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War and Healing Proposal

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War and Healing, funded in 2018-19 by the National Endowment for the Humanities, overseen by the FIU History Department, and supported by The Wolfsonian—FIU, the Combat Hippies, the Florida State University Institute for World War II and the Human Experience, and the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Miami Vet Center, had three primary goals. First, it was intended to enable Miami-area veterans to explore the process of post-service reintegration by examining visual arts, primary sources, oral histories, and texts focused on the aftermaths of twentieth century U.S. wars. Second, it aimed to create a network of NEH-trained discussion facilitators equipped to offer veteran-focused discussion groups at diverse institutions. Finally, it served as a potential model for how universities, cultural organizations, and VA facilities may partner to offer compelling, community-based, humanities-centered programming geared towards former service members.

The program consisted of a facilitator training session in August 2018, a four-week discussion series in the fall of 2018, and a four-week discussion series in the winter of 2019. During the August training, professors, veterans, a museum educator, and a VA Vet Center director gathered at FIU for a two-day workshop, where they shared their expertise and honed their discussion leadership skills. Each of the two four-week discussion series included approximately 10-15 veteran-participants who were clients of the Miami Vet Center – a VA community-based mental health clinic aimed at providing services for, among others, veterans who have served on active duty in combat zones. Each week’s discussion was held at either the Vet Center or the Wolfsonian—FIU, and focused on a specific conflict (World War I, World War II, the Vietnam War, and the “Global War on Terror”); a particular theme (remembering war; becoming a veteran; health; relationships); and one type of “source” (visual arts, archival documents, oral histories, general texts).