

# The Accepted System of Dissent

## War Veteran Speaks Out

By [Mike Kress](#)

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Veteran's speech on March 18, 2006

Why are we here today?

We are here because we oppose the war on Iraq. We are here because gathering together in one place makes a statement, and might have an impact on those who are afraid to question our government's actions.

Why are we here today?

We are here because standing in solidarity with others who are outraged about the war on Iraq helps us feel better. It helps us feel sane to find others who reject the lies of our government. It helps us feel grounded to know that other people don't buy the propaganda fed to us by the mainstream media.

We are here because we know that what's happening in Iraq – and what's likely to occur in Iran – is morally and criminally wrong. We are here because we hope that our presence, in conjunction with others doing the same thing across the nation and around the world, will make a positive difference.

And yet, these statements don't really answer the question: Why are we here today?

I would say we are here today because we believe that if we amass enough demonstrators, hold enough rallies, and walk in enough marches, we will turn the tide of war.

We are here today because we believe that if we say the right words and carry the right signs we will get our foot in the door of democratic debate.

In short, we are here because we believe in an illusion. That illusion is an accepted system of dissent that ensures our resistance doesn't go beyond boundaries established by the government and the corporate media.

Methods that worked 40 years ago have been gradually homogenized into a manageable system of dissent that channels our moral outrage and our demands for peace into predictable, self-censoring, and largely ineffective protest.

Like cattle penned inside corrals and channeled down chutes to the killing floor, we are following a blueprint for dissent that the people in power have basically designed for us. Is it any wonder that we find ourselves doing the same things we did before (and after) every

previous war?

If we want to end the occupation of Iraq, or stop the war on Iran – if we want the power to decide our own future – we must stop focusing on a particular war, a particular president, or a particular policy. Instead, we must focus on creating a sane new world by demolishing the illusions in which we live and rewriting the rules under which we are little more than slaves.

Before we can figure out how to build that new world, we must first realize that the wars, presidents, and policies we routinely oppose are part of a system wherein governments, militaries, police, and the courts work for corporations and the wealthy – not We the People. And we must recognize that our predictable, conventional methods of protest are simply figured into their cost of doing business.

Make no mistake: Bush, Cheney, Rumsfeld, Rice, Wolfowitz, Snow, the Clintons, the Kerrys, the Supreme Court, the CIA, the WTO, the IMF, the World Bank, the fossil fuels industry, the military-industrial complex, and everyone controlling this system, are not incompetent or stupid. They are corporatists, and they know what they are doing. They are deliberately dismantling our freedoms and protections so that corporate capitalism – backed by military and police power – can become a global reality.

“But wait,” you say. Don’t Americans have free speech? Can’t we vote the bums out? Well, what is free speech when it falls on deaf ears? What is voting when corporations manufacture hackable electronic voting machines that leave no paper trail? What is an election when the major political parties are two sides of a counterfeit coin?

It’s time to throw away our misplaced faith in this corrupt, undemocratic system and build alternatives to it. “Another world is possible” isn’t possible if we keep supporting a system that’s rigged against us.

Martin Luther King Jr. recognized this reality when he spoke at New York’s Riverside Church in 1967. He said:

...[W]e as a nation must undergo a radical revolution of values. We must rapidly begin the shift from a thing-oriented society to a person-oriented society. When machines and computers, profit motives and property rights, are considered more important than people, the giant triplets of racism, extreme materialism, and militarism are incapable of being conquered....A nation that continues year after year to spend more money on military defense than on programs of social uplift is approaching spiritual death.

Sadly, America has reached spiritual death. But the beautiful thing about the spirit is that it can be revived, reawakened, and renewed! Our spirits can rise from the dead.

Gandhi said, “Be the change you wish to see in the world.” If we follow his wisdom, we will see today’s protest not as an end, but as a beginning. Think of this gathering as a town hall meeting – a community meeting where we educate each other and organize. This protest should be the first step in a revolution wherein we transform ourselves, and then our communities, into the world we wish to see.

We can control our future by rejecting the system of death and lies and wasteful corporate capitalism that we’ve been brainwashed to believe is the American Way. By acting in revolutionary ways we can begin building a new and sustainable world that prevents our

children from dying in (or protesting) more immoral and unnecessary wars.

We must think creatively and wisely. We must build our own media, newspapers, websites; and our own cooperative networks, to include independent unions, banks, shops, farms, and housing. We must join with the men and women around the world who oppose the undemocratic, unaccountable, inhuman corporate structure that is destroying our planet.

Peak oil, global warming, and dwindling natural resources require that we start now. It won't be easy. The mainstream media will not inform us; there is no charismatic leader to lead us, and no political party can save us. It falls upon "We the People" to free our minds and claim our own destiny.

The alternative is to accept a fate that others have chosen for us.

*Mike Kress served two tours in the Persian Gulf prior to leaving the Air Force as a conscientious objector. He has served as vice-chair of the Spokane Human Rights Commission and is the producer and host of "Take the Power" on KYRS FM in Spokane, WA ([www.kyrs.org](http://www.kyrs.org) <<http://www.kyrs.org>> ). Comments welcome at [shrcmike@yahoo.com](mailto:shrcmike@yahoo.com) <<mailto:shrcmike@yahoo.com>> .*

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