

BIOGRAPHICAL STATEMENT: WHY I AM RUNNING

I'm Richard Duffee. I was born in 1948 in Philadelphia, lived from 1964 to '73 in Chicago, and most of the time from '74 to '95 in the Hudson Valley. My first degree was in philosophical psychology at the University of Chicago, my second in English at SUNY, the third in law at Pace, where I also earned certificates in international and environmental law. I write—poetry and essays mainly, but also a little fiction. I've taught English, social studies, and science in a variety of places. I went to law school to become a Legal Services lawyer but in 1995 Clinton reduced the Legal Services Corporation to a telephone referral service. I went to India. At least there I could get work teaching Law and Poverty, a course that isn't taught here anymore because our government now believes essentially that only property owners, not human beings, should have rights.

I came back in 2004. 50% of US legal time is used to make the richest 5% of Americans even richer. I think doing that kind of law a conspicuously wasteful way to live, so I'd rather use my law degree to get work drafting laws I think more highly of than the ones we've got. If we have to have laws, they should be good for everyone; they shouldn't injure some to benefit others.

I come from a rather military family. My father's father was so impressed by Wilson's idea of a war to end all wars that he volunteered for the French ambulance corps in 1916. My father was a navigator on a B24 in the Pacific. On my mother's side, my sole uncle and all four of my cousins joined the Navy, two going to Annapolis; one was a rear admiral. The Vietnam War tore me up because alongside that military ethic I'd been raised in a Quaker town as a Unitarian, and watched films of Gandhi, Schweitzer, the UN, and the Civil Rights Movement every Sunday from early childhood. Martin Luther King, Jr. and his father spoke at our church several times each year.

When my grandfather died at the age of 83, he still had shrapnel in his intestines, and still felt the effects of mustard gas. He passionately believed World War II could never have happened if the Senate had supported Wilson's 14 points. My father still receives \$100 a month because at mustering out from World War II he was classified permanently disabled. Twenty-five years after his discharge, when he had surgery, he hallucinated crash landings. War crippled both of them emotionally.

I studied some Japanese and German and went to Japan and Germany to try to understand better why they had fought those people. I found less hostility toward Americans in either country than there is in France or in many Latin American countries. That was inconsistent with what my schools and parents had taught me, and it made me very curious about American behavior around the world.

After two decades of believing war makes no sense, finally the study of international law began to show me that the belief that war is merely senseless is a failure to ask the right questions. The right questions are, "Who profits from it? And how?" After teaching courses in law and poverty, the philosophy of law, and human rights law, and going over UN statistics for years, I concluded that General Smedley Butler was right: war is a racket. Since World War II, the military has been our nationalized extortion racket, operating at a 200% profit overall.