

GI CIVIL LIBERTIES DEFENSE COMMITTEE  
Box 355, Old Chelsea Station  
New York, New York, 10011

September 25, 1968

Dear Friend,

We need your active help and support for efforts to build an effective campaign in defense of the constitutional rights of American GIs.

You have without doubt already noticed the signs of widespread antiwar sentiment among GIs. The most dramatic evidence of this opposition is the increasing involvement of veterans and active members of the armed forces in antiwar demonstrations or teach-ins, and the multiplication of newspapers and publications directed specifically toward GIs. There is every indication that this sentiment is growing as the conflict escalates and the nature of the war becomes increasingly clear, and that more and more GIs will turn toward the antiwar movement as their legitimate ally as the antiwar forces orient themselves positively toward the GIs and take an unequivocal stand in support of the rights and freedoms of men in uniform.

GIs theoretically enjoy the same constitutional guarantees that all American citizens are assured, including freedom to discuss the war in Vietnam and voice their opinions without intimidation. If anything, their right is stronger and more inviolable, since the GIs are being asked to give their very lives for this war. Yet the military often infringes upon the constitutional freedoms of antiwar GIs. There is a long roll call of servicemen harassed and penalized for their opposition to the war and for their political beliefs: the Fort Hood Three, Dr. Howard Levy, Andrew Stapp, Pfc. Howard Petrick, and many others. This summer we have witnessed the intimidation of GI antiwar activists such as Lt. Hugh Smith and Airman First Class Michael Locks, organizers of a San Francisco GI peace march. A recent free speech case involves the Army's attempts to silence an antiwar GI at Fort Dix: a fact sheet on the case of Sp/4 John Allen Myers is enclosed.

The Army has singled out certain antiwar GIs and endeavored to make "examples" of them. But opposition to the war is not an isolated or rare phenomenon among servicemen. It seems clear in the case of Allen Myers that the Army brass were concerned about the receptiveness of fellow GIs to the antiwar activist's ideas. Myers reports that it has been almost impossible to find GIs who wholeheartedly support the war and that the periodic massive national antiwar actions have made a big impression on servicemen. In particular he points out that the leaflet for which he faces court-martial met with a "tremendously enthusiastic" response of the part of Fort Dix soldiers.

The GI Civil Liberties Defense Committee has been formed to build the broadest possible defense for the constitutional rights of GIs to freedom of speech, freedom of the press, freedom of association and assembly, and the right to petition for redress of grievances. The Defense Committee will raise funds for the legal defense of GIs persecuted by the Military for exercising their rights, and will publicize these cases in order to marshal public support for the rights of these GIs.

It is important for all supporters of civil liberties to join actively in this campaign. The systematic denial of constitutional rights to any segment of society -- whether it be the black community, student activists, supporters of opposition political groups, or members of the armed forces -- sets a dangerous precedent and is at least potentially an injury to all of us.

The contribution of antiwar forces is particularly crucial in the defense effort. Their active support is a dramatic refutation of the warmakers' favorite propaganda about the antiwar movement being anti-GI. A broadly-based and serious defense campaign will reach many GIs with information about their rights within the Army. When a massive defense effort succeeds in thwarting the attempts of Army brass to impose unconstitutional curbs, this will demonstrate to GIs that they can exercise their legal rights without facing the prospect of inevitable and lonely court-martial, imprisonment or dishonorable discharge. Only when this is accomplished will the full and legitimate participation of GIs in the antiwar movement be possible.

The GI Civil Liberties Defense Committee welcomes the support of all those who defend the constitutional rights of American GIs, whatever their political beliefs and their positions on the war in Vietnam. If you support these rights, please fill out the enclosed sponsor card and return it to the GI Civil Liberties Defense Committee. The Committee needs your financial support in order to carry out its vital tasks of publicity and legal defense, in the Myers case as well as in other similar cases which will certainly appear. We encourage those of you who are able to do so to send a contribution.

Sincerely,

*Matilde Zimmermann*  
Matilde Zimmermann, National Secretary  
GI Civil Liberties Defense Committee

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Detach and send to: GI Civil Liberties Defense Committee, Box 355,  
Old Chelsea Station, New York, New York, 10011

I support the constitutional rights of American GIs. Please add my name as a sponsor of the GI Civil Liberties Defense Committee. I understand that sponsorship does not necessarily denote agreement with the political views of any of the defendants.

Enclosed is my contribution of \_\_\_\_\_.

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_  
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