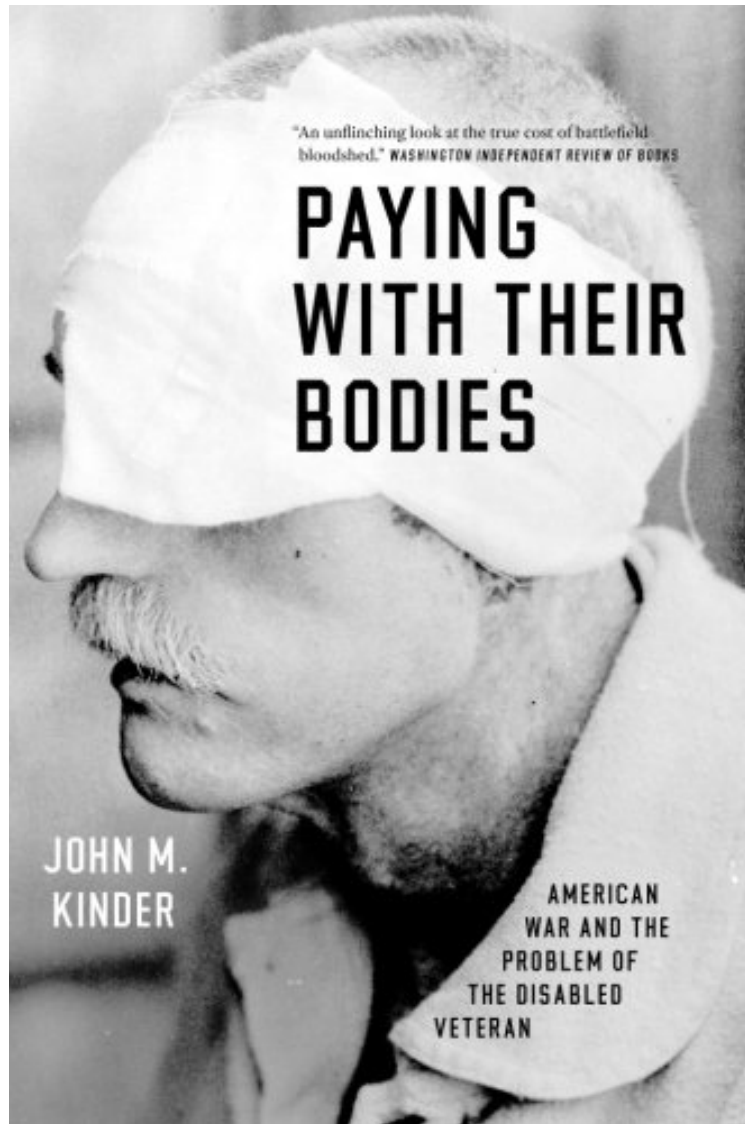


(Ebook free) Paying with Their Bodies: American War and the Problem of the Disabled Veteran

## Paying with Their Bodies: American War and the Problem of the Disabled Veteran

John M. Kinder

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**John M. Kinder : Paying with Their Bodies: American War and the Problem of the Disabled Veteran** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Paying with Their Bodies: American War and the Problem of the Disabled Veteran:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Powerful and timelyBy psapubBeautifully conceived, researched,

and written, *Paying with Their Bodies: American War and the Problem of the Disabled Veteran* explores the legacy of war from the viewpoint of disabled veterans and the society that attempts to rehabilitate and retrain them and then forget them. Following brief consideration of America's treatment of disabled veterans after the Civil War and the stigmatizing of disability in Victorian America, Professor Kinder focuses on World War I, which saw the birth of both the Rehabilitation Movement and two veterans associations, the American Legion and the smaller Disabled American Veterans of the World War (DAV). Whereas the Rehabilitation Movement was predicated on the belief that disabled veterans could and should return to a normal life, the two veteran groups held that a return to normalcy was simply not possible. Their mission was to educate the public and Congress about the continuing needs of disabled soldiers in the years and decades following their service. This central tension frames an illuminating chronology of the conflicting cultural responses to disabled veterans. After the Armistice, it tended to ephemeral expressions of pride and gratitude followed by commemoration in the form of monuments, parks, statues, White House garden parties, and the like all in the effort to seal off war as a past occurrence, not a living reality for the veterans, many disabled, who fought it. Along the way, Kinder chronicles additional tensions, including that between the interwar peace movement, with its insistence that war was physically and mentally ruinous to those who fought it, and the complementary insistence by the military that advances in military medicine and surgery, including the speed of evacuating the wounded to clearing stations and field hospitals, could sanitize future wars and avoid the slaughter of the Great War. It is this latter thread the ongoing efforts of military brass and governmental officialdom to assure the American public that the massive human cost of warfare is a thing of the past that guides Kinder to perceptive, albeit brief, consideration of the continuing Problem of the Disabled Veteran in World War II, Korea, Vietnam, the Gulf War, Iraq, and Afghanistan. In every case, he argues, the American public has been prepared for war through strategies of insulation from the safe war discourse of the Progressive era and clean weaponry to be used in World War I; to the promise of speedy evacuation and surgical repair in World War II and Korea; to the relegation of combat to an all-volunteer force during the Vietnam War; to the use of unmanned drones and smart weapons to keep soldiers off the battlefield in the first Gulf War and now in Iraq and Afghanistan. All seek to reassure Americans that the war at hand is safe for combatants, thereby perpetuating the fantasy that the Problem of Disabled Veterans will go away. But it does not. What Kinder terms the discourse of acceptable sacrifice invariably gives way to the reality of massive injury, dismemberment, and lasting psychic trauma, whether in Vietnam, Kuwait, or Iraq and Afghanistan, where smart weaponry has not prevented fourth-degree burns, mutilation, dismemberment, and death resulting from the improvised explosive devices (IEDs) of guerrilla fighters. Traumatic brain injuries (TBI) have been so common, Kinder notes, that in 2012 the U.S. Army teamed up with the NFL to study the long-term effects of head trauma. So the Problem of the Disabled Veteran remains with us, Kinder soberly concludes, and this because injury is not an error in warfare; it is not a mistake to be fixed. It is the purpose of warfare (p. 296) Graceful in tone yet devastating in impact, *Paying with their Bodies* should be read by all thinking Americans concerned with the normalization of successive small wars over the past half century and the rationalizations through which these wars have been sold to the public. It provides invaluable historical anchorage for recent journalistic meditations on the heartrending plight of wounded soldiers in Iraq and Afghanistan works like David Finkels *The Good Soldiers* (2009) and *Thank You for Your Service* (2013), and Ann Jones *They Were Soldiers: How the Wounded Return from America's Wars The Untold Story* (2014). In fact, I cannot think of a recent book that attests so powerfully to the relevance of history to an understanding of the present. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Veterans, medical issues, PTSD By Linn C. My husband got this book because another doc he works with recommended it. They both work for the VA health system where all the patients are veterans and many quite damaged mentally and physically. Very helpful book. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Great educational tool for those interested in veterans' issues By Joe Tree History placed in social context. Great educational tool for those interested in veterans' issues.

Christian Bagge, an Iraq War veteran, lost both his legs in a roadside bomb attack on his Humvee in 2006. Months after the accident, outfitted with sleek new prosthetic legs, he jogged alongside President Bush for a photo op at the White House. The photograph served many functions, one of them being to revive faith in an American martial ideal that war could be fought without permanent casualties, and that innovative technology could easily repair war damage. When Bagge was awarded his Purple Heart, however, military officials asked him to wear pants to the ceremony, saying that photos of the event should be soft on the eyes. Defiant, Bagge wore shorts. America has grappled with the questions posed by injured veterans since its founding, and with particular force since the early twentieth century: What are the nation's obligations to those who fight in its name? And when does war's legacy of disability outweigh the nation's interests at home and abroad? In *Paying with Their Bodies*, John M. Kinder traces the complicated, intertwined histories of war and disability in modern America. Focusing in particular on the decades surrounding World War I, he argues that disabled veterans have long been at the center of two competing visions of American war: one that highlights the relative safety of US military intervention overseas; the other indelibly associating American war with injury, mutilation, and suffering. Kinder brings disabled veterans to the center of the American war story and shows that when we do so, the history of American war over the last century begins to look

very different. War can no longer be seen as a discrete experience, easily left behind; rather, its human legacies are felt for decades. The first book to examine the history of American warfare through the lens of its troubled legacy of injury and disability, *Paying with Their Bodies* will force us to think anew about war and its painful costs.

Kinder mixes in sketches of well-known disabled veterans including Harold Russell (WWII), Ron Kovic (the Vietnam War), and Tammy Duckworth (the Iraq War) with bigger-picture issues involving the social and political impacts of veterans disabilities. Its a well-written, though academically tinged, tome that illuminates the long-lasting human legacy of Americas wars.