

# ★U.S. ARMED FORCES★ Don't Talk to That Guy in the Snappy Uniform

Say NO to war recruitment . . . the life you're saving might be your own.

by Barbara Brown

This may sound like a sociopath's idea of a good joke, but here goes: What do you call a person who willfully goes out to recruit people to a job that involves killing other human beings, often innocent people and involves a high risk of post-traumatic stress disorder for both sexes and a high risk of rape for women? You may be surprised to hear that that's a shockingly accurate description for a military recruiter and if you're a current or former high school student, you most likely have seen one. You probably have even seen one of your fellow students talking with one of these recruiters. These recruiters are talking to these students about honor, strength, bravery, and serving one's country and never mentioning the questionable politics behind the wars for which he is recruiting high school students and adults for, let alone the real dangers of physical and psychological wounds that come with military service. But guess what? Even if you are determined to not enlist at all and avoid any army recruiter like the plague, they still have your information. The No Child Left Behind Act requires that all schools receiving federal funding release the names and information of its students to military recruiters. You can be exempted from this requirement, provided that your parent or guardian signs a form forbidding your school from releasing your information to the military recruiters. But unfortunately, students are not always informed of their rights concerning their information and the military, and those who are seldom learn of these rights through any effort by the school to educate them on these rights.

I can share an anecdote of having been seen a fellow student named Taylor\* being recruited for the military. I was sitting alone during lunch and the military recruiter, Taylor, and a guidance counselor chose that table for which to have their discussion about the student joining the military. I tried to read because I found the whole thing abhorrent. Despite this, though, I caught some snippets of the conversation about how Taylor's grades weren't so good and how the army would be a good alternative to college and they mentioned how good it would be for Taylor to serve his country. Nowhere in that discussion did they inform Taylor of the reality of war, about how he could be killed and would be obligated to kill other people. Given this, I don't think that they would inform a young woman who they were trying to recruit of the fact that one in three women in the army ends up being raped. Fortunately, the army does recognize this, as they tell women to refrain from drinking water in the evening to avoid the need to go to the latrine at night and the risk of being raped on the way there or back, even if they don't take the trouble to inform them of this risk before they are in the army. Unfortunately, though, fully informing prospective soldiers of the risks they face does not seem to be the job of those who are trying to get people to do that job.

Additionally, good luck if you try to report any war crimes you may see on the job as Bradley Manning tried to do. On July 12, 2007, a helicopter shot at a group of nine men, most of whom were unarmed and two of whom were war correspondents for Reuters. Eight of them were killed and the other was wounded. When the wounded man tried to get into an unmarked van, a second helicopter fired at that one, wounding two children and killing three men, including the one originally trying to get into the van. When Bradley Manning posted footage of these attacks on Wikileaks, he was arrested and held in solitary confinement for months on end. Another soldier, Ethan McCord, who is seen in the video Bradley Manning posted, carrying an injured child, sought psychological help for the trauma he incurred from witnessing the "Apache airstrikes" and its aftermath, but he was ridiculed and told that if he went to the mental health officer, there would be repercussions.

For these reasons, it is nothing short of scary that commercials for army recruitment are ubiquitous on television and that there are people stationed in high schools to recruit students for the army. Casey Sheehan was uninterested in joining the army until he was repeatedly contacted by military recruiters who were pressuring him to join the army since high school and the years afterward. Additionally, the recruiters used several underhanded tactics to finally get him enlisted. As a result, he was killed and his mother, Cindy Sheehan, became a very vocal anti-war activist. To avoid becoming another Casey Sheehan, you can download the letter you need to opt out of the No Child Left Behind military recruitment provision at [http://www.themmob.org/lmca/lmca\\_forms/Opt\\_Out\\_Form\\_Parents.pdf](http://www.themmob.org/lmca/lmca_forms/Opt_Out_Form_Parents.pdf) and download the letter you need to opt out of the national JAMRS (Joint Advertising Marketing & Research Services) military recruitment database of 16-to-25-year-olds [http://www.themmob.org/lmca/lmca\\_forms/JAMRS\\_OPT\\_OUT.pdf](http://www.themmob.org/lmca/lmca_forms/JAMRS_OPT_OUT.pdf)

War recruitment in public schools, especially in urban and poor districts, is essential to the continuation of the endless US wars. There are many ways youth can resist and we can even drive the recruiters out of our schools. First we need to provide info to undermine the slick marketing and lies of the war recruiters widely among the student body. We can protest war recruitment with on the spot picketing, leafleting opposition when recruiters are in school and at their recruitment offices. War recruitment signs and literature can disappear or become marred with anti-war stickers or markings. Most of all, we need to organize a mass youth movement -- the war machine needs our blood to grease the gears of slaughter, invasion, occupation and empire expansion, but we need to resist. Our survival depends upon it!

\* Name changed to protect identity



Graphic donated by Mike Flugennock \* for more: <http://sinkers.org/stage/>

## After DADT: Don't Go! Don't Kill!

To any gay and bisexual readers, now that you can enlist, please don't!

Since Don't Ask Don't Tell (DADT) was repealed on September 20th, just about everyone's had something to say. Homophobes are vocally opposing it and LGBTQ people and their allies are celebrating. Some queer soldiers took the opportunity to come out.

As someone who simultaneously supports LGBTQ rights and an end to all wars, I didn't know how I should react to the end of DADT. On one hand, it opens up a lot of benefits for veterans who were previously discharged for their sexuality and enables soldiers to marry and enter civil unions with their same-sex partners.

However, despite these benefits for LGB veterans, DADT's repeal is still encouraging LGB people to join the military. It's not just the repeal itself either; the military is actively recruiting gays and bisexuals, and rather aggressively as well. And it's not like there aren't enough soldiers serving, either; over 180,000 soldiers are in Iraq and Afghanistan. With LGBTQ people experiencing higher rates of homelessness and poverty than those who are straight and cisgender, do we really want to be enthusiastically sending people of any sexual orientation off to indiscriminately kill innocent people and blow over half the federal budget on it in the process? Both wars were illegally started, have resulted in hundreds of thousands of deaths in Iraq, most of them of civilians and thousands more in Afghanistan, and are the direct cause of wastage of money that could otherwise be used to help combat problems that hit LGBTQ youth harder than those who are straight and cis, including homelessness, poverty, jobs, and education.

Is it really a good thing that people are rejoicing over the fact that the American government is asking gay and bisexual youth to participate in its violence after targeting them with it? LGBTQ youth are prosecuted and jailed at a higher rate compared to those who are cis and straight, making them more likely to be homeless after they have been jailed and most likely subjected to abuse by guards and other inmates and some of them were locked up for sexual activity with others of the same sex, despite the Supreme Court's declaration that state sodomy laws

are unconstitutional in 2003. And now they expect us to turn mercenary and come help them kill Iraqis and Afghans in cold blood? This queer contributor says no thanks!

Despite the military's insistence that it is safer for gays and bisexuals, not everyone agrees. Eva Rivera, who has a sister on active duty, wrote in her post How DADT Isn't A Step Forward For Everyone on Womanist Musings about her sister's and the sister's girlfriend's opinions on how DADT's repeal affects them as queer soldiers. I highly recommend reading all of it because its entirety describes so well why DADT's repeal is not so progressive as it appears.

(<http://www.womanist-musings.com/2011/08/how-dont-ask-dont-tell-isnt-step.html>) They have chosen to stay closeted because the army is conformist by nature and penalizes those who are "abnormal" in any way. Moreover, soldiers in legal same-sex unions aren't given the full benefits offered to nuclear families because of DOMA. It also closes a loophole for soldiers who want out and, as was already mentioned, is being used to recruit LGB people.

And while we're on the topic of the repeal being an illusion of progress, at least some of you may be wondering why I only addressed this to cisgender LGB youth. I do have a reason and it is that it only ends discrimination based on sexual orientation. Being trans is still grounds for disqualification.

**We encourage all youth, queer or straight, cis or trans, to refuse to contribute to the wastage of tax dollars, join the American government's violence, or believe its lies and to encourage others to refuse.**

**We encourage LGBT advocacy organizations not to be seduced by military recruitment dollars – do not let them come to your events to recruit and do not invite openly LGB troops to speak at your events to glorify the exploits of occupation soldiers! On the other hand, LGBT troops who resist the continuing wars, (e.g. the likely gay Bradley Manning) must be supported!**



Baruti Kafele is a public speaker and a full-time college student. **He is willing to speak at events pertaining to social justice, Afrocentricity, politics,**

**economics and on any other pertinent issue. He can be contacted via e-mail at [barutik67@gmail.com](mailto:barutik67@gmail.com).** He is also an author at youth blog site <http://NJYouthUnited.org/wp> **YO! What impact do the endless wars have on youth of your communities?**

The impact that endless wars have on the youth of our community is somewhat of the inevitability to engage into sinister, militaristic and violent actions that would damage the welfare of innocent people and specifically children in developing or underdeveloped countries. Concomitantly, the youth in this country who are generally in the U.S. Army have generally been deprived of the fruits of Americanism and don't have anything else to resort to except for using coercive means to proliferate the economic power and influence of the oligarchs and imperialists at the expense of tax payer's dollars, the security of American citizens by and large and their own individual lives.

**YO! What is your understanding of imperialism?**

Imperialism is the last stage of capitalism in which capitalists monopolize various industries to profit from the abundant and opulent resources in developing countries at the expense of its autochthonous and indigenous people of various countries.

**YO! What is your take on the following issues: "War on drugs"?**

## Communities: Interview with Baruti N. Kafele

Study the Iran Contra Scandal and various others.

**YO! Incarceration of youth?**

The incarceration of the youth is nothing but another lucrative way for capitalists to exploit a vulnerable segment in society through the privatization of prisons. Also, the incarceration of the youth is another way to exploit people who are living in perilous circumstances so that when they have the criminal stigmatization on to their record, they are deprived of various means of survival like jobs, loans, etc.

**YO! Police in schools?**

The police in schools and where ever are put into place to protect the interests of the wealthy, affluent and powerful who control the means of production and the majority of the influential institutions nationally and globally.

**YO! Military recruitment in your community and schools?**

Military recruitment is another way for the capitalists and oligarchs by and large to take advantage of the politically and culturally unaware youth of our country who have been deprived of the viable opportunities that are oppositely guaranteed to the wealthy and powerful of this country. They have a choice of either living a mundane or mediocre lifestyle within their communities, to indulge in a life of crime or to "legally" mutilate and eradicate people and to confiscate people of their property so that corporations could benefit from military intervention on the global scale.

**YO! What is the importance of youth organizing and youth unity?**

Youth organization and unity enables the most vulnerable, powerful, prodigious, energetic and promising segment of society to provoke change in the world to benefit the human family. Historically, the youth have almost always been the segment of society who would invigorate and activate the mental, cultural, social and political change, convulsion or cataclysm to make their society a better place.