries in Vietnam, which in turn started to create within the Black community in the North and the South, a lot of questioning of, why are we serving in this war, and very early on, the war came to be known in some circles as a "white man's war."

This became a theme throughout the 1960s. It's a part of the famous antiwar speech that Martin Luther King gave on April 4, 1967. Paraphrasing the speech: If [there is] any place I should be fighting, it is not in Viet Nam but in Detroit or in Mississippi, or in Los Angeles, or in Birmingham, Alabama, or in Newark, New Jersey. There was an explicit growing opposition to the war within Black organizations and amongst ordinary Black people.

I happen to have access to an amazing 1965 leaflet obtained by two white civil rights workers, Paul Lauter and Florence Howe. It was written by a local activist in McComb, Mississippi named Joe Martin and it reads like a manifesto against the war and against the draft. Under the main heading of "STOP THE WAR IN VIET NAM," he writes: "Here are more reasons why Colored Peoples should not be fighting for the White man's Freedom in America." And he lists five reasons, all of which tie the draft, riots in Los Angeles (which were ongoing), low wages, and segregated schools together. Now, if that isn't a "transnational" perspective, I don't know what is!

KASJ: Do you think that antiwar activists were and still are confused about their own motivations for protesting the war?

FJ: Yes, I often wonder what *do* they think it was all about? Whether they were draft resisters or whether they organized demonstrations in the streets, whether they worked on the electoral campaigns of peace candidates, whether they wrote letters to the editor opposing the war, whatever degree of participation they had that they would self-identify as saying: "I was against the war." What *do* they think they were doing at the time?

I think most of the people who participated in that opposition have less and less seen themselves in favor of peace, and more and more seen themselves very narrowly as having been against that particular war. And that's a pretty clean distinction, right? It's one thing to be against a particular war taking place at a particular time, and it's another thing to be against war.

Let's say it's 1978, three years after the war has ended, and you're a big shot in the Pentagon, and you're ashamed. The United States likes to portray itself as the best warriors, best war machine, best tanks, best airplanes, best aircraft carriers, best rockets, best bombs. We're the best at violence that anybody has ever been. But, you say, people think that we lost that war, and that grates on you, if you're a career military person or a defense contractor trying to sell airplanes and tanks and guns and weapons. So you think about how to describe and characterize the war. You think a lot because there was even a lot of opposition to the war from within the military; soldiers who rebelled against their commanders and against the war itself. And you recall one famous demonstration in particular, where soldiers threw their medals over a fence on the steps of Congress. And there was a Winter Soldier investigation in which soldiers testified about atrocities that they were ashamed of having participated in. And again, you don't want anybody to know about any of that. You try to erase it and cancel it out and ignore it. You try to elevate the profile of soldiers who fought enthusiastically, who never questioned the war, who believe to this day that it was a just war and a just cause.

And you have to demonize the movement. To this day, people still demonize Jane Fonda. Jane was part of a delegation in 1972. An iconic photo of her posing on an antiaircraft gun in Hanoi, the one that got her in all kinds of trouble. Jane Fonda came to epitomize disloyalty to the United States. To be antiwar is the essence of being unpatriotic.

And if you're a warrior nation, which the United States always has been, you want to marginalize the memory of the antiwar movement, to distort what it was, the size of It, the nature of it. One of the strategies was to characterize draft resisters as cowards. Because you're a coward, you are motivated one hundred percent by your own sense of personal safety, when there can be no higher cause than killing for your country. Thus, there's something wrong with you.

One of the twisted forms that this argument takes is to say the only reason there was an antiwar movement was because of the draft. The argument is that somehow, for the first time in US history, there was an attack of mass cowardice. That's how the antiwar movement is presented in popular culture: Whether you burned your draft card, whether you refused induction, or whether you went to Canada or Sweden or some other place that was friendly to draft resisters, you were a coward, a chicken.

That theme has penetrated the antiwar movement itself. I've had many, many conversations with my contemporaries in the antiwar movement, people like me. If the question comes up, "Why don't we have an antiwar movement now?," [they will respond] "because we don't have a draft." But that's not true. It wasn't the draft that motivated opposition to the war. For example, the US military intervention in Korea also had a draft but it didn't engender mass opposition. So mass opposition to a war is out of character with anything that happened before, or since. That's why I see this antiwar movement as a very big deal.

The Pentagon, by the way, has official programs to commemorate the Vietnam War, for which Congress allocated money. The military, the media, the defense economy, the war production economy, needs popular support for dropping bunker buster bombs on Iran, for example. We need popular support if we decide to send troops to Greenland, or send them again to Panama. Militarism needs people to be compliant with whatever it is you want them to do. And one way you achieve that is that you make them feel guilty for having ever done something other than that.

Many people have been worn down by this nonstop effort to either demonize the movement or erase it all together. I think a lot of people who participated in the movement have a peculiar form of post-traumatic stress. They've never processed *their own view* that they betrayed their country, that they were traitors, that it's true what the Pentagon [said about them].

KASJ: People who join movements to fight systems and don't win—they are branded as traitors and losers, right? It runs parallel to Vietnam war veterans being traumatized by returning home and not being welcomed as heroes. The trauma of combat is compounded by the trauma of finding out the war itself was wrong. How does anyone process all of that?

FJ: You mention two things that are important. On the side of the ledger about demonizing the antiwar movement has been the very deliberate propagation of the idea that because [you are a traitor] to your country, you would spit on a soldier. Many people in the antiwar movement believe it happened despite zero documented cases of that ever happening. [The spitting myth] encapsulates everything we're trying to talk about here, about how to demonize the antiwar movement, and what effect that effort had on the people who participated in it.

Now, let me say, very clearly, I've been very outspoken about this in public. I'm very proud of having been part of the antiwar movement, but I'm not sure that [others] who were part of it share that feeling. I think there is a sense of shame and doubt. There's a clip in the last episode of the Ken Burns series *The Vietnam War* in which a woman basically says, "I'm sorry that I wasn't more supportive of the soldiers." There's still a lot of processing to be done amongst the people who were part of the opposition.

KASJ: How did the Vietnamese people themselves influence US antiwar activists?

FJ: As the antiwar movement was emerging, contact between antiwar activists and people from Viet Nam took several forms. The most important and most conspicuous contact started in 1965 with a delegation of Tom Hayden, Staughton Lynd, and Herbert Aptheker. They became the first of many such delegations between 1965 and 1975 of people who were practicing people–to–people diplomacy, by traveling to Viet Nam

and or on occasion, meeting with Vietnamese people in the United States or in other locations.

It's one thing to have a peace movement, by Quakers and others who define themselves as pacifists. But during times of war, they have not always visited the location, the place where the war is being waged, let alone visit the people who the war is being waged against. Once you had made such a trip, you had a different understanding and a firsthand knowledge of the war. Because part of the idea of the trips was that you would see what life was like in Hanoi, interact with people—mostly government people, because these were supervised and organized trips—but they would include visits to villages and organizations.

These trips had an extraordinary impact on the antiwar movement. Cora Weiss created an apparatus, I don't know what else to call it, in which those who participated in such delegations would carry mail from the families of US prisoners of war in Viet Nam, and then carry letters from those prisoners back to their families in the United States. This became a source of protection for these trips.

It is a little strange that the US government would allow people to go to enemy territory, literally enemy territory, and not somehow try to restrict that or punish people for having done it, and we have every reason to believe that there were people in the government and the State Department and the Pentagon and elsewhere who wanted to do that, but who felt that they couldn't be seen as interrupting, from a humanitarian point of view, this one channel of communication between POWs and members of their family.

KASJ: How did traveling to Viet Nam in 1970 connect you to friends like Tom Hayden, Jane Fonda, and Rennie Davis?

FJ: Tom and I were products of all-white suburbia. Detroit is different, so even all-white suburbia in Detroit isn't necessarily the same as all-white suburbia in Chicago or Dallas or Cincinnati. We were two years apart in Royal Oak, Michigan, and I think we both, as high school students, exhibited what I have referred to as being rebels without causes, who later found causes. We both got in trouble with the authorities at school in various and sundry ways. We're talking the late 1950s, the zeitgeist that was emerging. On quite separate tracks, we both became engaged in the movement, and particularly the civil rights movement. I was never a college campus activist in the way that Tom was. I was a student at Wayne State, a commuter college, not a residential college.

In the earliest phases of my getting involved with the movement, I was working in a factory. [Later] I got involved with the Northern Student Movement and Tom, of course, famously, was involved with SDS. We became more closely connected [when] I helped to organize the demonstrations at the Democratic National Convention in 1968. That's where I really got to know Rennie Davis. When eight people were indicted for their role in organizing those activities in Chicago in 1968 [also known as the "Chicago 8"], I became a member of the staff for the trial that ensued in 1969. At one

point we all lived collectively in Chicago, and I was in an apartment that Tom also stayed in that was very close to a second apartment that Rennie Davis stayed in. The trial was a bonding experience.

Jane Fonda comes into the picture quite a bit later, because Jane and Tom became a famous couple involved in protesting the war. [They] created something called the Indochina Peace Campaign, which was something new, the leading vehicle for opposition to the war after 1973. Tom, Rennie, me, Jane, Judy Gumbo, Nancy Kurshan … [What] we had in common is that we had all been to North Vietnam [as citizen diplomats].

There's another person whom I've come to know much more recently through my work with an organization called the National Council of Elders, and that's Kathy Sanchez. Thirty-plus years ago, Kathy founded an organization called Tewa Women United. And she is part of the Tewa Pueblo of Indigenous people in northern New Mexico, and most specifically, the Los Alamos laboratories are located on Tewa land in northern New Mexico. And it's from the mentorship of Kathy, whom I've come to know [as a friend] that I have become familiar with the idea and the language of a "Culture of Peace."

Peace

KASJ: It's exciting to know that new friends are possible at every stage of life. What have you been learning from Kathy Sanchez about peace?

FJ: Kathy's point of view is very much outside the scope of what I now call the Tyranny of the Right–Left Paradigm. As an Indigenous woman, [she] has access to ways of thinking that are non-European, and that knowledge, that awareness, that perspective on all political questions, is outside of the very narrow boundaries of what is loosely known as the Left. [These] ideas and theories and ideologies that derive from European thinkers have never been modified very much, actually, for the US, which is one of its limitations.

I'm speaking personally. This is my own evolution that I'm talking about here. I think that we are more likely to create peace and harmony if we talk about how to create peace and harmony than if we talk about the price of eggs. Because within the Right–Left Paradigm, the concept is if you want to achieve racial justice, or if you want to reduce mass incarceration, or empower women, or "fix" the climate, the only way that you can achieve that is you have to talk about economics. I don't agree with that. I think if you want peace, you have to talk about peace, and you have to talk about violence, and you have to acknowledge the degree to which the systems of oppression cannot operate without violence.

KASJ: How do you connect peace back to your experiences in Viet Nam?

FJ: Where I am right now, in Paso Robles, California, I'm very close to a shopping center which includes a Walmart. Here at the Walmart parking lot, you could be killed by some gun-toting dude because he thinks you took his parking place. I'm coming back to this notion of how Viet Nam helped me personally. How do we look for and validate and venerate peace and harmony, in contrast to a society that venerates violence and conflict?

You can feel it in Ha Noi, or Da Nang, or wherever you are inches away from a scooter. There might be four people on the scooter next to you, and a car on the other side of them, and a bus ahead of them and a bicycle in the middle. All in motion, aware of each other. You know, they tell you, when you go to Viet Nam, you'll be completely intimidated trying to cross the street. But the advice is always: Trust the current. In the US we often speak of road rage. In the streets of Viet Nam, I see road love; on the sidewalks where people are eating, talking, laughing, connecting.

And that's what brings me back to this theme of reunification, which isn't just a slogan. It's palpable that people [in Viet Nam] have a sense of a common future.

Notes

1 Tom Hayden, *HELL NO: The Forgotten Power of the Vietnam Peace Movement* (Yale University Press, 2017), 135.

2 Hayden, *HELL NO*, 137–42.

3 *Rebel Without a Cause*, dir. Nicholas Ray, Warner, 1955.

4 Thomas Hayden and Staughton Lynd, *The Other Side* (New American Library, 1965).

5 Mary Hershberger, *Traveling to Vietnam: American Peace Activists and the War* (Syracuse University Press, 2003).

6 Even in her 1970 speech addressing "Asian-Americans and the U.S. Movement," Grace Lee Boggs stopped short of connecting the emergent political consciousness of Asian Americans to the revolution in Vietnam (Grace Lee Boggs, "Asian-Americans and the U.S. Movement," UCLA Asian American Studies Center, https://www.aasc.ucla.edu/da/kochiyama/nps1/locker/aasc-yk-0107_B.pdf). This reflects the fact that, for most of her life, Grace related to the world through a Black revolutionary lens rather than an Asian American one.

7 James Boggs and Grace Lee Boggs, *Revolution and Evolution in the 20th Century,* with a new introduction by Grace Lee Boggs (Monthly Review Press, 2008), 117–19.

8 Grace Lee Boggs, *Living for Change: An Autobiography* (University of Minnesota Press, 1998); and Grace Lee, director, "American Revolutionary: The Evolution of Grace Lee Boggs," Leelee Films, 2013.

9 Kyle T. Mays, *City of Dispossessions: Indigenous Peoples, African Americans, and the Creation of Modern Detroit* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2022).

[10] Mays, *City of Dispossessions*, 1–2.

[11] Prior to Mays's book, Detroit's history had been interpreted largely through a lens of the great migration north after the US civil war; racial segregation within industry and the urban space; race rebellion in the late 1960s; the post-1970s evisceration of the city's public infrastructure, from schools to government; and over the past two decades, the reconstruction of pockets of the city through private corporate investment. Mays's analysis enables Detroit to be reframed not through a trajectory of racial assimilation but rather through dispossession, which has global counterparts. See Thomas Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit,* Princeton University Press, 2005).

[12] Saskia Sassen, *The Global City: New York, London, Tokyo* (Princeton University Press, 2001).

[13] John Collins, *Global Palestine* (Columbia University Press, 2011), 1.

[14] One historical example of a South–South connection between Black Detroiters and the cause of Palestinean liberation is Professor Emeritus Charles Omowale Simmons, a member of the National Council of Elders who wrote about the Middle East for the Nation of Islam newsletter *Mohammed Speaks*. A more current example that is not tied to Detroit but connects to dispossession in US Black history would be Ta-Nehisi Coates's recent book reflecting on his travels to Senegal, South Carolina, Israel, and Palestine. See Ta-Nehisi Coates, *The Message* (One World, 2024).

[15] Along the lines of Canary Mission, a KeyWiki webpage devoted to "exposing the hidden influence of socialism and communism" traces the names of individuals who comprise what they label the "Hanoi Lobby" from the late 1960s to the present.

[16] See "Interview with Cora Weiss," in *The Loyal Opposition: Americans in North Vietnam, 1965–1972*, by James W. Clinton (University Press of Colorado, 1995). Cited in Judy Tzu-Chun Wu, *Radicals on the Road: Internationalism, Orientalism, and Feminism during the Vietnam Era* (Cornell University Press, 2013), 301, FN6.

[17] See Chapter 4: "The People's Peace Treaty" in Karín Aguilar-San Juan and Frank Joyce, eds. *The People Make the Peace: Lessons from the Vietnam Antiwar Movement* (Just World Books, 2015).

[18] Whether or not US antiwar activists had difficulty relating to Vietnamese culture, Susan Sontag—who took her own trip to Hanoi in 1968 and wrote about it—later claimed the Cuban revolution was an easier sell. See Susan Sontag, "Some Thoughts on the Right Way (for Us) to Love the Cuban Revolution," *Ramparts*, April 1969.

[19] Becky W. Thompson, *A Promise and a Way of Life: White Antiracist Activism* (University of Minnesota Press, 2001), 330, 329.

[20] Robert Jensen, *The Heart of Whiteness: Confronting Race, Racism, and White Privilege* (City Lights, 2005); and Emma Dabiri, *What White People Can Do Next: From Allyship to Coalition* (Harper Perennial, 2021).

[21] David L. Anderson, *Vietnamization: Politics, Strategy, Legacy* (Rowman and Littlefield, 2020).

[22] King made this comment when he was on trial for his participation in the Montgomery bus boycott of 1955; see Martin Luther King, Jr., "When Peace Becomes Obnoxious," Stanford University, Martin Luther King, Jr. Research and Education Institute, 1956,https://kinginstitute.stanford.edu/king-papers/documents/when-peace-becomes-obnoxious.

[23] Hayden, *Hell No*, 92.

[24] Holmes Brown and Don Luce, *Hostages of War: Saigon's Political Prisoners* (Indochina Mobile Education Project, 1973).

[25] Marc Jason Gilbert, "Poulo Condore (Con Son)," in *The Encyclopedia of the Vietnam War: A Political, Social, and Military History*, ed. Spencer Tucker (ABC-CLIO, 2011), http://ebooks.abc-clio.com/?isbn=9781851099610

[26] For example, the significant contributions of the Quaker peace scholar Elise Boulding were partially eclipsed by the fact of her upholding women and families as part of the project of peacemaking; see Mary Lee Morrison, "The Life and Work of Elise Boulding: Honoring Women as Peacemakers," *Affilia* 21, no. 2 (2006): 169–83.

[27] David Keen, "War and Peace: What's the Difference?" *International Peacekeeping,* 2000 7, no. 4, 1–22, https://doi.org/10.1080/13533310008413860

[28] See, for example, David Cortright, *Peace: A History of Movements and Ideas* (Cambridge University Press, 2008).

[29] Peace activist Randall Forsberg offered a succinct formulation that opens up this conversation: "No violence except defense." In other words, the limited reactive use of violence to reverse the harm done by those who do not uphold this same principle can be morally acceptable. See Elise Boulding and Randall Forsberg, *Abolishing War: Cultures and Institutions* (Boston Research Center for the 21st Century, 1998).

[30] Grace Lee Boggs credits Rev. Harding as the sole author of the first draft of this speech (Boggs, *Revolution and Evolution* xxxix, FN20). For the full text of the speech, see Martin Luther King, Jr, "Beyond Vietnam—A Time to Break Silence," http://archive.org/details/MLKBeyondVietnam

[31] King, "Beyond Vietnam."

[32] Kenneth L. Smith and Ira G. Zepp Jr, "Martin Luther King's Vision of the Beloved Community," *Religion Online*, https://www.religion-online.org/article/martin-luther-kings-vision-of-the-beloved-community/

[33] Robert J. Topmiller, *The Lotus Unleashed: The Buddhist Peace Movement in South Vietnam, 1964–1966* (University Press of Kentucky, 2002).

[34] Recently in an interview on Insight Timer (a meditation app), a highly esteemed US Zen teacher whose Vietnam war activism is part of their social identity implied that the specific act of self-immolation was a form of "pathological altruism." Their view was not challenged, revealing that cultural bias still needs to be challenged within the US peace movement.

[35] Thích Nhất Hạnh, Thomas Merton, and Alfred Hassler, *Vietnam: Lotus in a Sea of Fire* (Hill and Wang, 1967), 1.

[36] Cheyney Ryan, "The One Who Burns Herself for Peace," *Hypatia* 9, no. 2 (1994): 21–39, https://www.jstor.org/stable/3810168

[37] See Chapter 3 for a detailed description of Thich Nhat Hanh's integration into the US antiwar movement via Robert Browne in Wu, *Radicals on the Road.*

[38] Thích Nhất Hạnh, *Peace of Mind* (Parallax Press, 2016).

[39] Frank Joyce, "The Slogan No Justice, No Peace Gets It Backward: Peace is the Key to Justice," *Counterpunch*, July 23, 2021, https://www.counterpunch.org/2021/07/23/the-slogan-no-justice-no-peace-gets-it-backward-peace-is-the-key-to-justice/

[40] Joyce, "The Slogan No Justice, No Peace Gets It Backward."

[41] Penny Lewis, *Hardhats, Hippies, and Hawks: The Vietnam Antiwar Movement as Myth and Memory* (Cornell University Press, 2013).

[42] Sustained argumentation for a world beyond war provides hope in this context. See David Swanson, *War is a Lie* (Just World Books, 2016).

[43] Hannah Foster, "COINTELPRO [Counterintelligence Program] (1956-1976)," *BlackPast,* March 14, 2014, https://blackpast.org/african-american-history/cointelpro-1956-1976/

[44] Norma Kawelokū Wong, *When No Thing Works: A Zen and Indigenous Perspective on Resilience, Shared Purpose, and Leadership in the Timeplace of Collapse* (North Atlantic Books, 2024).

[45] Catherine Liu, *Virtue Hoarders: The Case against the Professional Managerial Class* (University of Minnesota Press, 2021).

[46] The raw transcript was created from the Zoom audio file by otter.ai.

[47] Joyce is referring to the activist-philosopher Grace Lee Boggs and the Zen master and Hawaiian Indigenous leader Norma Kawelokū Wong.

Selected Bibliography

Aguilar-San Juan, Karín, and Frank Joyce, eds. *The People Make the Peace: Lessons from the Vietnam Antiwar Movement.* Just World Books, 2015.

Anderson, David L. *Vietnamization: Politics, Strategy, Legacy*. Vietnam—America in the War Years. Rowman and Littlefield, 2020.

Boggs, Grace Lee. "Asian-Americans and the U.S. Movement." UCLA Asian American Studies Center. https://www.aasc.ucla.edu/da/kochiyama/nps1/locker/aasc-yk-0107_B.pdf

———. *Living for Change: An Autobiography*. University of Minnesota Press, 2016.

Boggs, James, and Grace Lee Boggs. *Revolution and Evolution in the Twentieth Century*. Monthly Review Press, 2008.

Boulding, Elise. *Abolishing War: Cultures and Institutions*. Boston Research Center for the 21st Century, 1998.

Brown, Holmes, and Don Luce. *Hostages of War: Saigon's Political Prisoners*. Indochina Mobile Education Project, 1973.

Coates, Ta-Nehisi. *The Message*. One World, 2024.

Collins, John. *Global Palestine*. Columbia University Press, 2011.

Cortright, David. *Peace: A History of Movements and Ideas*. Cambridge University Press, 2008.

Dabiri, Emma. *What White People Can Do Next: From Allyship to Coalition*. Harper Perennial, 2021.

Foster, Hannah. "COINTELPRO [Counterintelligence Program] (1956-1976)." *BlackPast.Org*, March 14, 2014. https://blackpast.org/african-american-history/cointelpro-1956-1976/

Gilbert, Marc Jason. "Poulo Condore (Con Son)." In *The Encyclopedia of the Vietnam War: A Political, Social, and Military History*, edited by Spencer C. Tucker. 2nd ed. ABC-CLIO, 2011. http://ebooks.abc-clio.com/?isbn=9781851099610

Hayden, Tom. *Hell No: The Forgotten Power of the Vietnam Peace Movement*. Yale University Press, 2017.

Hayden, Thomas, and Staughton Lynd. *The Other Side*. New American Library, 1965.

Hershberger, Mary. *Traveling to Vietnam: American Peace Activists and the War*. Syracuse University Press, 2003.

Jensen, Robert. *The Heart of Whiteness: Confronting Race, Racism, and White Privilege*. City Lights, 2005.

Joyce, Frank. "The Slogan No Justice, No Peace Gets it Backward: Peace is the Key to Justice." *Counterpunch*, July 23, 2021. https://www.counterpunch.org/2021/07/23/the-slogan-no-justice-no-peace-gets-it-backward-peace-is-the-key-to-justice/

Keen, David. "War and Peace: What's the Difference?" *International Peacekeeping* 7, no. 4 (2000): 1–22. https://doi.org/10.1080/13533310008413860

Lee, Grace. *American Revolutionary: The Evolution of Grace Lee Boggs*. Leelee Films, 2013.

Lewis, Penny. *Hardhats, Hippies, and Hawks: The Vietnam Antiwar Movement as Myth and Memory*. ILR Press, 2013.

Liu, Catherine. *Virtue Hoarders: The Case against the Professional Managerial Class*. University of Minnesota Press, 2021.

Mays, Kyle T. *City of Dispossessions: Indigenous Peoples, African Americans, and the Creation of Modern Detroit*. Politics and Culture in Modern America. University of Pennsylvania Press, 2022.

Morrison, Mary Lee. "The Life and Work of Elise Boulding: Honoring Women as Peacemakers." *Affilia* 21, no. 2 (2006): 169–83.

Nhất Hạnh, Thích, Thomas Merton, and Alfred Hassler. *Vietnam: Lotus in a Sea of Fire.* Hill and Wang, 1967.

Nhất Hạnh, Thích. *Peace of Mind: Becoming Fully Present*. Parallax Press, 2013.

Ryan, Cheyney. "The One Who Burns Herself for Peace." *Hypatia* 9, no. 2 (1994): 21–39. https://www.jstor.org/stable/3810168

Sassen, Saskia. *The Global City: New York, London, Tokyo*. 2nd ed. Princeton University Press, 2001.

Smith, Kenneth L., and Ira G. Zepp, Jr. *Martin Luther King's Vision of the Beloved Community – Religion Online*. n.d. Accessed September 30, 2025. https://www.religion-online.org/article/martin-luther-kings-vision-of-the-beloved-community/.

Sontag, Susan. "Some Thoughts on the Right Way (for Us) to Love the Cuban Revolution." *Ramparts*, April 1969, 6–19. https://www.unz.com/print/Ramparts-1969apr-00006/

Swanson, David. *War Is a Lie*. Just World Books, 2016.

Sugrue, Thomas J. *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit.* Princeton Studies in American Politics. Princeton University Press, 2005.

Thompson, Becky W. *A Promise and a Way of Life: White Antiracist Activism*. University of Minnesota Press, 2001.

Topmiller, Robert J. *The Lotus Unleashed: The Buddhist Peace Movement in South Vietnam, 1964-1966*. University Press of Kentucky, 2002.

Wong, Norma Ryūkō Kawelokū. *When No Thing Works: A Zen and Indigenous Perspective on Resilience, Shared Purpose, and Leadership in the Timeplace of Collapse*. North Atlantic Books, 2024.

Wu, Judy Tzu-Chun. *Radicals on the Road: Internationalism, Orientalism, and Feminism during the Vietnam Era*. Cornell University Press, 2013.