



SOLDIER'S HEART

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SPECIAL THANKS TO:

*Adam Cox, Fayetteville song writer and dear friend, who wrote the album with me  
over the winter of 2012,*

*Michael White for layout and design,*

*Pe&L Printing for creating the final product t share.*

'Soldier's Heart' was the term used for Post Traumatic Stress Disorder during our country's Civil War era.

The Civil War marked the beginning of industrial warfare. In terms of war, it was the gift that the United States gave to the rest of the world. It set the stage for what war would look like in the future. That scale of warfare was unusual, leading to strange symptoms emerging from the people who fought.

Not knowing how to diagnose - or even begin to treat - something of this magnitude, they called it 'Soldier's Heart.' The symptoms have manifested many different ways within humanity, and the most recent recognition is PTSD.

You will discover that the term 'Soldier's Heart' more accurately describes my wounds and what I experienced in a way that the clinical wording of 'Post Traumatic Stress Disorder' never can.

My first tour began in the Fall of 2001, a month after 9/11. The 2nd tour was the summer of 2002, and the 3rd was 2003-2004. I was honorably discharged as sergeant in 2004 and have been struggling with PTSD since I left the Army.

The book you now hold, *Soldier's Heart* is an account of my journey. March a few miles in my boots - see what it is to be at war, to return from war, and the transformation that takes place in a Soldier's Heart because of war.

*Soldier's Heart* focuses on my experiences at war and trying to reintegrate back into the country I call home. *Soldier's Heart* is about PTSD and one of its major components, Moral Injury.

A wise medicine woman from Arkansas once told me that grief is pain trying to leave the body. If you don't allow yourself to grieve, it gets stuck. But once you grieve, the body can heal itself.

I won't lie, some of this stuff is heavy. But telling my story is a part of my healing process. And it's not just veterans who need to heal: all of us need to heal from war and the roster of ailments produced by a nation at war.

This is grieving for me. Feel free to grieve as well.

- Jacob George

## JIMMY FREEMAN

---

I grew up an Arkansas native down in the Ouachita's, where the mountains go east to west. This first song is about growing up in the mountains and running into people in very unlikely places.

In the summer of 2002, I ran off a helicopter near a hill on the Afghanistan-Pakistan (Af-Pak) border. As I approached the top of the hill, I saw a guy that looked really familiar.

I had body armor on, so he couldn't see my name plate. He had his blouse off, so I couldn't see his name. We stared at each other for a while trying to figure it out, then we went back to our dailies.

Later on I saw him again, with his top on and it said 'Freeman'. I yelled out, "Jimmy!"

Jimmy Freeman was a childhood friend who ran around with me all over Danville Mountain. After not seeing one another for several years, he turned around and recognized me immediately.

Oh man, other soldiers made fun of us! We were like two kids in a candy shop!

Jimmy carried an Arkansas Toothpick, a knife so ridiculously large it's comical. Concerned it wouldn't make it back home, he gave me his toothpick when he left, challenging me to bring it home.

He was getting ready to return to the US and I had just arrived. Both of us had been bouncing around different bases on the Af-Pak border. He was only going to be up there for three or four more days and my stay was about a week, so it felt very special to briefly cross paths at such an unlikely place.

**seems like just a few years ago**

*i don't know, back around the nineties or so  
i's runnin' up and down  
that mountain in my town*

*danville mountain was her name  
and a runnin' and shootin' was our game  
up and down that mountain  
with no shame*

*causin' trouble was our thing  
with'a bb gun's and'a rubber slings  
we had a foxhole, a fort,  
and a danville battle cry*

*it was me an jimmy against the world  
fightin' off all those squirrels and girls  
best damn days of my life*

*oh me, oh my  
growin' up on a mountainside  
i's fightin' hard and runnin' all the time*

**oh my, oh me**  
**i've rambled all over this world ya'see**  
**and i can't take the mountains out of me**

*i left town when i's sixteen  
said goodbye to jimmy and the guys  
and i went to el paso, to cut my teeth*

*it seemed like every corner turned  
had another hard lesson  
waitin' to be learned  
and the law was there  
to help me get it right*

**then i met a man who gave me a hand**  
**he said his name was old uncle sam**  
*i hopped on his plane  
to scratch my itchy feet*

**oh my, oh me**  
**i've rambled all over this world ya'see**  
**and i can't take the mountains out of me**

*off to war i went with too much pride  
to fight for my country  
both day and night  
right on the afghan-pakistan line*

*oh me, oh my  
growin' up on a mountainside  
fightin' hard and runnin' all the time*

**oh my, oh me**  
**i've rambled all over this world ya'see**  
**and i can't take the mountains out of me**

*there i was on a mountaintop  
tryin' my best not to get shot  
by the angry farmers  
whose home we just took*

*when i looked around at all the men  
you'll never guess who i saw then  
but none other than that dadgum jimmy  
freeman from arkansas  
there wasn't more than fifty people  
on that mountaintop  
and my next door neighbor's son  
just happen to be one of them*

*oh me, oh my  
growin' up on a mountainside  
fightin' hard and runnin' all the time*

## SUPPORT THE TROOPS

---

You surely know the phrase my veteran sisters and brothers and I see on ribbons, magnets, and bumper stickers everywhere, 'Support the Troops.'

Many of the veterans I'm close with are confused about the post 9/11 global war and feel there are wiser, less violent methods of addressing global insecurity than aggression.

We feel war is an immature solution and reflects poorly on our nation's ability to conduct itself responsibly. For these reasons, many veterans are completely outraged when people thank them for their service.

One of the most triggering things we can experience is someone saying, "Hey, thank you for participating in war." War is not an honorable thing, it's something that should only happen if absolutely necessary.

It was not necessary in Iraq or Afghanistan.

'Support the troops' isn't going anywhere, so we challenge ourselves with finding a way to own it. We write poems about it, we write songs about it, we talk about it. We try to capture phrases like 'Support the Troops' and use them to challenge the narrative of war, turning them into a positive message capable of portraying our feelings.

With our choice to join the US military, we soldiers gained great insights into the effects of war. During basic training, we are weaponized: *our souls are turned into weapons*. This intentional adjustment of the moral compass seems to be the onset of Moral Injury. Basic training demands the dehumanization of the enemy.

Through my personal healing from PTSD, I've discovered it's not possible to dehumanize others without dehumanizing the self.

This song is a poem I wrote originally published in After Action Review, put together by Warrior Writer's, a collective of post-9/11 veterans who write about their military experiences. The level of thought-provoking meaningfulness in their writing inspires much of my own work.

WE JUST NEED TO SUPPORT THE TROOPS  
IS WHAT THEY TELL ME  
THIS IS COMING FROM A TROOP  
SO LISTEN CAREFULLY

*what we need are teachers  
who understand the history of this country*

*what we need is a decent living wage  
so people ain't cold and hungry*

*what we need are bicycle trails  
across this beautiful nation*

*what we need are trees  
and less playstations*

*what we need is a justice system  
that seeks the truth*

*what we need are more books  
and less boots*

***what we need is love***  
*for every woman and man  
from southern louisiana  
to the mountains of afghanistan*

*it's true, the troops need support  
the support to come home  
we need treatment, jobs, and love for the soul*

***war ain't no good for the human condition  
i lost a piece of who i was  
on every single mission***

*i'm tellin' you,  
don't thank me for what i've done*

*give me a hug and let me know  
we ain't gonna let this happen again  
because we support the troops  
and we're gonna bring war to an end*

***i said,***  
*we support the troops  
and we're gonna bring war to an end*

***i said,***  
*we support the troops  
and we're gonna bring war to an end*

***i said,***  
*we support the troops  
and we're gonna bring war to an end*

***i said,***  
*we support the troops  
and we're gonna bring war to an end*



## CHILD INSIDE

---

I had an itchin' to return to Afghanistan. In the summer of 2011 I went to organize with Afghan youth who were interested in peace and using non-violence to address the many issues in Afghanistan.

A group of young Afghan men, orphans of war, took me in like a brother. They did not know how old they were; they celebrated their birthdays on January 1st. It was both inspiring and disarming that these kids who had only seen war since they'd been alive — three decades of war — could even imagine peace and nonviolence as a solution.

One trying day, I went up on the rooftop of the building where we were staying. It was a beautiful day in Kabul. Lying down, I trained my eyes on the kites flying all over the city.

In Afghanistan people are really good with kites, they love flying kites, and it's a show of skill. They put glass on the string close to the kite, trying to snip each other's kites out of the sky. They have these big kite battles everywhere, so there are just kites flying all over the place.

As I enjoyed this peaceful display of brotherly competition & artistic skill, I noticed a kite flying close to the building. Watching it for a little while, I thought someone must be flying it in the street next to the building. Looking up again, all of a sudden the kite was flying right over me. It didn't make any sense at all. It seemed the handler would have to be on the roof with me, but no one was there but me.

It was a fallen kite, the string was dragging across the roof of the hotel. Jumping up, I grabbed the string right before it went over the side of the building. It was the first time I had flown a kite in my life.

All of a sudden I'm on the edge of this building flying a kite in Afghanistan, and it's Rama Dan. Everyone down in the courtyard was looking at this crazy white guy with no shirt, tattoos, and a two foot rattail on the edge of a building trying to fly a kite.

They didn't know what to think. I was screaming, jumping up and down, trying as hard as I could to keep it away from the line of pine trees to my left.

Just then the wind went away and the kite plummeted right down in the middle of the courtyard of praying men. Some of them went over to the kite and picked it up.

Hopping and throwing it in the air, they were waving their hands as if to say, "Come on!" I didn't know what to do, so I laid the string down, put a rock on it, and went back to my mat.

Throughout the entire delegation not a single person had come on to the roof of this building. About five minutes after my episode with the kite, two men around my age emerge in the doorway. They looked at me, kind of smiling, but seemed hesitant to step out on the roof with me.

Waving them onto the rooftop, I let them know their company was welcomed. With a huge smile on his face, one of the two men walked over to me making gestures in silence due to our language barrier. He then walks over to the kite, looks at me, asking silent permission to pick it up. He takes the rock off and picks up the string. He looks back at me with a smirk and gives the kite three jerks.

**It takes off like a rocket.**

I just stood there with a bewildered gaze. Of course, they know I'm not Afghan because I can't fly a kite. He beckoned me over and attempted to teach me how to fly a kite. It was one of the most beautiful experiences of my life.

WHEN I WAS A CHILD,  
I THOUGHT LIKE A CHILD,  
and played like one all the time  
the older i got, the more i forgot  
and traded my kite for a fight  
*i trade my kite for a flight*

*i fought with my brother,  
i fought with my mother,  
a living hell all of the time  
i wish i could trade,  
all the misery i've made  
i just need some wind for my kite  
*i just need some wind for my kite**

*oh, oh, wind won't you blow*  
***oh, oh, wind won't you blow***

*i'm sick of this nonsense,  
i'm gonna build myself a fence,  
and no one will see who i am  
god forbid, they see what i did  
when i fought for old uncle sam  
*i fought for old uncle sam**

*i drug the fight on,  
for a decade long,  
from here to that crazy old war  
i can't believe, the boy that i see  
is sure not the child that i was  
*sure not the child that i was**

*oh, oh, wind won't you blow*  
***oh, oh, wind won't you blow***

*i hopped on my bike,  
i'm gonna finish this fight,  
across the country i ride  
i'm healing my pain,  
while trying to stay sane  
i search of the child inside  
i search of the child inside*

*when i was low,  
as low as can be,  
on the rooftop of an afghan motel  
it was a local guy,  
who gave me a kite  
and showed me the child that i am  
**showed me the child that i am***

*oh, oh, wind won't you blow  
**oh, oh, wind won't you blow**  
oh, oh, wind won't you blow  
**oh, oh, wind won't you blow***

---

*I still talk to those boys.  
They call themselves the Afghan Peace Volunteers.  
They're doing amazing work over there.  
Part of the reason this album of music  
was put into motion was to design a fundraising tool  
to help a whole delegation of Afghan vets  
return for similar reasons.  
There are many of them who want to go back.  
They want to experience what I've experienced;  
they want to heal their souls.*

## PLAYGROUND OF WAR

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We were about midway through the delegation and the guys said, “Jacob, we need to show you something.” I thought, “Oh, god, I don’t know if I can take much more.” Every day was life shattering. They told me we were going to a landmine museum.

This pulled at my heart, as one of my jobs in the army was being an explosives expert. Outside the museum was a graveyard of tombstones from wars past: Russian fighter jets, tanks, and weapons blown to pieces, littering the soil. Inside a pretty small building, there were a bunch of tables laid out with explosive devices I had become familiar with on my previous visits to Afghanistan.

It was difficult just walking into the building. There was a lone, hard-faced Afghan man standing in the room. He was dauntingly serious, rightfully so, stopping us at the door. He told us he was in charge of this museum, and it was his responsibility to share its story. He walked us around the museum of explosives, pointing out how taking them out of the ground was very dangerous and courageous work.

Once we had gone full circle around the museum, he said, “I want to ask y’all a question. How many things in this museum do you think were made by the hands of the Afghans?”

Everyone stood there, looking around in silence. I knew the answer to the question, but it didn’t feel right to speak it. He’s waiting, tapping his foot, and kind of shrugs while we gaze in silence.

He determinately says, “Nothing! Not a single thing in this museum was made by the hands of the Afghans. You, the international community, have come to my country and turned it into the playground of war. You bring your toys here, you play, and we suffer. This has been going on for three decades.”

He then goes on to tell me it would take over a hundred years of working seven days a week to clear every single landmine out of Afghanistan. He says their fathers and grandfathers used to work their fields with plows, but now they work their fields with metal detectors and wooden rods. Instead of harvesting potatoes, they harvest explosives. He tells me all kinds of things that change my life in a matter of minutes.

He finishes with, "I'd like to ask y'all just one more question. This landmine museum is a fundraising tool for the men and women who do the work of demining. They get wounded and sometimes killed. Afghanistan doesn't have the medical infrastructure to provide prosthetic limbs or the financial stability when family members are affected while doing this work. So, would anyone like to make a donation?"

Everyone scrambled as fast as they could; wallets were flying all over the place. This guy was a good fundraiser. This song is an attempt to sing his story.

---

*working from sunup to sundown  
out in the fields, my farther did sow  
with sweat on their brow,  
they plowed through the land  
now with tears in my eyes, i make my stand*

*hundred years of back breaking work  
that's all it'd take to heal all the hurt  
they call me a fool and a fool i must be  
but that's what it takes for all to be free*

**home, home**

**home, home**

*here i stand in this building so small  
a museum of ways to kills us all  
why, you ask, do i risk my life?  
for my friends, kids, and my wife*

*not a single toy in the playground of war  
was made with the hands of the afghans, so torn  
who did i ask to make this the plan?  
to make me a refugee in my home land*

**home, home**

**home, home**

*three decades of war we afghans have had  
from the ussr, to those american lads  
a graveyard of empires, we find ourselves in  
all chasing the ghost of bin ladens*

*with gentle hands and nerves of steel  
i dig through the ground so we can all heal  
i'm working my fingers straight down to the bone  
and a difference i make, in the place i call home*

**home, home**

**home, home**

## I DON'T CARE

---

Going back was a very intense experience and I had no idea how to prepare myself. I returned with one other veteran. Believe it or not, we are the first two Afghan vets in this decade of war to go back to Afghanistan to do nonviolent peace work and organize against the U.S. occupation. Afghans were very surprised and confused about why we were there. At times, I was as well.

One day was especially hard. We had gone to a hospital called Emergency. It was a foreign non-governmental organization (NGO). In this hospital they only took people who had war wounds, grotesque wounds: stabbed, shot, amputated, etc. When we entered the courtyard, I could see Afghan men laid out, missing all parts of their bodies. It was hard to look at.

Tall walls framed the courtyard, which seemed serene in comparison to the chaotic Kabul streets on the other side of the walls. There was a building in the center of the courtyard where the main hospital was located.

As we opened the door to the building I could smell death spilling out of the door. The room was lined with rows of men crying and in critical condition. It was a terrible site to see. I was looking at the rotten fruit of my labor, thinking, "This is what war does to people." These guys, some of them without hands, were reaching out to me with smiles on their faces trying to give me a hug.

I was devastated. I couldn't walk. Frozen like a child, I couldn't move. The boys floated around the room, spreading their joy, as I stood stunned in silence. I couldn't touch any of the victims, I felt terrible, I couldn't touch the fruit of my warring labor.

This is a poem I put to music. It was composed by a soldier on the battlefield in Afghanistan. When I read this poem, I felt it shared great insight into why someone makes the choice to fight in order to protect.

*if i'm put into danger,*

*i don't care*

*if my body is split into pieces,*

*i don't care*

*they turned our maidens hands, into soil and ashes*

*if my head is cut from my body,*

*i don't care*

*i leave my property and head for islam*

*if my muscles are fried in the fire,*

*i don't care*

*i leave my property and head for islam*

*if my muscles are fried in the fire,*

*i don't care*

*oh my god, accept my prayers*

*oh my god, accept my prayers*

*oh my god, accept my prayers*

*even if i spend the rest of my life in jail,*

*i don't care*

*even if i spend the rest of my life in jail,*

*i don't care*

*'cause all i want is god's love*

*all i want is god's love*

*all i want is god's love*

*all i want is god's love*

*all i want is god's love*

*all i want is god's love*

*even if this love bursts into flames,*

*i don't care*



A fateful evening at a Fayetteville bar inspired this one. My brother, Jordan, was playing music there. The mandolin player in the band is Alan, a Afghan vet. Alan says, "Hey, my cousin's here, he's a vet, an Afghan vet at that. Would you talk to him? He's struggling."

We sat at the corner of the bar. He asked, "Can I buy you a beer?" In veteran talk that means, "I need to talk about... stuff." I had a beer with him and listened to his story. He told me that he fought for the 188th Fighter Wing out of Fort Smith, AR. He had just gotten home from Afghanistan where he worked on A-10s jets. He said he loaded thousands of pounds of bombs and munitions on that plane when they flew into Bagram airbase in Afghanistan.

He said he'd watch 'em take off full and come back empty. After doing that for months on end, it started to wear on him. He didn't know where any of it was going, but he felt in some way responsible for it. I asked, "When did you get back from Afghanistan?" He replied, "Oh, last week. I haven't slept well since." He said he tried to drink it away, and it hasn't gone anywhere. It's still there every time he tries to sleep.

I got to thinking about this. A popular myth around PTSD is it only effects services members who've experienced combat, direct or indirect fire, missing limbs or burned, or anyone who has lived through military sexual trauma. But here we have this guy who never saw combat, *never left the base*, never saw any of the things Western medicine uses to categorize PTSD — yet he has the symptoms.

All he did was put bombs on the airplanes. I call this a Moral Injury. You can be morally injured just by participating in war, and that can bring on the symptoms of PTSD. This song is his story.

*i fought for the 188th,  
i packed my bags to meet my fate  
off i went to pay my rent  
i've been a patriot since i was eight*

*there i was with the old fighter wing  
fightin' a war no one could see  
with 8,000 pounds of bombs and rounds  
we'll load it all up as we all sing*

*hey, ho, here we go, load'em up and watch'em go  
hey, ho, here we go, load'em up and watch'em go*

*after twelve long months of war  
i got home to do my chores  
but instead, i laid in bed  
i could see that A-10 soar*

*hey, ho, here we go, load'em up and watch'em go  
hey, ho, here we go, load'em up and watch'em go*

*i went to the bar every night  
tried to drink away all that pain and fright  
but what could i do, when the drinkin' was through  
but dream about the war every night*

*hey, ho, here we go, load'em up and watch'em go  
hey, ho, here we go, load'em up and watch'em go*

*this invisible war's too much for me  
what we need is a conversation you see  
but it'll have to wait, 'cause i got a date  
uncle sam needs twelve more from me*

*hey, ho, here we go, load'em up and watch'em go  
hey, ho, here we go, load'em up and watch'em go  
hey, ho, here we go, load'em up and watch'em go  
hey, ho, here we go, load'em up and watch'em go*

*where they all go, nobody knows*

## SOLDIERS HEART

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A lot of us veterans feel we entered into a relationship with our nation through our service: a sacred contract of protection signed with the soul. It's just like a marriage, except with the U.S. government, which is all of you, the people. This contract to protect is older than war itself. Through the use of this contract, some of us feel we've been taken advantage of, we feel our souls were misused. Our souls were used for less-than-honorable reasons, things weren't fully explained to us and decisions were made in secret without the full consent of the people, and all we really wanted to do was fulfill our sacred contract of protection. This contract isn't for the interest of international corporations or greedy people, it's fulfillment is hinged on the needs of The people. Through the misuse of this contract, many of us feel betrayed, deceived, cheated on, and abused emotionally, physically, intellectually, and spiritually. It's similar to what one may experience in a unhealthy marriage.

This sacred contract of protection is more complicated to resolve than one of marriage. It's almost impossible to find the space to heal when the spouse, the U.S. flag, is stuck on the side of every business, bumper, and flagpole in sight. It's like having to look your ex-partner in the eyes every time you leave the door of your house.

If you've ever wondered why veterans don't want to spend a lot of time in heavily populated areas, this might be why, it certainly is for me. The best way I can explain this is like being lied to, cheated on, and having your heart broken, except you can't ever get away from it. I think the Civil war term, Soldier's Heart, has got it more accurate than any other term because my heart was broken, in a similar way it would've been in any other intimate relationship. I may never be able to have a functional intimate relationship because of this. I'll be working on it for rest of my life, along with the generation of brave souls who've served in the post 9-11 war. This song is about having my heart broken.

*i'm just a farmer from arkansas, there's a lot of things i don't understand  
like why we send farmers to kill farmers in afghanistan  
i did what i's told for my love of this land  
i come home a shattered man with blood on my hands*

*now i can't have a relationship, i can't hold down a job  
some may say i'm broken, i call it soldier's heart  
every time i go outside, i gotta look her in the eyes  
knowing that she broke my heart, and turned around and lied*

*red, white, and blue, i trusted you  
and you never even told me why*

*it was 2002 and i just got off the pakistan border to get out of the heat  
my sergeant handed me orders and told me to read*

*it called for the mobilization of 500,00 soldiers, sailors, and marines  
for impending invasion of iraq the coming spring  
i got home a couple months later and heard the drums of war  
they had y'all dancin' all around and asking for more*

***this soldier's heart couldn't take it anymore***

*now i can't have a relationship, i can't hold down a job  
some may say i'm broken, i call it soldier's heart  
every time i go outside, i gotta look her in the eyes  
knowing that she broke my heart, and turned around and lied*

*red, white, and blue, i trusted you  
and you never even told me why*

*every time i go outside i gotta look her in the eyes  
knowing that she broke my heart and turned around and lied*

*red, white, and blue, i trusted you  
and you never even told me why*

## THEY CALL ME HERO

---

Something weird happens when we go to war.

Actually, a lot of weird things happen. Chief among these is the process of weaponizing the soul. This causes a great transformation to happen internally, and it's never explained. We come home as something completely different than what we were when we left.

However, everyone treats us as if we are the same as when we left. In my case, my family treated me like Jacob, their son. But I no longer felt like Jacob. I felt like someone else, which was not acknowledged.

People called me hero and people called me son, but I didn't feel like either of those. I'm no longer the boy I was before I left. I'm not the hero my country projects on to me. I'm stuck somewhere in the middle, not knowing who I am.

This is one way to look at some of the many components of PTSD. It can be a botched rite of passage ceremony where someone is exposed to a very transformative event, a traumatic event, and the person's feelings and transformation aren't acknowledged or honored.

We are expected to be the thing we were when we left, which is impossible. It's really hard to talk to people about this. People don't really want take responsibility for what we've done, which is a necessary component in the completion of the ceremony. They often don't want to hear what we've done and in return we have to silently carry it around for the rest of our lives.

The people have to take responsibility for what we've done at their request and for who we've become in-order for us to fully transform and heal.

This song is a poem written by Sean Casey, a Global War on Terror veteran. I had to put it to music because it articulates many things I've been trying to find for years.

Thanks brother.

*they call me son, they call me hero  
but to me, i'm neither*

*i'm not what you think  
i'm scared of me  
i'm not that boy that left  
i've danced with death*

*they call me son, they call me hero  
but to me, i'm neither*

*they call me precious  
they worship my sacrifice  
they gave me medals to validate their lies  
the colorful clangin' on my chest  
calms them like a lullaby*

*they call me son, they call me hero  
but to me, i'm neither*

*they call me son, they call me hero  
but to me, i'm neither*

*a celebration of violent deeds  
puts my heart at unease  
parades and flags can't change with i've done  
and there's no honor in what i've become*

*they call me son, they call me hero  
but to me, i'm neither*

*they call me son, they call me hero  
but to me, i'm neither*

***i'm neither, i'm neither, i'm neither, i'm neither***

## WARRIOR

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We've explored many aspects of PTSD on this journey and this next song is on the more positive side of the subject. This is about the righteous rite of passage. This is how we transform PTSD into something beautiful.

This is turning trauma into transformation, which we all have to do to some degree. Thic Naht Han reminds us that veterans can help lead the healing of the nation. This is coming from a Vietnamese Buddhist out of the Vietnam era. His meditations led him to discover that the veterans have to come home and heal because the overall health of the nation depends on it.

I met a great warrior by the name of Crazy Dog at a men's conference in Minnesota. Crazy Dog is native american and we came to the conference to put the veterans through a warrior's dance, which is an important part of his culture. It's a ceremony used to heal their warriors and subsequently heal their community from war.

After separating us from the non-vets, Crazy Dog asked us questions and painted our faces based on the answers. He led us in a dance into this huge group of men who were not veterans. These men sat around us in silence while we said everything we needed to say. We had to get it all off of our chests.

This took hours, and it could have taken days if needed. This is important because we have to tell our story. If we don't we can bring the silent sickness back into our society and spread it as what Western medicine calls Secondary PTSD. If you just spend time around a veteran with PTSD, you can get PTSD, because one of its many symptoms is unusual reactionary behavior.

If you react to the behavior in any way, you are in some degree taking on the symptoms. That is one of the many ways it contagiously spreads through families, society, and culture. Crazy Dog's people knew they had to heal this sickness before the warriors reintegrated back into society.

Through story telling, everyone listening gains an understanding of what we did and how we are all responsible for it. They can honor the transformation, and we can all share the heavy burden of war. If warriors silently carry this burden among the tribe or nation, it can become systemic.

Obviously, we don't place a priority on this ceremony in this country. These men, Native Americans of all people, have stepped up to help heal us — after all we've done and all we've taken from them. They have medicine for us, and they are giving it to us.

This is the true measure of a warrior.

After the ceremony I approached Crazy Dog with many questions. He said, "Jacob, I need to give you something. I want to honor your deeds as a warrior. I want to honor the fact that you have now transitioned into warrior-hood. You are no longer a soldier. A warrior has empathic understanding with the enemy. That is something a soldier can't have; you clearly displayed that." That was a very powerful thing, so this song carries that gospel.

In early 2012, some veteran brothers and sisters of mine had found out NATO generals were going to be meeting in Chicago. We thought we'd give them the opportunity to honor us as warriors by returning our medals. This is a touchy subject, to tell someone they're not a warrior when they were a soldier, because we think we are warriors when we're being trained in soldiering. But there is a difference.

You see, a soldier follows orders, a soldier is loyal, and a soldier is technically and tactically proficient. A warrior isn't so good at following orders. The warrior follows the heart. A warrior has empathic understanding with the enemy, so much so that the very thought of causing pain or harm to the enemy causes pain to the warrior. This song is about the difference between a soldier and a warrior.



*a warrior understands that we fight to make a stand  
no matter the injustice we might see  
i'm telling you that's nothing but the truth  
i'll be the best warrior i can be*

*it was a hot and sunny day in chicago  
as we lined up to march down the road  
with 20,000 strong there was nothing to go wrong  
as we sang songs through every barricade*

*i held my head high as i marched beside  
my sisters and brothers in arms  
there's no better day than the day that we marched  
to the gates of the nato barricade*

*a warrior understands that we fight to make a stand  
no matter the injustice we might see  
i'm telling you that's nothing but the truth  
i'll be the best warrior i can be*

*we carried our flag next to the afghan flag  
to show the world where we stand  
surrounding us was a circle of trust  
by veterans of many wars past*

*their eyes sang songs as we marched along  
streets that were paved with police  
that's ok, because they lead the way  
straight to the nato barricade*

*a warrior understands that we fight to make a stand  
no matter the injustice we might see  
i'm telling you that's nothing but the truth  
i'll be the best warrior i can be*

*i was a soldier for too many years  
i caused my fair share of war and fear  
that all changed the day i took the stage  
and told the world why i was there*

*i'm here to tell ya  
this war will make a fella  
crazier than crazy can be*

*today is the day i give my medals away  
i can be the best warrior i can be  
i'll be the best warrior i can be*

*a warrior understands that we fight to make a stand  
no matter the injustice we might see  
i'm telling you that's nothing but the truth  
i'll be the best warrior i can be*

*a warrior understands that we fight to make a stand  
no matter the injustice we might see  
i'm telling you that's nothing but the truth  
i'll be the best warrior i can be*

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That really happened. Vietnam veterans surrounded us with a rope, marching next to us. They wouldn't let anyone near. I witnessed someone try to jump over this rope and run into our formation, for who knows what reason. There were twenty thousand screaming people out there. A Vietnam Veteran not much bigger than me, Barry, was holding the rope. He's one of the anti-war veterans from the Vietnam era involved with the Vietnam Veterans Against the War. He side-stepped and puffed up his chest in front of the intruder. The guy quickly bounced off of him, staggering to the ground. I watched our brothers and sisters do that around us all the way to the gates of the NATO summit. I saw my elders step up and display what it truly means to walk in elder-hood. They formed a container around us to protect us, allowing us to experience our transformation, helping us heal. They helped us earn our warrior-hood and show the world that this country still has warriors!









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