

Veterans, Who Know War, Say "Try Peace"

Written by Buzz Davis, Army Veteran & Activist

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Veterans, especially combat veterans, need to talk about the real costs of war. The veterans' silence results in enabling power hungry politicians and greedy business persons to push war as the solution instead of creating a more peaceful world.

TUCSON, AZ - We approach Memorial Day honoring the ultimate sacrifices made by 1.4 million American military men and women who died in America's wars since 1775. We must discuss the horrific impact of war on surviving soldiers and civilians. For only they can teach us working for peace is a better option than fighting wars.

Each death in war brings everlasting tragedy to a family. Each death damages the hope of loved ones.

Humans are brutal. We have many wonderful traits. But we must admit to a brutal streak. And we must hope that we do not exhibit that trait ourselves and are not forced into situations where we too become brutal.

Historians view history as a long string of wars. The most destructive war thus far was World War II. Between 45 million and 85 million men, women and children perished in combat, destruction and resulting disease and famine.

Historians estimate 400 million to 670 million soldiers and civilians died in the largest 35 wars.

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Wars always kill far more civilians than soldiers.



This drawing and caption of children at the graveside of a Civil War relative killed at Gettysburg depicts our basic problem.

Because a relative served in a long ago war, many children especially boys are socialized into thinking being a soldier is the good thing to do.

Society (families, media, schools, movies, religions) encourage this, many times glorifying war. Recruiters prey on these emotions.

As a future infantry officer, I spent a year of my life being taught how to kill people (fortunately I was sent to S. Korea rather than S. Vietnam in 1969).

"You bet I'm goin' to be a soldier, too,
like my Uncle David, when I grow up."

"On Decoration Day" Political cartoon c 1900 by [John T. McCutcheon](#) .

The military does an excellent job of training men and women to kill. But our generals have no idea of how to train/educate people to "unkill." Many of our 22 million veterans who were in combat and had to participate in, or were near, the killing, deaths and maimings have memories and emotions they try to control all their lives. Most don't discuss these memories at all or very much with family and friends. Such discussions are extremely difficult to have.

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The veterans' silence results in enabling power hungry politicians and greedy business persons to use the military industrial complex to push war as the "solution" to problems/challenges nations face.

The result of silence is that millions of veterans are not teaching their children, friends and community that war is not the answer. Killing does not solve problems. It just makes problems more difficult to resolve. You can't kill a religious idea or political idea with a bullet.

The military teaches team work and being in the military and combat encourages camaraderie. But each vet is on his/her own when it comes to controlling or squashing the bad memories and thoughts.



America spends over \$600 billion per year on wars, weapons and designing more weapons. We spend only \$50 billion on the U.S. State Department and the United Nations.

Nine nations have 15,000 nuclear weapons. Scientists say if just 1% of those weapons are exploded in a nuclear war, tens of millions would die in the first hour. Millions would die later from the radiation effects and fire storms. Firestorms, sweeping large areas creating dark dust clouds, would cause an extended winter of possibly 10 years with drastically shortened food growing cycles. Two billion would be threatened with famine. Life on earth, as we know it, would be gone.

[Khatyn](#) Memorial commemorating the loss of life in Belarus during [World War II](#) .

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For decades we have had politicians creating more wars instead of creating a more peaceful world via diplomacy, cooperation, helping other nations improve safe water supplies, educational systems, infrastructure, health, food production and strengthening the United Nations to help improve the lives of peoples across this world.

Small steps for America are: Veterans, especially combat veterans, need to discuss with their families some of what they did in "their" war. Or skip their personal experiences, if they cannot talk about it, and talk about the horrendous cost in lost lives. Vets can write letters to the editor of their local papers saying War Is Not the Answer and tell the readers what needs to be done.

Today our nation is controlled by Republican war mongers and meek Democratic followers. We must all think ahead to November 2018. We will have an opportunity to vote out of office those who foolishly advocate war. But right now we must talk about why we must fight harder for Peace than we do for War!

Buzz Davis, formerly of Stoughton, WI now of Tucson, is a long time progressive activist, a member of Veterans for Peace and a former VISTA Volunteer, Army officer, elected official, union organizer, impeachment organizer, VP of WI Alliance for Retired Americans and a retired state government planner. □ dbuzzdavis@aol.com