

# GOOD INTENTIONS

Norms and Practices of Imperial Humanitarianism

The New Imperialism, Volume 4

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Front cover image: According to the official caption, this is US Navy Hospital Corpsman 2<sup>nd</sup> Class Porfirio Nino, from Maritime Civil Affairs Team 104, practices speaking Kinyarwanda, one of the official languages of Rwanda, during a civil observation mission in Bunyamanza, Rwanda, August 7, 2009. (DoD photo by Senior Chief Mass Communication Specialist Jon E. McMillan, US Navy. Public domain.) This particular photograph was also used as the lead image for 2011 presentation by AFRICOM titled, "United States Africa Command: The First Three Years". On the image the following words were superimposed: "Umuntu Ngumuntu Ngamantu' I am a person through other people. My humanity is tied to yours.~ Zulu proverb"

Back cover image: According to the official caption, these are US Airmen assigned to the 23<sup>rd</sup> Equipment Maintenance Squadron, 75<sup>th</sup> Aircraft Maintenance Unit "downloading" an A-10C Thunderbolt II aircraft during an operational readiness exercise at Moody Air Force Base, Georgia, August 4, 2009. (DoD photo by Airman 1<sup>st</sup> Class Joshua Green, US Air Force. Public domain.)

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## Glorification of the Military in Popular Culture and the Media



Laura Powell

Every day, images of the military are seen, whether through television shows, movies, the news, or recruitment ads. The tendency to portray the military and its members as unstoppable forces is prevalent in all forms of media. Is this tendency based on an accurate representation? The Pentagon has been working with Hollywood film producers for decades, in what is considered to be a mutually beneficial relationship through which the Department of Defense gets professional filmmakers to portray the military in the best possible light. Hollywood producers, who agree to make the modifications necessary to their films in order to get the Pentagon's approval, are granted access to millions of dollars' worth of military personnel and equipment for use in their productions. This relationship perpetuates the pristine image of the military as seen by media audiences worldwide and thus attempts to block a view of the darker side of the armed forces.

This pristine image in turn reinforces the idea that "service" men and women are unstoppable heroes in camouflage. The men and women who lost their lives overseas are welcomed home as heroes, yet those who are injured, either physically or mentally, are not awarded that same honour. In reality, when those injured return, they are more likely to be seen as broken people, unlikely to be able to resume their normal work, and many get discharged.

While they may not perceive themselves as heroes, the knowledge that others expect them to be untouchable may deter service members from getting help if they are affected by Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), which in turn results in the misreporting of occurrences of the disorder. For those brave enough to attempt to take control of their lives and stop living with PTSD, there is another obstacle in the way—clinicians. In order to make themselves look good with fewer cases of PTSD, or to save money on treatment, the Department of Defense ordered clinicians to misdiagnose the disorder.

At every turn, military members are asked to live up to unreasonable expectations, and, when they cannot meet them, they are stigmatized because of mental health issues. Thinking of men and women in military uniform as heroes is more damaging than not thinking anything of them at all. It is time to acknowledge the dark side of military conflict and the potential dangers one may face if one chooses to enlist.

## **Media Portrayal of the Military**

Technology plays an important role in the ways in which military conflicts have been covered. Media coverage of World War I occurred through print, such as text and photographs, and radio which could be rendered unusable as per former President Woodrow Wilson's 1917 Executive Order 2585 stating that "all radio stations not necessary to the Government of the United States for naval communications, may be closed for radio communication" (Wilson, 1917/4/6). During World War II, the first televisions began to appear in the US, but not in great enough numbers to become an important medium through which to share the events of war. Radio remained an important way to be connected to the ongoing conflict (Old Time Radio Catalog, 2014). The most important changes in media coverage were to come.

The coverage of the Gulf War in 1991, especially by CNN, marked a change in the way military conflict was reported to audiences, which brought conflict into people's homes, and portrayed war as being painless and bloodless (Thussu, 2007, p. 116). Starting with the Gulf War, US military intervention abroad was presented as a form of humanitarian aid, made deliverable thanks to the superiority of US arms (Thussu, 2007, p. 116). The US Department of Defense, after purchasing all satellite imagery of Afghanistan in 2001 to prevent its use by anyone else, became an important provider of visuals for news providers, who had no other access to satellite images (Thussu, 2007, p. 117).

With the increased war coverage that accompanied the Gulf War, the media portrayed conflicts involving America and the military as clean and not uselessly violent, offering "a 'bloodless' version of conflict, with death and destruction minimized by the apparent surgical precision of bombardments" (Thussu, 2007, p. 117). By minimizing the human loss of war, the media and the Department of Defense hid the reality of military conflict from the masses.

### **The Pentagon's Involvement in Hollywood Film Productions**

US Military involvement in Hollywood can be traced back to World War I with the creation of the Committee on Public Information in 1917 (Klindo & Phillips, 2005/3/14; Thussu, 2007, p. 123), which released government news, sustained morale, and censored the press until it was abolished in 1919 (National Archives and Records Administration [NARA], 2014). By World War II, the US military and Hollywood worked together in producing propagandistic films and documentaries (Klindo & Phillips, 2005/3/14; Thussu, 2007, p. 123). The partnership between the military and Hollywood, dubbed "Operation Hollywood" (Robb, 2004), was cemented with the creation of a "special movie liaison office, as part of the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs" (Thussu, 2007, p.

123). This union was the foundation of a mutually beneficial relationship between arms and entertainment through which producers would have access to military personnel and equipment if they allowed their work to be examined and changed as the Pentagon saw fit (Thussu, 2007, p. 124). Every year, movies romanticizing the military and conflict are produced and released to captivated audiences, while other films offer more realistic views of the military as a form of entertainment. It is to be expected that films may not be entirely accurate, however they generally represent only one side of a conflict and glorify war as "righteous, [and] undertaken for moral purposes" (Thussu, 2007, p. 123). Which movie benefits from the support of the military is at the Pentagon's discretion and up to the producers' willingness to comply with its demands.

Acclaimed films such as *Top Gun* and *Black Hawk Down* were made possible only through the Pentagon-Hollywood union (Thussu, 2007, p. 124). Of course this does not mean that award-winning films with military themes cannot be made without the Pentagon's support. *The Hurt Locker*, an Academy Award winning film, and one acclaimed by a former Secretary of Defense for its authentic portrayal of life in Iraq, saw its Pentagon support revoked because of scenes deemed unflattering to the image of the military (Zakarin, 2012/2/21). The Pentagon does not stop the production of movies of which it does not approve, and so films showing a side which the military does not want seen continue to be produced. However, it is in the Pentagon's favour to make Hollywood producers a deal they cannot refuse, by granting them access to millions of dollars' worth of military personnel and equipment, so that they can control the movies made about the military.

The Pentagon reserves the right to ask for any changes its officials see fit in films sent to them seeking assistance, and to deny support to any film they deem inappropriate or inaccurate, even if those films are historical and the producers are certain of their accuracy. However, the Pentagon's selection of worthy projects is unconstitutional. The

Department of Defense, as a component of the government, should abide by the Constitution which “does not allow for the government to bestow benefits on those whose speech it approves of, while refusing to grant the same benefits to those whose speech it disapproves of” (Robb, 2004, p. 26). Movies such as *In the Valley of Elah*, based on the murder of Specialist Richard Davis by fellow Iraq War veterans shortly upon the end of their deployment, are not the films the Pentagon would support because they do not portray the military favourably (Lee, 2007/10/5; Zakarin, 2012/2/21). However, when the production team of *Thirteen Days*, a film about the Cuban missile crisis, requested support from the Pentagon, they were asked to change their script, in spite of the historical accuracy of the project (Robb, 2004, p. 53). The main issues of contention for the Pentagon were the portrayal of the Joint Chiefs of Staff which, while accurate, was considered too aggressive (Klindo & Phillips, 2005/3/14; Robb, 2004, p. 53), and the script which the Pentagon considered “revisionist history” (Robb, 2004, p. 54).

### **Portrayal of the Military in Music and Television**

“Operation Hollywood” does not only concern Hollywood productions. Robb (2004) discusses numerous Pentagon film interventions, as well as a number of television shows censored by the military. Not all television series produced with assistance from the Pentagon were meant for adults. As with movies, the Pentagon’s influence on the production of children’s television shows ensured that the military was positively portrayed. For example, the series *Steve Canyon*, as well as some episodes of the shows *Lassie* and *The Mickey Mouse Club*, were produced under the watchful eye of the Pentagon. By complying with Pentagon demands for changes in scripts, producers would have access to military equipment and footage, and would, in return, create shows for young audience members who could be

easily influenced and potentially grow up to be become recruits.

The Pentagon also does not only interfere with productions portraying mainly the military. As per the producer's request, the Pentagon was involved in the production of two episodes of the show *Lassie*, in which the intervention ultimately took the focus away from the beloved dog in favour of the military (Robb, 2004, pp. 303–305). The military intervention in *The Mickey Mouse Club* was not as subtle as with *Lassie*. This show was a great vehicle for the Pentagon to propagate the idea that the military is the place to be. After all, *The Mickey Mouse Club* had a following of some estimated 15 million young, receptive, and malleable minds (Robb, 2004, p. 307). The Pentagon was mostly involved in the production of segments called "Mouse Reels," one of which featured the first nuclear submarine, the *USS Nautilus*, and attempted to attract young boys to the Navy by making the submarine a place with all the comforts of home—"good food, games to play, a jukebox that plays the 'Mickey Mouse Club March,' and warm comfortable beds" (Robb, 2004, p. 309).

Three channels are dedicated to the military—Discovery's Military Channel, the Pentagon Channel, and the Military History Channel (Takacs, 2012, p. 13; Thussu, 2007, p. 124). Non-fiction shows focus on the people and the latest technologies in arms, such as the shows *Delta Company* and *Future Weapons*, both featuring what are essentially "killing machines" (Thussu, 2007, pp. 124–125). Reality television is not off-limits for the Department of Defense either. The show *Profiles from the Front Line* features men getting ready for, and on deployment in Afghanistan, one writer calling it "propaganda hour" (Gallo, 2003/2/26). The six episodes of the show depict big boys with big guns, leaving the comfort of their homes to do what they must for the good of their country. As Gallo (2003/2/26) explains, the series is not about the explosions but the individuals behind them. Perhaps the series was an attempt at reintroducing humans into conflicts the news



media have rendered bloodless and almost free of humans, as discussed shortly.

The home improvement show *Extreme Makeover: Home Edition* has dedicated a small number of its episodes to the makeover of the homes of injured or deceased Iraq War veterans. Takacs argues that these shows are meant to teach the lesson that the state will not take care of you when you lose a limb or a relative to war, and that you need to rely on yourself and those close to you for support (2012, pp. 212–213). Such episodes tell us we owe “sympathy and consumer therapy” to veterans (Takacs, 2012, p. 212), yet the help veterans may need cannot be replaced by a shopping spree or a newly furnished home.

Music on the other hand does not require the assistance of the Pentagon for the production of elaborate and costly movies, therefore musicians and songwriters need not be censored by the military, allowing them to be more critical. The song “Hero of War” (Rise Against, 2008), offers a quick look at what the future holds for a new army recruit enlisting after being told he will see the world and get paid for doing so. Everything is going well at first as he bonds with the other recruits, and he thinks of the future, of when he will come back from deployment and of how everyone will think of him as a hero, but of how, if he must, he will die for his country. Soon the reality of war sets in, as he sings of the military’s treatment of those they held captive, resisting at first but eventually giving in and participating in the abuse. As the song progresses, the experiences begin to take their toll on the soldier, and eventually he questions why people view him as a hero when all he has left are medals and scars.

## **Productions for Recruitment Purposes**

Generally, American recruitment videos attempt to make their audience feel that when they join they will finally feel accepted and respected, like they have found where they belong, that the sky is the limit and they will get to see the

world, and that they will have the opportunity to reach their full potential, as well as be able to help others. They are seen jumping out of helicopters and airplanes and arriving in numbers in armoured vehicles, as well as sharing moments together such as the fleeting fist bump or handshake for a job well done, but never under fire or injured and awaiting help. Recruitment films are an art, as their makers have to find the right balance of adventure—without showing any situations considered dangerous—and of wellbeing and comfort, without looking like a boring or tedious job. Recruitment films lure individuals with promises of an exciting life without ever informing them of the other side of reality.

Not all recruitment videos are limited to a few minutes of inspirational and exciting footage of smiling men and women in uniform hinting at the joy and fulfilment they experienced from enlisting. *Act of Valor*, a feature-length Hollywood production was born within the walls of the Pentagon and was the first recruitment film of its kind in America, not only by attempting to recruit potential Navy SEALs but also by starring active members (Zakarin, 2012/2/21).

Zakarin (2012/2/21) explains that *Top Gun* was also born of the union between the Pentagon and Hollywood, and, through Pentagon-tinted lenses, the Air Force was portrayed as the place to be for nonstop excitement and beautiful women. The film was not a recruitment film like *Act of Valor*, but it did not stop the military from attempting to make the most of the movie by setting up recruiters outside movie theatres. As filmmaker Oliver Stone said, “most films about the military are recruitment posters” (Robb, 2004, p. 25), and while they may not have the same background as *Act of Valor*, film projects supported by the Pentagon will most likely make some individuals consider signing up for the military.

## **What the Media Are Not Telling Us: Discrepancies between the News and Reality**

Following the attacks of September 11, 2001, then President George W. Bush declared a “War on Terror,” and from then on the media fervently covered the progression of events. However, they only reported the events, without doing much independent research and thus regurgitating the White House’s claims of Saddam Hussein’s weapons of mass destruction (Moeller, 2004/4/14). The media acted as an amplifying force to President Bush’s claims, instilling unnecessary fear within the American population about their vulnerability in the face of terrorism, and any voice expressing differing perspectives was hushed and effectively buried by the hegemonic Bush-dictated rhetoric on terror (Moeller, 2004/4/14). Media coverage of the “War on Terror” very much reflected the US government’s views on the matter rather than offering a well-rounded and objective representation of the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan. As long as the White House had something to say about weapons of mass destruction and protecting America against terrorists, the journalistic convention of prioritizing “breaking news” from “important” sources, such as the government, meant that all other news and voices would be considered much less important or worthy of air-time and ink (Moeller, 2004/4/14).

When covering conflict in warzones, correspondents are generally reporting “live,” however up-to-the-minute coverage of war can result in the misreporting of events as journalists may have little time to corroborate their stories, or to verify the validity of their sources (Thussu, 2007, p. 114). Various 24/7 news providers desire to be the first to offer the latest development in major stories, creating competition between the networks, and such was the case with the events of September 11, 2001. When new developments became scarce, journalists used any new information, regardless of its origins or validity as long as some link with the terrorist attacks could be made, and would also resort to speculation to give the impression they were

the first to offer their audience breaking news (Thussu, 2007, p. 114). Fox News, an American news channel, goes beyond selectivity with their stories or sources. The manner in which events are covered, and the language used by Fox news hosts in discussing military conflict, may be better suited for a personal blog than a serious news channel. Largely based on opinions and laced with xenophobic comments, the journalism of Fox News reporters and anchors lacks objectivity, and can be seen as “aggressive cheerleading for the U.S. armed forces and their allies” (Naureckas, 2002/1/1). Prioritizing patriotism over fact, for example, Fox News justified the invasion of Iraq by propagating “unfounded allegations that Iraq was linked to the 9/11 attacks; that it possessed vast ‘weapons of mass destruction’, and was ready and willing to use them” (Thussu, 2007, p. 120).

To accurately convey wartime information to their audiences, news media should first and foremost attempt to maintain impartiality and be critical of the information they are given and are about to propagate. However, the general public is misinformed, or at the very least underinformed, because the media remain uncritical and readily accept whatever information they receive from the most important player, the government. Pat Tillman, American footballer and soldier, died while deployed in what was reported as a heroic act that saved the lives of a number of other American soldiers (Astore, 2010/7/22; Holden, 2010/8/19), or at least that was the story being told. In reality, Tillman was killed by friendly fire and people from his unit were made to lie about what really happened and Tillman would become the ideal poster boy for the war (Astore, 2010/7/22; Holden, 2010/8/19).

The cover-up of Tillman’s death was not the only thing people were not allowed to discuss. The Pentagon managed the news, effectively forbidding the coverage of events that could portray the military unfavourably, and encouraged the production of shows that could help civilians identify with soldiers and humanize war, such as programs showing the lives of soldiers during their

deployment (Thussu, 2007, p. 115), as previously discussed.

The human cost of the US wars with Afghanistan and Iraq is high, yet few in the media dare discuss it or to its full extent. As of February 2013, 6,656 American service members died in Iraq and Afghanistan; however the numbers from the Pentagon are lower as they do not account for suicides (Costs of War, 2013/3). In addition, at least 3,000 Department of Defense contractors in Iraq and Afghanistan have perished, but the official number of casualties is not known (Costs of War, 2013/3). The number of casualties becomes significantly larger when those wounded in action are considered. As of May 2014, the Department of Defense claims that 51,960 individuals were wounded in Iraq and Afghanistan in Operation Iraqi Freedom, Operation New Dawn, and Operation Enduring Freedom (US Department of Defense, 2014). These casualty numbers do not account for service members suffering from PTSD, or those who have taken their own lives.

### **Portrayal of Military Members as Heroes**

“A snappy uniform—or even dented body armor—is not a magical shortcut to hero status” (Astore, 2010/7/22) could be something someone who never jumped on the “Support the Troops” bandwagon would say about the military and the popular opinion that all service members are heroes. In reality, those are the words of William Astore, a retired lieutenant colonel of the US Air Force, who challenges the ever so popular labelling of service members as heroes. Astore (2010/7/22) defines a hero as, “someone who behaves selflessly, usually at considerable personal risk and sacrifice, to comfort or empower others and to make the world a better place”. While this definition was not taken from a dictionary, it offers a description of the kind of person likely to be called a hero. The teenage boys who rode their bicycles in pursuit of a vehicle in which they saw a young girl who had vanished from her home earlier that day

could be labelled as heroes, at least according to Astore's definition. However, not everyone needs to save someone's life to be considered a hero, and men and women in military uniform are often freely labelled as such, without being required to perform any grand selfless act for the greater good of the world.

Astore (2010/7/22) argues that labelling of service members as heroes is really a disservice to them as it ultimately results in displacing the reality of war. He explains that when the population of a country views its military as a group of heroes, it is likely to overlook the less-than-heroic things service members can be involved in while deployed. Leaning to live with PTSD and the things he did and witnessed in Iraq, a veteran explains that most of the people deployed thought they would do good, that he didn't "think anyone joins an army or goes off to war thinking they are going to do evil" (Gutmann & Lutz, 2010, p. 5). Not everyone who wears a military uniform is a hero.

No one thinks of heroes as damaged individuals, and by assigning them the hero label, we deprive them of recognition of their suffering the effects of wartime experiences. In turn, the label could discourage them from admitting they may need help for mental health issues because while they may not consider themselves heroes, they are aware of the general population's perception of them. Not labelling military men and women as heroes could allow them to feel more at ease seeking help if they required it because they would possibly not feel the pressure to be stronger than everyone else.

## **PTSD and the Media**

To maintain the appealing image of the military as an opportunity for adventure and heroism, some of the "side effects" of war are tucked away. Military personnel and civilians alike know of the possible imminent dangers associated with engaging in combat, but no one readily

speaks about any of them. Men and women who lost their lives while deployed return home as heroes in caskets wrapped in their country's flag. The news media include footage of ramp ceremonies, showing the caskets of the fallen being unloaded from planes, in their broadcasts. The military personnel who are injured during their deployment return home and do not get the same media coverage as to those who lost their lives. Those soldiers not physically injured get to return home at the end of their deployment, their injuries not as easily visible. The absence of obvious physical injuries does not mean military members returned home unscathed. PTSD is "an anxiety disorder characterized by reliving a psychological traumatic situation, long after any physical danger involved has passed, through flashbacks and nightmares" and is frequently found in individuals whose life or wellbeing was in jeopardy, such as individuals engaged in military combat (Canadian Mental Health Association [CMHA], 2014).

In the US, estimates suggest that 11–20% of Iraq War and Afghanistan War veterans, upward to 10% of Gulf War veterans, and approximately 30% of Vietnam War veterans were affected by PTSD (US Department of Veterans Affairs, 2014). A study of individuals deployed in Operation Enduring Freedom (Afghanistan), Operation New Dawn (Iraq), and Operation Iraqi Freedom (Iraq) shows that for the period of 2002 to 2014 (as of January 10, 2014), there were 118,829 reported cases of PTSD (Fisher, 2014, p. 2). The number of individuals whose PTSD was reported is substantial and it must be kept in mind that this number is most likely not representative of the full number of individuals affected by PTSD. Even if there are over 100,000 American soldiers diagnosed with the disorder, there remains a stigma associated with mental health issues which may dissuade military members from seeking help, resulting in under-reported incidences of the disorder. Individuals who seek professional help for mental health issues are not guaranteed the care they require.

## **Lack of Coverage and Resources for Personnel with PTSD**

The military is not free of the stigma associated with mental health issues. PTSD and other conditions linked to it, such as depression and substance abuse, challenge the image of the military, and its members, as an unstoppable force. PTSD can be debilitating, making day-to-day life an exercise in perseverance and resilience. The real number of service members affected by PTSD may never be known because of individuals not seeking help, and because mental health professionals working for the military are allegedly pressured to misdiagnose and misreport disorders.

Michael de Yoanna and Mark Benjamin (2009/4/8) shared the story of an American soldier who served in Iraq. The soldier, Sgt. X, met with Douglas McNinch, a civilian psychologist working for the US Army, and recorded their discussion. Dr. McNinch had reported to the evaluation boards charged with evaluating service members and the disability benefits to which they are entitled, that Sgt. X suffered from an anxiety disorder, with no mention of PTSD. Deliberately misdiagnosing Sgt. X's condition meant he would not receive the treatment he was seeking and needed, and that he would not receive the benefits to which he was entitled. Sgt. X recorded Dr. McNinch confessing that clinicians, including himself, were pressured by the army to not diagnose PTSD, effectively preventing the Department of Veterans Affairs from having to pay for expensive and lengthy treatment and benefits.

The media do not need to do make much of an effort to keep PTSD out of the spotlight as the military is doing it for them. By pressuring clinicians to misdiagnose and misreport the state of the mental health of service members seeking help, the military is effectively depriving them of the treatment and resources they need to improve their mental health, in order to save money and the reputation of heroism. Rather than making more resources available, the military deals with the increasing number of veterans



seeking benefits by diminishing the gravity of the disorder and offering a (mis)diagnosis of Adjustment Disorder (AD). As this disorder is considered temporary, veterans who receive a diagnosis of AD are typically not eligible for benefits they would have received with a diagnosis of PTSD (de Yoanna & Benjamin, 2009/4/8). Other ways to avoid diagnosing PTSD in veterans is to blame personality disorders, mental disorders associated with a “rigid and unhealthy pattern of thinking, functioning and behaving (Mayo Clinic, 2014) or childhood trauma as the cause of mental health issues (de Yoanna & Benjamin, 2009/4/8).

Sgt. X is not alone. There are thousands like him, left to deal with their problems alone because they would be too much of a financial burden for the military, as they would also diminish the hero mystique. In 2009, de Yoanna and Benjamin wrote a number of articles for their “Coming Home: The Army’s Fatal Neglect” series pertaining to PTSD and the military. The majority of the articles made reference to veterans who either committed suicide or who were behind bars for homicide because they had been misdiagnosed or could not get help.

This time, it is not the media censoring reality, but the military and the mental health professionals on its payroll. Men and women are denied their realities by people who do not want to spend much money to fix what was broken in war, even when that involves fellow citizens.

## Conclusions

When men and women go fight wars in other countries, those who remain home can easily feel as though they have no connections to the deployed military or to the ongoing conflict. The media do nothing to engage their audiences to the events taking place by misreporting the information and by omitting to share the dirty side of war. Fallen soldiers return home as heroes who sacrificed their lives for democracy and for their country, but no one hears about those gravely injured by friendly fire, those whose

lives are in shambles because of PTSD, or even of the innocent men, women and children who perished in air raids.

Only by censoring the reality of conflict and by hiding the true cost of war can the government maintain a romanticized image of the military. To ensure access to potential recruits, the military must make itself attractive and appear as a once in a lifetime opportunity, but it can only do so by concealing the harsh reality that by enlisting you may lose yourself to PTSD, or limbs or your life to an IED.

By hiding the human cost of war, either by censoring cinematographic or television productions or by misreporting and underreporting the news, the media trivialize the sacrifice of the men and women who are not welcomed as heroes upon their return. Those same individuals, whose injuries may not be visible at first glance, are the ones who experience the brutality of war even after they return. To allow the service members affected by PTSD to get the help they require, the military must stop instructing doctors to misdiagnose their condition, and the military must no longer be seen as an unstoppable force. By thinking of the men and women in uniform as heroes, we take away their humanness, their right to be vulnerable, and their right to ask for help.

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