

**PURÉE
FANTASTICO**

If everyone
is thinking the same,
then someone
isn't thinking.

SUPPORT OUR TROOPS:
THE PERFORMANCE

The other day I came across this line of beers that features a fallen service member on its cans.

The comments all were positive and thought this was fantastic. When I told my assistant about it (and my desire to talk about it), she responded with “Aw that’s so nice”

And I want us all to really consider: is it ACTUALLY nice?

Here are some facts:

Of all of the listed groups of service members afflicted with alcoholic usage disorder, veterans and service members are the most at risk for problematic drinking (Sharp).

general population. (NIDA)

Increased exposure to trauma, violence, and combat increases military personnel risk of problematic drinking, and veterans diagnosed with PTSD and alcoholism are more likely to binge drink. (Sharp)

In a 2013 study, the most common primary substance of abuse among veteran admissions was alcohol (65.4 percent), followed by heroin (10.7 percent) and cocaine (6.2 percent) (samhsa).

An average of 20 veterans die from suicide every day. (Sharp)

And now here’s some bias:

My husband is a veteran and an alcoholic. He also is very much aware of how the support

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A 2017 study examining National Survey on Drug Use and Health data found that, compared to their non-veteran counterparts, veterans were more likely to use alcohol (56.6% vs 50.8% in a 1-month period), and to report heavy use of alcohol (7.5% vs 6.5% in a 1-month period). Sixty-five percent of veterans who enter a treatment program report alcohol as the substance they most frequently misuse, which is almost double that of the

the troops mentality, the Memorial Day sales, and the Veterans Day specials are performative— and it crushes him. He doesn’t ever want a “a veteran lives here” sign. Doesn’t want anyone to know he served two tours in Iraq, and while I respect him, I do think it’s a piece of his life he should own with pride. But that’s a different post altogether.

He was observing a parade one year for a pro-

ject during an anthropology course. He came home in tears because the only people there that weren't veterans were life insurance agents handing him pamphlets for his own burial. "We give so much.. and it's just.. to die?" I had no answers, only hugs and comfort.

And so back to this beer.

They give so much, turning to alcohol to heal things alcohol will never heal, for you to drink a beer- look at a name and say "Aw that's nice"?

It feels akin to the people taking photos of themselves giving money to homeless people. The person in need is on display for the giver's benefit. The system is unchanged, that very system creating the homeless situation, creating the need for others to give rather than have support built in, you get the picture.

When we support, performance is a hindrance not a benefit. Performative support serves only the giver. Not the receiver, definitely the system that created the inequity and disconnect to begin with, and that's the whole point.

Beyond nurturing a minefield of addiction, what ways can we actually support these individuals who give their whole everything to do things we don't want to do?

Is it with a beer can? Or is it with the recognition of the system itself?

Yes, clearly one is easier— but that's not what they truly deserve. That's not supporting them. That's doing a superficial minimum so that we can feel relief and go back to not thinking about it.

A corporation doing it BETTER would be Newman's Own. Yes, they feature photos on the back of their boxes for their troops' donation (and whether these are actual veterans or actors is a question we'll never have a trustable answer) but it's a level of support that's actionable. Yes, performative; it's a corporation, yet it's the actionable bit that offsets the performative.

When we as advertisers, marketers, creators, and problem solvers truly sit and connect with what we are trying to achieve BEYOND the numbers— but for and with each other, real support can take place.

Sources:

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