

# FROM SOLDIER TO ANTI-WAR ACTIVIST: THE STORY OF TINA GARNANEZ

## LOOKING FOR A FUTURE

"I was a lost Native," Tina Garnanez reflected on her journey in the Army.

Tina grew up on the Navajo reservation and attended public school in Farmington, New Mexico. The only daughter of five children raised by a single mom, Tina enlisted when she was 17, to get money for college.

*"I wanted to attend college, and I knew that between my family situation and being from the reservation, I had few options to get a college education."*

Tina was stationed in Kosovo in March 2003 when U.S. planes bombed Baghdad. In July 2004, Tina was deployed to Iraq. Tina had already completed her tour of duty, but the Army can extend a soldier's enlistment through a policy known as stop-loss.

## BEING IN A WAR-ZONE

As a medic in Iraq, Tina transferred patients from the ambulances to the hospitals where she saw the high cost of war. "I saw disfigured bodies, limbs blown off, soldiers lost their sanity."

She also traveled with convoys delivering medical supplies to bases. On one of these convoys, Tina barely escaped an explosion. A bomb exploded and dust, rocks, and shrapnel flew everywhere.

"I was so angry, angry at the reason I was there. 'For what?' I asked myself. My mom would have received a triangle-folded flag in exchange for her only daughter."

She knew at that moment she could no longer serve in the war. "I'm done," she said. "I am not fighting for anyone's oil agenda."

## SPEAKING OUT AGAINST THE WAR

Tina is home in Silver City, New Mexico, honorably discharged. "I really wish I never went into the military. I now have post-traumatic stress disorder. I jump at everything." Many of her fellow soldiers returned home damaged and disillusioned, if they returned at all.

Tina speaks to high school students about why the recruiters target poor, minority students. These youth are looking for a way out, out of the ghetto, out of poverty, where there is little hope for advancement. "The military is not the only option but it's usually only the military recruiters that are there in the schools."

*"Some people call me unpatriotic when I speak out against the war. Now that's interesting: to call a veteran unpatriotic. I support the troops. They are my brothers and sisters."*

Tina has struggled to understand how she as a Navajo could be part of the same machine that nearly exterminated the Native Americans. "Broken treaties. Forcing us on reservations. I was a lost Native." But Tina Garnanez has found her way as part of a growing movement of soldiers speaking out against the war in Iraq.



**WAR TIMES**  
*Tiempo de Guerras*

This flyer was prepared by War Times/ Tiempo de Guerras ([www.war-times.org](http://www.war-times.org)). Interview by Christine Ahn of the Women of Color Resource Center ([www.coloredgirls.org](http://www.coloredgirls.org)).