

One group that this particularly excludes is women, who serve in the military, but often not in combat units. To some extent, Combatants for Peace has recognized this lack and has actively moved to include women and women's issues in their organization, but it is not a simple matter. I once sat on a CFP bus, on the way to protest settlers seizing land from Palestinians in Susiya (South Hebron hills), next to a male member who had not been involved in CFP activities for almost a year. When a female group coordinator stood up to brief us about our activities, he looked across me and asked his friend, one of the CFP founders, "What—we have girls in CFP now?!" "Of course!" the friend responded. "Things have changed since you were here last." "But what kind of combatants are they?" my seatmate insisted. His friend dodged the question.

Although this type of veteran activism is exclusionary by nature, it also clarifies the ways in which (certain types of) veterans are in a unique position to speak back to the societies that sent them into battle. They have a specific kind of knowledge about war, violence and the "enemy"—a kind of knowledge that many trust and highly value. In the past, veterans have often practiced self-censorship, for what they saw as their own good and the good of the nation. It took a specific generation to make this leap—one raised with explicitly liberal values, with confidence in their own rightness and heroism, with social and educational privilege, and who could not bear the idea of compromising their ideals.

These economic and educational factors are important to remember when considering the potential for veteran activism in general, since such activism often involves serious personal exposure. In the US, we have an expanding military, an unpopular conflict, and a growing percentage of veterans who voice disapproval with that conflict; but at the same time, most of the country's socioeconomic elite does not go into military service. Among other concerns about social justice and the armed forces, we must therefore also keep in mind the structural barriers that prevent most veterans from engaging in activism if they so desire.

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Dismantling a National Icon

Genetic Testing and the Tomb of the Unknowns

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Since World War I, the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier has served as a powerful emblem of collective sacrifice and a repository for national honor. The bones housed within it connect civilians to soldiers and citizens to their state. Advancements in genetic testing, however, promise—or threaten—to dismantle this cultural icon by returning names to the unknown and their remains to expectant families, rather than letting them rest in anonymous national tombs.

Beginning in the mid-1990s, DNA testing entered into and at times disrupted national discourses surrounding emblematic monuments to US war dead, especially those dedicated to the fallen, missing and unknown soldiers of the Vietnam War. As Benedict Anderson (1983) has pointed out, the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier evokes in its onlookers sentiments of national sacrifice and glory: the anonymous remains foster a "fictive kinship" based on national identity rather than familial ties, a connection reinforced by such ritual acts as the changing of the guard at Arlington National Cemetery. There, before the monument to the Unknown Soldiers of four wars (World War I, World War II, the Korean War and the Vietnam War), silence is demanded and given; the audience, young and old, rises on command to honor the changing sentinel, their eyes riveted to the scene unfolding before them.

To disrupt this memorial would be, as Anderson puts it, a "sacrilege of a strange, contemporary kind." Yet this is precisely what happened in the case of the Vietnam Unknown buried at that memorial.

in Arlington and sent for DNA analysis. The following month, geneticists from the Armed Forces DNA Identification Laboratory confirmed the family's suspicions, and Blassie's remains, accompanied by an Air Force honor guard, were flown to St Louis, Missouri for burial in his hometown. The occasion prompted speculation that the phenomenon of the unknown soldier was a thing of the past; then-Secretary of Defense William

ized individual lives over collective categories.

The Promise of Repatriation

The US military's emphasis on individual recovery is by no means new. The promise of "no soldier left behind" has dictated its philosophy and practice concerning MIAs from all foreign deployments: "While patriotic duty remains the primary incentive to serve our Nation, the universal expectation that no one



A silent crowd watches a guard at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier at Arlington National Cemetery in Arlington, Virginia. Photo courtesy NCinDC

Cohen remarked, "It may be that forensic science has reached the point where there will be no other unknowns in any war."

In many ways, the Blassie case is a milestone for the achievements of forensic genetics. Beyond the dramatic rupture of the monument at Arlington, the identification of First Lieutenant Blassie has raised the stakes of the US military's Missing in Action (MIA) accounting efforts. For relatives and veterans alike, biotechnology now promises greater accuracy in postmortem identification and, by extension, a fuller accounting of the missing. Blassie's recovery

will be left behind is a fundamental article of faith that underpins the motivation and confidence of every US service member deploying to a foreign duty location" (Defense Prisoner of War/Missing Personnel Office, 2006). Indeed, since the Civil War, accounting for, naming and (re)burying fallen soldiers has represented the fulfillment of an implicit social contract between the state, its soldiers and their surviving relatives. Battlefields are revisited and bodies returned home. This promise of repatriation grows out of several important themes in military culture, such as service, honor, sacrifice and teamwork, all of which are instilled in US military recruits from the onset of their training.

The conditions of war, however, often have meant that repatriation takes place well after the fighting has subsided, and such

COMMENTARY

On May 14, 1998, at the behest of surviving family members, the then-unrecognized remains of First Lieutenant Michael Blassie were exhumed from the Vietnam crypt of the Tomb of the Unknowns

through DNA testing also affected how US war dead are remembered: the use of the genetic technology to recover missing soldiers has influenced commemorative practices that increasingly memorial-

See *National Icon* on page 9

boundary between legality and illegality.

The limited attention we pay to the role of war in fostering naturalization represents another failure of popular and academic discourses in this area. Escalante's naturalization in 2004 makes him only one of the over 24,000 non-citizens persons to be naturalized while in the military between 2002 and 2007. Although this is significant, the actual figure may be greater than 50,000 because of the large number of naturalizations that are not classified as either "civilian" or "military" (ie, "not reported"). Historically, World War I retains the peak level in number of mili-

tary naturalizations. In 1919 alone, over 128,000 non-citizens in the military were granted citizenship. The peak year for World War II was 1944, when 49,000 non-citizens were granted citizenship. Thus, the United States has a long tradition of supporting non-citizens who have killed and died in the nation's wars, having accepted an obligation presumed to be borne by citizens.

The absence of a historical narrative recognizing the important role of non-citizens in defending the United States leaves us with an incomplete understanding of US citizenship and US history more broadly. It also has limited our theo-

retical analysis of what motivates non-citizens to assume the patriotism and obligations associated with citizenship, when citizens typically bear the rights and responsibilities of the nation, including the obligation to ensure its security. Thus, citizenship in relation to citizens-by-proxy, the constitution of veteran status and identity by citizens and non-citizens, and the urgent steps on the part of the nation-state to grant citizenship to non-citizens in military roles are issues that need further investigation. The projected demographic growth of Latinos in the United States suggests that Latino citizens and non-citizens alike will have an increasing pres-

ence in the military, and that the need for this research will continue to grow.



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National Icon

continued from page 7

delays have made DNA testing especially instrumental in identifying Vietnam MIAs. Of all twentieth-century conflicts the United States was involved in, the Vietnam War presents the most compelling example of repatriation, both because of the deep-seated controversy that has surrounded the war and because of diplomatic and physical (eg, topographical) challenges that have complicated MIA recovery efforts. Unlike the current wars in Afghanistan and Iraq where special forces are trained and equipment outfitted specifically for recovery missions, repatriation of MIAs from the Vietnam War has proven a prolonged and arduous task. Indeed, some 1,700 individual soldiers are still presumed missing.

DNA Testing and Commemoration

At the entrance to the exhibit, *Resolved: Advances in Forensic Identification of US War Dead*, housed at the National Museum of Health and Medicine for the Armed Forces Institute of Pathology at the Walter Reed Army Medical Center, visitors are greeted by the words of nineteenth-century British Prime Minister William Gladstone: "Show me the manner in which a nation cares for its dead and I will show you with mathematical exactness the tender mercies of its people." The final panels of the exhibit, highlighting DNA technology's impact on the recovery and identification process, present a striking

symmetry to Gladstone's remark, as they emphasize the exactness of genetic science now brought to bear on the cases of missing soldiers.

Included among the many displays is a glass case containing some of the recovered personal effects of First Lieutenant Blassie—sections of his flight suit, a parachute survival guide, his dog tags chain, an ammunition pouch. The accompanying narrative spells out the story of his downed plane, his eventual burial, and the DNA testing that prompted the disinterment of the Tomb of the Unknowns. But the explanation leaves out important details—namely, that in the early 1980s the Reagan administration was under pressure to add to Arlington's Tomb of the Unknowns, and that the Blassie family encountered strong opposition to its insistence that the remains undergo DNA testing. Rather, the story of commemoration interrupted becomes a seamless tribute to advances in forensic science and First Lieutenant Michael Blassie a symbol for the "tender mercies" of a grateful nation. His name and photograph have unseated the powerful icon of an Unknown Soldier.

In recent weeks debates concerning how best to remember US war dead have reignited with President Obama's decision to lift the 20-year ban on photographing

flag-draped coffins. Media coverage now depends on whether individual families agree to such photographs and critics fret over the complications that will invariably arise.

If the use of DNA testing has in fact rendered the cultural phenomenon of the Tomb of the Unknowns outdated, even obsolete, what then takes its place in the "work of remembering" war dead?

Nevertheless, despite mixed reactions from family and veterans associations, the ban's reversal indexes a shift in the authority over commemoration from the government to the public, namely surviving relatives of killed soldiers. This shift mirrors a growing emphasis on the need to remember individual loss and identity, fostered by advancements in genetic testing and the achievements of US military's forensic facilities.

If the use of DNA testing has in fact rendered the cultural phenomenon of the Tomb of the Unknowns outdated, even obsolete, what then takes its place in the "work of remembering" war dead? Does the United States still need to memo-

rialize its fallen soldiers through collective or impersonal measures? Such questions arise in the wake of the US military's capacity to gather genetic profiles for each of its soldiers—to ensure that, if recovered, remains will be recognized and remembered individually. In attempting to answer these questions, we might look to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in the nation's capital. Organic in its physical and metaphorical design, the monument is updated periodically to reflect ongoing forensic efforts to recover each and every MIA: beside each name a symbol indicates the soldier's status as recovered or still missing, and from time to time the successful results of the recovery, repatriation and identification process replace the missing marker with that of the permanently recovered. A living memorial, the wall thus not only accommodates changing forensic practice, but also allows for highly personalized and collectivized remembering to take place before its panels—addressing the casual and intimate onlooker alike.

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