New York Times Publishes 'Crazy Veteran' Editorial

VFW to flood newspaper with good news stories

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WASHINGTON – In response to an opinion editorial published this week in the New York Times, the national commander of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States is asking the 1.9 million members of the VFW and its Auxiliaries to e-mail the newspaper with their good news stories.

The editorial published Tuesday was written by a young university academic who used accused triple murderer Frazier Glenn Miller as the focus of her piece, entitled Veterans and White Supremacy. The author, Kathleen Belew, earned a bachelor's degree in 2005 from the University of Washington, and then two masters and a Ph.D. from Yale. She is now a Postdoctoral Fellow in the History Department of Northwestern University, and is also writing a book about Vietnam veterans and the radical right.

"The First Amendment protects the free speech and expression rights of this young author, and the rights of the New York Times to publish it, but it also protects my right to disagree with the message," said William A. Thien, the VFW's national commander and a Vietnam veteran from Georgetown, Ind.

"The 'crazy Vietnam veteran' label isn't talked about much these days, yet despite 40 years of moving on with our lives and successfully reintegrating into our communities, we all know the potential is just another headline away," he said.

"The shooting on Sunday in Overland Park, Kan., was as senseless as it is tragic, but we cannot allow political pundits, the media or our academicians to use the failings of one to once again paint all of us as damaged goods," he said. "That is why I am asking everyone to send their personal comments directly to the New York Times, but in a positive manner, such as 'I am a proud Vietnam veteran who came home from war, went to work, raised a family, and continues to help give back to my community and country. I am not damaged goods.'

"Let them hear our voices by writing today to letters@nytimes.com."