

"No one talks about what happens to the people nothing happens to"

By [Steve Thorngate](#)

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[Via Rose Berger](#),

the summer issue of *Portland* magazine

includes an essay by *Portland* editor

and *Century* contributor Brian Doyle,

in which he quotes at length a conversation with a young U.S. war veteran named Jackie. She paints a striking picture:

After

a while I forgot everyone's names. For a while I called people by their numbers but after a while I didn't call them anything. That's when I knew I had war sickness, big time. I never got hit by fire but pretty much everyone I knew did. For a while there I thought it was me, that as soon as I said hello to someone or shook hands or learned their names they were doomed, so I stopped touching people and learning names. You would think wiggling out in the middle of a war would be bad but it's just normal, No one talks about what happens to the people nothing happens to, but something happens to them, and no one talks

about it. Probably because we don't have any words for what happens. Wars kill words, but no one talks about that. Wars kill everything except more wars.

Read more of Jackie's account, as previously published in *Commonweal*, [here](#).