

## **For Immediate Release**

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### **Reading Together Panel Discussion to Feature Black Vietnam Vets**

Reading Together invites all Kalamazoo County residents to read and then discuss important issues raised by a single book. *The Things They Carried*, Tim O'Brien's brilliant collection of short stories about the men of Alpha Company during the Vietnam War, is the book selected for 2006.

Thousands of people participated in the three previous Reading Together programs. Program coordinator Joan Hawxhurst feels this year's book will draw new participants into the Reading Together program, especially members of the armed forces community and others concerned about the effects of war on our soldiers and our society.

The first live event of the 2006 Reading Together program features a panel of black Vietnam veterans, who will share their stories and experiences emphasizing the particular issues and challenges faced by people of color during and after the war. Harold Bulger, the Metropolitan Kalamazoo NAACP 2003 Veteran of the Year, will moderate the panel which will include veterans David Mims and Al Dixon, among others.

This first Reading Together program will be held in conjunction with the Southwest Michigan Black Heritage Society's annual book fair on February 18, from noon-4:00 pm, at the Douglass Community Association, 1000 W. Paterson St. The panel discussion will convene at 1:00 pm.

### **About the Panel**

Harold Bulger's military history includes service in the U.S. Navy during World War II, then in the Army during the Korean War and the Vietnam War. During his final ten months of service, he was first sergeant of a 120-member medical company in a combat zone in Vietnam. Born in Chicago in 1923, Bulger is the grandson of a Kentucky slave named Joseph Bulger who ran to freedom in Canada at the age of 15. Despite his pride in his service to his country, Harold Bulger became a peace activist in 1980 after studying the concept of just war at church.

Retired Sergeant Major David Mims, who served in the U.S. Army for 30 years, including two tours of duty in Korea and two tours in Vietnam, was named the local NAACP Veteran of the Year in 2004. Sergeant Major Mims' military distinctions include the Bronze Star with Oak Leaf Cluster, the Vietnam campaign medal with seven

campaign clusters, the Vietnam Cross of Gallantry with Palm, and the Combat Medical Badge.

Al Dixon was transferred in 1966 to the newly formed 5th Marine Division. His team landed in November 1966 near the village of Dong Ha in the northern part of southern Vietnam. From December 1966 to April 1971, Dixon participated in seventeen operations. In April of 1975, he participated in the evacuation of Phnom Penh, Cambodia, and in May of 1975, he participated in the evacuation of Saigon.

### **About the Southwest Michigan Black Heritage Society Book Fair**

The Southwest Michigan Black Heritage Society seeks to coordinate and encourage research on the history of African American life in Southwest Michigan. In addition to the panel discussion by Vietnam veterans, their second annual book fair, "Celebrating the African-American Journey: Life Stories and Memoirs," will feature a Life Writing workshop with Bobbe Taber, who specializes in helping workshop participants in "turning memories into memoirs," plus a talk and book signing by Anna-Lisa Cox, author of *A Stronger Kinship*, the intriguing story of race relations in Covert, Michigan. The book fair will take place at the Douglass Community Association, 1000 W. Paterson St., from noon to 4:00 pm.