

Statement of Our Moral Outrage (Rev 2)

Why Veterans Oppose Memorials Honoring Foreign Soldiers in Veterans Memorial Park
July 1, 2009

We have had scant media coverage for our position on the proposed Vietnamese soldier memorial. So the public remains misinformed and misled on the facts. We are puzzled by the general media silence on the reasons the Veterans and citizens object to the memorial. Perhaps they too have been misinformed and misled. Only on channel 3 KSN, did the commentator get across the idea that our objections had something to do with the Vietnamese not being soldiers of the United States and another station quickly showed Veterans expressing the sense that the ground upon which the memorials are set is sacred. But the balance of the coverage of the issue has picked up the City's allegations and suggested that our reasons are selfish and racist and nothing more. In addition, the strong implication coming from the City and other media coverage is that Veterans are bigoted and dangerous. Each of these accusations is false and unfounded. We have pondered why the media and the general public does not understand the importance of this issue to Veterans. I have tried to write what I believe to be the heart of the Veteran's position.

The sole purpose of a Veterans Memorial Park is to remember and honor our veterans. The reason we honor our veterans is to show our awareness, appreciation and respect for the sacrifices they made on behalf of our country. Those sacrifices are profound: our young people leave their homes while the rest of us are safe in our beds, to fight for an ideal. They are not fighting to save their own skins, for social prestige, or to secure their own financial stake in our society. Many die. If they make it back from war, they come back wounded, physically and emotionally, and financially compromised, and they, their families, and their communities, suffer. They fight, suffer and die for what is best in America. They provide America the military strength that we must have to preserve our place in the world and keep America free, but they do so at immense cost to themselves. We remember and honor them for that reason and for that reason only. A Veterans Park has no other purpose than to remember those who sacrificed so much for our country.

When a newly arrived group who identifies itself as a "Vietnamese Community" instead of Americans, or at least the Vietnamese – American Community, insists that "their" Vietnamese Military is entitled to be honored with a monument in the American Veterans Park, the American Veterans are in shock at their conceit. The Vietnamese Military did not fight for America, they fought for Vietnam. They did not fight for us, we fought and died for them. The Vietnamese Military does not pass the first test of being entitled to be memorialized in our Park. And when we see that their proposed monument is larger than most of the other memorials in the Park and more prominently placed, we are stunned by their arrogance. When there is already a significant memorial to the Vietnam conflict in the Park, we are amazed at their lack of a sense of propriety. Americans have placed themselves in harm's way to help many, many peoples and nations; the Vietnam conflict is only one of those many. There remain many other U.S. Veterans, branches of service, and wars and conflicts to commemorate and our Park is small. When the Vietnamese Community says that they "wish to honor the Americans who came to fight for them in Vietnam," knowing that the very placement of their proposed memorial in Veterans Park gravely insults, rather than honors, American Veterans, the Veterans do not have words to express their moral outrage.

But when it comes to light that some City employees have supported and promoted this idea, there is a sense of outrage, hurt and disgust that transcends all the emotions the actions of the Vietnamese Community have aroused. The Veterans can understand the Vietnamese Community's motives for seeking a grand memorial to their soldiers in Veterans Park, but the relentless efforts of some City employees on their behalf sends the unmistakable message to the Veterans that the meaning and significance of Veterans Memorial Park to honor those who sacrificed for America is negotiable and subject to change at the whim of the management of the City of Wichita.

By promoting this proposed memorial to foreign soldiers, the city employees and the Vietnamese Community insult the memory of those Kansans who have fought and died for the United States of America.

That is why we, American Veterans and those citizens who feel a sense of gratitude to our American Military and our American Veterans, are so very opposed to placing this memorial to Vietnamese Soldiers in Wichita Veterans Memorial Park. And that is why we continue to stand up and speak out to keep Veteran Park dedicated to those who serve in the American Armed Forces, and to no others.