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## **Cast of Characters**

SAMUEL WHITE

TAMMY DUCKWORTH

IVAN MEDINA

MATTHEW MILLER

DAVE BISCHER

JOHN BALL JR.

LISA HAYNES

JON SOLTZ

HEROLD NOEL

KELLY DOUGHERTY

JULIUS TULLEY

PATRICK MURPHY

ROBERT ACOSTA

TRACEY RINGO

ALEX PRESSMAN

JAMEL DANIELS

TY SIMMONS

## **Production Notes**

### ***Set:***

The set for the original production consisted of two rows of rotating panels, each 6' by 12'. There were two panels in the back row (in-two) and three in front (in-one), staggered with about two feet between each panel in each row. On one side there was a painted Jasper Johns-inspired American flag in full color, fully washed over and encrusted in grey tones and texture—a grayscale over-painting. On the reverse side was a warm earth-toned map of Iraq, the kind you see shimmering behind Brian Williams on the NBC Nightly News.

There was a different panel configuration for each scene; they were rotated by the company during transitions.

Behind these panels were three larger backdrop panels with an entrance gap between each—large light boxes covered in front with draped digital Camo netting and backed by a white bounce drop.

The floor was a neutral military grey-green.

### ***Furniture:***

One chair, one table and one low table.

### ***Props:***

Very few hand props.

### ***Costumes:***

The cast all wore regulation Army desert patrol boots, Camo fatigue trousers, patrol caps and military issue T-shirts.

For some of the characters they merely added a piece of clothing, for others they would do a complete full change, depending on the interview subject.

## Acknowledgments

*In Conflict* received its world premiere at Temple Theaters at Temple University in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania on October 3, 2007, with the following cast and staff:

### *Act I:*

Prologue .....	Full Company
1. SAMUEL WHITE .....	Sam Paul
2. TAMMY DUCKWORTH .....	Suyeon Kim
3. IVAN MEDINA .....	Sean Lally
4. MATTHEW MILLER .....	Tom Rader
5. DAVE BISCHEL .....	Stan Demidoff
6. JOHN BALL JR. ....	Tim Chambers
7. LISA HAYNES.....	Danielle Pinnock
8. JON SOLTZ.....	Ethan Haymes
9. HEROLD NOEL .....	Damon Williams

### *Act II:*

10. KELLY DOUGHERTY .....	Amanda Holston
11. JULIUS TULLEY.....	Sam Paul
12. PATRICK MURPHY .....	Ethan Haymes
13. ROBERT ACOSTA .....	Sean Lally
14. TRACEY RINGO .....	Joy Notoma
15. ALEX PRESSMAN .....	Stan Sinyakov
16. JAMEL DANIELS.....	Damon Williams
17. TY SIMMONS.....	Tom Rader

Epilogue / Tribute .....

Full Company

Set Designer .....	Andrew Laine
Costume Designer .....	Marian Cooper
Lighting Designer .....	J. Dominic Chacon
Video Designer .....	Warren Bass
Video Assistant.....	Gary Yong
Sound Designer .....	Christopher Cappello
Music Advisor .....	Paul Winnick
Voice and Speech .....	Diane Gaary
Stage Manager .....	Dana Hurley
Assistant Directors .....	Feliepe Vergara, Jim McCaffrey
Dramaturgy Team.....	Allison Garrett, Lauren Zapata, Nahid Ibrahim, Anjoli Santiago

## **Acknowledgments (continued)**

*Special Thanks:* Yvonne Latty, Jim MacMillan; Roberta Sloan (Chair, Department of Theater), Concetta Stewart (Dean, School of Communications and Theater), Temple University; David O'Connor, Scott Braun, and our student military advisors, Arleigh Hughes and Tiffany Dydak.

For more information go to [www.inconflictheplay.com](http://www.inconflictheplay.com)

## Foreword

*[Excerpted from the foreword to the book, "In Conflict: Iraq War Veterans Speak Out on Duty, Loss, and the Fight to Stay Alive," by Yvonne Latty.]*

Marcus Childs, a distinguished columnist for the *Washington Post*, once wrote about war, "Only a few do the fighting and the dying."

In terms of the American military, that statement has never been truer than it is today. We have the smallest army as a nation we've had since before World War II. It is all-volunteer. The active force, even the National Guard and reserves, have become an American Foreign Legion deployed like a 911 force all over the world. Young Americans have been sent to hot spots around the globe in recent years to fight and to die in Panama, Somalia, Bosnia, Kosovo, and now Iraq and Afghanistan. The wisdom of their being sent to these wars is debatable. The courage of their performance is not.

Most of us have an eerie detachment from the lives of these young warriors. We see their experiences through the prism of the media babble and the political tug-of-war which their deployment ultimately brings. But, we are still armchair generals. We can change the channel.

They cannot.

Their tales of war and its impact on them are breathtaking. They rivet us in our seats, and they hit us in the gut. We are there with them—for a moment. For the first time, we feel what they feel—the foreword fear, the terror, the confusion, the doubt, the anger, and the frustration of being caught up in something much bigger than them. We realize that ultimately they are just fighting to survive. For the first time, we experience what it is like to be them, especially when they come home. We begin to "get it." We sense what the soldiers call the "ground truth" of war.

The focus of this project is the mosaic that emerges from a microcosmic look into what it's like to be in the Iraq war. As we look below the surface, even though this new generation of American heroes tells their stories as honestly as they can, we sense the powerful pain of what war does to people.

The ultimate question about war begins to surface— “Why is this going on, and when will it end?” There are few legitimate answers. We realize that on a very deep level these American warriors who have done the fighting and seen the dying are still in conflict.

So are we.

—Former U.S. Senator Max Cleland

## Introduction

The process of adapting Yvonne Latty's extraordinary book for the stage, *In Conflict: Iraq War Veterans Speak Out on Duty, Loss and the Fight to Stay Alive*, chronicling the experiences of just over two dozen wildly diverse returning veterans, has been perhaps the most rewarding experience of my thirty-plus-year professional career as a director thus far.

I met Yvonne in the late summer of 2006, after reading a profile of her and her new book in the *Philadelphia Inquirer*. Sitting together in a small coffeehouse one afternoon, I had goose bumps; the kind that signal a defining discovery in your life.

It was Yvonne; hearing her story recounting the personal journey she took both as a journalist and as a human being during the process of gathering interviews and writing this honest, revelatory book. It was her sincere and dedicated attempt to try and capture on a simple, human level, the true experience of being in Iraq, then coming home; and the relationship of those experiences to her (and our) preconceptions about personal values of patriotism, service and what it means to be an American.

Our first meeting solidified the theatrical approach: to present the people in the book as fully, honestly and un-editorialized as possible on stage, one at a time; to preserve the complex juxtaposition created by the order in which the stories are told in the book; and perhaps most significantly, to expose the actors to Yvonne's primary research: her detailed description of each interview event: the full, unedited field audio tapes for each interview—to hear Yvonne's questions, to hear the actual voices of the vets, and to use these voices, rather than the text of the book, as the primary source material for fabricating character—capturing the “song “ of the person in order to live in the “soul” of the person; and build a provocative and deeply affecting documentary theater piece.

Working in a highly progressive workshop rehearsal process, based on my prior experience working with the actress, scholar and performance artist Anna Deveare Smith (creator of *Fires in the Mirror* and *Twilight, Los Angeles*) at the Arena Stage in Washington, D.C., the Temple University student actors readily immersed themselves in the actual voices of the characters, working primarily in exercises

and workshop sessions utilizing the audio tapes of their actual interview subjects, and using my initial script adaptation of Yvonne's book as a text foundation.

Subsequently, the actual theatrical staging evolved from an ensemble effort between me, the cast, the designers, and a large team of student dramaturgy students, directing associates, faculty coaches and volunteer military advisors.

The resulting production also incorporated specially filmed interview segments with Yvonne, reflecting on the impact of her experience researching the book, describing in detail the specific circumstances of her encounters with her interview subjects. We visually incorporated over nine hundred photographs taken during the Iraq conflict by Pulitzer Prize-winning photojournalist Jim Macmillan, a close professional associate of Yvonne's.

I am extremely proud of the eleven Temple University undergraduate actors who participated in creating this project. I am similarly grateful to all of the numerous Temple University students who contributed so much energy, passion and hard work to the effort to realize this project.

The Iraq War is still with us. Troops continue to be deployed and redeployed. When they come back, they deserve not only a debt of gratitude, but they deserve the chance to be heard, listened to and understood.

We can neither stop this war nor win it. "Support the Troops" has now evolved into a political conundrum of compassion, exploited by both sides of the issue. But we can make a difference by just listening to their stories and begin to grasp the conflicts, challenges and complexities these brave and worthy Americans face daily as a result of their service and perhaps be moved to help them in simple ways to finally "come home."

—Douglas C. Wager, Adaptor/Director

# IN CONFLICT

adapted by Douglas C. Wager

BASED ON THE BOOK BY YVONNE LATTY

## ACT I

### Prologue

*(Video interview clip underscored by theme music—Kronos Quartet plays Sigur Rós' Flugufrelsarinn.)*

**YVONNE.**

When you put on CNN,  
or any of the morning news shows,  
you always see like—  
persons, like—  
presidential politicians—  
talking about what's going on in Iraq—  
you never saw the soldiers;  
and when a soldier was killed,  
all you saw in the newspapers  
was, you know,  
like a really small brief—  
unless three or four died in a community,  
that's all it was—  
a really small brief.  
So I wanted to know  
what was going on in Iraq,  
and I wanted to know what was going on  
with the people that I believed  
were going to tell the truth;  
and that's the soldiers,  
because they're the ones who are actually there.

*(Video transition to inspirational U.S. Army Recruiting Film.)*

*(As the film finishes, we hear the live sound of the cast humming America the Beautiful as the lights come up center and JAMEL enters.)*

**JAMEL.**

What's up?

My name is Jamel Daniels.

I joined the marines

to get out of my neighborhood,

the projects on the Lower East Side.

Everybody I grew up with was selling drugs.

I didn't want my son to end up doing the same thing.

*(KELLY enters.)*

**KELLY.**

Hi I'm Kelly.

I joined the military

when I was seventeen

because I needed to pay for college.

Plus my stepbrother was in the National Guard

and he encouraged me to go.

*(TY enters.)*

**TY.**

Hello, I'm Ty.

I enlisted in 1968

and served one year in Vietnam.

My parents wanted me to go to college

but the truth is I wasn't ready.

I was eighteen and the army seemed like fun.

Besides, an 18-year-old doesn't think

about death and dying.

*(ROBERT enters.)*

**ROBERT.**

Hey, I'm Robert Acosta.

I guess I joined for a few reasons:

I wasn't doin too good in school.

I was working little jobs n' whatever,

I was using drugs and stuff.

A good friend of mine

had just come back from boot camp

and he was talking about how cool it was

and well “I might as well,”  
cause “I’m not doin anything here,” ya know.  
So that’s why,  
that’s why I joined.

*(ALEX enters.)*

**ALEX.**

I always wanted to go into the military.  
It was a dream I always had.  
I wanted to be one of the ones  
who make a difference.  
I wanted to go to war.

*(JOHN enters.)*

**JOHN.**

My name is John Ball Jr.  
After high school,  
I knew I was going into the military.  
So I figured if I was going to join,  
I should join the one that was going to be  
the most challenging for me.  
That’s why I chose the Marine Corps.

*(TAMMY enters.)*

**TAMMY.**

Hi, my name is Tammy.  
When I was going through ROTC  
at George Washington University,  
I was getting my masters degree  
and I was studying strategic studies.  
All my friends were in the military  
and I was intrigued by them,  
so I did join—  
and I *loved* it.

*(TRACEY enters.)*

**TRACEY.**

I’m Tracey.  
I joined the National Guard

in the Fall of 1988.  
I went in as a medic  
because I always knew  
I wanted to be a doctor.

*(SAM enters.)*

**SAM.**  
Hey, I'm Sam.  
From the day I knew what a marine was,  
I wanted to be one.  
I love this country so much.  
One night, I was over at a friend's house  
watching the movie *Black Hawk Down*  
and I'm thinking while I'm watching,  
I gotta get over there,  
I gotta get over there.

*(LISA enters.)*

**LISA.**  
Hi I'm Lisa.  
I joined the Army Reserves  
right out of high school in 1984,  
for the money.  
It wasn't a lot of money,  
but I thought it was.  
I wanted to do something different.

*(JON enters.)*

**JON.**  
I've always wanted to be in the military.  
I was excited about going to war.  
I was ready.  
In my heart,  
I thought the weapons of mass destruction were there.

*(All cast end up in a line across the proscenium.)*

**TY.**  
Fall in!

*(JON steps back into line as cast nervously reform the line.)*

**TY.**

Please raise your right hand and repeat after me—

*(They all do.)*

**TY.**

I do solemnly swear—  
that I will support and defend—  
the constitution of the United States—  
against all enemies—  
foreign and domestic—  
so help me God.

*(Sound of military drums and drill sergeant shouting as new recruits fumble to put on and properly adjust their patrol; caps out of right side cargo pocket. TY inspects the line.)*

**TY.**

Double Quicktime—March!

*(Marching in place, all repeating after TY:)*

Bomb the village, kill the people—  
Throw some napalm in the square—  
Do it on a Sunday morning—  
Kill them on their way to prayer—  
Ring the bell inside the schoolhouse—  
Watch those kiddies gather round—  
Lock and load with your 240—  
Mow them little (mother)fuckers down—

*(TY falls in to the line and jogs with them for a moment.)*

**JAMEL.**

Incoming!

*(Loud sounds of mortars exploding, gunfire, chaos, flashing lights; underscored by a ripping rock guitar [Kronos Quartet version of The Star Spangled Banner] as the cast scatters to rapidly and chaotically spin the five large set panels while shouting out a barrage of battle field commands: “Three o’clock, four hundred meters!,” “Lay Down Suppressive Fire!,” “Contact; Seven o’clock!,” “We need an E-Vac over here!,” “Weapons Free! Weapons Free!!!”)*

*(With the final "...free" they stop panels and there is a surreal percussive sound of slamming prison doors; the five panels simultaneously turn and stop to reveal a full-stage map of Iraq.)*

### Scene 1

**SAM WHITE, MARINE SERGEANT**

**Iraq War Service: August 2004—April 2005.**

**White male, 25, lives in Annapolis, Maryland.**

*(Interview: Annapolis, Maryland. Fall. Night. A busy bar/restaurant where he worked [they had his helmet on the wall].)*

*(Just as suddenly, a celebratory cheer erupts as we hear the rousing sounds of John Cougar Mellencamp's anthem, Pink Houses.)*

*(The panels turn to create McGarvey's Bar, as people enter toting beer bottles, laughing and talking.)*

*(SAM enters, is handed a bottle and he speaks:)*

**SAM.**

Hey, you see that?

*(All freeze.)*

That's my helmet there on the wall.

*(They all snap back to life and eventually move off out of sight as the party continues.)*

This is my country.

We are the best country in the world.

It's like this...

A lot of countries don't like us,

but for the most part,

we are a good country with good people.

If you walk down the street,

anywhere in America,

you're going to meet and talk to good people.

I can't put into words how much I love this country.

When I joined the marines, I was in college

and I was just like...

I could keep on going to college  
do mediocre,  
get out,  
get a mediocre job,  
do mediocre everything.

I just...

And then my dad is like  
you've always wanted to be in the Marines,  
why don't you check it out.  
I had always...

Always; since the day that I knew what a marine was,  
I wanted to be one.

Every single,  
every single one of the armed forces—  
branches

are very integral parts  
and I've very happy that they exist  
but the marines were always  
ya know  
looked up to be like the force.

Fifteen minutes later me and my dad were at the recruiter station,  
I walked up to him

I was like—

I wanna join the Marine Corps—  
I've already had my physical.

I took the test...

I got the highest score they had in the whole region  
in like a year.

I was like—

and I wanna be in the infantry  
and I wanna go as soon as possible  
and the recruiter almost fell out of his chair.

Because I could have done so much more  
but I think...

If you join the Marine Corps  
you join it for the Marine Corps infantry.

Because it—

it's centered around the infantry

and everything else supports the infantry.  
So I didn't want to do anything else.

It was '97; I was nineteen  
at that time I was preparing for it,  
I was listening to music—  
it was pretty pathetic actually.  
I mean I just...  
I was just Marine, Marine, Marine.  
Ya know I wanted to fight for my country.  
It's—  
it's not that I take enjoyment out of killing people,  
but you sign up for a reason; to go to war.  
It's like, I had all this training,  
but it never was put to the test, ya know.  
I served for four years, I got out in 2001.  
Then, a Kansas City unit called  
to see if I'd join their unit and serve in Iraq.  
So I said , "ok,"  
ya know,  
within two weeks I go out of this job,  
finished school up,  
ya know got my house prepared and...  
I was—gone.

They gave me a squad of young Marines  
who didn't know anything,  
They were mine to mold and teach.  
We were the first unit into Fallujah.  
It was intense;  
ya know, it was crazy.

Some of things we did...  
war is not a pretty thing.  
The first time I killed someone,  
we had just gotten into Fallujah,  
and we got engaged from across the river.  
I saw this—  
this person firing at me,  
and I thought, "This is it."

I put my eye on the scope,  
I saw his face.  
I had a red tracer round,  
which means you can see the bullets go.  
I sat there for a second,  
fired, and I missed him.  
I waited a second more,  
and I fired again.  
I saw the tracer go up in an arc  
and down through his chest,  
and that was it.

It was a weird feeling, ya know.  
I had taken someone's life,  
but I can't say that I had a whole lot of remorse.  
I felt adrenaline—  
I felt power, ya know  
because I got him before he got me.  
I don't have nightmares about it.  
They say that a lot of people compartmentalize  
post traumatic stress disorder,  
but I, personally, don't feel like I'm...  
holding anything in.  
I've looked at it and, ya know, dealt with it.  
I know for a fact that I killed five.  
Then, we probably as a unit did another ten to twenty people,  
where we all fired together.  
I got out of it with not one of my marines wounded or killed.  
I'd like to think of it as skill,  
but 99 percent of it was luck.

One of my friends got killed outside of Ramadah.  
His unit was coming to our position on the main highway,  
and an IED went off.  
And it went through the vehicle armor  
and it pierced his head.  
His...  
his eye came out.  
When we came back to our base,  
they told me he was dead.

And I was like trying not to cry ya know.  
I'm a marine.  
They can't see me cry.  
I put my sunglasses on,  
tried to keep my eyes open.  
He had a young wife,  
a young kid,  
and a newborn.  
That really sucked.  
To this day, I've never cried about it.  
Two kids will grow up without their dad,  
and a young wife won't have her husband.  
As bad as my life can get, at least I'm still alive.

When I came back,  
I had a party here at McGarvey's,  
They put up like all these posters  
with pictures of me  
on every telephone pole,  
inviting people to the party.  
And then these kids from a very liberal school  
ripped all of them off.  
It's cool if they didn't believe in the war,  
but it takes their credibility away.  
To me, that's not protesting.  
That's hate,  
and I am out there risking my life.  
They should have respect for that.  
Maybe not for what I'm doing,  
or why we are over there,  
but respect for the fact that I am a person,  
just like they are.

*(He remains facing the audience as the lights dim.)*

*(Transition to TAMMY at Walter Reed.)*

*(Theme music: During the following Yvonne video, a slow-motion impressionistic depiction of Walter Reed Medical Center is revealed as the panels slowly turn to open the stage vertically. Bathed in a dim, blue-green wash of light, we see patients in wheelchairs, with*

*missing limbs, or on crutches, or blind, bandaged and burned, hospital orderlies and such, all drifting dream-like through the space as YVONNE speaks:)*

**YVONNE.**

*(Video interview clip.)*

When I ah,  
talked to Tammy over the phone,  
for the interview,  
she said, oh, you know,  
I'm having physical therapy  
here at Walter Reed;  
why don't you just come and meet me there,  
then afterwards we'll talk.  
And I thought oh, okay.  
So, you know, I took the train to D.C.,  
took a cab to Walter Reed;  
you know, Walter Reed is a big solid campus,—  
I found physical therapy;  
it was a little complicated.  
And the minute you know,  
I walked into that room—  
I'll tell you it wasn't—  
it felt like—  
I think if there wasn't a chair for me to wait—  
I would have fallen out.  
It was a shocking horrible sight,  
and I swear,  
if every American  
had to spend fifteen minutes  
in rehab at Walter Reed  
there would never, ever be war.

**Scene 2**

**TAMMY DUCKWORTH, NATIONAL GUARD MAJOR**  
**Iraq War Service: February 2004—November 2004.**  
**Thai/American, 37, lives in suburban Chicago.**

*(Interview: Bethesda, Maryland, fall, daytime. The day room of Walter Reed Medical Center rehab ward. A public venue, people walking around. Asian/Thai/White. Very pretty.)*

*(TAMMY is in a wheelchair pushed by her husband BRIAN, they exchange an affectionate parting moment, he exits.)*

**TAMMY.**

I am not going to dishonor the effort  
In saving my life by saying,  
“Woe is me, I got no legs.”  
Well, I got one knee.  
I have my arms,  
my face,  
my brain.  
This is a pretty good life I have now  
compared to what it could be.  
And plus they make prosthetic high heels.  
I checked into it.  
Not three-inch stilettos,  
but at least an inch or two of heel.  
I’ll be good to go.

I am so grateful to be alive.  
I should not be here.  
So, I am not depressed  
or I am not upset.  
Because the alternative to this  
is death.

I was in command of a National Guard air  
Assault Helicopter Company in Chicago.  
After 9/11,  
it became more real than ever  
that I needed to train my men for war.

My position was battle captain assistant operations officer.

Oh, I am also a pilot.

I, I was born in Thailand,  
and my uh,  
my mom is Thai.

And my dad is Caucasian from Virginia.  
He was in the army.

You know my dad did not talk too much  
about his military background.

A World War II and Vietnam vet.

Um—so...

when I went home

and told my parents I joined ROTC,

My dad's only comment to me was,

“Do you think you can make it?”

And that was it!

And he never—

Never encouraged it

Anything like that,

or acted like he was proud of me,

Or anything but—

When I was commissioned he gave me, uh

Gold plated second lieutenant bars

Which is when I realized, okay, he might be—

There might be some approval there.

And my mom of course cried. She's like,

“But I raised you to be a girl!

I put you in stockings and pink and lace and what

Are you doing wearing combat boots?”

And other stuff but, you know,

now I take her to be very proud of me, so...

I am a minority female

who got to be a Company Commander.

There are not that many.

You know,

what other country would let me do that?

I was in Iraq for more than eight months  
before the shoot-down.

I had spent the day flying missions  
in Support of the First Cavalry Division in Baghdad.  
This is around the time  
of the battle of Fallujah,  
And basically  
a nest of insurgents  
had gotten out of Fallujah,  
And they were north of Baghdad.  
We happened to fly over them.  
They shot everything they had  
into the air,  
small arms fire,  
AK-47,  
RPGs (rocket-propelled grenades)  
Everything—  
and at least one of the RPGs hit us  
and it hit me.  
It exploded right between my legs.  
It amputated both my legs  
immediately.  
Um,  
I didn't know that it took off  
most of my right arm.

I got on the controls.  
all my training took over,  
I picked a landing spot.  
The cockpit was filled with smoke  
The aircraft was shaking like crazy.  
I remember thinking  
I had to shut down the engine  
I remember thinking  
I had to reach up to do that,  
and then,  
just raising my hand,  
that's when I passed out.

I was unconscious for eleven days,  
And for those eleven days,  
It was like I was asleep,

But I could still hear a voice telling me,  
“You are injured. You are OK.  
You are at Walter Reed and you are back home.”  
That was my husband’s voice.

When I woke up, my legs hurt.  
I was in so much pain.  
I said,  
“Please—can I have some painkillers for my feet and my legs?”  
That’s when my husband told me I lost my legs.  
I was devastated.  
I thought that I had crashed the aircraft.  
I thought I deserved to lose my legs  
If I didn’t do my job as a pilot  
I was crying,  
and my husband asked me what was wrong,  
And I told him.  
When he told me that my co-pilot landed the aircraft,  
It was like a huge weight that was lifted off of me.

I’ve been fine.  
My arm is doing really well.  
I can put up my hair.  
When I was first going through rehabilitation  
I couldn’t move this arm at all and  
I’m like, “How am I gonna put up my hair?”  
And that was one of the few things—so  
But the goal was to get me  
So I could put my hair in a ponytail  
And put on my own earrings.

*(Laughing.)*

I’m such a girl! I’m such a girly girl!  
My favorite color is pink and all that.  
But um—I know!  
I am like—it’s,  
it’s so funny.

I miss my body.  
I miss my strong, healthy body.  
And I am addicted to *America’s Next Top Model*.  
I don’t know why.

I love Tyra Banks.  
 I think she is the greatest.  
 I am addicted to that show.  
 Sometimes I'm like,  
 "I can't wear stilettos anymore."  
 And when I go shopping, I have to compensate for  
 How my legs look under my clothes.  
 And things like that, but then  
 Those feelings go away.

*(Her husband BRIAN enters, kneels next to her.)*

Oh, Brian!  
 This is my husband Brian.  
 We will have a bid party here at Walter Reed  
 On my one-year anniversary—  
 my Alive day.  
 It will be great.  
 I am very blessed.  
 I have a good employer,  
 a good husband who has been here for me.  
 I appreciate every day of my life.

*(BRIAN wheels her offstage as the next transition begins into IVAN.)*

### Scene 3

**IVAN MEDINA, ARMY CHAPLAIN**

**Iraq War service: September 2002—August 2003.**

**Hispanic male (Mexican), 25, Army Chaplain's Assistant, lives in Verona, New York.**

*(Interview: Verona, New York. Thin, Mexican/American immigrant, has a noticeable Mexican dialect.)*

*(Transition to IVAN MEDINA.)*

*(Music: to the strains of CSNY's Find the Cost of Freedom [accompanying a photo on screens of soldiers saluting a battlefield grave marker—a pair of desert boots, a rifle stuck in the earth between them, a helmet sitting atop the stock].)*

*(The panels turn as two figures wearing neutral painted “flag” masks flank the center panel facing out. They slowly turn to each other; then one turns away and disappears behind the panels as the other figure looks after him, turns to the audience, removes his mask, sets it down center stage, kneels behind it and blesses himself; he rises and speaks to the audience.)*

*(We are at a memorial service for his brother, Irving.)*

**IVAN.**

I speak out in my brother’s name.

I served in Iraq, and I want people to know the truth.

I consider this my country.

My family moved to the United States  
from Mexico City when I was around 6.

My sister had joined the military when I was in high school.

For my siblings and me,

it was a way to give thanks to our adoptive country.

We wanted to wear the uniform,

which most Americans didn’t do.

I joined in March of 2001.

My brother Irving and I joined together.

They offered us the chaplain assistant position.

I was going to be deployed to Kuwait for six months.

I went to my new chaplain captain

and said I needed to go on leave.

I wanted to see my family

and say good-bye to them.

The drums of war were beating.

It was the last time

as a family

we were all together.

My brother and I

got into an argument,

and we didn’t speak,

and my brother

didn’t even want to say good-bye.

I didn’t know he would be killed in Iraq.

To this day I regret how we said good-bye that day.

My commanders said we were ready.  
I wanted to laugh.  
Half of my division had no body armor;  
half had no armor on their vehicles.  
The next day the infantry went in with our engineers,  
and we were given the go-ahead to go into Iraq.

We got to a town right outside of Baghdad  
and took over a building that belonged to Iraqi forces.  
A bomb hit the building right near where we were.  
I heard people screaming and crying.  
I had ringing in my ear.  
I could see the debris coming down  
and red and black smoke.  
It was like watching a war movie.  
It went so fast and so slow at the same time.  
People were running out of the building.  
You could smell burned skin all over,  
and they were bringing out people totally burned.  
One sergeant major  
who I thought was a great person  
was so burned.  
He didn't care.  
He kept asking,  
"How many dead, how many injured, how is everybody?"  
He wanted to help.  
To me, that is heroism.

I remember seeing an Iraqi on a gurney  
screaming about paradise and Allah.  
I just wanted to grab my gun and shoot him.

I spent my 21st birthday there  
and tried to find my brother,  
but I couldn't find him.  
They sent us home in August of 2003.  
I spent 11 months in the Middle East.

I came home, and life went back to normal.

But then one day,

I was coming out of the post office,  
and I got a phone call from my sister,  
and I just knew my brother was dead.  
I felt dizzy all day,  
and I felt really down.  
I said, "It's Irving, isn't it?  
He's dead, isn't he?"  
And she started crying,  
and I said, "Tell me it's not true?"  
And I started crying in my car.

I lost the one person I loved so much  
and meant so much to me in the world,  
my twin brother Irving.  
The vehicle he was driving hit an IED.  
They said he died quickly.  
They said he didn't suffer,  
but I know he did—  
he just didn't show it.

He was taken away from me...  
in one day; everything was taken away from me.  
The condolence letters  
that Rumsfeld and the President sent  
did not even look signed.  
They were stamped.  
It made me so angry,  
so pissed off.  
They were saying,  
"We don't care about you personally."  
My brother shouldn't have been there.  
We both shouldn't have been there.  
I couldn't keep quiet anymore.  
I felt we went in there for the wrong reasons.  
I loved my brother so much.  
I speak out for him,  
in his name,  
in his memory.

*(ROBERT puts on the mask.)*

**Scene 4**

**MATTHEW MILLER, NATIONAL GUARD SERGEANT**  
**Iraq War Service: February 2005—December 2005.**  
**White male, 37, lives in Pasadena, Maryland.**

*(Interview: [while serving in Iraq] Combat Medivac Helicopter duty.  
Currently redeployed in Iraq.)*

*(Transition to MATT MILLER.)*

*(Arabica music pulses along with the increasingly deafening sound  
of an approaching military helicopter. ROBERT looks up, wearing  
the mask, and spots the approaching helicopter, effecting a stylized  
retreat as the center panel swivels to reveal MATT MILLER in full  
combat flight gear.)*

**MATTHEW.**

Humans are extremely adaptive,  
And very good at causing acute pain  
and suffering to other humans.  
We're very good at making war.  
I fly Medivac  
in Black Hawk helicopters in Iraq.  
I've had five soldiers die in the back of my 'copter;  
I still remember their names,  
and I don't forget their faces.  
And those are just the ones I know have died.  
You do the best you can  
with the tools and skills that you have,  
And it doesn't always work.

I'm lucky I have a good wife at home.  
I call her every night.  
She's my sounding board.

I had a young African-American guy,  
I think he was 27.  
What happened was  
the Humvee in front of him blew up,  
And a piece of shrapnel

came in from the window  
of the tractor-trailer he was driving—  
Hit him on the side of the head.

No one else was hurt  
but when we landed out there in the desert,  
I could tell he was hurt bad.  
The soldiers were breathing for him.  
My crew chief started CPR  
and I intubated him,  
got his airway secure  
and his heart rate went up.  
Some of the problems started to get better.  
He was still unconscious  
but my hopes were getting high.  
The wound on his head was bandaged,  
So we continued to monitor him  
and gave him some fluids,  
Try and nudge his pressure up.  
Then his head wound started bleeding,  
And the bandage came loose.  
When I tried to adjust it,  
Brain matter started coming out of the hole.  
It's like putting a house of cards together  
and it just tumbles down.  
We did CPR again  
and he went into trauma arrest.

We took him to CSH  
and they never quit on this kid.  
The commander was there  
and I'm watching them work on this guy.  
I just knew he was going to die by what I saw.  
His commander was a young captain;  
He was just sitting there crying.  
There were probably 30 people there,  
They weren't saying anything;  
Just watching...  
They finally called it.  
You could have heard a pin drop in that place.

I gathered my things,  
Got in the copter;  
Pilot was,  
like "Lets get gas;"  
I said "Let's just go home."  
It took twenty minutes  
to clean the blood out of the aircraft.  
I felt like I aged twenty years.  
I had trouble sleeping after that.

He was a big muscular guy,  
James...  
You never really think about how it wears you down.  
About 1030 that night we get a call,  
IED hit a gun truck, detonated it  
So we launched.  
While we were in route  
Could hear the ground crew talking over the radio;  
One of the guys had died.  
We landed.  
There was a lot of smoke.  
Approached the ground medic;  
He's working on one young kid,  
about nineteen,  
Shrapnel had torn through his legs;  
Blew part of his right hand off...  
Blew three of his fingers off...  
Their interpreter was killed.  
The shrapnel that hit the interpreter,  
Then hit the kid.  
I'm talkin' to the kid,  
He's hurtin'  
but he's tryin' to be tough guy,  
The medic's tellin' me he has no morphine,  
Then this weird thing happens.  
This guy walks out of the smoke  
and grabs me by the vest,  
Piece of shrapnel  
went flying through his nose

Practically took it off;  
He said  
“Don’t worry about me. Take care of my soldiers.”  
Asked him to come with me,  
he said  
“No, no I’m riding with my soldiers.”  
Then he turned around  
And walked away into the smoke  
and disappeared.

I mean I was sound asleep one second,  
Next thing you know I’m going to pick up a kid  
who an hour ago  
was full of life.

I’m a firefighter back home;  
A paramedic;  
Run about 1,000 calls a year,  
Which is a lot.  
Forty of them are big,  
Rest are just b.s.  
Here I’ve run five years  
of multisystem trauma patients  
in five months...  
And they don’t stop coming.  
At home it’s car crashes;  
But their body parts are still on them.  
Here there’s so much blood  
and pieces of bodies missing;  
We’ve sprayed out our aircraft  
And found pieces of bone.  
I spend 72 straight hours on call,  
Get a day off,  
And back again.  
Everyone wants to be politically correct,  
But it’s important to hear  
what really goes on.  
Some of these kids are doing great work.  
They have a lot of heart.

It pains me  
to see it minimized by the news.  
Only the sensational gets reported.  
You hear thirty Iraqis killed by a suicide bomber,  
But the one private that got killed in the Humvee...  
You don't hear about.  
That happens a lot.

Most of us believe in what we're doing.  
Most Iraqis are happy that we're here.  
You see kids playing soccer,  
People going back to work,...  
The people were being brutalized.  
They're ecstatic we're here.  
But still some kids throw rocks at you—  
You help the majority  
and try and suppress the ones starting trouble.

I just re-enlisted for another six years.  
I like being an army guy...  
But I'm looking forward to being a fireman again.  
I don't want to cry until I get home.

If I'm going to tell people back home  
what is going on,  
The most important thing  
I want to do is tell it real.

*(The sounds of a military helicopter taking off accompany his exit as the center panel swivels bringing DAVE on stage.)*

*(Panels all turn to create the Dave set-up.)*

### Scene 5

**DAVE BISCHSEL, NATIONAL GUARD SPECIALIST**  
**Iraq War Service: March 2003—April 2004.**  
**36, white male, lives in Clearlake, California.**

*(Interview: Clearlake, California. Local Police Officer.)*

**DAVE.**

Before 9/11,

I was doing outside wireless communication sales  
and always feeling  
that there was something missing in my life.

But 9/11 changed a lot of lives  
and how they view their lives,  
including me.

After 9/11,

I started reevaluating my priorities.

I wanted to be able to help  
if something bad happened in the West Coast,  
so I joined the Guard.

I wanted to be available to help out in a natural disaster.

I was in the army full-time from 1989 to 1993.

I went back in January 2003  
about ten years after I left.

When I went to talk to the recruiter,  
he told me the military police company  
that I was going in  
was getting involved in something big.

But he gave me the impression  
that I would be left in the rear.

I was out of shape  
and had just enlisted,  
but the next thing I knew,  
I was on my way to Iraq.

From that point on,  
I put on my best face,  
but I had to leave my wife,  
my daughter, who was ten,  
and a baby son.

We are a pretty liberal family,  
very few Republicans  
we have any respect for,  
but one was Colin Powell.

I believed him and what he said about the war.

So I went in  
just thinking that I would try to be  
as humble and respectful as I could be  
and let the Iraqi people know  
that we are all not warmongers  
and that we know they had  
sisters, brothers, moms, kinds, and fathers too.

My first four weeks there,  
we didn't have bulletproof vests.  
We did raids.  
We kicked in doors.  
We were supposed to be training Iraqi police,  
but it was a joke.  
They were extremely corrupt,  
and people have so much fear of the Iraqi police  
because under Saddam,  
they would take people's wives and daughters  
and murder, rape them.  
We had this Iraqi police outfit that was not trained.  
We had someone running it who,  
two weeks ago,  
was in the police academy.  
A K-Mart security guard  
is better trained  
then the Iraqi Police.

When we first got there,  
we were treated like rock stars.  
"Good president Bush, Saddam bad, Saddam Donkey;"  
but then it changed.  
They'd say they were glad we got rid of Saddam,  
but then say,  
"by the way, do you support Israel?"

When we got to Abu Ghraib Prison,  
we were sitting ducks over there all the time.  
We monitored the outside walls  
and who came and left the prison.  
The prison was freaking huge!

A monster!  
It's a prison within a prison.  
The walls were falling down.  
Trash piled up everywhere,  
rusty toilets,  
and bugs all over the place.  
The odor was terrible.  
We had bug bite competition,  
like you show me yours, and I'll show you mine.  
We had bites all over our bodies.  
It was insane, and we were hot and sweating all the time.

There was a point in Abu Ghraib I didn't realize it,  
but I just started deteriorating mentally.

I was like,  
"Fuck Iraq.  
I want to kill these mother fuckers and go home."  
You get to the point you lose it,  
its like,  
"Fuck it, fuck them.  
They don't want us here?"  
It drove me crazy.

When you try to talk to people, they say,  
"Why did you sign up?  
What did you think would happen?"  
They lose sight of how this war happened.  
You don't send troops in harm's way  
unless it's absolutely necessary.  
You shouldn't be sent away for some bullshit.  
People lose focus on the human component  
of being a soldier in harm's way.  
When you are told  
you are only going to be there for six months,  
and it keeps getting extended,  
and you watch the death toll go up,  
it does something to you.

The hardest thing when I came home  
was whenever I heard a loud noise,

it would freak me out.  
We went to Disneyland,  
And they did a fireworks display,  
and when they started going off,  
I hit the floor.  
My daughter hit the ground, too.  
I started looking for my weapon.  
I was freaked out.  
It took me a while  
to not freak out  
when a car backfired.  
It was kind of tough.

They put pressure on us to reenlist,  
but I felt totally exploited.  
I was a bullet catcher.  
No freaking way was I going to reenlist.  
I'd rather shovel—cow manure.  
It was so obvious to me when I came back  
that it was amazing that anyone can support this war.  
They should be seeing the coffins come back,  
the families in tears.  
They lost sight of the component  
that we are human beings  
killing other human beings.

This war is based on lies.  
You remember the way Kenneth Starr went after Clinton?  
All that money spent,  
and Clinton just lied about an affair.  
He didn't kill anybody.  
Who knows how many Iraqis have been killed.

Where is Kenneth Starr now?  
It's all freaking insane.

**Scene 6**

**JOHN BALL, JR., MARINE SERGEANT**

**Iraq War Service: February 2003—June 2003.**

**White male. 23, lives in Pottstown, Pennsylvania.**

*(Interview: King of Prussia, Pennsylvania, Borders Books, fall, night, in the coffee café. Small, 5' 8'', slight/thin build but cut and fit. A low baseball cap hiding his face; drinking a latte/coffee from a take-away cup.)*

*(Transition to JOHN BALL JR.)*

*(Music, panels, lights shift as JOHN BALL enters with a chair, wearing a Phillies hat, and carrying a latte drink. He sits, straddling the chair, and addresses the audience.)*

**JOHN.**

I served in the Marines for four years.

And I'm gay—

I excelled at my job  
Not patting myself on the back  
but Everything...  
Everything about my job  
And everything I did  
I loved it.

I don't even think I looked  
at anybody in basic.  
The hardest part  
was just getting through.

So...

Yeah;

Being gay wasn't really an issue.  
We didn't talk about it a lot,  
we just basically did our jobs  
and we were there for each other.  
Nobody's thinking about sex;  
Nobody's thinking about

*(Long pause.)*

I just don't think you could.  
Not in a situation like that.

But you read it all the time  
and that's people's argument,  
and that's just not correct.  
You can have someone sit there and say  
It's gonna be distracting  
It's gonna...  
Ruin the unit  
The thing is—  
is that they're already there;  
There's more of 'em than you think there are.  
You just...  
They can't tell you.

Our first lift  
was a Mediterranean lift,  
which was a six-months float.  
No one knew I was gay on the lift.

I excelled at my job.  
I was in communications.  
I was a radio operator.  
I went from being a radio operator  
to a semi-intelligence person,  
which I didn't have the training for.  
But the people I worked with were in intelligence,  
and I was their communicator.

We were on our way home  
from a second six-months float  
when they said we were going to war with Iraq.

It was mass confusion on both sides.  
Both seemed confused.  
I'd be driving in a Humvee  
with my rifle  
and pointing it at kids.  
We would go through the towns  
Searching for weapons,

and these men  
would smuggle their stuff with these kids  
or use them as shields.  
The kids didn't understand,  
but they were being used.  
I felt sorry for them.  
I saw women screaming  
and crying with their babies.  
I couldn't understand what they were saying,  
but I knew what they were saying:  
"What are you doing here?  
My babies are hungry.  
Why? Why? Why?  
When is this going to stop?"

These people had no food,  
and the government had no plan.  
War is not perfect, I know that.  
But whoever made the plans for this war  
did a horrible job.

The way we were treated in each town was so different.  
In one town they threw rocks and all kinds of things at us.  
They were sending kids at us  
to steal our rifles and vehicles.  
We pushed them away.  
Some people were very angry.  
Then we went to another town,  
and the people screamed we were heroes  
and dropped to their knees thanking us.  
They said stuff like,  
"You are saving us from this guy  
we have been under for so long."  
We went into towns and saw the American flag waving,  
and it always gave me goose bumps.

When I got home,  
The whole talk of reenlistment came up.  
But I couldn't reenlist  
because I was scared

that if the commanders  
found out I was gay,  
I would lose everything.

So now when I see an American flag,  
I think I don't have  
The same freedoms everyone else has  
even though I fought for them.  
I have served my country in war and peace.  
I know from my life experience  
that I tried to make it go away,  
and I would never wish being gay  
on anyone.

If it were a choice,  
I would not choose it.  
I'm very angry a lot of the days  
when I see an American flag,  
but I have a lot of respect  
and admiration  
and pride  
in people who serve in the military  
and past vets.  
Yet, I'm selfish  
because the government has hurt my life.

I know that I shouldn't have to be working  
at TGI Fridays as a waiter,  
but I have to deal with it.  
To go from an extremely responsible job,  
giving these communication messages  
that were saving lives  
and making a difference  
to "would you like mashed potatoes or fries with that,"  
ya know,  
It was hard.

I'm definitely patriotic.  
I hold America in a high regard.  
I definitely wouldn't want to live anywhere else.  
As much as my freedoms aren't here

I feel like one day they will be,  
And I just I just  
Live everyday hoping  
that I see it in my lifetime.  
I wake up everyday  
with the hope that  
one day we can serve in the military,  
that one day we can get married,  
that one day it won't matter if you are gay.

And I'm not pissed off all the time  
I just don't see  
a reason  
why in an advanced country like we are  
Why we are so far behind in that area.  
Out of 52 countries  
in NATO  
There are only two countries  
that don't allow gays  
to serve in the military  
and we're one of them.

I think the most funny part  
is gonna be is that  
When it is allowed  
Absolutely nothing's gonna change  
We're already serving.  
We're in Iraq right now.

*(JOHN drains his latte as the lights fade.)*

### Scene 7

**LISA HAYNES, SERGEANT, ARMY RESERVES**

**Iraq War Service: April 2003—April 2004.**

**African/Native American female, 40, lives in Boynton, Oklahoma.**

*(Interview: Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. Hotel lounge. Interview scheduled for 8 AM, she arrives at 11 PM, out of the fog. 5' 8", small limp, strong, nice build, not sexy, didn't wear makeup, brown Pay-*

*less shoes, Wal-Mart clothes, hair relaxed. She speaks with a Black 'slo-Oklahoma' dialect. Works at the VA laundry in Oklahoma City.)*

*(Transition to LISA HAYNES.)*

*(During the transition/video, the panels slowly shift to Lisa's scene. About half way through YVONNE's narrative, LISA enters up right and slowly hobbles in, weaving her way through the panels, in and out of the light to arrive down left right at the finish of Yvonne's set up. There is a chair waiting for her. She is dressed in civilian clothes and carries a shoulder bag.)*

**YVONNE.**

*(Video interview clip; theme music under.)*

Lisa lived in Oklahoma,  
and I called her a few times  
to try to set up this interview  
and pre-interview her  
and we decided that she would come  
to this hotel that I was staying at  
outside Oklahoma City,  
and that would be easier than me  
driving to Boynton which was far away—  
which is where she's from,  
and you know she made it seem  
like it was no big deal.

OK,

I'm like okay girl, you sure?

I'll come to you...

but she's like no, no no NO!—

I will come to you.

And it's Embassy Suites,

so when I get to the hotel

I call her... she's like,

OK Yvonne, I'm gonna be there

at 8 o'clock in the morning the next day

so you better go to bed early

cause I'm gonna' be there—

bright and early cause I have things to do.

So I'm like OK,

fine so whatever;  
I get up.  
I get up really early—  
extra early in fact,  
like 6 AM...  
ready—  
and then I wait...  
and then I wait...  
and then I wait...  
and then I wait...  
and I call Lisa;  
I'm coming—I'm coming,  
I just had to stop for an errand  
but I'm gonna' come—I'll be there!  
I hang up  
and then I wait...  
and then I wait...  
and then I wait...  
Ten o'clock at night I'm still waiting  
eleven o'clock at night  
Lisa shows up.

**LISA.**

I don't regret anythang...  
any,  
anythang that I've done in the service...  
up till this last war.  
I felt like I was accomplishin' somethin'...  
I, I felt proud...  
It's just where my last experiences...  
I know what toll it has taken on me...  
And now I can't take dat back I can only jus work on it...  
through the experiences dat I've had...  
but right now it may have me down  
but hopefully in the long run it's gon' have me stronger  
I jus got ta git through it.

I was from a small town,  
real small,  
Boynton, Oklahoma.

It's an all black town,  
of 300 something people.  
I wanted to travel you know so I joined.  
I was on the first group that went to Iraq.

I got to Iraq on uh Saddam's birthday.  
You know we saw a lot of stuff.  
We saw a lot of camels.  
You'd have these big spiders  
and what these spiders would do is attack...  
well attach...  
they they...  
they knot like this—

*(She attempts to illustrate the process with her fingers.)*

But see, they are attached to each other—  
and dey be like this—  
so they could be—  
This Big!—  
On the camel's back.  
And uh dey nest on 'em  
and dey kinda eat dem alive  
until dey drop.

*(Beat.)*

That's what dey do.

A lot of Iraqi...  
Kids—  
you know...  
mal...nourished—  
the ones with the big stomachs.  
Or um,  
little pretty kids...  
But you can tell that there was poor poverty.  
You can tell dey was hungry.  
We couldn't give them anything.  
They would all be comin' up to your cars  
and it was you know,  
it was hard seein' the kids like that

but you they could also probably throw a grenade!  
You had to be sharp and on guard all...  
all the time.

Everythang we did...  
uh was chancy...  
Everythang we did was chancy cause we didn't know,  
we didn't know the type of people we were dealin' with...  
It was messed up...  
One time two cars uh ahead of us,...  
A car was hit with a grenade...  
The insurgents drove right up on the side of it  
and blew it up...  
and uh that stopped the rest of us.  
I jumped out of the car,  
and the insurgents were there and everything  
everything was action...  
ACTION...  
They were coming after me

*(Beat.)*

and they were close to me...  
I started hittin' dem.  
You know, I used my weapon, my hands...  
And I just beat em down.

*(Beat.)*

Er' one doesn't think jus ta kill.  
We do have a conscience...  
well you know...  
if we can git around it we do...  
A lot of young people in the service  
jus thinking about the killin'  
jus killin' all the time...  
but they don't realize that they have to...  
Live...  
with it...  
The war gives you a lot of mental problems.  
I know because I have to live with it.

You know when we went ova there  
it was a lot of women out there...  
A LOT of women...  
it's like a city of itself.

You know and when they say it's a lot goin' on...  
it's a lot goin' on...  
You know,  
you got married women and married men  
but it's like nothing when you ova there

*(Chuckle.)*

you know the rules is out the winda  
war time is war time and er  
everybody is cohabitin'.  
Long hours...  
No showers...  
and we took uh...  
took washups out of our hardhats.  
You know stuff dat...  
stuff dat we would only think about or see on the T.V.

*(Pause.)*

It's...  
You had to sneak and uh urinate in bottle you know  
and as a woman we had to get creative  
and do different thangs in that bottle.

Some of my soldiers were talking about suicidal...  
Dey had no money  
dey wives done left them and I had to talk them out of it...  
you talk dem out a suicidal...  
and as a sergeant you have to be dey friend,  
you know and you like  
I ain't know all dis come with it  
and sometimes you jus feel like we should jus be at home.  
It's jus like the government  
jus want the bodies ova there  
jus in case something do break out...

When I came home I wasn't aware of how,

I was *(Pause)* actin'.  
I ain't even see it comin'.

*(Beat.)*

I started having uh flashbacks  
uh and uh  
hot and cold flashes...  
Any foreign...people...  
of color...  
irritated me...  
everything that I went through...  
It was comin back to me and I didn't...  
like what's goin on...  
I had to fuss with the VA to let them know...  
I said y'all betta try to get me in...  
see I'm really...hurt...  
and y'all tryin' to push me out the door...  
and I said Naw I demand to be seen now...  
while I'm here...  
while I'm still on active duty...  
I had to fight for it!  
And once dey did see me it's like everything,  
everythang was a slow process.

It ain't no joke;  
if I could just get my life back  
I wouldn't be care-in bout none of this money.  
It ain't worth nothing that I been through.  
It's just messed up my life  
just messed up in such a way to where...  
I can't...gather...with...  
people...  
I don't like groups of people;  
I would always get in a corner somewhere  
Or I wouldn't go.  
You know, I can't ride horses  
do thangs that I used to do.  
Actually I am jus shocked at how I'm doin' right now.  
My kids...  
don't play with me they way they used to

uh...

I actually hit one of my sons.

Because he tried to scare me

he tried to come up and Boo

and I wasn't lookin' and my reflexes hit 'em.

My reflexes hit 'em!

And I tried to talk to them when I first got here...

to let them know...

that I am a very different person.

It's not all bad but it's not all good.

I'm moody, cryin' a lot I...

Now what's the word

ahhh

procrastinate?

What is it?

*Procrastinate...*

I do that I hate with a passion.

I'm slow and I forget stuff.

You know jus stuff that you would normally just know!

From the time when I was over there

*(Pause.)*

I ain't even know why we were there.

I'm talking bout why we are still there.

Uh,

what the purpose was,

and a lot of soldiers feel the same way;

we just did what we ordered to.

We went with what we had to go with.

I never regretted anything I have done in the service  
until this last war.

I felt I uh accomplished...

Somethin'...

I was proud.

I can't take anything back,

but right now it uh,...

it just has me down.

## Scene 8

**JON SOLTZ, ARMY CAPTAIN****Iraq War Service: May 2003—September 2003.****White, Jewish male, 27, lives in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.**

*(Interview: Fort Dix, New Jersey, a Base restaurant, November. Piled his plate with food at the buffet. Eating and talking. Male model handsome 5' 11", short dark hair, nicely built. Talked fast; a live wire.)*

*(Transition to JON SOLTZ.)*

*(As Arabica music plays, the panels shift as ensemble enters forming a mess hall food line carrying empty trays; JON enters with a tray piled with food. He sits at a table and begins to eat voraciously throughout the entire interview.)*

**JON.**

I've always wanted to be in the military.  
When I was sixteen, I had a heart defect  
and my dad sent me to Israel for two months.  
Everyone in Israel has to serve in the military.  
It's like a rite of passage in society,  
so it became my personal rite of passage.

As a captain going into Iraq,  
I was excited to be there.  
I was going to be a part of American history.  
I was so cocky,  
I kept thinking "What is France gonna do  
when they find the weapons of mass destruction?"  
In my heart...  
I really thought they were there.

I got to Kuwait,  
and we had not one piece  
of up-armored equipment.  
We only had some body armor.  
We had one mission—  
push the battalion into Iraq.  
Probably the most physically demanding thing possible—  
Kuwait to Baghdad in one day

inna middle of the summer—  
I wanted to be the first to lead the convoy into Iraq,  
I was like “Alright, we got it.”

We rounded up all the body armor,  
everyone who left the base had to wear it.  
We found some Iraqi body armor and put that in.  
I mean, Iraqi armor,  
that’s how...  
...we didn’t have enough for our own soldiers.

I left Iraq,  
I went back to Germany.  
That is the day the war started...for me.  
That’s the day you have to start living with it  
for the rest of your life.

I was on my way back to Pittsburgh,  
to surprise my girlfriend...  
This guy tells me there’s this rumor,  
she’s with some other guy.  
I called her up,  
said “You know what day it is?”  
of course, the year before she went all crazy about,  
aww, our anniversary,  
you know how girls are with that bullshit;  
She didn’t *know*.  
She does one of *these*:  
“Pfffffffffffff (*long sigh*), we need to talk.”  
I said, “Yeah we do,  
maybe you should tell me about your other boyfriend.”  
She’s like, uuuh,  
and I’m like, “Don’t ever talk to me ever again.”

I was pretty destroyed.  
I started havin’ these dreams,  
like mortars would come down  
—pfoom—closer—pfoom—.  
Then they’d be coming down on top of you  
and you’d wake up.  
That’s the way it went for months.

Couldn't concentrate.  
Back in the states,  
it was worse because  
I was around people who didn't understand me at all.  
How many 26-year-olds can deal with what...er...

I went to live with one of my friends.  
He comes home, drunk,  
slams his hand down, yells "Mortars!"  
I jumped up...I was asleep...  
I jumped up and said,  
"Don't you EVER do that to me again."  
After bout a month I moved out.

I was exhausted  
when I walked into that VA hospital  
in Highland Park. Nurse is like  
"What's wrong with you?"  
I'm like,  
"I'm exhausted, I'm not the same person."  
I was crying,  
I told her about these dreams I was having  
where I kill three or four people.  
She's like,  
you are articulate,  
you should talk with other soldiers  
who came back from Iraq.  
She helped me out a lot.

Then I get this *phone call*,  
from this *guy*,  
and he says I'm a Vietnam Veteran,  
I'm calling on behalf of Senator John Kerry,  
I'm like,  
*Who the fuck is this?*  
He said to me,  
"I'd like to know how you feel about John Kerry."  
I said "I'll tell you what,  
I don't like that he voted down  
the 87 billion dollar appropriations  
cause them soldiers needed that body armor in Iraq.

Time to be...  
time to vote against the war has passed,  
now we needed that stuff.”

But I said,  
I’ll do anything I can to help John Kerry,  
I’ll stick with a guy who’s been to war.  
I said, I was there last week,  
these punk kids wouldn’t let me near him,  
his little *staffer* people.  
I just wanted to get five minutes with him  
to tell him what he needs to know about Iraq.

Guy says to me,  
“I’d love to get you your five minutes.”  
... I’m like, *holy shit* I’m gonna meet the MAN.  
I met him at this airport.  
He came up to me, shook my hand.  
I said, “Sir, American soldiers need your help.”  
I told him, the army is overextended,  
we need two more divisions in Iraq,  
I wrote this paper all about it.  
He said, stop, I wanna read this paper.  
Took my business card and said “I’m gonna give you a call.”  
I’m like “Naw...you won’t.”  
My phone rings a few days later  
and it’s this number like,  
*who the fuck?*  
I had been calling all my friends,  
tellin’ them I met John Kerry,  
I told him all about the war,  
I told him we needed two more divisions.  
S’like:  
—“Jon Soltz?”  
Yeah...  
—“It’s Senator John Kerry.”  
*Like holy shit.*  
*This guy’s callin’ me...*  
*on the telephone!*  
He was like:

Look, man, I just wanted to tell you that,  
like, when I got home from Vietnam,  
I was just like you,  
I was mad, because  
I didn't feel like I had been told the truth.  
I said, Hey sir,  
you know what I am?  
I'm the guy who went to die  
for weapons that weren't there.  
I'm the guy who,  
after I sent a soldier out and he was killed,  
I had to hear my *commander in chief*,  
*man who evaded service in Vietnam*,  
tell my enemy to *Bring it On*.  
I'm the guy who got help at a VA hospital,  
and that same guy that sent me to war  
says he's going to close that hospital.  
Senator Kerry was the first guy  
to get through to me  
and let me know everything I was feeling was okay,  
first one.

I'm back on active duty now,  
at Fort Dix.  
Training troops.  
I'm giving back to the troops.  
It's not about—  
at this point, being for or against any war,  
because these soldiers are going to Iraq,  
and I train them hard every day.

The men that got us into this war  
are the men who did not go to Vietnam  
When they had their chance to serve,  
they turned their backs on America,  
and now they've developed into  
the biggest war hawks  
America's ever seen.

### Scene 9

**HEROLD NOEL, ARMY PRIVATE FIRST CLASS**

**Iraq War Service: January 2003—September 2003.**

**African American male, 25, lives in the Bronx, New York.**

*(Interview: Section 8 Apartment, South Bronx New York.)*

*(Transition into HEROLD NOEL.)*

*(Music Live From Iraq rap, as panels shift, screens: picture montage of wounded Iraqi children and citizens—furniture is placed and HEROLD enters and sits.)*

*(Low end table, chair; HEROLD, sitting, holding a vodka bottle and glass, puts them on the table to his left and speaks:)*

**HEROLD.**

The hardest thing about being in Iraq is being in Iraq.

We fightin' people that—  
that believe in somethin'.

They believe that when they die  
they gonna go—  
eighteen virgins and all that stuff.

Know I'm sayin', they—  
they believe that.

So how you gonna kill—  
how you gonna—  
try to—take over—  
a land where people believe in somethin'.

Its like you Christian, Baptist,  
Jewish whatever—  
you believe in your religion so how you gonna...  
this is a religious war.

You know I'm sayin.  
Unless you gonna—  
throw a nuclear bomb in Iraq and annihilate everybody.  
Cause these people gonna keep comin'—  
the women, the children, everybody.

One day we're drivin', right.  
Alright—

we were drivin' and shit.  
One of the tanks flipped over in a ditch.  
So we all had to stop—  
pull guard, you understand...  
and secure the area.  
And we're the fueler  
so we had to stay in the middle  
while the Bradley and the tanks,  
they secure everything.  
So everything's secure and blaze-blah.  
I'm sittin' in my truck.  
First thing you see is a crowd of people.  
Now they was just standin' around waitin'.  
So people get paranoid—  
people in the tanks tell 'em "Back up, Back Up."

Alright—  
OK—

and there's this lady walkin'  
out of nowhere while we're about to pull off—  
and keep on with our convoy.  
And she was walkin' real slow.  
So—

There was like—now this lady  
was like closer to my truck.  
Know I'm sayin'  
she came out of nowhere.  
So they tellin' her to stop.  
So I have my M16,  
I'm sayin' in Iraqi blaze-blah whatever.  
She ain't want to stop,  
she kept walkin'.  
So nobody know if it was a bomb she straddlin'—  
so shots were fired—  
the lady falls—  
know I'm sayin'

whatever's in her hand falls and rolls.

Nobody knew what it was—

until they see the hand of a baby come up and start cryin'.

So everybody like "Wow,"

the lady got shot in the head by mistake.

You know soldiers get paranoid

they don't know if it's a bomb,

don't want to get close to it,

close to her.

That's why I'm sayin' it was a mistake, you know—

Know I'm sayin' it was like yo—

it wasn't my fault.

I ain't know—

I didn't want to be in the middle—

So baby layin' there.

I try to walk—I—you know I was stunned.

You know I'm sayin' like "Damn."

You know I'm sayin' it's a baby,

I'm sittin' there stuck,

like, I don't know what to do.

So when I take a first step to go pick up the baby, right—

the minute I took a step to pick up this baby

another convoy zooms by and runs over the baby—

Baby was just like all tangled up, rollin'.

The head—the baby's head was just

like rollin' one direction—

the body was rollin' another direction—

Now imagine how my day was, on an everyday basis, in Iraq—

The baby's body all tangled up and just rollin'—

It was truck after truck after truck runnin' that baby over.

It was like a whole convoy of trucks and tanks

until you just seen—

Now that's—

That was sick.

You think them dreams don't—

don't—

them nightmares don't—

don't—  
don't haunt me...  
every day?  
That shit haunts me  
every fuckin' day of my life.  
Know I'm sayin'  
I don't know how to make it stop.  
Only thing to make it stop,  
see what I'm doin'?  
I'm drinkin' know I'm sayin—  
smoke me a blunt and drink some more.  
That's how I make it stop sometime.  
I self medicate myself  
then I go take the medication the VA gave me  
and I'm knocked out.  
That's how I sleep every day.  
I sleep cryin' sometimes—I sleep like “Damn, for what?”  
Know I'm sayin'

I imagine the guys that came home  
with missing limbs and stuff like that—  
imagine what they goin' through.  
You may see them laughin'—  
imagine what they goin through inside.  
Cause they gave up a limb.  
I gave up my soul.  
Know I'm sayin' I gave up my-my-my  
state of—the way I think.  
I came back an amputee,  
but you can't see my amputation.  
You feel me.  
My amputation is up here—  
and nobody can give that back to me—  
can't nobody give me a prosthetic mind or whatever.  
Know I'm sayin'—  
all I can do is live day by day  
and wonder if I'm a die today.

Twice—  
I've tried to commit suicide twice.

I put—I put a gun to my head  
and pulled the trigger know I'm sayin'.  
Come on, I was livin' out of my car—  
I couldn't provide for my family—  
everybody was denying me for everything—  
wha—what I had to live for?

You join the military  
to have a stable life for your family—  
so you can support your family.  
I was like okay—  
us soldiers,  
we went out there killin' people.  
Know I'm sayin'  
Killin' people,  
doin things we ain't want to do,  
for what?  
For these ingrates—  
for these mothafuckas,  
that don't give a fuck—  
walkin', drinkin' their lattes every morning  
and goin' to work,  
they don't give a damn,  
that there's people's kids out there,  
people's fathers out there—  
fathers out there fightin',  
for them to go about their normal day.  
And this is the thanks we get—  
sayin' we don't care—  
come on man.  
That shit don't even make no sense.  
It's just fuckin'—embarrassing.  
I expected to come back as a the hero—  
not the zero.  
Know I'm sayin'  
I'm—I'm about to turn 26.  
And you know what I'm a do for my birthday?—  
I'm sittin' here and gettin' drunk.  
I'm a sit in here and get drunk

cuz if I go out something might happen to me.  
Know I'm sayin' I'm scared to go out—  
I'm scared to take the train—  
can't be around too many people.

I was never the person to complain  
about "Oh this country ain't shit,  
what is this country doin' for me?"  
but if you do a lot for this country—  
Know I'm sayin'  
you put your life on the line—  
don't you think you deserve something?

I hear things in my head all the time—  
kids cryin'—  
bombs going off,  
shit like that.  
You know you leave one war—  
start another.  
Finish the physical war—  
start the mental one.

*(Music: Arabica female vocal chant—A woman wearing a black jhida/burka/veil revealing only her eyes appears out of the darkness.)*

*(She is carrying a white bundle. He recoils as she unfurls the bundle; suddenly releasing a shower of blood-red rose petals, filling the air, fluttering softly to the ground. She drops the white swaddling cloth to the ground, turns to face the audience as HEROLD grabs his vodka bottle and chugs—as...the lights fade.)*

*(Blackout.)*

***End of Act I***

## ACT II

**YVONNE.**

*(Theme music / Video interview clip.)*

I have been a reporter  
for a long time,  
and I have covered  
a lot of really tough stories;  
and nothing—  
nothing I did  
my entire career  
prepared me  
for when I had to sit  
and talk to these VETS.  
It's truly heartbreaking;  
and some moments were really beautiful,  
and I learned a lot;  
and you know,  
I'm not the same person  
that I was  
before I did the book.  
I think a lot—  
I think a lot more deeply  
about people as individuals  
and their freedom  
and how one life—  
how one life you know,  
wounded or  
mentally destroyed  
can affect so many people.

### Scene 10

**KELLY DOUGHERTY, NATIONAL GUARD SERGEANT**  
**Iraq War Service: February 2003—February 2004.**  
**White female, 25, lives in Colorado Springs.**

*(Interview: Colorado Springs, Colorado. At home; pretty girl, not the type to “be there”—eventually co-founded Iraq Veterans Against the*

*War, appears in film, The Ground Truth, now living in Philadelphia.)*

*(Theme music: On the screens we see a photo montage of Iraqi children in need or in distress as KELLY enters with her chair and military jacket draped over the back.)*

**KELLY.**

I was naïve!  
I thought I  
wouldn't be one of the people sent  
we were a medical unit  
an not a unit  
that went on the field.

Um,  
I'm in school!  
an I'm against the war.  
it sounds stupid  
but I  
went there an I told them that.  
I was conflicted an  
I didn't know if I should  
Refuse to go an suffer the consequences.  
Which would have meant being  
Brought up on a court martial  
or leaving  
the country.  
I thought about  
getting pregnant or...  
smoking a bunch of pot  
but—the alternatives were not,  
not that, great.  
By the time I got my wits together,  
I was in Kuwait!

I was stationed at a port  
doing base security  
during the initial part  
of the war.  
There were a lot of

---

alarms going off  
because of the scud missiles being fired at us.  
You'd try to take-a shower real quick  
but...  
it always happened that  
when you would add the shampoo in your hair  
that's when the alarm would go off.  
One time it had a been  
a really long day,  
an alarms were going off constantly.  
It was nighttime an  
as I was falling asleep  
the whole ground shook.  
The windows blew out an  
I think the part that was  
really scary was looking around  
seeing the faces of the other people—  
of the officers!  
an seeing how freaked out they were  
an how they could not control their panic.  
Um,  
I thought about it later an thought  
how many American bombs an missiles  
landed in people's neighborhoods an  
what that must have been like.  
It happening to us  
one time  
sent everyone into a tailspin an  
there was such disorder.  
For it to happen to the Iraqis  
day after day after day  
it must have been terrible.

There were so many  
weird rumors  
like  
Iraqis had apples  
they were going to give  
to the soldiers

but some dogs ate them an  
they were poisoned and died.  
It was very Snow White.

Ha! (*Laugh.*) Um...  
Another story I heard was—  
thirty Marines went blind  
because they drank Iraqi moonshine.  
It was so absurd—  
thirty Marines  
an a barrel of poison apples.  
I saw people  
who I liked  
in my own unit  
who I respected  
treat the Iraqis so bad  
an say they are so stupid,  
dirty,  
an disgusting,  
um...  
It was very upsetting.

Even myself  
at times—  
would say that I hated the Iraqis.  
You are soo...  
overwhelmed—  
an it seems like they are there  
to take out your frustrations.  
It's really confusing.

I wanted to talk to the Iraqi people.  
an—um...  
I wanted to talk to the women!  
How uh absurd would that be!  
“Hi, I have three weapons on me that could kill you!  
but hey, let's talk woman to woman.”  
ha—, um...

I did get a two week leave  
an all I wanted was to go home

an never return?  
but I knew I had to go back  
an so I tried not to think about it.  
So um...  
there I was  
going to Macy's,  
shopping for shoes,  
eating, in nice restaurants,  
but in two weeks  
I knew I'd be back in the desert  
in a Humvee with three guns.  
Besides...  
I knew my best friend was there  
an she made it bearable.  
I—I couldn't abandon her.

When we finally came home for good,  
I had been there a long time  
an I thought it would be great  
but it was not so great to be home.  
um...

You go in your house  
an it's all the same  
an you see your friends  
an you say  
"I was just in Iraq. For a year."  
an they say  
"What was it like?"  
an you say  
"It sucked!"  
but you look in their eyes  
an you see  
they don't wanna hear it.  
so...  
you stop talking to people!

I couldn't tell people that  
when I was in Iraq  
I was  
laying on a flatbed truck

waiting for hijackers  
so we could shoot them.

or...

that I hit people with bayonets  
so that I could get them away from me.

They'd look at you  
in a different way  
especially people you're close to.

um...

I had a boyfriend

an...

we stayed together while I was gone.

But when I got home,

my boyfriend would say

"Yeah it's bullshit but what can I do about it?"

We broke up.

ha an um...

My *Mom* was like,

"I support you an I'm proud of you,"

but then she voted for Bush!

How could you vote for someone  
who tried to kill me?

She would have been

one of those people who say,

"My daughter died for a good cause."

But I would want her

to be Cindy Sheehan

an say,

"What the fuck?!"

She believes

she supports me

to the fullest extent

but I can't reconcile that.

How could she support me

and—

a president

who is doing such horrible things?

So we don't talk about it.

I don't understand why everyone doesn't care about this war!

*(Music: Suddenly we hear chanting from offstage: three groups—  
“Peace now!” / “1-2-3-4 we don't want your fucking war!” / “Bring  
home the troops.” She rises and dons her Army jacket, adorned with  
various protest pins. The entire cast enters chanting and cheering,  
giving KELLY a live microphone. We are at an antiwar rally.)*

I think  
we should pull out the troops!

*(Cheers.)*

What we are doing now  
Is not  
working!

*(Applause and cheers.)*

If this war is based on lies  
why are we there?  
Why are U.S. soldiers being killed?  
Why are soldiers back  
for a third time?

*(More cheering.)*

I have a friend who can't sleep,  
families have fallen apart,  
vets can't find jobs!

*(Angry applause.)*

All of this is because  
they were used as pawns in this war!  
I don't think we can fix it by staying!

*(Cheers and chanting begin again into mass exit and transition.)*

**Scene 11****JULIUS TULLEY, NATIONAL GUARD SERGEANT****Iraq War Service: February 2002—May 2003.****Native American, 42, lives in Navajo Reservation, St. Michael's, Arizona.**

*(Interview: St. Michaels, Arizona, Navajo Indian Reservation, all day [10 A.M. to 8 P.M.] driving around the Reservation in a Jeep. Average build, jeans, button down plaid shirt.)*

*(Transition to JULIUS.)*

*(Video interview clip.)*

*(Music: Ackerman Wondering...Eyes.)*

*(During YVONNE's narration, JULIUS enters from up right. All the panels are open and the camo cloth backdrop glows like twilight or dawn in a southwestern sky. As he strolls among the vertical panels he quietly takes in the landscape and the heavens, arriving down left.)*

**YVONNE.**

I wanted Julius to sit down—  
you know, sit down  
and feel comfortable  
to tell me what it was like to be in Iraq—  
what a difficult experience—you know,  
he was there for a long time  
and you know—he lives on this Navaho reservation in Arizona—  
St. Michael's Arizona,  
and I had to drive  
like three hours  
from Albuquerque to get there  
because the reservation  
is basically in the middle of nowhere.

So I go to a Days Inn,  
where I'm supposed to meet him  
that his cousin is the manager of in Navaho country  
and his cousin tells me  
that Julius is really having a hard time

---

and that he hopes that spending some time with me will sort of help him talk about his experiences.

**JULIUS.**

I am Native American.

Americans call us Navajo,  
but we are Diné people.

Ya know

that is what we call ourselves.

I love my people.

I am patriotic for my people.

I have a Navajo flag on my helmet  
along with the American flag,  
and I keep a picture of my family  
inside my helmet.

I fought in Iraq for my people,  
but in some ways, it has killed me.

In some ways I'm not the same person I used to be.

I'm short-tempered

And my spirituality is not as strong.

It's been hard for me, ya know;

No one...

knows how I feel.

No one understands...

You can never understand.

We are all different.

I wanted to serve for my people.

Ya know,

that's what I wanted to do

in the midst of war,

live as righteously as I could

and serve mankind in a good way.

I want to make sure

that what happened to my people  
never happens again.

Not just to my Diné, Navajo people,  
but all people,

including Iraqis.

I joined the National Guard in Blanding, Utah.  
Half of the people there were Navajo.  
We trained at Fort Hood, Texas.  
And as I was going through the museum there,  
I, ummm,  
saw pictures of the Navajo people  
being rounded up,  
and then I thought:  
this is the very unit,  
the very division,  
that came over  
and rounded up my people like animals.  
This is the very people,  
the very military,  
that came over  
and killed my people.  
The Native Americans grew up here  
first.  
Then they started coming,  
the Europeans,  
started coming;  
Then the Hispanics came from the south.  
Slowly,  
driving the people out;  
killed them.

This was once our land.  
This mother earth is nobody's land,  
It's no one's land.  
We're just the caretakers.  
When they killed my people,  
a lot of our beliefs and traditions were lost.  
That is something I am struggling with to this day.

I don't know if I killed any of them,  
I took no pride  
in killing another human being.  
But I would do the killing  
not to be killed.

---

My mom was concerned,  
So we called for a medicine man,  
and he did the Navajo Ceremony of Protection for us.  
It's a sacred ceremony.

Then I said good-bye to my family.

I was not afraid at all.

I left it all up to the Great Creator  
as to what would happen.

I depended on the ceremony that was done for me.

I remember my brother was always telling me  
not to feel alone.

We are never alone.

The trees, rocks, and the sky  
are always with us.

There was always a spiritual being with me.

I'd really grown to like the people of Iraq;

They're just people,  
like you and I.

Every human being is like that on the face of this earth,  
ya know...

every five fingered human being is—  
is like that.

Then I would ask, ya know,

out of curiosity I would say,

“Ya know what. Tell me three things

tell me three things, you want—

you want to see for your country,

for your people

What would you want?

The three answers that would always come back is:

well, first of all,

no more wars.

We want no more wars.

Second would be education.

I want an education.

I want to be able to make a difference

with the education I receive.

Third is,

I would really like to see some economic development  
Here in our country,  
I'd say—what do you mean by economic development?  
I wanna see an economic structure  
that will benefit all people,  
not just one person.  
That's what I would want.  
Those are the three things that would always come up.  
I respect them.

I did my part, came home,  
I said I needed some psychological help,  
but...  
my Navajo people,  
my government,  
could not help me.  
They kept saying I needed to go to the outside for that.  
Yet so many of us here are veterans,  
So many Native Americans serve.  
But when we need help,  
we have to drive three hours to Albuquerque  
or five hours to Phoenix  
or eight-nine hours to Salt Lake City.  
I personally...  
I don't want handouts.  
I just want help.  
I need someone to talk to about these things,  
but my people can't help me.

It is very hard for me to talk about what I saw,  
what happened there,  
ya know.

I'm trying to get help. I really am.  
But, I would go back if they asked me.

I am a warrior,  
and my people are warriors.  
I don't want to go back,  
but I will.

*(He stands proudly, quietly, gently confronting the audience as the lights fade.)*

## Scene 12

**PATRICK MURPHY, ARMY CAPTAIN**

**Iraq War Service: July 2003—January 2004.**

**White male, 31, lives in New Hope, Pennsylvania.**

*(Interview: Center City Philadelphia Law Firm Office, seated at his desk. Recently elected to Congress from Bucks County, Pennsylvania; he is northeast Philly born and raised.)*

*(Transition to PATRICK MURPHY.)*

*(Music: Panels turn, lights change as a desk/table and chair are set up center for PATRICK. He is dressed in a trademark dark blue suit and a power tie, seated.)*

**PATRICK.**

When I landed at the Baghdad Airport,  
my guys picked me up in a convoy,  
handed me a weapon,  
gave me a couple of magazines,  
said, “Load up, we are going through the city,  
we’re going down ambush alley.”

I knew then...

I was kinda going to the Super Bowl of war.

We were a combat brigade...

so it’s...

35 hunnerd people.

These are the guys that are front line,  
tip of the spear.

We were in Al Rashid,  
nine districts in Baghdad;  
al Rashid is the biggest  
and most poorest district.

There are 1.5 million people,  
bout the size of “fulla-delf-yah” *(Philadelphia)*.

This is where I get pissed off, quite frankly,

what's going on in Iraq.

My dad served...

[as a]... p'lice officer in Philadelphia  
for 22 years.

There are 1.5 million people in Philadelphia  
and seven thousand police officers.

There are 1.5 million people in Al Rashid, Baghdad,  
and there were 35 hunnerd of us.

Half as many law enforcement personnel  
in Baghdad Iraq in the middle of the war  
than there are in Philadelphia right now.

And then I hear my government say  
we're not short handed.

*Nineteen* of my fellow paratroopers did not make it back.

Yeah, every time a guy died

I had to investigate it.

Know why, how, all that.

These 35 hunnerd guys,

I was their attorney.

Practiced every kind of law imaginable,

Criminal law,

foreign claims,

even handled divorce papers—

you'd have grown men come in,

shut the door and start bawling

how their wife of 20 years was leavin 'em

because they were s'posed to be home

by the fourth of July,

and it's now September.

They were tired of the...

tired of the pace.

I tried three Iraqis

in the Iraqi Central Criminal Court.

Basically the Supreme Court of Iraq.

One guy was Shiek Moyad,

who was a lieutenant under Muqtada al Sadr.

He's the most radical Shiite leader in Iraq.

He's killin' people,

---

threatenin' to kill Americans,  
doin things he shouldn't be doing.  
He's got mortar,  
AK 47's,  
all kinds of weapons in his mosque.  
Completely against the Geneva Convention,  
international law.  
I worked my tail off to  
learn the 1969 Iraqi Criminal Code,  
put him in jail for seven years.  
Best case I ever tried.  
I trained 600 Iraqis  
in small class settings.  
Job was to teach them Rules of Engagement,  
basically when you can fire your weapon.  
I also taught them what it meant  
to be a U.S.,  
now Iraqi Army soldier.  
I taught 'em the seven Army values:  
Loyalty, Duty, Honor, Respect,  
Selfless Service, Honor,  
Integrity, and Personal Courage.  
They were my battle buddies,  
brothers in arms.  
I'd tell them,  
this is a defining moment in your country's history,  
and you guys are true patriots for your country.

I did get the bronze star.  
The greatest thing I'll ever do  
is serve my country in Iraq.  
Felt like I was changing the world for the better.  
I can run for Congress, 2006.  
I could win,  
(I'm gonna win),  
but that won't be as great  
as serving in Iraq.

The most important Issue out there is—  
we are a nation at war,

and you wouldn't know that  
walking down the streets of Philadelphia  
or into a Starbucks right now.  
I'm not anti-war,  
I'm not pro-war,  
I'm pro-troops.  
It's hard to say the war wasn't right  
when I know it will dishonor the people I served with.  
S' hard t' have conservatives question my patriotism.  
I know what I have done for my country,  
and I'm not afraid to take a stand.  
Administration can say they support the troops,  
get pictures with the troops,  
but the truth is,  
they are not supporting the troops...  
When we don't have simple...  
VIPs who came to visit us,  
they have up-armored Humvees,  
anti-detonation technologies.  
Why shouldn't that be on every...  
Why shouldn't a private have that?  
Why, in this year alone,  
have we cut over 155 million  
in Veteran's benefits?  
Why are VA hospitals getting closed down?  
So now, Captain Soltz,  
when he's home,  
he has bad dreams  
he has to drive three hours  
to get counseling?  
That's what we're doing  
to our veterans out there,  
and it's a disgrace,  
an absolute disgrace.

*(Transition to ROBERT ACOSTA.)*

*(Music: The Decemberists' alt-rock anthem When the War Came punches in loudly, as the set is suddenly bathed in deep red light.)*

*(SOLDIERS enter, angrily striking and shifting the scene, move downstage toward the audience, pausing for a moment, taking a defiant stance.)*

*(The actor playing ROBERT enters and takes his position, and in tune with the chaotic violence of the music, stares up into a single down-light as if to draw strength and power from it.)*

*(The others leave at random.)*

*(As the music pulses, his gaze gently drops as he surrenders himself to inhabit the broken figure of ROBERT—missing his right hand [his fist and forearm encased in a camouflage glove that matched his fatigues].)*

*(The lights come up on the scene.)*

*(There is a chair down right.)*

### Scene 13

**ROBERT ACOSTA, ARMY SPECIALIST**  
**Iraq War Service: April 2003—July 2003.**  
**Hispanic male, 22, lives Santa Ana, California.**

*(Interview: Los Angeles, California. Missing his right hand; also has a pronounced left leg limp [featured in The Ground Truth]).*

**ROBERT.**

Me and my buddy, Anthony,  
uh we...  
was hangin' out with some friends  
cause the fire department  
had this big hole in the ground,  
and uh, they'd fill it with water  
and we would go swimming.  
Ummm...ya man like uh,  
we're all swimming and havin' a good time  
'n me and Anthony go out  
cause I was gonna pick up some stuff for  
umm, my soldiers.  
we didn't have a vehicle

so we went and we, uh,  
we asked this, this E7  
for uh—  
a Humvee  
and he said  
“yeah ya know only if you, you...  
ya know, here’s some money,  
get me some stuff too,” ya know,  
cause we were gonna buy sodas and  
um ice ’n like that  
stuff’s like gold out there man  
and, um...

So we go and we’re drivin’ out  
'n it’s like—  
it’s like the airport—  
and then there’s a long road—  
and there’s like, ya know,  
little shops—  
n’ there’s the souvenirs—  
and like ice and all that stuff  
and um...  
and then there’s the airport road,  
uhhh, IED valley, whatever.

We would always buy from this guy,  
and uhh Anthony,  
I guess,  
would always buy from somewhere else,  
so uhhh,  
we went down the road further  
little bit than what I was used to.  
There was no vehicles or nothing  
and we were we were just like  
the only Humvee  
heh, um...  
so like I told like,  
“Hey dude, fuck this, ya know,  
let’s take a U-turn and go back.”  
cause like people,

were startin' to come out man,  
they were coming out of their houses  
and like starin' at us 'n shit  
and then umm—  
We're like trying to go back to that airport road.  
And uh then,  
a car,  
the car in front of us stops  
and then umm—  
there's like people standin' to my side,  
people standin' to Anthony's side.  
And uhh,  
all of a sudden it's like boom,  
a live grenade goes through the window,  
my window is open,  
and lands between me and the driver.  
Eh uh I uh grabbed it,  
with my right hand  
and then uhh I,  
I just threw it out,  
I,  
I fuckin' dropped it on the floor  
and then uhh—  
I reached down again and I grabbed it  
and when I grabbed it,  
it popped.  
So I almost got it out  
and umm,  
like my hand was gone automatically.  
My leg was all fucked up.

*(Pause.)*

I was still like conscious  
and Anthony just started shooting  
and I couldn't tell,  
I couldn't—  
I tried to fire a round,  
first time I'd fired a gun in Iraq.  
Ha, umm...

I'm like "Fuck that,  
let's go dude,  
let's get the fuck out of here,"  
and then uh,  
I put my hand out the window,  
cause I didn't wanna look at,  
cause I figure ya know  
if I can't see it,  
its not as bad  
'n maybe it won't aff—  
I don't know.  
But ummm...  
ya, he hits the car in front of us  
and he pushes all the cars out of the way  
and he's like runnin' people over man.  
It was fuckin' crazy.  
And he's like  
knockin' people off the road man  
and he's like yellin' at me  
"You'll be alright, you'll be alright."  
That's the point when I was just like,  
"Tell my family, I'm sorry,"  
like fuck it dude.  
Yeah.

*(Pause.)*

And he's like  
"Stay awake, stay awake."  
And I was like up man,  
I was completely fucking conscious dude.  
I remember every fucking detail.  
And um  
I started getting kinda dizzy  
and I was like fuck, ya know.  
I was like this,  
fuck it, ya know,  
I'm gonna die in this fuckin' shit hole  
and then uh uh,—  
we finally make it back;

Fuckin' vehicle dies at the gate—  
fuckin' crazy dude—  
some crazy shit man—  
so um—  
Anthony gets out,  
and he goes to the gate,  
comes back,  
throws me on his back,  
um, he carried me really far  
and tells these guys to take me to the hospital.

*(He sits in a chair.)*

Then uhhm—  
they sent me like over to Walter Reed.  
And umm— we I,  
I had a lot of surgeries,  
like it was like a couple a week.  
Shit man,  
I didn't really even wanna  
live ya know.  
Sometimes I'd be like  
why the fuck am I doin this,  
putting myself through this shit ya know?  
I started drinking a lot.  
Uhh,  
shit man, I was even doing all these pills.  
I mean I still sleep with a gun by me at night,  
I'm just so paranoid,  
it's not normal.  
My girlfriend, she  
saved me,  
I mean I wouldn't be here  
if it wasn't for her.  
I don't,  
I don't wear the  
uhhh electric prosthetic  
cause like it's heavy,  
and uhh  
it makes you sweat

and it's just like really like uncomfortable.

But uhh

I really actually like the,

the hook, ya know,

it was just like easier I guess.

Like good for pool and stuff,

but like it attracted attention,

ya know,

plus I'm more comfortable without it.

And uhhmm

I had like a fake hand which,

which I wore for a while,

but the finger broke off

and then like uhh

I had to safety pin it on

and it looked like really ghetto.

heh, umm...

And fuckin',

if I wanted another,

I'd like have to go to the VA

'n that shit sucks.

Like the VA fucked me over man.

Like they sent me a fuckin' letter

and it said somethin' about my claims being denied

uhh for my leg

and uhhh PTSD.

I mean I was wiggin' out, ya know

cause like I needed those benefits

cause it was like costin' me 500 dollars

on just bounced checks, ya know.

Then, all of a sudden,

the *Washington Post* calls me up,

and I,

I told them everything and then,

like, the article comes out,

and then the next day the,

uhh, chief of staff of the VA called me

and I told her I couldn't live,

so uhh, so she sent me a check  
heh.

*(Rises from chair.)*

I mean,  
I liked being in the army,  
ya know,

*(He begins massaging his stump.)*

until Iraq came cause like  
I was a good soldier,  
like I did everything I was told.  
Uhhhm,  
every now and then,  
I look at the list like,  
to see who died,  
and I'll see someone I know or somethin'.  
I mean, it's sad.

*(He looks down at his lost hand and then looks up, straight out into the audience.)*

*(Transition to TRACEY RINGO.)*

*(Music: Panels shift, chair is reset for TRACEY. She enters, dressed quite well; wearing nice jeans and a lovely, expensive white blouse.)*

*(There is a photo montage on the screens; pictures of Iraqi citizens in need.)*

## Scene 14

**DR. TRACEY RINGO, NATIONAL GUARD MAJOR**  
**Iraq War Service: July 2004—October 2004.**  
**Black female, 35, lives in Cleveland, Ohio.**

*(Interview: Suburban Cleveland, Ohio, in the den of her home; affluent, successful, well dressed and manicured African American woman, lean, petite, put together.)*

**TRACEY.**

I feel...

Great  
about what I did.  
It's probably the most  
rewarding thing I have ever, ever done—  
and probably will ever do.

1988—  
right outta high school  
the Fall of 1988.  
I joined the medical unit of course,  
because I knew I...  
I always knew I wanted to be a doctor,  
so I was a medic.  
So I got a lot of experience;  
so by the time I went to medical school  
it was like  
oh you're already doing a lot of this stuff!

I had uh,  
I had been in the military,  
in the National Guard  
throughout Desert Storm  
and  
it really *wasnta-issue*  
because if your unit wasn't needed,  
then you would not be needed.  
So when we um—  
We started with Iraqi Freedom,  
I said, oh,  
more than likely we won't be going.  
But what happened was that  
The rules changed (*Laugh.*)  
they said we need doctors.  
But, before I left,  
You know, the part of being fearful  
or wondering  
you know,  
what's goina happen or...  
I didn't  
I didn't have that anymore,

Cuz I knew I just had to concentrate  
on coming back home,  
Being you know...  
going there with a clear mind  
and doing my job and coming back home,  
y'know that was my goal;  
and of course there was my faith  
I,  
I didn't have any fears  
about—  
you know,  
I said the Lord hasn't bought me this far to leave me!  
and I musta said that a thousand times.

*(Laughs.)*

And I, I made a vow to myself  
That I would not have any negative vibes over there,  
you know,  
I needed to be positive  
I needed to be  
uh,  
I could be an inspiration to someone  
or get someone through a troubled day  
you know,  
I mean I'm wearing a medical uni—  
and I'm going to be seeing people  
who are hurt  
people who are discouraged  
for all different types of reasons  
so I need to have a positive attitude.

My nickname was Smiley  
or *(Laughs.)*

Why are you smiling so?  
And I said people don't smile?  
And they said no not over here.  
They don't.

So it was like a breath of fresh air you know,  
to be this positive force

you know for all the people around me,  
and it worked.

I was the uhh,  
I was the palace, um—  
physician;  
so I was stationed in the Green Zone  
which was then transitioned into the international zone  
and that was at the presidential palace  
It's a, a beautiful place

*(Inhale.)*

Uh what it was like... You know what,  
They WANNID to see us  
It was like—  
Just to touch us *(Giggle.)*  
just to y'know get some advice from an American doctor  
they were very grateful.  
When you see these people  
they are very very humble.  
uhh, very grateful—  
that we're there.  
Ya know it wasn't like what I saw on the news;  
They wannid us there.  
Y'know I'm sure you had a select few  
but the overwhelmingly  
Y'a know feelin' that ya got  
was they're so happy that you're here.

*(Exhale.)*

I was there when they uh,  
Actually...uh  
blew up the marketplace;  
And one of the restaurants  
And Death  
Just—  
People—  
burnt—  
Death you know...  
But...

to see though,  
I mean it was nothing,  
I mean we went to the site but—  
There was nothing to do...  
That was...  
that was the worst...  
There were children...  
Yeah. Yeah...  
there's nothing you could do;  
So young...so young...

And we need to just finish what we started,  
You know, just to see just  
to think of their city street  
I look at these lil kids  
an I'm thinkin what a worl...  
You know what a life  
You know to grow up with this  
and this is just normal to them now.  
So...we need to do what we went over there to do;  
You know help them have a good life  
live faith,  
and make decisions that,  
you know, we're able to make.

I wish I had this song...  
Well my translator had...  
it's a song they had  
About um—  
She would sing it every morning and jus—  
La la la lah—  
It's a song about, um, the American troops  
comin' to save us.  
And I don't, I don't know the song  
But she would sing it all the time,  
An what she would do,  
when she came to work  
she would um, have on one outfit—  
and then when she left  
she would wear something else—

so that people couldn't track her  
or trace her based on how she was dressed.

An she wasn't scared.

Y'know sometimes she would

um

come in a little late

and she'd come in an say—

Sorry I'm late they blew up the bridge—

An she would still come.

Her name was Salwa,

an she was forty years old.

The women...

They deal with a lot...

Goin' back?

That's on the table;

I kinda struggled with that

Coming back home,

Y'know cuz I felt like my team

I was leaving my team;

the medical psychologist

He said um,

It's time for you to go

you did your time and you need to leave

cuz the longer you stay

the harder it's goin' to get for you to leave.

Then my family "We need you"

you know cuz we're very close

And then the time I was leavin'

was when it really started to heat up

Already have the confidence of everyone around me

and now I'm leavin'

so I was dealin' with that.

Nightmares?

You know I—I don't and

You know when I came back

I didn't know how I was goina be—

But—not um...

I kinda put it behind me.

You know when I, when I do a interview  
it kinda brings back those emotions;  
Makes me think about it;  
but on a day to day basis,  
It—  
it just kinda goes away.

I get emotional before a basketball game now.  
The flag means so much more to me  
than it ever did before.  
I've always been patriotic,  
but even more so now.  
A lot of people have lost their lives  
for that flag to fly,  
and when I see it,  
I think about them.  
I am grateful for them.

*(Transition to ALEX.)*

*(Music: Panels shift as ALEX enters carrying a TV tray table holding a small plate with three or four cookies on it. There is also a chair down right.)*

## Scene 15

**ALEX PRESSMAN, MARINE RESERVE SERGEANT**

**Iraq War Service: February 2003—July 2003.**

**White Russian immigrant, 27. Russian native, lives in Brooklyn, New York.**

*(Interview: Coney Island, New York, housing development apartment. 5'6," bald, sturdy, muscular. Missing a foot—walks with a prosthetic limp. Has a trademark Russian dialect. Dressed in a white T under a track suit; new white sneakers.)*

**ALEX.**

Hi.

I'm a Russian Jew.

I emigrated from Belarus...

came here in '94 when I was sixteen years old.

I moved to Brooklyn,  
Sheepshead Bay,  
it's a little Russian populated area,  
so...  
After my first semester in college  
I decided to join the Marines.  
I always wanted to go to the military,  
it was my childhood dream.  
When I came here,  
you know,  
I knew the Marines were the hardest,  
of you know training and stuff,  
and I always like it.  
My buddy in college,  
he was a Marine too,  
and you know,  
he taught me a lot of stuff about them  
and I loved it.  
And I,  
well one day,  
there was a recruiter on campus...  
and...  
HE GOT ME!

*(Laugh.)*

It was at Stony Brook University.  
Month later I was in boot camp.  
I wanted to go to war.  
I wanted to be one of the ones  
who makes a difference, you know?  
I didn't spend six years in the military just to,  
you know,  
come to work and go to the base...  
I wanted to do the real thing.  
I wanted to experience it.  
I don't regret a bit of it,  
even though I became disabled because of it.  
And you know I lost a foot,

but I don't regret anything.

When I was in Iraq,  
and when I got wounded, you know,  
I was just in the back of a convoy doing security.  
I volunteered to go to Baghdad  
to get some medical supplies.

And umm,

I was in the back with a machine gun,  
and our commander told us to stop for a smoke break,  
or whatever.

We stopped at a pit of the highway.

I just came out to smoke a cigarette.

I was walking behind the guys,  
and just...

stepped on a land mine, you know.

Took me up in the air,

fell on my feet,

you know,

I mean I fell down, everybody took cover, you know,  
they thought we were under fire and stuff  
cause there was like a loud boom.

Nothing the doctor could do,

plus he didn't have any morphine,

but they did a tourniquet

and it stopped the bleeding a little bit,

and I waited for like an hour

for the chopper to come and pick me up.

I wasn't screaming,

I'm still a man, you know

—haha.

But it was painful, you know,

what you going to do?!

*(He looks off stage and back.)*

Oh, I forgot the tea!

*(He rises and begins to exit up left as he speaks.)*

They flew me to Baghdad,  
where I had my initial surgery.

*(Offstage:)*

I guess they took care of the bone sticking out, you know, they cut it up a little,  
and I had a chunk of muscle lifted from this side.  
I had multiple lacerations, so you know, they took care of that.  
Next day I was flown to Germany, and I spent three days in Germany.

*(ALEX reenters, limping, carrying a tea service for two on a tray. As he talks he realizes the plate of cookies is still on the tray table, sets the tea tray down on the chair during the following...)*

And from Germany,  
I was flown to Bethesda,  
and I spent two months there.  
I had just three surgeries,  
no actually four surgeries.  
I was depressed for a while,  
but you know I always had friends or family there,  
somebody with me—so that was kind of cool.

*(ALEX gives the cookie plate to someone in the audience.)*

Here, have a cookie, pass them around, they're good.

*(ALEX takes a cookie for himself and takes a bite.)*

Try one.  
You know, then I thought of  
“What am I gonna do now,” you know.  
And that I won't able to find a job,  
and why did it happen to me...  
you know, stupid stuff like that.  
I was on drugs most of the time.  
Then they took me to Walter Reed to get a prosthetic,  
so I spent two months there in therapy,  
and trying to get used to the prosthetic.

*(He sits again.)*

It was painful,

but you know,  
I'm doing fine.  
My friends used to pick me up on the weekends,  
you know, come to Maryland  
and drive back home for the weekend,  
and drive me back on Monday—  
that was cool.

*(He eats, thinking...)*

Oh yea! President Bush came to see me...  
uhhh...  
I couldn't speak.  
I didn't now what to say...  
ha-ha.  
But he made me feel really great, you know.  
It was really nice,  
he came in and shook my hand,  
and everybody had to wear gloves to come in,  
you know, to the room,  
and he didn't wear no gloves,  
he just shook my hand and we spoke a few minutes.  
He said thank you for the job,  
and you know, he asked who I was...  
When he found out I was an immigrant,  
you know, he got surprised.  
And he said, you know...  
we take care of our veterans...  
ha-ha.

Actually I read yesterday,  
they're trying to close Walter Reed Hospital.  
I don't know about it,  
because I don't think they can close.  
It's huge point...  
All the army guys go to Walter Reed.  
They say they'll transfer people to Bethesda,  
I don't think Bethesda can handle the numbers.  
Close a hospital that's not so busy, you know.

*(He looks for the plate.)*

So, who's got the plate?

*(ALEX retrieves the plate.)*

I'll go get some more. I didn't realize there would be so many of you!

*(ALEX exits with the plate as he speaks, returning with a bakery box full of cookies.)*

When people say the war is based on lies,  
you know...it upsets me,  
especially when people who are saying it  
have nothing to do with the military,  
or just, you know,  
follow that stuff on the news,  
and have their own opinion.

*(He gives the box of cookies to an audience member.)*

Here, pass them around.  
Make sure everybody gets one.

I mean, everyone is entitled to their own opinion,  
but like keep it to yourself.  
Soldiers,  
Marines, you know,  
sailors and everybody,  
we're not there to have our own personal opinions.  
You could have your own personal opinion,  
but it doesn't matter what you're thinking,  
if you want to go,  
or if you're against or for the war,  
if you already signed the contract,  
you have to follow orders,  
no matter what you think,  
what's your personal agenda about something,  
you know.  
Whatever the higher ups tell you to do,  
you better suck it up and do it.

I support the war

because we have to finish what we started.  
We can't just pull out.  
It's gonna take years,  
It's not gonna be fast,  
not like the way we planned.

I'm fine,  
and I have to go with my life.  
I stay close to the military,  
I have a lot of friends who are in the military,  
some deployed, you know...  
You know, I'm not happy  
that I have to walk  
with a prosthetic leg, you know.  
And I do get depressed sometimes,  
like you know,  
a wave of depression,  
but you know, like I said,  
I snap out of it real quick.  
And you know, just sometimes  
I even forget that I have a prosthetic.

You know, I wish it didn't happen,  
but it did.  
Nothing I can do about it.  
I can't change it.  
You have to go on with your life,  
it's how you make of it.  
You can't change the wheel of life back, you know.  
If you wanna at least live the rest of your life  
feeling sorry for yourself,  
thinking, why the hell did it happen to me...  
That's how you'll spend your life.  
You just gotta forget about it,  
and just go on with your life...  
just get the best out of it—  
that's my point of view.  
So, who's got the box?

*(He says in fluent Russian: "Put it under your chair.")*

Sorry, please put it under your seat, I'll take care of it.

*(Theme music: Panels change as ALEX exits, carrying off the TV table and tea tray.)*

*(Transition to JAMEL.)*

**YVONNE.**

*(Theme music / Video interview clip.)*

I was talking on the phone with Jamel—  
we were talking for a long time.  
We were joking around and laughing  
and it turns out  
we have a very similar ethnic mix  
having a Hispanic mother  
and a Caribbean father  
and um he's from New York—  
I'm from New York—  
we have a whole accent thing going on  
fast talking  
and I was on the phone with him  
and I kept thinking  
I know he's an amputee  
maybe it's like a finger you know,  
I was so into him  
and I was like well,  
maybe it's not that bad—  
I didn't even want to ask him what it was.  
And then finally  
at the end of the conversation  
I said you know, what happened?  
He told me he lost a leg  
and I said OK.  
So when I went to Walter Reed  
I was prepared for that.  
Once again, It's this big sprawling campus  
and for me to get to where Jamel is  
I have to do this long walk.  
At that time I was teaching part time  
at Villanova University  
and all my students we wear—

all the boys would wear  
T-shirts that said Villanova or whatever on it  
and then these baseball caps  
with the brims like,  
work to death on it.  
I was walking through the campus on Walter Reed  
and it was like the same thing  
I mean there were these kids  
with these T-shirts  
and they said Army or their names on them  
and they had the caps  
with the brims work to death  
and then when you look at them  
like half their face was blown off  
or they were missing arms  
or legs  
and when I saw  
that they were so similar to my students  
that it just—  
by the time I got to Jamel,  
I was  
my heart  
you know,  
my heart was in my throat.

### Scene 16

**JAMEL DANIELS, MARINE CORPORAL**

**Iraq War Service: July 2004—January 2005.**

**Puerto Rican/African/Jamaican American male, 26, lives in New York City.**

*(Interview: Bethesda, Maryland, Walter Reed Medical Center. He is in a wheelchair, one leg in a traction pin cage, one leg missing [above the knee]. He speaks quickly, with a casual, yet forced nervous enthusiasm.)*

**JAMEL.**

Pretty much, my accident—  
Pretty much resulted in a uh—

something called an IED—  
“Improvised Explosive Device”—  
pretty much a home made bomb.

We was on patrol—  
for the whole day and umm—  
we was on our way back to the base.

And—  
we was about—  
I’d say—  
four miles away, from our base.  
And, it was four Hummers, four Humvees.  
And like I said I’m a machine gunner  
so my job is on top the Hummer,  
with my machine gun.

With and uhhh—  
me and three other guys.  
Now we’re half way there, driving by—  
and ummm—

Boom, this big explosion blew up  
from underneath the Hummer.

And—  
from what I could remember  
I flew up—  
it shot me,  
from the blast underneath.  
It shot me out of the hole,  
the hole on top of the Hummer?—  
thirty-five feet in the air.

And—  
when they found me,  
I was in the ditch where the bomb blew up.  
And uhhh—  
pretty much uh from there,  
I was in the hole and—  
everybody like, jumped out the vehicles.  
So one of my boys pulled me out of the hole—  
by the back of my flack jacket,  
And ummm—

as a result of that,  
while that's goin' on  
we have our vehicle blown up—  
completely blown up.  
We had ammo in there.  
You know, grenades—  
Uhhhh, AT4s—  
You know, it's like the usuals of war.  
All that ammo in there just blew up the whole vehicle.  
And the ammo that was in there started shootin' off  
and blowin' up by itself.  
That's uhhhh, what we call in the military a—  
A—“cook off.”

I was up for the whole uhhh—  
the whole accident and everything.  
I really couldn't feel anything from the waist down.  
Nothing—  
from the waist down I couldn't feel it.  
I was just like—  
in shock, I was in shock the whole time.  
And pretty much—  
My guys just lit up the whole neighborhood.  
They was just pissed off from the everything, you know.  
Cuz there was a guy—  
a guy running so they caught him—  
and they just took care of him.

I didn't find out till I actually did wake up  
and I looked down out of my coma—  
I looked down and I was crying.  
It was really uhhh—  
really a bad moment for me right there.  
Very painful.  
I mean—  
My right leg was in like a brace,  
not a brace but some kind of—  
uhhh, what do you call—  
It was in traction—  
had pins goin' through it.

Lost a lot of uhhh—  
had a lot of wounds—  
uhhh, skin grafts all that.

They tried they said they tried to save my other leg,  
but it just—  
the blood flow wasn't there, you know.  
And you know, it's just sad, you know,  
I really do wish I had my other leg.  
Really kills me every day—  
to wake up and—  
you know, look at my foot and it's like  
"Wow," you know,  
"I have one leg," you know.  
I'm limited on doin so many things, you know.  
And I have my son,  
you know, my son, you know—  
he's young, five years old, you know.  
I wanna run and play with him,  
you know and everything and—  
Can't do nothing—  
I really can't do much.  
I mean—  
my son's used to it,  
he's used to it.  
In the beginning he was like  
"Awwww, Daddy! No, No, No!"  
He was kinda sad and all—  
and like—  
he would be scared to come near me—  
then he got used to it, he's used to it.  
He loves me man.  
It feels great when I'm with them.

You know—  
It sucks being here by myself  
and I'm like "Uhhhh."  
I'm used to my wife, you know,  
I'm used to being with my wife.

My wife—  
There's nothing like my wife.  
She's a great person, a really great person.  
I love her to death.  
But uhhh—  
just everything's hard on her.  
She's working, she's going to school—  
then she has to worry about him,  
then she has to worry about herself—  
and then—  
its just a lot of stress—  
with me.  
Yeah.  
It's a lot—  
It's a lot, it's a lot, you know—  
I love her to death—  
I don't know any other woman  
that would actually do this, you know—  
I cherish her to death—.

They rarely come down here.  
Uhhh last time was—  
two months ago,  
but I talk to them every day.  
I usually go to New York—  
to see them as much as I can on uhhh—  
the weekends.  
Now—  
I get mad because—  
I want to be home with my wife and kid  
and I can't do it,  
I can't even get in my apartment.  
Its kinda embarrassing, you know.  
I go to the lobby, there's two elevators—  
but I have to have my wheelchair  
lifted up the steps to get into the building.  
My wife can't do it, she's not that strong.  
In order for me to get into the bedroom  
I have to get on the floor and crawl to bed.

I don't like my son to see me like that.  
My son has a skateboard—  
and—  
one time I tried that,  
I put my body on the board  
and uhhhh—  
dragged my arms  
across the floor to bedroom,  
it's embarrassing that I have to do that, you know.  
I want to spend time with them.  
For me to spend the night,  
for me to go to the bathroom—  
I can't get up—  
So when I go to New York  
I stay in the Doubletree Hotel.

I get pissed off, you know.  
I wanna go run.  
I wanna go for a run, you know.  
I wanna go for a walk,  
something as simple as that, you know.  
Now it's like "Oh God"  
everything is sitting, sitting, sitting.  
I'm getting tired of sitting.  
I'm a very active person you know  
always on the go, doin' this doin' that.  
This sucks—  
really sucks,  
feel like an old man.

Seriously this is crazy, you know  
Half the time it really feels like that—  
This is not my life, you know what I mean?  
Wake up and everything will be back to normal.

I mean—  
I—  
when I dream at night sometimes—  
I dream about, well actually when I dream I see myself walking and  
everything—

just walking around.  
When I come out of my dream—  
I—  
I open up my eyes and wake up,  
I'm back to the reality of this.

It's hard.  
It's depressing—  
It's...

*(JAMEL takes a few convulsive shallow breaths, drops his head and finally breaks down, sobbing.)*

*(Transition to TY SIMMONS.)*

*(Music: Joy Division—Atmospheres Remix.)*

*(An orderly enters and wheels JAMEL off up right, still sobbing as the panels shift for Ty.)*

### Scene 17

**TY SIMMONS, NATIONAL GUARD CHIEF WARRANT OFFICER**

**Iraq War Service March 2003—July 2004.**

**West Indian/White male, 55, lives in Aurora, Illinois.**

*(Interview: Dulles Airport Hotel, Virginia, fall, late afternoon. Thick black hair, shirt, no tie; very conservative, retired military. He has a slight Chicago dialect.)*

**TY.**

I bleed red white and blue.  
To me, there's no greater honor  
than fightin'  
for your country.  
And, ya know,  
I'm so proud to be among the many people  
Dating back to the Revolution,  
the Civil War,  
who have served.  
I mean what greater honor

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