

DISCUSSION GUIDE

PEACE HAS NO BORDERS



THEY MADE A CHOICE, AND PAID A PRICE...





PEACE HAS NO BORDERS

64 min. documentary

52 min. version available

www.peacehasnoborders.com

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Discussion Guide

This guide has been designed to help teachers, students and community screeners enrich their experience of *Peace Has No Borders* by providing support in the form of questions and activities. There are a range of questions to help teachers frame discussions with their class, activities for before, during and after viewing the film, and some web links that provide starting points for further research or discussion.

The Film:

Between 1965-1973, over 50,000 Americans made their way to Canada, refusing to participate in the Vietnam War. More than forty years later, Canada has another moral choice – whether to give refuge to U.S. veterans of the Iraq War who crossed the border instead of serving another tour. Caught between two countries, today’s resisters have support of the public, but still fight for the political will to allow them to remain in Canada. *Peace Has No Borders* tells a complex story that weaves the resisters’ personal struggles against the backdrop of the political power of the Canadian government and demonstrates how one decision of conscience can affect the rest of your life.

The Directors:

Deb Ellis and Denis Mueller make films that focus on social justice and activism. Their films serve as reminders that some people make great sacrifices to talk to to power, and that often they pay a price. *Howard Zinn: You Can’t be Neutral on a Moving Train* (2004) is an overview of social movements of the 20th century seen through the eyes of activist and historian Howard Zinn. *The FBI’s War on Black America* is a rigorous examination of the FBI’s infamous COINTELPRO program. An underground classic, the film remains a relevant cautionary tale about the dangers of government surveillance. *Peace Has No Borders* is yet another chapter, reflecting on the impact of social activism and resistance to war.



Background Information

from the [War Resisters Support Campaign](#)



- During the Vietnam War in the 1960s and 1970s, between 50,000 and 80,000 Americans – including draft resisters and deserters – crossed the border and were welcomed into Canada. Today, many of these people remain in Canada. Some of them have helped welcome a new generation of war resisters to the country. Canada has a long history of welcoming people seeking refuge from war.
 - During the Iraq War, many U.S. soldiers were forced to return to service after fulfilling their legal contract to serve in the military. In many cases, US soldiers served their entire tour of duty and were honourably discharged, then were *involuntarily re-enlisted*, a practice known as “stop-loss”.
 - Tens of thousands of U.S. National Guard troops who enlisted for domestic service during the Iraq War were sent overseas. These enlistees did not anticipate being sent overseas when they joined the National Guard.
 - Access to conscientious objection and other forms of appeal was restricted at the height of the war. Soldiers were often unable to make a claim of conscientious objection.
 - In 2008 and 2009, two motions were adopted by the Canadian Parliament calling for the government to accept U.S. Iraq war resisters into the country and cease deportations.
 - A 2008 Angus Reid poll showed that 64% of Canadians believed U.S. Iraq War resisters should be allowed to stay in Canada. In 2016 an Insights West public opinion poll confirmed this sentiment. More information can be found on the War Resisters Support Campaign website:
 - <http://resisters.ca/>
 - Canada did not join the invasion of Iraq in 2003, but did send soldiers to fight in Afghanistan. More than 40,000 Canadian Armed Forces members served in the Afghanistan theatre of operations between 2001 and 2014.
 - Timeline of Major Events in the Iraq War
 - <http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2010/08/31/world/middleeast/20100831-Iraq-Timeline.html>
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Penalties for resisters deported from Canada back to the US:



Military personnel who receive bad conduct discharges do not receive veterans' benefits. This means being left to cope with the aftermath of serving in a war with no access to health care, a situation that can take a tremendous toll, both on the soldiers and their families.

When Kim Rivera was facing removal from Canada, the Harper Government argued that her claim that she faced punishment in the US was "merely speculative". But when she returned to the US, Kim was arrested at the border, taken to an Army base, court martialed, and sentenced to 14 months in prison. Patrick Hart received 25 months in prison.

Patrick Hart and Kim Rivera, both portrayed in the film, received significantly greater penalties than many former military personnel. It is speculated that they received harsher sentences because they spoke out against the war while they were in Canada. This 2015 article, "American Deserter", profiles several AWOL soldiers in Canada (including Kim Rivera) and describes the situations they faced:

<http://nymag.com/daily/intelligencer/2015/02/american-military-deserters-canada.html>



Terms and Concepts

(these terms may be introduced before viewing, or used in conjunction with a post-screening discussion).

- **Voluntary military** derives its manpower from volunteers rather than conscription or mandatory service. A country may offer attractive benefits through military recruitment to attract potential recruits.
 - **Conscription**, or drafting, is the compulsory enlistment of people in a national service, most often a military service.
 - **A Conscientious Objector** is a person who is opposed to serving in the armed forces and/or bearing arms on the grounds of moral or religious principles. <https://www.sss.gov/consobj>
 - **Absent Without Leave (AWOL)** AWOL means not being where you are supposed to be at the time you are supposed to be there.
 - **Desertion** is intent to remain away permanently or if the purpose of the absence is to shirk “important duty” (such as a combat deployment).
 - If a person intends to return to “**military control**” someday, he is guilty of AWOL, not desertion, even if he was away for 50 years. Conversely, if a person was absent for just one minute and then captured, he could be convicted of desertion if the prosecution can prove that the member intended to remain away permanently from the military.
 - Desertion carries a maximum punishment of dishonorable discharge, forfeiture of all pay, and confinement of five years. For desertion during a time of war, however, the death penalty may be applied (at the discretion of the court-martial). At any given time during the Iraq War, between 8000-10,000 military were considered AWOL. Many of them remained in the United States. If they were found, their punishment was typically significantly less than the resisters who went to Canada.
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- The United Nations Human Rights Commission and UN Commission for Refugees have established the validity of a conscientious objection while serving in military service, particularly when it concerns a military action “intended to violate basic human rights, ventures in breach of the Geneva Convention standards for the conduct of war, (or) non-defensive incursions into foreign territory.” The Geneva Convention is one of a series of agreements concerning the treatment of prisoners of war and of the sick, wounded, and dead in battle first made at Geneva, Switzerland in 1864 and subsequently accepted in later revisions by most nations.

• The right to freedom of conscience is established in Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). It declares that: “Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience, religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private...” *More information about the UDHR can be found on the United Nations website: <http://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/>*

- The Nuremberg principles are a set of guidelines for determining what constitutes a war crime. The document was created by the International Law Commission of the United Nations to codify the legal principles underlying the Nuremberg Trials of Nazi party members following World War II.
- The 4th Nuremberg Principle states “the fact that a person acted pursuant to order of his Government or of a superior does not relieve him from responsibility under international law, provided a moral choice was in fact possible to him.” The war resisters in the film made a decision that they did not want to continue participation in a war they felt was illegal and immoral. *More information about the Nuremberg Trials can be found on the History Channel website: <http://www.history.com/topics/world-war-ii/nuremberg-trials>*

Pre-Viewing Activities

- Show students the trailer and/or poster for the film on the film’s website: www.peacehasnoborders.com
 - What are the themes conveyed in the poster and/or the website?
 - What expectations do viewers have about the film and the subject? How do they feel about the issue, before seeing the film?
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After Viewing the Film:



- Often there will be people in your audience who have family members in the military. You may want to open up discussion in a way that allows people to share their experiences, and discuss openly how this film makes them feel. It's important to include everyone's voice in the conversation.
- Questions that come up may include why the people profiled in the film joined the military if they

didn't agree with the war. Kim, Chuck and Patrick all supported the U.S. mission in Iraq when they joined the military. They changed their minds after being asked to participate in activities they felt were illegal, for example, bombing civilian structures.

- Often viewers will have questions about the votes in the film, especially viewers from non-parliamentary governed countries. In the first part of the film, the resisters and their supporters are very happy when the Canadian Parliament passes a motion in support of allowing the resisters to stay in Canada. But, that motion didn't turn into law. A motion is not binding, it expresses an opinion of the House of Commons.
 - A Private Member's bill, such as Bill C440, which fails in the film, would be binding. This House of Commons Practical Guide offers in-depth description of the difference between a motion and a bill. <http://www.ourcommons.ca/About/Guides/PrivateMembersBusiness-e.html>
 - Like a government bill, a private Member's bill is a piece of draft legislation which is submitted to Parliament for approval and possible amendment before it can become law. Most private Members' bills originate in the Commons, but some private Members' bills are sent to the Commons from the Senate. Strictly speaking, private Members' bills are public bills, but private bills are also considered under Private Members' Business, since they must be sponsored by private Members.
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Questions to consider after viewing the film:

- The people portrayed in the film are subject to arrest in the U.S. for being AWOL or deserting the military. Do you think Canada should allow them to stay, or deport them back to the U.S.?
- These people volunteered for the military and signed a contract. Then they changed their minds. If someone volunteers to do something, do they have a duty to do it? Under all conditions?
- The invasion of Iraq in 2003 was based on a presumption that Iraq was hiding weapons of mass destruction. It was a lie. The people in the film made a choice to join the military based on what they knew. How would you feel if you had been lied to?
- What do you think a soldier should do if he or she is asked to participate in illegal acts of war?
- What is a government's responsibility to adhere to international rules of war?
- Can you imagine what you might do if you were in the same situation as Chuck, Pat or Kim?

Associated Questions

- Why do you think nations have developed rules of war?
 - What rules would you want to see enforced?
 - What do you think should happen if a soldier or citizen sees rules of war being broken?
 - Can you imagine a reason that a soldier might change his or her mind about war, after they've volunteered for service?
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Additional Resources

War Resisters Support Campaign (WRSC)

<http://resisters.ca/>

The War Resisters Support Campaign was founded in 2004 to assist U.S. military personnel who refused to participate in the Iraq war and came to Canada seeking asylum. Their resource page <http://resisters.ca/resources/> includes excellent background information, and links to a current court case that may have implications for resisters remaining in Canada.

Zinn Education Project

The Zinn Education Project promotes and supports the teaching of people's history in middle and high school classrooms across the country. Based on the lens of history highlighted in Howard Zinn's best-selling book A People's History of the United States, the website offers free, downloadable lessons and articles organized by theme, time period, and reading level. The Zinn Education Project is coordinated by two non-profit organizations, Rethinking Schools and Teaching for Change. Below are a few resources that include material about the Iraq War.

<https://zinnedproject.org/>

What War Looks Like

<https://zinnedproject.org/materials/what-war-looks-like/>

Greed As A Weapon: Teaching the Other Iraq War

<https://zinnedproject.org/materials/greed-as-a-weapon-iraq-war/>

Ten Years After: How Not to Teach the Iraq War

<https://zinnedproject.org/2013/03/ten-years-after-how-not-to-teach-about-the-iraq-war/>

Quotes from the film for discussion.

Following are some statements made by subjects in the film that can be used to initiate conversation about issues raised.

Kimberly Rivera, U.S. Army Private First Class: There's no reason for me to be taken to Iraq. It's not the same reasons they tell you. They can't even tell you the same answers. It's always something different."

You keep losing people around you. I call it my Iraq effect. Like, I just have incredible rage, like so bad that I just want to punch a hole through a wall.

Patrick Hart, U.S. Army Sergeant: I was in line at a Burger King up in Kuwait, and a couple of soldiers were talking about going back. The younger fellow said, "I don't know how many dead Iraqi children's hair I've pulled out of the grill of my vehicle. Those kids aren't nothing but speed bumps to me man, and you just got to let that, let that go."

Chuck Wiley, U.S. Navy Chief Petty Officer: The root problem for me was that we were bombing structures and targets that clearly in my mind were not military targets. They're civilian structures.

Jack Layton, Canadian politician and leader of the New Democratic Party 2003-2011: I was very proud to be standing in that House of Commons today voting on this motion.

I believe that it represents the views, very profound views and feelings of millions of Canadians across the land. So I think you should know that that vote there wasn't just the vote of 137 members of Parliament on your behalf. That

represented the sentiments of millions, millions of Canadians. And I call on our Prime Minister to do what is right and stop the deportations. Stop them now!

Jason Kenney, Canadian politician, former Minister for Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism, 2008-2013: The one thing I would point out is that these are not draft dodgers. These are not people being conscripted or drafted. They were volunteers into the military of a democratic country. And that's being taken into consideration by our IRB (Immigration and Refugee Board) and our courts, which is why to date none of these applications for refugee status have been successful, I think.

Chuck Wiley: There are times that I stop and realize that I would actually right now be processing out of the military for retirement if I had just kept my mouth shut, and dealt with it. You know, it's very easy to say that I betrayed my country, but I don't see it that way. I see it as we're the people, really the only people in this situation that are actually standing on the foundation of values that supposedly defined the country to begin with.

Justin Trudeau, former Member of Parliament, current Prime Minister of Canada: I'm a little concerned that they're flying in the face of certain Canadian history and a point of pride for many Canadians. I would've liked to have a chance to debate it in immigration committee, look at ways to hear out some of the concerns including the concerns of Canadian veterans and understand that this is a bit part of Canada's identity in the world and is worthy of discussing at the very least in committee.
