

# ***War Legacies Project***

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## **Post War Vietnam film narrated by Kevin Kline to screen at The New School**

*The Last Ghost of War*, a new documentary film, examines the impacts of Agent Orange on American veterans and the Vietnamese population. More than 30 years after the end of the war, dioxin levels near former U.S. military bases are as high as during the 10 years of spraying. Narrated by Kevin Kline and produced by the Gardner Documentary Group, the film will be screened on Friday, March 28th at The New School, 66 West 12<sup>th</sup> Street, Room 404 followed by a panel discussion from 6 to 8 pm.

*Newsday* has called *The Last Ghost of War* “a must-see” and “a catalyst for a much needed national dialogue on Agent Orange.”

Filmed in Vietnam, France and inside the US Court of Appeals, *The Last Ghost of War* features interviews with attorneys, activists, an Air Force historian and scientists to shed light on the questions raised by the film. Were these dioxin-laden herbicides chemical weapons? And if so, who should be held accountable in the wake of what was allegedly the largest chemical warfare operation in history?

Profiled are Vietnam veteran Michael Ryan and his daughter Kerry who suffered from ailments linked to birth defects believed to be related to her father’s exposure to Agent Orange. After the war, US veterans brought a class action lawsuit against Dow, Monsanto and other producers of the herbicides. The case was settled out of court in 1984 for 180 million dollars. As a result of the Agent Orange Act of 1991, the US government began to compensate American veterans for a growing list of diseases, and, in some cases, for birth defects in their children.

In *The Last Ghost of War*, we meet Vietnamese who have not yet received any assistance from the US government for ailments caused by their exposure. The film tells the story of three of the Vietnamese plaintiffs who filed a class action suit against the 32 US chemical companies that produced the herbicides.

“As journalists, we tried to be fair to both sides” says the film’s director Janet Gardner. “The Air Force historian, who wrote the book on Operation Ranch Hand, presents the military perspective and attorneys representing Dow Chemical and Monsanto argue that because their clients produced the herbicides as government contractors, they are immune from liability. It is up to the viewer to decide.”

*The Last Ghost of War* is distributed by WGBH International and licensed for broadcast in Australia, Norway, the Middle East, and Canada. It will be broadcast in the United States later this year. It was produced in association with the Center for Asian American Media with support from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, New Jersey Council for the Humanities and several foundations.

The War Legacies Project has been bringing the film to American college campuses. “The audiences have been very moved by the film. Many are surprised that so little has been done by the chemical companies or the US government to address the impact of Agent Orange in Vietnam,” says Susan Hammond, Director of the War Legacies Project. “This lack of accountability goes against what most Americans believe, that, as a people, we reach out to those in need, even if they were once considered our enemies.”

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