



Contact:

Cynthia López, clopez@pov.org, Cathy Fisher, cfisher@pov.org, 212-989-7425

Emergency contact: 646-729-4748

P.O.V. online pressroom: www.pbs.org/pov/pressroom

P.O.V.'s "Soldiers of Conscience" Cuts Through Politics to the Moral Dilemma Facing Every Soldier in Combat, Thursday, Oct. 16 on PBS

When the Moment to Shoot Comes, Soldiers Face a Split-Second Decision: To Kill or Not to Kill

"A thoughtful, challenging, and remarkably wide-ranging examination of the nature of war and its alternatives." – John Hartl, Seattle Times

MEDIA ALERT – FACT SHEET

National Air

Date: **Soldiers of Conscience** by Gary Weimberg and Catherine Ryan has its national broadcast premiere on **Thursday, Oct. 16, 2008** at 9 p.m. on PBS. (Check local listings.) The **P.O.V.** series (a cinema term for "point of view"), now in its 21st year on PBS, is broadcast June through October, with primetime specials in the fall and winter.

Summary: When is it right to kill? In the midst of war, is it right to refuse? Eight U.S. soldiers today, some who killed and some who said no, reveal their inner moral dilemmas in **Soldiers of Conscience**. Made with official permission of the U.S. Army, the film transcends politics to explore the tension between spiritual values and military orders. **Soldiers** follows the stories of both conscientious objectors and those who criticize them. Through this clash of views, the film discovers a surprising common ground: all soldiers are "soldiers of conscience," torn between the demands of duty and the call of conscience.

Soldiers of Conscience is a dramatic window on the dilemma of individual U.S. soldiers in the current Iraq War — when their finger is on the trigger and another human being is in their gun-sight. Narrated by Peter Coyote, the film reveals the eight men wrestling with the morality of killing in war, not as a philosophical problem, but as soldiers experience it: a split-second decision in combat that can never be forgotten or undone.

In the Film: **Maj. Pete Kilner** is now Lt. Col. Pete Kilner. He has served as an enlisted infantryman and as an infantry officer in the 1st AD and 82nd ABN. He received a Ph.D in education from Penn State and continues to teach philosophy at West Point. He was deployed to Iraq and will deploy to Afghanistan this winter. He publishes a blog, "Thoughts of a Soldier-Ethicist," <http://soldier-ethicist.blogspot.com/>. Kilner co-authored *CompanyCommand: Unleashing the Power of the Army Profession* (The Center for the Advancement of Leader Development & Organizational Learning, 2005). He is married and the father of four sons.

Todd Savage officially retired from the Army on Sept. 1, 2008 after more than 15 years of military service. He is now the co-owner of Champion Arms, an indoor shooting range in Kent, Wash.

Conscientious Objectors:

Joshua Casteel, raised in an Evangelical Christian home, was a cadet at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point and was. He is completing a masters degree at the University of Iowa. Now a Catholic, Joshua traveled with a delegation of Catholic leaders to meet with the Pope in March 2007. He wrote *Letters from Abu Ghraib* (Essay Press, 2008).

Camilo Mejia gained prominence in 2004 when he applied for a discharge from the National Guard as a conscientious objector after having served eight months in a combat zone in Iraq. He was court-martialed for desertion and served nine months in a military jail. He grew up in Nicaragua and Costa Rica. He is co-chair of the Board of Directors of Iraq Veterans Against the War. He currently lives in Sunny Isles Beach, Florida, and wrote the book *Road from Ar Ramadi* (The New Press, 2007).

Aidan Delgado was in the process of enlisting in the U.S. Army Reserve as the planes hit the World Trade Center on Sept. 11, 2001. Two years later, he arrived in Iraq with the 320th Military Police Company. He came to believe that war was immoral and ran counter to his Buddhist principles. He turned in his weapon and began the long process of securing conscientious objector status. Delgado is currently pursuing a law degree at Georgetown University in Washington DC. He is the author of *The Sutras of Abu Ghraib* (Beacon Press, 2007).

Kevin Benderman was court-martialed by the U.S. Army for desertion. Haunted by his time of combat duty in Iraq, the nine-year veteran declared himself a conscientious objector and declined to return to Iraq for a second tour. He was imprisoned for 13 months after being convicted of “missing movement” in 2005. Benderman now lives in Hinesville, Georgia, with his wife, Monica. He wrote *Letters from Fort Lewis Brig* (Lyon’s Press, 2007).

Filmmakers
Statements:

“This film is about the burden of conscience,” says co-director Gary Weimberg. “If you break the taboo and talk to a soldier about killing in war, as we did for this film, you’ll learn that if soldiers have to kill, almost every single one suffers the rest of his or her life for doing so. We previewed the film for West Point cadets and for Quaker pacifists, and both audiences learned something new about the question of ‘to kill or not to kill.’”

“Another goal we had in making this film was to build respect for one another — even when we disagree,” says co-director Catherine Ryan. “We tried to make a war film that examines and explores our common ground. Where we can find common ground, we can eliminate problems. Perhaps even war.”

Filmmaker
Bios:

Gary Weimberg, Director/Producer

Gary Weimberg has spent the last two decades making award-winning documentaries as a producer, director, editor, writer and cameraman. He has won two national Emmy Awards, for “Earth and the American Dream” (HBO, 1992) and “Loyalty and Betrayal: A History of the American Mob” (Fox, 1994). He edited the Academy Award-nominated documentaries “Memorial” (1989) and “Superchief: The Life and Legacy of Earl Warren” (1991). In 1999, he received a Director’s Guild nomination for Outstanding Documentary Director for “The Double Life of Ernesto Gómez Gómez,” a film that contributed to the presidential pardon of 11 U.S. political prisoners. From 2004-2006, as part of Luna Productions, Weimberg produced a series of documentaries that have helped to raise over \$1.6 million for nonprofit organizations. He recently completed the feature documentary “Three Women and a Chateau.” He is married to Catherine Ryan; they live in San Francisco.

Catherine Ryan, Director/Producer

Catherine Ryan has been producing, directing and editing award-winning documentaries for over 20 years. **Soldiers of Conscience** is her third film to be shown on P.O.V. The other two are “Maria’s Story” (1991), and “The Double Life of Ernesto Gómez Gómez.” Ryan has also produced and directed documentaries for primetime network television, including “The Story of Mothers & Daughters” (1997, ABC), “The Story of Fathers & Sons” (1999, ABC) and “Teens” (2000, WB). She and Gary have been producing partners, creating independent films for too long to mention.

P.O.V. Web: The **Soldiers of Conscience** companion website, www.pbs.org/pov/soldiersofconscience, offers a streaming video trailer of the film, an interview with filmmakers Gary Weimberg and Catherine Ryan; a list of related websites, organizations and books; a downloadable discussion guide and classroom activity; and these special features:

- **Watching *Soldiers of Conscience***: This film takes a powerful look at a central drama of our time: how a soldier decides to kill or not, and the life-changing consequences of either choice. We asked military chaplains, religious leaders and veterans groups to comment on the film. Read what they have to say.
- **FAQ: Post-traumatic Stress Disorder**: Dr. Shira Maguen, a staff psychologist at the San Francisco VA Medical Center, answers some frequently asked questions about veterans and post-traumatic stress disorder.
- **Live Chat**: Weimberg and Ryan will participate in an online chat at PBS Engage. Log on **Friday, Oct. 17** at 1:00 p.m. ET to ask a question live, or submit a question in advance: <http://www.pbs.org/engage/live-chats>
- **On the P.O.V. Blog**: Maj. Pete Kilner, Aidan Delgado and Joshua Casteel will respond to viewer questions on the *P.O.V. Blog*, www.pbs.org/pov/blog

Outreach: P.O.V. is working with public television stations and national and community-based groups across the country to foster community dialogue around the issues presented in the film. For a list of upcoming screening and discussion events for **Soldiers of Conscience**, go to: http://www.amdoc.org/outreach_news.php

P.O.V. also works with nationally recognized media educator Dr. Faith Rogow to develop a facilitation guide with discussion questions and background information to help event organizers carry out discussions around the film's content. Cari Ladd has created the lesson plan. Rebecca Federman of the New York Public Library has created a multimedia resource list of related fiction and nonfiction books and videos that further explore the issues. The materials are available free of charge at: www.pbs.org/pov/soldiersofconscience.

Length: 86:46

Credits: Co-directors/-producers: Gary Weimberg, Catherine Ryan
 Executive Producers: Stan and Mary Friedman, Philip and Donna Harris
 Cinematographer: Kevin O'Brien
 Editors: Gary Weimberg, Josh Peterson
 Original Music: Todd Boekelheide

Soldiers of Conscience is a Luna Productions Film.

Awards & Festivals: Best Documentary, Salem Film Festival, 2008
 Best Film, Conflict and Resolution Category, Hamptons International Film Festival, 2007
 Best Documentary, Foyle Film Festival (Northern Ireland), 2007
 Best Documentary, Rhode Island International Film Festival, 2007
 Finalist, Best Documentary, Denver Film Festival, 2007

Pressroom: Visit P.O.V.'s pressroom, www.pbs.org/pov/pressroom, for press releases, downloadable art, filmmaker biographies, transcripts and special features.

P.O.V.: Produced by American Documentary, Inc. and celebrating its 21st season on PBS in 2008, the award-winning P.O.V. series is the longest-running showcase on television to feature the work of America's best contemporary-issue independent filmmakers. Airing June through October, with primetime specials during the year, P.O.V. has brought more than 250 award-winning documentaries to millions nationwide, and has a Webby Award-winning online series, *P.O.V.'s Borders*. Since 1988, P.O.V. has pioneered the art of presentation and outreach using independent nonfiction media to build new communities

in conversation about today's most pressing social issues. More information about P.O.V is available at www.pbs.org/pov.

Major funding for P.O.V. is provided by PBS, The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, National Endowment for the Arts, The Educational Foundation of America, The Fledgling Fund, New York City Department of Cultural Affairs, New York State Council on the Arts, Lower Manhattan Cultural Council, The September 11th Fund, and public television viewers. Funding for P.O.V.'s *Diverse Voices Project* is provided by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting. P.O.V. is presented by a consortium of public television stations, including KCET Los Angeles, WGBH Boston and Thirteen/WNET New York.

DVD REQUESTS: Please note that a broadcast version of this film is available upon request, as the film may be edited to comply with new FCC regulations.

Media Sponsor:

