The tendency to use every weapon at our disposal to attack our real or imagined enemies is an unfortunate part of our heritage. Indeed, it is one of the evils which those of us joined to work for social reform wish to expose and strive to eliminate in our own behaviors. Consequently, I am struck by the apparent paradox between the worthwhile intentions of these authors and some of the literary techniques which the have utilized. We are provided important information about apparent contradictions in Herrnstein’s public ‘testimony’. It is a shame that these critical data are obscured by non-sequiturs and statements quoted out of context.

With respect to the IQ controversy, and Herrnstein’s role in it, there are so many methodological and philosophical inadequacies in the original work that it does not need to be attacked by indirect means. As has frequently been pointed out, the basic construct ‘intelligence’ is one of the weakest in the psychological repertoire. The impossibility of developing culture-free tests of relative ability is the heart of the problem. No mathematical techniques, no matter how sophisticated or unique, can do anything to enhance the fundamentally inadequate comparative data provided by available IQ tests. Yet, purported intelligence measures continue to have great popularity and almost magical effects upon beliefs about ourselves and beliefs about and actions toward others. At any rate, the work of Cyril Burt is hardly the weakest cornerstone of Herrnstein’s position, and I am not at all sure why the IQ nonsense is of any importance for the present article which focuses on the ‘war effort’.

What the careful reader must finally extract from this article is the fact that Herrnstein’s 1965 Atlantic Monthly article clearly states the military nature of his classified research. This does seem to discredit his late (1971) statement quoted in the last paragraph by the present authors. One technical note of caution is necessary: the 1971 statement says that Herrnstein “never trained pigeons to hunt down Viet-Cong” and that to his knowledge the company with which he was consulted “did not so train pigeons either”. It does not say that his work might not logically have been used by others for exactly that purpose, nor do these quotations deny the possibility that Herrnstein’s research might have included training for some target group other than the Viet Cong.

This review is certainly not a defense of Herrnstein’s efforts... an individual has moral responsibility for assessing the potential as well as intended uses of their inventions, training procedures and products. It is also important for us to evaluate one another’s contributions and bring to light those efforts which are clearly contrary to minimum standards of human decency. I applaud the attempt to share important data with us. It is the significance of this data which makes me wish that the authors had not embellished it with conjecture about lies and implicit meanings. The deeds speak for themselves.