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ruggles. He fought against many injustices: segregation, the Vietnam War, racial discrimination, and economic inequalities, among others. As we have seen, he accepts that there are instances in which a just cause may require force to combat a great evil. Protecting Rwanda and Darfur stand out as profound examples. But while there may be justifiable instances, war (most especially in its modern incarnation) will never be justifiable. The injustice of war is, above all, revealed in its consequences—namely, the death of so many of its victims are civilians, and so many of them children. Zinn (1995) was right in claiming that wars waged by nations “are a hundred times more deadly for innocent people than the attacks by terrorists, vicious as they are.” As this chapter has reminded us, the statistics demonstrate this point compellingly. This is a fitting quote by Zinn with which to end this chapter at our current historical moment, in which our governmental leaders fight a war called War on Terror without really examining the *terror of war*. War is a condition in need of a cure. The cure resides in the people’s will.

CHAPTER 9

Howard Zinn

A Moral Example for G.I. Resistance

Ross Caputi

There are some harmful actions that can't be blamed on a single individual. Some harms can only come about when many people contribute, even though each person's actual contribution may seem small and insignificant. Imagine a working mother who buys a daily coffee and throws her styrofoam cup away when she's finished, a college graduate who takes a job that makes money over a job that does good, and the many Americans (and citizens of the “coalition of the willing” nations) who watched their country wage an unjust war. When these individual actions and inactions are multiplied by a population, they can result in enormous amounts of harm. When my former military unit, 1st Battalion 8th Marines, laid siege to Fallujah, Iraq, in November 2004, we forced 200,000 civilians to flee their homes, we killed hundreds (possibly thousands) of civilians, and we destroyed large portions of the city.¹ There isn't one person from my unit whom I can point my finger at and say he alone is responsible for the atrocities that ensued; everyone played a role.

My experience in Fallujah taught me one clear lesson: it is not enough that we refrain from committing individual acts of harm; we have to refrain from participating in harmful group actions as well. I didn't know it then, but what I came to believe in is called “collective responsibility,” a controversial (and, I would argue, radical) ethical concept. A proper understanding and application

of collective responsibility was completely lacking during my experience in the Marine Corps; surprisingly, I also found it lacking when I joined the antiwar movement. I believe that this concept makes clear why the antiwar movement failed to end the occupation of Iraq.

COLLECTIVE RESPONSIBILITY AND HOWARD ZINN

Howard Zinn played an important role in developing my belief in collective responsibility. When I got back from Iraq I was lost, torn between what was expected of me as a Marine and the guilt I felt for what we did to Fallujah. Around that time I read Howard Zinn's *A People's History of the United States*. Few books have had a greater impact on my life. Howard Zinn's words had a moral clarity about them that immediately rang true to me, and they did so at a time when I needed them most. It was because of him that I began to trust my instinct that what we had done to the people of Fallujah was wrong, and I gradually built up the courage to leave the Marine Corps.

I eventually joined the antiwar movement, but its message, the positions it took, and its tactics often frustrated me. In an effort to grow in numbers, the antiwar movement tried to appeal more to Americans' self-interest and sense of patriotism than to their sense of morality. It focused on informing Americans about the impact that the occupation was having on the economy instead of focusing on the destruction that it had brought to Iraq. To not risk being called anti-troops, it treated American servicepeople as victims of larger circumstances—like propaganda, the economic draft, and deceitful politicians—rather than as people, good and bad, who made a choice, consciously or not, to be part of something terrible. The antiwar movement spoke out against the atrocities that were committed in Iraq, but when it came to talking about who committed the atrocities its language got vague and its analysis became muddled. The antiwar movement blamed the government; it blamed the corporate media; it even blamed war itself. However, it did everything in its power not to blame the troops.² To me all of these positions and tactics appeared to be calculated appeals to patriotism and self-interest, and came in stark contrast to *A People's History of the United States*, which had appealed to me on a moral level.

A slogan often used by various veteran-led antiwar groups is "honor the warrior, not the war." This slogan epitomizes the type of thinking that often bothered me about the antiwar movement, and that Howard Zinn helped me break free from. If one thinks about it, it is difficult to imagine how one could be deserving of honor for participating in something dishonorable. Yet this slogan pops up again and again at veteran-led antiwar actions, and the antiwar movement doesn't consider its meaning. This slogan confuses the American public, it misrepresents how soldiers actually conduct themselves in war, it doesn't challenge the alleged honorable position that veterans hold in our society, and it makes real solidarity with Iraqis difficult, if not impossible.

Many people get nervous whenever they hear "blame" and "veteran" in the same sentence. The antiwar movement during the Vietnam era was accused

of unjustly blaming veterans, and was harshly criticized for this. Most likely the antiwar movement of today wants to avoid a similar reaction from the public, so it tiptoes around the subject of veteran responsibility.³ But it is of the utmost importance that we think about what our veterans did in Iraq and describe their actions honestly. If they harmed innocent civilians, we may have no choice but to blame them. If they did honorable things and truly deserve to be honored, then we should honor them. It should be noted, though, that veterans may not deserve blame or honor; the truth may be more complex, and we shouldn't let patriotism or a political agenda color our judgment on this issue or cause us to avoid it altogether.

Whether some veterans are deserving of blame—and if so, how much and for what specifically—is a side issue that will be discussed only briefly in this chapter. The issue at hand, broadly, is collective responsibility and what this concept has to offer to the activist, revolutionary, and average citizen. Collective responsibility was a big part of Howard Zinn's moral reasoning, and it shaped his approach to activism and academics. Of immediate consequence is what collective responsibility can teach us about how to resist war and occupation, and Howard Zinn's beliefs on this matter provide all of us, but veterans in particular, with a strong moral precedent. The antiwar movement's message and tactics have lacked clarity and have not addressed issues in American moral culture.⁴ Consequently, it has failed to protect Iraq from our government, though not for a lack of good intentions and hard work.⁵ In light of this failure and as members of the antiwar movement, we owe it to Iraqis to be self-critical. An understanding and application of the concept of collective responsibility will clarify our message and improve our tactics.

The Theory Behind It All

Contemporary ethics has traditionally focused on the causal and moral responsibility of individuals. The dominant belief in this field is that *individuals* are moral agents (assuming that they act under free will, they are capable of deliberating about reasons for acting, they are conscious of what they are doing, and they understand the consequences of their actions).⁶ Moral agents are held to be morally responsible for their actions, and they are ascribed with praise or blame for those actions. Thus, moral responsibility is different from causal responsibility. In the eyes of many philosophers, collective responsibility is a controversial concept because it judges *groups* to be either causally or morally responsible for *collective* actions.⁷ As a concept it is ardently both attacked and defended. Some deny that it is even sensible, while others claim that it is a common sense concept that most people use every day.

Those who reject collective responsibility usually do so because they believe that the intentions that lead to an action are the correct basis for moral evaluation. They claim that groups, unlike individuals, don't have the necessary center of consciousness or free will to be capable of intending to do something. Therefore, collective responsibility is something like a contradiction in terms. They believe that what might appear as a single group action is really an aggregate of individual actions, and is better termed as group "behavior."⁸ Those who support collective

responsibility either argue that collectives can form intentions⁹ or that the scope of morality involves more than just intentions.¹⁰ For example, people tacitly invoke it when they make statements like “Monsanto pollutes,” “the Winter Hill Gang ran South Boston,” or “the US military laid siege to Fallujah.” Many philosophers do accept collective responsibility; however, its nuances and implications are still very much debated.¹¹

Consider a group of people in which each person commits an act that doesn't interact with any other group member's action. Compare this to a group of people who act in concert with one another, and each person's action supports or interacts with all the other contributing people's actions. When these individual actions are related in such a way, they take on a character that wouldn't have been possible otherwise. The first example is just an aggregate of individual actions, and each person is responsible for his or her own individual actions. The second example is a collective action, and each person in the collective is responsible for his or her contributing action or actions, but the collective itself also bears additional responsibility.

A real-life example of the first case might be when 100 military personnel each perform a single military task independently of one other—tasks such as carrying a radio, firing a weapon, standing post, manning a checkpoint, and so on. Separately each one of these actions has little moral significance. Carrying a radio that isn't connected to air support is neither harmful nor useful. Standing post doesn't make any sense if you're not attached to a military and don't have a mission. However, when 100 military personnel perform the same military tasks together and their actions support, act in concert with, and interact with everyone else's, their actions become a collective action, which is greater and more significant than the sum of all their contributing individual actions. Carrying a radio and standing post are no longer isolated acts; they now have moral significance in the context of the collective action. The 100 military actions are now something more—they are a mission, an assault, a siege, or something of the kind—and the 100 military personnel may be blameworthy or praiseworthy as individuals for their contribution to this collective action. Additionally, the 100 military personnel are something more; they are a platoon, a battalion, or some other type of collective, and that collective may be blameworthy or praiseworthy itself.

This distinction between a group of people acting independently of one another and a group of people acting in concert with one another is typically ignored in the ethics literature, yet it is of great importance. It is this distinction that separates group behavior from a collective action, and the moral implications of this are significant because being a member of a group is a very big part of life.¹² Our families are groups, the people we work with are a group, and our society is a group. Understanding morality from the perspective of individuals, as it has been traditionally understood, is insufficient because it leaves a large part of our lives unexamined. Collective actions can be good or bad, and because the effects of collective actions are always more than the sum of all the contributing individual actions, enormous amounts of good or harm can result when groups act. In the globalized world that we live in today, where a single person's actions can have effects on the other side of the planet, it is more important than ever that

we understand collective responsibility, be aware of the collective actions that we contribute to, and feel empowered by the good that we can achieve when groups act.

There are many different types of collective action that may warrant collective responsibility. One type is when every member of a group engages in a collective practice, but only the action of one member results in any good or harm. In such cases, we might ascribe collective responsibility to the entire group.¹³ Imagine a community where everyone drinks and drives, and one night a drunk driver runs over a young child crossing the street. Even though it is only that night's driver's fault that leads to any harm, we might be inclined to ascribe blame to the entire community.¹⁴

Another type of collective action is when every member of a group contributes to a collective action. We can even make distinctions within this category. Consider, for example, when large numbers of people act without any communication or coordination between them (e.g., in a riot or by creating pollution). Or when a number of people jointly and cooperatively undertake a collective action (e.g., a military assault or a revolution). Or when harm or good is caused by some feature of the culture consciously endorsed and participated in by every member of a group (e.g., a society that endorses slavery or universal human rights).¹⁵

There may be some disagreement with these subcategories. For instance, someone might say that a society can't be held collectively responsible for pollution, since the polluters weren't acting as a group but rather as individuals with no cooperation or communication between them. True enough, most people in Western society don't get together and communicate and cooperate on how to pollute. However, most of us are aware that we pollute; we are aware that others pollute; we are aware that our pollution and everyone else's pollution is adding up at an alarming rate; and we are aware that our pollution is contributing to disease, climate change, and the extinction of entire species. Yet we continue to pollute, fully aware that we are acting with others and that together our actions will have a harmful effect. Whether or not the individuals in question intended to act together is irrelevant. The fact that they *did* act together is what makes their actions a collective action.

A group could even be collectively responsible for collective *inaction*. Imagine a society that has a government that lies to them, unjustly awards their tax dollars to multinational corporations, and allows only a very limited amount of democracy. If members of that society decided to rise up against its government, they could potentially overthrow it, but instead they remain docile.¹⁶ The society as a whole might be blameworthy, but the individual citizens could hardly be blamed. After all, it can only be considered heroic to risk being jailed, or worse, by one's government, and surely morality doesn't require so much from us. However, the whole group had it within its power to overthrow their government, and did nothing.¹⁷

Howard Zinn's writings have a lot to offer us on this topic even though he never explicitly wrote about collective responsibility. Zinn never felt a need to ground his moral judgments in one or another moral theory. He didn't need the theories of Kant or Hume or any other moral philosopher to oppose slavery or to speak out against war. His moral judgments came from a place of common sense and empathy for others. Collective responsibility was most likely a tacit component

of Zinn's moral reasoning, because it is implicit in his writings on history, justice, and peace. One can see this in the title of his autobiography, *You Can't Be Neutral on a Moving Train*. Employing this metaphor, Zinn (2002 [1994]: 8) means "that events are already moving in a certain deadly direction, and to be neutral means to accept that." War, occupation, social movements, apartheid, and pollution are collective actions, and Zinn clearly believed that we can't pretend that our actions are neutral, that they don't contribute, to these "events" around us. We can either oppose these collective actions or embrace our collective responsibility for them.

Collective responsibility also is implicit in his writings to the extent that it's implicit in a class analysis of society. You invoke collective responsibility when you claim that there is a group of people who unjustly maintain an economic and social system that favors them at the expense of everyone else in their society. (When the Occupy movement blames the 1%, it invokes collective responsibility.) Furthermore, Zinn believed that we all have a moral obligation to take direct action against injustices. This obligation falls on the individual rather than the collective, but it is not your traditional obligation to refrain from individual acts of harm or to do individual acts of good. The obligation is derived from the individual's status as a member of a collective (e.g., a citizen in a society, a soldier in an army, a member of the human race) and the responsibility that such a status places on the individual to oppose harmful collective actions (e.g., wars, pollution, oppression) and to participate in benevolent collective actions (e.g., social movements, protests, marches).

The Problem with Blaming

One contentious point in the debate about collective responsibility concerns blaming. Many philosophers become outraged at the idea that someone might be blamed for something that other people in their group did. However, this concern reflects a misunderstanding of collective responsibility. If the individual who is being blamed for the actions of others in his group truly did nothing, most likely he or she didn't participate in a collective action. Related to this issue is how we define group membership in a theory of collective responsibility. Collectives need not be defined along the lines of race, religion, nationality, or anything of the sort. These groups do not always act as a whole, and when they don't, they should be considered ancillary to a theory of collective responsibility. The type of group that is relevant to a theory of collective responsibility is the group of individuals who participate in a collective action. Those who should be held responsible for that collective action are only those who participated in it. Hence, group membership should be defined by participation in a collective action. If group membership is defined any other way—such as by race, religion, or nationality—and entire groups are blamed for the actions of just a few of its members, this would be terribly unjust.

Margaret Gilbert (2006: 109) formulates this concern better when she asks, "What does the blameworthiness of the collective's act imply about the personal blameworthiness of any one member of that collective?" The answer she gives is that "from a logical point of view, the short answer is: *nothing*. Everything depends on the details of a given member's particular situation."¹⁸ Those details

may include the precise amount that the individual in question contributed to the collective action. Or whether the individual knew that the collective action was immoral. If the individual was unaware, and that person's ignorance was in no way blameworthy, then he or she can't be blamed for the act in question.¹⁹

Collective actions are phenomena that transcend the individual contributions of each member. Similarly, the identity of the collective transcends the identity of its members. By participating in a collective action each individual becomes a member of a collective, an entity that is something more than the sum of all its individual members, a thing that we can speak of separately from its members, a thing that we can ascribe moral judgments to and that its members can feel pride or shame in. Also, individuals who have participated in a collective action often do hold separate moral judgments for themselves and for their collectives. All of these reasons indicate that the collective itself is capable of bearing moral responsibility that does not distribute to its individual members. For example, many veterans of the occupation of Iraq can truthfully say that they themselves are not responsible for war crimes in Iraq; however, no one who has been a member of the US military from the start of the occupation to its end can truthfully say that *we* are not responsible for war crimes in Iraq.²⁰ If they aren't ashamed of their own individual actions, they should, at the very least, be ashamed of the US military's actions.

This brings up an important question. What if our employer, our university, our country, or some other group that we belong to is doing something immoral? What is required from us as individuals? Based on the questions raised by Juha Räikkä (1997: 95–96), we might ask ourselves a similar set of questions when considering what we should do when we believe that a group we belong to is committing harm:

- Can I oppose the collective action without serious risk of being killed or tortured?
- Can I oppose the collective action by appealing to shared values accepted by the group and to factual knowledge readily available to its members?
- Is there no reason for believing that opposing the collective action would be completely futile?
- Should I accept the collective action without opposing it?

If our answers to the first three questions are yes, then our answer to the final question should be no.

Räikkä notes that we need to be more specific about what it means to oppose an immoral action or practice. If one's criticism or act of resistance is late, if it could have been made more effectively, or if it ends up being counterproductive, then it can't be considered genuine opposition.²¹ Räikkä concludes that the only way to "disassociate" ourselves from collective responsibility is to oppose the collective action in question and cease *all* support of it.²² He believes that there are real-life examples of people who oppose harmful collective actions but continue to contribute to them in some way, and who can still be considered blameworthy. Imagine a scholar who opposes how American society pollutes the environment, but the only way he can oppose that practice and be taken seriously is to fly in

jets to speak at conferences on the topic. So the only way this scholar can oppose America's practice of pollution effectively is by polluting the environment with jet exhaust. Alternatively, imagine an activist who opposes American society's practice of exploiting the developing world and consuming its resources. But this activist can't oppose this practice without exploiting these nations at least a little bit. This activist can't realistically reject American living standards completely. It would mean being an outcast from society, and few people would take the activism of an outcast seriously.²³

This raises important questions about what is required of each one of us to oppose our groups' harmful collective actions. Does morality require of us that we immediately stop polluting and reject all the comforts of a Western lifestyle? Should we be considered blameworthy if we do not completely convert to a sustainable and non-exploitive lifestyle so as to not be complicit in the crimes being committed against the developing world? Certainly action is required from us to move toward sustainability, but morality would hardly require from us sacrifices that are beyond our means. Those who do manage to completely disassociate themselves from the collective responsibilities of pollution and exploitation go above and beyond the call of duty. This brings to mind the heroic story of Brian Haw (1949–2011), who gave up everything, left his wife and children, and camped out in Parliament Square in London to protest his country's involvement in the occupations of Afghanistan and Iraq.²⁴ Brian Haw died after ten years of camping in Parliament Square. His dedication to justice and human rights is nothing short of heroic, and people who fall short of his example cannot rightly be considered blameworthy. It is often difficult to know precisely where to draw the line between what counts as opposing a harmful collective action and what counts as being complicit in it, but perhaps it is less important to know exactly where to draw the line than it is to draw one.

Some philosophers have even gone as far as to say that collective responsibility is not just a poor concept, but that it is actually dangerous. One such argument comes from Mark Reiff, who writes,

Attributions of collective responsibility have led to the wholesale murder, displacement, and oppression of entire peoples often enough that it should be obvious that a belief in collective responsibility cannot easily be controlled—given human nature, we must regard it as always presenting an invitation to evil.²⁵

Challenging a common analysis of terrorism that it is a “war-like instrument for advancing a political agenda,” Reiff (2008: 210) argues that terrorism is often more than just a means of coercion—some terrorists consider their acts to be retribution for past harms. He notes that terrorism is often “a means of exacting punishment on a political community the terrorist believes is collectively responsible for grievous wrongs certain members of that community have committed.”²⁶ Reiff reasons that since terrorists believe in collective responsibility, arguments that show that collective responsibility is both dangerous and wrong might help to end terrorism. Therefore, he sets out to “attack the notion of collective responsibility on which the terrorist relies.”²⁷

Reiff's account of terrorism as retribution may be correct, but his assumption that terrorists justify their crimes with rational argument rather than irrational hate may be mistaken. Reiff worries that collective responsibility doesn't protect the autonomy of the individual, unlike competing notions of individual responsibility. He sees this issue as part of a larger issue between communalism and liberalism—where communalism considers the basic social unit to be the community (a group or collective) and liberalism considers the basic social unit to be the individual.²⁸ Reiff cites Sayyid Qutb's book *Milestones*, which he claims is one of the “most important statements of the purpose, nature, and scope of the Islamic fundamentalist conception of *jihad*.”²⁹ Here he points to references to the Muslim community for evidence that terrorists are communalists, suggesting that terrorism is carried out only by Muslims.

However, individualists are just as capable of committing terrorism as communalists are, as are Christians, Jews, Buddhists, and atheists. I, myself, a secular Westerner, participated in terrorism against Muslims during the second siege of Fallujah, and I didn't need collective responsibility to justify it. The second siege of Fallujah was to a large extent retribution for the victory of the resistance in Fallujah over the US military during the first siege seven months earlier.³⁰ After that victory Fallujah became a symbol of resistance throughout Iraq and throughout much of the developing world. What Fallujah symbolized and the hope that it inspired in Iraqis became extremely dangerous for the US military, especially when there started to be indications that various armed resistance movements across Iraq were going to unite against the Americans.³¹ The purpose of the second siege of Fallujah was threefold: to destroy the strongest armed resistance group in Iraq, to mend the US military's tarnished image with a clear and widely broadcast victory over the militants who had once embarrassed it, and to inflict such pain and suffering on the entire population of Fallujah that it would discourage others from trying to follow in their footsteps.³² The second siege of Fallujah was both terrorism as coercion and terrorism as retribution. The hundreds of civilians who died in this siege from the weeks of aerial bombardment and siege by ground troops, the entire neighborhoods that were either bulldozed to the ground or bombed into rubble,³³ the use of indiscriminate and illegal weapons such as white phosphorus, the use of indiscriminate and illegal tactics like reconnaissance by fire,³⁴ the 200,000 refugees that the siege created, and the continued suffering of the people of Fallujah today are all evidence that this siege is an example of terrorism.³⁵

Reiff's assumption that only Muslims are terrorists is ahistorical, and the fact that some people have *tried* to justify their awful crimes against entire groups by claiming that they were collectively responsible is not a reason for thinking that the concept of collective responsibility is flawed, nor is it a reason for thinking collective responsibility will inevitably lead to collective punishment and terrorism. Many good ideas have been twisted, abused, and used for evil, but the evil has never been inherent in the ideas themselves. Collective responsibility can be more reasonable and more nuanced than as described by Reiff. It applies to bad collective actions and good ones as well, and even though Reiff focuses on the issues of blame, this concept is just as much about praise. But even beyond praise and blame, there is yet another side to collective responsibility that is often ignored in

the ethics literature, and completely ignored by Reiff. It is the side that Howard Zinn would have preferred.

Keith Graham (2006) notes that we have very different moral responses to cases of imposing collective responsibility as opposed to cases of embracing collective responsibility. Imposing collective responsibility goes beyond blaming a group for some harmful collective action by distributing that blame among the group's members. Graham notes that imposing collective responsibility often elicits "moral repugnance," whereas cases of embracing collective responsibility are very different. People are often inspired when they see individuals or groups voluntarily take responsibility for, own up to, take action against, or make amends for some collective action for which they feel partly responsible.³⁶

I joined the Marine Corps because I wanted people to call me a hero. I joined because I wanted to see combat. I wanted to be part of a big dramatic gunfight, just like in the movies, and I wanted my friends back home to "ooh" and "ahh" as I told them stories about it. I joined the Marine Corps for money, adventure, and respect, and I got all of those things. I gave no thought to Iraqis or what our occupation was doing to them. My decision to join was all about me, and my moral reasoning was as individualistic as it gets. I knew that our occupation of Iraq was more about stealing oil than it was about freedom and democracy, but I felt no obligation to consider the bigger picture of what I was participating in. I reassured myself that the war was the fault of corrupt politicians, and as long as I minded my own individual conduct once I got to Iraq, I wasn't to blame.

During the second siege of Fallujah, I saw women and children fleeing into the desert from our "liberation" of their city. I saw the dead bodies of resistance fighters lying in the streets. I saw us bulldoze homes and drop white phosphorous from the sky, but I didn't see what any of that had to do with me. My job was to carry the radio. I didn't force civilians from their homes with my own two hands, or shoot anyone, or bulldoze anyone's house. I kept blaming all the horrible things that I was seeing around me on the few bad apples in my unit, the generals who dreamed up the mission, and the corrupt politicians who put me there in the first place. I convinced myself that I was not to blame. I told myself that I didn't want to be there, that I was obligated by contract to follow orders, and that I was just doing what I had to do to get back to my family. But the truth was that I chose to be there. Everyday that I decided to follow orders, I made a choice, and I chose to follow orders because it was in my own best interest. I couldn't see how carrying a radio allowed someone else to call in an air strike or to bulldoze houses. I couldn't see myself as being complicit, and I imagine that is how most of the guys in my unit saw themselves, too.

My intentions were to come home a hero and bask in the glory of being a combat vet, not to liberate Iraqis, and I knew perfectly well that we were hurting innocent people. For a while I was able to ignore all of this and convince myself that I had done nothing wrong, but at some point that changed, and even though I never shot anyone or forced anyone from their home, the fact that I played a role in what we did to Fallujah became more shameful than I could bear.

The other men in my former unit, though, may have believed that the war was just and that our mission in Fallujah was just. They may have been fooled

by propaganda, and they may have been unaware that we were harming civilians. They also may have had the best intentions. Perhaps they were ignorant about the harm we were causing the people of Fallujah; however, were they *culpably ignorant*? Was information about the harm that we were causing easily available to them and they just chose not to look at it, or chose not to believe it? Can someone be blameworthy for choosing to believe lies over an inconvenient truth because the lies are more psychologically salient? What if the belief of the men in my unit that we were doing the right thing was the result of media deception, an incredible amount of pressure from what society expected of them, pressure from what their command was ordering them to do, and a complicated psychological mechanism that tainted their judgment? Are they blameworthy?

Psychology has taught us about the mechanisms that can cause otherwise-decent people to "morally disengage" and commit atrocities.³⁷ These psychological mechanisms explain our behavior in Fallujah well. We used sanitizing language, like "collateral damage," "pacifying the city," and "taking down . . . a sanctuary for the insurgents,"³⁸ and our command told us that we were "liberating" Fallujah and described our mission as a moral one against a great evil. This allowed many of the people in my unit to perceive their actions as benevolent. We told ourselves that everything we were doing was for the people of Fallujah; even the destruction of their homes and their forced exodus was for their safety and their freedom.³⁹ At the same time we dehumanized the people of Fallujah. We denied them a voice, we ignored their will, and we rejected their right to defend themselves against our aggression.⁴⁰ We jumped through psychological hoops to cognitively reconstruct our behavior as moral and just.

Understanding these psychological factors that led me and everyone else in my unit to do what we did is important, but how far can they go in exonerating us from responsibility for our actions? This is a question I don't pretend to have an answer for. Ascribing blame and praise in real life is far more complicated than it is in the abstract. Identifying intentions and beliefs that lead to an action is never as simple in real life as in philosophy because of the complexities of human psychology. These issues are complicated and intimidating, but they are also extremely important, and we shouldn't simply dodge them, as the antiwar movement has done. If American society is ever going to come to a clearer understanding of these issues and act more responsibly because of it, we need to discuss this in an intelligent way.

That all the men from my former unit are causally responsible for what we did to Fallujah is unquestionable. But I can't pretend to know what was in each person's head at the time that the operation began; therefore, I can't come to any conclusion about whether any of them are blameworthy as individuals. I can only say with certainty that I knew we were causing harm to civilians, but the fear of being called a coward for refusing to participate any further and the prospect of going home as a war hero with money in my pocket got the better of me. Fear and self-interest kept me from doing what I knew in my gut was right, and I know that these psychological factors cannot relieve me of blameworthiness. I don't believe that I am the only blameworthy individual from my unit, but the majority of the people in my unit were misinformed, misguided, and manipulated by our

leaders and our society. However, I also don't believe that anyone from my unit, with full knowledge of the harm we caused and with full understanding that our justifications were false, could still look proudly at being a former member of 1st Battalion 8th Marines. I believe that shame is the appropriate response to *our* actions, which is not to say that any of the individuals in my unit are shameful. I hold us collectively responsible.

Howard Zinn had a skill for addressing hard truths and delicate topics in a conciliatory manner, and perhaps it was the collective responsibility in his moral reasoning that allowed him to speak about atrocities and address all affected parties fairly, to fully express complicated moral issues without minimizing the suffering of one side and without carelessly laying blame on the other. The purpose of such an approach is not to punish one side, but, hopefully, to encourage it to embrace its collective responsibility while pursuing justice for the other. I hope that acknowledging the lies that were told to my former unit and fully describing the "atrocious producing situation"⁴¹ that we were thrown into—while not minimizing the suffering, death, and destruction that we visited on the people of Fallujah, and not minimizing each individual's moral agency—will help others from my former unit to embrace their collective responsibility too.

APPLYING COLLECTIVE RESPONSIBILITY

In *A People's History of the United States* (2003 [1980]), Howard Zinn preferred not to lay blame on the individuals who carried out atrocities. Instead, he focused on the individuals who embraced their collective responsibility and felt compelled to resist and speak out against oppression, unjust war, and racism, and he described them as heroes. Throughout his years as an academic and an activist he often expressed eloquently and poetically his belief that we must fight against harmful collective actions:

More and more in our time, the mass production of massive evil requires an enormously complicated division of labor. No one is positively responsible for the horror that ensues. But everyone is negatively responsible, because anyone can throw a wrench into the machinery. Not quite, of course—because only a few people have wrenches. The rest have only their hands and feet. That is, the power to interfere with the terrible progression is distributed unevenly, and therefore the sacrifice required varies, according to one's means. In that odd perversion of the natural which we call society (that is, nature seems to equip each species for its special needs) the greater one's capability for interference, the less urgent is the need to interfere.

It is the immediate victims—or tomorrow's—who have the greatest need, and the fewest wrenches. They must use their bodies (which may explain why rebellion is a rare phenomenon). This may suggest to those of us who have a bit more than our bare hands, and at least a small interest in stopping the machine, that we might play a peculiar role in breaking the social stalemate.

This may require resisting a false crusade—or refusing one or another expedition in a true one. But always, it means refusing to be transfixed by the actions of other people, the truths of other times. It means acting on what we feel and think, here, now, for human flesh and sense, against the abstractions of duty and obedience.⁴²

Howard Zinn blamed the government, not the soldiers, for the atrocities that have been carried out against Native Americans, African Americans, Filipinos, Japanese, Vietnamese, Afghans, Iraqis, and many others. That is, he put the moral responsibility on our government, though he did acknowledge the causal responsibility of our soldiers. He never publicly blamed veterans, nor did he demand that they accept responsibility. Instead, he led by example and held himself, a veteran of World War II, to the highest standard of accountability.⁴³ On several occasions he wrote with regret about his participation in World War II. His words express embarrassment for his naïve enthusiasm in joining the war,⁴⁴ and remorse for his victims.⁴⁵ It is unclear whether he held his actions as a bombardier to be blameworthy; nevertheless, he felt a responsibility for the rest of his life to educate others about the injustice that is inherent in war.

Howard Zinn joined the Army Air Corps in 1943 when he was twenty years old. He got involved late in the war, and ended up flying some of its last missions. One day he was briefed for a bombing mission over the French town of Royan, of which he wrote,

At our bombing altitudes—twenty-five or thirty thousand feet—we saw no people, heard no screams, saw no blood, no torn limbs. I remember only seeing the canisters light up like matches flaring one by one on the ground below. Up there in the sky, I was just "doing my job"—the explanation throughout history of warriors committing atrocities.⁴⁶

This bombing mission more than any other moved Zinn to question the necessity of war, because years later he and his wife traveled to Royan and spoke to survivors of the bombing and "rummaged through documents."⁴⁷ Zinn was horrified to learn that his mission had claimed the lives of over a thousand French civilians.⁴⁸

The British, American, and French officers involved in planning the mission all excused their actions by appealing to the unfortunate consequences of war.⁴⁹ In essence they blamed war itself. Honor the warrior, not the war. Their justifications for the hundreds dead in Royan were completely unacceptable to Zinn. He occasionally blamed war throughout his life as an academic and activist. However, there is a large and important distinction between Howard Zinn saying that "war poisons everyone who is engaged in it"⁵⁰ and the military officers who planned the assault on Royan saying that bad things happen in war. Those officers were blaming the collective action of war to relieve themselves of responsibility. They are claiming that the blame does not fall on the agents who carry out the action, but instead on the action itself.

Most philosophers agree that *agents*, not actions, are the type of thing that can be blameworthy or praiseworthy. So to say that war is wrong presupposes that those who go to war are wrong to do so.⁵¹ The slogan “honor the warrior, not the war,” seems hardly antiwar in this light. Yet this slogan goes even further than saying something like, “bad things happen in war, but those who go to war aren’t to blame.” This slogan attributes honor to those who participate in a collective action that they admit is dishonorable. “Honor the warrior, not the war” seems to be as morally bankrupt as the officers who ordered the bombing of Royan.

Zinn’s blaming of war might be seen by some moral philosophers as an analytical departure from collective responsibility, but Zinn would likely laugh at the idea that all of his language should be coherent with one or another moral theory. He was far more concerned with acting morally and encouraging others to act morally than he was with adhering rigidly to doctrine. Zinn’s intention behind blaming war seems to be to posit a moral responsibility to refrain from war, not to wash anyone’s hands of responsibility. He is saying that war is bad because it is inevitably destructive and indiscriminate, and that those who participate in war often behave in the most horrid ways because of the nature of war, the atmosphere it creates, and the means of destruction that it employs. He is not removing the agency of the individuals who fight wars, nor is he disregarding the circumstances under which the people who fight wars act. He is not looking for any special treatment for being a veteran, nor is he pointing his finger and blaming anyone. He is simply trying to inform people that war is a harmful collective action, something in which we should never participate.

Most of us can benefit from reading about ethics from time to time, whether it be from a religious text or a philosophy book. But that doesn’t mean that moral theories should be dogma for us to live our lives by. I don’t pretend to have given a fully explanatory, predictive, or descriptive theory of collective action and collective responsibility. I only hope to show the intuitive appeal of these ideas, and to encourage others to think about what they are contributing to when they act. We all get lost from time to time, and I hope that when people are faced with moral dilemmas, the concept of collective responsibility might bring them clarity. From the soldier in the unjust war to the citizen in the corrupt society to the movement within the unjust system, collective responsibility can help show us the right way forward.

CONCLUSION

When seen through the lens of collective responsibility, the antiwar movement’s message appears confused, and consequently its tactics don’t sufficiently address important issues in our moral culture. To a limited extent the antiwar movement encouraged Americans to end the occupation for moral and principled reasons. However, to a much greater extent it tried to get Americans to do a cost-benefit analysis and determine that the occupation wasn’t worth it. It chose to emphasize that the invasion and occupation of Iraq were devastating to the economy, that American servicepeople were sent to die for lies, and that it all has been counterpro-

ductive to national security. In doing so it minimized the important facts that the invasion and occupation were devastating to *Iraq’s* economy, that our occupation may have killed over one million *Iraqis*,⁵² and that it all has been counterproductive to *Iraq’s* security. The antiwar movement blamed the invasion and occupation on George W. Bush and the corporate media when it should have been raising awareness about all the ways that our society is collectively responsible—from our inability to control our government to our cultural support for militarism—and it should have been encouraging Americans to take action and make changes for a more peaceful, just, and responsible society. The antiwar movement should have challenged Americans to stop honoring the people who committed atrocities against Iraqis. Only when this happens will solidarity with Iraqis be possible.

Most importantly, antiwar veterans need to stop organizing around self-exonerating slogans and attack the false belief in our culture that veterans automatically deserve honor and esteem. The esteem that our society gives to veterans causes children to idolize veterans and follow in their footsteps, and it discourages public criticism of our military. Veterans have a moral obligation to renounce their own hero status. The power that veterans have to end these wars is, perhaps, best articulated by Michael Prysner (2008), a veteran of the occupation of Iraq and cofounder of *March Forward!*, who gave one of the most powerful and moving testimonies at the Winter Soldier hearings:

While all of those weapons are created and owned by this government, they are harmless without people willing to use them. Those who send us to war do not have to pull a trigger or lob a mortar round. They do not have to fight the war. They merely have to sell the war. They need a public who is willing to send their soldiers into harm’s way and they need soldiers who are willing to kill or be killed without question. They can spend millions on a single bomb, but that bomb only becomes a weapon when the ranks in the military are willing to follow orders to use it. They can send every last soldier anywhere on earth, but there will only be a war if soldiers are willing to fight.

Clear moral reasoning is an indispensable guide to the activist, revolutionary, and citizen. Few have reasoned so clearly and have set such an uncompromising moral example as Howard Zinn did. His ethical beliefs, embodied in his words and actions, illuminate where we have erred in the past and provide us with a path forward. As activists, revolutionaries, and citizens, as members of the antiwar movement, we need to look critically at our failure to end the occupation of Iraq, and think about what we could have done differently. Our tactics have done little to change American culture and challenge Americans to think in more moralistic terms. We have not gotten the majority of society to understand that shock-and-awe bombing is just wrong, that invading another nation is wrong, and that placing sanctions on other nations is wrong. Instead of appealing to traditional American values, we should have been trying to create a revolution in our moral culture. We should have acted as the moral compass that our country needed.

to negotiated settlements. The contras in Nicaragua could not win militarily, and finally had to negotiate with a political solution" (Zinn 2003b: 296).

37. Tabeau and Bijak (2005).
38. Leitenberg (2006: 9).
39. Zinn (2005).

CHAPTER 9

1. Jamail (2007: 222–257).
2. Jubran (2004).
3. I'm speaking generally about the antiwar movement. There have been groups and individuals within the antiwar movement since the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq who have fought against these trends, such as Dahlia Wasfi, Amer Jubran, and various socialist and anarchist groups. However, these groups and individuals have always been a minority.
4. Caputi (2011b).
5. Caputi (2012).
6. Taylor (2007: 342–343).
7. Smiley (2010).
8. Smiley (2010).
9. Gilbert (2006: 94–109).
10. Sosa (2009: 217).
11. I thank Professor David Lyons at Boston University Law School for helping me think through the complexities of collective responsibility.
12. Throughout this chapter, I use "group" and "collective" interchangeably.
13. Feinberg (1968: 681).
14. Feinberg (1968: 681–682).
15. Feinberg (1968: 681–682).
16. Feinberg (1968: 687).
17. This section is inspired by Joel Feinberg's (1968) taxonomy of different forms of collective responsibility.
18. Gilbert (2006: 109). Emphasis in original.
19. Gilbert (2006: 110).
20. Declaration of the Jury of Conscience at the World Tribunal on Iraq (2006: 168–178).
21. Räikkä (1997: 96).
22. Räikkä (1997: 104).
23. Räikkä (1997: 102–104).
24. Quinton (2011).
25. Reiff (2008: 235).
26. Reiff (2008: 210).
27. Reiff (2008: 210–213).
28. Reiff (2008: 224–228).
29. Reiff (2008: 226). Emphasis in original.
30. Jamail (2004).
31. Al-Darraj (2010a).
32. Mansour (2009: 275–339).
33. Jamail (2012).
34. Caputi (2011a).

35. Al-Darraj (2010b).
36. Graham (2006: 259–262).
37. Bandura (1999: 193).
38. McWilliams and Wheeler (2009: 92).
39. Caputi (2011a).
40. Caputi (2011c).
41. Lifton (2006: 340–341).
42. Zinn (1997d: 292).
43. Zinn (2002: 22–23).
44. Zinn (1994: 87).
45. Zinn (1994: 97).
46. Zinn (1994: 94).
47. Zinn (1994: 94).
48. Zinn (1997d: 283).
49. Zinn (1997d: 284–285).
50. Zinn (2006c).
51. Graham (2006: 258).
52. Tirman (2009).

CHAPTER 10

1. Zinn (2003c: 10).
2. Zinn (2002 [1994]: 143).
3. Zinn (2002 [1994]: 7).
4. "On the Spoken Word Movement of the 1990s," email correspondence between Bob Holman and Mark Miazga (December 22, 1998).
5. Zinn (2002 [1994]: 203).
6. Zinn (2002 [1994]: 207–208).
7. I borrow here from the counterpublic theory of Michael Warner (2002a, 2002b) and Nancy Fraser (1990).
8. Warner (2002b: 424–425).
9. Zinn (2001c).
10. Rich (2001).
11. Zinn (2010b).
12. Shulman (1996 [1972]).
13. Foucault (1989: 305–306).
14. Zinn (2003c: 31). Emphasis added.
15. Zinn (2002 [1994]: 152).
16. Zinn (2002 [1994]: 7).
17. The entire poem and further discussion of this controversy can be found at www.amiribaraka.com.
18. Importantly, during the same period as Baraka's dismissal, the National League of Congress recruited Poet Laureate Billy Collins to project a pathos toward patriotism in an emotional poem called simply "The Names." The poem was read before a special joint session of Congress.
19. I use these interchangeably because I am not convinced it is useful, as I am not, to invoke these distinctions to classify political roles.
20. Zinn (2009 [1997]: 539–540).
21. Zinn (2009 [1997]: 694).