

**Alice Lynd, Staughton Lynd.** *Moral Injury and Nonviolent Resistance: Breaking the Cycle of Violence in the Military and Behind Bars*. Oakland: PM Press, 2017. 192 pp. \$17.95, paper, ISBN 978-1-62963-379-4.

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*Moral Injury and Nonviolent Resistance: Breaking the Cycle of Violence in the Military and Behind Bars* is the work of Alice and Staughton Lynd, lifelong activists of social justice and the civil rights, antiwar, labor, and prison reform movements in the United States. In 1966, Alice Lynd published her experiences as a military non-combatant draft counselor in *We Won't Go*. Staughton is best known for his 1968 historiographical work, *Intellectual Origins of American Radicalism*. Staughton taught at Yale but was forced to leave after he was denied tenure because he visited Hanoi during the Vietnam War. He later graduated from the University of Chicago law school and practiced as a lawyer in Youngstown, Ohio. After relocating to Youngstown, the Lynds became involved politically with the prison reform movement. *Moral Injury and Nonviolent Resistance* is a product of Alice and Staughton Lynd's cumulative life's work as activists for social justice.

The organization of *Moral Injury and Nonviolent Resistance* is straightforward, divided into two parts: "In the Military" and "Behind Bars." The book examines the intersections between the military and prisons, and describes their connection to moral injury and nonviolent resistance. In part 1, "In the Military" the Lynds survey service-members and conscientious objectors in the Unit-

ed States and Israel who suffered moral injury in the line of duty. *Moral Injury and Nonviolent Resistance* defines moral injury as when a person believes they committed, witnessed, or failed to prevent something that "you know in your heart is wrong." The book also suggests that moral injury contributes to post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Interestingly, while the Lynds resisted the military draft during the Vietnam War, they point out that the lack of a draft during the Iraq and Afghanistan wars has created new forms of moral inequality within the all-volunteer military. The burden of military service is carried by less than 1 percent of the US population, personnel who are deployed repeatedly and experience moral injury because of these repeated tours.

The Lynds discuss the connection between volunteerism and moral injury with examples from a select group of Vietnam veterans who, in contrast to most soldiers of this war, volunteered for service. The National Council of Disability estimates that between 320,000 and 640,000 veterans of the all-volunteer force (AVF) in Iraq and Afghanistan suffer from invisible wounds.[1] Seventeen years of war have created invisible injuries within the US military that only received high-profile attention after an unprecedented spike in suicides. From 2005 to 2015, veterans were twice as likely to commit suicide than non-

veterans.[2] The book draws attention to the many mental health issues that servicemembers face, such as moral injury, PTSD, postdeployment readjustment, self-harm, and suicide.

*Moral Injury and Nonviolent Resistance* is also in conversation with scholars who explore the invisible wounds and experiences of war, such as Michael Bess, Jennifer Keene, David Kieran, and Lisa M. Munday. The book points out that military training, especially initial or basic combat training, is intended to desensitize individuals in preparation for war and transform the citizen into a member of the armed forces. Many of the examples of moral injury come from veterans of the Vietnam War, whereas the conscientious objectors mentioned in the book are all from the nation's most recent, longest war. "In the Military" explores in depth the legal aspects of war crimes in international law and US policy toward conscientious objectors in the military. The section also broaches the legitimacy of detention and enhanced interrogation of unlawful combatants.

Since the introduction of the all-volunteer force, those who join do so without compulsion, although there is an argument to be made that the current volunteer system is a form of economic conscription. Nonetheless, volunteers are assumed to know what they are getting into when they sign their service contracts. It is difficult, if not impossible, for US servicemembers to later change their classification to noncombatant pacifist or conscientious objector. If a servicemember desires to amend their status as a noncombatant, they must prove that by "religious training and belief" they should be classified as a conscientious objector. In addition, conscientious objector status does not exclude a servicemember from service in the military. Ultimately there is slim recourse for servicemembers who experience a moral crisis after they join the AVF.

The Lynds interviewed several former US servicemembers who claimed conscientious objector status during the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Several servicemembers requested objector status on the premise that the US involvement in Iraq and Afghanistan was unjust and illegal. Most of the ex-servicemembers interviewed wanted no role, combatant or noncombatant, in the US military and desired to quit the military altogether. After the US invasion in 2003, some servicemembers never applied for conscientious objector status, went absent without leave (AWOL), and fled to Canada. Servicemembers who failed to request objector status and went AWOL breached their legally binding service contract with the government. Still, not a single servicemember who applied for objector status received it. Most of them were placed into noncombatant roles for the remainder of their enlistment period.

*Moral Injury and Nonviolent Resistance* underscores the general lack of knowledge regarding the laws of war. Typically, most volunteers are not aware of the nuances of international law unless they are a member of the Judge Adjutant General (JAG). Even if servicemembers believe the US military has broken international law, legal technicalities exist that establish the supremacy of US over international law.[3] The book also makes clear that volunteers have few, if any, legal alternatives if they believe their military service constitutes a moral or legal violation. Further thickening the fog of war, veterans of the Iraq and Afghanistan wars grapple with the battlefield reality of an enemy that operates without regard to international law. In Israel servicemembers have greater means of resistance, since all citizens are conscripted for military service. Israeli "Refuseniks" have enjoyed some success voicing their opposition. Conscripts have petitioned their commanders over operations against Palestinians they deemed immoral and illegal. The success of the "Refuseniks" highlights a key difference between the moral intervention of conscripts in the Israeli military and volunteers of the US volunteer military.

Part 2, “Behind Bars” examines moral injury and nonviolent resistance of US prisoners in Ohio, Illinois, and California, as well as Palestinian prisoners in Israel. Prisons are sites for dehumanization and punishment rather than rehabilitation of inmates. *Moral Injury and Nonviolent Resistance* contends that servicemembers and inmates are linked by their dual roles as both victims and perpetrators of violence. As of 2018, there are 1,266,000 inmates in US prisons, with around 90,000 in solitary confinement.[4] Prolonged solitary confinement has effects analogous to torture that are deleterious to a person’s mental health. The Lynds suggest that the military and prisons similarly dehumanize individuals and perpetuate cycles of violence that result in moral injuries and a host of other invisible wounds. Where prisoners find success that servicemembers do not is through nonviolent resistance. Inmates have conducted hunger strikes to advocate better treatment and conditions in jails and prisons. The book also describes the ideological processes that some inmates undergo that lead them to protest through hunger strikes instead of prison riots.

In the concluding chapter the Lynds widen their historical perspective to compare the successes and failures of prison hunger strikes with the civil rights and the labor movements. The labor movement is examined from 1930 to WWII and then leaps forward to the \$15 minimum wage movement to highlight examples of nonviolent direct action. *Moral Injury and Nonviolent Resistance* argues that individuals who peacefully resist illegal and immoral authority communicate more effectively than their opposition because of their seriousness, boldness, and the risk involved in their resistance. The Lynds recommend to activists a combined strategy of nonviolent protest and legal recourse.

*Moral Injury and Nonviolent Resistance* is a fine work that illuminates the issue of morality within two of society’s most violent institutions: prison and the military. When prisoners and ser-

vicemembers are forced to participate in circumstances that affront their notions of right and wrong, they experience moral injury. Individuals are further confused by vague interpretations of international law. The Lynds identify direct action and nonviolent resistance as crucial to both preventing moral injury and insisting on humane treatment. Significant change is possible through peaceful, nonthreatening resistance.

The sources used by the authors are oral histories, personal statements, interviews, newspapers articles, and their own personal experiences as activists working with prisoners and servicemembers. The few weaknesses of *Moral Injury and Nonviolent Resistance* are predominantly minor. The book misses several opportunities to intersect with other, related societal issues—for example, the economic side of the military and prison-industrial complexes that perpetuates the cycles of violence within prisons and the military, the history of law enforcement and the courts, and the constitutionality of executive war powers. Regrettably, the book suffers from minor typographical errors, though the most obvious is the misspelling of “resistance” on the front cover. Another cause for concern is the work’s citation, albeit sparing, of Wikipedia articles. The Lynds could have addressed the case of Private Chelsea Manning and whether her actions may be viewed as an act of nonviolent resistance. However, the book that the Lynds have presented is a unique work appropriate for both scholars and activists.

Overall, *Moral Injury and Nonviolent Resistance* is an inspiring study that advocates social justice. The Lynds utilize case studies from their own personal experiences in some of the major social justice movements of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. The book skillfully examines the shared cyclic cultures of shame and violence that affect individuals in the military and in prison. This work goes beyond a simple indictment of societal issues and presents a pathway to enact meaningful change.

## Notes

[1]. National Council on Disability, *Invisible Wounds: Serving Service Members and Veterans with PTSD and TBI*, accessed August 14, 2018, <https://www.ncd.gov/publications/2009/March042009/>.

[2]. Kent Allen, "Veteran Suicide Rates Rose in Recent Decade," Veterans, Military, and their Families, AARP website, June 19, 2018, accessed August 14, 2018, <https://www.aarp.org/home-family/voices/veterans/info-2018/veteran-suicide-rate-rise.html>.

[3]. Department of Defense, Office of General Counsel, *Law of War Manual*, June 2015, accessed August 14, 2018, <https://dod.defense.gov/Portals/1/Documents/pubs/Law-of-War-Manual-june-2015.pdf>.

[4]. John Gramlich, "The Gap Between the Number of Blacks and Whites in Prison is Shrinking," Pew Research Center, January 12, 2018, accessed August 14, 2018, <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2018/01/12/shrinking-gap-between-number-of-blacks-and-whites-in-prison/>.

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