

Warheads
United States of America
The School of the Art Institute of Chicago
Daniel Hoyer, U.S.A., SAIC.
www.hutsforvets.org

Projects For Peace Report

Section One

- The goal of this project was to research combat veterans struggles with coming home after deployment. Not to just look at the problems, but to look into alternative solutions, interview these veterans on film as they participate in a wilderness therapy program in Aspen, Colorado with a group called Huts For Vets.
- No other fund raising efforts were used to create this project.
- My project involved driving to Aspen, Colorado this summer to participate and film the wilderness therapy process. Unanticipated difficulties include one man with one camera filming this process as a participant at 12,000ft. elevation in the Rocky Mountains. There we no budget constraints. Things that worked well include the staff at Huts For Vets being open to me filming what is considered a "sacred space" for combat veterans to find healing and working closely with the board members to ensure the privacy of the veterans, and the integrity of the organization. Things that did not work well included having to film in a remote location with no electricity for charging equipment. It is my hope and the hope of the staff of Huts For Vets for this film to benefit an untold number of veterans and civilians alike. To bring awareness to the public about the struggles our combat veterans face reintegrating back into society, and to make veterans aware that there are some very real solutions. It is my hope that the long-term impact of this project will lead to the development of a Student Veterans of America organization at The School of the Art Institute of Chicago to support our veteran artists as they work through issues in college that many students do not have to face. Also, to make the Huts For Vets program available to veterans at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago in order to bind them into a cohort to support each other. Nationally, veterans face high drop out rates and low graduation rates. So, yes, there is a future for this project. The film will also be entered in several film festivals to raise awareness of veteran issues. After the film runs through a circuit of around ten festivals or so, a copy will be given to every Student Veterans of America chapter in the United States and hopefully find a good home as an educational film, free to the public. This way, the awareness can be maintained on our college campuses as well as bring hope and help to veterans that need it.

Section Two

- I am a combat veteran of the Afghanistan war. I have thought long and hard on this question of defining peace. Truthfully, I am more prone to ask, is peace possible? During the six months of research that went into this film I spoke to many combat veterans, many of which were close friends of mine. I was heart broken hearing their stories of how they were being denied the medical coverage afforded to them by law. In fact, every combat veteran I spoke to was struggling, not one person had come out and said that they had received all that the American people and congress had promised them. These men had killed people and had seen people killed in combat. But after working closely with Huts For Vets and going through the wilderness therapy program they offer, I believe that I have come to a working definition of peace. And it is

this... Peace can be found in an educated community that cares about the humanity of others and seeks to develop that humanity through lasting relationships. That is how I define peace.

- It is my hope that this project will contribute to the values and mission of Projects For Peace in the following ways. First, to bring awareness to these issues through the use of the film to raise up an educated community in which healing can take place and combat veterans inner humanity can be restored. Short term I hope to establish a Student Veterans of America chapter at The School of the Art Institute of Chicago. This will hopefully identify veterans going to the school and reconnect them with their peers from the military. Studies show that this peer-to-peer interaction is vital for the success of our student veterans returning home from war. Many combat veterans are returning home from a battlefield and then walking into a classroom a few days later, with no support from the military or the schools they attend. As a combat veteran I can say that this issue needs to be addressed. Long-term contribution for peace is to connect the veterans attending The School of the Art Institute of Chicago with the Huts For Vets program. It is my intent to identify these veterans and offer them this program before they come in for freshman year so they can build the kind of bonds and friendships they are going to need, as veterans face grim statistics concerning their education after returning home from war.
- This was an amazing opportunity for me personally and for my education. Being a combat veteran and having many of these struggles that are talked about in this film, I was able to use my own personal war related issues and turn them into something positive. Going on the Huts For Vets trip was a transformative experience. And the experience is this... It is a three-day wilderness therapy program that takes place in the Rocky Mountains. A small group of combat veterans (eight to ten) are brought up 12,000ft. to the 10th Mountain Division huts. During this time they receive psychological treatment, peer interaction, physical exercise and a curriculum of readings from philosophy and classic literature. Here the veterans are freely aloud to consider the existential questions and crisis that arise during combat. The veterans talk about art, nature, philosophy, theology and science. In this private setting bonding takes place, wisdom is shared and many tears are shed. I am so glad that I had the opportunity to not only to experience this trip, but also to film it. This is an inside look into the culture of combat, the nature of war and the healing process from a veteran who went through the program. This project has changed my life. Huts For Vets has given me a new outlook on life that I never thought possible. For several years after getting out of the military and struggling with trying to receive medical care and facing the depressing statistics of veteran students, through Huts For Vets I was able to receive help. They instilled in me a wide variety of coping skills that would have been beneficial when I was first starting school. I hope that the film will find its way into the hands of those that need to hear this message to most.
- My personal statement is this... I urge all combat veterans who struggle with PTSD and traumatic brain injury to take their personal well being into their own hands, today. You are worth so much more than you know to just be living in the problem, waiting on a broken system. You can start living in the solution, and for me, Huts For Vets was that solution.

Photographic Report

A few images taken during the Huts For Vets trip.

Combat Veterans undergoing Trauma Release Exercises at 12,000ft



Morning view of the Hunter Frying Pan Wilderness in Aspen, CO

