

The Trials of Homecoming

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Jonathan Shay,, *psychiatrist, MacArthur fellow*

James Meeks *former army captain*

Christopher Lydon, *former radio host, The Connection*

<http://forum-network.org/lecture/trials-homecoming>

So, good afternoon, good afternoon and welcome to the John F. Kennedy Library. I'm John Shattuck, the CEO of the Kennedy Library Foundation, and on behalf of our Board of Directors and our Library Director, Tom Putnam; I want to welcome all of you on this beautiful Veteran's Day afternoon here on Columbia Point. And I want to thank all the institutions that make these forums possible starting with our lead sponsor, Bank of America and we're also grateful to the Boston Foundation, Boston Capital, Lowell Institute, the Corcoran Jennison Companies, and our media sponsors, The Boston Globe, NECN and WBUR which broadcast these Kennedy Library Forums on Sunday evenings. John F. Kennedy was a veteran, and he knew the face of war. When he was asked how he became a war hero, he said with typical self-effacing humor, "It was involuntary, they sank my boat". Kennedy's generation of veterans didn't talk much about what they've been through and what they said was always understated. But like my own father who was badly wounded in the Pacific as a marine in the Second World War, Kennedy knew what it meant to go through battle and as with other people, other veterans throughout history, he carried with him the names and faces of those who didn't make it back. On November 11th 1961, a young president, tempered by war, and disciplined, as he said in his Inaugural Address, by hard and bitter peace, went to Arlington National Cemetery to honor the nation's veterans. And here's what he said,

47 years ago today, he said, "We commemorate the veterans this Veteran's Day with a few moments of silence, and then this country's life goes on. But it is appropriate that we recall on this occasion the sacrifice which so many soldiers and their families have made in order to permit us to gather here together. In a world tormented by tension and conflict we meet in commemoration of peace. Some might say that this day has lost its meaning, that the shadow of new and deadly weapons has robbed this day of value, but at this time of remembrance, let us pray in the name of those who fought before, that there shall be no veterans of any further war, not because all shall have perished but because all shall have learned together to live in peace." So that's what President Kennedy had to say on Veteran's Day, it's pretty powerful stuff. And today, many years later, but in that same spirit, our thoughts and words turn toward those who serve, who have served, or soon will serve in Iraq, Afghanistan and other distant places. And toward their families who have joined with them in making that sacrifice about which Kennedy spoke so simply and so eloquently. And with that in mind, I would like to ask all of the veterans, of all wars who are here with us today, to stand, so that we can recognize you and thank you for your service to the nation, please.

For many years now, we have been a country deeply divided by the issues of war. And by the way, our government has taken us to war. Here in Massachusetts alone, there are now some 35,000 citizens who are veterans of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, a staggering number. And for those of us who came of age in the shadow of another deeply controversial war in Vietnam, we remember all too well. How veterans would return home without the welcome and appreciation they deserve for the sacrifices that they have made. So here at the Kennedy Library, we're determined not to let that happen today. And that those who have served are properly honored even as those who have led our nation to war, are justly criticized for the decisions they have made. And to honor and represent the veterans of 2008, and especially all of you who are here with us today, we've invited a wonderful panel to talk about the trials, the difficulties of homecoming, from the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Let me introduce our panelists as they are seated, first, starting over on the far left of me, is our first panelist, James Meeks who served two tours of duty as an Army Officer in the 1st Infantry Division in Iraq. A graduate of Harvard and Stanford Business School, Capt. Meeks was deployed to Iraq in the spring of 2004, where he was wounded by roadside bomb. Following his recovery, he returned to Iraq in 2005 as a Tank Commander and Platoon Leader. He saw active duty during a particularly intense period of the war in Diala Province where he conducted combat patrols, trained soldiers in the Iraqi Army and provided security for the Parliamentary Elections and Constitutional Referendum.

And when he returned from Iraq after this second tour of duty, Capt. Meeks served as an Executive Officer tasked with transitioning his combat battalion into a training unit. We salute you for your service Captain Meeks and welcome you to the stage of the Kennedy library. Our second panelist is Doctor Jonathan Shay who's seated here to my immediate left and who serves as Staff Psychiatrist for the department of veterans' affairs here in Boston. Dr. Shay's pioneering treatment of combat traumas suffered by war veterans combined with his imaginative interpretations of the ancient accounts of battle in Homer's Iliad and Odyssey have deepened our understanding of the effects of warfare on the individual. In his book, *Odysseus in America: Combat Trauma and the Trials of Homecoming*, Dr. Shay uses Odysseus as a metaphor focusing on the American soldiers' experience on returning from war to civilian society and highlighting the role of public policy in protecting the mental well being of soldiers. Last year Dr. Shay received a prestigious McArthur Fellowship, and in its citation the Mc Arthur Foundation described him as follows; and I quote "A passionate advocate for veterans, he strives to reform the way the Armed Forces are organized, trained and counseled respected by humanist's and military leaders alike, he brings in to stark relief the emotional problems faced by military combatants; ancient and modern. Dr. Shay's book is available for purchase on our bookstore and I'm sure he'd be delighted to sign copies after the forum. We welcome you Dr. Shay to the stage of the Kennedy Library. And our moderator this afternoon is one of Boston's most distinguished journalists, my good friend, Christopher Lyndon. Chris has recently decamped to Brown University at least temporarily where he's serving as a visiting fellow at the Watson Institute for International Studies,

and broadcasting his path-breaking series of internet-radio conversations Open Source. For more than three decades, Chris has been a distinctive voice in print, television and radio journalism, he has covered Presidential Campaigns for the New York Times, anchored the 10 O'Clock News on WBGH T.V., and founded an award-winning radio program The Connection on WBUR, and I should say parenthetically, he also trained our outstanding forum producer, Aimee McDonalds. So, please join me in welcoming to the stage of the Kennedy Library, Christopher Lyndon, Captain James Meeks, and Dr. Jonathan Shay. John Shattuck thanks you. Aimee McDonald is a – I mean she did it all on her own but she may be our proudest product. We're talking this afternoon about on Veteran's Day 2008 about this astonishingly steady, consistent, sometimes you think incurable process of war. War as a job, as a daily job, as Dr. Shay says, and the question of homecoming. So much to say, we won't get it all done in an hour and a half, but we will very much want your engagement and your questions, your thoughts, stated concisely so be prepared. Nobody's going to carry on for a great length. It's Dr. Shay, who, in this remarkable book takes us back to the ringing plains of Troy, and establishes that story as a kind of central narrative that we all know, we were joking about it, the fact that there is a school of thought and I'm a part of it. If Homer was the only book we had, we'd have enough for everything. It tells all of the stories of human life, men, women, young, old, breath and death, and battle, battle, battle. I'd like to ask Jonathan Shay to begin by simply explaining how he as a Psychiatrist got into both the Iliad, and the matter of war not unlike my friend Chris Hedges, whom I'm sure you know. Who went through a similar process as a journalist,

discovering Homer and Shakespeare, and the great literature of war, in the course of preparing his book. War is the Force that Gives Us Meaning, but give us the, if you can, in a headline, Dr. Shay, the Homeric context of what we are still talking about. Well, what Homer shows us, so amazingly is that what really matters to soldiers in war is the social and the moral context of his own forces. Yes, the enemy does matter, And what makes the enemy so dangerous is that he is human just like us, and is doing a damn good job of killing my friends in war. And, but, ultimately, the thing that wrecks people's lives, is the social ruptures and in particular, the ethical ruptures by people who hold legitimate authority in war. And, that's really what the main straight-ahead narrative of the Iliad is about. It's about the story of this one particular warrior, Achilles, who is betrayed by his boss, Agamemnon, and the terrible, terrible consequences that flow from that. Now, a consequence of the consequences that his dearest friend, closest comrade and foster brother Patroclus, is killed wearing Achilles' own armor, and so, it's all raise to an exponent there. And all I said, in Achilles in Vietnam, is that this really is a story about soldiers in war, and what matters to them. Achilles' connection to his comrade Patroclus, and the betrayal by his boss, Agamemnon, and that, if you grasp the significance of all of those things and the way those play out in the human heart, you've really learned a lot about war and how it wrecks people. And guys, I always think this was the original guy book... Well, uh...there... the... It's amazing how important women are to, in the worlds of everyone. We see Andromache, Hector's wife, Hector being the Trojans' main man,

and so he is sleeping in his own bed every night after battle, whereas Achilles is part of an expeditionary force, the only women, there are, are captive slave women and we actually get a significant glimpse of these women. But it is fair to say that the Iliad primarily focuses on the men fighting with each other. Whether the enemy were their own, their own leadership. The story of all times, it is such a cliché, but it's so true when you make the connection as a doctor, as a citizen, as a human being to the, the, war stories and the homecoming stories they were all... they were all hearing, first and second hand in Iraq today... from Iraq. The 35,000, astonishing number, veterans in Massachusetts, of war in Afghanistan and Iraq I had the privilege of writing the ... both of these books, really by dumb luck. I stumbled into it. ... My daughter Tamara is here in the audience. She was a freshman at Harvard College taking Professor Gregory Najy's famous freshmen course lovingly known as "Heroes for Zeros." And she gave him a copy of a little paper that I'd had in the Journal of Traumatic Stress which I thought a really nifty teaching piece. If you want to take a decent combat history, from a patient who is a veteran, remember the story of Achilles and you'll touch all the bases. And I thought that's all it was. And she gave that to Professor Najy and he came to my apartment and said, "Would you please expand this into a book for one of the series that I edit? Because this has never been said before." What? All I said is that the Iliad is about war and what matters to soldiers in war. "Never been said before." Now, if Shay says that something is or is not in the corpus of Homeric scholarship, that and a nickel will get you a ball of gum in the supermarket.

But if Professor Najy says that something is or is not in the corpus of Homeric scholarship, you can go to the bank with that. So, I realized this is my one shot at immortality. If you write something good about Homer, people will literally read it for centuries. And so I dug in and I wrote the book that Professor Najy requested. And he was incredibly generous... incredibly generous with me and with this book. And actually, the whole tribe of classicists has been incredibly generous. and I ...It... It has all changed my life. The books have changed my life, but most of all, the veterans have changed my life. They, I went to work for the VA, and by the way, I have retired from the VA as of May 31st, so I am no longer doing clinical work. But what I am doing, and I come back to what the veterans did for me, in addition to redirecting my life once I went to VA... I went there expecting to reopen the laboratory that I'd had at Mass. General, and they...(making bullet sound).. I am fond of saying that the veterans kidnapped me when I got there. They redirected my life in that regard. But also once involved in work on Psychological Injury, by the way, a term I much prefer to PTST, once I became involved with that, I became deeply, deeply fired up over preventing Psychological and Moral Injury in Military Service. And when I retired from the VA, It was not to play golf. It was to devote myself full time to the quest for prevention of Psychological and Moral Injury in Military service. And I learned from the veterans that I served for twenty years that this is something that they are absolutely unified on. They don't want other young kids wrecked the way they were wrecked. And so every, in a certain sense, every thought in my head

tends to be aimed in the direction of how to protect the good young kids that are we're sending into harm's way and then if they do get hurt and in war people always get hurt both physically and psychologically. If they are hurt how can we help them in their recovery? So what is the psychological, you know, IED? That... Chris, you have to decode this metaphor for me. Well I mean the - the roadside bomb. We hear about, trauma, shrapnel these improvised explosive devices... What are you talking about when you speak of this psychological injury? Well, I have been encouraging people to think of two aspects of the psychological injury. The first is the primary injury that you can think of its being like a mortar fragment slashing across the thigh of a soldier or marine. That's the primary injury. Now that primary injury can be severe enough, especially if that mortar fragment goes right through the head or right through the heart to kill that soldier right on the spot. But, generally, it's not the primary injury that will kill a soldier it's the complications of that injury. And just about everybody in this room knows whether they know they know it or not What those primary complications are, and that is bleeding, bleeding to death and infection. Bleeding to death kills you quick, infection takes a while. But these are the two primary complications. Now, I have advocated that we view psychological injury in this sort of military frame of mind. What is the primary injury and the way I have tried to frame it is that in war there is certain physiological adaptations, psychological adaptations, social adaptations, and maybe even cultural adaptations, in the form of ideologies. I'm not certain about the cultural side, actually. But the brain, mind and social

connection, I'm certain about. So, you develop these adaptations that allow you to live through this hideous situation of other human beings really trying to kill you. That's real; you're not making that up. And they're doing a damn good job of it, and you're seeing comrades being maimed, being killed, and so, this is certain and it takes up residence in your gut. Now, you come then home, either to life in garrison or to civilian life, and from everything I understand, and I will welcome correction here if it is called for. From everything I understand, life in garrison on a base in the United State or in Germany, or in Japan, whatever... is much more like civilian life than war in a battle zone. And that, so, whether you're coming back to life in garrison or civilian life, you have all of these adaptations in your body, your mind, and your way of relating to people, and these, often just don't fit. They don't work. Sometimes they're outright destructive. Like the instant readiness for violent, lethal action when surprised, which is certainly a survival adaptation. You're patrolling in a built up area in Iraq, where people in your unit have been ambushed before, and you're ready for instant, lethal action. One of my patient's a 173rd Airborne Trooper from Vietnam, was working at his work bench, and his ten year old daughter thought it would be cute to sneak up behind her father and surprise him. Well, in a flash, he had her pinned against the wall by the neck. and then he realized... he was looking into the terror in her eyes and realized what he had done, and he was so mortified, he just put her down and walked out of the house and didn't return for a month, because he was so mortified. So, this is an example, of the Primary Injury,

it's a valid adaptation
to the real situation of war
which doesn't fit in
Civilian life or life in garrison.
Now, I want to say, that it is
rare in my observation and belief,
that the primary injuries are so severe,
that it totally wrecks the
veterans' capacity for a good life.
It may impose focal disabilities, focal
just like someone with a hand shot off.
No matter how skillful they
become with that prosthesis
and I've known a veteran
who could flip a quarter
into the air with his hook
and catch it. That's real skill.
But, there will be things that
that veteran can't do
because his missing that
hand, focal disabilities.
But my view is that it's the
complications of combat trauma,
that truly wrecked the veteran's life,
the life of the family,
the life in the workplace.
And in the extreme, many historians
believe that it was the pathogen burden,
if you wish, of combat trauma
in the population of Weimar, Germany
that contributed mightily to the
disruption of Weimar, Germany.
So, it is not just a humanitarian issue,
it is something we all have a deep,
personal, positive self-interest
in getting all this right.
And I... yes, I am devoting myself primarily
to prevention of psychological
injury, and its complications.
The moral injury part actually
connects to the complications.
Can I introduce Capt. Jim Meeks.
And I wanted to say, to begin,
Jim, you're so unusual in a certain way.
A guy, especially in a war,
fought, a lot of it, by poor people,
in a sort of a poverty draft,
volunteers in the Armed Forces today.
You came at it as a child of real privilege,
Harvard education, and business ambition.
I'd loved to know why you
went, and then some of the,
some of the lessons that
you brought back against this,

I'm thinking in the Homeric scale here,
but against this sort of ageless
process that you got deep into.
Well, I was a, I was one of the 'zeroes' in
Gregory Najy's Heroes for Zeros class, and so
I became, as I was interested in
the class from this perspective.
And I think if you ever
are attracted to ethics,
and you see something like
9/11 happen, and you say, this is,
this is not everyday occurrence,
this is a huge rift, it's a
huge scar in our society
we're living through it right now,
And I picked up Dr. Shay's book,
largely because my professor'd
written a foreword for it.
And began thinking about,
what does it mean to be a leader?
I think, I think that term
is, probably, the most over-used
and under, and un-understood,
misunderstood, phrase out there.
At lots of business schools we
hear about leadership all the time
and it gets confused with management.
But the true leadership is,
is the accepting responsibility,
the moral responsibility of
those who are underneath you,
that your actions and your decisions
are gonna very much influence
the moral universe of those who follow you.
And, after September 11th, I...
in the spring, in my senior year,
I went to Israel with Bishop Tom Shaw,
the Bishop of the Obispal Church
Massachusetts, of which I'm a member.
And we went, we met with lots
of Palestinians, and lots of Israelis.
And everyone was trying to tell us a
story, everyone was trying to convince us,
that one side was right
or the other side was right.
And there was one woman who I
thought was very open with her heart,
and she said to me, her house was
right next to Arafat's Compound.
We got there right after the
Israelis have kind of surrounded
Arafat's Headquarters in Ramallah.
And her house has been taken
over by these Israeli soldiers,

and they had rushed in, and put her whole family into one room. And ate all their food, and trashed their house And while walking out, and this woman was telling us a story, this very dramatic story. And she stops, and she said, "You know what, they're not all bad". One guy stopped, he's a private and when he was rushing out of the room, he knocked over the picture of her deceased husband. I think that he could tell it's an important picture and then he stopped and he picked it up and he yelled, "I'm very sorry" and he put it back on the shelf and ran out. And this woman, who was a part of a community, that was starting to think that maybe killing Israeli civilians isn't so bad because these soldiers are so cruel to us. This woman said, "I don't think they're all evil. I think there's goodness in their heart." And I thought a little bit about, what is that impetice that a leader has, what is his responsibility, and I came into a conclusion, I don't understand this Iraq war. I'm not smart enough to figure out why were going into it. I've got sense that we're going to go into it, and the question is, are we going to, fight this war in a way that upholds our greatest honors and our morals, and our values of the country, that I assume that we have. Or are we just going to leave it to other people. To fight a war as they see fit. And so I took that sense of responsibility, I think pretty seriously, and try to accept that call in a way that generation before me have accepted it, and I ended up joining the Army. And then what happened? I learned how to shine my boots pretty well, and clean a... clean a rifle. And then, next thing I knew, I graduated; I finished my training as a tank commander, and was shipped over to

Iraq, to a unit in 2004. And what's interesting was – everything was changing so quickly in Iraq. When I joined the Army, it was the debate to go into Iraq. When I was in basic training, it was the last ultimatum to Saddam Hussein, give up the WMDs or else. By the time I started Officer Candidacy School, we were rolling over the burning Kuwait, By the time I'd finished, it was mission accomplished. Wow, that's a pretty quick turnaround, and so, over the summer, we're occupying and I'm learning how to be a tanker. We're getting some reports about, there's these things, they're turning Pepsi cans into explosives, they got some snipers firing at us, there's something going on in Iraq. By the time I finish my, my tank training, and I get to my unit, I find that, find out that's already deployed. Six of the 22 lieutenants had either been killed, or wounded so critically they had to be evacuated. So, I got switched from my normal unit, one that was in Iraq as an individual replacement And something Dr. Shay talks about really, eloquently is, the trauma of being an individual replacement like you're a replacement-cog in a wheel, just to make sure that the vehicle keeps on running. And when I got there, as a green lieutenant which is about the worst of the worst anyhow in garrison, who hasn't been fighting like these guys have been fighting for six months and then to top it off with the single worst thing possible, I was from Ivy League school. The, the level and kind of respect and compassion I was going to get from this unit was going to be very low. But I kind of tried to figure out a way to stick with what my ideals were, about how we should fight this war with acknowledging that these guys have been doing now for six months. And I think the army that I arrived into had no clue what it was doing, it was not trained for counter insurgency,

it was not expecting this type of resistance. We were, rewriting the rule book as we went, and good people under times of duress were making bad decisions. And I was put in charge of a, a prison camp, of detainees. And we've taken over British Base in Habbaniya, and they had a ten-person prison facility, back when the British Air Forces were stationed there. So, we'd taken it over, we've turned this detention facility from a 10-person to a 112-person facility. People were just swamped in into this area, and I was stuck with a problem of how do I figure out a way to reform this, because this is a legal and a moral, and a safety nightmare, with no moral credibility whatsoever, just being a young lieutenant. And, during that time, the images of Abu Ghraib were coming out and, they're cycling through the US Army before they hit New York Times. And, I was very much thinking of this Homeric position because on one hand, if you think of the Geneva Convention as a contract, then, between two nations in war. Then the Iraqi insurgents in Al-Qaeda specifically had violated their end of the deal. They were killing civilians. They weren't fighting in uniform. And if they were have gotten a hold of us, they would have tortured us worse than we've tortured them. So you can think about it as a contract, and I think that's kind of how some people in the army when their back's against the wall, were thinking of it. Or you can think of it as a covenant, a set of values, as what our enemy does. We have certain morals and values in the society that, if we break that, we don't deserve to be a society at all, and to wear an American flag, it just makes us like Roman conquerors, not this notion, this home of American democracy, an idealism that we cling to. And that was something

that I was very sensitive to, and I think that kind of Homeric view point was helping me. If you want to win a war, you can win a war, you just have to destroy the entire city. But you have to win a war well. If you don't win the war well, then when you go home and what are you going to tell your kids. What are they going to tell their kids about how you performed? And that's an element of the American army that makes it fairly difficult. When you try to explain to an 18 year old kid, hey look, I know this guy just killed your friend, I know you watched your friend die, you think that this guy put a bullet on him. But you can't go after him. Why not? Because then we don't stand for anything. And then we go home, and we have to deal with the fact that we've committed atrocities that at the time seem like they're pragmatic but you'd have to live with for the rest of your life. And I think that was the biggest charge I had when I was in the Army, I certainly wasn't the strongest, or the fastest, or the best shot. But the one thing I thought I could bring to the table was, this understanding of, not just morality in an abstract sense but the fact that, you're going to have to live with these decisions. If you survive here, that's great, but if you survive here and you're haunted for the rest of your life, that's debilitating. So we have to make decisions that we can, that we believe are right and good, and that was, and so, I just want to thank you in front of all these people for writing the book that help crystallize these thoughts for me when I was over there. You're very kind to say that. If I can just follow-up a little bit with that, you may know a person with a somewhat similar experience? Nate Thick? This is a young man who is a Marine Platoon Commander in both Afghanistan and Iraq,

and he wrote a book called, "One Bullet Away", and what's unusual is that there's a second book that was written by someone situated very differently in the universe. A reporter from Rolling Stone who was embedded with Nate's Platoon during the Iraq fight. So we get to see the same cast of characters, the same fight through two very different sets of eyes. And, I find remarkable that both of these witnesses, one of them with his particular interests, the commander of this platoon. And the other, in some respects really disinterested but different interest if... and both of them testified to the same thing, and that is, that these junior enlisted American service members cared deeply about the moral context of what they're doing in this fight. They do not want to know themselves as murderers. They think that the bright line between militarily legitimate and necessary killing and murder means everything to them. And so, one encounters, in my experience when I've worked with a fair number of people currently in uniform, not as a, as their doctor, but as an agitator for Preventive Psychiatry, that the people in uniform understand this, and that it's most often, civilians and some people in uniform who actually never go into harm's way, who say, there are no rules in war. It's kill or be killed and you just kill 'em all as efficiently as you can. Uh-uh. You're doing a profound disservice to the people you're sending into danger. To believe that that bright line means nothing. It means everything. Dr. Shay, it seemed... for some people it is everything and for others it's not. And we, we, we've seen in the Abu Ghraib's accounts especially that for some people it was aggressively not to be a restraint on their behavior. So it's a terribly complicated thing. I'm sure there are more of the conscientious ones than not. On the other hand, the ones who weren't conscientious

aren't punished or held into account in today's world. And it's one of the most distressing things that we, that we've learned in this war is that Abu Ghraib goes in effect unaccounted for. And anything, anything higher than one or two very junior people. There is so much to say about these horrors that one doesn't know where to begin, but I want to point out that, the first duty of leadership, pay attention at its... Oh... there we go. A, it's really clear that there really was an adult supervision in Abu Ghraib, and what adult supervision there was, was distracted by office politics, was distracted by conflicting chains of command, and by, eh, very clear messages coming from above. This is what we want you to do. Herbert Kelman, the great social psychologist at Harvard wrote a book called "Crimes of Obedience", and in my view Abu Ghraib was unmistakably a set of crimes of obedience. And something that I never saw in an American news source, which is something that was prominently a full page in Financial Times starting in the White House, and showing with arrows, specific dates, specific actions and decisions going down through every echelon eventually arriving at those pathetic, in some cases, and horrifying corrupt junior enlisted at the very bottom of that, uh... that, that these were, it was a failure of the ethical compass of leadership at every level and when Rumsfeld said, and I think his boss also said with the same dismissive wiggle of the shoulders 'We'll catch 'em, or kill 'em'... wiggle. And so there's no distinction. If you have to kill somebody in war, you have to. But the point of being a soldier is to accomplish something useful. And if it's necessary to kill somebody in the process of doing that, that's unfortunate but, that's part of it.

But the soldier's job is not just to kill,
and you hear people saying that.
Your job is to kill.
And there's unfortunately some folk culture
that persist within some
of the ranks in the Military
that says that you, have to, desensitize
people to the meaning of killing others.
Can I ask you Meeks,
you know for a man who,
went with questions about the war
and a real commitment to do your part
as an American in a time of war,
how does a man in the Iraq situation
on the ground, day after day,
sort these questions out?
Uh... you've heard that it's a kind of chronic.
This probably goes back to Homer too,
but second guessing the rank above you,
and the Captains second guess
the Generals and the Lieutenants,
and the Private second guess the Officers.
And you, but you're thinking,
you're trained to be analytical
from the moral stand point,
from a pragmatic stand point,
is it working kind of thing.
What was the short history of
your own reflection on this war?
And does, do, does a fighting man at
your level get kind of moral, historical
bigger political perspective on it.
I hope they do. I mean, if they don't,
then it's, it's pretty difficult to
get up every morning for a year
away from your family and your friends
in incredible hardship and not get super
satisfaction out of what you are doing.
I was thinking the other day,
you know, in the history warfare,
how do you motivate your troops.
Well Genghis Khan motivated by
dividing up the spoils and saying,
these women go to you,
and these women go to you,
and you get this house in the middle.
Or maybe the Soviets motivated their troops
by giving them priority status in society
with which they can have
more access to food stamps.
And how do we motivate
US soldiers with the G.I. bill but,
that didn't even pay for my
rent when I was at Stanford.

I mean, we don't have a lot
of perks for being a soldier.
But one of the things you get
satisfaction out of, I believe,
is, you're looking at these
faces of Iraqis, and you're saying,
I can be doing something that's
worthwhile for these people.
I can be protecting them.
And so regardless of what
my administration is doing,
regardless of what I hear
from the politicians, I am here.
I've been sent here.
And I can either do my job and
make sure these people are protected
or I can fail and have to deal with the fact
that I'm watching innocent
people die in front of me.
And one of the very poignant things
I've heard from the Persian Gulf War in 1991,
which was a very pragmatic war.
It didn't have all the, this
moral rhetoric that we have now,
creating democracy in Iraq.
When George Bush Sr. decided not
to push the army any further into Baghdad
and made a treaty with Saddam Hussein.
There were some troops
from the 82nd Airborne,
who were kind of left on
that, demilitarized zone.
And over the burn, they were watching
as Saddam Hussein attack helicopters
were coming in and
destroying the Shiite insurgency
that was happening in the South,
literally massacring men, women, and children.
And these soldiers of the 82nd Airborne
one reporter was talking about the tears
were just streaming down their faces,
they were clutching their M16,
knowing that they have the
combat power to stop this
and knowing that they have the ability
to prevent this massacre from happening,
and because of politics, not being
allowed to do it, and that's crushing.
I think soldiers, when you realized
you have power, you have force,
and you can stop bad things from happening.
You want to employ that.
In Iraq, regardless of whether we
should've gone, or we should've never,

regardless of whether democracy is a viable, political institution in Iraq, or not, the question is, is a suicide bomber going to come in today and are you going to pick up more body parts in the Shiite marketplace or in the Sunni Mosque, or are you going to try to stop it. And then the question kind of crystallizes a little bit more where people are trying to make these analytical, political, academic arguments, that's, that's great. But at the end of the day, people are going to bleed to death in front of you or they're not. You're either going to stand for some you care about, or, you're going to sit in your base and wait for time to go, expire, so you could go back home. And I just really believe that they're trying to convince themselves that they were there for a purpose, is truly the only way you can get through it. Otherwise, it's pure hell for no reason. I'd like to engage, everybody here, especially the veterans, I'd like to ask Jonathan and Jim, just one general question, again going back to the, the Iliad and Odyssey perspective about coming home. We, we know... we know the Odysseus along time and many adventures and I always think of Finale, when he comes home, his wife doesn't recognize him, his father doesn't recognize him, and his son doesn't recognize him and his dog does recognize him. And then the dog dies. The first great dog in literature. Argo if I am not mistaken? Argust
Define the struggle of men who have come home from Vietnam, and you know a lot of them, Doctor Shay, but also of the Iraq veterans coming back to our midst now. What are they going through? Well there is an enormous chasm of understanding, and the fact is that nobody who's been in to war wants to hurt the people they love. And they will often say to civilians,

"If you knew what I knew it would screw you up, too."
So there is a protective aspect there. But the fact is that the primary injury in war, you must shut down those emotions that would compromise your survival in this fight. To be really crude about it, you can't burst into tears in the middle of a fire fight because your closest friend has just been killed. If you did, you would be in danger of being killed yourself and other people in your unit who are depending on you would be in danger of being killed. So that's, sort of simple basic adaptation. The trouble is we don't know how to turn that switch on and off. And so a classic thing that combat veterans returning to life with their families here from their partners is "you're like a block of ice." What's wrong with you? This is your mother's wake and that's her in the coffin and you haven't shed one single tear for her. What's wrong with you?" Well, this is the primary injury. Now, this doesn't, not everyone is injured in this way. There are some people who can return to their emotions, to the full range of emotions fairly quickly. And I think it's fair to say that we don't entirely understand what allows one person to return quickly and another not. I can't resist saying and it's so simple and so un-fancy. Sleep. That I believe that one of the key differences between someone who can return to the here and now and someone who cannot is that the person who can return has managed to get enough good quality sleep after returning from war. It's not rocket Science. Sorry, didn't mean to get into a rant. Jim Meekes, among... for yourself... And for the veterans coming back from Iraq, what should we know, but we don't, are not aware enough, of about ... What the real problems are? Oh first I think I need a nap. You know, I think, I guess I can tell you

to step back and look it from a two different generation perspective.
When, When I went to a –
when I told my father that I joined the army,
he, he began to tear up.
And I think his perspective was
I worked so hard in my life
that my kids wouldn't have to
go through what I went through,.
Why would you do this?
Why would you take it on yourself?
And I went through Basic Training and I was
graduating from Officer Candidates' School,
and we had a big ball, a big celebration.
And my mother convinced my father
to wear one of his medals from Vietnam.
And he was sitting next to a fellow
candidate of mine, a newly admitted officer.
You know, we're all trying to be the best
officer we can and learn as much as we can.
And this guy, Lieutenant Norwin,
noticed my father's lapel.
And he said, "Sir, you served in Vietnam?"
and my father said,
"Yes, I did."
"So would you, would you
mind telling me about it?"
and my father kind of paused
and said, "I'd rather not."
and then Norwin,
without skipping a beat says,
"I thank you, sir,
for your service."
This is in 2003. And my father said,
"That's the first time that
anyone ever did that."
And I guess one of the
things that I would say is,
I've been living in Europe for a little while
and Europe's an interesting country
because their history
for some reason gets frozen
and they live with the ghost
from their past for a long time.
And one of the things about
America that is spectacular,
I think this election shows that,
is our ability is for renewal,
our ability to take a scar and let it heal
and then we come out
even more strong in the end.
And I think that a certain American
renewal was happening before that,
and the fact that society now understands

what soldiers are going through,
and that they're doing it because
they believe in their ability to do good.
Not because they believe in the
actual politics of the administration.
The fact that Americans now, like you guys,
come out and support people like me,
on a day, in Veteran's Day, that is,
that for me is a number one example
that America can renew itself,
and that when my father got
off the plane from Vietnam,
and people threw stones at him,
and called him a baby-killer,
and I come back, having done one
fifth of what my father accomplished,
saving lives in Vietnam, and
that people would celebrate it,
I think, that sign would give me
more hope for this nation
than almost anything else.
So actually I would
just like to thank you
and ask that you stay
informed on the news in Iraq
and also stay informed
with research like Dr. Shay,
and tell your friends so that when you
recognize behavior from Iraqi soldiers,
you don't pretend to understand that
you offer compassion which is,
I think the only thing they can ask.
Can I just make one comment?
The various lessons learned from Vietnam.
One lesson, thank God, that it
appears that everyone has learned,
regardless of your opinion
of the wisdom or justice
of the wars that we have recently gone into,
regardless of your opinions
of the wisdom or justice
of the ways those wars were being fought,
that you don't take it out
on that junior enlisted man
coming back from these wars.
He did not get a vote.
But we as the citizens of this country,
do have the responsibility, that only,
wars that have the full weight
of justice and wisdom behind them are
worth sending good, young America
kids into this terrible situation.
Let's open it up, please.
My name is Roy Freid, I live in Canton.

It's my impression that ordinarily in a war, an effort is made to degrade the enemy. Essentially, they're inhuman. Has that been a factor in the Iraq war? For me, or for Dr.?
Whoever...
It is a good question.
The difficult thing about Iraq war and I think there is some of this element in Vietnam Wars, you've got no idea who the enemy is. And so, you're going through a town, and your mission is to ensure democracy in that town. And you're constantly evaluating, Are they for me? Are they against me? Are they indifferent?
And are they the trigger men that's about to set off an I.D.
And so given that you, you had this, this double mission, which is very unusual, to protect, help the people, that very well could be the same people that are going to kill you
You're not afforded that luxury to dehumanize the opposing force, coz' you don't know who the opposing force is.
And I think that's actually very good, result of the Iraq wars, that we have to trust that every Iraqi can uh... can have the potential to be both a democratic ally or to be an insurgent.
I think the number one example of that is the Sunni re-awakening in Al-Amber Province. When I was in Al-Amber province, I was driving up and down that road route-missioning, about twelve times. Five times a bomb went off, the last one hit me.
Now, in that exact same area, soldiers are walking around without flak vests or Kevlar.
It's not that everyone moved out of Al-Ambar province. it's that the people who were once insurgents are now trying to cooperate with the Americans.
And the fact that the American military could swallow it and say, "Hey, I know I'm across the table from someone who was shooting at me, and tried to kill my friend yesterday, but now we're ready to make a deal and negotiate."

That to me is America at its best.
Mr. Freid, what's your own impression of degrading the enemy? In, especially curious situation in Iraq where we were never at war with the people in Iraq, we were, we... we convinced ourselves that we were war with their dictatorial leader, and yet, five years later, we're still there in the middle of...of trouble.
But, who's been degraded by whom? With you, in your own observation...
I think that we haven't degraded them. I think that's the significant factor, and it's been Saddam Hussein who has been the main problem there and his coterie of Sunnis, in control.
And this distinguishes it greatly from Vietnam and from fighting the Japanese, and Germans in previous wars, and things like that, and I just wanted to bring that out.
Interesting point, thank you.
Thank you.
Okay, since you work, since you work in the field of Psychiatry, and you deal with the field of trauma. Here's something that you may not have thought about. It's the trauma created by Psychiatry itself. When people like me, I'm one of these people, get put in a Psychiatric institution against their will, okay?
Have the will of others imposed on them, you talked about moral injuries. There's a moral injury done to the people who worked in those places by imposing that on the people who they keep there.
And you talk about the coping mechanisms that people go through, right? To survive those, you know, these unendurable experiences right?
I'm familiar with that.
I consciously cut off part of my emotions in order to deal with the fact that I was put in there in order, so that they would release me sooner, okay? I mean...
Is there, is there a question that Dr. Shay can answer here and now?
Well, it wasn't necessarily a question, it was the saying,

and I also want to say that there's something that is different, culturally between the Vietnam War and now. In the Vietnam war, the people who were spitting on veterans, it wasn't just that they were, that they were calling the Vietnam War obscene. They called all of war obscene. Now, we've shifted back to position in reaction to that, of making it unacceptable to talk about the morality of the war itself. Rather than just the morality of individual wars, OK? So, that's all, OK? I would like to respond to both sides of that comment. One is that, I deeply abhor coercive psychiatric treatments. And have never chosen to function in a hospital setting with locked doors. I, uh, if you would be interested in reading any of my clinical writings, you will see that there's enormous attention to the respect for the free self-determination of the patients, which of course, does have the limit, that when death or violence is immediately in question. That is a limit on everyone's autonomy. There are people who would argue that philosophically, but I'm ready to accept that. And on the morality of war in general. And the morality of war in general, I would like to say that it is my view that we can end this human practice of war. I am not talking about ending evil. I am not talking about ending individual violence. These are probably beyond our capacity. But war is a state activity. And in fact, we have a pretty decent idea of how to end war. It is just that in fact we never actually pursued it with any consistent seriousness. And that is a broad and wonderful topic. But it would take us away and I want to mention that people in uniform in my experience do not regard this as some sort of subversive. They don't love war. In fact, my loathing for this human practice is tiny compared to the loathing that most of the military people

that I have known that actually been to war. I have said and this is a truthful report although I acknowledge there may be some self-selection in who chooses to let me to get to know them. But I have never met a warmonger in uniform. But I have met plenty of warmongers among civilians who thinks that it's 'way cool'. Yeah. May I take that cue to say that for next year, the assigned reading should be William James' great essay on the Moral Equivalent of War. William James in a situation astonishingly like ours about a hundred years ago. He abhorred the invasion of the Philippines. But he wrote this piece that could've been written yesterday about The Moral Equivalent of War. We are children of war. We are here because somebody fought for our genes as opposed to somebody else's genes. "We'll never get it out" he said. But he also took a long view again going back to Homer that it is one disgusting bloodbath after another. It is murder, it's plunder, it's foolishness. And we have come to a point in with our weaponry where it literally destroyed it threatened the destruction of the species and the globe. But we have got to deal with the fact that we are a sort of tooth and claw species. And it is in our makeup. And yet, it leads to an utterly awful place. So, we got to think up ways to honor Military values, to recognize the values of courage, even a kind of combat. We got to do it some other way. We have been only working that for a hundred years in his terms. But it is where we got to go. My name is Tom Fitzgibbon. I live in Newton, Massachusetts. And I want to talk or ask a question about the evolution or the devolution if you will, of the public's attitude about war and veterans as heroes and villains. World War II veterans came home to

parades and to GI Joe with great applause. Vietnam veterans came home and, in a sense the question of homecoming, to be vilified. I happen to be a veteran of the Korean War, the forgotten war. And that is not a misnomer. It was a forgotten war. Korean War veterans came home and were largely ignored. They hung up their uniform and went out to look for a job. That was pretty much it. Even though 54,000 American men died in Korea. Now, we have a situation in Iraq where our veterans are coming home and being severely wounded psychologically. I don't remember coming home from Korea ever having the term Post-Traumatic Stress Syndrome. You just took your uniform off and got a job. And I think that, and I'm sure that, you know, we were as wounded as any other population of veterans. But what concerns me and what I would like you to comment on, is what I feel is an evolution of numbness towards war. We're surrounded by society which immerses itself in violence as entertainment. And I often wonder now whether we are becoming immune to the real trauma of war. Anybody here, my fellow veterans who has been in the war zone knows that you don't trivialize the experience. It is something that you put behind you and you get on with your life. But I am concerned that our country, maybe the world for that matter, is treating war and violence as a source of entertainment. That is a terrific question. I wonder if Dr. Shay, you have answer? I deeply, deeply agree with your horror at the idea that people's eyes should sparkle. Actually, Thomas Mann in his great novel about the run-up to World War II, Dr. Faustus describes in this the declaration of war in World War I. This novel spans from the beginning of the century through the end of World War II. And he describes the scenes on all of the capitals of Europe when war was declared in World War I.

He described is as an unlicensed holiday, there was literally dancing in the streets of every European capital when war broke out in WW I, and I think we must get control over that tendency for our eyes to sparkle for us to go around feeling like every single person we meet on the street is our brother because war has been declared. There is something, I don't know exactly how to describe it but this is toxic. This is a crack-cocaine addiction that the human race has to the uplift. Now, I know without a trace of defensiveness that I don't have to defend my respect and my appreciation. And it wouldn't even be too much to say my reverence for the men that I have worked with who have been to war for my sake. But I can tell you that I feel revulsion anytime I encounter somebody whose eyes sparkle when they see a tank or a military airplane or a gigantic warship. And I have been in the presence of these tools of war. And again, forgive me. I am getting into a rant. No, thank you. Right away, I mean, take another question and re-rant. Thank you. Women's perspective a little bit of context here and I want to thank you for your service. And please thank your father for his service in Vietnam. He is right in the corner there. Thank you so much. Thank you. If you were a Tripler, maybe we saw each other. I was an Army Nurse during the Nam era stationed at Walter Reed in Honolulu. And I have been associated with the military for a long time. And this is the first time in five years that I have done something other than be at the Vietnam War Counseling our servicemen who were there. Last year, we celebrated the 25th anniversary of the memorial. It was quite an experience. My first degree is Nursing. My doctorate is in Family Therapy. And in 2007, I worked with Military One Source, which is the Employee Assistance Program and Counseling.

And so, part of the context when I was a new therapist, I did this very small study of nurses who have served in Vietnam and found that a high percentage of them also suffered from post-traumatic stress disorder psychological injury. They never did a lot about that. But I am pleased that people are beginning to attend to women in service since the Gulf War and Iraqi War when they have served on the battlefields as well. When I was in the Military, One Source I learned that, anybody struck by the IEDs or any of the other - I am a little nervous, I am so sorry... But they suffer trauma to the brain that because their brain is rattled by the virtue of being hit. 70% to 90% of those hit in Iraq or Afghanistan suffer from some sort of brain injury, whether that be short-term memory loss or severe injury which leaves them unable to function cognitively, to do mathematical problems, to remember their children's names. Very, very difficult. There is a Women's Memorial in Washington DC, actually in Arlington, that I would like to let all of you know about. It honors all women who support the services through all the wars, not just those they served, although there are certainly those of us who served in uniform. When I came back from Hawaii, I too was spit upon. And as a member of a family who for generations has served in the military, this was just enormously, you know, surprising and shocking to me. And I wanted to respond to two things that each of you said. What are we there for? What was our purpose? And that we shut down our emotions to be able to survive. And I remember doing that. You know, I sat by the bedside of many of our soldiers who were dying. And you shut it down because you're there to support the troops.

And it wasn't until I saw the movie Coming Home that it occurred to me that I was not just a nurse who happened to work in a Military hospital. I really was part of the war machine. And I had to go through a whole lot of that. So, knowing now that Charles Figley who was part of the, definer of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorders is working on some new therapies. The questions is, what at this point, can those of us in community service, in therapy service, those of us who support families who have people who are serving, what can we do in our community to provide the therapies and the help that our people need at this point? Thank you. Wow! Well, first of all, knowledge is incredibly important. Sigmund Freud did us all a disservice in claiming that knowledge really didn't count unless you drank it through this tiny, little straw called Psychoanalysis. The extent to which families of veterans, and veterans themselves, benefit from trustworthy knowledge about what to expect, what is, what is sort of characteristic of this situation, of being in war and returning from war. It is so valuable. And I swear that half of what we did for 20 years in that little program in the Out-Patient Clinic was basically giving veterans a chance to discover that they weren't freaks. "Gee! You mean, you have nightmares like that too? I thought I was the only one" Now, today we think that everybody knows this because it shows up on television sitcoms and so on. But the fact is that in a strange way, it's still possible not to know these things unless you've heard it from your peers. So, my overwhelming emphasis in mental health is to recognize the critical value of peers and not to be too captivated by the 'heroic drama' of the compassionate and well trained mental health professional helping the service member or helping the veteran that,

to do everything you can do to strengthen a trustworthy community among veterans, where it is amazing how much work they can do with each other. And I think that is my major rallying cry, is that we should be stage hands. The credentialed mental health professionals, in my view, and I got very fancy credentials, do not belong in center stage. The people who belong in center stage are the veterans and the service members themselves. And our job is to sweep out the gum wrappers, get the lights on, make sure there are enough chairs. So, that is my...
And bring the beer.
- Well, yeah.
Another question please.
Thanks, first of all for this excellent conversation first to have juxtapose Dr. Shay and Capt. Meeks gives us a balance, because very few people have perspectives of Capt. Meeks' many times in war. I've read your book. I serendipitously ran across it in a used bookstore years ago. And I've studied, and writing, and work in this area.
And it's appropriate that I segue this last lady who spoke, because what you just said about communities really, not only supporting those who come back from war, but also morally dealing with the issues of war. And really looking at the moral issue of how a contract of the individual facing at war. I mean, Capt. Meeks himself, has a unique perspective, having studied it before he ever went into it, which is very different. Is really crucial to the issue how people handle that experience, I think. And I'd like to talk to you later about some other issues there. But just to be brief here. And by the way, I, put it a word, this morning, there was a conversation on the Yale Program News they have, On Point, on women in war. This morning, Tom, I forget his last name, he had a very excellent program and people can get it on Podcast,

it is discussing a lot of the issues that we are discussing here. And it looks at the unique perspective of women. And they talk about the Post Traumatic Syndrome and also the sexual harassment and the relationship between women in war and warzones and sexual harassment. And that's something relevant but I won't digress more than I have. I have two questions. One, for you Doctor: In your research, even though you're sort of downplaying yourself here, but how do you find the difference between the Greek concept of war, where, literally children are raised with the understanding of honor and duty, sacrifice. I mean, Socrates used to say, his mother said, "Go to war with your shield, or back on it." Of course, the Spartans epitomized that. But there was a sense of violence, a very raw sense of war. Whereas today, a lot of the problems, I think, that we're encountering here, this grandiose, romanticized notion of war that many of our people lead in our society. And the moral issues are either distorted or again romanticized. And how that creates that crisis when the person is facing a life or death situation? The other thing I have, for you Captain, is, you know, you really are unique. I've never met anybody who studied war from a theoretical perspective, then goes to Israel and encounters, you know, and the woman, the story that you had was beautiful. But then, how did you decide? I mean, I guess your father's example must have been a great example. But how did you decide to risk your life and then try to deal with the moral issues? I mean, your answer was, OK, Regardless of whether you're for or against the war. I felt I had to deal with the safety of the Iraqis and the safety of my men and my own safety every day. And that always is a case where the military wants to inculcate that into people, to protect

themselves and try to do the moral thing.
But there are a lot of people
and Chris mentioned it,
who don't have that moral compass,
particularly in the Abu Ghraib
situation that you talked about.
And how do you talk to other...
I mean, you're very unique.
How do you talk to other veterans
though, who don't have that moral sense?
I think why I wanted to go
and put ideas to action, was,
in addition that I was studying
and I was very sensitive to it.
I was very sensitive to the
fact that, I had keen sense that,
American liberty was on a
loan from prior generations.
And that, I just felt an obligation to be
part of that tradition, in a pretty deep way.
And, I guess I 'drank the Kool Aid'
inn'it? By the gallon-full. And I still do.
And it was the honor of my life. It
was the best decision I have ever made.
How to convince people,
I think it's very difficult,
because you don't want to
be on a moral high horse,
because if you sound too idealistic,
especially coming from a background
like Harvard, you are quickly discredited.
People aren't going to listen to you.
So, you have to mix a lot of
the morality, I think, and the idealism,
with hard nose pragmatism,
strategy, and the fact that,
"Hey! Look, we get shot at.
This is where we're going to go.
This is what we're going to do."
And so, for me, it was how do you
establish yourself as a combat leader,
in a way that it is a job. And you're
either good at it or you're bad at it.
And then, how do you tap into people's,
to use Lincoln's phrase - 'Better Angels',
because I think everyone
wants those angels to be tapped.
But they only want it to be tapped
by someone they think is credible,
and will be willing to sacrifice with them.
And I wanted to put myself in
that situation as best I could.
Hi! My name is Laurie Winters.
I am the daughter and

daughter-in-law of World War II vets.
I have a tough question for you,
maybe a good ending question
of the groups that we have here.
And that is: What are we to do as a people,
when our leaders are the ones with
the sparkle in their eyes for war?
I really want to know if
there's anything to be done,
I'd like to hear you address it.
That is a brilliant question obviously.
Let us get that one out first.
One more...
- Sorry, one more, one more question.
I am thinking about this book that I
read by Victor Frank many years ago.
And he talks about surviving in
concentration camp and losing all his family.
People being outside, you know,
in the middle of winter, scantily clad,
working in 20 and 30-degree days,
coming home and, at the end of the day,
being given broth, were being emaciated.
And I do remember the one, he said that
the one thing that was, enabled him to
and the people, he felt that
the reason that people survive
in concentration camps who
did, was that there was hope.
And that was the only, the single
reason that they remained alive.
And I was also thinking about, I think, the
comment that the gentleman was asking
about how wars start and he
commented on a violent society, I think it,
I don't think it's just the leaders.
I think it's all of us.
I don't know specifically how wars start.
But something that comes to mind is,
this attitude of better. Good, better, best.
People are saying, "Well,
I have this. You have that.
I am better because I am this and I am that."
I think that this is the
kind of thing that fuels,
this is the kind of violence that
puts people against one another,
because of what they have, what kind of house
they live in or what kind of car they drive.
I think that when we leave this world,
just as well as when we are in it,
that none of this matters.
The single thing that will
matter is what is in our hearts.

And I think that we all know this. We all know this. OK. Thank you. Dr. Shay, speak to this question about, when the sparkle in the eye, with the prospect of war, is, when we see it in our leaders, or in our media, or in our political campaigns. Well, I am glad, Chris, that you mentioned the media, because it, the overall functioning, or rather lack of functioning, the overall functioning or rather lack of functioning these wars, is so staggering, the media were just flat on their backs. these wars is so staggering that the media were just flat on their backs. And then, there are voices, and there have been voices right from the start, often... Well, maybe not often-often... But certainly more than one, people with unmistakable military credentials, who said, "Now let's think this through and let's do this in a way that's not going to make things worse for everybody." And they were just ridden right over. Congressman Murtha comes to mind. I don't recall exactly the history with Chuck Hagel, as to whether he was, I don't remember whether he was a vocal opponent of us going to war in Iraq from the start. But the, we need to make sure. If I had to summarize democratic process in a one-liner, that one-liner would be "Safe Struggle" with equal emphasis on the word safe and struggle. one-liner would be "safe struggle" with equal emphasis on the word safe and struggle. In a democracy, we attempt to struggle safely together. And what was so striking in the histrionic and hysterical atmosphere post-9/11, was that it became profoundly unsafe for anyone in public life, and even often in private life, to say, "Let's think for a minute." It was all, "I gotta get me some!" And so, we have to attend to the strength and durability of our democratic political culture. And when that gets out of whack, so that, either we all agree 100%,

and democracy is out the window when that happens, or, more commonly, when it becomes unsafe to disagree, then we need to remind ourselves and really recall that it's our duty to listen to points of view that we disagree with, and try and find the good reasons why this other person might be thinking in that way. So... Jim Meekes, would you take your pick, among the many important questions we have heard, about, Ethical Vigilance, under the guides of war, the vulnerability of adolescence that you've seen, the political and social response to wounded veterans coming home, the relation of domestic violence, a hidden epidemic of domestic violence, to war stress. Put them all together in one fell swoop and, close with the service.. No problem... I think most of those are in your lane of expertise, because I'm not that sophisticated. The one thing that I'm interested in, is actually this philosophical question of Ethical Vigilance and what is it in human nature that causes war. And the one thing that was very striking for me I think is difficult to understand in American society is there is this prevalence to think that reason will triumph. If I get upset with somebody, if I can speak calmly, engage, see things in their point of view, we can find some kind of detente, maybe agree to disagree. That's how civilized society works. I will argue that that is 300 or 400 years of civilization of working pretty hard to make sure that we can walk down the streets without getting worried that we're going to get into a duel. And one lawyer once described to me, the whole reason for the constitution is to make people, make sure people aren't shooting each other in the streets. It is just that simple. We can resolve our conflict in a

courtroom, instead of in violence.
There are still parts of the
world that live in a pre-legal,
pre-civilized, pre-humane society.
And I just want to remind us, in
this very lovely room here today,
that we don't have to worry about
hitting the deck because a mortar round
might come in and disrupt it.
Or we don't have to worry
about the Pol Beuaro coming in,
telling us to shut up because we
are saying something different
than what the administration cares about.
That there are still cores of
the world that live like this,
and there are certain areas
in which I looked at people,
I looked in the eyes of
these Iraqi detainees.
These are people, who had no problem
setting an improvised explosive device
in a school yard to kill
children for their cause.
And I remember thinking to myself,
if we hadn't captured this person,
what could we have done?
I don't know if I can reason.
I don't know what
moral universe he exists,
in which I can convince
him that his ways are wrong,
because he is so far off of my
understanding of good and evil,
that I can see how sometimes
things devolved into violent conflict.
And in the Boston Globe today, there is a
report of a bombing in a Shiite marketplace,
in which people were running
to save school children
who were trapped in a bus,
because of a first bomb.
And that was when the suicide
bomber came in with the second.
And I would just say that perhaps,
in the future, and God willing it comes,
we all live in societies that are democratic
and free, where people debate in words,
this kind of safe struggle.
But just to remind you that there
is still pure viciousness out there.
And I do not make that as
a claim to justify going to war.
I don't make that as a claim

to justify the Iraq War.
But just a reminder that the world
that we understand is very unique
and thanks God for the people who
came before us and created this society.
But I do not think that the way we live
is as common as we would like
it to be in the rest of the world.
Capt. James Meeks,
Dr. Jonathan Shay, thank you all.
Capt. James Meeks,
Dr. Jonathan Shay, thank you all.
Thank you for coming.
We go forward in safe struggle.
Thank you.
John Chadwick and the
Kennedy Library, thank you.