



## **Tips for Interviewing Veterans and Current Military Personnel to Create Art in Collaboration**

Whether you are creating a stageplay, film, painting, dance, or musical composition, it's important to involve the veteran or active duty soldier or Marine in the process. This is an opportunity to challenge yourself with given parameters that impact your storytelling.

First and foremost, do no harm. See the Pam Woll provided handouts for details on hyperarousal. Be especially vigilant when you are talking on the phone and unable to observe their physical reactions. Check in with the questions she provides.

You are telling his or her story, not your story. Be respectful of this.

Sometimes its best to begin by asking a veteran to list her or his years and locations of service, and then ask her or him to tell you about the experience of service. This type of general question can provide you with a foundation on which to build.

Be a good listener.

If needed, ask the veteran if there is a particular event or relationship that he or she would like to explore in art with you. If they don't have one in mind, select a relationship or event that he or she mentioned during their response to your general question of service. Ask if they are willing to further explore the event you selected.

Be respectful of the story as given. Do not change facts. If a veteran gives you a specific detail, it is because it is meaningful to him or her.

Reflect details back to ensure accuracy.

Don't judge.

When a veteran tells you that he or she doesn't recall how they felt during a particular event, or at a specific moment, accept this. Don't ask the question in another way hoping to elicit the details you seek.

Continue to involve and engage them—give updates on your progress, share drafts, collect feedback, ask for corrections, and remember this is a collaboration.

If you encounter problems—phone calls not returned or difficulty in coming to an agreement on the creative outcome—contact Lisa Rosenthal (708.715.5488, [lisa@lisarosenthal.com](mailto:lisa@lisarosenthal.com)). She'll work with members of the mediation council to resolve the issue.

***“Veterans are the light at the tip of the candle, illuminating the way for the whole nation. If veterans can achieve awareness, transformation, understanding, and peace, they can share with the rest of society the realities of war. And they can teach us how to make peace with ourselves and each other, so we never have to use violence to resolve conflicts again.”***

***—Vietnamese Buddhist monk Thich Nhat Hanh***