



COURAGE TO RESIST

Supporting the troops who refuse to fight

484 Lake Park Ave #41, Oakland CA 94610
www.couragetoresist.org
510-488-3559

From Sarah Lazare
Courage to Resist Project Coordinator
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We are entering a critical period for G.I. resistance. The recent elections showed that a clear majority of Americans are fed up with the war. Now that Obama has been elected on the anti-war ticket, the peace and anti-war movement must define what that means. It is vital that we push for **a real end to the war**, including a pullout of all "non-combat" troops and independent contractors from Iraq.

We are also entering a time of heightened aggression in Afghanistan, Pakistan, and elsewhere, with Obama planning to send **17,000 more troops to Afghanistan** this spring and summer, in addition to the 36,000 that are already there. Not only is the Global War on Terror not "working," but it is turning into a war of attrition with no end in sight, causing great hardship for people living in occupied lands, as well as for the troops being sent overseas. Now is a vital time to be **developing strategies to stop the escalation** before it becomes a centerpiece of U.S. policy.

I came to this work with a background in anti-war, labor, and community organizing. During the buildup to the Iraq invasion and afterward, I was involved in organizing protests. However, as the war dragged on, despite public opinion and mass mobilizations against it, I became more and more interested in strategies that focus on building a mass movement to directly withdraw support for the war.

My experience in labor and community organizing gave me a sense of the importance of movements grounded in building the voices and power of most-affected communities. When I learned about the work that veterans and resisters are doing to withdraw support from, and speak out against, the war, I was convinced that this was exactly the kind of organizing that **needs to be happening right now**.

We have been working with war resisters and civilian ally networks to help support the G.I. resistance movement. It has been a busy, exciting, and extremely fulfilling six months since I started. Here are some highlights:

- Working with war resisters Benjamin Lewis, Brandon Neely, and Andrew Gorby to build an information campaign about the facts of **resisting Individual Ready Reserves** (IRR) involuntary activation.

- Meeting many anti-war veterans and war resisters at the **Veterans for Peace / Iraq Veterans Against the War** Convention and the Republican National Convention protests in Minneapolis last August.

- Helping war resisters **get their personal stories out** to the media.

- Coordinating a letter of solidarity from Iraq and Afghanistan War resisters to **Israeli "Shministim"** (high school) conscientious objectors.



War resisters are on the front line of efforts to stop unjust war and occupation. By directly **withdrawing military support, resisters slow down the machinery of war**, and, as demonstrated during the Vietnam War, can **ultimately bring it to a halt**.

Moving forward, here are a few things that we at Courage to Resist are working on right now:

- **Reaching out to active duty GIs** near bases and induction centers.
- Articulating a clear and effective strategy for **ending the war in Afghanistan**.
- Organizing a national week of **letter-writing parties March 16-23** to show support for war resisters.
- Unfolding a **sanctuary** for war resisters effort, with the help of **community groups, unions, and churches**.
- Launching a campaign to eventually win **amnesty** for war resisters in the U.S.

Service members are getting in touch with us daily to learn about their rights, ask for support, and share their stories. We are working hard to make sure that these troops, and those who eventually refuse to fight do not have to go it alone.

I want to welcome recent G.I. resisters **Benji Lewis** and **Michael Thurman** on to our organizing collective, along with **Bob Meola**, a current National Committee member of the War Resisters League.

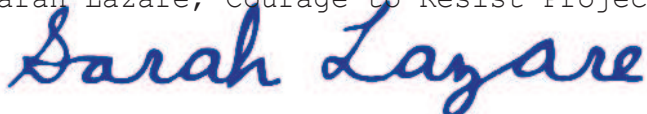
They are joining us just in time, because we have a lot of work to do. **Chris Teske** and **Cliff Cornell** have been forced out of Canada by the Harper Administration and will likely face military court martial. Several more U.S. war resisters, including Kimberly Rivera and Jeremy Hinzman, continue to fight their deportation orders in the Canadian courts. Meanwhile, **Robin Long**, the first U.S. war resister deported from Canada since Vietnam, continues to serve a 15-month brig sentence.

The current **economic climate presents obvious challenges** for sustaining this kind of work. Yet, it is exactly because of the impending economic troubles that our work is so important now. If our government did not waste **trillions of dollars on wars abroad**, we would be better equipped to take care of each other at home. It is time for our society to **stop wasting resources on immoral and unjust wars** and start genuinely tending to problems right in our own backyard.

Thank you for all you have done to help Courage to Resist sustain our work. With your assistance, I'm confident we'll be able to continue to build G.I. resistance against unjust war.

Sincerely,

Sarah Lazare, Courage to Resist Project Coordinator



P.S. I'm asking that you **consider a contribution of \$100** or more, or become a **sustainer at \$25** or more a month. For friends who are looking to cut back on expenses during these hard times, we can set up a credit card donation starting at **only \$10 monthly**. Regardless of the amount, **your tax deductible gift of whatever you can afford is critical** to our efforts in support of the troops who refuse to fight.